

**EXPERIENCES OF ZULU AFRICAN MOTHERS OF ADOLESCENTS WHO  
ARE MISBEHAVING IN URBAN TOWNSHIPS IN DURBAN**

**BY**

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- The mothers who participated in my research study, without whom my study would not have been possible.

**DECLARATION**

I, Nonhle Olga Khumalo, hereby declare that all the sources that were used have been included in the reference list, and that this study has never been previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

  
.....  
Nonhle Olga Khumalo  
Durban  
December, 2007

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Ntombenhle Khumalo, who passed away on 19 August 2005. You may be gone but your legacy will forever be in our hearts.

We love you Mom!

## ABSTRACT

In this study the experience of Zulu African mothers who have adolescents who are misbehaving in urban townships in Durban were identified and explored. A qualitative, descriptive, contextual and interpretive research design was used to capture the experiences of ten mothers whose adolescents are misbehaving.

Data was collected by means of individual semi-structured interviews as well as feedback and collaboration with the mothers. Data was analysed using Tesch's eight steps of data analysis, through which, four themes emerged. Themes are clustered around the support of mothers' perceptions of themselves, mothers' fearful emotional responses and mothers' suggestions on managing adolescents who are misbehaving. The strongest themes that emerged, which were reported by all the mothers were family support, despair and worry. Mothers mentioned that they experienced lack of support from their extended families, schools and other structures in helping them deal with their experiences. Mothers also mentioned feelings of worry about their children's life, and despair in relation to not knowing what to do or who to turn to for help.

Guidelines and strategies in the form of recommendations are made to assist mothers in managing their adolescents who are misbehaving and also to facilitate adolescents in gaining parenting skills in schools.

## **KEYWORDS**

**JUVENILE DELINQUENT**

**ADOLESCENT**

**MOTHER**

**EXPERIENCE**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The focus of the study is to explore and understand the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving (delinquent) in urban townships in Durban. In the African culture it is usually the mother who is responsible for the upbringing of the children, as the father is often absent, hence my focus on the experiences of the mothers. The literature shows that numerous studies have been done on the nature and causes of adolescent misbehaviour (Regoli & Hewitt, 2006; Smith & Stern, 1997; Tlhoale, 2003). Some researchers have examined and explained the misbehaviour in relation to cultural differences (Tyson & Stone, 2002), and others have looked at the experiences of misbehaving adolescents (Van der Westhuizen, 2004). From the literature study conducted it appears that little emphasis has been placed on the experiences of mothers of misbehaving adolescents. This indicates a gap and a need for research focusing on the mother's experiences of having a misbehaving adolescent in order to suggest ways in which the interaction with the adolescent can be improved.

I come from a family in which one of the siblings was showing delinquent behaviour (misbehaving). My mother would cry, not knowing what she might have done wrong to have a delinquent child. She would blame herself. For most parents having a misbehaving child is very challenging as it raises issues regarding the individual, the family as a whole, the mother's parenting abilities, and the relationship with the school as well as the community's trust of the family. Through the study I intend to explore the experiences of mothers of their adolescents who are showing delinquent behaviour (misbehaviour, c.f. 1.5.1), and how they themselves are treated by the extended family, the school, as well as the community. This

would be done through exploring mothers' experiences of parenting misbehaving adolescents.

Through looking at the experiences of the mothers, one might be able to reflect on the crises in parenting that parenting education programmes could possibly address, in order to improve the chances of adolescents. Chevrier (2005) in a parenting project in America, states that there is a direct link between parenting and its influence in the first years of a child's life on the one hand and crime, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse which could lead to one's child performing poorly or dropping out of school on the other hand. This study on the experiences of mothers regarding their adolescents who are misbehaving, could provide the platform from which to launch parenting education programmes for parents in the community, but also parenting programmes for adolescents at school, as part of the Life Orientation learning area.

The literature shows that many American studies have been done on the juvenile delinquents' perception of their mothers. Haapasalo (2001) looked at what juvenile delinquents think of their parents and Agnew (2005) studied how parents could look at the causes of juvenile delinquency and how it could be controlled. Minimal attention has been given to parents' experiences regarding their delinquent adolescents and even less exists about the experiences mothers go through if their adolescents are misbehaving. The literature that does exist concerning parents gives no clear description of the experiences of mothers. Therefore this study is prompted by a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of mothers whose adolescents are juvenile delinquents. This study will focus mainly on the Zulu African mother whose child shows delinquent behaviour and whose child therefore is or had been in prison because of delinquent acts.

Through the understanding of mothers' experiences of adolescents who are misbehaving, the Department of Education through the school might be able to mobilize various circles in schools and communities to take part in efforts to establish a network to earnestly carry out the work of help and education, to strengthen the work done by the parents (mothers) in their homes (Daqi, n.d), in so doing improving the chances of adolescents. The



collaboration could possibly take place with much better results because the mothers, after engaging with the issue would better understand the meaning of their experiences and in turn could intensify information exchange between parents (mothers) and the school, regarding the learners whose optimal actualisation of potential is at stake. The mothers in this study will be given an opportunity to tell their stories of their experiences. This process of mothers telling their stories may in itself be a therapeutic process for them, possibly leading to greater self-awareness and insight. It is hoped that this research will form the basis for parenting education in many sites and at different levels of society. Being a parent is one of the most important roles people have, and therefore parenting education ought to become part of the school's curriculum. Every learner should know the basics about being a good parent (Chevrier, 2005).

## **1.2. AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is:

- to explore the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving
- to generate guidelines and strategies to assist mothers in managing their adolescents who are misbehaving, in order for adolescents to better adjust.
- to generate guidelines to facilitate adolescents gaining parenting skills at school, in the Life Orientation learning area.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Research always commences with one or more questions. According to De Vos (1998), questions are posed about the nature of real situations. In this study, questions are posed about the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving. De Vos (1998) says a good research question is one that can be answered by collecting data

and whose answers cannot be foreseen prior to the collection of data. In consideration of the experiences of mothers the following questions will be explored in this study:

- What are the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving?
- What guidelines and strategies can be generated to assist mothers in managing their adolescents who are misbehaving, in order for adolescents to better adjust?
- What guidelines and strategies can be generated to facilitate adolescents' gaining parenting skills at school, in the Life Orientation learning area?

## **1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.4.1 Research design**

Researchers are faced with a number of research designs from which to choose when conducting a study. The design depends on the nature of the problem to be addressed. A qualitative, explorative and contextual research design will be used (Mouton & Marais, 1992). According to De Vos (2002), explorative research is conducted in order to gain insight into a situation or phenomenon, when there is little known about the issue to be researched. So in this research study I will be exploring the experiences of Zulu African mothers, particularly in black township areas, who have adolescents who are misbehaving and whose adolescents subsequently landed in jail. This study will use a phenomenological approach because it seeks to explore and understand these individuals' experiences of the phenomenon (Mertens, 1998) and also the meaning of their experiences (Valle, 1998).

De Vos (1998) defines qualitative research as research that elicits participation to focus on meaning, experience and perceptions. It aims to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to their everyday life. Mertens (1998) views qualitative research as a subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of the insider, through the stories individuals tell. It seeks to focus on experiences of individuals and the meaning of these experiences, as told. The researcher will use qualitative research because it is the

approach that seeks to understand the meaning people attach to their daily lives, including their experiences.

## **1.4.2 Research Methodology**

### **1.4.2.1 Sample**

To access the experiences of mothers, interviews will be conducted with Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving and who are subsequently in jail or have been in jail for some misbehaviour. The researcher will use a purposive sampling strategy, and participants will be chosen because of the rich information that they could provide. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001), purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of the participants according to the needs of the study. Purposive sampling will be used because I have knowledge and information about mothers who have adolescents who are misbehaving. In a non-probability sample, a small number of participants can be selected, and interviews will be conducted until the data is saturated (Cohen *et al.* 2001).

### **1.4.2.2 Data Collection**

Data collection is the method of gathering or producing information. Qualitative research employs mostly interviews and observations to gather information. In this study interviews will be used as the principal means of data gathering (Cohen *et al.* 2001). The best way to get the story is to have the individual tell about his/her experiences, either through personal conversations or interviews (Creswell, 2002). Individual face to face interviews will be used as it is a flexible technique to gather accounts of people's experiences (McLeod, 1996). This will allow the participants the freedom to tell their stories. The researcher will explain to the participants (mothers) what she hopes to achieve through their involvement in the study in order to allay fears they might have. The interviews will be conducted in the language the participants know best, which is isiZulu, and will later be translated into

English and transcribed. This will give the participants the opportunity to express themselves freely.

Permission will be requested from the participants to audiotape the interview for the purpose of transcribing. Willing (2001) believes that the researcher must explain to the participants why the recording is being made and how it is going to be used after the interview. To begin the interview all participants will be asked the same question to which they will be requested to respond and elaborate on. Further probing and clarification questions will be asked. Data will be recorded on labelled audio-tapes and translation and transcribing will be done after each interview to preserve data.

### **1.4.2.3 Data Analysis**

According to Creswell (2002) familiarisation with the data is the first step in data analysis because in qualitative research the development of themes depends on the researcher's understanding of data. As supported by Cohen *et al.* (2001) the researcher must understand what the interviewee is saying rather than what the researcher expects the participant to say. Tesch's eight steps of data analysis will be used (Tesch, 1990). During this process of data analysis, the researcher will familiarise herself with the data and unwanted data will be eliminated. The focus will be on relevant data that answers the research questions. Similar responses will be grouped together into categories that bring together similar ideas. Themes will be formulated and a logical flow of ideas will be maintained. An independent coder will re-code the raw data and a consensus discussion will be held to reach consensus on the themes.

Some conclusions will be drawn and guidelines suggested based on the outcomes of the empirical study.

## **1.5. KEY CONCEPTS**

### **1.5.1 Juvenile delinquent**

Eurocentric textbooks refer to child and youth misbehaviour as '*juvenile delinquency*' (Bartollas, 1993). Delinquency implies criminal activities and guilt, thus many children who are involved in minor misbehavior are labeled as juvenile delinquents. This label, in turn, causes a great deal of negative reaction from the community (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003) which can possibly influence a child to become involved in serious crime. The concept '*misbehaviour*' as used by Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) will therefore rather be used in this study to refer to any type of criminal wrongdoing and the term juvenile delinquency will be avoided where possible.

A misbehaving youth refers to a young person, usually under the age of 18, who becomes involved in activities that are punishable by law (Gouws & Kruger, 1994). Some of these activities are robbery, aggravated assault, rape, car hijacking, murder or illegal use of drugs. A misbehaving youth is therefore a child or youth guilty of some offence, act of vandalism or antisocial behaviour or whose conduct is beyond parental control and who may be brought before the court of law.

### **1.5.2 Adolescent**

Adolescence stands out as a fascinating and challenging period of human development. An adolescent is neither a child nor an adult (Newton, 1995) and is at the stage of identity formation. The adolescent life stage is often a period of increased risk for the onset of problem behaviours, including delinquency or misbehaviour (Erickson, Crosnoe & Dornbusch, 2000). Cummings (1995:20) defines the adolescent period as the brief period of transformation between childhood and adulthood that is marked by a formal rite of passage and that ends with full inclusion into the adult society. Newton (1995) concurs with Cummings and includes that it involves multiple dimensions.

Adolescence is generally seen to range from age 11 or 12 to 18 or 19, although it should not be seen to be fixed and is subdivided into three phases: early adolescence from 11 to 14; middle adolescence from 14 to 16 and, lastly late adolescence from 16 to 19 (McMahon, McMahon & Romano, 1990). In this research adolescent will refer to those adolescents in the middle adolescent stage (14 to 16 years).

### **1.5.3 Mother**

A mother is a female parent (MacMillan English Dictionary, 2002) who provides physical, cognitive and emotional care and stimulation required by an infant, child or youth (Stratton & Hayes, 1993) to develop and grow. For the purpose of the study, mother will refer to Zulu African female parents responsible for mothering the adolescent who is misbehaving (juvenile delinquent) and who is/was in prison because of the misbehaviour.

### **1.5.4 Experience**

According to the Collins English Dictionary (Hank, Long & Urdang, 1985) experiences are defined as particular incidents and feelings that a person has. According to Tullock (1993) an experience could be described as the apprehension of an object, thought or emotion through the senses or mind. Furthermore it is an active participation in events or activities leading to an accumulation of knowledge and skills. For the purpose of this research 'experience' will refer to the personal and practical incidents and feelings of the mother of an adolescent who is misbehaving.

## **1.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Strydom (1998) a researcher ought to pay attention to certain aspects of the research in order to ensure that the study is ethically acceptable and has a standard upon which to evaluate the work. Strydom (1998) identified some of the following considerations:

### **1.6.1 No harm to participants**

The research should cause no harm to participants. Should the participants experience stress when being interviewed because of the sensitive nature of the study, the interview will be stopped. To ensure that stress is minimized, the interview will be controlled by participants themselves, and they could stop at any time. If it seems as if participants need counselling, they will be referred to a social worker.

### **1.6.2 Informed and understood consent**

All mothers will be visited in the comfort of their homes and will be given information regarding the study and their roles therein. Interview appointments will be scheduled with the mothers who agree to participate in the study. Participants will be told about the nature of the study to be conducted (Cohen *et al.* 2001) and will be made aware that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time should they feel uncomfortable. At the first meeting the letters of consent will be discussed and participants will read, query and then sign the letter of consent. In the case where participants cannot read or write, the consent form will be explained in full to them and verbal consent will be recorded.

### **1.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

It will be explained to the participants that the information they will share with the researcher will be kept confidential and the participants' anonymity will be maintained throughout the study. Pseudonyms will be used to protect their identity.

### **1.6.4 Release of the findings**

Participants will be informed of the findings of the research study.

## **1.7 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY**

The researcher has identified the following factors as ones that will contribute to the successful completion of the study:

- The researcher can reach the participants with ease.
- Permission could be sought from the participants.
- Participants will be interviewed outside work hours and within their homes if that does not cause a threat to them.
- The researcher will be bearing all the costs.

## **1.8 DELIMITATION**

Coming from an Educational Psychology perspective, the study looks at the development of an adolescent in terms of adolescent misbehaviour and mothers' experiences of parenting when there is a misbehaving adolescent in the family. Furthermore the research will try to gain an understanding of how misbehaviour is dealt with by mothers, school and the community. The study will try to show how parenting education can be included as part of the school curriculum in Life Orientation.

## **1.9. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research. It includes the aim of the study, research questions, key concepts and research design and methodology. The focus of Chapter 2 will be on exploring a theoretical framework for understanding parenting of adolescents who are misbehaving and ways of dealing with misbehaviour in different levels of the ecosystem. Chapter 3 will provide a detailed description of the research design and methodology used to achieve the aim of the study. It will also include how participants will be selected and how data will be analysed. Chapter 4 will unpack the findings and



discussion of the findings. Chapter 5 will focus on conclusions, guidelines based on the research findings, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has highlighted that adolescent misbehaviour is a real problem which needs to be explored from the perspective of the parent. The people who seem to be affected the most by the misbehaviour of their children are the mothers, who have not often been heard. The next chapter will focus on the review of the literature, placing the research in the context of the bodies of literature of adolescent misbehaviour and parenting.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON JUVENILE DELINQUENTS / MISBEHAVING ADOLESCENTS FROM AN ECOSYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Many parents become worried and at times distressed by the behaviour of their adolescents. Rutter (1995) believes that most adolescents are not particularly troublesome. The problem is often how the family, school, and society respond to the adolescents. The response of the family, school, peers and society may create further negative feelings and can contribute to adolescents' misbehaviour.

This chapter involves a review of literature of juvenile delinquency also referred to as 'misbehaving' by Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003), a concept preferred in this dissertation, and which will be clarified below. A historical overview of the juvenile delinquency/adolescent misbehaviour will be given to show how misbehaviour has been dealt with over time. The researcher will discuss diagnostic criteria used to diagnose adolescent misbehaviour, the onset of the misbehaviour, different causal theories of juvenile delinquency, and the social construction of misbehaviour. Parents (specifically mothers) and parenting will be explored from the ecosystems theory to illustrate the impact on the adolescents and the adolescents' impact on parents. Lastly, the researcher will look at the different ways that can be employed to manage the misbehaviour of the adolescents, also referring to parenting skills in the Life Orientation programmes.

#### **2.2 SUITABLE CONCEPTS**

##### **2.2.1 Juvenile delinquency vs. Adolescent misbehaviour**

Almost everyone has used the term juvenile delinquent on occasion, perhaps in describing

someone they know, but the term has different meanings for different individuals. The following discussion should throw light on what researchers refer to as juvenile delinquent and furthermore argue for a more appropriate concept.

According to the South African Law Commission (2000) a juvenile delinquent is a child or young person who under the respective legal system may be dealt with for an offence in a manner which is different from the way an adult is dealt with. Some research views a juvenile as a person under the age of eighteen (18) (Elsea, 2007; Siegal & Senna, 2000).

Eurocentric textbooks refer to child and youth misbehaviour as juvenile delinquency (Bartollas, 1993). This label however, causes a great deal of negative reaction from the community which can possibly contribute to a child becoming involved in serious misbehaviour and crime (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). The word delinquent has a negative connotation and is no longer accepted internationally. The concept 'misbehaviour' is preferred and will therefore be used in this study to refer to any type of criminal wrongdoing, and the term juvenile delinquent will be avoided where possible.

Brown, Eisbensen and Geis (1991) define juvenile delinquents or misbehaving adolescents as young people whose conduct fails to conform to norms of institutions such as the family and the school. Siegal and Senna (2000) define a juvenile delinquent as a minor child that has been found to have violated the law. Because of their minor status, juveniles are usually kept separate from adults in prison and receive different consideration and treatment under the law. The internationally proposed standard sets the minimum age limit at ten years for a juvenile.

In South Africa the upper age limit in which a young person is to be brought before the attention of the juvenile court, is eighteen years, while in other countries (such as Australia, Antigua and Barbuda) it is sixteen and seventeen years (Elsea, 2007; Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1990). In South Africa a juvenile delinquent (misbehaving youth) refers to a young person, usually under the age of 18, who becomes involved in activities that are punishable by law (Gouws & Kruger, 1994). Some of those activities are robbery, aggravated assault, rape, car hijacking, murder or illegal use of drugs. Tlhoaela (2003)

points out that in the South African context actions by youth such as truancy, running away from home, having fist fights, trespassing, or calling the emergency number under false circumstances are regarded as inappropriate, and are seen to be misbehaving. A misbehaving youth is therefore a child or a young person guilty of some offence, act of vandalism or antisocial behaviour or whose conduct is beyond parental control and who may be brought before the court of law. In South Africa the age range is between seven and eighteen years (Gouws & Kruger, 1994).

There are many other concepts that are used internationally to refer to juvenile delinquents. Such concepts include *chronic juvenile offender* which refers to a small number of juvenile delinquents who commit serious crimes (rape, murder and armed robbery) and are excessively violent and destructive (Siegal, 2002); *PINS* (person in need of supervision); a *wayward* child whose behaviour is injurious to her or his welfare, has deserted home without good cause or is disobedient to parents or guardians (Rogers & May, 1987). Locally, the Africans (Nguni people, whose mother tongue is isiZulu) in South Africa use a number of terms like *tsotsi*, (a streetwise criminal), *usikhotheni* (person who disobeys the law, does not finish his or her academic programme and often disappears from home to stay wherever he or she likes) and *isigebengu* (a criminal thug). These terms do not differentiate in terms of age or crime committed but refers to behaviour regarded as antisocial and unacceptable.

The abovementioned give a clear indication of what a misbehaving adolescent is. For the purpose of this research the term 'adolescent misbehaviour' will be used in the study to refer to any wrong doing by a youth, that is punishable by law and the term juvenile delinquency will be avoided where possible. With the above in mind, the origin of the concept *juvenile delinquency* will be discussed.

## **2.3 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

### **2.3.1 The origin**

According to Empey (1982) in Europe the word delinquency was not used until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Around the 12<sup>th</sup> century the only person who had power over the family was the father, who could severely punish the children who have done wrong. In the Middle Ages, children and adults were grouped together (Shoemaker, 1984) and whatever explained the behaviour of older criminals was also applicable to young ones. If an adolescent had committed a crime punishable by execution, that adolescent was executed the same way an adult would be. This does not mean that the youth did not steal, fight or disobey the law as young people have always been engaged in acts of misbehaviour. The behaviour that is now defined as delinquent has been common among young people throughout history; it has always been illegal but was not called delinquency.

During the 15<sup>th</sup> century things started to change as children were described in a way to show their place within the society and were viewed as being different from the adults and in need of intensive supervision and attention. Public dunking and stocks were used as a form of discipline (Bartollas, 1993). Juvenile courts came into existence as a result of the widespread belief that children were different from adults and therefore required different legal protection and special care. Because of this, separate systems of justice were designed and it gave birth to a juvenile justice system and confinement.

South Africa was largely influenced by the European countries, being a colony of Britain. Holland and England influenced the legal basis of South Africa (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Around the 1670's and onwards the Chamber of Justice in South Africa acted as a mediator in cases where children had been disobedient towards their parents (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Absolute obedience from children was required and any transgression resulted in the child being severely punished and the punishment was not prescriptive in nature. Adults have always been worried about the behaviour of the youth probably because of the perception that the nation's future rests on the development of its youth.

During the industrialization period, in South Africa immigration brought about a change in value systems, viewing sin and criminal activity as two separate issues with the transgressor being viewed as “a sinner and a criminal and therefore an outcast” (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003:17). According to Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1990), the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an expansion in the population which made it hard to maintain close family life. Because of industrialization heads of families had to work far from home making it hard for them to maintain the discipline of their children. Families were moving to urban areas mixing with other families, causing family values to get lost. The family life was seen to be promoting idleness, as a result institutional treatment was thought to resolve the problem of misbehaving adolescents. It was during this era that many people started to believe that those who were misbehaving knew what they were letting themselves in for before they embarked on the action to join a gang, steal cars, or sell drugs, as an easy way to better their personal situations. They consider the possible benefit of being rich or simply enjoy the excitement of running away from the police, with little fear of being caught. Even so, not all adolescents have the ability to reason and weigh up the outcome of their behaviour. For example mentally ill children and some adolescents do not have sufficient reasoning ability. The juvenile courts were not created until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **2.3.2 Punishment/Addressing adolescent misbehaviour**

At first, juvenile lawbreakers were arrested, tried and imprisoned along with adult offenders. This, in turn, resulted in sexual exploitation as well as further learning to be a criminal (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Later, according to Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003), misbehaving adolescents were beginning to be treated differently to adult criminals in most countries, including South Africa. This was because they were seen and are still seen as less responsible for their misbehaviour and that their illegal behaviour had not yet taken on a permanent pattern (Tlhoaela, 2003). Confinements were built as a method to prevent crime and correct offenders (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995). Prisons, houses of refuge as well as orphan asylums were built for adolescents who were misbehaving. According to

Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) the houses of refuge served as a substitute to family, providing order and discipline. The strict application of discipline was believed to be the best method for preparing youngsters for their future (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995). These institutions were however not deemed effective as the institutions themselves harboured dangerous conditions.

In the twentieth century (20<sup>th</sup>) in South Africa clinic schools were developed for children who were described as being behaviourally difficult (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). The main aim of these schools was to rehabilitate the youth and prevent further misbehaviour (Stevens & Cloete, 1996). Child care schools were also developed for misbehaving children; for example Boys' Town, which provided a care programme for boys between 6 and 18 years of age. Reform schools were also built for adolescents considered to be uncontrollable due to serious behavioural problems. The main objective for these schools was to care for, train, educate and instruct the adolescents to become hard-working, dutiful and socially adjusted individuals (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). This is important in ensuring all adolescents are included in appropriate settings, especially since 1996 when Public education was made compulsory for all youth aged seven (7) to fifteen (15) years of age or to the completion of grade nine (9) (Department of Education, 2001).

At present in South Africa, there are no special juvenile justice systems (South African Law Commission, 2000). Adult courts fulfill the tasks of juvenile courts. Before a child can be found guilty, the age has to be determined, whilst a child under the age of seven (7) is presumed to lack criminal capacity and therefore cannot be prosecuted (South African Law Commission, 2000; Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003).

## **2.4 THEORIES OF MISBEHAVIOUR/JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

Theories of juvenile delinquency, or misbehaviour, have changed markedly in the past 200 or 300 years, because of the changes in the way adolescents are perceived. There are many different theories that try to explain juvenile delinquency but no single theory has been universally accepted. The following section will look at differential theory, labeling

theory, rational choice theory, strain theory, social learning theory as well as the social control theory.

### **2.4.1 Differential Association theory**

Differential association is a process of social learning, in which criminals and law abiding people learn their behaviour from association with others (Theories of juvenile delinquency retrieved from [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org) on 03 Sept 2007). This theory focuses on how people learn to be criminals but does not concern itself with why they become criminals. This theory suggests that delinquency is learned behaviour acquired from interacting with others who participate in criminal lifestyles, so that the difference in offenders and non-offenders lies in individual choices. This theory predicts that an individual will choose the law-breaking path when the balance of definition of law-breaking exceeds that of law-abiding. It is believed that this tendency will be reinforced if social association provides role models of significance (Theories of juvenile delinquency retrieved from [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org) on 03 Sept 2007).

### **2.4.2 Labelling theory**

This theory suggests that the label applied to individuals influences their behaviour, particularly the application of negative or stigmatizing labels that promote deviant behaviour, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thrasher's work on juvenile gangs in Chicago (1936) was one of the first instances in which the consequences of official labels of delinquency were recognised as potentially harmful (Shoemaker, 1984). Similarly in 1936 Tannenbaum argued that official labelling of someone as a delinquent can result in the person becoming the very thing he is described as being. The process of identifying, labelling and stigmatising children in the juvenile justice system worsens the behaviour (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Interestingly, rehabilitation of offenders could occur through an alteration of their label. Labelling theory is crucial in understanding misbehaviour because it is during the time of adolescence that youths' identities are



formed. If a youth is then labelled as a delinquent, the identity will possibly be influenced by it, and the youth will be prone to engage in criminal activities.

The researcher uses the term adolescent misbehaviour (c.f. 2.2.1) to avoid labelling an adolescent, as labelling places the adolescent in a category which our society views as negative and which from an inclusive education framework, is excluding. The person who has been labelled further suffers from the stigma of his/ her label. As a result that person is seen as "bad" or a "troublemaker". Teachers, other learners and the neighbours begin to view a youth who bears this label as deviant and they may well react differently as a result of his status. Stigmatised youths are more likely to be held responsible for the noise in the classroom or a broken window in the school. Parents may discourage their children from playing or being seen with them as they are viewed as the culprits. A result of such stigmatisation is that some misbehaving adolescents, who have been negatively labelled, will not only engage in further criminal behaviour, but also seek out comfort in the company of others who have likewise been cast as outsiders (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). The Education White Paper Six (6) (DoE, 2001) outlines that the South African Schools Act (1996) of the Republic of South Africa gives the right to basic and equal education for all learners without discrimination of any sort and this would include adolescents who are misbehaving.

### **2.4.3 Rational choice theory**

This theory assumes that a rational decision is always the decision that will maximize gain and minimize pain for each individual. According to Calhoun, Light and Keller (1989) deviancy is a result of highly rational calculations of risks and rewards. Rational theorists are of the opinion that offenders take a decision to break the law after considering both personal factors (such as the need for money) and situational factors (how well a target is protected and the efficiency of the police force) (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Prospective adolescents who behave defiantly weigh their chances of gain against the risk of getting caught and thereby decide on a course of action. The emphasis is on free will, as

Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) believe that individuals are governed by reason, not passion.

According to this view, if a youth believes that s/he can gain pleasure rather than pain by committing forbidden acts, s/he will do so, if not, s/he will refrain from delinquent behaviour. In this theory, youths are thought to weigh the costs and benefits of their proposed actions before they embark on them. Adolescents, however, do not always choose the most rational actions. Their values are different from those of adults. Adolescents are known for not thinking before they act. What may constitute delinquency / misbehaving, may come as a result of acting out against authority. For example an adolescent may decide to set off a smoke bomb or ignore the principal as an act of defiance towards authority at school (Causal theories of juvenile delinquency retrieved from [www.skidmore.edu](http://www.skidmore.edu) on 03 Sept 2007) and then be seen to be misbehaving.

#### **2.4.4 Strain theory**

This theory argues that people are more likely to engage in crime when they get what they want illegally (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Most people want wealth, material possessions, power, prestige and other life comforts. Members of the lower socio-economic class are generally unable to achieve these symbols of success through conventional means. They may become frustrated or angry, and as a result, they may try to get what they want illegally. Strain theory assumes that human nature is socially inherited or is the product of interaction in intimate groups, and therefore sees misbehaviour as an expression of conformity to shared values and standards set by certain individuals, for example thieves.

Strain theory was created to account for the fact that delinquency and adult crimes are more common among lower socio-economic class. According to Messner and Rosenfeld (1994) strain theory may either be structural in the sense that processes at the societal level filter down and affect how the individual perceives her/his needs, or in the sense that

the pains experienced by the individual as he or she looks for a way to satisfy his/her needs may become more important than the means adopted.

#### **2.4.5 Social learning theory**

Social learning theory provides a perspective of how behavior is acquired, maintained, and modified by individuals in society, regardless of their age or developmental status. Bandura (1982, 1986), a prominent social learning theorist, suggests that behavior is shaped mainly through modelling, or observing behaviours, and reinforcement, or experiencing positive consequences to behaviours. This theory states that crime is normal learned behaviour (Leighninger & Popple, 1996). Social learning can involve the actual teaching of crime. Learning the criminal behaviour involves learning the techniques of committing crime, the proper terminology for their acts and acquiring approved reaction to law violations. For example, learning how to smoke a dagga joint is learnt from the more experienced companions. Social learning theorists see lawbreaking socialisation as occurring through a process by which young offenders are taught that criminal behaviour is acceptable and even more desirable than law-abiding behaviour. People learn criminal behaviour through the group with which they associate. If a person associates with more groups that see criminal behaviour more acceptable than groups that see criminal behaviour as unacceptable, the person will probably engage in criminal behaviour.

This theory shows how adolescents can socially learn deviant behaviour from those around them such as friends and family. Bandura (1977) believed that crime reinforced by the family members is the most prominent source of behaviour modeling, for example, a child growing up in a home where the parents are engaged in criminal acts. The child would grow up thinking that the criminal acts exercised by her/his parents are not wrong as society defines them to be. Bandura (1977, 1986) believes that individuals do not inherit criminal acts, but they observe them as they are modelled by other people.

#### **2.4.6 Social control theory**

The central issue of social control theory is that human behaviour is largely the result of how children are socialised (Ellis & Walsh, 2000). The social control theory is also known as the bonding theory. This theory puts forward the idea that a person is free to engage in wrongful activities when his or her ties to the conventional order have been broken. It believes that when social orders are strong, deviance is less likely to occur. Most people stay out of trouble most of the time because people are used to conventional norms of society through their affiliations with home, school, place of work, church and political institutions. As long as the ties are strong and meaningful, a person generally abides by the rules. The key concept in this theory, as referred to above, is bonding (Ellis & Walsh, 2000). Greater bonding to school attachment, high achievement and involvement in school activities reduces the likelihood of school misconduct.

Hirschi (1979) describes bonding by means of four elements that enhance conformity. The first is *attachment*, meaning caring about other people, their opinions, and expectations and shared aspirations. To violate certain norms is to violate the wishes and aspirations of relevant people and, possibly, to destroy mutual trust. Such attachment connects individuals to significant others such as parents, peers, school and work groups. Secondly, *commitment* is the result of cost benefit approach to wrongful deeds. It refers to the investment accumulated in terms of conformity to conventional rules. Thirdly, *involvement* refers to participation in conventional and legal activities. The last one is *belief* which involves acceptance of a conventional value system, which if weakened, increases the chances of wrongful deeds and misbehaviour (Ellis & Walsh, 2000).

Among the theories, which have been discussed, the researcher relates more with the social learning theory. The researcher sees misbehaviour as a learned behaviour. People learn from the people they interact with on a daily basis. In the case of misbehaviour,

children learn from their associates the 'proper' ways of stealing and the benefit if one is not caught reinforces the behaviour.

According to the researcher, this theory may not work alone in explaining the misbehaviour. The labelling theory is seen as another possible cause of misbehaviour. Giving children names, for example "Usikhotheni" (person who disobeys the law, does not finish his or her academic programme and often disappears from home to stay wherever he or she likes) even if he is not *usikhotheni*, may actually cause that child to behave like one. Because of labelling children form new identities of themselves, and might make them feel like they do not have a conscience. A labelled child will start to hang around children who are misbehaving and possibly learn criminal acts.

## **2.5 PREVALENCE**

### **2.5.1 An increasing phenomenon world wide**

Misbehaving adolescents is a serious problem world wide. The intensity and gravity depends mostly on the social, economical and cultural conditions of each country (Snyder, Espiritu, Huizinga, Loeber & Peterchuk, 2003). In America for an example, current American statistics show that there is an increasing number of young offenders (Snyder *et al.* 2003) between seven (7) and twelve (12). It is believed that adolescent misbehaviour is linked with economic recession, especially in marginalized sections of urban areas. The statistics also show that the behaviour of young people has somehow grown worse over the centuries and significant changes have occurred in the way people define it and react to it.

### **2.5.2 An increasing phenomenon in South Africa**

According to De Wet (2003) adolescent misbehaviour is like a runaway train: reckless, out of control and picking up speed while schools and its surroundings are regarded as danger zones. According to De Wet (2003) learner on learner aggression acts are committed by

boys, however girls are beginning to become increasingly more aggressive, and some even come to school armed. De Wet (2003) suggests that violent crimes such as murder and serious assault are a given in South African schools and violence in schools is a reflection of the society in which adolescents grow up.

### **2.5.3 Prevalence statistics in South Africa**

The scope of crime committed by adolescents is difficult to determine as police statistics do not show the non-reported crimes. The statistics however show that perpetrators of violence are becoming younger by the day because older learners intimidate the younger ones to rebel against authority (De Wet, 2003). According to the S.A. statistics, children younger than thirteen (13) are involved in one out of ten criminal arrests (South African Law Commission, 2000). The National Report (1999) on juvenile offenders and victims showed an increase in youth caseloads by 49 percent between 1987 and 1996, while the population only increased by 11 percent. It is said the number of girls misbehaving has grown by 76 percent, and boys by 42 percent, meaning there is an increase of misbehaving girls though they are not considered to be such a threat as boys. This trend seems to be continuing.

### **2.5.4 Culture and ethnic groups**

About 18 percent of youths who are detained are white, and 71 percent are black (National Report, 1999). Considering the demographics of South Africa, this does not seem strange. In South Africa, the socialization and discipline of children differ from ethnic group to ethnic group. The indigenous groups in South Africa were not greatly influenced by Eurocentric methods of enforcing discipline. In the Zulu African family, male domination is common. The misbehaviour of a boy is regarded as normal as the people would say "Boys will be boys". It is the use of aggression to gain power and dominance that might drive one to misbehave. Many black cultures use severe punishment for misbehaviour, for example locking a child outside at night or severely punishing a child for forgetting to do her/his duties. Most white South Africans when having a misbehaving adolescent, sit down with the child and try to find a solution to the problem. The solution may include counseling or

the involvement of social workers. Among most black South Africans, the problem is viewed from many directions.

If a child is misbehaving, some black cultures believe that the child needs to be reported to the ancestors. The Inyanga (Traditional Doctor) or Isangoma (Witch Doctor) is consulted for advice and later may be called to perform a ritual ceremony for the misbehaving child. In some cases the misbehaving child is severely punished, and might be expelled from the home. At times, the misbehaviour of the child may be regarded as hereditary, for example a child bunks classes and disobeys authority, and the elders would say that he is just like his uncle. His uncle was also behaving the same way as he does and therefore the child is never given any professional help. With changing times, educated Zulu parents can afford to take their children for counseling, but this is not true for all Zulu educated elite.

A large population of Zulu parents cannot afford to take their children for counseling and social workers are not always available, so the only thing they know and believe in is prayer. Through the presence of a pastor parents are usually given counseling. Some parents of misbehaving adolescents believe that through prayer their problems will go away and very often the Bible is used to try and change the mindset of their children.

### **2.5.5 Gender**

From the review of the literature on misbehaviour one could easily assume that females are seldom involved in misbehaviour, as most literature does not include females in their studies and focus on male misbehaviour. Because of this, wrongful deeds have come to be seen as a male phenomenon (National Report on juvenile offenders and victims, 1999). Official as well as unofficial crime information sources indicate that males are significantly more likely than females to commit criminal activities (Bartollas, 1993; Mills, 2001; Newburn, 2003; Snyder *et al.* 2003). According to official records, male youth offenders are more likely to be arrested for serious offences such as the possession of stolen property, vandalism, possession of illegal firearms and assaults, while female youth are likely to be

arrested for female offences such as prostitution, shoplifting and running away from home (Bartollas, 1993).

Emler and Reicher (1995) suggest that males and female do not necessarily engage in different types of offences but there are differences in prevalence. Misbehaving females admit to theft, vandalism and assault, but to a lesser extent than males. Bartollas (1993) believes that males are more likely than females to start offending at an early age and to extend the offending patterns into their adult lives. Because female misbehaviour is outnumbered by the boys in the juvenile system (Newburn, 2003; Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003), and because girls' offences may seem less dangerous to the society, the needs of the girls often go unaddressed. However, more girls are entering the system and some are committing more violent crimes. Therefore, there is a need for programmes for misbehaving females.

### **2.5.6 Age**

An increasing number of misbehaving children are those between the age seven and twelve. According to the latest statistics, children younger than thirteen (13) are involved in almost one in ten juvenile arrests in South Africa (South African Law Commission, 2000). The number of misbehaving children entering the justice system is increasing, as evidenced by the arrest rates and courts caseloads (Snyder *et al.* 2003). Compared with the adolescents who become involved in delinquency, children misbehaving between the ages seven and twelve have a two to three times greater risk of becoming serious violent and chronic offenders (Loeber & Farrington, 2001). It has been found that youthful offenders, who started misbehaving early, commit more serious crimes as compared to those who started late (Steinberg, 1996). For those who started late, the level of misbehaving decreases because they apparently are able to rationalize their acts, yet this is not true for all as some go on to commit serious crimes like murder. According to Siegal and Senna (2000), imprisonment, criminal record, maturity, changes in personality traits and risk factors accompanying crime are some reasons why some youths outgrow criminal activities.



### **2.5.7 High risk groups**

In terms of gender, boys are more at risk of misbehaving than girls because they spend more time outside the home (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003), have greater freedom of movement and engage less in household chores as compared to girls and therefore may become engaged in antisocial activities. There are no definite predictors that indicate exactly which children will engage in misbehaviour. According to Murrell and Lester (1981), Henggeler (1989), National Report (1999) and Newburn, (2003) boys are more at risk, due to gender role definitions in communities, which encourage aggressive behaviour from males and passive, emotional behaviour from girls.

Official records in South Africa show that adolescent misbehaviour is primarily found among lower-socioeconomic status groups (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003; Holman, 1995; Siegal, 2002). Although social conditions are linked to higher rates of adolescent misbehaviour many adolescents growing up in disadvantaged environments manage to avoid misbehaving while some growing up in advantaged environments engage in wrongful activities. Adolescents who are at risk of misbehaving often live in difficult circumstances, like children with parents who are suffering from alcoholism, poverty (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003), breakdown of the family (Van der Westhuizen, 2004), overcrowding (Clifford-Piston, 2001; Thompson & Rudolph, 2000), abusive conditions in the home, the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic, or death of a parent during conflict (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995) and those who do not have other basic necessities.

Another group of individuals who are at risk are the children who suffer from measurable neurological deficits at birth (Siegal, 2003). Adolescents who are mentally challenged are more inclined to be at risk. This could be due to the fact that they do poorly at school and the poor performance in turn, leads to less attachment to school, lower ability to reason thus increasing the likelihood to misbehave.

## 2.6. DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

The following criteria which are used to diagnose the misbehaving youths are the same criteria used to diagnose an antisocial personality disorder (APD). The criteria for the APD, which were simplified from DSM-III-R (1987), tend to emphasize overt behaviours, especially unlawful acts, rather than underlying traits as in psychopathology (Kendall & Hammen, 1995).

A. Current age less than 18 years

B. Evidence of conduct disorder with the onset before age 15.

C. A pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others occurring from the age of 15, as indicated by at least three of the following:

Failure to conform to social norms with respect of lawful behaviour as indicated by repeatedly performing acts that are grounds for arrest.

Irritability and aggressiveness as indicated by repeated physical fights or assaults.

Consistent irresponsibility, as indicated by repeated failure to sustain consistent work behaviour or honor financial obligations.

Impulsivity or failure to plan ahead.

Deceitfulness, as indicated by repeated lying, use of aliases or conning others for personal profit or pleasure.

Reckless disregard for safety of self or others.

Lack of remorse, as indicated by being indifferent to or rationalising having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another.

D. Occurrence of antisocial behaviour is not exclusive during the course of schizophrenia or a manic episode.

Research shows that the prevalence of mental health disorders and substance abuse among youth is greater for misbehaving adolescents than for other youth (Kendell & Hammen, 1995). The above DSM-III R criteria show that misbehaving adolescents may have at least three or almost all characteristics mentioned. Lack of concern for others, hostility and poor personality skills may be the core reason why most adolescents misbehave (Kendall & Hammen, 1995).

## 2.7 THE ONSET OF JUVENILE DELINQUENT/ADOLESCENT MISBEHAVIOUR

Most studies of adolescent misbehaviour in the past have focused on older, serious and violent misbehaving adolescents. There are two types of adolescent misbehaviour i.e. early onset and the late onset, as the figure reveals below:

Figure 2.1 Adolescent misbehaviour (Steinberg, 1996)

<b>Early onset</b>	<b>Late onset</b>
Symptoms occur early in childhood	Symptoms occur in adolescence
Usually affects males	Affects both males and females
Less effective socialisation	Greater understanding of norms and standards
Poor peer relationships	Very influential peer group
Commits more serious and violent crimes	Commits less crime
Later becomes a chronic adult offender	Unlikely to violate laws as an adult
Family in crisis	Permissive family

Early onset misbehaving adolescents are usually males who have a history of aggression and come from a low socio-economic level and are at risk of becoming serious, violent and chronic offenders (Steinberg, 1996). They are more likely, than older misbehaving adolescents, to continue their wrongful deeds for extended periods of time. It is believed that not all very young misbehaving adolescents will become chronic offenders. For the late misbehaving adolescents, peer pressure is likely to be the biggest factor (Regoli & Hewitt, 1997) and they usually come from permissive families in which they are given a lot of

freedom, without highlighting the concurrent responsibility. The development of misbehaviour cannot be viewed as a sudden occurrence, but as a behaviour that was previously ignored or addressed only on an informal basis (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003).

An ecosystemic framework will be used to explore factors possibly contributing to adolescent misbehaviour.

## **2.8 ECOSYSTEMIC THEORY**

The ecosystemic theory of Bronfenbrenner suggests interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). These relationships are seen as a whole. For example, within the society, if there is a breakdown in traditional norms, values and family bonding, conditions conducive to crime will be created which in turn, will affect family, society and even government.

The ecosystemic framework views human beings as evolving, adapting and developing through transactions with all other social aspects of which they are a part (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992). People respond to their surroundings as well as the circumstances surrounding them. This idea is also advocated by Ryan (2001) as he explains the ecosystem as having layers and each having an effect on the individual. The ecosystemic theory is used to better understand the way in which people and the environment influence, shape and change one another. Therefore people are not merely products of their environment but through interaction with it are capable of influence and change. The relevance of this ecosystemic theory would be in developing an understanding of mothers and their adolescents who are misbehaving, by looking at the families and relationships within the family as well as between them and their school and their society.

A family consists of individual members, who shape and are shaped in a continuous process of dynamic tension and adjustment within and outside the family (Donald *et al.* 2002). The family is the most crucial unit in our society. Nearly every person is raised for

some period of time within the family. The earliest and the most important stage of socialisation therefore occurs within the family. The family is largely responsible for instilling social values and beliefs about right and wrong. The problems for some families may be minor while other families may experience greater problems and the impact on the family may be significant. For a family to function properly, it needs to cultivate and preserve its own norms and values (Chevreir, 2005). The changes and conflicts in one layer ripples throughout the other layers of the ecosystem.

The way a mother feels and perceives herself affects her parenting skills. If the mother is unhappy or has marital problems, the children are likely to be affected and tend to seek comfort and pleasure from their peers, as often the mother is too engrossed in her own survival. The influences from their peers and a lack of affection from their parents may cause adolescents to misbehave. The moment the adolescent misbehaves, the mother could start to question her parenting skills. In other words, the way the mother perceives herself will affect the way she treats herself and all her children in the family. In terms of the ecosystemic theory relationships are not seen as taking place in one direction, but reciprocal and occurring in a cycle. The way the mother parents her children, will not only influence her children directly, but they will also have an influence on her, and furthermore over time the cycle is perpetuated, because her children will use her methods of dealing with problems and will probably do the same when they are grown-ups.

To understand the mothers' experiences of having an adolescent who is misbehaving, one should not look only at the mother and her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified four structures of the environment: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The systems theory argues that a child's misbehaviour must be looked at as a whole rather than as an individual component, which can be put together because there are so many factors which may lead to misbehaviour. Similarly, the mothers' parenting must be seen against the backdrop and in the context of her ecosystem.

In the *microsystem*, relationships also work in two directions (Ryan, 2001), both away from the child and towards the child. For example, a child's parents may affect the child's beliefs and behaviour and the child may also affect the behaviour and beliefs of the parent.

In the *mesosystem*, effects are also seen on the child. What happens at home can influence how a child performs at school. If at home there are internal conflicts the child may not perform to her/his best ability and may end up dropping out of school or playing truant. This will cause a child to be seen as misbehaving and will be called 'Usikhotheni' (c.f.2.2.1) and the mother will experience stress.

The *exosystem* includes other systems in which the adolescent is not directly involved, but which may influence or be influenced by the people who have close relationships with the adolescent in the microsystem (Donald *et al.* 2002). Work responsibilities of mothers, for example, may cause the mother to spend less time with her children and leave children unsupervised. As the children are left unsupervised, they have lots of time to engage in wrongful activities. The exosystem can shape people's behaviour by observing others interact and listening to their views. For example it exposes people to what is going on in their society. Young people like to wear designer label clothing, have money to buy things and to go to places where they could have fun with their friends. If the parents cannot afford all the necessities needed in adolescence, the adolescent can easily find other ways of getting money. Adolescents might see people earn fast cash through illegal drug dealing and may get involved in illegal drug dealing in the community.

The last level is the *macrosystem*, the society. This layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, beliefs and laws (Ryan, 2001). The effects of the larger principles underpinning the macrosystem have a ripple effect throughout the interactions of all other layers (Donald *et al.* 2002). If it is a cultural belief of the community that parents should solely be responsible for raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents. Yet society needs to work hand in hand with the family in raising children. The ecosystemic theory is crucial as it illustrates the various systems impacting on the parent and the adolescent and reciprocally how they impact on the systems.

## **2.9 FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO ADOLESCENT MISBEHAVIOUR**

Adolescent misbehaviour is a complex social problem that significantly impacts on all members and processes of a social structure. The consensus among practitioners and researchers, however, is that adolescent misbehaviour is a dynamic multifaceted problem with numerous potentially causal factors (Holman, 1995; Mussen, Conger, Kagan & Huston 1990; Redding, 2000).

It is important to understand the factors contributing to adolescent misbehaviour so that steps can be taken to correct these causal factors. It must be emphasised that it is difficult to verify that a particular characteristic or factor will always lead to adolescent misbehaviour (Anderson & Stavrou, 2001; Holman, 1995) and the presence of risk factors often increase the chances of misbehaviour. The uniqueness of the adolescent as well as the context should be considered, since adolescent behaviour is complex and can develop in response to a wide range of influences. The following factors may be regarded as the contributory factors to adolescent misbehaviour:

- Factors within the individual
- Factors within the family
- Factors within the school
- Factors relating to the peer group
- Factors within the community

Considering the focus of the research, the above will be discussed as they play a role in the misbehaviour of the adolescent, but the family and parenting of the mother, is key.

### **2.9.1 Factors within the individual**

The period of childhood is highly important considering a child's unique physical, emotional, mental and social development. Adolescents undergo some serious changes, which have

an enormous impact on their personalities. Some individual factors that may contribute to misbehaviour are the following:

#### **2.9.1.1 Biological and genetic factors**

According to Mussen *et al.* (1990) adolescents who are misbehaving are more closely related to the behaviour of their parents. This suggests that genetic factors may play some indirect role in an individual's capability to engage in misbehaviour. It has been found that some adolescents show evidence of maturational lag in the development of their frontal lobe system of the brain which can result in misbehaviour (Rice, 1992), meaning that organic or biological factors can directly and indirectly influence one to misbehave.

#### **2.9.1.2 Psychological factors**

According to Nethavhani (2002) personality traits alone do not account for misbehaviour, but in relation to one another and other factors, personality traits may contribute to misbehaviour. Freud's psychoanalytic theory shows that the mind is structured in terms of three major provinces, namely the Id, the ego and the superego (Kendall & Hammen, 1995). When the three are unbalanced, internal conflict actualises as misbehaviour, which is then seen as a symptom of inner maladjustment. According to Sue, Sue and Sue (1994), Freud interprets antisocial behaviour and misbehaviour as symptoms underlying anxiety. They argue that conflict results from inadequate relationship with the parents. It is believed that, if parents offer a child little affection, conflict develops and the superego does not develop adequately (Sue *et al.* 1994). Studies show that no single personality trait can be associated with misbehavior (Nethavhani, 2002), but it is known that those who are misbehaving are likely to be assertive, defiant, ambivalent to authority and resentful (Rice, 1992; Steinberg, 1996).



### **2.9.1.3 Neurophysiologic factors**

Neurological and physical abnormalities are acquired during the prenatal stage (Siegal, 2003). Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) say research findings indicate a significant relationship between aggressive behaviour and impairment in executive brain functions, such as problem-solving skills. Children who suffer from measurable neurological deficits at birth are more likely to become criminals later in life (Siegal, 2003).

### **2.9.2 Factors within the family**

The South African Law Commission (2002) maintains that South African law has no single definition of the family and the traditional nuclear family does not reflect the reality of South African society. The family in South African society may be any person/s who are legally considered family and whom the young person perceives to be family. The family may refer to parents, extended family or a tribe. It is within the family that a child internalizes basic beliefs, values, attributes and general patterns of behaviour that give direction to certain behaviour. To a child, home and family are the basic sources of information about life. The family has come to be regarded as the cornerstone of the society. Therefore the family context could be a contributory factor to adolescent misbehaviour. According to Tlhoaela (2003) the family environment into which a child is born may exert a strong and long-lasting influence over the child's development and future life chances. The nature of family circumstances in which the child is being brought up may influence him either positively or negatively, depending on what he went through during his development. One common problem related to families is adolescent misbehaviour (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003; Regoli & Hewitt, 1997; Scholte, 1992).

Family variables such as family size, broken homes, family disruption, poor communication, poor role models, abuse within the family, marital disharmony, extreme discipline, social class and unemployment status of parents impact on adolescent behaviour (Holman, 1995; Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1990; Siegal, 2002; Singh, 2003). In other words the family setting

is an important factor influencing misbehaviour.

### **2.9.2.1 Family transaction**

It is generally acknowledged that the family is the most important system in the ecosystemic framework influencing the individual. As such, family transaction has been assumed to play a crucial role in the development and maintenance of adolescent behaviour problems. Geismar and Wood (1986) as well as Svensson (2000) maintain that a connection exists between disturbed family situations and adolescents' behaviour. Seeing that the study focuses on the experiences of Zulu African mothers and misbehaving adolescents, the Zulu family will be explored.

### **2.9.2.2 The Zulu African family**

In the Zulu African family, the mother is expected to stay at home as a fulltime nurturer and socialize the children (Van der Westhuizen, 2004) while the father is out working. The fact that fathers are often away working does not necessarily mean they do not want to be part of their child's/children's development. The culture of the Zulu people sees the father as the provider of food and other necessities and the mother as the one responsible for raising the children. According to Hirschi (1969) adolescents whose mothers are housewives have the lowest rate of delinquency. This could mean mothers who are not employed spend more time directly supervising their children's activities and behavior than those who are working.

Today it is apparent that the typical African family no longer exists. In some families mothers are absent as a result of work responsibilities. A vast number of mothers work outside their homes. Geismar and Wood (1986) discuss the notion of working mothers as a contributory factor to adolescent misbehaviour. Some mothers work far away from home and therefore spend many hours on the road traveling and others may stay where they work and come back home only on weekends or month ends. Due to the fact that mothers

have to work, they have less time to spend with their children, and therefore have less influence over them.

This situation leaves children on their own unsupervised making them to think that they may do whatever they wish because their parents do not see them. If children are left unsupervised or without proper supervision (Redding, 2000), it is likely that they may end up making wrong choices of friends and becoming involved in wrongful activities. Poor supervision during pre-adolescence has been shown to have a long term effect on adolescent misbehaviour. Children who are inadequately supervised are at great risk of misbehaving and they often resort to groups outside the family and in most cases these groups are of deviant nature. Regoli and Hewitt (1997) refer to children in these situations elsewhere in the world as "latchkey children". They define latchkey children as children who regularly care for themselves without adult supervision after school.

This has become a similar South African scenario, but also a common practice among the Zulu African families as children are often left alone without the supervision of an adult. These youths are often left to fend for themselves before going to school in the morning, after school in the afternoon, and during school holidays when parents are working or are otherwise occupied. The majority of the latchkey children become involved in illegal activities without their parents' knowledge. This notion is also advocated by Hirschi (1969) who found that the incidence of misbehaviour increased with the number of hours mothers were employed outside the home. Svensson (2000) reported that a lack of parental monitoring plays an important role in the prediction of drug use behaviour among adolescents. As a result the quantity and quality of care is seen as contributing to an adolescent misbehaving (Anderson & Stavrou, 2001).

### **2.9.2.3 Democracy within the family**

Another factor that has been related to adolescent misbehaviour is democracy within the family, with each family member having an equal position in family decision-making

(Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995). Too often parents give their children decision-making power as part of the children's rights to individual freedom. The problem is when such rights are encouraged without emphasizing personal responsibility and social consciousness. The lack of a strong authority figure within the family and greater permissiveness are key contributors to misbehaviour. Nonetheless, the presence of a capable mother who is self-confident and affectionate and who has leadership skills provides a buffer against misbehaviour (Wright & Wright, 1995).

In the traditional Zulu family there is no democracy in the family. The father is the head of the family and whatever he says goes without anyone questioning his authority. The mother is supposed to support the father in his decision-making, whether she agrees or not. The mother and the children have no say in the smooth running of the family matters. Male dominance is common and acceptable among the Zulu families. Boys are treated in a superior manner to girls. They are given power as a way of preparing them to be real men and are expected to behave in such a manner. Because of education, there is a change as wives and children are beginning to be given a voice. One would like to argue that in the case of a Zulu family the traditional authoritarian role change to a more democratic one, could cause confusion in the child and create an atmosphere conducive to misbehaviour.

#### **2.9.2.4 Internal conflict**

Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1995) point out that a family unit that is physically intact but characterized by internal conflict and tension may also contribute to misbehaviour. There are many types of family conflicts but two stand out from the rest. The two are the absence of communication and the inability to solve problems (Empey, 1982; Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1990; Redding, 2000). This in turn increases stress and conflict levels within the family leading to more instances of deviant behaviour (Smith & Stern, 1997). Misbehaviour by youth is also closely related to emotional stress and high levels of tension in the family environment (Smith & Stern, 1997). In some families, one adult undermines the efforts of another adult to set limits on a child's behaviour. Often one of the adults, usually a parent, is harsh and the other parent disagrees with the harshness and punishment approach. As a

child grows older in a family in which the adults are inconsistent, she or he can often manipulate the parents to get what s/he wants or to relax the rules.

There is little transparency in the Zulu families. Whenever there is conflict the mother always tries to cover it up and the children are always left out of the loop.

#### **2.9.2.5 Family size and ordinal position in the family**

The family size has been identified as a factor in adolescent misbehaviour. Holman (1995) agrees that children from large families are more prone to misbehave, since the parents with five, six or even more children find it difficult to give their children enough attention and to control them. Studies show that misbehaving adolescents are more likely to come from large families. Parents with many children should not be alarmed since it does not necessarily imply that all children from such families misbehave.

The ordinal position of a child in a family has a great effect on his/her eventual personality (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998) and the possibility of him/her misbehaving. The evidence points to middle children being overrepresented in the misbehaving population (Empey, 1982) and also that youngest siblings are more likely to misbehave (Bartollas, 1993). However, Geismar and Wood (1986) use Haskell and Yablonsky's explanation that in-between children are squeezed out of the family into the gangs because parents tend to give more attention to the oldest and youngest offspring (Bartollas, 1993). However, it is not all the children in the family who may misbehave.

The traditional Zulu family usually consists of plus minus six siblings and the first born is always regarded as the eldest in the true sense of the word, especially if he is a boy. The focus is mainly on the first born and the last born. The ones in the middle often do not receive enough attention from their parents which often gives them time to seek attention outside the home, whilst the eldest one normally takes care of all siblings, but this sometimes presents a problem because they are not yet equipped to execute adult tasks. The last born is often spoilt and overprotected. He is not usually disciplined and can get

away with anything. So it is easy for both the first born and the last born to misuse the love, attention they get from their parents.

#### **2.9.2.6 Incomplete family**

According to Anderson and Stavrou (2001), an incomplete family refers to the absence of the father or mother, due to a variety of circumstances. Such incompleteness will have different influences on the children involved. In some households, mothers and fathers are absent as a result of work responsibilities. Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1990) emphasised the important role the father can play in preventing adolescent misbehaviour by establishing strong and meaningful relationship with his children. The presence of a step-parent may result in relationship problems in adolescents. Adolescents may consider the step-parent as an outsider and disobey their rules and authority. They may also run away from home to live on the street or become involved in criminal activities (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Divorce (Louw *et al.* 1998) and marital separation also leaves families incomplete. The lives and relationships of children and adolescents in divorce families are affected socially, economically, psychologically and legally. Children of divorced parents may be asked to take on the role of the absent parent and to fulfill responsibilities beyond their maturity level. Regoli and Hewitt (1997) say that after divorce, many mothers struggle with demanding children and worry about being rejected by their children in favour of the other parent.

Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1995) point out that loss of either parent through death does not seem to be as harmful for children as loss of a parent through divorce or separation. Studies that have examined the relationship between broken homes and adolescent misbehaviour have consistently noted that misbehaving females are more likely than misbehaving males to come from dysfunctional families. Jersild, Brook, and Brook (1978); Nurco and Lerner (1996) and Thompson and Rudolph (2000) have also found that adolescents from broken homes are more likely to be misbehaving adolescents than adolescents from intact homes, whereas other researchers have reported that the probability of being a misbehaving adolescent is not greater among those coming from homes where both parents are living together.

Incomplete families are common among the Zulu families. It has been mentioned earlier that children are often left alone to fend for themselves because parents are away working. Sometimes a family may be incomplete because of death, divorce or the father never being part of the family in the first place. The father is often not involved in the upbringing of children but provides food and money. The raising of children is seen as the responsibility of the mother. Much has been written about the absence of the father figure and its impact on children's behaviour (Holman, 1995; Siegal, 2002), which also applies to Zulu families.

### **2.9.2.7 Dysfunctional family**

The nature of the relationship within the family has been explored extensively for its possible association with adolescent misbehaviour. There are differing opinions in this regard. The [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org) (Risk and protective factors for youth violence fact sheet retrieved from [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org) on 10 Oct 2007) reported that one third of their misbehaving sample came from homes with spousal conflict, compared to 15% of the non-delinquent population. Marital violence is often prominent in these families. Studies show that misbehaving adolescents seem to come from unhappy homes marked by marital discord, lack of family communication, unaffectionate parents, high levels of stress and tension and a general lack of parental cohesiveness and solidarity (Holman, 1995; Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1990; Louw, *et al.* 1998; Siegal, 2002; Regoli & Hewitt, 1997).

When the family is broken by death, divorce or loss, the normal process of the family is usually disturbed and children usually suffer the most, as they must learn to adapt to a new lifestyle (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Since it is usually assumed that the presence of both parents is important to the development of a well adjusted child, broken homes are believed to contribute to crime and adolescent misbehaviour. It is important to note that it is not only the absence of a parent per se that is associated with adolescent misbehaviour but the kind of relationship that exists between children and parents (Tlhoale, 2003).

High levels of family dysfunction are found in families in which there is physical or emotional abuse between partners; parental mental illness or abuse of alcohol or other drugs; physical or sexual abuse of children; or neglect of children's physical, emotional, and medical needs. Interactions within these families do not provide opportunities for children to develop a sense of connectedness to others or control over their fate in life. Children from severely dysfunctional families are disproportionately represented among runaway youth, particularly those who frequently run away and remain away from home for long periods of time (Simons & Whitbeck, 1991); homeless youth (Mundy, Robertson, Robertson & Greenblatt, 1990); youth with severe substance abuse problems (Beman, 1995; Bilchik, 1998; Holden, 1997); and youth who exhibit high levels of depression and anxiety, (Sue, Sue & Sue, 1994).

There are many dysfunctional families among the Zulus, making it impossible to discipline children as at times the parents themselves show no respect towards each other and need discipline. Different forms of domestic violence are also often experienced in traditional Zulu African families, such as physical assault and emotional abuse. In many instances women let men get away with this behaviour because they were taught to respect the male and to be submissive, no matter what. Since families are the primary source of socialisation (Holman, 1995), children learn and identify with the norms and values practiced by their families. So children growing up in such families are greatly affected by witnessing violence and may even end up imitating what they see in their families, and may get involved in violent activities thinking that that is normal.

#### **2.9.2.8 Economic status**

According to Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003), economic strain and deprivation are universally accepted as a factor that contributes to adolescent misbehaviour. However, it is not poverty per se that contributes to crime, but how people experience their financial situation within their social environment. Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) and Farrington (1991) say it is commonly accepted that a child will be involved in criminal activities if he/she comes from a poverty-stricken family in which the parents are unable to provide for



their basic needs. Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) as well as Shoemaker (1996) are furthermore of the opinion that overcrowded living arrangements (Nurco & Lerner, 1996) due to economic deprivation could lead to lack of privacy and irritation with one another which could make children wander to the streets. As a result of this many children may land in bad company.

According to Scholte (1992) individuals turn to crime in order to alleviate their economic situation or to express dissatisfaction with the political and social order of the day. While most evidence suggest that youths from all social classes may misbehave, many maintain that many misbehaving adolescents grow up in lower social class areas (Holman, 1995; Characteristics of juvenile offenders, retrieved from [www.marshall.edu](http://www.marshall.edu) on 03 Sept 2007).

Most of the children who come from poor Zulu families possibly steal because they want to better their lives while others steal because they want to help improve the conditions in their families. It needs to be noted that most of the Zulu children who are misbehaving come from the lower social class where food is a priority as opposed to discipline. So disciplining these children is usually the last thing on the minds of their poor parents.

### **2.9.2.9 Parental control**

Recent studies have concluded that the level of parental control is related to adolescent misbehaviour. Wells and Rankin (1988) found that direct control of adolescents' behaviour in the form of setting rules, monitoring the youth's activities, and punishing them for violating the rules, were related to involvement in misbehaviour. Sue *et al.* (1994) believe that antisocial behaviour is the result of parents' failure to effectively punish misbehaviour. The disciplinary role of the father is more closely related to misbehaviour than is that of the mother. Researchers (Van der Westhuizen, 2004; Wells & Rankin, 1988) have examined inadequate parental discipline as a factor in misbehaviour and have found that when parents physically punish their children or threaten them, the result may be aggressive behaviour on the part of the children.

The only person in the traditional Zulu family who makes the rules is the father and everybody else does as told. If a child is found not to be following the rules set in the family, corporal punishment is used. The child may choose to run away from home or be more defiant. The mother is seen as not having strong parental control even when she is serious, she is not usually taken seriously by the children. So with the father always away working, the children are often likely to misbehave.

### **2.9.2.10 Parenting skills or styles**

Goldstein and Mather (1998) acknowledge that all parents have great hopes for their children, that they will enjoy learning, perform well at school, behave appropriately, and grow up feeling confident and self-assured. Parents expect only the best and the impact of a child who is misbehaving can result in an array of emotional responses from the parent.

According to Van der Westhuizen (2004) the parents of chronic misbehavers do not only know how to be good parents to their children but also they often do not care. Many have no or little affection for their children. They get angry if their children get into trouble. Over time parent-child conflict may escalate and the relationship between parent and the child may become more distant (Regoli & Hewitt, 1997).

Regoli and Hewitt (1997) have identified two styles of parenting, enmeshed and lax, that characterise families with misbehaving adolescents. Parents who exercise the enmeshed style are overly inclusive in what they define as misbehaviour. Parents, who exercise a lax style on the other hand, tend to be very under inclusive in what they define as antisocial behaviour (Regoli & Hewitt, 1997) and both have been linked with misbehaviour in many, large scale studies.

### **2.9.2.11 Parental rejection**

A number of researchers have found a relationship between parent rejection and adolescent misbehaviour. McCord, in Kratcoski & Kratcoski (1995) found that sons who are rejected by parents frequently exhibit aggressive behaviour. Glueck and Glueck (1994) reported a relationship between hostile rejecting fathers and misbehaviour in their children. They said the absence of the father or the father's unwillingness or inability to spend time with the child is a contributory factor. The role of the father is important in that it can prevent misbehaviour (Rice, 1992, Svensson, 2000). This opinion is also held by Rice (1992), that children who are troublesome are more likely to be rejected by their parents, thus creating cycle that may lead to more delinquent acts. Children who are emotionally attached to their parents will generally respect their parents' wishes and stay out of trouble. Rankin and Kern (1994) as well as Regoli and Hewitt (1997) are of the opinion that children least likely to misbehave are those who feel loved, identify with their parents and respect their parents' wishes. Some Zulu families reject their children once they realise that they are misbehaving and some even chase them away while others assist the children by arranging for them to be seen by the Isangoma.

Because parents are not always at home, the school then serves primarily as a means of social control as it keeps the larger population of young people off the street. Though the school assists the family in developing a good responsible citizen there also could be some problems within the school that may cause an adolescent to misbehave.

### **2.9.3 FACTORS WITHIN THE SCHOOL**

Lack of school success together with an inability to adjust to the school programmes is associated with misbehaviour (Rice, 1992). The school is the first institution entrusted with the care of a child away from the family and provides another socialization setting (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995). Some schools do not only fail to prevent adolescent misbehaviour amongst their learners but the way in which the school is organized positively promotes anti-authority attitudes and hence produces misbehaving learners.

### **2.9.3.1 Discipline**

Within the school environment, enforcement of discipline (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003) is recognized as a pressing problem and that the lack of discipline in some schools is a common problem. Learner apathy (Kratcoski & Kratcoski; 1995) is another problem with learners viewing school as a place where they go to pass time and they lack motivation to achieve.

Schools in most townships are sites of violence, vandalism, rape and assault (De Wet, 2003) and they reflect and produce the power relations within the male dominated society. Acts of violence are accepted and learners take violence into schools, so if it happens at school they are not surprised. Rules are set in schools but they are hardly followed. Many young educators are being employed, making it hard for them to discipline learners as they are seen as peers by the learners.

### **2.9.3.2 Fear of social failure**

The fear of social failure is another factor causing many youths to withdraw from school through truancy and disassociating themselves from the socially successful learners through drugs and alcohol. Those learners who have low social standing in schools have little to lose by misbehaving, in contrast to socially successful learners, who have a lot to lose if they misbehave. (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995).

### **2.9.3.3 Academic failure**

Learners who are not committed to academic success are more likely to misbehave (Hirschi, 1969). The continued emphasis of "going to varsity" (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995) as a definition of high school success may also serve as a stimuli to the behaviour of those who have little hope of achieving this status. Adolescents in most townships are not

motivated. They do not care about going to university; all they want is an easy life, and if necessary, achieved through stealing. When children experience failure at school they become frustrated and unhappy. The fact that they are unhappy may result in poor attendance, expulsion or they may drop-out of school.

A huge number of adolescents drop-out of school and never drop-in again. The term drop-out has generally been used to describe a person who leaves school without completing his education and is applied to children who drop out of primary, high school, colleges and universities. According to Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1995) one cause of drop-out is being "pushed out" in the sense that learners' unacceptable behaviour is repeatedly punished with suspension, until it reaches a point where expulsion occurs. So when learners are expelled or suspended from school, they are let loose into the community without supervision (Chaiken, 2000) because many parents are at work. This in itself creates opportunity for many of these learners to become involved in criminal activities. The adolescent school drop-out is less likely to secure employment and more likely to engage in misbehaviour than youth who remain in school. If the school fails to involve the adolescent in the school programme it means that the school contributes to misbehaviour via truancy (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995; Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003).

#### **2.9.3.4 Self- perceived ability**

Self-perceived ability is important in thinking about the causes of adolescent misbehaviour. An adolescent who sees himself as capable of doing well in school would find school tolerable and relevant to his future regardless of his ability. The more competent the adolescent thinks he is the less likely he is to misbehave.

Youths from a poor context are more likely to have many frustrating experiences at school, such as being unable to pay school fees, the constant reminder that one has not paid school fees, and not having the right school uniform. These experiences contribute not only to his failure at school but also to the development of a negative self-image, which could

contribute to choosing to engage in crime and associate with those on the wrong side of the law (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995).

Adolescents who drop out of school and related extra-curricular activities limit their opportunities to learn social skills, which are important to self-concept formation and for successful transition to adulthood. The absence of these social skills and personal competence may contribute to misbehaviour (Newcomb, 1987).

#### **2.9.4. Factors relating to the peers**

At school youths are together and interact primarily with people their own age, forming their own subculture with language, symbols and values different from those of adults. Regoli and Hewitt (1997) and Abbot, Hill, Catalano and Hawkins (2000) are of the opinion that poor relations between young people and their parents open doors to peer pressure and bad company. The poor relations may be caused by differences in music, clothing style and social activities. As part of the process of wanting to be accepted and to feel valued, many adolescents turn to wrongful activities exposed to them by their peers. Children are prone to peer-group pressure, which may lead to their involvement in misconduct. However, where the family atmosphere is supportive and does not press for achievement, adolescents tend to use their peer group as a source of emotional support, without a strong need to conform to group pressure (Rice, 1992). But those who are being pushed out or rejected by their families turn to other misbehaving adolescents as a way of meeting needs not fulfilled by their families.

The need to be popular produces misbehaving adolescents, as misbehaving is seen as a way of having fun and passing time. Those who feel rejected by their family tend to do wrong things in trying to seek the attention of their parents but many end up joining gangs and misbehave, trying to prove to others that they are worth being a member of the group. Gangs are not common in all Zulu communities, but some do exist.

## **2.9.5 Factors relating to the society**

### **2.9.5.1 Urbanisation**

Urbanisation is the movement of individuals from rural areas to urban areas causing the population in towns and cities to grow (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2002). It is internationally accepted that urbanisation of the youth and the accompanying social processes are extremely conducive to crime (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). When urbanisation occurs suddenly and on a large scale, coinciding with a massive influx of young work seekers, ideal conditions for crime are created.

### **2.9.5.2 Availability of alcohol and drugs**

The high level of substance abuse is not the only contributory factor to adolescent misbehaviour but also the existence of criminal activities, for example selling of drugs makes people engage in other criminal activities. Research has shown that substance abuse (De Wet, 2003; Redding, 2000) and criminal activities do not exist in isolation but together with violence and corruption (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Adolescents in need of income usually are easily influenced. Any immediate income generating activity seems worthwhile no matter how they get it (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). Many adolescents do not start drinking or abusing alcohol with the intention to get addicted but they do it out of curiosity. According to Tlhoale (2003) the initial plan is often to imitate their parents or their peers. Adolescents under the influence of drugs often behave in an irresponsible and reckless manner, which may lead to serious crime like rape and assault. Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) state that taking drugs does not turn one into a criminal but it intensifies and perpetuates the misbehaviour. Alcohol causes some changes within a person, for example if one is shy under the influence may be wild, talkative, lack self-awareness, fail to differentiate between right and wrong and even fail to think correctly. These changes make it easy for anyone under the influence of alcohol to be encouraged to engage in criminal activities.

### **2.9.5.3 Normlessness**

Changes in the society means that people change the way they do things. Things which were once important and which held the community together are forgotten. This leads to a society of normlessness. In the traditional black communities, it was only the elders who had a say in the issues affecting the community, but with the transformation brought about by democracy, everyone has a voice and social control is weakened. The weakening of the social control makes it easy for people to commit crimes. During the 1980s people would commit criminal acts and hide behind politics. As a result of this some people still regard vandalism, stealing, and violence as part of their daily living, something which is difficult to change.

### **2.9.5.4 Climate of violence**

As a result of political instability in South Africa, the crime rate has increased. Research has shown that children growing up in an extreme violent environment and in a culture of survival are more likely to internalise violent acts (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003:58) as part of their everyday living. For example, when learners are dissatisfied about a certain issue within the school, it is easy for them to vandalise the school because they think it is the way things need to be done as it was acceptable during the days of the apartheid regime. Again due to the issue of human rights and democracy many black communities have lost their moral foundations.

Serious criminal offences committed by adolescents include crimes against life and against the physical integrity of the individual (De Wet, 2003). In schools, older learners intimidate younger ones to rebel against authority by bullying them. The bullying of one learner by another may even result in victims committing crimes in seeking revenge. According to De Wet (2003) it appears that violence among the adolescents is a survival mechanism, as a result many educators even experience their place of work as dangerous.



## **2.10 PARENTS (MOTHERS) AND PARENTING MISBEHAVING ADOLESCENTS**

Martin and Corbeck (1997), regard parenting as a process that involves adults giving birth to, protecting, nurturing and guiding the child. It is regarded as the experience that changes people's lives. Scozion (1995) is of the opinion that parenting is a lifetime occupation and commitment and that the aim of parenting is to develop a child from a helpless and dependent infant to a strong, independent and resilient person. Clifford-Piston (2001) asks how and where one learns to be a parent and where instincts for parenting come from. When one becomes a parent, there are roles that a parent needs to assume in order to ensure that the child being raised becomes a responsible adult. Such roles are prescribed by the society.

The society has expected roles for mothers (Holden, 1997), while society and parents usually have expectations regarding how their children should behave towards others, most especially to adults. In this regard different cultures have some similar but also some different expectations. Within the Zulu society, a child remains a child of the parent until death. One can get married and have children of his own but will still be seen as a child and would be expected to consult parents whenever certain decisions have to be taken. In Western communities the child is usually helped along to become independent in order to live his or her own adult life. In the Zulu culture one should never disown a child as it is believed it would bring bad luck on his way.

Being a mother is a process that is influenced by a variety of factors in determining the success or failure of parenting. Such factors may be the age of the mother (Louw *et al.* 1998) as parenting requires a sense of maturing from the parent. Martin and Corbeck (1997) add that the socio-economic status of the family influences parenting. The family's socio-economic status is seen through the parents' education, income and occupation. The link here is in the varying financial resources and the way adolescents are brought up.

Poverty, for example, creates a high risk context for parenting because of low income, poor housing, high level of daily stress and lack of employment opportunities.

The parent's own experiences as a child and as an adult will also influence how the parent's role is executed. If the parent was neglected as a child, she is more likely to be neglecting her children. Furthermore, if parents are demoralized, it will be difficult for them to take up a role of parenting. Famularo, Kinscherrff, Fenton and Bolduc (1990), suggest that parental style contributes significantly to later delinquent behaviour.

## **2.11 THE MANAGEMENT OF MISBEHAVIOUR**

Healthy morals and values of a healthy society is the first line of prevention of misbehaviour, and managing adolescent misbehaviour is also an essential part of crime prevention in society. The management of adolescent misbehaviour requires effort on the part of the entire family, school or education institutions and society to ensure the optimal development of the individual.

### **2.11.1 Individual**

Once a child is identified as misbehaving, there are ways of addressing the problem. One way of dealing with the problem is training tailored to meet the identified needs of the individual adolescent, reinforcing and internalizing positive individual traits such as discipline, trustworthiness, self-respect, responsibility and good citizenship (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003). This can be achieved by an educational psychologist, but programmes in and out of school could be used to focus on skill development and to provide an adolescent with insight regarding his or her own feelings, and an accepting and empathic relationship in which an adolescent can mature (Henggeler, 1989).

Adolescents could be taught problem-solving skills while still attending school as well as social skills (Redding, 2000). Social skills training is another way of helping misbehaving adolescents deal with their behaviour. The social skills training may include, for example,

anger management training or interpersonal skills training. In this type of training, adolescents are usually given a scenario containing a conflict situation, and then are asked to describe the behaviour needed to deal with the situation effectively. The use of social skills programmes is necessary because it is believed that misbehaving adolescents are deficient in social skills (Redding, 2000). Problem solving skills training is used based on the assumption that problem behaviour has resulted from a deficit in cognitive processing and verbal mediation skills (Henggeler, 1989). This training is used to enhance the misbehaving adolescent's self control and social responsibility.

Other programmes, such as enrichment projects, aim to empower young people to develop in their community in a safe, secure and structured environment through strengthening the links between the youth, parents, educators and the wider community (Henggeler, 1989).

### **2.11.2 Family**

It has been acknowledged that there is a relationship between the family and adolescent misbehaviour. As a consequence of this recognition, family-based treatment models have been developed. Functional family therapy and behavioural parent training were developed to educate the parents on how to take charge of their lives and to accept the responsibilities of parenting. Furthermore, functional family therapy is a family based prevention and intervention programme for children and youths who are at risk or who are already involved with the justice system (Anderson & Stavrou, 2001). The purpose of the therapy is to develop the family members' inner strengths and a sense of being able to improve their lives. The model includes specific phases: engagement/motivation, behaviour change and generalization. The behaviour change phase aims at reducing and eliminating the problem behaviours (Redding, 2000) and accompanying family relational patterns through individualized behaviour change interventions (Alexander & Sextor, 2002). The behaviour change intervention includes things such as skills training for family communication, parenting, problem-solving and conflict management.

Behavioural parent training may be used to assist parents in developing child management techniques to reduce the risk of poor family management practices and early aggressive behaviour and conduct problems. It is aimed at teaching parents how to set clear expectations for their children's behaviour, monitor behaviour, reinforce positive behaviour, provide consequences for inappropriate behaviour and improve interaction to promote a child's bonding within the family context (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003).

In African townships none of the above programmes exist and parents have to rely on the informal support of the community.

### **2.11.3 Peer group intervention**

There is enough evidence that peer group influence is a powerful predictor of adolescent misbehaviour (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003), so programmes that encourage friendship with peers who will have a positive influence, can be viewed as a primary way of preventing adolescent misbehaviour. Peer group counseling is used, which at times consists of discussions aimed at confronting and censuring negative behaviour and supporting and reinforcing positive behaviour. The emphasis in peer group counseling is on honesty regarding one's misbehaviour and assuming responsibility for one's actions, caring and helping each other cope with difficulties. The group is usually facilitated by an adult, who shapes the direction of the group discussion.

The basic aim of the above-mentioned interventions is to decrease adolescent association with deviant behaviour (Redding, 2000), improve school performance and also develop support network. It remains to be noted that there is no single magic bullet for the management of misbehaviour. A combination of interventions, tailored to youths' individual needs would be the most effective.

#### **2.11.4 School**

Inclusive Education, introduced in South Africa in 2001, sees misbehaving children as the concern of the whole school (DoE, 2001) and with the help of education support systems educators should be assisted in dealing with misbehaving children in their schools. School management and educators play an important role in the prevention of adolescent misbehaviour. Educators have close contact with the adolescents at school and this puts them in a better position to identify learners who are having problems. Through the use of Teacher Support Teams (at school), learners experiencing problems could be assisted and referred to social services for further help. Smaller schools and those with more teachers per learner have higher student achievement and provide a more structured and orderly environment than larger schools do (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Lee & Smith, 1995), and ought to benefit a misbehaving adolescent.

The inclusion of life skills training in school curricula (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003) help adolescents learn how to resolve conflict, to trust and to earn trust, to communicate and to negotiate fair solutions. Life Orientation, a compulsory learning area, in all schools is to be taken seriously as learners are afforded an opportunity to speak about issues concerning them. Participating in school activities also reduces involvement in misbehaviour, and does not only provide alternatives to misbehaviour, but it also assists adolescents to develop values such as teamwork, fairness and cooperation (Stevens & Cloete, 1996).

#### **2.11.5 Community**

Lack of community involvement is linked to a range of social problems, including adolescent misbehaviour. The society has a responsibility to assist the family in providing care and protection and to minimize the number of adolescents who roam the streets because they have been expelled. Community programmes could deal with adolescent misbehaviour. Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003), discuss an example of a Community Youth Development (CYD) initiated in the 1990's designed to encourage communities to

engage in their role in the development of adolescents. The CYD provided an approach for addressing adolescents' psychosocial needs and the need to develop competency in life skills, and engage adolescents to work in partnership with adults to create safe and healthy communities (Hughes & Curnan, 2000; Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003).

Community-based treatments are usually found in youth centers where young people come together to discuss issues that are affecting them directly. This takes the form of daily guided group sessions, as it is through a group and its process that one can work out his or her problem (Hughes & Curnan, 2000).

Furthermore, a lack of recreational facilities in the historical disadvantaged communities create a space for the youth to operate in crime. There is however some work being done with adolescents, such as recreational centres which offer basketball programmes and dance classes. The idea that adolescents need to work in partnership with adults has gained grounds even in African townships. Adolescents are included in community development structures where they sit and have input in the development of their community, for instance the Million Men March was designed to engage adolescents on activities of social transformation. Promotion of activities like sports, poetry, debates has become the order of the day in the community to try and keep adolescents away from the wrongful activities. The introduction of structures such as Progressive Youth Alliance, Umsobomvu Youth Fund and Khula finance try to encourage adolescents to venture into business work towards being empowered and given a sense of belonging (Personal communication Mzwamandla Sosibo).

## **2.12 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this chapter addressed a very sensitive topic, that of misbehaving adolescents, the possible causes of the behaviour and some ways of preventing and managing it in all levels of the system. Though one may take the viewpoint that children's destiny depends on what kind of parents their parents really choose to be, every adolescent has to choose who he or she would like to be. Parents, schools and

communities need to assist one another in the development of an adolescent. This places the mothers, as part of the ecosystem described above, and their experiences of parenting the misbehaving adolescent at the centre of the research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

When undertaking any research it is essential to have a clear idea of the lens through which one views the research topic as well as the research design that will be the most appropriate, the methods to collect and analyze the data and represent the findings of the research. The focus of this research is on the experiences of mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving. This chapter will detail the design and methodology that has been adopted for this study.

#### **3.2 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The aim of the research study is to explore and understand the experiences of Zulu African mothers who have adolescents who are misbehaving and who are subsequently in jail or had been in jail, for some misbehaviour, so that guidelines can be generated to support mothers in managing their misbehaving adolescents in order for the adolescent to be fully adjusted.

#### **3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

De Vos (1998) says a good research question is one that can be answered by collecting data and whose answers cannot be foreseen prior to the collection of data. In consideration of the experiences of mothers the following questions will be explored in this study:

- What are the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving?
- What guidelines and strategies can be generated to assist mothers in managing their adolescents who are misbehaving, in order for the adolescents to be better



adjusted?

- What guidelines and strategies can be generated to facilitate adolescents gaining parenting skills at school, in the Life Orientation learning area?

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research refers to research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). It is more concerned about the quality and texture of the experience (Creswell, 1994) and less concerned with the "cause-effect relationships" (Willing, 2001). It is also interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events. The major interest is in meaning (Neuman, 1997), which is how people make sense of their experiences and structures of the world. It takes into account what comes before or what surrounds the focus of the study. Qualitative research shows that some events or behaviours can have a different meaning in different cultures or historical eras (Neuman, 1997).

Qualitative research could be descriptive as in this case, and the researcher is interested in the process of gaining meaning and understanding of mothers' experiences. Basically qualitative research is used to answer the questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant's point of view.

#### **3.4.2 Research design**

Research design is defined by Mouton, in De Vos (2002), as a blue print of how one intends conducting research and the direction the researcher will take (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). This section will focus on the design selected which is qualitative, descriptive, contextual and interpretive, as well as the methodology. Babbie (2001) states that three of

the most common and useful purposes of social research are exploration, description and explanation.

The researcher decided to use the phenomenological approach because this approach aims to understand the meaning of human experience as it is actually lived (Neuman, 1997). Valle (1998) maintains that phenomenology has to do with the day-to-day living of people and further seeks to understand the phenomena in their pure essence, prior to any reflective interpretation. Tesch (1990) concurs that phenomenological research emphasises the individual's subjective experience, as it seeks the individual's perception and meaning of the experience.

The intention is to understand and describe the phenomenon from the point of view of the participants, in this case the mothers. This approach therefore explores the commonalities and uniqueness of the individual experiences.

The approach of phenomenology is characterized by the attitude of openness for whatever is significant for the proper understanding of a phenomenon. In this particular research, the researcher's intention is to explore the experiences of mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving and what it means for them. Phenomenology offers a descriptive analysis of lived experience (Willing, 2001). It tries to understand the experience of an individual as lived by her. It focuses on descriptions of the experience. It is in the light of the above that this approach of inquiry has been selected for the purpose of understanding the mothers' experiences of having a misbehaving adolescent.

### **3.4.3 Methodology**

#### **3.4.3.1 The context**

The participants were all from a township near Durban. They regarded their area as semi-safe meaning it is not too hostile or too safe but that it varies from one section of the township to the other. It is a township with mostly Africans, some Indians also live there. The majority of the inhabitants is working mostly at the factories, and has passed or failed grade 12. There are many educational institutions in the area but few recreational places.

The recreational places that are available are gender biased, for example, soccer fields are found in almost all sections and are usually dominated by boys. The township consists of different types of houses from two rooms to about six rooms. Most of the families in this township are not too poor, but average and are able to live on what they have. Like most townships there is violence, such as domestic violence or assault. The township is under the administration of a ward counselor who works with street committees in bringing development to the people.

### **3.4.3.2 Sample**

Neuman (1997) defines sampling as a process of systematically selecting cases for inclusion in a research project. Selecting a sample rather than studying the whole population is convenient and inexpensive because only a portion of the population is selected. The requirement was to have participants who have had an experience of the phenomenon studied, that is, the topic of research, and that the participants are able to provide a full and sensitive description of the experience.

Babbie (2001) points out that the type of sampling is chosen based on the researcher's knowledge of the participants and the purpose of the study. There are two types of sampling namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Cohen *et al.* 2001), the last also known as the purposive sampling. Using purposive sampling the participants were chosen because of the rich information that they could provide. According to Cohen *et al.* (2001) purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants according to the needs of the study.

The purposive sampling was used in the study because the researcher had knowledge and information of mothers who have adolescents who are misbehaving. The researcher approached them to determine their willingness to participate in the study and share their stories. In a non-probability sampling strategy, a small number of participants are selected. Therefore, participants were interviewed in the study and data was collected until saturated, which happened after ten participants had been interviewed.

The researcher explained to the mothers the purpose of the research as well as their required participation. The mothers read and signed the consent form (See Appendix A). Those who could not write gave verbal consent. None of the mothers knew of the other mothers and each individual interview was done privately. Real names were not used to protect their identity. Table 3.1 below shows the biographical information of the participants.

Table 3.1: Biographical information of the participants

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Mother tongue</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Position of misbehaving child in family</b>
Ma N	54	IsiZulu	Part-time	Married living with husband	5	First born
Ma Eb	47	IsiZulu	yes	Married living with husband	3	Last born
Ma K	50	IsiZulu	yes	Married living with husband	4	Last born
Ma Ndu	52	IsiZulu	no	Married not living with husband	5	Last born
Ma Jo	40	IsiZulu	Part-time	Not married	1	Only child
Ma Nat	48	IsiZulu	yes	Not married	3	First born
Ma Nja	47	IsiZulu	Part-time	Married living with husband	3	First born
Ma Njabulo	44	IsiZulu	yes	Not married	2	First born
Ma Sphokazi	45	IsiZulu	yes	widow	4	Last born
Ma Dorcas	44	IsiZulu	yes	Married not living with husband	3	First born

The ages of the mothers vary between 40 and 54. All use isiZulu as their mother tongue. Six of the mothers are in full time employment; three are working part-time, and one mother is not working at all. She stays at home with her children but her husband is staying at the place of work and comes home on month ends. Of the ten mothers, seven are married and of the seven, four are living with their husbands. Two of the remaining three are not living with their husbands but see them on long week-ends, holidays or month ends because they work far from home. The remaining one is a widow. Out of ten mothers interviewed only three are not married. All mothers, but one, have more than one child. According to the mothers the children who are misbehaving are the first born or the last born.

According to Martin and Corbeck (1997) the economic status of the family is judged through the parent's education, income and occupation. The employment profiles of the participants were checked and the majority of them worked as domestic workers; as a result they fell in a low income bracket. There was only one mother who was not employed by choice as she was a housewife. Only two of the mothers were educated and were employed by the government.

### **3.4.3.3 Data gathering**

The type of data collected in qualitative research needs to be naturalistic (Willing, 2001). This implies that the data should not be categorised, coded, or summarised at the point of collection. In psychological research based on a phenomenological approach the usual purpose of data gathering is to collect descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. The participants need to be directed towards their own experience of the phenomenon. This was achieved through the interview question directing the participant to report her experience (Hatch, 2002).

The interview is the predominant mode of data collection in a qualitative study (De Vos, 2002) and has been turned into written field text through transcribing of the tape recorded interviews in the study. The interview question asked was "*Could you tell me about your*

*experiences of having a misbehaving adolescent?"*

Qualitative research aims to understand the social life of the people and this was achieved through the unstructured interviews to obtain a detailed picture of their experiences. The face to face interview is a flexible technique for gathering accounts of experiences (McLeod, 1996). In this study the participants were interviewed through the use of face to face, unstructured interviews which allowed the participants the freedom to tell their story about their misbehaving child, but also allowed for their emotional responses to be drawn out in the process.

The unstructured interview allowed all the participants to give an account of the particular topic (De Vos, 2002). The researcher usually has questions about a certain topic in mind, but they are open so as to allow the interview to move to the direction that the participant takes it. Probing or following up with questions based on the responses received (Hatch, 2002) allows for clarity. The interviews which were in IsiZulu, were tape recorded, translated and then transcribed.

Through the interview sessions with the researcher as listener and a prober and the participant as a storyteller, participants further constructed meaning of their experiences. The unstructured interview is like an informal conversation, with the emphasis on narrative and experience (Willing, 2001). Participants were encouraged to tell their stories and elaborate on aspects they felt they would like to. The researcher probed and made use of additional questions where necessary in order for the participants to tell their stories. The participants were interviewed more than once. The length of the interview depended on the amount of self-reflection the participant felt comfortable with. Appointments were scheduled with the participants to discuss the initial steps of the research. The participants were notified in advanced about the time and place of the interview. (See Appendix B for the interview schedule)

Furthermore, observational data afforded the researcher the opportunity to gather live data from live situations. This enabled the researcher to see things that might be otherwise

missed. The researcher was observing the facial expression, the tone of voice and the things the participants did as they related their stories. Through this the researcher was able to note the emotions, such as anger or sadness or worry.

#### **3.5.2.4 Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involves the researcher taking a large amount of data collected and reducing it to certain patterns, categories, or themes, and then interpreting the data (Cohen *et al.* 2001). Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning, a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others (Hatch, 2002). According to De Vos (2002) data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Babbie (2001) defines data analysis as a process of making sense of what was collected.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that if there is no new data emerging then data analysis can be stopped. A collection of data is broken down into manageable units, and a process of sequential steps must be followed to assist the researcher in developing a general structural description (Cohen *et al.* 2001:285). For this reason, Tesch's (1990) open coding was used.



The steps are explained below in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Tesch's eight steps of data analysis (Tesch, 1990)

<p>Step 1 : Getting a sense of the whole</p> <p>The researcher reads the transcript more than once in order to familiarize herself and become intimate with the data.</p>
<p>Step 2: Data cleaning</p> <p>The unwanted data is eliminated. The researcher will focus on the relevant data that answers the research questions.</p>
<p>Step 3: Developing the classification system and categories</p> <p>While the researcher rereads the transcripts, ideas on what the participants were trying to say is jotted down in the margins.</p>
<p>Step 4: Coding data material</p> <p>The interviewees' responses are grouped together into categories that bring together similar ideas.</p>
<p>Step 5: Formulation of themes</p> <p>Themes are formulated from the topics within developed categories</p>
<p>Step 6: Cut and paste</p> <p>Topics with similar ideas are cut, sorted and pasted together under the relevant themes</p>
<p>Steps 7: Recording the data on paper</p>
<p>Step 8 :Data verification</p>

The process of data analysis requires the researcher to have an open mind in attempting to format the findings. The researcher broke down data in order to make sense and removed data that did not answer the research questions. The researcher went through the data and immersed herself in it. Similar ideas were identified and grouped together to form certain themes or patterns. The data was than recontextualised against relevant literature.

### **3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA**

Trustworthiness was established by utilizing Guba's model for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of qualitative research. The four criteria for trustworthiness are truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. In this study the experiences of Zulu African mothers are being researched, and it is the account of their experiences that have been studied. The mothers' construction of their experiences is what is important as well as how they see things from their own frame of reference. In this study, the researcher places a certain amount of trust in the data collected as the participants were made to feel at ease throughout the interview, thereby ensuring genuine communication and sharing of their different experiences. The main focus was on mothers' experiences and the meaning they ascribe to their situation, which, as part of a qualitative research study, reflect truth and trustworthiness of the data.

#### **3.5.1 Truth value**

Truth value asks if the researcher has confidence in the truth of the findings based on the research design, participants and context. Truth value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experience as it is lived and perceived by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Truth value will be established since the study will be subject oriented (Krefting, 1991) as mothers' experiences are crucial in understanding their experiences as a whole. In this study the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving were explored. The researcher made use of face-to-face interviews, observations and audio tapes to ensure accuracy of the study. The instruments which were used assisted the researcher in recording and describing exactly what was being said by the participants and not what the researcher thought the participant might be trying to say.

#### **3.5.2 Applicability**

Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or other groups (Krefting, 1991). Through audio-tapes and transcriptions, the

researcher tried to present sufficient descriptive data of the mothers' experiences as lived by them. The results can therefore be placed in other contexts outside the study and applied to other setting or groups (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by other researchers. Each situation will be defined as unique and for that reason the research findings cannot be generalized to other groups.

### **3.5.3 Consistency**

The researcher presents the findings in a way that would show consistency even if the enquiry was to be replicated with the same subjects under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is done by describing mothers' experiences as lived by them. Through the story telling, creation of rapport and trust, it was easy for the participants to give account of their experiences freely without faking data in an attempt to please the researcher. The researcher compared the observations of the research participants, interviews and audio tapes to ensure consistency of the study. Data was collected until saturated and the research process is described in depth.

### **3.5.4 Neutrality**

Neutrality is the basis on which the results are a function of the participants and conditions of research, and not of other biases and motivations (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The qualitative researcher tries to increase the worth of the findings by prolonged contact with the participants. Data, interpretation and outcomes will be rooted in contexts and the participants' living the experience and not the researcher's imagination. The logic that was used for assembly, interpretation and maintaining the neutrality of data will be made clear through the use of themes and sub-categories. Participants are known to the researcher and through observation, information could be verified.

## **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **3.6.1 Informed consent and voluntary involvement**

In this study mothers were contacted personally by the researcher. The aim of the study, as well as the procedure of the research was explained to them. Their role in the study was also set out in the consent letter (See Appendix A) with the emphasis on voluntary participation. Appointments for individual interview sessions were scheduled with mothers who agreed to participate in the study at a time convenient to them. During the first interview with the mothers, the letter of consent was given to them to read, and they were given an opportunity to ask any questions relating to the study before signing.

The consent letter was in IsiZulu since these mothers were Zulu speakers. It was emphasized that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Before the interview proceeded, the researcher briefly explained the question which covered their experiences and the participants were encouraged to speak freely about their experiences regarding their adolescents who are misbehaving. Each participant was given a copy of the consent letter, with the contact details to take with them and an invitation to contact the researcher or supervisor with queries at anytime.

### **3.6.2 Confidentiality and anonymity**

During the initial interview session with the mothers, participants were assured that their identity would not be revealed (that is, it will be withheld from appearing in the study or interview data) and that the information they share would be kept confidential. The interview took place at places comfortable to the mothers (participants). By guaranteeing participants' confidentiality, the probability of more cooperation, openness and honest responses was increased.

## **3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A major limitation in the study was the language issue. The mothers who were interviewed

were all Zulu speakers and the dissertation had to be presented in English which is the second language for both the researcher and the participants. The translation into English was done and consumed a lot of time.

Although one may argue that giving participants a chance to give an account of their experiences or stories freely is an excellent method of collecting data, however, in the work done by Creswell (2002), the author concurs with Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) opinion that participants could fake data, relating only positive stories with happy endings. Nonetheless the study relies on self reported information by the participants.

Some mothers refused to participate in the study due to its sensitive nature, and some were not available due to personal commitments. The researcher failed to have the second contact with some of the mothers because their sons were unwilling to let their mothers talk about them.

There was insufficient literature on the topic being studied, from which I could draw.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an exposition of how the research was conducted. It dealt with the nature of the study, research design, sampling method, data collection method and data analysis. The next chapter will present the findings from the data collected through face-to-face interviews, recorded on audio-tapes, translated into English and transcribed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study was to explore and understand the experiences of African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving in urban townships in Durban. In chapter two the researcher conducted a literature study regarding adolescent misbehaviour and parenting with regard to factors contributing to adolescent misbehaviour (juvenile delinquency). This is used to recontextualise the findings in chapter four. In this chapter, the researcher provides a detailed discussion of the results of the data analysis, providing supporting evidence from the transcribed interviews. The tabulated results of the data analysis are firstly presented, followed by a more detailed discussion of the four themes that emerged.

#### **4. 2 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS**

The researcher started the analysis by familiarizing herself with the data and unwanted data was eliminated. The focus was only on relevant data that answered the research questions. Similar responses were then grouped together into themes making four themes which brought together similar ideas. Under each theme categories were formulated (Refer to Table 4.1). Supporting quotations are first written in isiZulu followed by an English translation of it.

**Table 4.1 Experiences of mothers raising adolescents who are misbehaving**

Theme	Categories
1. Perception of self as a mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a desperate mother</li> <li>• doubting own mothering/ parenting ability</li> </ul>
2. Worrisome thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anticipating involvement in criminal acts in the community</li> <li>• concern about the future of the adolescent</li> </ul>
3. Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• spiritual support</li> <li>• support from extended family</li> <li>• support from school</li> <li>• community support</li> </ul>
4. Possible solutions suggested by mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communication in family</li> <li>• transparency in family</li> <li>• support for mothers</li> <li>• support for adolescents</li> <li>• involvement of the father</li> <li>• support from the extended family</li> <li>• support from the school</li> </ul>

Mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving have a story to tell regarding their experiences in relation to their children's behaviour. The experiences of these mothers are not the same for all of them but some are common to all of them. The following discussion presents the results of the analysis depicted by the mothers of misbehaving adolescents. The chapter concludes with a summary of the analysis.

#### 4.2.1 Theme 1: Perception of self as a mother

Positive parenting appears to act as a buffer in preventing adolescent misbehaviour (Wright & Wright, 1995), yet some mothers seem to have gone past the stage of using positive parenting and are feeling *desperate* not knowing what else to do. From the results it became clear that they were at a stage where they did not know what to do or who to turn to for help. They wanted to do the right thing, but the more they tried the more their children were misbehaving. They could see that their adolescents were not behaving in an acceptable manner and were willing to do anything for their children but they were at a loss as to what action to take. This is expressed in the following quotations:

*“Besengixakekile ngingasazi ukuthi kumele ngenzeni”*  
*(“I was so desperate and I didn’t know what to do”)*

Some expressed feelings of desperation and helplessness as they thought that the behaviour of their boys was so bad and nothing they could do or say would ever change them. Some mothers accepted their inability to help, as is supported by the following quotation:

*“Indlela ayiyona njengamanje angeke ngikwazi ukumsiza”*  
*(“The way he is now I cannot help him at all”).*

It is also clear that the mothers’ feelings of helplessness were reinforced by the refusal of their boys to accept help:

*“Uhlale engitshela ukuthi angeke ngimphilele impilo yakhe njengoba naye engangiphileli eyami”.*  
*(“He always tells me that I cannot live his life just like he cannot live mine”).*

The feeling of desperation is coupled with feelings of *doubting their mothering and parenting ability*. Most mothers reported experiencing feelings of self-blame and doubted their parenting ability. Some mothers did not adjust very well to having to accept that their adolescents are misbehaving and felt guilty when they thought they might have caused the



misbehaviour of their children. They blamed themselves for not being good mothers to their children even though they said they had done their best and tried all possible means to keep the adolescent on the right track. It seems as if they identify with their children and perceive them as an extension of themselves; as a result they felt they too were failures, as parents. They said they were not sure if they were doing the right thing and making the right choices. Mothers reported experiencing feelings of guilt which led to self blame, doubt and feelings of being inadequate (Famularo *et al.* 1990). This is supported by the following quotation:

*“Ngicabanga ukuthi kwakumele ngenze okungaphezu kwalokhu engakwenza, mhlampe kwakhumele abhode”.*

*(“I think I should have done more, maybe take him to boarding school or something”).*

Some mothers also reported blaming themselves for not looking for help at an earlier stage as they claim that their boys started misbehaving at an earlier age. Like many other parents they dismissed or denied the idea that their children may be misbehaving:

*“UN ngambona esemncane ukuthi uyahlupha kowda ngazitshela ukuthi ubungane nje”*

*(“I started noticing N at an early age but I just thought he was being naughty”).*

Parents put themselves down (Goldstein & Mather, 1998) as a result of the actions of their children and that act in itself might impact negatively on their ability to support and care for their other children. The presence of a capable mother who is self-confident and affectionate and who understands herself might provide a buffer against feeling inadequate as a parent. Two of the mothers did not report any feelings of self-blame because they believed that they had done their best for their children. This is supported by the following quotation:

*“Ngiyazi ukuthi ngikwenze konke ebengingakwenza. Yena uzikhethela indlela yakhe, akukho engingakwenza”*

*(“I know deep in my heart that I did it all. He chose his path so it will be. The way he is now I cannot help him at all”).*

These mothers do not perceive themselves as mothers or parents who are doing a good job of raising their adolescents. The meaning these mothers make of their experiences may be attributed to their thinking based on how they see the world and their experiences of having a misbehaving adolescent through the eyes of others, their families, school and community. It is also based on what the others will be saying about their parenting and on how they will judge their parenting skills. Nonetheless, mothers themselves are also human beings who have their own feelings and thoughts (Silver, 1998), and these need to be heard.

#### **4.2.2 Theme 2: Worrisome thoughts**

It is speculated that almost all parents who have children who are misbehaving worry about their children throughout their lives (Williams, 2001). The degree of worry may vary from one parent to the other, and according to the difficulties experienced. This worry is not neurotic but it is normal and natural.

This theme highlights the importance of the mother feeling responsible for her adolescent and also being concerned about what is happening in the neighbourhood, and whether her adolescent might be involved in the crime. This becomes clear in the example below:

*“Ngiye ngiphatheke kabi nxa ngizwa ukuthi kukhona obanjwe inkunzi ngoba ngisuke ngingazi ukuthi ubani okwenzile lokho”.*

*(“I worry a lot if in the area someone has been pick-pocketed because I don’t know who was behind it”).*

Similarly, when they hear a gunshot or if police come to their house, they imagine the worst, that their adolescent has been misbehaving again:

*“Uphatheke kabi uma uzwa ukukhala kwesibhamu, uze uzibuze ukuthi ingabe ukuphi...”*

*(“You worry at the sound of a gunshot, you ask yourself where is...”)*

From their previous experience of their misbehaving adolescents being imprisoned, any illegal activity in the neighbourhood causes anxiety as they associate their adolescents with crime.

*“...selokhu abuya kuyatshontshwa”*

*(“...ever since he came back crime has increased”).*

The constant worrying and expecting the worst have an impact on the mother’s emotional state. Not only is there a constant concern about the adolescent, but also about what the people in the neighbourhood think of her family, and how they will respond to her and her adolescent.

All the mothers reported experiences of feeling worried. They reported that they felt worried because they could see that their boys were taking a wrong turn in life in spite of their trying to help the adolescent and wanting the best for their boys:

*“...siphathekile ngezimpilo zabo”.*

*(“...we are so concerned about their lives”).*

Not only is the immediate behaviour a concern for the mothers, but they were also worried about the future of their boys. Some were concerned about what would happen to their boys once they (mothers) are gone:

*“Ngiye ngizibuze ukuthi ingabe kuyokwenzekalani uma ngingasekho kulomhlaba”.*

*(“I think to myself what is going to happen to him when I am dead...”)*

This is a concern experienced by all parents who have children/adolescents with some disability, who seems according to the parent, to be unable to manage by themselves (Williams, 2004). An adolescent with a criminal record will find it more difficult to find and keep employment, and this situation adds to the concern of the mothers.

### 4.2.3 Theme 3: Support

In the situation of having a misbehaving adolescent, who has been in touch with the criminal system, the first place where the mothers think they might find help is the family, the school and the community. However, due to the stigma of misbehaviour and imprisonment, they are often ostracized, and therefore also draw on their spiritual strength, such as using prayer as a way of dealing with their anxiety and depression:

*“ngiyacula bese ngiyakhuleka”*  
*(“I sing and pray”).*

Faith seems to be drawn upon in the face of challenges:

*“Ngiyakhuleke futhi ngiyethembe iNkosi izowuzwa umkhuleko wami”*  
*(“I pray and I hope the Lord above hears my prayers, it is only a matter of time”).*

Yet, in spite of the spiritual strength, the impact of a misbehaving adolescent on the parental view of perfection (Williams, 2004) can result in resorting to drugs (Holden, 1997), to enable them to cope with the pressures and to get some relief. One participant reported that she takes sleeping pills:

*“Bengihlale ngigxakekile, angikwazi ukukhuluma namuntu, uma ngiyolala sengilal ngamaphilisi”*  
*(“I am always stressed. I can’t talk to anyone about my problems. When I go to sleep I usually take sleeping pills”).*

The above highlights the importance of the need for support from the family, school and community to be more tangible, so that the need to resort to drugs might be minimized.

According to Williams (2004) strengthening family ties is an essential component in the effort to prevent misbehaviour. Williams (2004) also says that adolescents who do not receive any form of support, experience feelings of lack of acceptance by the society, and also damage to their identity. This also happens to mothers of adolescents as they feel they are not getting sufficient support from their family and community. If mothers are supported

and assisted in dealing with their children's misbehaviour, further misbehaviour may be prevented. A *lack of support from the extended family* seemed to affect some mothers:

*"Kungathi abekho. Abakaze bafike bazosibona noma babuze noma yini"*

*("It's like they don't exist. They never come to see or ask anything for that matter".)*

Though the mothers said they did not get support from the extended family, they felt things might have been different if their mothers were still alive:

*umndeni wakithi mncane futhi awunandaba. Ngezinye izikhathi ngiye ngifise sengathi ngisenaye umam"*

*("My family is very small. Sometimes I wish I still had a mother").*

Some mothers reported that their families do not show any form of care and that they mock them instead, as if they are gaining pleasure from the misfortune of the mother. This feeling expressed by the mothers is supported by the following quotation:

*"Bayajabula, bayangihleka noma bengeze basho kodwa ngiyazi bayajabula"*

*("They are happy, they laugh at my back even if they may not say it, I know they are laughing at me").*

Even though the mothers felt they were not getting any form of support from the extended family, some expressed feelings of satisfaction for the support of their immediate family:

*"Kungathi abaphili...kodwa akunalutho uma nje umnyeni wami kanye nezingane zami bekhona kulungile"*

*("It is like they do not exist...but anyway as long as my husband and children are here it is okay").*

To some mothers the failure of the extended family to provide support to them is seen as an accusation that the mothers with misbehaving adolescents are not doing their job as mothers. Yet there is no prescribed formula on how to be a good mother and there is no school to which one can go to be trained on how to become a good mother. According to Goldstein and Mather (1998) all mothers have great hopes for their children and their children's future and will try the best they know how to be a parent, to work towards a bright

future. The way these mothers are perceived by their extended families is as if they do not possess proper parenting skills. This finding is supported by the following quotation:

*“Abasemzini bacabanga ukuthi ngingumama obhedayo, ongakwazi ukukhulisa abantwana kahle...usizo olonjani ngaphandle kokukhuluma”*.  
(*“My in-laws think am a bad mother and I don’t know how to handle my children. They are not offering any kind of support except talk”*).

It seems as if the in-laws believe that the adolescents are misbehaving because of the parenting of their mothers, and that the mothers approve of the behaviour. Parenting is a task that one can never be fully prepared for and may be more challenging if there is a misbehaving adolescent in the family.

Not all the participants experienced a lack of support, as one mother’s extended family did show support because of their own past experiences with misbehaving children or their own understanding of what is required. This is supported by the following quotation:

*“Kukhona abangangilahlile njengo gogo wabo.  
Uhlale ebatshela ukuthi bayangihlupha ngalezinto abazenzayo”*  
(*“There are those who are supportive like their grandmother (my mother) always tell them that they are ill-treating me”*).

Not only the close and extended family are important in supporting the mother and her adolescent, the *school* too, could be supportive. All the participants reported that the adolescents have or had a problem with school in one way or the other. The school did contact the parents, but the contact was about school work or school uniforms, not about the strategies that could be used by the parents to deal with their adolescents’ misbehaviour. The findings show that every time the mother is called, she is informed that her adolescent child is a problem, and that she has to solve it. Nothing positive was done to assist the mother or the adolescent child. This is supported by the following quotation:

*“UThisha wakhe wayefuna ukungibona ngoba uN wayengenawo umfaniswano”*  
(*“The teacher wanted to see me since N did not have uniform”*)

Parenting, in cases where there is a misbehaving adolescent, involves understanding everything about one's child's misbehaviour and how the adolescents' acts affects him/her. So when mothers go to school, they expect some kind of educational information since whatever they do is based on the information they have, which at times leaves them confused and not knowing what to do. One participant however, was called to school and was supported through referring the adolescent:

*“Sahlangana nomphathi wangigqubekisa kwiPsychologist yesikole”*  
*(“We met with the headmaster and he referred us to*  
*a school psychologist”).*

In one instance one mother out of her own accord, went wider in search of help, and consulted a psychologist for her own well-being:

*“Ngiyengibonane ne Psychologist. Ngiyakwazi ukukhuluma nayo”*  
*(“Every now and then I see a psychologist. At least I can pour my heart to her”).*

The school cannot always provide support as they themselves might not be trained to work with parents of adolescents who are misbehaving. The experiences reported by most mothers are not in line with Dreman's (1999) view that the school environment needs to serve as a source of social support. Most participants reported that they had never heard from the school or any other social structure to help them address their adolescent's behaviour. When mothers first realize that their adolescents are misbehaving they often are overwhelmed, do not know how to deal with or resolve the misbehaviour (Goldstein & Mather, 1998), have little understanding of what is happening as well as little hope. It is specifically during this time that they need professional help to acknowledge these feelings and point to a positive course of action to be taken (Silver, 1998) with their adolescents, for their own sake, as well as that of their adolescents.

The *community*, which could provide invaluable support, did *not provide the necessary* support to the mother with the misbehaving adolescent. Most mothers felt hurt when they saw that their children were not listening to them and when they realized the damage the child has caused in the community. They may try to isolate themselves from the community

as a way of protecting themselves from insult and accusations. Dreman (1999) says support from the non-family members may be useful because these people are not too personally involved and may provide an outside perspective and relief from the stressful situations.

Mothers in the study reported that they did not receive any form of support from the community. From the finding it seems as if the community is quite closed and difficult to relate to if the community perceives you and your adolescent as a threat, and you will therefore not be welcomed and supported. Such stigmatization has caused some of the mothers to isolate themselves from the activities taking place within the community because of fear and shame:

*“Uma kukhona into ekhona emphakathini, angiyi ngoba uma kuhlengenwe akubi mnandi kimina”*

*(“Whenever there is anything in the community I don’t go because whenever they are together it is never nice for me”).*

There is a belief among these mothers that the community members see them as being behind the wrongful deeds of their adolescents. Mothers of misbehaving adolescents experience the mothering or parenting task differently from other mothers. When one become a parent, there are immediate roles that a parent needs to assume and some of those roles are prescribed by the society (Holden, 1997) and when a child behaves in unacceptable manner, the first person to get the blame is the mother. This is supported by the following quotation:

*“...bacabanga ukuthi ngihlangene nengane...”*

*(“...they think I am in this with my child...”)*

From what mothers expressed it is clear that they expect help from the community, and that seeking advice from the elders in the community leadership might ease the burden and frustration of bringing the child up. In this way the problem will not be seen as belonging to a particular family, but will be shared by the community.

*“Uma benganginika usizo, khona angazi ukuthi banganginika usizo olunjani...”*



*(“If they were to give me support, I don’t really know what kind of support they would give ...”).*

Some of the mothers do not communicate about their adolescent’s problem, and rather hide their problem, and therefore have a good relationship with the community.

*“Ubudlelwano bukhona futhi buhle...”*

*(“The relationship is good but I know...”).*

*“Ngicabanga ukuthi akukho lutho emphakhathini wami. Abazi ngaye. Babona njengo mfana ohloniphayo”*

*(“There is nothing that is wrong in my community; at least that is what I would like to believe. The community does not know about him. They look at him as a sweet boy”).*

Declaring to the members of the community the challenges one is faced with could raise awareness of the family situation. More and more members could lend a hand to support where they can. The mothers could try to get support but it may be difficult if they are not sure what kind of support they need or might get. Within the Zulu tradition, the family is seen as part of the community hence the relationships between a family and the community are interdependent (Donald *et al.* 2002).

#### **4.2.4 Theme 4: Possible solutions suggested by mothers**

In spite of the difficulties the mothers experienced, they had some ideas of how to improve their own situation as well as that of their adolescents who are misbehaving. This becomes clear in the suggestions they make.

Life lessons have shown that those who have been there know better. When mothers were asked what they think could be done to deal with what they have been through, they suggested that *talking to other mothers who are going through the same experience* might assist in coping better with the stress associated with having a misbehaving adolescent:

*“Ukwazi ukuthi awuwedwa, kukhona abantu ongakhuluma nabo futhi bayazi kahle nento okhuluma ngayo kuyangikhulula”*  
(*“To know that I am not alone, that there are people I can speak to warms my heart”*).

*Open communication* with one’s adolescent was seen to be important. Communicating with one’s child would mean a parent would give a child a reason to come to her or him for help and advice. Parents need to create an environment that promotes trust and honesty within the family and they must try to lead by example. Through open communication both adolescents and parents need to be able to disclose their concerns in the family without the fear of offending anyone. All the mothers reported that they would advise other parents to communicate openly with their children, husband, as well as with the community members.

*“Abazali kumele bakhulume nabentwana babo, babe ngabangani”*.  
(*“Parents must talk with their children at all times and be friends with their children”*).

*Transparency* within the family should be encouraged. The children need to grow up taking pride in the family and hence they would try and protect it. Only one mother suggested that there should be transparency in the family so that children cannot go out and do things which they know are not accepted in the family. This is supported by the following quotation:

*“Uma kunoshintsho emndenini wonke umuntu kumele azi ngalo futhi izingane kumele ziwazi umthetho”*  
(*“If there is a change in the family, all members of the family must be informed... and children must know the rules in the family”*).

All mothers reported that they would love to see mothers *supporting each other* in their pain. Mothers suggested that there should be support groups whereby mothers would come together and discuss issues that affect them and assist each other with the skills for better parenting, give advice on the realities of parenting. The victims or mothers of misbehaving adolescents must be given a chance to lead the discussions as they have first hand experience of having a difficult child.

*“Ngingathanda ukuthi sibe inhlangotho yomama sisizano ezinkingeni esibhekene nazo”.*

*(“I would love to have a mothers group with other mothers who are going through what I am going through so that we can talk together, receive counseling and even assist each other on how to cope with the situation”).*

Through support that could be given by the community to the family one may be able not only to change the way mothers see themselves but also be able to influence them to be the agents of change. This needs to be done because the way mothers perceive themselves affects their parenting skills either positively or negatively. The literature showed that lack of community support is linked to a number of social problems, like adolescent misbehaviour.

*“Umpakathi ungibuka njengomama ababhedayo kodwa kumele sisizane, uma lokhu kwenzeka kimi kungenzeka nakuye”*

*(“The community must not look at us as bad mothers but they must lend a helping hand. If this can happen to me it can also happen to them”).*

The support groups for the adolescents according to Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) may assist them in discussing issues that are primary to them and they may even learn to deal with the problems rather than to misbehave. Those support groups for the adolescents need to be facilitated by an adult who will shape the direction of the discussion. This was supported by the following quotation:

*“...nabantwana bethu kumele bakwazi ukuyalana”.*

*(“...our children need to be able to discourage one another in doing something bad”).*

It needs to be noted that whether mothers perform effectively in child-rearing roles within the family depends on the role demands, stresses and supports emanating from other settings (Tlhoale, 2003). Jersild *et al.* (1978) and Thompson and Rudolph (2000) point out for example, that being raised in the single-parent family increases the chances of adolescent misbehaviour.

Money from *fathers* does not necessarily make a human being of the child as fathers need to be involved in the upbringing of their children. Two mothers suggested that fathers themselves are also responsible for the child:

*“Obaba kumele babe neqhaza abalibambayo ekukhuliswene kwengane”*  
*(“Fathers must be involved in the upbringing of the children”).*

The role of the significant other is therefore seen as crucial. In a traditional Zulu family, the mother is the one responsible for the upbringing of the children while the father is responsible for putting food on the table. Most mothers reported that they would like to get the full support of their husband in bringing up the children. Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1990) emphasized the importance of a father figure in the life of an adolescent in preventing misbehaviour, as is also reflected in the following quotation:.

*“Obaba kumele babe ingxenye...bangasiniki imali nje kuphele”*  
*(“Fathers must be involved...they must not only provide us with money”).*

The *support of the extended family* can ease the stress on the mother so she knows that she is not alone and if the family is supportive the children can always go to them should they need advice or any other help. Supportive members of the family or extended family can play a significant role in the supervision of children whose parents are employed. Geismer and Wood (1986) discuss the notion of working mothers as a contributory factor to adolescent misbehaviour. Some mothers suggested that children need to be supervised.

*“...kumele babe nesikhathi sabantwana babo babone nendlela abaziphatha ngayo”*  
*(“...must have time for their children and must be able to monitor their behaviour”).*

Mothers reported that they would like to get support from their extended families even if that support may be small.

*“Ngicabanga ukuthi siyaludinga ugxaso lwemindeni yethu”*  
*(“I think we do need support from our extended families”).*

According to Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) the inclusion of life skills training in school curricula provides learners with conflict resolution skills, problem solving skills as well as communication skills. Though some schools have programmes to deal with misbehaving adolescents, they do not have programmes to assist parents in dealing with their misbehaving adolescent. Schools need to serve as resource centers for the provision of *help/advice* to parents and misbehaving adolescents. Mothers reported that they would like to get support and *assistance from the school*:

*“Kungani izikole zingakwazi ukusisiza. Bangothisha, kumele bazi ukuthi kumele kwenziwe njani”*

*(“Why school are never around when we need them. They are educators, they should know what to do in times like these”).*

Mothers showed that knowing that their children were misbehaving is the truth no mother would like to hear and it is a reality that is hard to accept. Mothers showed that their experiences are accompanied by painful emotions and guilt. They blame themselves and worry about the lives of their children.

#### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with the results and the interpretation of the findings in terms of four themes which emerged. The next chapter will draw conclusions and highlight some guidelines, limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I will first present the summarized steps used in the research from the previous four chapters before providing recommendations in the form of guidelines. Qualitative research was conducted to draw out the participants' account of their experiences. The researcher utilized a descriptive, contextual and explorative research design to break ground on the experiences of Zulu African mothers who have adolescents who are misbehaving. Purposive sampling was used to select only participants which the researcher thought would provide rich descriptions. Ten mothers participated.

To unfold the experiences of the participants and understand their point of view, the researcher had a single question which was followed by probing questions which yielded data to answer the three research questions. A tape recorder was used to preserve the data. Tesch's open coding was used to assist the researcher in reducing the massive set of data into themes and categories that answered the research questions.

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of Zulu African mothers who have adolescents who are misbehaving in an urban Durban township. The research question for the study therefore was "What are the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving?"

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**What are the experiences of Zulu African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving?**

One of the experiences of mothers of misbehaving adolescents, as discussed in theme one, was mothers feeling desperate and doubting their own mothering or parenting ability.

Mothers reported that they were desperate and uncertain as they did not know what to do with their adolescents. This led to most of them being frustrated, sad, depressed and low in esteem, which caused them to isolate themselves from the rest of the community activities. It is clear that the mothers lacked knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a misbehaving adolescent and how to parent a misbehaving adolescent, causing them to doubt their own ability to parent. The results of the study indicated that feelings of *desperation* were commonly experienced by most mothers. The manner in which the adolescent behaves challenges every mother to review her parenting ability.

The findings also showed that mothers began to doubt their parenting abilities as to whether what they were doing was right or wrong or was the result of their being failures. Silver (1998) concurs with this as he states that parents experience feelings of self-blame thinking that they must have caused the child to be in that particular situation. The self blame which the mothers experienced was primarily because they thought they were not good mothers to their children and they felt guilty for not being able to reach out to them. Smith and Stern (1997) support these findings by explaining that parents may blame themselves in an attempt to identify the cause for child's misbehaviour. As a result of feelings they experienced mothers were weighing their parental skills up against the behaviour of their adolescents. They felt bad, humiliated and helpless about the behaviour exhibited by their adolescents.

Mothers reported to be concerned that when their children were not around they might be *involved in criminal acts*. The whereabouts of their adolescents became their concern. It is evident that mothers get desperate as a result of worrisome thoughts and this feeling is at times justifiable as the news is full of incidents involving misbehaving adolescents. All mothers reported that they were concerned/ worried for the future of their children and also worried about the behaviour of their children. Mothers mentioned that parenting is the task

that one can never be fully prepared for, but the parenting task seems to be more difficult and challenging when the child is misbehaving.

It has been evident throughout the study that support comes piece meal and it is not always guaranteed that it will be given. One of the experiences of mothers, as discussed in theme three, was spiritual support, support from the extended family, from the schools and the community.

Mothers relied on religion to provide themselves with support in the form of psychological belief that everything will be alright once I have given my problems to God. The spiritual support was providing faith and hope to the mothers that the difficulties were only temporal. The role of the family seemed to be of critical importance though it was not recognized by the family members. Mothers reported that they were blamed for the misbehaviour of their adolescent and the blame which mothers received did not make the situation any better.

The school interaction with the mothers only occurred during problematic times. The mothers saw the school as not guiding or supporting them. A community that supports its own members is regarded as being responsible and supportive. Such communities tend to change the perceptions and attitudes of those who are victims of the circumstances. The study however, showed that the community did not support the mothers, instead they were disowning them with a belief that mothers were behind what their boys were doing.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FORM OF GUIDELINES**

The two secondary research questions could be answered, based on the findings of the primary question, as it has implications for families, schools and communities.

The following discussion will explore guidelines in the form of recommendations.

**What guidelines and strategies can be generated to assist mothers in managing their adolescents who are misbehaving?**



From the first theme it became clear that these mothers doubted their own ability to parent their misbehaving adolescents, while the second theme revealed constant worrying. This possibly arises from their not being educated and well informed, or lacking the skill and resources to address the needs of their adolescents. This implies that there needs to be some form of training to assist these mothers in managing their adolescents' behaviour.

The possible suggestions are:

- Community programmes and structures like Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) could initiate parent projects or programmes to train and support parents in *managing their adolescents' behaviour*. It is also important that those programmes need to empower parents with coping skills so that they will not be blaming themselves whenever a certain problem arises.
- Parent training programmes could focus on developing *problem solving skills* and educating parents about contributory factors and early warning signs of misbehaviour. Parent guidance workshops should be designed for parents. Such workshops need to give parents more insight into misbehaviour and how to deal effectively with challenging adolescent misbehaviour. It needs to be noted that the ultimate goal of parenting children and adolescents is similar in many ways. However, the means by which goals are achieved are strikingly different. In providing these programmes it is important to recognise the developmental stage of the targeted group and to tailor the programmes accordingly. For instance, with young children setting limits is appropriate, whereas with adolescents, negotiating limits meets them at their developmental stage. Therefore in this context of parenting programmes it should be ensured that the skills provided are developmentally sensitive.
- Parent centres could be established in the community which can help teach parents how *to develop their children's self-esteem and life skills* through positive parenting and non-violent modes of home discipline.

- Mothers could be empowered by *obtaining knowledge* from as many sources as possible. The researcher recommends the following sources:
  - ❖ Support groups
  - ❖ Social workers, Psychologists, Educators or Guidance counsellors.
  - ❖ Media
  
- Support groups should be set up for and by parents. The primary objective must be to train these parents (Government and NGOs can provide training) to be field experts who can *support other parents* in similar situations. Those who may be selected to lead these groups at least must be those mothers with firsthand experience of how it is to parent a misbehaving child. They would need intensive training which may include knowledge on child development, guidance on group counselling techniques. In doing so parents will be engaged in changing their approach to parenting and this will help increase their self-confidence within the context of their parenting role.
  
- Programmes could focus more on *self-exploration* as a way to assist mothers to become more aware of their inner strengths and weaknesses. This can lead to better understanding of their personal worlds which in turn would lead to acceptance of the self and things they cannot change, as well as strengthening of their parenting skills.

Looking back at the third theme it appears as if there is very little support in townships to assist mothers in managing their adolescents who are misbehaving. One segment of the school consists of educators, who could work hand in hand with parents of children who are having behavioural problems. In this way the school could become a centre which supports and reaches out to the community.

- Schools could serve as *resource centres* for the provision of counselling to parents and adolescents experiencing barriers to learning, but this can only happen if teachers are adequately trained. Therefore Teacher Training Colleges and Universities should include in their training programmes training that would equip

teachers with knowledge and skills of how to guide parents of misbehaving children. This will assist teachers to be able to support parents more effectively. It is essential that teachers have an understanding of the experiences of mothers of children with behavioural problems. Teachers should be encouraged to take time to explain to parents what can be done to address the problem. This would help the mothers (parents) to gain a better understanding, which in turn would have an impact on their parenting experiences and improve the way they manage their misbehaving children.

- Some of the emotional experiences of the mothers are caused by the lack of information and understanding. Professionals (educators, school counsellors and social workers) need to be in a position to carefully explain to mother's factors which may have led to their parenting experiences. For example, if a mother *understands the cause of the misbehaviour*, that mother could find means and ways of dealing with her child's misbehaviour.

The school could also work with the community to enlighten those who are in the dark about the complexities of raising misbehaving adolescents. Both parties could do this by:

- *Raising awareness* of issues that affect parents and children who come from families with a misbehaving child. It is important that the community has an understanding of the experiences of mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving. By being aware of these experiences, they may be able to support mothers and not treat them as outcasts.
- *Trained people* like social workers, and psychologists need to be stationed in townships at community centres to work with parents. These people need to demonstrate familiarity with the cultural beliefs, expectations and child rearing practices of all the ethnic groups being served and they need to be accessible and available.
- *Youth centres* can play a vital role in informing and educating the community about

adolescent's risk factors, but also in providing support and recreation for the youth.

- There should be *community based programmes* which should respond to special needs or problems, and offer appropriate counselling and guidance to both children and parents. In places in which they already exist, they need to be strengthened.
- The *mass media* should be encouraged to ensure that everybody has access to information and material from different sources, about parenting and managing adolescent misbehaviour

### **What guidelines and strategies can be generated to facilitate adolescents' gaining parenting skills at school?**

Taking the implications of the research findings a bit further, one could think preventatively and reflect on possible ways of allowing adolescent learners themselves to gain parenting skills while still at school. The majority of children do not get the opportunity to learn certain skills from their families. It is then the educators, rather than parents, who become responsible for assisting the adolescents to develop and learn these skills. Mothers in the study mentioned that children need to be taught about family values and what it means to be a parent. Every adolescent learner needs to know some basics about being a good parent. Educating an adolescent should not only be based on what is happening inside the classroom but it must also include opportunities to meet varying real life needs of young people and also serve as a supportive framework for safeguarding the personal development of all young people, especially those who are at risk of misbehaving.

- This can be done by establishing programmes for parenting skills to be implemented in schools as part of the school's Life Orientation curriculum. These programmes need to be designed in such a way that they assist adolescents to gain a full understanding of the commitment and responsibility of being a parent.
- These programmes could be used not only as a preventative measure to curb misbehaviour but also as a preparation tool for adolescents who do not yet have

children and as a parenting tool for those adolescents who already have children, thereby improving their parenting skills.

- Through these programmes adolescents can learn about the importance of parenting, involvement of both parents in the upbringing of a child, managing behaviour in real life and the challenges of being a parent while still a teenager.

The above guidelines are intended to improve the situation for mothers of misbehaving adolescents in particular, but also for parents in general. Furthermore, by including such programmes in school and the community, it might indirectly have an impact on the adolescents and their behaviour, and ultimately on the whole ecosystem.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY**

- There was very limited literature on the topic about mothers of misbehaving adolescents, from which I could draw, as not much has been written about it.
- Some mothers refused to participate in the study due to its sensitive nature, while others were not available due to personal commitments or relocation.
- The participants were Zulu African mothers living in townships and the findings are not necessarily generalisable to other contexts or to other race groups.

#### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEACH**

- Exploring participatory-action research where parents are facilitated to design a support programme for parents of adolescents who are misbehaving.
- Fathers are often left out of the parenting equation, and therefore a study on the experiences of fathers of adolescents who are misbehaving, should be undertaken.
- Using visual participatory methodologies to explore issues and solutions with adolescents who are misbehaving, as research and intervention.

- The participants in the study were Zulu African mothers, the results in this study cannot be generalised to all the mothers. It is recommended that future studies should also look at the experiences of mothers across all races in South Africa.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

The study identified and explored the experiences of African mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving by means of an explorative, descriptive and contextual research design, which allowed mothers to relate their stories freely. The results of the study indicated that mothers of misbehaving adolescents experience a wide range of complex emotions in response to their adolescent's misbehaviour. The study also showed the need for support from all levels of the ecosystem, and that there is hardly any effective structure in place in townships working in hand in hand with the mothers of misbehaving adolescents. The study revealed that a lack of information leads to mothers being ill-treated or to be perceived as bad people with poor parenting skills. Therefore one may conclude that the various levels of the ecosystem should be trained to be supportive in assisting Zulu African mothers in townships to cope with their adolescents' misbehaviour and the notion of uBuntu be recultivated.

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## Appendix A

**Letter of consent for participants.** The first copy is in IsiZulu followed by an English translation.

Mzali Othandekayo

Ngiumfundi owenza iziqu ze-Mastazi kwiSayikhologi enyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal esikhungweni sase-Edgewood eThekwini. Ngifisa ukukumema ukuba ube yingxenye yocwaningo. Koda kusemqoka ukuthi wazi ukuthi ukuzibandankanya kwakho kulolucwaningo akusiyona impoqo, futhi unalo ilungelo lokuhoxa noma yinini uma ufisa ukwenze njalo.

Induna kulolucwaningo uSolwazi N. de Lange. Inhloso yalolucwaningo ukuthola kabanzi ngemizwa yomama abampisholo abanezingane ezisakhula ezinokuhlupha, futhi nokubuka kungakwazi yini ukuthi kwenziwe umkhombandlela ongasiza intsha esakhula esezikoleni ukuyihlinzekela ngamakhono okukhulisa imindeni.

Kulolucwaningo kukhona ingxoxo engathatha ihora, kanye nawe mzali. Zonke izinto ozobamba kuzo iqhaza ziyohlala ziyimfihlo, futhi igama lakho liyogodlwa. Uma sesifika esiphethweni socwaningo ngihlose ukuxoxa kabanzi nawe ngemiphumela yocwaningo.

Uma unemibuzo mayelana nocwaningo, ungathintana nami noma uSolwazi N.de Lange.

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## ISIBOPHEZELO

Mina.....(amagama aphelele) ngiyifundile incwadi yesicelo sokuba ingxenye yoncwangingo, futhi ngiqondisisile kahle ukuthi ziyini izinhloso zalolucwangingo. Ngiyazi ukuthi yini engicelwa ukuba ngiyenze. Ngazi kahle kamhlophe ukuthi ukuzibandakanya kwami akuphoqiwe, nokuthi futhi ngingahoxa noma yinini. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi imininingwano yonke iyogcinwa iyimfihlo nokuthi igama lami liyogodlwa. Nginikeza isiqiniseko futhi ngiyavuma ukuthi ngizoba yingxenye yalolucwangingo. Ngiyazi ukuthi imibuzo engingaba nayo ngingayiqondisa kumcwangingi noma enduneni.

.....

Igama lomzali (Bhala uhlukanise)

.....

.....

Isignisha yomzali

Usuku

.....

.....

Isignisha yomcwangingi

Usuku

Dear Parent

I am currently a Masters student doing Educational Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban Edgewood campus. I wish to invite you to participate in the study. The following information is provided in so that you can have an idea of what the study is all about. You must be aware that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time. The study is being undertaken by Nonhle Olga Khumalo, a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My supervisor for the study is Prof. N.de Lange. For the study I must do a research on the experiences of mothers who have adolescents who are misbehaving. The goal is to explore the experiences of mothers, to find out if there are guidelines that can be generated to assist mothers in managing their experiences of adolescents who are misbehaving and also to find out if there can be guidelines that can be generated to facilitate adolescents' gaining parenting skills at school. The research process includes face to face interviews with you as a parent. All activities that you will participate in will remain confidential, as well as anonymous. At the end of the study I undertake to discuss the initial findings with you.

If you have any queries, before, during or after the study, you are welcome to contact Prof. N. de Lange or myself.

Thanking you in advance

Nonhle Olga Khumalo

27-(0)31-7074387

E-mail: [203516724@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:203516724@ukzn.ac.za)

Prof. N. de Lange

27-(0)31-2601342

E-mail: [delangen@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:delangen@ukzn.ac.za)

**DECLARATION**

I..... (full names of the participant) have read the letter of consent and understand what the goals of the study are. I understand what will be asked of me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that all information will be handled confidentially and that my identity will remain anonymous. I hereby confirm that I will participate in the study. I understand to direct any queries to the researcher or to the supervisor.

Name of parent (printed)

.....

.....

Signature of parent

Date

.....

.....

Signature of researcher

Date

## Appendix B

### Interview schedule

I will use only one open ended question ***“Could you tell me about your experiences of having a misbehaving adolescent?”*** Following this question will be probing questions which will yield data to answer the four research problems mentioned earlier.

### Interview schedule

I would like you to tell me about your experiences at home, at school and even within the community of having a misbehaving adolescent. The focus is on your experiences, but this is the opportunity for you to tell your story. I only have one question that I would like to ask you but as we talk, there will be some other questions which I may ask to help me get clarity. Please feel free to elaborate on anything at any time, as I would like to hear your story. Are there any questions you would like to ask before we start?

“Could you tell me about your experiences of having a misbehaving adolescent?”



## **APPENDIX C: An example of a page from a transcribed interview**

### **INTERVIEW WITH THE PARTICIPANT: MRS Elephant**

**C:** Could you tell me about your experiences of having a misbehaving adolescent.

**Mrs. E:** It is difficult N, it is really difficult. You know we have tried everything to help E. He was studying at P.B.H.S and he said teachers hate him. He said he want to learn here at the township. I did not want to force him as I could see that he was not prepared to go back to school if that school was P.B.H.S. I then went to a nearby school to ask them if they could enroll him. Well they did. I thought he will love it there but he did not. You know my place of work is just opposite their school. I would think that he is at school but he will be out with friends drinking and smoking drugs. You know all parents want to grow up responsible and be educated so that one day they will be something in life. If I have had my way I would not have had him involved in anything bad. We tell children things at home but they would go out with meet friends and do what they like.

**C:** When did it all started?

**Mrs. E:** I don't know but I think when he was at P.B.H.S. He started to hang out with the wrong crowd, people he did not go to school with. I would ask him where he got his friends and he would say they are from here (township) and they are cool. He then started to hate B.B. At this school he is in now, he started to bunk classes, do drugs and drink alcohol to death.

**C:** Did you speak to him?

**Mrs. E:** Yes, I did and I still do. I always beg with him at all times. When I ask him about his drug use he would say he does not do drugs, we are saying all these things because we hate him. The other one does not want to school where he was. I sent him to my brother in Pmb at a technical school, but he got back within a year. I remember one time we were at the church when we got back, the place was up side down. Nothing was stolen except my husband's gun. He called the police and my boy was arrested. He was released. My brother came from Pmb, he forced him to say where the gun was and eventually he did say. E does not go to school, he just stay here during the day and drink alcohol. He eats like nobody and is so disrespectful. If he's out all night, when he comes he would insult me and force me to open the door for him.

**C:** What about his father, is he supportive?

**Mrs. E:** My husband is very supportive but you know men; they do not do things the way we do. He loses patience easily and beat him a lot sometimes. You can imagine my husband is a reverend and the community and the church expect the best out of us. We have tried taking them to the rehab but it did not work because they did not want to be helped.

**C:** How are you treated in the community?

**Mrs. E:** I don't know. I guess they don't treat us badly may be it is because they know we are a religious family. I don't know where my children get the money to spend on alcohol and drugs. I worry a lot if in the area someone has been picked pocketed because I don't know who was behind it. It could be my boys.



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 - 2603587  
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

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29 JUNE 2006

MS. NO KHUMALO (203516724)  
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Dear Ms. Khumalo

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/06147A

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Experiences of mothers of adolescents who are misbehaving/delinquent in Township a in Urban Durban"

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA  
RESEARCH OFFICE

PS: The following general condition is applicable to all projects that have been granted ethical clearance:

THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVAL SHOULD THE RESEARCH INVOLVE UTILIZATION OF SPACE AND/OR FACILITIES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS. WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES ARE USED IN THE PROJECT, THE RESEARCHER SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE INCLUDES A SECTION AT THE END WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT (PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE) INDICATING THAT HE/SHE WAS INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

cc. Faculty Research Office (Derek Buchler)  
cc. Supervisor (Prof. N DeLange)

2006-07-06