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ABSTRACT

Massive social upheaval, families' failure to provide a supportive milieu, and the schools' failure to instill an appreciation of education has contributed to large numbers of black street children in South Africa. This exploratory study analyzed the problem of street children in the Durban municipal area in South Africa, providing a social profile of children and their families, and exploring the roots of involvement in deviant behavior. Interviews were conducted with 193 street children at shelters in Durban and on the streets. Questionnaires were also completed by 71 service providers. Findings suggest that the social profile of the families of the street children appears to be typical of black families in general. The children's inner motivations and expectations, and their evaluation of costs and rewards were the main factors pushing them into street life. Although service providers expressed sympathy for street children, many regarded them as deviants, delinquents, future criminals, and a public nuisance. Service providers tended to advocate places of safety and schools of industry for their care. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the street child phenomenon necessitates a partnership between governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide for policy and legislation, funding and resources to translate programs into concrete plans of action. (Contains 67 references.) (Author/KB)

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V.R. CHETTY
July 1996

Editor's comment

The research discussed in this report was completed and documented prior to the 1994 general elections and the 1995/1996 local elections. This means that the names of national, provincial and local government departments and structures, which were correct at the time of the study, may in many instances be obsolete. For example, the former Natal Provincial Administration is presently known as the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration and the former Durban City Council is presently known as the Durban Metropolitan and Local Council.

No attempt was made by the editor to correct outdated names since, among other reasons, at the time of editing this report, local elections in KwaZulu-Natal had not yet taken place.

LORRAINE GLANZ
July 1996

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Abstract

The street child drama being played out on South African streets alternatively evokes sympathy, hostility, kindness, fear, anger, curiosity and often brutality towards the children. These varied emotions, attitudes and behaviour arise largely out of prejudice and ignorance of this unknown phenomenon. Media reports on street children, though not unkind, have etched an image of them in the minds of the public as being tatty, dirty and criminally inclined. At the same time, the children are portrayed as both weak and strong in the face of adversity and the rigours of street life. Street children have, without exaggeration, captured the imagination and indignation of the public.

This report discusses the findings of an exploratory research investigation that was undertaken with the aim of describing and analysing the problem of street children in the Durban municipal area. The purpose of the study was to compile a social profile of the children and their families and to explore the children's involvement in deviant behaviour. The opinions of service providers towards street children were also obtained in order to gain some insight into the milieu in which services to these children were provided.

In order to ground the research on a solid knowledge base, a comprehensive review of the literature, with a focus on causative factors, was undertaken. The main findings of this review are discussed in the report. The researcher reviewed many of the social processes that have led to the street child problem: massive social disorganisation, poverty, unemployment and gross disparities in the distribution of resources. All have impacted significantly on black family life. She referred to the failure of the fractured family to provide a stabilising and supportive milieu for children and this is echoed by the failure of the school to stimulate pupils and provide the essential commitment to discipline and a work ethic and an appreciation of education. The researcher concluded that many black children have been victimised and abandoned by the two most

important socialising institutions in their lives—the family and the school.

The author found that no specific legislation designed to protect street children exists in South Africa and that the Child Care Act and the Child Protection Act do not afford them any safeguards, instead, these Acts condemn them to detention in prisons, police cells and places of safety. Detention in such places exposes them to contact with hardened offenders and brutalises the children further.

The self-report procedure was followed to obtain the information needed to compile a social profile of street children in Durban. Interviews were conducted with 193 street children at Bayhead Place of Safety, Zamani Shelter and on the streets. A questionnaire was constructed and distributed among service providers to investigate their attitudes towards street children. The views of 71 service providers were obtained in this manner. The social profile of the families of the street children in the study appeared to be typical of black families in general. This suggests that external factors alone can not account for children leaving home to take up a life on the streets. The inner motivations and expectations of these children, and their evaluation of costs and rewards are the main factors that propel them into street life in the belief that they can survive on the streets and that they are running to a better life.

Although the service providers involved in the study generally expressed sympathy for street children, many tended to regard them as deviants, delinquents, future criminals and a public nuisance. They also tended to advocate *hard* options (such as places of safety and schools of industry) for their care. From the responses of the children to the type of treatment and care received at the different facilities, it would appear that shelters, rather than places of safety, have the best chance of contributing towards the rehabilitation of the street child.

The author concludes that the street child phenomenon is one that requires a partnership between governmental and non-governmental organisations to provide for policy and legislation, funding and resources to translate programmes into concrete plans of action. Recommendations for primary prevention programmes on a macro level and tertiary prevention programmes on a micro level are made in the report.

Ekserp

Die straatkinddrama wat hom in Suid-Afrika se strate afspeel ontlok om die beurt simpatie, vyandigheid, goedhartigheid, vrees, woede, nuuskierigheid en dikwels wreedheid teenoor die kinders. Hierdie emosies, houdings en gedrag spruit grootliks voort uit vooroordeel en onkunde oor hierdie verskynsel. Mediaverslae oor straatkinders, hoewel nie onvriendelik nie, het by die publiek die idee ingeskerp dat die kinders vertoiing, vuil en geneig tot misdaad is. Terselfdertyd word die kinders geteken as beide broos en sterk te midde van die teenslae en ongenaakbaarheid van die straatlewe. Straatkinders het, sonder om te oordryf, die publiek se verbeelding aangegryp en hulle verontwaardig.

Hierdie verslag bespreek die bevindings van 'n verkennende navorsingsondersoek wat onderneem is met die oog op die beskrywing en ontleding van die probleem van straatkinders in Durban se munisipale gebied. Die doel van die studie was om 'n maatskaplike profiel van die kinders en hul gesinne saam te stel en om die kinders se betrokkenheid by afwykende gedrag te verken. Diensverskaffers se menings ten opsigte van straatkinders is ook verkry in 'n poging om insig te verwerf in die milieu waarin dienste aan hierdie kinders verskaf word.

In 'n poging om die navorsing op 'n stewige kennisbasis te grond, is 'n omvattende literatuurstudie gedoen, met klem op oorsaaklike faktore. Die hoofbevindings van die studie word in die verslag bespreek. Die navorser het baie van die maatskaplike prosesse ondersoek wat aanleiding gegee het tot die straatkindprobleem, elk met 'n aansienlike uitwerking op die swart gesinslewe. Die gebroke gesin is veral nie 'n stabiliserende en ondersteunde omgewing vir die kinders nie en dit vind weerklank in die onvermoë van die skool om leerlinge te stimuleer en toewyding aan dissipline, werksetiek en 'n waardering van opvoeding in hulle vas te lê. Die navorser kom tot die slotsom dat baie swart kinders die slagoffers is van, en in die steek gelaat is deur,

twee van die belangrikste sosialiseringstelsels in hul lewens—die gesin en die skool.

Die navorser het bevind dat daar geen wetgewing is wat spesifiek ontwerp is om straatkinders in Suid-Afrika te beskerm nie, en dat die Wet op Kindersorg en die Wet op Kinderbeskerming die kinders in werklikheid verdoem tot aanhouding in gevangenisse, polisieselle en bewaarplekke. Aanhouding in sulke plekke stel hulle bloot aan kontak met geharde misdadigers en brutaliseer hulle verder.

Selfrapportering is ingespan om inligting te kry vir die samestelling van 'n maatskaplike profiel van straatkinders in Durban. Onderhoude is gevoer met 193 straatkinders by die Bayhead-bewaarplek, die Zamani-skuiling en op straat. 'n Vraelys is opgestel en onder diensverskaffers versprei sodat hul houdings teenoor straatkinders ondersoek kon word. Die menings van 71 diensverskaffers is op hierdie manier ontvang. Die maatskaplike profiel van die gesinne van die straatkinders was klaarblyklik kenmerkend van swart gesinne in die algemeen. Dit dui daarop dat die feit dat die kinders hul huise ten gunste van 'n straatlewe verlaat nie alleen toegeskryf kan word aan eksterne faktore nie. Die innerlike motivering en verwagtings van hierdie kinders, en hul beoordeling van die voor- en nadele is die hooffaktore wat hulle na die straatlewe dryf in die oortuiging dat hulle daar kan oorleef, en selfs beter kan leef as by hul eie huise.

Alhoewel die diensverskaffers wat by die studie betrokke was in die algemeen meegevoel met die straatkinders uitgedruk het, het baie van hulle die kinders as afwykendes, oortreders, toekomstige misdadigers en as 'n openbare ergernis beskou. Hulle het ook geneig om *strawwe* alternatiewe ten opsigte van die versorging van die kinders voor te staan (soos bewaarplekke en nywerheidskole). Uit die kinders se reaksie op die soort behandeling en versorging wat hulle van die verskillende instellings ontvang het, blyk dit dat skuilings meer bydrae tot die rehabilitering van die kinders as bewaarplekke.

Die navorser sluit af met die gedagte dat die straatkindverskynsel 'n vennootskap tussen regerings- en nie-regeringsorganisasies vereis met die oog op beleid en wetgewing, befondsing en hulpbronne wat konkrete aksieplanne in werking kan stel. Die verslag beveel aan dat primêre voorkomingsprogramme op makrovlak en tersiêre voorkomingsprogramme op mikrovlak ingestel word.

1 Introduction and orientation

Background to the study

This chapter begins by discussing the background, extent and rationale of the street child phenomenon. The aims of the study, theoretical assumptions underlying it and the definition of relevant constructs are also described. Finally, a brief outline of the chapters that follow is given.

A social profile of street children emerges from the three themes that pervade the present study, that is causation, victimisation and deviance. Causal factors are crucial in so far as they explain the reasons why some children become street children, while others do not.

Victimisation is equally important since the largely negative attitudes towards and labelling of street children close off legitimate opportunities and alternatives and push them towards deviant (secondary) activities. Symbolic interactionism, notably labelling, thus emerges as a powerful theoretical framework for explaining the victimisation and deviance of street children.

The presence on our city streets of a growing number of street children is a blight on the conscience of every responsible and concerned individual. The fact that so many street children are left unprotected and uncared for by their parents, communities and the law itself is a flagrant violation of moral and religious precepts, and is an indication of man's inhumanity to man.

The phenomenon of street children is not a new one. For centuries children have lived on and of the streets for a variety of reasons. Swart (1988d) provides insight into the presence of street children in Europe. In the thirteenth century, following the failure of the Children's Crusade in the Middle Ages, large numbers of children lived in bands and pillaged in order to survive. These children were allegedly sold

into slavery in Italy and Southern France. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw great numbers of street children in cities like Dublin, Glasgow and Naples. In London in the 1800s, children who were "filthy, roaming, lawless and deserted, were known as 'street arabs'" (Swart, 1988d:32).

Ireland also has a history of homelessness, due to many years of poverty, famine, evictions, economic deprivation and political conflict. Street children were also a common sight in both Russia and Japan during famine and civil war and due to high levels of illegitimacy, they were also common in Spain (Swart, 1988d). The depression of the 1930s in America saw the extensive cross-country migration of individuals, many of whom were youth. South America has an exceptionally high number of street children, estimated to be between 20 to 30 million. Although this figure is debatable, the number nevertheless remains large (Swart, 1988d:33).

Like other countries in the world, South Africa has not been immune to the presence of street children. Swart (1988d:94) mentions that "street children appear to have become generally newsworthy in Johannesburg only from about 1979 onwards".

In Durban, the phenomenon of street children seems to have fired the imagination and sympathy of newspaper reporters in the latter half of 1980, especially from 1987 onwards. The increased newspaper coverage coincided with the opening of the Khayalethu Shelter in Durnford Road in 1987. In the same year, the first National Conference on Street Children was held in Cape Town. The growing number of street children on Durban's streets and the public outcry that followed, led to the establishment of the Street Child Unit by the Durban City Police in 1988. Khayalethu Shelter, home to many street children, burnt down in June 1988, once again exposing them to an insecure and bleak future until alternative premises could be found. This was duly achieved and many, but not all, street children in the Durban area are currently housed at Bayhead Place of Safety, which is run by the former Natal Provincial Administration. The widely differing attitudes to street children are reflected in the two extracts quoted below:

> There are no dangers to the value of property or to the permanency of our institutions so great as those from the existence of a class of vagabond, ignorant, ungoverned children. Then let society beware, when the outcast, vicious, reckless multitude of New York boys, swarming now in every foul alley and low street, come to know their power, and use it (Agnelli, 1986:46).

> To most people, they are the tatty, bleary-eyed brats who beg for money. To others they are special individuals, totally displaced in society, the tragic, lost victims of the large scale problems of greater South Africa (*Daily News*, 3 February 1990:7).

In its annual report of 1917, the Society for the Protection of Child Life stated that one of the functions of the then-newly established Place of Safety was to provide temporary shelter for children wandering in the streets (Jayes, 1985). It appears that for the street child, custody is equated with rehabilitation, and little has changed since the provisions of the Society for the Protection of Child Life in 1917. It is argued in this study that the attitudes of the public and officials towards street children influence policy and management practices and provide the impetus for deviant activities and crime.

Extent of the street child phenomenon

It is very difficult to determine the exact number of street children living on the streets in the main cities and towns in South Africa. This is due largely to the *dark* or *unknown* figure. Official estimates are based on the number of street children in places of safety, shelters and other known abodes and hangouts. In 1987 Swart (cited in Richter, 1988a:2) estimated the number of street children to be approximately 5 000 countrywide. Richter (1988a:2) estimated the presence of over 9 000 street children in South Africa. This estimate was based on her definition of street children as "those who have abandoned (or have been abandoned by) their families, schools, and immediate communities, before they are 16 years of age, and drifted into a

nomadic street life". It is reasonable to suppose that the numbers of street children have risen dramatically since the time of Richter's estimate. Furthermore, if one defines street children as children under the age of 18 in terms of the Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983, this number would obviously be far higher.

Worldwide, the street child population is estimated to be more than 30 million (Agnelli, 1986:15). It is likely that as urban populations increase and adequate housing decreases, the growing number of squatter settlements and shacks will spawn even larger numbers of homeless people and street children.

Theoretical framework

At the heart of all research undertakings lie what many researchers consider to be the opposing philosophies of positivism and anti-positivism. Each philosophy is linked to a specific methodology. Positivism utilises mainly quantitative methods, whereas anti-positivism usually uses a qualitative approach.

Although the assumptions underlying these two approaches differ considerably, they are not mutually exclusive and should be seen to be on a philosophical continuum.

The philosophical assumptions guiding the present study contain elements of both positivism and anti-positivism. The anti-positivist approach and the qualitative method it uses, are described by Schurink as being "rooted in a number of theoretical perspectives among which symbolic interactionism is highly influential particularly in the study of small-scale interaction, personality and deviance" (Schurink, 1993:168-170).

Apart from symbolic interactionism, several other criminological theories can be applied to explain the deviant behaviour of street children and to construct a social profile of them before and after taking to the streets. Two perspectives characterise studies on crime, deviance and juvenile offences, namely the normative and relativistic perspectives. These in turn focus on both large-scale characteristics of

the social environment (macro-level theories) and small-scale face-to-face interactions (micro-level theories) (Schurink, 1994).

The present study adopted a relativistic approach. The relativistic perspective moves away from traditional notions of trying to explain deviant behaviour and the deviant and focuses instead on trying to explain why it is that certain individuals come to be defined or labelled as deviant/delinquent. Conflict and labelling theories have relevance within this perspective.

Conflict theory

The influence of Karl Marx underpins conflict theory, particularly radical conflict theories. Marx, though not writing specifically on crime but rather on society generally, says that conflict over scarce resources arises between those who own the means of production (bourgeoisie) and those who work for it (proletariat). Both classes vie for scarce resources, with the bourgeoisie striving to keep what they have, while the proletariat fight for what they do not have, but want. Laws are used by those in positions of power to subjugate the powerless.

In similar vein Schurink, citing Lötter and Ndabandaba, asserts that under the apartheid era, laws were created and enforced to uphold the interests of one or some groups and to label and punish those acts considered threatening to it/them (Schurink, 1994). In this way blacks were criminalised for trivial offences, family and community life were destroyed and untold poverty, unemployment and social, political and economic upheavals ensued so that the powerful could maintain their control over the powerless.

Conflict theory focuses on the differential power structure in society, and the ability of those who occupy powerful positions to make and enforce laws that are in their interests and that entrench their positions of power. Conflict theory rejects the notion that laws represent or protect the interests of all groups in society. Street children occupy the lowest and lowliest position on the power ladder relative to any other interest group in South African society. The threat

they pose to the powerful through their abandonment of family and community, their *public nuisance* value, the health risks they represent and their involvement in deviance and crime is reacted to punitively, merely reinforcing their victimisation and deviance.

Labelling theory

According to Goode, "labelling theory grew out of a more general perspective in sociology—symbolic interactionism" (Goode, 1984:32). Symbolic interactionists view human behaviour as dynamic rather than static and occurring within constantly changing social interactions. Inherent in this approach are the meanings and interpretations made by individuals in the course of their interactions with others (Thio, 1988).

Several theorists have contributed to the labelling perspective, such as Mead, Blumer, Becker, Thomas and Tannenbaum. This theory describes how the labelling of an individual sets in motion certain processes that eventually push him towards deviance and crime. The several propositions underlying labelling theory are briefly discussed.

- Definitions of acceptable and deviant behaviour are subjective and relative, depending on time, place, social status and society. There are therefore great variations in definitions of acceptable and deviant behaviour.

- Negative sanctions do not automatically follow rule breaking, since there are no universally held norms, values, beliefs, etc. Normative consensus is the exception rather than the rule, and occurs more commonly in homogenous societies.

- The focal issue in determining deviance is the labelling of the behaviour and the individual as deviant by an audience, or others.

- Labelling an individual as deviant has serious implications for further deviance. The theory states that following initial arrest and labelling, provision is made for the deviant to *reform*; failure to do

so results in rejection of the deviant and an intensification of his deviance.

- Once labelled, it is very difficult to escape the label. Arrest, trial and punishment all serve to dramatise the deviant act, yet when the debt has been repaid there is no fanfare—hence the label dramatically given, sticks.

- Labels are not randomly conferred, but depend on the status and power of the victim, the deviant and the labeller. Obviously the higher the status and power of the labeller, and the lower the status and power of the deviant, the more likely it is that the latter will be labelled.

- The deviant's acceptance of the label carries serious implications for further deviance (Goode, 1984).

The applicability of labelling theory to street children is abundantly clear. From the time the child abandons or is abandoned by family and community, the label *street child* is applied. This label has negative connotations since it emphasises his* street status rather than his child status. There appears to be widespread normative consensus by those in positions of power that street children are deviant, hence the *hard options* adopted in respect of them. These hard options indicate to the street child the negative perceptions of those in power, with the result that the deviant identity is accepted by the child, and followed by secondary deviance and further victimisation.

* It should be noted that the male gender reference to street children in this report is purely for expedience.

Rationale for the study

The presence of an estimated thirty million street children worldwide is cause for great concern. The 1991 census revealed that South Africa's population stood at approximately 26 million people. This figure included the former self-governing territories. It appears that "blacks are continuing a strong reproductive pattern indicated in the fact that 40 percent were under the age of 20 last year" (*Daily News*, 11 March 1992). These figures reveal that an exceptionally large number of African children under the age of 20 are resident in South Africa. Research on street children in this country estimates that there are over 9 000 such children countrywide (Richter, 1988a:5). With the exception of the strollers in the Cape, who are coloured, the street children in South Africa are overwhelmingly black. The number of known street children is small by comparison with the population under 20 years of age. However, the figure is unacceptably high in terms of the suffering, danger, exploitation, harassment, illness and criminal involvement experienced by these children.

There are admittedly many street children who have made acquaintance with criminals and gang members, and who refuse to live with their families, preferring to pursue anti-social activities. However, the larger number of street children has escaped from intolerable conditions of poverty, overcrowding, family breakdown and a host of other problems. Conditions such as these create a general atmosphere of neglect, hopelessness and despair. Parents, under such circumstances, have lost the respect of their children, and their control over them. It is perhaps a testimony to the courage of these children that they have decided to abandon these oppressive lifestyles in exchange for what they perceive to be the freedom, excitement and pleasures of city life. Unlike Huckleberry Finn and Dick Whittington, whose adventures captured the imagination of children throughout the world, these youngsters will not sail tranquilly down the river of life, nor will they find the cities' streets paved with gold. For them the road ahead is long and hard. Having faced neglect and rejection in their homes, they now face it on the streets. Their scruffy, unkempt

appearance evokes hostility, rather than sympathy. They have alternately been branded as terrorists, criminals, *good for nothing* children who should be dumped way out of the sight of *decent* citizens. Their presence has stirred up a hornet's nest of controversy as to what should be done for and about them. *Helping* strategies range from the custodial (places of safety) to the rehabilitative, with the emphasis falling largely on the former.

In addition to the differing attitudes and ideologies towards street children, their deviant activities and potential for future criminality is well documented in the literature (refer to Chapter 2). Media articles similarly highlight the deviant activities of street children, as the following excerpts show:

> In Durban there are between 300 and 500 street-waifs, who eke out an existence by begging and stealing from those who are better off than they are ... their actions range from minor transgressions like begging to major crimes like housebreaking (*Daily News*, 5 September 1990:7).

Professor Pieter Marcus, Dean of the Education Department at Rand Afrikaans University, speaking at a conference on street children in September 1990 (*Daily News*, 5 September 1990:7), said that "although they were not much inclined towards gangsterism and crime, there was, however, a direct link between the length of time spent on the street and the deterioration into delinquency and crime". The *Sunday Tribune* (11 May 1988:16), in an article headed "The theme is Dickens, the time is now, the place is here", states that street children "as young as nine and ten are trapped in a web of sexual abuse, glue-sniffing and alcohol abuse".

These articles number among the many that have appeared over the last few years. It is obvious from these media reports that the problems presented by the street children have assumed serious proportions in Durban. The involvement of street children in various types of deviance, such as theft, glue sniffing, prostitution, begging, to name but a few, is cause for increasing concern, especially in a country with

escalating rates of crime and violence. It is generally accepted that repeated acts of deviance may lead to delinquency and even crime, if the conditions that give rise to and nurture them are not forestalled.

Aims of the investigation

The aims of the study are in keeping with the three main themes that underpin it. It is believed that cause (victimisation) and effect (deviance) are entwined, and that if there is greater understanding why some children assume a street existence, steps can be taken to halt their gravitation to the streets and the deviant activities that invariably follow. This study therefore aims to

- study the existing literature on street children to establish causal factors, their victimisation and the deviant activities they engage in. From this discussion a social profile of street children before and after taking to the streets emerges (Chapter 2);

- investigate the victimisation of street children. It is argued that the victimisation of street children begins in the family and continues on the streets (Chapters 2, 4 and 5);

- investigate the deviant behaviour of street children in the Durban area (Chapters 4 and 5);

- investigate the attitudes of the service providers to street children. Their interactions with street children will determine the management of the problem, which in turn has implications for the victimisation of street children and their involvement in deviance, particularly secondary deviance (Chapter 5);

- make recommendations for the more effective prevention and management of the street child phenomenon and consequently their victimisation and deviance (primary and secondary) (Chapter 6).

Demarcation of the study

Due to time and financial constraints, the study was confined geographically to the Durban area. This area extended from Phoenix in the North to Merewent in the South, and Westwards to Cato Manor. Research indicates that street children tend to gravitate towards the city centre, since this area provides them with ample opportunity to engage in both legitimate and illegitimate activities. It was therefore felt that this area would more than adequately enable the researcher to fulfil the aims of the study.

Theoretically, the study is demarcated into three themes within both positivist and anti-positivist frameworks. The first theme relates to causation. It is believed that children do not simply become street children, but that an extensive process is involved that results in some, not all, becoming street children. This aspect is discussed in Chapter 2 by reviewing local and international studies that isolate certain factors contributing to this process. Causation is again examined in Chapters 4 and 5, from the perspectives of the actors (street children) and those with whom they interact (service providers). The second theme emphasises the victimisation of street children through beatings, ostracism, inadequate or non-existent legal measures to protect them, and institutionalisation, invariably in places of safety. The researcher asserts that the above forms of victimisation arise from and result in negative interactions that lay the foundation for deviance and crime. This aspect is discussed in Chapters 2, 4 and 5. Lastly, the study aims to show that street children engage in a variety of deviant activities (primary deviance), and that the interactions they experience, particularly labelling, are responsible for their engaging in further deviance (secondary deviance). The conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 6.

Defining relevant constructs

Street children

Definitions of street children are many and varied, depending on the orientation of the definer. Agnelli (1986:32) points to the difficulties in defining street children, since the term can be applied to a large number of children, all of whom "spend a significant part of their day in the street, without necessarily sharing any other common characteristics". However, she states that "a street child or street youth is any minor for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode, and who is without adequate protection".

Schurink (1993) asserts that there is no generally accepted definition of street children and related terms, and rather than attempting to define them, it seems more fruitful to bear the various dimensions of street children in mind when studying the phenomenon. Despite the debate over the use of the term *street children*, it is used to embrace various categories of children under this umbrella. The term street children is in common usage in Africa while in Europe, the United Kingdom, America and Australia, they are referred to as *homeless children*, *runaways*, *throwaways* and *pushouts*.

In this study, street children are defined as children under the age of 18 who live on the streets and who are forced or intentionally choose to leave their homes. They live marginally, that is on the fringe of society, independent of the family but dependent on society for a livelihood. Their physical, emotional, religious, medical, legal and other needs are largely unmet while on the streets. The children in this study are also runaways, since all but two children left of their own volition.

Runaways

This term refers to children who leave home of their own free will, without the permission of their parents. The National Centre for Health Statistics defines running away as "leaving or staying away on

purpose, knowing you would be missed, intending to stay away from home at least for some time" (Gullotta, 1979:111).

The definition of runaway children implies volition. Such children deliberately decide to leave their homes, to escape unhappy conditions or what they believe to be intolerable situations.

From the definition given of runaways, it is clear that a great many street children may be regarded as runaways, since they leave their homes intentionally and without parental permission. Kufeldt and Nimmo (1987:531) refer to two distinct categories of runaways. The first type are the *true runners* who leave intentionally with no thought of returning, and the second type are the *in and outers*, who run as a temporary coping mechanism. The *runs* of the *true runners* tend to be extended, whereas those of the *in and outers* tend to be impulsive and of short duration.

Pushouts or *throwaways*

Unlike the runaways, who make a conscious decision to leave their families, pushouts would seem to have no choice in the matter, having been unceremoniously kicked out of their families, or having been told to leave. These children have either been abandoned or orphaned by their parents, relatives and communities, or have been rejected from intact families, often by step-parents (Swart, 1988c).

These terms apply to children who have been asked to leave their home by their parents, who have been abandoned by them, or who have been subjected to high levels of abuse and neglect.

Homelessness

In its literal definition, homelessness refers to the absence of shelter or accommodation. This definition fails to reflect the trauma that accompanies homelessness, such as the isolation, alienation, rejection, forced independence and the lack of suitable alternatives. O'Connor (1989:19) states that "homelessness is far more than a description of their (homeless) current housing status. It is an experience that impinges on every aspect of their lives".

The National Youth Coalition for Housing reports that in order for homelessness to exist, one or more of the following conditions should be present: an absence of shelter or the threat of losing one's shelter; high mobility between places of residence; inadequate present accommodation due to physical condition, overcrowding and/or lack of security; and unreasonable restrictions in obtaining other forms of accommodation (O'Connor, 1989).

It is apparent that street children adequately fit the definitions of runaway, throwaway and homeless children.

Deviance

The theoretical polarisation *vis-à-vis* positivism/anti-positivism similarly characterises the studies on deviance. Two perspectives prevail, the traditional (positivist) and the modern (anti-positivist). Positivists traditionally concern themselves with serious types of deviant behaviour such as murder, rape and armed robbery. As such, these crimes receive a greater degree of value consensus and may be regarded as higher consensus deviance. Anti-positivists reject the notion of value consensus, believing it to be applicable only to simple, traditional, homogenous societies. They focus on the less serious or harmful types of deviants such as, *inter alia*, drug addicts, prostitutes, *grifters* and *skidders* (Thio, 1988). It is clear from management procedures that although street children fit more comfortably into the lower consensus deviance category, their behaviour receives considerable censure.

Bearing the above discussion in mind, this study focuses on the primary and secondary deviance of street children. Primary deviance "is simply the enactment of deviant behaviour itself—any form of it" (Goode, 1984:33). Secondary deviance, according to Goode "occurs when the individual who enacts deviant behaviour deals with the problems created by social reactions to his primary deviation" (Goode, 1984:33). In this study, deviance is defined as "those activities which bring disapproval from members of society" (Haralambos & Holborn, 1992:580-581). Deviance is considered to be arbitrary social judgment,

a label given at a certain time and place by those in positions of power.

Social profile

For the purpose of this study a social profile is defined as a social history of the street child and his family prior to leaving home, as well as his activities and interactions on the streets.

Outline of the report

The following chapter examines the causation, victimisation and deviance themes. Chapter 3 presents a methodological account of the steps taken in executing the study. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of the empirical study. Chapter 4 presents the views of street children on a number of aspects relating to, *inter alia*, their backgrounds, deviant activities and arrest/detention.

Chapter 5 canvasses the views of service providers on street children. Their views are essential in understanding how street children are currently dealt with, and in proposing new measures for the more effective management of the street child phenomenon. Finally, recommendations for the more effective prevention and management of the street child phenomenon are made in Chapter 6.

2 Review of the literature

Introduction

The reasons for children taking to the streets or being forced out of their homes are multiple. No single factor is responsible for the homelessness of children. The causes combine in an interlinking chain to produce children *on* and *of* the street. Broader global and societal factors filter down to affect communities, families and ultimately children. The immediate familial and community upheavals combine with inner motivations, culminating in the alienation of children from family and community supports, so much so that running away is viewed as the best or only alternative. The tragedy of home and community life continues on the streets, with the child being exposed to physical assault, sexual abuse, harassment from the public, intimidation by gang members and criminals and arrest and detention in prisons, police cells and places of safety by officials. The victimisation that characterised the lives of street children in their families and communities is re-enacted on the streets, providing the impetus for deviance and crime.

The present chapter examines the literature dealing with the aetiology of the street child phenomenon, the victimisation of street children and the involvement of street children in deviant behaviour. It is believed that the causal factors set in motion the process of becoming a street child, the victimisation he experiences and the deviance he engages in. The street child can be regarded as doubly victimised, first in his family and his community and then on the streets, and it is this latter victimisation that may propel him towards deviance. From an examination of causal factors, victimisation and deviance it is possible to construct a social profile of street children and their families, both prior to leaving their homes and while on the streets.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Following the introduction is a discussion on causation or aetiological factors that contribute to the street child phenomenon. The influence of political, social, family and individual factors on the street child phenomenon is discussed. Political factors may be regarded as the overarching factors responsible for the widespread destruction of family and community life with severe consequences for the individual. The next two sections focus on the victimisation of street children, the deviant activities they engage in, and the links between these two aspects. The chapter concludes with a summary of the preceding themes.

Aetiology of the street child phenomenon

An in-depth study of the literature reveals a host of contributory factors, the most commonly cited being political factors, poverty, urbanisation, unemployment, family disintegration and disruption, violence and conflicts, abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) and alcoholism. The chain of causality does not merely end with children turning to the streets. The many children who are displaced and alienated through factors beyond their control in turn engage in a host of anti-social and criminal activities. These are children who are catapulted into adulthood before their time, deprived of nurture, protection and care. Children learn from those around them. If they are denied what most children take for granted as freely given, how will they in turn be able to nurture, protect and care for their own children? The effects of abuse, neglect and deprivation are far reaching and the effects of street life are brutalising. The cost to society is incalculable and the responsibility to understand and help is ours.

Political factors

Politics play a fundamental role in our lives and, until recently, dictated how and where we lived and worked, with whom, where and how we were educated, and the health and welfare services available to us. The lifestyles of South Africans were prescribed by a series of laws and regulations that severely limited the prospects and potential

of the majority while bestowing unlimited advantages and favours on the few. These restrictive and destructive laws are believed by many to be the root cause of South Africa's isolation from the international community and the dissatisfaction and upheavals it has experienced, particularly since the Soweto riots of 1976. The most well-known and damaging pieces of legislation responsible for the break-up of family and community life and perhaps the increasing number of black children taking to the streets, are mentioned below.

The Group Areas Act

This Act, which was implemented in 1950, saw the creation of separate geographical areas for the various population groups. Apart from separating people geographically, it also stymied competition by non-whites in the business arena. The effects of this Act were devastating, and rent asunder the social and economic fabric of settled communities. The proclamation of District Six (on the slopes of Table Mountain) as a white area brought to an end extended family support systems, home industries and employment. Women went to work to make ends meet and children took to the streets, particularly as gang members (McLachlan, 1984).

McLachlan notes that the Group Areas Act had dire implications, particularly for coloured and Indian people. From the time of its implementation in 1950 to the end of 1981, 120 787 families were moved. Only 2 262 of them were white, the rest were coloured and Indian. The ties binding communities, families and children were loosened, with the result that without social restraints, the children were free to do as they pleased (McLachlan, 1984:9).

In terms of the above legislation, black communities were also resettled far from any existing amenities and facilities, and were subjected to frequent bulldozing or burning of dwellings that were considered unfit. Motsisi and Magubane (cited in Peacock, 1990:3) believe "that street children were torn from their families when their parents could not 'prove' to the Resettlement Board that they were their children".

The Act also prohibited black children from living with parents who worked in white areas. They were consequently left with relatives, friends and even acquaintances. Isolation from parents and poor nurturing are seen by Peacock as factors facilitating entry into street life (Peacock, 1990). MacCurtain (1988) and Agnelli (1986) cite the eviction of employees' children by their employers as a factor that gives rise to the street child phenomenon.

Influx control

This piece of legislation effectively prohibited large-scale settlement of blacks in urban areas, unless they qualified to live in a white area, or were granted permission to work in South Africa under the migrant labour system. Families were not permitted to accompany migrant workers, thereby leading to disintegration of family life. In the process, migrant labourers found themselves *outsiders* on their annual visits to their families, and lost their authority over their children. This viewpoint is shared by Peacock (1990:6) who states that "large scale family disruption was the consequence of this forced migrant labour". The establishment of the independent homelands meant that millions of blacks were automatically denied citizenship in the country of their birth, and were condemned to severe deprivation in outlying areas that lacked the infrastructure to support such large numbers of people.

Pass Laws

The Pass Laws formed the legal framework for the Group Areas and influx control legislation. They necessitated the carrying of a pass book at all times, and determined the *right* of the individual to be in white areas. As a result, millions of people were criminalised for actions that in any other country were regarded as normal and acceptable.

The above laws are cited by many researchers (Goniwe & Bishop, 1989; Keen, 1988; Peacock, 1990) as having led to the disintegration of family bonds, and by implication to the weakening of the duties, responsibilities and controls attendant on such ties.

Furthermore, job reservation and the inferior education system for blacks precluded most blacks from receiving a solid education, which in turn limited the job opportunities available to them. The Institute for Christian National Education formed in 1939 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, were designed to entrench the inferiority of black education and to ensure the "trusteeship of the White man ... over the non-white" (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986:172-177).

The implementation of these laws has led to widespread poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, housing shortages and discrepancies in implementing socio-economic policies. These conditions, in turn, have caused stresses and strain in interpersonal relationships, more especially within the family. Street children are the products of an accumulation of circumstances and events emanating from broader structures and processes.

Homelessness in Ireland bears sharp resemblance to conditions that give rise to the phenomenon of street children in South Africa. He ascribes homelessness in Dublin to the "inequitable social, economic, political and legislative system which ordinarily traps them in this deprived state". He is critical of the Irish Government's indifference towards the plight of the homeless which is expressed through archaic laws. He states that "though they are Irish citizens in theory, in reality they have virtually no rights under the Irish law". The same can be said of street children in this country who are safeguarded only by the Child Care Act, which is regarded as inadequate.

Political protest

In the 1960s running away in America was regarded by many young people as a political protest against restrictive families and an oppressive society. Although South Africa has seen mass protest action, particularly since the 1976 Soweto uprising, it is unlikely that running away is pursued as a means of political protest. If this were the case, there would be much larger numbers of street children than the estimated "0,3 % of the relevant reference population groups,

which in this case are Black and Coloured males ..." (Cockburn, 1990:4).

Township conditions

Township life presents two faces. On the one hand it is characterised by its vibrancy, the laughter of its peoples, colourfulness and the sheer grit and determination of its residents who have fought, mobilising young and old alike, for the birth of a new nation. It is characterised by its music and dance such as the soulful strains of Kwela music and the penny whistle. It has spawned powerful resistance groups and individuals who have left indelible marks on the pages of South African history books. On the other hand, the darker side of township life is all too well-known: the endless rows of unattractive, anonymous dwellings, set in isolated, barren acres of land; poorly lit streets, people living one on top of the other in cramped, overcrowded conditions with no jobs, no money and not much hope for the future. The threat of attack by vigilantes, comrades, the police and criminal elements generates great fear and stress in people already burdened with the day-to-day problems of survival. These are some of the many conditions that may catapult children into street life. As early as 1957, Motsisi and Magubane (cited in Peacock, 1990:2) stated that "the degenerated townships of Pimville, Orlando and Alexandria ... were responsible for the occurrence of street children". They believed that township conditions forced children "to seek psychological and physical survival on the streets of Johannesburg". Swart (1988a) states that the unrest in black townships, especially in schools, was responsible for many youths being driven to the streets. She reports that intimidation from older, more politically active youth, fear of police reprisals and the burning down of schools caused many youth to flee to Johannesburg in search of alternate schooling. She states further that faction fighting, clashes between township residents and the police and necklacing have all created tension and insecurity, which find release in street life (Swart, 1988c). The urban areas must

seem very attractive and promising in comparison with the conditions that street children leave behind.

Township violence

Surprisingly little has been written on the impact of township violence on the street child phenomenon. It is well-known that townships are rent by indiscriminate killings, violence, intimidation and fear. The Detainees' Parents Support Committee (1986) believes that there is no connection between township violence and street children, since children seem to ignore the violence around them. By the same token, the tendency to ignore the violence can take the form of escaping from it physically. Children have been victims of police and armed forces raids, teargassing, attacks by dogs and intimidation by older children and this may possibly account for "increased numbers of nomadic children recently coming to towns to escape ... and joining the street children's groups" (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986:157). However, those who work with these refugees of township violence in Johannesburg hold the view that these children are only *temporary sojourners*, and soon return to their homes with the help of social workers.

Political violence and instability are not peculiar to South Africa, and wherever they occur, children become the victims. Alexander's (1987) study of street children in Guatemala views the political violence there as a contributory factor both to the underdevelopment of the country and the increase in the number of homeless children.

Education

The education of black schoolgoing children in South Africa has been described, *inter alia*, as being *at the crossroads*, *in turmoil*, or *in crisis*. J.N. le Roux, 1945 National Party politician, stated: "We should not give the Natives any academic education. If we do, who is going to do the manual labour in the community?" (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986:172).

Education, which should be regarded as a right, not a privilege, was deliberately designed by the former government to suppress black people and keep them in their place.

Education for blacks was never meant to be equal, but was designed to frustrate and alienate pupils at every turn. The Bantu Education Act imposed in 1953 was the means by which this ideology could be attained. Resistance to this Act came from teachers, students and communities alike who were well aware of the inferior nature of the education provided. Black education was characterised by the shortage of schools and classrooms, and consequently overcrowding. In 1992, the teacher-student ratio in KwaMashu schools stood at 115:1 (Thembinkosi Ngcobo, information officer of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee, cited in the *Daily News*, 29 January 1992:4). Teachers were underqualified and schools were severely lacking in facilities and textbooks. The Soweto uprising of 1976 brought international media coverage and condemnation, and was the culmination of years of dissatisfaction with an educational system that did little or nothing to uplift the masses.

The above factors led to young people's rejection of the black educational system which they saw as the tool of the state to implement its discriminatory policies. Children therefore rejected the schools and what they stood for, but did not reject a fair, satisfying education. Peacock (1990), citing Burman and Reynolds (1986), states that the schools did not cater for the cultural sentiments of blacks, but instead portrayed them as "obstacles to white interests". Peacock believes that the inferior school system entrenches poverty, which in turn makes a street lifestyle almost inevitable. Swart (1988c:39) states that the poor conditions prevailing in the schools "generate a high drop-out rate", leaving children unsupervised for the better part of the day.

The school plays a vital role in the lives of children, and apart from the parents, "is one of the principal and constant agents in socialization" (Cronjé *et al.*, 1976:169-174). It reinforces the "social and cognitive responses" that are learnt from parents, and teaches new responses and behaviour. Ideally, the school should educate the *whole* child, that is, physically, intellectually, emotionally and

psychologically, and should form the bridge between childhood and adulthood. It can either counteract deviant behaviour, or it can encourage and facilitate it.

It is evident from the various factors reviewed above that strenuous efforts were made by the Nationalist government to halt the development and progress of black South Africans, the effects of which were keenly felt in the social arena.

Social factors

Urbanisation

Urbanisation is often cited as a contributory factor to the street child phenomenon. Although the Group Areas Act and influx control laws effectively limited widespread urbanisation until their recent repeal, the tendency exists for people to move to cities and towns in search of employment, and what they perceive to be better opportunities. Pinnock (1984:18) is of the view that "poverty in the city holds out more chances of survival than poverty in the countryside".

Increasing hardship such as unpredictable climatic conditions, pests, unsuitable farming methods and diminishing profits, entice rural dwellers to the city. The city holds out promise for better educational and job opportunities, combined with better facilities and resources. The expectations of newcomers to the city are often unrealised, as they are faced by cities that simply cannot accommodate the burgeoning population. The result is poverty, unemployment and frustration. Both parents are often obliged to work long hours for low pay. Children are left unsupervised without vital support systems, and the family unit disintegrates (Agnelli, 1986).

Aptekar (1988) believes that the hypothesis pointing to urban poverty and rural to urban migration as causative factors in the street child phenomenon must be viewed cautiously, since it fails to take into account the sources of street children and individual differences. These latter factors may be pivotal in explaining why it is that only some children who experience urban poverty and rural to urban migration become street children. Since most street children in South Africa are

black, the fact that most black children stay with their families and grow up to lead law-abiding and hard-working lives is testimony to the strength and tenacity of black families, which have endured all forms of hardship and discrimination over the years.

Westernisation

Closely related to urbanisation is westernisation. This process refers to the influence of western culture on indigenous culture when the two cultures meet. "Culture may be regarded as the sum total of a group's habits, customs and life attitudes, and as their material and spiritual possession, developed and transferred in the course of time" (Cloete *et al.*, 1980:126). Culture exercises a vital influence in the lives of all individuals. The African family system is bound by a strict code of conduct and ethics, inextricably entwined with culture and tradition. Every man, woman and child has a place and a role to fulfil in family and community life. Out of this awareness arises stability and security. The African individual in urban society finds himself in conflict. He is isolated from family and community support systems and is confronted by values, norms and laws that he finds alien. Western values, norms and laws are seen as desirable and, by implication, status-conferring. In order to be accepted, there is a tendency to identify with the dominant culture, and to denounce the African culture. In the process, important elements of black culture are denied, and with them the many controls and supports that are an inherent part of the culture. Peacock (1990:4) cites various researchers who believe that the westernisation of black families is one of the reasons for the higher incidence of black street children, since it is responsible for the loss of cultural values and is hence "disruptive of urban family life". Swart (1988c:84) states that westernisation has eroded the "traditional way of life of indigenous peoples in Southern Africa".

Poverty

Poverty is incongruous amid the numerous advances and technological developments of the twentieth century. It stands in sharp contrast to the

opulence, glamour and sophistication of large cities and individuals. It is a relative concept, and is defined by Gillin as "that condition in which a person, either because of inadequate income or unwise expenditure, does not maintain a scale of living high enough to provide for his physical and mental efficiency and to enable him and his natural dependants to function usefully according to the standards of the society of which he is a member" (Gillin, cited in Rip, 1978:59).

In many developing countries, population growth supersedes economic growth due to natural increases and rural to urban migration. Consequently, large numbers of people are barely able to make ends meet, if at all. Driven by poverty and need, children in developing countries living and working on the streets are a common sight. Agnelli (1986) is of the opinion that street children in developing countries are the products of unemployment, rural to urban migration, poverty and broken families, and are forced to live on the fringe of the adult world.

Poverty in South Africa is linked, *inter alia*, to urbanisation, job reservation, the inferior education system for blacks and the inequitable distribution of resources. Poverty creates stress and frustration which, apart from weakening parents' self-control, also weakens their ability to control and discipline their children. The stresses and strains emanating from poverty often result in violent and aggressive interchanges between husband and wife, which frequently spill over into violence towards children. Research indicates that poverty and abuse, singly or in combination, are powerful precipitators for the decision by children to flee from their families and communities and live on the streets. Several researchers point to the connection between poverty, runaway and homeless youth and street children.

Swart (1988c) states that the widespread poverty in urban areas necessitates that children contribute to the family income, and in many cases, they may be the sole contributors. She reports that it is not unusual for children to have to choose between earning money somehow, not bringing in money and getting beaten, or "stay[ing] in the street for good".

Unemployment

Unemployment and poverty go hand in hand, and much of what has been said with regard to poverty, applies to unemployment as well. Unemployment is demeaning to the individual and is to him a negation of his self-worth and value as a provider.

Historically, men have been providers and women child-bearers and child-raisers. Although men are no longer the sole contributors to the family income, the perception still exists, albeit covertly, that they are, or should be, the major providers.

Economic recession is being experienced in several countries throughout the world. South Africa has been in the grip of recession and rising inflation rates for a number of years. International sanctions and disinvestment have meant the closure of businesses, factories and mines, resulting in widespread unemployment and hardship. The black worker is hardest hit, and so are his children. According to Swart, children are asked to work "to supplement the family income through begging or vending", or told to fend for themselves (Swart, 1988c:90).

She states that unemployment among black people is excessive, and that in Soweto alone, 28 per cent are unemployed (Swart, 1988a:11). Children therefore turn to the streets for survival, out of sheer desperation or because they are expected to.

Overcrowding

Related to poverty and unemployment is overcrowding. The dearth of affordable housing for black families and high rentals leads to the situation where a dwelling is occupied by several families or tenants in the effort to reduce payments. Pinnock (1984:4), writing on street gangs in the Cape, poignantly captures the living conditions in housing developments in the Cape Flats. In his view,

> many of the families have broken up, most of the houses and flats are overcrowded, and the schools are packed to bursting-point. Street life is the spill from families, schools, jobs and overcrowding.

He believes that youth must make a choice between the claustrophobic conditions indoors or moving out onto the street. They opt for the latter. Although Pinnock writes specifically of youth in the Cape Flats, these conditions are experienced similarly by black youth in their respective townships. He further states that the townships that were conceived and developed by the urban planners of the 1940s were geared towards nuclear families, and completely ignored the social and cultural systems of non-whites, leading over time to their fragmentation and dislocation. In addition, insufficient houses were made available to resettled people, so that those who had homes accommodated friends and relatives in cramped, overcrowded conditions (Pinnock, 1984).

Jayes (1985) states that overcrowding had an effect on the quality of life in these homes and "seemed to be more directly related to the drift to the streets". She also believes that the lack of physical care and comfort, and the feeling of being unwanted, cause some children to leave their homes.

It can be concluded that overcrowding due to the Group Areas Act, poverty and unemployment, is a decisive factor in a child's decision to run away, or find himself being thrown out of his home.

Housing shortage

The lack of adequate accommodation forces people to live in shanty towns characterised by little or no health care facilities, a paucity of clean water and no schools and social services. Children are pushed into the streets and into "hunger, disease, violence and fear" (Alexander, 1987:190).

Preference in housing allocation in the townships is given to families or to men. In the event of the death of the husband or divorce, the wife and children face eviction. The rent boycotts in the townships cause further evictions. The victims inevitably are the children, who are forced by circumstances onto the streets (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986:117).

The critical shortage of housing is indicated in the table below*:

Table 1: Housing shortage

Population group	*Surplus (+) or shortage (-)*	*No. of houses built 1983-1985*
White	+37 000	172 000
Coloured	-52 000	62 000
Asian	-44 000	37 000
African	-583 000	41 000

De Vos (cited by Kenridge, 1989:77) states that

> taking the backlog to the year 2000 as four million units, approximately 600 units would have to be built each working day for the next 20 years. At present, the building rate is below 20 units per working day. Clearly, no dent can be made in the housing shortage if the current rate of building is maintained.

The influence of political factors on poverty, unemployment, overcrowding and housing shortages is undeniable, and has seriously affected adequate family functioning.

Family factors

Numerous studies on the street child phenomenon have focused on the family. The reasons for children running away or being thrown out of their homes are generally ascribed to the disintegration of families, conflict, violence, abuse, alcoholism and illegitimacy. The search for

* From the *Report of the National Building Research Institute* by Dr Tobie de Vos, cited by Mathew Kenridge in a report for UNICEF (1989:77).

causes is endless and family factors undoubtedly play a role. The dynamic interplay between political, social, family and individual factors must be considered.

Families wield great power and influence over children and have the power to mould and shape, to make or break. The child who is neglected and abused by those who should love and care for him, is unable to show love and care for others, and will carry these unfulfilled needs into adulthood. The need for love and security is a powerful motivator for behaviour, even for behaviour that is unacceptable or incomprehensible to others. Many of the studies already referred to have shown that children end up as *strays* on the street because of sociopolitical factors over which they have no control. They also end up on the streets because of family factors over which they have no control, as the following studies show.

Family disintegration

The tendency for families to crumble and disintegrate is a recurrent theme in much of the current literature. Families that once stood as fortresses against all turpitude, are now succumbing to the onslaughts of urbanisation, isolation, mobility, impersonality and a host of other influences. Societies now recognise that families do fail and desertion, separation and divorce bear testimony to this.

Richter (1988a:13-15) states that "single parenthood or disrupted family life" is characteristic of between one-third and one-half of all black families, and therefore does not fully explain the presence of street children in a relatively small number of families. She believes that "psychological and motivational factors" will help to explain why some, and not all children who experience this upheaval run away.

The structural disruption of the family through death or divorce may also be a cause of the street child phenomenon. He states that when a divorced parent enters a new relationship, his or her children may be abused by the step-parent, causing great trauma, isolation and alienation of the child from the family. Such children may end up on the streets scavenging for food, begging and engaging in prostitution.

In many instances, children are abandoned by their remaining parents in urban areas and are forced by circumstances to fend for themselves.

Family violence

Violence towards women and children in families has increased considerably and is associated, along with other factors, with the increasing stress on nuclear, broken and reconstituted families. Stress arising from the numerous sociopolitical factors already mentioned, together with the changing role and status of women and children and the emphasis on individual rights, freedom and independence, all combine to produce volatile situations within the family. Men who abuse their wives are equally likely to abuse their children. Women who are abused by their husbands, may in turn either abuse their children, or be neglectful and indifferent towards them.

It is against this backdrop of violence and abuse that many children run away from their homes. Richter (1988c:2) states that the family backgrounds of both street children and runaways are characterised by "violence, abuse, neglect and rejection".

Ennew (cited in Swart, 1988c) reports that street children typically have been subjected to exploitation, rejection and violence, especially by fathers and father figures, making their lives at home unbearable. Physical abuse by parents is a constant feature in the case histories of these children. Step-parents are particularly hated for the abuse they inflict, and the deterioration in care following their arrival into the home.

A stroller's account of the abuse he suffered prior to running away may be generalised to a large number of children currently living on our streets, and graphically illustrates the violence that is so much a part of many families:

> We [the children] were just hit and kicked without reason, and I don't like that anymore. My *ma* and *pa* fight nearly every night, then we also get hiding. ... My dad invites his friends over and they smoke dagga and when they've left he kicks the

door open and fights with us" (Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:267).

In a comparative study of runaways and non-runaways conducted by Roberts (1982:15,19) it was found that certain types of stressful events combined with inadequate coping skills led many youth to run away. Among the six stress-producing events reported only by runaways was *being beaten by a parent*. He also found a "high frequency of runaways who had an alcoholic parent and/or a parent who beat them, combined with problems at school".

*Family conflicts**

A review of the literature indicates the tendency for overseas authors to emphasise the role of family conflicts in runaway behaviour. The South African literature on street children by contrast makes scant reference to such conflicts. No doubt this is due to the cultural tradition of black people, whereby children are expected to be obedient and respectful to parents and elders at all times. Perhaps it is this very expectation of obedience and respect that is responsible for children taking to the streets, since to stay and argue and assert one's independence would be totally unacceptable.

In developed countries, family conflicts over curfews, house rules, appearance, friends, school and future expectations by parents often provide the impetus for running away. Children view parents' rules, regulations and expectations as rigid and as attempts to frustrate their independence (*Report of the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary*, 1980).

Olson *et al.* (1980) state that the most serious conflicts between parents and runaway children arise over school performance and household rules and regulations. Children whose grades do not meet

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* Family conflict is a broad category that refers to conflict, rejection and lack of communication in relationships, which result in anger and frustration for the child.

their parents' expectations are frequently denied privileges or made to do additional household chores. In their study, the runaway children felt that they had a heavier share of household duties than did their siblings. The demands of the parents, and the restrictions imposed in order to achieve them, were viewed by the runaways as rejections and unjust. Runaways felt that their parents would be better off without them, and hence left.

South African studies on family conflict are fewer by comparison but echo the themes in the international literature. In South Africa, Swart (1988a:9) reports that nearly half of the sample of street children admitted "pain, hurt, anger, rejection or aggression in family relationships". These feelings were ascribed to parents who drank, did not care, abandoned and punished their children unfairly.

The role of women

Very few published studies refer to the role of women and how it affects runaway behaviour. Women and their children are two sides of the same coin. What happens to one is felt by the other. Their ties to one another extend from birth, through life and through successive generations. When women suffer and are downtrodden, so too are their children. It can be argued that the presence of large numbers of street children is symptomatic of the social, cultural, familial and economic ills experienced by women. Historically, women and children have always maintained an inferior status in the social hierarchy. "A prime factor in domination is that law, devised to ensure human freedom is manipulated by those wielding power, to withhold rights and privileges from others" (Meer *et al.*, 1990:35).

In addition to this, the interpretation of selected passages of scripture, taken out of context, by male scholars entrenches the domination of women. Women's domination likewise occurs in the family patriarchy, where the male head distributes resources, both material and affectional, and presides over her domain. The right to rule or *control* the household, carries with it obligations and expectations of emotional and financial support. However,

> the 'disappearance' of men in the urban areas, and their consequent 're-appearance', for short durations, has driven the women in the rural areas into penury, and forced them into the job market" (Mandela, cited in Meer *et al.*, 1990:8).

Women also face discrimination when competing for jobs, housing and equal pay. Although women in the western world have lobbied for protective legislation and greater equality in all spheres, their sisters in the Third World are severely handicapped by traditional notions of womanhood. In South Africa, black women are discriminated against racially, socially and culturally. Employers are hesitant to employ domestic workers with children, and children are generally sent to relatives or other caretakers. The more children a woman has, the less likely she is to obtain employment. Agnelli states that "the higher the number of children single working women must support, the greater the possibility of their ending up in the street" (Agnelli, 1986:50). The irony is that black women must of necessity work to support their children, yet the long hours spent at work and in travelling long distances for meagre pay, leaves children more deprived.

Alexander (1987:11-13) believes that the position of women is central to the discussion of street children. She states that the breakdown of family and community support has robbed single women of their self-esteem and control over their lives. Consequently, "because of the close relationship between women and children, the lack of such support not only affects the economic situation but the emotional security of their children as well".

Illegitimacy

Illegitimacy among South African black families has arisen largely out of the policies of migrant labour and influx control. Men who spend only a few weeks each year with their wives, form liaisons in the city with other women with whom they father children. Women also enter into temporary unions with men for financial and moral support, and bear their children as well. The result is a large number of children

who grow up amid the instability and insecurity of temporary and shifting family relationships.

Apart from the legislation that affected illegitimacy rates, Richter, Griesel and Etheridge (1986) attribute illegitimacy to the delay in marriage brought about by the *lobola* system. Traditionally, *lobola* consisted of giving cattle to the bride's parents. Nowadays, the urban groom has to pay a substantial amount of money to the bride's parents and has to negotiate complex wedding arrangements between two sets of parents who may live in different parts of the country. The couple may begin to live together and have children long before the *lobola* has been paid. This partly accounts for the single status of women, and the illegitimate status of children.

Illegitimate children born under conditions of poverty run the risk of abuse, neglect and abandonment, and may account for a sizeable proportion of children on the streets.

Alcoholism

Alcoholism disrupts family relationships and is often associated with violence towards spouses and children. It leads to suspension or dismissal from work, which in turn leads to the impoverishment of families, with wives having to work and children being left in the *care* of an alcoholic. Alcoholism weakens the bonds between the alcoholic parent and the children. They do not respect the drinker and resent his/her attempt to assert authority and discipline over them. When the alcoholism of the parent is combined with poor living conditions, overcrowding and the lack of food, money and physical and emotional warmth, the tenuous ties between parents and children may be finally broken.

Jayes (1985) found in her study that the parents of runaway boys had a higher incidence of alcoholism than the parents of non-runaway boys. She further found that alcoholism (including drug abuse) and family violence increased in densely populated, poor communities as a result of the stresses and strains that accrued from such lifestyles, while the political structures limited other alternatives. Alcohol abuse

was prevalent among the mothers of the runaways in the Jayes study, and this may have contributed to their inability to adequately care for their children. She concludes that alcohol abuse among mothers may have significantly contributed to their children's runaway behaviour.

It is generally acknowledged that alcoholism in families of the lower and upper strata, locally and throughout the world, is an ever-present reality and yet children remain in unhappy home situations rather than run away. It seems that the decision to stay or leave is determined by the different evaluations children make of their circumstances. This latter view finds support in the theory of W. I. Thomas, who states that "if men define situations as real ... they are real in their consequences" (Vetter & Silverman, 1986:360). This seems to be particularly true of runaways. The particular meanings and interpretations they develop during their interactions with others determine ultimately whether they remain in unhappy home situations or leave. Although external variables (politics and social factors) provide the backdrop, the final trigger arises from factors within the children themselves, that is, individual factors.

Individual factors

Motivation, personality characteristics and temperament all determine how an individual assesses his life circumstances and how he reacts to them. Coping mechanisms are learned in childhood, as well as habits, behavioural patterns and attitudes. The foundation for the personality is the product of the parents' attitudes and behaviour towards the child, their interactions with him and their cultural values. In the attempt to understand runaway behaviour, many studies examine the characteristics and needs of the child. The views of various researchers are presented below.

Psychological factors

The psychological perspective views the child as psychopathological and Speck, Ginther and Helton (1988:886) found in their study of runaways that they were "more aggressive than the norm, they possess

weaker superego strength and recidivist runaways have lower general intelligence than the norms".

Recidivism has been used by several researchers as the criterion by which healthy characteristics of runaways can be measured. In other words, those who run away once are seen as healthy or normal or reacting to a particular problem in the environment, while those who run away repeatedly are seen to have more serious problems. Repeated running away is listed as a diagnostic criterion in the DSM-III* for conduct disorders in children and adolescents (Speck, Ginther & Helton, 1988:882).

Research indicates that some characteristics of street children conform to the psychiatric classification of conduct disorders included in DSM-III of "non aggressive, undersocialised conduct disorder" (Cockburn, 1990:7). Similarly, Jayes (1985:12,68) found that many of the boys in her study displayed symptoms of "oppositional or conduct disorders" mainly of the undersocialised, non-aggressive type listed in the DSM-III. She cites Stierlin, who distinguishes between runaways who are delinquent, those who run away often but show no signs of delinquency, and those who show symptoms of psychosis. The runaway group with delinquent characteristics display truancy, assaultive behaviour, theft, drug and alcohol abuse and promiscuity, all of which are listed as conduct disorders in the DSM-III.

Richter (1988b:60,75,78), though disapproving of a psychopathological approach to street children, nevertheless distinguished between three types of boys on the street. The first group, approximately one-third of her sample, displayed moderate to severe symptoms of some type of disorder. The second, again approximately one-third of the sample, showed no signs of psychological disorder, while the last group fell somewhere between the two groups. She found that those boys who had a strong internal

* *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual.*

locus of control* were less psychopathological, especially with regard to depression. Those with a strong external locus of control had spent a longer period on the streets, had "less positive relationships with peers and showed more signs of psychopathology, particularly in the form of depression and psychosomatic symptoms". She believes that the psychopathology evinced by some of the boys should not be ignored, since it is likely to hinder their success in certain areas of their lives. On the other hand, some of the boys displayed tremendous resilience and capabilities beyond what was expected of them, despite the enormous hardships to which they had been exposed.

Stress

Several studies focus on stress as a reason for children running away from their homes. Wilson and Arnold (1986:6) state that children are under tremendous pressure to achieve, in stark contrast to the reality of their situations. These expectations are transmitted via parents, school and the media and present to children an "increasingly unattainable image".

Although this may be true of runaways in developed countries, such expectations are far less likely to apply to the South African street child. Nowadays, children are subjected to far more familial stress, evident in increasing numbers of single-parent families whose obligation to support and care for their members extracts a heavy toll on all. A comparative study of runaways and non-runaways by Roberts (1982) revealed that runaways experienced a greater number of stressful events than their non-runaway counterparts. These events included stressful patterns of living, such as being beaten by parents,

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* Locus of control is a psychological construct referring to an individual's belief regarding his or her power and/or ability to influence events in life and other people. Individuals who perceive themselves as the passive victims of uncontrollable events, and as passive recipients of the acts of other people, are regarded as having an extreme external locus of control (Richter, 1988b:59).

being thrown out of their homes, the death of a parent, being placed in a children's shelter and being caught for drug dealing.

Jayes (1985:43,44,46), like Roberts, tabulated the number of stress-producing events experienced by the children in her study and found that each child had a mean of 14,7 stressful events. Some of the most frequently reported stress-producing events were residential moves, parents' separation or divorce, mother's boyfriend moving in, overcrowding/inadequate housing, financial difficulties, alcoholism, parents' fighting and being beaten by a parent.

It is apparent that street children in this country are subjected to both external and internal stresses that may explain their presence on the streets. It does not, however, explain why the vast majority of black children are not on the streets, since most experience the same stresses and pressures. The answer is to be found perhaps in the peculiar interplay of social and especially personal factors, which make each individual unique and determine the decision to stay or flee.

Rebellion

To some youths, running away represents a rebellion against parental control, fear of domination by parents and the feeling of losing control over their lives (Leventhal, cited in Jayes, 1985).

Richter (1988c:2) states that running away in the 1960s in America was symptomatic of the emerging youth culture (or *hippie* movement) which challenged the established values of the social system. Large numbers of runaways in the 1960s allied themselves with *beatniks*, *hippies*, anti-war and civil rights activists in the highly visible protest against family, polity and society. The civil rights movement, which was gathering momentum in America at the time, was a reflection of the runaways' own powerlessness. The atrocities of the Vietnam War alerted them to the hypocrisy of the much-cherished ideals of peace, democracy, truthfulness and the American way of life. Seen in this context, running away was an expression of rebellion against restrictive family life and oppressive society. The same can be said to be occurring among black youth in South Africa who, through the

many struggles from 1976 onwards, are beginning to feel a sense of empowerment and dissatisfaction with their lives and the lives of those around them.

By running away, young people also express the powerlessness or alienation they feel in their homes and society. They are alienated from homes characterised by violence, conflicts or indifference, and from society, which dismisses them as being insignificant, maybe even inferior.

> Their silent scream and inner rage surface as they cut loose and take to the streets. There are few safety nets for them, because they are alienated from our society and because we regard them as 'deviants' and 'social junk' (Wilson & Arnold, 1986:7).

Adventure/camaraderie

Running away has long been enshrined in myths, legends, books and films, and runaways are portrayed in romantic fashion as brave, strong, fearless and masculine. One of the more notable runaways was Benjamin Franklin, whose desire for travel and independence led him to sail the high seas to New York.

Many other youngsters, fired by the search for adventure, ran away to the army and to war. Davy Crockett and Huckleberry Finn have influenced numerous youth by their exploits. Since the earliest days running away was considered to be adventurous and a way to seek your fortune.

Richter states that running away conveys the assumptions of adventure, independence and excitement. It holds out the promise of opportunity, fortune and freedom from parental restraints. These sentiments are illustrated in the following extract from Huckleberry Finn: "... he did not have to go to school or to church, or call any being master, or obey anybody: he could go fishing or swimming when and where he chose ..." (Richter, 1989b:4).

It seems unlikely that the street children in this country have been inspired by or exposed to the exploits of Huckleberry Finn or Davy

Crocket. Their heroes may be more tangible and drawn from colourful township figures and local success stories. Be that as it may, the desire for adventure/camaraderie/independence is universal. The street children in this country, no less than their counterparts throughout the world, could well have been spurred into running away in the eternal quest for adventure and camaraderie.

Satisfaction of needs

Apart from the need all young boys have for excitement, adventure and perhaps even danger, street life for many boys fulfils more deep-seated emotional needs. Hope and identity are two such needs. The types of homes from which the children come and the size of their families, give rise to feelings of anonymity and hopelessness. The friendships street children forge on the streets fulfil their emotional needs and compensate greatly for the deprivations, abuse and neglect suffered in their homes (Goniwe & Bishop, 1989).

Running away may result from the anticipated rewards, which are weighed against current circumstances, regardless of the nature of the relationships with family, school and friends. The external world, as it appears in the media, is shown to be exciting and full of love, generosity and good fellowship. A place which is idyllic, where the sun always shines, and nothing ever goes wrong.

The most obvious need of street children, especially in developing countries, is the need for survival. To this end they have developed their begging skills to a fine art, and the younger, frailer, more pathetic-looking children are far more likely to elicit sympathy and money than are the older, more delinquent-looking boys.

The influence of peers

Not much has been written on the influence of peers on the runaway child. It is generally accepted that peers are an important reference group for adolescents and provide much-needed comfort and support in times of stress. Friends can always be relied upon, in both good and bad times. The fellowship and comradeship that exist between boys of

similar ages, backgrounds and interests, often ease the transition into adulthood, and are an important part of the developmental process. Where family life is riddled with conflict, with alienation from parents, school and community, peer group acceptance becomes a source of emotional support which gives the child a sense of stability.

The need for friends and their acceptance grows out of the individual's constant need for social contact. Children in play groups grow into boys in peer groups. These associations are natural and normal. Where parent-child relationships are healthy and supportive, the child is free to interact with peer groups, and return to the family at the end of the day. Where parent-child relationships are faulty, the peer group assumes far greater significance and must fulfil the roles of parent and friend.

The mothers of runaway boys who were interviewed by Jayes (1985) perceived the peer group as having a significant influence on their children. They tended to deny the part played by themselves and the community in their children's selection of undesirable companions and tended to find the peer group responsible.

The aetiological factors presented in the preceding sections confirm that street children are victimised before their street existence, while the section that follows confirms their victimisation on the streets.

Victimisation of street children

Street children the world over are exploited and victimised social reprobates whom, together with criminals, delinquents, drunkards and perverts, society loves to hate. This hatred, or in a milder form, antagonism, is evident in official policy and public attitudes towards them. They "feel exploited by almost everyone: the media, the pushers, the sex purchasers, the sociologists and the do-gooders" (Wilson & Arnold, 1986:8). Few people bother to look beyond the labels *bad, delinquent, ruffian, scavenger,* etc. to the children themselves. The outward appearance of raggedness, bravado and perhaps even defiance, masks the deep hurt and the need to receive

and give affection that every individual craves—more so the street child.

The abuse, neglect and rejection that characterise the early lives of street children are once again enacted on the streets. Their victimisation has been categorised in the following sections.

Danger/violence

Street children live under constant threat of violence and danger, and assaults on them are regular occurrences. Swart (1989:14) states that "(a)dult street dwellers and gang members may take the children's money forcibly or their pockets may be slit at night with razor blades and their money removed while they are asleep".

She further states that many members of the public believe that by maltreating the children they will go elsewhere, the implication being that they will rid their communities of the supposed dangers and threats presented by street children. Swart (1989) refers to the teargassing, beating, kicking and *sjambokking* of street children in Hillbrow by certain shopkeepers, in their attempt to drive the children away from their premises.

Street children living as far afield as Turkey and the Philippines report physical, emotional and sexual abuse, beatings, coercion and extortion on the part of police, being offered drugs by adults and other street children, and abuse by adult prisoners in jails and police cells (Konanc, 1989).

Police brutality

Police brutality towards street children in the form of beatings, threats and intimidation, is not an uncommon experience for many of them. One child reported being beaten 30 times all over his body (Peacock, 1990:8). The corporal punishment, removal and round-up of street children by the police and dumping them far out of town are considered to be excessive measures (Goniwe & Bishop, 1989). The tendency to extort bribe money from street children in exchange for their release from custody has also been documented (Swart, 1989).

Sexual abuse

Street children are easy targets for sexual abuse, particularly by "white paedophilic clients" (Peacock, 1990:abstract,1). Their inferior status as blacks, children and street children, exposes them to various perverse sexual practices, sometimes for very little financial remuneration. However, the view has been expressed that "the only approval given to strollers comes in a very problematic area of their lives—their sexuality" (Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:280). Schärf *et al.* assert that the boys' rendering of sexual services to their clients is satisfying to them, since it boosts their sense of manhood and their sense of self-worth.

Keen (1988) similarly reports the physical and sexual abuse of street children by those who attempt to control them or who regard them as *common property*.

Peacock (1990:9) refers to a mortality rate of more than 50 per cent among street children, attributable to Aids. Rectal haemorrhaging due to "sexual abuse concomitant with prostitution" is also listed as a major cause of death among street children. This contention has been refuted by Cockburn who, in her long experience with street children, has not found evidence to support this claim. She believes that such statements are counter-productive to street children and lead to their further ostracism and neglect by society (Cockburn, personal communication).

Illness

Apart from the daily antagonisms and hostilities of passersby and police, street children also fight constant battles against hunger, cold and illness. Schafer (1989:20) refers to the suffering of street children from diseases such as tuberculosis, bronchitis, venereal disease and "the withering mental effects of drug abuse ...".

Institutionalisation

The official measures adopted in handling street children indicate a negative, punitive and *don't care* attitude towards them. The typical

response of magistrates and some social workers is to regard the children as "deviant and unworthy of approval" (Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:280). This attitude influences official policy and results in street children being subject to "arrest and detention in harsh circumstances at the hands of law enforcement agencies" (Swart, 1988c:2). Street children are frequently remanded in police cells (also regarded as places of safety), prisons and institutions. The decision to lock them away in institutions is influenced by the feeling that the streets must be *sanitised* of their presence, and is akin to locking away mental patients in asylums in bygone days. However, the shortage of institutions (which in this case are places of safety) means that more and more street children are being housed in police cells and prisons, which brings them in contact with a wide assortment of gang-hardened and criminally inclined individuals. Institutions—be they prisons, police cells or places of safety—are simply not suitable for children. Far from achieving the stated goal of rehabilitation, the institutions isolate children from society and are repressive and counter-productive.

Lack of protective legislation for street children

Apart from the Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983 and the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977, there is no specific legislation in respect of street children. In the researcher's view, these two Acts are totally inadequate for meeting the needs of street children, and in fact victimise them.

In South Africa, children under the age of 18 are protected by the Child Care Act. In summary, this Act imposes the duty of care, maintenance and protection from danger, and immoral and harmful influences, on the parents, guardians or custodians of the child. It concerns itself with the responsibility of the parent, and whether his/her mental condition is conducive to the physical, mental and social welfare of the child (Chetty, 1986).

All street children can be regarded as children in need of care, since their lifestyles on the street conform to many of the requirements

implicit in the definition of a child in need of care. The children's court decides whether the child is in fact in need of care. If this is found to be the case, the court can order the child to be sent to either a children's home, or a school of industries (childcare school) or placed temporarily in a place of safety, pending designation to a children's home or school of industries (McLachlan, 1986). The chronic shortage of children's homes in South Africa (there were nine for Africans in 1986) necessitates the housing of children in places of safety, although this placement is supposed to be temporary:

> three months is given as the maximum time that a child should be kept in a place of safety ... in practice it appears that many children ... wait for months in these institutions contrary to the intention of the Act ..." (McLachlan, 1986:52-53).

It appears that coloured and African children wait the longest. The Child Care Act therefore fails in its duty towards children in need of care. Although places of safety are supposed to ensure interim placement, they often become long-term placement, with negative consequences for the child in this state of limbo. Institutions for children, far from being progressive and rehabilitative in outlook, are punitive and "practise archaic and [D]ickensian methods of 'caring' for children" (McLachlan, 1986:131). Childcare practices have been accused of blatant racism and of believing that black children are not as important as white children. The duplication of facilities, resources and manpower for the different population groups ensures that black children receive the smallest slice of the cake. The De Meyer Commission into certain aspects of child care stated the need for a suitably qualified, motivated and professional staff to meet the psychological and emotional needs of institutionalised children (McLachlan, 1986:129).

If the Child Care Act is to perform its stated duty towards all children, the number of children's homes must be drastically increased and the quality of child care offered within them, regardless of the race of the children, must be improved.

The Child Care Act also fails to provide for the street children who are accommodated in shelters. The Act provides only for those children who have been removed from their parents' care and have been placed in a residential facility chosen by a social worker. It does not provide for those children who remove themselves from their parents' care and seek accommodation at the shelters. The Act provides for the registration of shelters as either children's homes or places of care. Children's homes and places of care refer to any residence, home, building or premises, maintained or used for the reception, protection, care, upbringing and temporary or partial care of more than six children away from their parents. The advantages of registering a shelter as a children's home are that they then qualify for a government subsidy and possible recognition and respectability.

The disadvantages of registration are that the shelters then become too formalised and restrictive, and cannot operate on a walk-in walk-out basis. This defeats the purpose of shelters, which provide for the basic needs of homeless children on the streets, where they are needed most. Shelters were initially established as non-governmental initiatives. Registration would drastically curtail the number of children in shelters and subject them to bureaucratic red tape, which would be counter-productive to children in immediate need. On the other hand, non-registration denies shelters legal custody of children, and leaves them open to accusations of harbouring children without their parents' consent.

The Criminal Procedure Act has also been severely criticised for failing to adequately protect black children. Although the Act does provide certain safeguards to children on trial, these are overshadowed by the tendency of law enforcement agents and court officials to dispense with the proceedings as quickly as possible, without availing themselves of the discretionary powers at hand. Awaiting-trial children are usually kept in police cells, which in the Children's Act No. 33 of 1960 were defined as places of safety. This Act has since been replaced by the Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983 which "provides that a place of safety includes any place suitable for the reception of a child, into which the owner, occupier or person in charge thereof is

willing to receive a child" (McLachlan, cited in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:347).

Bail as an alternative to incarceration is seldom used, neither is the option to leave children in the custody of parents or guardians. Furthermore, the Criminal Procedure Act makes provision for parents to assist children during court proceedings, on condition that they can be traced timeously and that they live within the same magisterial district in which the court is situated. Hutchinson (cited in Peacock, 1990:12) is of the view that magistrates all too readily accept the absence of parents during the trials of children. If a child is sent to prison, he often finds himself incarcerated with individuals up to the age of 21, since the Prison Act of 1959 defines a child as a person under 21 years of age.

The child has the right to legal representation, but most black children cannot afford it. The most severe criticism of the Criminal Procedure Act is its failure to provide free legal counsel for children on trial. The trial proceedings are traumatic. The child is disadvantaged physically, racially, socially, economically and educationally and is unable to effectively defend himself against the charge. Peacock (1990:13) concludes that "the inadequate provision for children in the law, provides little real protection to the street child".

These various forms of victimisation isolate street children, rather than integrating them into conventional society, and open the door to primary as well as secondary deviance.

Street children and deviance

Two schools of thought prevail in studies of deviance. Positivists believe that deviance is observable, real and determined by internal or external factors beyond the deviant's control. Anti-positivists conversely believe deviance to be an arbitrary social judgement conferred by the powerful on the powerless.

Positivists are also concerned with the degree of consensus elicited by a particular crime, with crimes such as murder, rape, armed robbery, etc. receiving greater value consensus.

Anti-positivists concentrate on the less serious forms of deviance, such as prostitution and drug addiction. These crimes elicit lower value consensus and the street child phenomenon can fit into this category. The contradiction is apparent here, for although street children fit the anti-positivist notion of deviance, their behaviour nevertheless elicits maximum censure, as was indicated by the discussion of their victimisation in the preceding section.

Definitions of deviance vary depending on the theoretical position taken. In the present study, deviance is defined as "any behaviour considered deviant by public consensus, which may range from the maximum to the minimum" (Thio, 1988:22). This definition incorporates elements of positivism and anti-positivism. The anti-positivist definition of deviance as a label conferred by the powerful on the powerless has significance for secondary deviance, since it is argued throughout the study that the negative perceptions of people with whom street children interact, and the punitive measures people adopt in dealing with them, victimise street children further by closing off legitimate options, to the extent that the street child comes to accept society's label of him as deviant and lives up to the label.

A review of the literature reveals that most studies implicate street children in various acts of deviance. Street children's involvement in begging, prostitution, drug abuse and various types of theft is widely documented. Their exploitation and coercion into deviant activities by older children, gang members or adult criminals is also a reality. The longer they remain on the streets, the greater the possibility that they will be drawn into the web of illegal activities. When legitimate means of supporting themselves become unavailable, illegitimate activities provide a means of support.

Swart (1988b:8) states that although some people condone the behaviour of street children as that which is to be expected under the circumstances, it is "considered deviant in terms of childhood and community norms". The feeling also exists that street children will not be part of mainstream society when they grow up.

A number of South African studies focusing on the deviant activities of street children are discussed below.

Delinquency

The debate on whether street children are delinquent or not is evident in South African studies.

Richter (1989a) asserts that street children become involved in criminal activities because of their need to survive, but that there is no evidence to support the contention that most home leavers have anti-social traits, or that most of them had a history of delinquency before the runaway episode. Richter states that South African research does not provide concrete evidence, in terms of psychiatric criteria, that street children are delinquent.

The overall finding in her studies with regard to delinquency was that delinquency was minimal and featured in only a small group of children. By contrast, anxiety and depression and problems in interpersonal relationships, rather than anti-social behaviour and delinquency, appeared to be far more prevalent among street children in general (Richter, 1989a, 1988b; Richter *et al.*, 1989). However, this finding is not consistent with an earlier study during which she found that 23 per cent of the boys in the study exhibited behaviour that can be described as delinquent. Richter is uncertain whether the anti-social attitudes and behaviour of street children were a cause or a consequence of running away from home. Nevertheless, their involvement in such activities antagonises the communities in which they take place, and hinders efforts to assist them (Richter, 1988a:11-12).

Drugs and other substance abuse

Richter (1989b) refers to street children's use of drugs to dull the pangs of hunger, cold and fear and to numb the child into a state of oblivion.

Bothma, writing on the *hunting-gathering* activities of strollers, stated that the consumption of alcohol, sweets and marijuana often followed a successful heist. Dagga use by strollers at feasts and as part of leisure activities not only united the group, but also "represented an

important cultural link between strollers and gangsters" (Bothma, 1988:5,40-41,49-50,69-70).

A favourite, albeit deviant activity of street children, and one that is well documented, is glue sniffing. Garman (1987), in her study of solvent abuse among street children in the Cape, notes the progression from smoking and drinking to glue sniffing and finally to dagga, and sometimes even mandrax and cocaine. Other substances that are inhaled include plastic cement, drycleaning fluids, nail polish remover, lighter fluid, dyes, hair lacquer, aerosols and petrol. The novice is initiated into glue sniffing by his peers, since this is very much a social activity that promotes understanding of and between peers. It may also be used as rebellion against society and as a means to combat hunger, cold and fear. The boys in Garman's (1987) study, however, reported a preference for dagga over glue.

A similar study of substance abuse among children at the Bayhead Place of Safety found substance abuse to be prevalent in 55 (or 45 per cent) of the children in the sample (Pather, 1990:28). The negative effects suffered by glue sniffers should be noted. Feelings range from euphoria, giddiness, light-headedness and flying in space, to delusions, hallucinations and extreme aggression.

A document compiled by the Hillbrow Traders' Association, setting down their grievances in respect of street children, lists glue sniffing as a problem that influences the "unacceptable attitude to members of the public and local traders".

It is believed that street children are engaged by white syndicates for mandrax pushing and housebreaking (Swart, 1988a:11-13).

Gangs

From their study of street children in Cape Town, Schärf *et al.* (in Burman & Reynolds, 1986) believe that there is very little overlap or similarity between gangs and strollers, and that the two groups tend to frown upon one another. The authors concluded that although both gangs and strollers have transferred their economic and emotional dependence from family to peer group, gangs differ in that they

maintain contact with their families, "subvent and exploit the mechanisms of capitalist society", demand extreme loyalty and wield extensive control over members, and are obsessed with maintaining and portraying a *macho* image (Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:265-266). The philosophies of gang members and strollers are therefore far removed—gangs being confrontational while strollers tend towards escapism. The researcher found that only 7 per cent of the children interviewed belonged to gangs.

The link between some street children and gangs is referred to by Altshuler (cited in Jayes, 1985). However, a report by the Detainees' Parents Support Committee refutes the link between gangs and street children, saying that although they do engage in petty theft, they are not essentially criminals or gangsters. Their behaviour is seen as "evasive and passive" rather than "aggressive or confrontory", as is the behaviour of the gang (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986:156).

Prostitution

Prostitution (also referred to as *chip-chop*) is one of the most lucrative activities for strollers. It can, however, be considered deviant in terms of their upbringing and the generally accepted moral values of society. Researchers have contradictory viewpoints concerning street children and prostitution. Some believe that naïve newcomers to the city are "grabbed for kinky sex", resulting in lasting damage and trauma when combined with the already destructive conditions from which the children have escaped. Others see black children as practising a skill which is positive and satisfying to the child because of his contact with adult whites and as an ego-booster to a poor self-image (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986:152-153).

In Schärf *et al.*'s study (in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:279), 24 of the 28 strollers had contributed to their income by means of prostitution, and boasted about their contacts with *bunnies* (white men) and *sugar mummies* (white women). However, the Aids scare has had a sobering influence on these activities, and discussions with strollers

a year after the 24 admitted deriving an income from it revealed that only seven "earned money from prostitution with males while three claimed that female clients were their major source of income" (Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:279). From this study it appears that homosexuality is twice as prevalent as prostitution, and in the researcher's view may be explained by the child's need for the love of his father, engendered by separation from him and the lack of an appropriate male role model. These residual feelings are then transferred to other males, and take the form of sexual activity.

Theft

Bothma (1988) distinguishes between the *hunting* and *gathering* activities of strollers. *Hunting* refers to high-risk, high-return activities such as prostitution and theft, while *gathering* refers to assisting shoppers, begging and doing odd jobs. From his study he found that more time was spent and more income generated by the gathering activities. It became clear that as more restrictions and pressures were placed upon the group's activities, the gathering activities declined and the hunting activities increased. Theft as a hunting activity required careful planning and great consideration. The strollers in the study were well aware of their insecure position in the community and the consequences should they be caught. For this reason, theft was often an individual activity, and regarded as a lucrative source of income. A successful *job* was highly regarded and conferred a high status on the *doer* (Bothma, 1988).

Begging

Begging as a public nuisance offence is the predominant income-generating activity of street children; a good day can earn a child R20. *Innocent* children exploit their vulnerability and deprived status to stir the consciences of those better off. The stories of woe and desolation are designed to loosen the strings of the tightest of purses, and if there is a girl among them, she is used to do the begging on behalf of the

group (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986; Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986).

Conduct disorder

In Jayes' (1985) discussions with the parents and house-parents of the boys in her study she found that the boys evinced symptoms of oppositional or conduct disorder of the "under-socialised non-aggressive type", as listed in the DSM-III. The parents of the runaways complained of their sons' truancy and occasional stealing, thereby indicating a tendency to deviance prior to running away. Shelter staff reported a variety of conduct disorders such as lying, tale carrying, jealousy, manipulative behaviour, defiance and disobedience. The boys had also abused substances such as dagga, cigarettes and paint thinners, had committed theft and were sexually precocious. At least half the group had had homosexual encounters. It was found that "their behaviour seemed to regress when frustrated and they seemed to carry over unfulfilled needs from earlier developmental stages" (Jayes, 1985:64,68-69). Furthermore, the tendency to run away from the shelter in response to difficulties is indicative of a maladaptive response to frustration.

General

McLachlan (cited in Swart, 1988b) reports that the most common offences for which street children are arrested are begging, petty theft, loitering, housebreaking and being a nuisance.

During a study of street children in Hillbrow, the community complained of street children urinating in public, gambling, sniffing glue and worrying people for money. It was also felt that their relationships were marked by violence and inconsideration. The children themselves reported that begging and petty theft were engaged in of necessity, while they dissociated themselves from gang activities (Swart, 1988b).

Swart (1988b:6-7,11-12) states that the opening of a particular shelter project (unnamed) that provided food, clothing and shelter, in

fact robbed the children of their pride in being able to support themselves and assist their friends while on the street. The result was that since their basic needs were being met, the children had more time on their hands to engage in "theft, housebreaking, and prostitution—all activities which had previously formed only a small part of their life-style".

Street children or *strollers* in the Cape are frequently arrested for common law crimes such as theft, shoplifting and public nuisance offences such as "begging, spitting, being drunk or dirty, swearing, shouting and the like" (Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:273). Schafer (1989), in agreement with Schärf *et al.*, mentions the involvement of street children in begging, pilfering, pickpocketing and shoplifting. He reports that when legitimate income-producing activities such as shoe-shining, assisting shoppers with parcels and odd jobbing are unavailable, the children turn to illegitimate activities such as bag-snatching, housebreaking, prostitution, begging, loitering and disturbing the peace.

Secondary deviance

One of the main arguments in this study is that the victimisation of street children through arrest and labelling blocks the attainment of goals through legitimate means. When street children come to accept society's perceptions of them, they are pushed into secondary deviance. This view is supported by Alexander (1987), O'Connor (1989), Olson *et al.* (1980), and Aptekar (1988).

One of the most interesting findings of a longitudinal study conducted by Olson *et al.*(1980:181), and one that confirms the link between street children and deviance, is that 13 of the 14 former runaways who had been interviewed had been arrested at some stage, while nine had appeared before the court on formal charges. These charges ranged from being "drunk and disorderly to burglary, assault and battery", of which theft appeared to have occurred most frequently. Most of the runaways also suffered some type of psychological symptom or affliction and had been "formally referred

for professional help ..." (Olson *et al.*, 1980:183). The authors make the point that the runaways' troubles follow them into adulthood, since "psychiatrists, schools for delinquents, counsellors, private schools, halfway houses, or jail—have neither reversed nor even noticeably ameliorated their problems".

Aptekar (1988:78) states bluntly that by adolescence, street children "have crossed the boundaries into thuggery" and have been denied the luxury of self-indulgence enjoyed by others of their own age. Furthermore, he believes that the appearance and behaviour of street children determine whether they will be accepted into the adult world or whether they will be forced into a delinquent lifestyle. If they appear thug-like or fit the delinquent stereotype, the chances are that they will be forced to fulfil the prophecy. In other words, society's view of the children, its negative expectations of them, and the closing of legitimate avenues and opportunities pushes them into delinquency, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Society's perception of the street child is transferred to the child, who internalises it and begins to identify with it. As they grow older, street children are "compelled by their perceptions of themselves as haughty provocateurs to give up small-scale mischief and become either full-scale delinquents or find a way to live outside the mainstream of the larger society" (Aptekar, 1988:77).

The view that street children grow up to be vagrants and/or criminals is not supported by the studies of Schärf *et al.* and Swart cited previously. What was shown, however, is that the longer the child stays on the street, and the more he runs away, the more likely he is to become involved in criminal activity, and the more difficult it will be for him to adjust socially and occupationally.

An interesting perspective was provided by the street children themselves during an *izindaba* (group discussion) with Jill Swart. They reported being forced to engage in activities they knew to be wrong by

the adults they encountered, such as the Rastas* and street dwellers. These activities included experimenting with drugs, housebreaking and prostitution. On the other hand, glue addiction and petty theft was learned from other street children. The street children who had been imprisoned reported learning skills in housebreaking and theft whether they wanted to or not, and being recruited by gang members for breaking and entering. Methods of coercion were often brutal (Swart, 1988c).

Swart (1988c) states that the popular belief that "the streets are schools of crime" and that street children will grow up to be criminals is not true, as can be seen from the large number of children who grow up on the streets and later lead respectable lives. However, when street children are arrested, most commonly for petty theft, the tendency is to incarcerate them with adult offenders, who pass the "tricks of the trade" on to them. Contamination of children by more hardened offenders is likely to entrench their criminal careers (Swart, 1988c).

Summary

From the discussion of causal factors and deviant behaviour, a profile of street children as coming from poverty-stricken, violence-torn and conflict-riddled families and communities emerges. The local and overseas studies that have been reviewed contribute significantly to the explication of causal factors and deviance, mainly primary deviance. The runaway episode itself can be regarded as an act of primary deviance since it violates cherished social norms. In most societies and cultures throughout the world, the child is part of the family unit within which socialisation takes place. Running away inhibits the

* Rastas-Rastafarians can be defined as members of a politico-religious movement among the black population of Jamaica who worship Haile Selassie I, the former emperor of Ethiopia.

process of becoming a functional member of society, jeopardises his contribution, and can be seen as a loss to society as a whole.

Scant attention is paid in the literature to secondary deviance, which in the researcher's view, correlates positively with a hardening of attitudes, recidivism and entry into deviant careers. The follow-up study of Olson *et al.* (1980) is of particular significance. They report on the multiple difficulties, including psychological difficulties, experienced by middle-class and repeat runaways, and an almost 100 per cent arrest rate 12 years after the runaway event. These findings serve to confirm the views held by the researcher that the brutality of street life and negative interactions and handling procedures may well set into motion an irreversible process of primary and secondary deviance. Since the problems posed and experienced by street children are of relatively recent interest and concern in South Africa, no follow-up studies have been undertaken thus far. These are urgently needed, especially in relation to deviance.

The theoretical significance of this study is that it traces the victimisation of street children from their families and their communities to their lives on the street and emphasises the important role played by their victimisation on the streets in entrenching deviance, particularly secondary deviance.

The researcher has also wedded positivist notions of value consensus with anti-positivist notions of labelling. Positivists assert that the greater the severity of the act, the higher the value consensus it will elicit and that maximum negative sanctions are elicited in cases of murder, rape, armed robbery, etc. Anti-positivists believe that it is the labelling of the act, rather than the act itself, that determines whether or not behaviour is deviant. It is therefore asserted that for those street children who do engage in deviant behaviour (primary deviance), the degree of value consensus is higher because of their powerlessness in society. The penalties are more severe, and negative labelling catapults them into further acts of deviance (secondary deviance), since legitimate avenues of goal attainment are closed to them.

The insights provided in this chapter with regard to the causes of the street child phenomenon, the victimisation of street children and

their deviant activities form the basis of the discussion of the research findings in the chapters to follow.

3 Methodology

Introduction

In any research project, the researcher is accountable for her/his "starting point, methods, findings and applications" (Van der Walt *et al.*, 1977:159). The ultimate value of his/her research is dependent upon the methods, procedures and techniques utilised. This chapter elucidates the steps taken to achieve the several aims of this study. Due consideration is therefore given to the research model used, sampling in respect of street children and service providers, data-gathering tools (questionnaires and interview schedules), data analysis and limitations of the study.

Research model

The present study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It is believed that a combination of these methods enhances both the reliability and validity of the findings, since shortfalls in one are compensated for by strengths in the other, and *vice versa*. It is generally accepted that the quantitative method is synonymous with the positivist approach, while the qualitative method is preferred by the anti-positivists. Haralambos and Holborn (1992), however, make the point that the positivist/anti-positivist impasse is a hangover from the 1960s, and that a truce now exists between proponents of each method. They believe also that "practical difficulties have at least as much influence on the choice of research methods as theoretical considerations" (Haralambos & Holborn, 1992:718). The quantitative dimension is provided by the use of questionnaires and interview schedules. The inclusion of open and semi-structured questions in the questionnaires and interview schedules provide the qualitative element by attempting to arrive at an understanding of people's interactions and perceptions.

The researcher agrees that practical difficulties are a major concern and as such have influenced the ways in which the data were gathered in the present study. The questionnaire was chosen for the following reasons:

- The children under study originated from severely disadvantaged backgrounds; many had spent a great deal of time on the streets and might as a result be regarded as functionally illiterate. It was therefore believed that their ability to articulate and verbalise might be somewhat impeded, hence the decision to administer interview schedules in which choices were offered to them.

- To ensure uniformity of the data gathered.

- To ensure a wider range of data than might otherwise have been obtained in unstructured interviews. On the other hand, since several *open* questions were included, qualitative data were also obtained, for example:

  What would make you really happy now?, and
  What job would you like to do when you grow up?

  The responses to these questions were varied, revealing practical, realistic, unrealistic, even hedonistic wishes and desires, for example:

  I would like to study further.
  I would like to make progress.
  I would like to own an aeroplane.
  I would like to buy dagga and cigarettes.

Further to this, several questions asked of the children focused on, *inter alia*, the interactions of street children with other street children, criminals, shopkeepers, social workers and the police. Symbolic interactionism therefore was chosen as the most applicable theoretical

approach when dealing with the perceptions of the street children and service providers. This approach considers the meanings and interpretations people make during their interactions with others and how such meanings and interpretations influence the way they think about themselves and how they react.

Schurink (1993) asserts that although quantitative methods such as social surveys are regarded as inappropriate by symbolic interactionists, their use in gathering data on people's perceptions should not be negated. In fact the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods is encouraged. The tendency to place street children in places of safety is proof of the negative perceptions that exist towards them. It is believed that street children's largely negative interactions with those with whom they come into contact victimises children who have already been victimised and fosters deviance rather than conforming behaviour.

Steps taken during the execution of the study

Sampling

The selection of the sample involved:

- The selection of respondents to complete the questionnaire, that is, the service providers.
- The selection of respondents with whom to conduct interviews with the aid of the interview schedule, that is, the street children.

Selection of service providers

The term *service providers* refers to those individuals who, through their various organisations or occupations, render services on behalf of street children. Since the universe was known, a probability sampling technique was used. The researcher used a non-random selection technique, since the universe was small. Van der Walt *et al.* (1977:193) state that "this procedure is especially useful in preliminary

investigations". To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous studies in the Durban area had canvassed the attitudes and opinions of service providers towards street children, and it was considered expedient to include all identified service providers in the study.

A total of 119 questionnaires were distributed to service providers at the Bayhead and Umlazi Places of Safety, the Community Social Work Section of the City Health Department, the Street Child Unit of the Durban City Police, Durban city councillors and Streetwise. These individuals represented a variety of professional and non-professional, business, administrative, clerical and legal occupations. Seventy-one individuals responded to the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 59,7 per cent. The realisation of the sample is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Realisation of sample of service providers

Service provider	*Number of questionnaires distributed*	*Number of questionnaires received*	*% realisation*
Bayhead Place of Safety	60	45	75,0
Umlazi Place of Safety	6	4	67,0
City Health Department	8	7	88,0
Durban City Police	5	5	100,0
City councillors	30	6	20,0
Streetwise	10	4	40,0

With the exception of the City Council, the overall response rate from the service providers was heartening, and indicated their concern for the street children they served. On the other hand, the low response rate from the city councillors was in keeping with the indifference and apathy towards street children that they had displayed until then. As

the local decision-making body, the City Council was in a position to play a far more active role in a problem which was steadily increasing, and which was an indictment on Durban as the "friendly" or "holiday" city.

Selection of the street children

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the precise number of children living on the streets of Durban. The reasons for not being able to do so are diverse.

- Estimates vary largely due to the unknown or *dark* figure and are generally based on the number of street children in places of safety, shelters, and other known abodes and *hangouts*. A report in the *Daily News*, Saturday, 3 February 1990, stated that in Durban, the number of street waifs varied between 300 and 500 children. Since a large proportion of all street children are not known to the authorities, and the number was in all likelihood far higher in 1992 when this study was undertaken.

- It is difficult to distinguish between children *of* the street and children *on* the street. Children *of* the street are *true* street children as we know them, while children *on* the street are those who work on the streets to earn money, most of which goes to their families, and who return home to their families.

Taking the above factors into consideration, the researcher employed a purposive non-probability sampling technique in respect of the street children at the Bayhead Place of Safety and Zamani Shelter since the universe was unknown. The researcher made contact with numerous organisations and individuals in an effort to establish the whereabouts of the children. Contact was made with the Durban City Police, the then-South African Police, the City Health Department, Natal Provincial Administration, Pinetown, Clermont and Durban child welfare societies, Umlazi Place of Safety, Streetwise, the Children's

Foundation and the Legal Resource Centre. Through personal communication with individuals in these organisations, the researcher ascertained that street children were accommodated at Bayhead, Umlazi and Wentworth Places of Safety, and at Zamani Shelter.

Since the majority of street children were to be found at Bayhead Place of Safety, it was decided to interview only the children who resided there, together with those at Zamani Shelter. Umlazi and Wentworth Places of Safety had fewer than ten street children at the time of the interviews. A total of 193 street children were interviewed for the present study, all of whom were black and all except seven were male.

Bayhead Place of Safety falls under the auspices of the former Natal Provincial Administration (NPA), and was officially opened in November 1988. It was established in terms of the Child Care Act and can accommodate a maximum of 370 children, although the complement of children at the time of the study was far lower. Bayhead makes provision for children between the ages of 12 and 18, who have either been charged with criminal offences, or who have been declared "in need of care". Originally, Bayhead was intended to be a temporary measure, while the NPA negotiated for more suitable premises or land. It has since developed mainly into a place of safety for street children. Since the time of the interviews at Bayhead (August 1991), the school and a literacy training programme have been fully established. One hundred and forty-three children, who were identified as street children, were interviewed there.

Street children were also interviewed at Zamani Shelter where the children are known as Zamani street children. Zamani Shelter was opened in 1988, following the razing of Khayalethu Shelter. The children are accommodated in containers and rondavels in a tranquil, and what appears to be, semi-rural setting. This project is run by the Durban Child Welfare Society, and is situated in the grounds of Lakehaven Children's Home. It has no affiliation to Lakehaven, except that some of the street children attend school there, and others go to schools elsewhere. At the time of the interviews there were 25 children at Zamani. Twenty-one children agreed to participate in the study, two

declined, and two had gone to their homes for the week-end. Zamani Shelter is operating as a second phase project, that is, the basic needs of the children are being fulfilled. An attempt is made to modify behaviour through the point or token systems whereby good behaviour is rewarded by points and *vice versa*. It is hoped that the project will eventually be a three-phase one. The first phase will operate as a walk-in shelter in the city, where children can obtain a meal, but no accommodation. They will be taught survival skills and basic hygiene. It is envisaged that the children from phases one and two will be eventually integrated into the third phase, where the aim will be to develop the children's various skills and talents by teaching pottery and other skills. The third phase will also try to reintegrate the children into formal schools and their communities. For those who cannot go back to formal school, the emphasis will be on skills training.

The interviews at Bayhead and Zamani were conducted in August 1991 with the help of a Zulu-speaking research assistant. The interview schedules were translated into Zulu with the assistance of the Zulu Department at the University of Durban-Westville. The interviews were conducted informally, mainly outdoors, and took three weeks to complete.

Interviews with street children were also conducted on the streets. Twenty-nine children were interviewed over a three-day period (from Friday to Sunday) at the Workshop, Minitown and in the Grey Street complex. A snowball sampling technique was used to obtain respondents. According to Haralambos and Holborn (1992:725):

> Snowballing is a very specialised type of sampling and is usually only used when other methods are not practical. It involves using personal contacts to build up a sample of the group to be studied.

The researcher and her assistant encountered two boys who had been living on the streets for a lengthy period of time, and it was through their enthusiastic co-operation and unfailing interest that their friends were recruited. Contrary to other researchers' findings that their respondents' attention span was short and that they were easily

distracted, the researcher and her assistant found the children to be extremely interested in the proceedings, and they appeared promptly at the appointed hour. It is the researcher's view that had the interviews gone on for longer than the appointed time period, there would have been no shortage of respondents or co-operation.

Methods used to gather the data

The data in the present study were gathered by means of

- interview schedules administered to street children;
- questionnaires administered to service providers, that is, those individuals who through their various occupations, rendered services on behalf of street children.

The interview schedule

Part of the data in the present study were also gathered by means of an interview schedule, or formally structured interview. Anastasi (cited in Van der Walt *et al.*, 1977) asserts that this method may be regarded as an oral questionnaire. The interview schedules were structured so as to allow for uniformity in questioning. They contained a total of 40 questions, with both closed and open-ended questions. The latter type of question allowed the respondents greater freedom in replying.

The interview schedule contained several of the questions that were included in the questionnaire to service providers, in order to compare the responses of the two groups.

The interviews at the Place of Safety were conducted by the research assistant in an informal, non-threatening manner, and care was taken to establish rapport with each child, and to make him feel a valued part of the research project. Since the weather was warm, most of the interviews were conducted outdoors. It was believed that the respondents would feel more free to respond outdoors rather than in the confines of a clinical office. Interviews conducted at the shelter and on the streets were naturally more relaxed, and the respondents

talked freely and openly. The research assistant explained the purpose of the study to each boy, some of whom he was familiar with since he had previously worked at Khayalethu Shelter.

In order to avoid duplicating any of the interviews (since the rate of absconcion from Bayhead is high), the names of respondents were recorded on the interview schedules. Names were not used in order to respect the children's confidentiality and because of the ethical considerations involved in research of a sensitive nature.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to uncover the feelings, perceptions and attitudes of service providers towards the street children whom they served. Van der Walt *et al.* (1977:203) are of the opinion that

> ... the questionnaire is the most usual technique for collecting information ... and it is currently used in the collection of data on beliefs, values, behavioural patterns, customs, etc.

The advantages of a questionnaire are that they allow a mass of information to be collected quickly and uniformly; they provide scientific evidence from which generalisations and comparisons can be made; they can be reviewed and controlled by other researchers; and they do not allow the coercion of the respondent (Van der Walt *et al.*, 1977).

The questionnaire was constructed with due consideration to the local and international literature on the subject, as well as local media reports. Several of the questions were direct quotes taken from local articles, and were included to determine whether service providers shared similar or opposing views. The questionnaire included both open-ended and closed questions.

Data analysis

In view of the large number of interview schedules and questionnaires, it was decided that manual processing of the data would be

impractical. The open-ended questions were grouped according to similarity of response, and then coded. The numerical codes were transferred onto data-capture sheets and the data were processed with the aid of a computer. The services of an experienced computer programmer were invaluable in completing the final stages of the analysis of the data. The *Data Base* program was used, and all data were checked by means of an automatic verifier.

Limitations of the study

Overall, the response to the study was heartening, with service providers and street children alike being willing participants. However, in any intensive study, particularly with regard to sensitive or controversial issues, difficulties are encountered. The difficulties in this study are described below.

In order to determine the extent and nature of the deviant behaviour of street children in the Durban area, the researcher sought and obtained permission to study the files from both the Children's Court and Juvenile Court. The intention was to substantiate the involvement of street children in deviant activities indicated during the interviews, with the court records.

All files relating to cases heard before the Children's Court between 1989 and 1990 were thoroughly examined and transcribed. However, it was difficult to determine from the files whether the children were street children or not, since no reference was made to this fact. In order to avoid making assumptions on the status of the children, it was decided not to use the Children's Court records.

The researcher followed the same procedure at the Juvenile Court. However, the records at this court far outnumbered those at the Children's Court, and for the years 1989 to 1990, there was a total of 2 600 files. The researcher made a thorough study of Boxes 1 to 222 (each box contained ten files) and once again came across no cases that pointed to the fact that the accused was a street child. In Boxes 98 to 129, the researcher came across three cases where the offenders may have been street children, since their addresses were unknown. Once

again, to avoid making assumptions, the researcher decided not to continue with the examination of the files. The reasons for reaching this decision were that firstly, it would have taken far too much time to go through 2 600 files and secondly, the files were scanty since the majority of trial proceedings were mechanically recorded on cassettes. Lastly, there was no indication that the children were street children.

A further obstacle related to the delay in obtaining permission to interview the street children at Bayhead Place of Safety and Zamani Shelter. However, within three months of writing to the then-Natal Provincial Administration (NPA), an affirmative reply was received from the Director of Social Services in the Community Services Branch of the NPA. No effort was spared in assisting the researcher and her assistant while conducting the interviews at Bayhead Place of Safety.

Although no written confirmation was received from Durban Child Welfare Society with respect to interviewing the children at Zamani Shelter, permission to proceed with the interviews was granted by the individual in charge of the project, and she in turn proved to be most helpful to the researcher.

The researcher wishes to point out that there are no doubt other formal/informal organisations that render services to street children. Service providers' knowledge on what facilities/resources/services exist for street children indicates that the large majority are themselves unaware of facilities/resources/services that exist for street children apart from their own. Through informal communication with many informed individuals, the researcher was able to identify the service providers included in the present study as important ones in the specified area.

Also, the respondents in the present study are largely drawn from formal, bureaucratic structures, and consequently their views may not be shared by individuals who provide services to street children at grassroots level. Be that as it may, their views and opinions, which may reflect official policy, are important and form the basis of the recommendations discussed in Chapter 6.

The Durban City Police were most co-operative, though they displayed an initial reluctance to complete the questionnaires, perhaps owing to criticisms levelled at them in the past. Since they were in the forefront of the initial contact with street children, their participation in the study was considered imperative. The outcome of discussions with them was that they agreed to participate in the study provided the researcher personally administered the questionnaires to them. This was duly accomplished.

The interview schedule was not strictly adhered to in the course of interviewing the children, but was modified slightly as the interviews proceeded. The interview was lengthy and designed to include all relevant details pertaining to the children's background and circumstances. In order not to tire the children, the questions were modified slightly, while adhering to the basic structure and format of the interview schedules.

To a lesser or greater extent, all of the children had engaged in some form of deviant activity at some time in their street careers. They may have understated their involvement in deviance for fear of reprisal. The intention is not to make moral judgements but to emphasise that street children engage in deviant acts when all legitimate avenues for earning money are closed to them, and that the longer they live on the streets, the more likely it is that they will engage in deviant activities to support themselves. The intention is also not to get the street children into trouble with the police, or to *rid* the streets of them, but instead to jog public and official consciences to the benefit of street children and the public alike.

Despite the above difficulties, the researcher believes that the interviews and questionnaires have produced a wealth of information that provides insights and serves as a basis for further research in the area.

Strategies used to curb the effect of nuisance variables

The reliability of observations or data is influenced by at least four major variables: The researcher, the respondent, the measuring

instruments and the research context in which the research is conducted. To curb the effects of these nuisance variables, thereby increasing the validity of the findings, certain procedural safeguards were adopted during this research.

Researcher

A problem often confronted by researchers in the behavioural sciences is that of bias. It can be argued that a particular subject for study, the tool chosen and the expectations of the researcher, all point to or presuppose a certain bias. Be that as it may, bias on the part of the researcher was controlled by the use of a trained research assistant, who was asked to adhere to the questions and not lead or prompt the respondents in any way or evince any reaction to the responses. The aims of the study were not revealed to him in an attempt to control bias arising from the projection of researcher expectations on to a research subject's responses.

A further problem confronting the researcher is the choice of a research tool, which in this study was the questionnaire for service providers and interview schedule for street children. Although there are several limitations in the use of the questionnaire, its advantage is that it allows for uniformity in the collection of a mass of data. It was also considered appropriate since many of the respondents had spent long periods on the streets, and might have lost or not had the ability to communicate satisfactorily. Rather than leaving them to talk freely, it was decided to offer them a choice of answers to questions that probed various aspects of their lives, before and after taking to the streets. In order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire/interview schedules, they were revised and referred for comment to colleagues several times before a pretest was conducted on a limited number of respondents.

Respondents

With regard to the respondents, the researcher had to be mindful of the ages of the children, language barriers and the inability or

unwillingness to articulate feelings/perceptions. These limitations were overcome by utilising the services of a trained black research assistant with whom they could identify. The interview schedules were translated into Zulu and alternatives offered to overcome age and communication difficulties.

Since the majority of children were detained in an institution, care was taken to remain neutral and objective, yet empathetic, so as not to be seen as *taking sides* with either the staff or the children.

Ethical considerations also had to be borne in mind. The researcher and her assistant were extremely sensitive to the circumstances and feelings of the respondents. Care was taken not to coerce or lead the respondents in any way. Children are very protective of their parents and even under duress, will not easily let them down. Any questions that caused even the slightest discomfort or hesitance were passed over and the respondent was allowed to proceed with the following question.

There is consensus among those who work with or conduct research on street children that they are highly adept at manipulation and in telling "exaggerated or patently untrue tales designed to provoke sympathy and elicit donations" (Schärf *et al.* in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:273). It is also generally accepted that street children have "had bad experiences with officialdom and tend to be very suspicious when confronted with formal questioning" (Swart, 1987:12). However, Swart attests to the essential importance of the interview method in order to obtain an all-round perspective on the lives of street children. It is impossible to state categorically that the answers obtained are an absolute reflection of the circumstances of the children prior to and after leaving their homes. However, the researcher believes that the responses are an adequate reflection of the facts, since

- the findings correlate largely with the findings of other similar studies;

- at no stage during the interviews at Bayhead, Zamani and on the streets did the children display boredom or lack of interest. On the

contrary, they evinced a great deal of interest and wanted to be included in the study and to put across their points of view;

- body language and non-verbal cues, which can be seen as indications of veracity, did not suggest malingering on the part of the respondents.

4 The process of becoming a street child and getting involved in deviant activities

Introduction

The review of the literature in Chapter 2 presents a range of political, social, family and individual factors that contribute to the street child phenomenon. A social profile of street children before they leave their homes emerges from these factors. Due largely to apartheid policies, the homes of these children are characterised by family disorganisation and disruption, poverty, unemployment, chronic housing shortages, alcohol abuse and physical and emotional abuse. All these factors point to the victimisation of street children before leaving home. The victimisation of street children on the streets, which forms an important link in the chain of the causality of deviance and paints a further profile of the street life of street children, was also examined in Chapter 2. The present chapter shifts from theoretical discussion to presenting the findings of the empirical study based on interview schedules administered to 193 street children: 143 from Bayhead Place of Safety, 21 from Zamani Shelter and 29 who were interviewed on the streets.

This chapter pursues the causation, victimisation and deviance themes through an analysis of the sociodemographic characteristics of members of the sample and other background information. A discussion of the findings on becoming a street child, involvement in and the nature of deviant activities, the social world of street children, and their perceptions and attitudes is also given.

Although a quantitative method has been used (interview schedules), symbolic interactionism, particularly labelling, has also been used as a broad framework to discuss the victimisation and deviance (primary and secondary) of street children, thereby providing an anti-positivist/qualitative dimension.

The findings of the empirical study are presented in the forthcoming sections.

Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

Age

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents were between 11 and 15 years of age.

The findings in the present study regarding age agree largely with those of other South African researchers. In her several studies, Richter found street children to range in age from seven to 16 years (Richter, 1988a). In the present study, children ranged in age from five to 18 years, with the average age being 13 years. A study of children on the streets in Cradock revealed that the boys ranged in age from eight to 17 years, with an average age of 13 years (Goniwe & Bishop, 1989:9).

Matilda Smith's conversations with street girls on the streets of Cape Town revealed that the majority were between 13 and 17 years of age, indicating that they started *strolling* later than boys (Smith, cited in Keen, 1989:8).

In America, the average age of runaways is 16 years (Kufeldt & Nimmo, 1987; Zingaro, 1988) which suggests that South African street children leave home earlier than their American counterparts. Possible reasons for doing so are the poverty-stricken homes and townships from which they come and the neglect that often goes hand in hand with it. It is generally known that parents commute long distances to and from work, leaving early in the morning and arriving back in the early evening. The long working hours, the frustrations inherent in low-paid occupations and the constant battle to make ends meet tend to erode the best intentions of parents and their ability to cope with such pressures. Under such conditions, children are daily left to their own devices, with the situation becoming worse if they are not at school. It may, therefore, be natural for them to spend their days on township streets. It can be argued that one street is very much like another, and the children are merely exchanging life on township

streets for the excitement and perceived material advantages of the city's streets. Hence the younger age at which South African street children leave home.

Table 3: Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

Sociodemographic characteristic	*N*	*%*
Age		
5 years and younger	1	0,5
6 - 10 years	15	7,8
11 - 15 years	142	73,6
16 - 18 years	35	18,1
TOTAL	193	100,0
Gender		
Male	186	96,4
Female	7	3,6
TOTAL	193	100,0
Highest educational level		
Junior primary: Class 1 and 2 and Std 1	66	34,2
Senior primary: Stds 2, 3 and 4	86	44,6
Junior secondary: Stds 5, 6 and 7	18	9,3
No formal schooling	21	10,8
No response	2	1,0
TOTAL	193	100,0

Sociodemographic characteristic	*N*	*%*
Area of origin		
Inanda	29	15,0
KwaMashu	19	9,9
Umlazi	16	8,3
Hammarsdale	14	7,3
Ashdown	8	4,1
Clermont	5	2,6
Port Shepstone	5	2,6
Ntuzuma	5	2,6
Four children from each of the following areas: Umthwalumi, KwaNdengezi, Umkomaas, Adams Mission and KwaMakhuta	20	10,4
Three children from each of the following areas: Newcastle, Bizana, Harding, Umtata, St Wendolins and Marianhill	18	9,3
Two children from each of the following areas: Mount Frere, Ixopo, Richmond, Hillcrest, Verulam, Bothas Hill, Ohlange, Folweni, Table Mountain, Inchanga and Empangeni	22	11,4
One child from each of the following areas: Lusikisiki, Mapumulo, Phoenix, Tongaat, Lindelani, Mandini, Lamontville, Ndwedwe, Thornwood, Chesterville, Umzimkulu, Shallcross, Intshangwe, Ulundi, Mawoti, Nongoma, Stanger, Malagazi, Welbedacht, Eshowe, Howick, Malvern, Umbumbulu, Umbogintwini, Holy Cross, Bergville, Groutville, Edendale, Georgedale and Ngonyameni	30	15,5
No response	2	1,0
TOTAL	193	100,0

South American studies reveal that street children in those countries, like South African street children, leave home at a far earlier age. Most are between ten and 18 years of age, while some are as young as five or six. Agnelli notes that children in Latin America commonly start their street existence around the age of eight years, and "reach a peak around 15" (Agnelli, 1986:34).

Gender

Table 3 indicates that the respondents in the sample were predominantly male (186 or 96,4 per cent); only 7 (or 3,6 per cent) were female.

The literature reveals that the overwhelming majority of street children are male (Swart, 1988c; Richter, 1988b). However, the exception is America, where there are more or less equal numbers of male and female runaways (Kufeldt & Nimmo, 1987; Young, Godfrey & Adams, 1983). Spillane-Grieco, on the other hand, found that the largest number of runaways in her study were "female, middle-class, and age 15" (Spillane-Grieco, 1984:163).

Richter (1988b:4) believes that street girls comprise approximately 10 per cent of the street child population. Schärf *et al.* (cited in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:262) similarly report that of the 300 strollers in Cape Town in 1985, 30 (or 10 per cent) were girls.

The predominance of male street children in developing countries can be attributed to the patriarchy and the strong sex-role definition inherent in it. Males are socialised to be tough and aggressive, and are encouraged to spend more time out of the house (either at school, work or with friends). Females on the other hand are taught to be subservient, and are expected to spend most or all of their time at home in the pursuit of household chores and womanly duties.

Educational level

Table 3 indicates that the majority of respondents in the sample (86 or 44,6 per cent) proceeded as far as the senior primary level. Therefore, 86 children had completed four to six years of schooling. According

to Richter (1988b:14-15), "a pass in Standard 2 is considered the minimum educational level to qualify as 'literate'". Therefore, the majority of children in the present study were literate. Furthermore, 66 (or 34,2 per cent) attained the junior primary level and 18 (or 9,3 per cent) reached the junior secondary level. However, none of the children proceeded to senior secondary school and 21 (or 10,8 per cent) had never been to school.

However, given the inferior quality of education in black schools, together with the high teacher-pupil ratios, unqualified staff, lack of facilities and low teacher and student morale, "it is likely that even those children who had passed Standard 2, were functionally illiterate" (Richter, 1988b:15). An interesting finding in support of the above statement stems from a study by Richter. In a comparative study between "same-aged school children from urban township environments and the street children", no differences in performance were found between the two groups of children, even though the former were drawn from Standard 1 to 5 pupils. The tentative question posed is whether the black educational system fosters critical, independent and logical thinking, over and above that which occurs in the informal day-to-day learning and maturation process (Richter, 1988c:10-11). It may well be that the street children's abilities are sharpened by the rigours of having to fend for themselves on the street, while their schoolgoing counterparts are by contrast dulled by the unstimulating and uninteresting class room environment.

Schärf (1988) found that only four of the 31 children in his study claimed to have enjoyed school, and yet none had proceeded beyond Standards 2 and 3. Swart similarly concludes that approximately 49 per cent of street children are virtually illiterate. Nevertheless, they demonstrate "considerable persistence and endurance", and "few are demotivated by failure"(Swart, 1988c:102-103). A further observation with regard to street children is the belief they have in the value of education, and their hankering for it (Swart, 1988c; MacCurtain, 1988; Kufeldt & Nimmo, 1987).

Although the children in the present study are young, the Soweto uprising of 1976 highlighted the role of township youth in shaping

political events. In addition, the widespread presence of the police and the defence force in the townships and schools, and the imprisonment of children under the state of emergency, have all forged a common bond of comradeship, and heightened political awareness of an inferior educational system. It can be argued therefore that children in the townships become politicised at a tender age.

It can also be argued that although the majority of street children in this study were literate in that they had spent more than four years at school, they may nevertheless be considered functionally illiterate in terms of the quality of schooling received and the length of time spent on the streets. This lack of an all-round education will drastically limit the chances of the children becoming legitimately productive members of society.

Other training

The findings indicated that 192 (or 99,5 per cent) of the 193 respondents had no specific training. This fact, together with discontinued or interrupted schooling, does not augur well for their future.

Areas of origin

The respondents in the study came from a great many areas, and some of these areas have been the scenes of fierce clashes and much violence. Table 3 shows that the highest number of respondents were from Inanda (29 or 15,0 per cent), followed by KwaMashu (19 or 9,9 per cent), Umlazi (16 or 8,3 per cent), Hammarsdale (14 or 7,3 per cent) and Ashdown (8 or 4,1 per cent). The remainder came from the other areas mentioned in the table.

The findings reveal that the children in the sample come from a variety of townships, small towns, peri-urban and peri-rural areas, informal settlements and rural areas to the North, South and West of Durban. Several came from areas in and around Pietermaritzburg, and from as far afield as the Transkei.

The last few decades have seen a massive influx of migrants to the Durban area. Several factors have been responsible for this. The First World War saw the establishment of light industry in the Durban-Pinetown area which required largely unskilled labour. Further to this, the great drought resulting in crop and stock losses swelled the number of rural to urban migrants (Minnaar, 1992:9).

The Durban local authorities at the time realised that Africans in urban areas could no longer be regarded as "temporary sojourners but that they had become permanent town-dwellers who needed to be provided with better facilities in terms of accommodation and housing" (Minnaar, 1992:10). The government's attempts to keep the migration of blacks to urban areas at bay was given teeth by numerous legislation, some of which were the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937, and the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act in 1954. Once again severe drought in the 1980s in parts of Zululand and Northern Natal saw a flood of refugees into Durban, "and by 1985 the total number of people living in the informal settlements on the outskirts of Durban had reached approximately one million" (Minnaar, 1992:21). These settlements in hilly terrain were devoid of sanitation, water, electricity, refuse removal and schooling. According to Minnaar, in the 1980s these settlements became focal points for conflicts between the central government and the KwaZulu government on the one hand and the liberation organisations such as Cosatu, ANC and UDF on the other. Violence escalated in the townships and informal settlements of, *inter alia*, Umlazi, Umbumbulu, KwaMashu, Lamontville, Chesterville and Clermont (Minnaar, 1992).

The township of Umlazi (Durban's largest) and the informal settlement of Inanda, had up until 1985 remained uninvolved. However, the murder of Victoria Mxenge in 1985 provided the trigger which caused Durban's townships to erupt in large-scale violence, where "vigilante violence against UDF supporters emanated from the informal settlements like Lindelani and Inanda" (Minnaar, 1992:30).

It is against this backdrop of conflict and violence that many of the street children in the present study have found themselves on the streets.

Religious affiliation and attendance at place of worship

The respondents in the sample were predominantly Christian (169 or 87,6 per cent), while 22 (or 11,4 per cent) stated that they had no religious affiliation and 2 (or 1,0 per cent) did not respond. None of the children were of the Hindu or Muslim faiths.

None of the literature reviewed made any reference to the religious affiliation of street children and runaways. Swart (1988d:176), however, discusses the impact of religion on the moral values of the street children in her study. She found that nearly 50 per cent of the children she interviewed had attended church and "were exposed to some degree, before their street existence, to biblical precepts". Moreover, respondents to her community questionnaire reported the voluntary attendance of some street children at churches in the Hillbrow area. Swart is of the view that exposure to religious teachings in childhood may have been instrumental in laying down "their personal moral precepts". The researcher shares this viewpoint, and believes that the basic principles espoused by all religions are goodness, kindness, honesty, love and responsibility towards one's fellow beings. Religions teach truthfulness and right from wrong, and are important in controlling and directing an individual's behaviour. The fear of punishment in the hereafter or the anger of departed ancestors goes a long way towards ensuring acceptable behaviour.

The majority of the respondents in the sample (169 or 87,6 per cent) were church goers; 22 (or 11,4 per cent) did not attend church, mosque, temple or any other place of worship, while 2 (or 1,0 per cent) failed to respond to the question.

Just over 50 per cent of the respondents (100 or 51,8 per cent) attended church with either their mothers, fathers, both parents or other relatives. The churches that they attended were *inter alia* Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Zionist. It may be presumed

that church attendance played an important part in the lives of the children prior to running away, if regularity of attendance is indicative of this. It may also be that such attendance provided social as well as spiritual solace to people living in grossly deprived areas, and may have been responsible for the inculcation of several conventional values in the street children, as later findings reveal.

The findings also show that the majority of the respondents attended church regularly, that is once a week. Regularity of church attendance implies a measure of discipline and commitment to higher ideals and values. It is believed that such regular attendance would have left an impression, no matter how small, and may have been influential in forming conventional values despite the children's involvement in deviant activities.

When asked about their present church attendance, the responses revealed that 135 (or 69,9 per cent) of the total number of respondents and 135 (or 79,9 per cent) of the Christians in the study still attended church although they were no longer living at home. The interview schedules revealed that the 135 church-going children resided at the place of safety and the shelter, which explains why they still attended church, since such attendance is a requirement at such places. None of the children living on the streets attended church.

A point worth making here is that their early religious convictions may cushion them for a time from deviance as a survival strategy, but how long morality can withstand deprivation is open to debate.

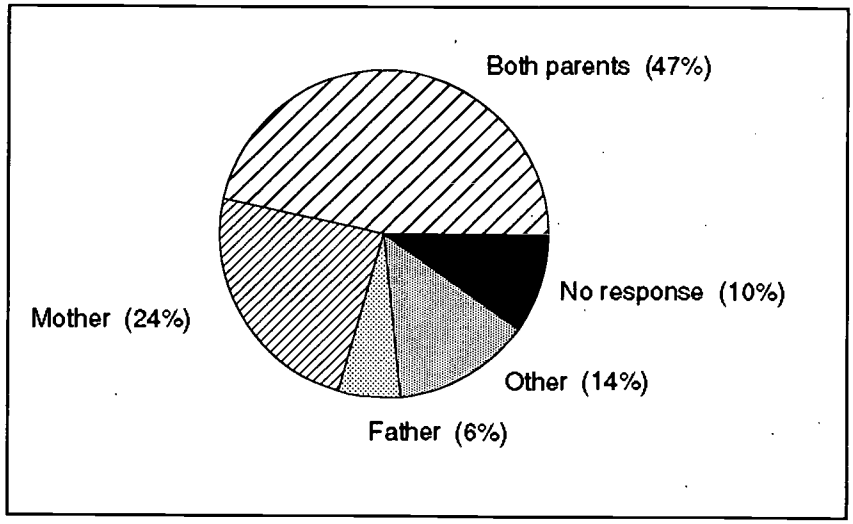
Street children's family background

Person with whom respondent lived prior to leaving home

Nearly one-half of the respondents (90 or 46,6 per cent) lived with both parents, indicating physically intact families, while slightly fewer (84 or 43,5 per cent) came from physically broken homes. The difference is however negligible, indicating an almost equal number of physically broken and physically intact families. Figure 1 reveals that more children (46 or 23,8 per cent) lived with their mothers and others (26 or 13,5 per cent) than with their fathers (12 or 6,2 per cent).

Others refers to grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers and sisters.

Figure 1: Person(s) with whom respondent lived prior to leaving home



Several studies confirm the present findings. In her study of substance abuse among children at the Bayhead Place of Safety, Pather (1990:16) found that the majority of substance abusers originated from nuclear family units, that is, units comprising mother, father and siblings.

Jayes (1985:31-32), on the other hand, found a much higher incidence (13 or 72,2 per cent) of reconstituted families in her study. This meant that the majority of the children had spent periods of time ranging from a few months to a few years with other caretakers—frequently more than one—indicating tremendous upheaval and insecurity in their lives. Only three lived with both parents before the runaway episode.

The above findings, although pointing to a slightly higher number of nuclear family types, need not necessarily indicate a greater degree of stability in these families. Although the families are physically intact, they may be psychologically broken, as the studies in Chapter 2 indicate. The financial resources and ability to cope are often stretched to the limit in such families, and this may engender various forms of neglect and deprivation, resulting in running away from home. It appears that the street children in this study are products of both intact and broken homes, the former characterised by conflict and the latter by neglect.

It may also be argued that large family size correlates positively with neglect. Support for this point of view comes from the criminological literature, which indicates that larger families lead to higher levels of child neglect, which in turn leads to juvenile delinquency (Cronjé *et al.*, 1976:82-83).

Family composition and size

Table 4 indicates that the majority (53,3 per cent) of the respondents said that their parents were still living together. The families of the remainder of the sample were broken either by separation, death or desertion.

The data further indicate that of the 193 street children respondents in the study, only 5 (or 2,6 per cent) were orphans. Similarly Richter (1989c:3) found that only 4,0 per cent of the children in her study were orphans. Schärf (1988:266-267) found that 2 (or 6,5 per cent) of the 31 children he studied were orphans and Goniwe and Bishop (1989:13) found only 1 (or 7,1 per cent) of the 14 children in their study to be an orphan. There appears to be little relationship between being orphaned and taking to the streets, since there were many more runaways from physically intact homes than from single-parent families (refer to previous section).

Table 4: Family characteristics of the sample

Characteristic	*N*	*%*
Family composition		
Parents living together	99	46,3
Parents separated	32	15,0
Father deceased	31	14,5
Family deserted by father	26	12,1
Mother deceased	16	7,5
Family deserted by mother	10	4,7
TOTAL	214*	100,0
Family size		
No siblings	9	4,7
One sibling	12	6,2
Two siblings	30	15,5
Three siblings	45	23,3
Four siblings	31	16,1
Five siblings	28	14,5
Six or more	38	19,7
TOTAL	193	100,0

* Total is more than 193 since some children gave more than one response.

In the present study, 21 (or 10,9 per cent) respondents reported being illegitimate. Swart (1988d:89-90) states that in this country, illegitimacy has been "fostered by, amongst other things, the national policy of Influx Control". She cites a 1986 study of 92 adolescents in KwaMashu, where as many as 36 per cent were unable to provide any information on their fathers.

The researcher believes that the association between illegitimacy and street children, though tenuous, should not be ignored. The social and financial burden of raising children unassisted places strain on the

woman's or man's coping resources, resulting in the neglect and/or abuse of the child, and his ultimate decision to run away from home.

The number of siblings in the families of the respondents studied is given in Table 4. It is evident that although the majority had three siblings each, 96 (or 49,7 per cent) of the children came from average size families of three siblings and less, while 97 (or 50,3 per cent) came from larger families. It would seem therefore that slightly more children came from larger families.

The findings regarding family size are ambivalent and suggest several tentative possibilities. Firstly, they contradict the belief that all street children come from families with large numbers of children, indicating perhaps a subtle, structural change in African families, over and above that which occurred due, *inter alia*, to urbanisation and mass migration. On the other hand, it suggests an association between poor socio-economic conditions and larger family size. A large number of children came from informal settlements, notably Inanda. These makeshift shelters, which provide scant protection from the elements, and in which disease, malnutrition and poverty prevail, create an atmosphere of neglect and apathy. These disorganised conditions often take their toll on family life, especially when there are large numbers of children to support. Children are left to their own devices and are deprived of the individual attention and nurture that every child needs for emotional and personal growth. One can presume, therefore, that children from large families and disorganised living conditions suffer the effects of neglect which, when combined with the unique character of the child, provide the impetus to run away.

The present study agrees in part with the findings of Jayes (1985:36), who concluded from her study that "the families were not as large as perhaps expected". In her study, the number of children ranged from one to nine, with an average of 4,3 children per family.

Employment of parents/guardians

The results of the study indicated that 122 fathers (75,3 per cent of the total number of fathers who were still alive) were employed, while 84

mothers (47,5 per cent of the total number of mothers who were still alive) were employed. In addition, 12 guardians (46,2 per cent of those who indicated that they lived with *others*) were employed. The responses to this question further revealed that of the 90 physically intact families (refer to previous section) both parents were employed in 43 (or 47,7 per cent) of the cases. The picture presented here shows a significant number of parents and *others* in employment, thereby indicating relative economic stability, if employment is an indicator of stability. This being the case, it may explain the greater number of years spent at school by the majority of respondents in this study as compared with similar studies. The facts suggest that it is not unemployment, but rather employment which is related to the street child phenomenon. In the families where both parents work, or the remaining parent (after desertion, divorce or death) works, children are left to their own devices and are free to do as they please. Their independence, fostered at a young age out of necessity, may cause them to resent the authority and discipline of their parents when they are at home. The child is therefore caught up in the double-bind situation of being independent and self-nurturant during the working day, and subservient and child-like when the parents are present. Furthermore, the politicisation and increasing empowerment of township youth have caused them to reject poverty and mediocrity and have imbued them with greater expectations.

The findings in this study disagree with those of other researchers. Goniwe and Bishop (1989:6,14) found that the majority of families in their study, who were resident in Cradock's Lingelihle community, were reliant on state grants and pensions for support. Being a predominantly farming area subject to the vagaries of climate and without factories and industries to provide employment, Lingelihle had an estimated unemployment rate of between 60 and 70 per cent. These factors contributed to unemployment among the families of children on the streets in their study.

Jayes (1985) found the families of runaway boys in her study to be severely deprived economically, with earnings seldom exceeding R150 per month.

It is not the intention of the researcher to assert that the families of street children in this study were well off. It would be more appropriate to say that they were better off than the families of street children cited in a number of other studies. The street children in the present study appear to come from various socio-economic backgrounds.

Support of street children in families without employment

Although several parents/caretakers were not in formal employment, they were nevertheless engaged in various activities in the informal sector, such as buying and selling old clothes, running shebeens and odd jobbing.

Of the 42 (or 21,8 per cent) who indicated their source of support, 11 (or 26,2 per cent) stated that they were dependent on their grandmothers' pensions for support. The rest were reliant to varying degrees on other family members for support, with the exception of one child who was supported by an Indian family with whom he stayed.

The data suggest that a wide network of relationships play a supportive role in the lives of many of the respondents when the parents are unable to do so. This may perhaps explain why so few sought help from the church prior to running away. These findings also attest to the importance of family relationships, even in urban settings. They may also support the point made earlier that cultural and traditional practices may discourage outside interference in domestic affairs.

Street children's relationship with their families

Table 5 shows that once the respondents leave their homes, contact with parents and siblings is minimal. A large proportion of the sample reported no contact with parents or siblings once they had left home.

The table indicates that slightly more children never see their mothers than those who never see their fathers, while 123 (or 63,7 per cent) of the 149 who responded, never see either parent.

Table 5: Present contact of street children with their families

Family member	*Frequency of contact*					
	Frequently		*Sometimes*		*Never*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Mother	22	11,4	21	10,9	137	71,0
Father	20	10,4	14	7,2	130	67,4
Both parents	17	8,8	9	4,7	123	63,7
Brothers	5	2,6	5	2,6	179	92,7
Sisters	4	2,1	3	1,5	181	93,8
Other	1	0,5	6	3,1	-	-

For the majority of street children, severance of ties with parents and siblings becomes a *fait accompli* once they leave their homes. Although a few report occasional and frequent contact with mothers and fathers, the majority remain isolated from familial contact of any kind. It appears that although the research revealed that the children love their parents, neither the children nor their parents make the effort to keep in touch. The present findings agree with those of Swart (1988d), whose research indicated either occasional to regular contact with family members, or complete severance of family ties. Zingaro's (1988) work with street children in Canada revealed minimal or non-existent contact between the children and their families, which is similar to the present findings.

On the other hand, Richter and Goniwe and Bishop all report regular contact between street children with their families. Richter (1989a:5) states that 74 per cent of the children studied "reported having contact with their families, and 40% reported seeing members of their immediate family at least once every two weeks". Of the 14 children in Goniwe and Bishop's (1989:15) study, 11 went home daily, two went home often, and one occasionally. This suggests that the

children in their study were mainly *children on the street*, rather than *children of the street*.

When asked whether they intended to return to their families, 118 (or 64,1 per cent) of the 184 who responded, indicated that they would return to live with their families; 51 (or 27,7 per cent) said they would not, and 15 (or 8,2 per cent) did not know whether they would. The findings suggest that for the majority of street children, street life is not a permanent option but rather an interim solution to difficult circumstances. It appears that they would have liked to return home, take their place as males in the household and settle down to jobs and family life, as later findings indicate. The children, though deviant by society's norms and values, have no intention of continuing as they are, and show surprisingly conventional attitudes towards their future prospects. Swart (1988d) believes that because the street child phenomenon is of relatively recent interest in South Africa, it is still too early to undertake longitudinal studies to determine what becomes of street children when they grow up. However, studies of adult street dwellers in the Cape indicate that "few adult street dwellers appear to have spent their childhood years on the streets" (Bromley, cited in Swart, 1988d:138). She further reports that the street children of Hillbrow often fantasise that they will return home to "undergo traditional initiation into manhood". This fantasy is unlikely to become a reality since this practice has largely "fallen away in urban areas and amongst the Zulu in general". This dream, she states, is perpetuated by those of Sotho origin among whom such practices are still in effect.

Richter (1988b:65) states that 40 per cent of the boys in her study "made implicit or explicit statements indicating a desire to return to their families or to find a substitute family or home".

The researcher holds the view that for many of the respondents, returning home is held as an ideal and not an immediate reality. Many of the respondents in the study have been on the streets for a number of years and would have returned to their families by now if that was really what they had wanted to do. This is true if one considers the multiple placements many have endured in places of safety, prisons and police cells. Furthermore, whenever the boys absconded from

Bayhead Place of Safety, they made their way back to the city, rather than back to their homes. For these reasons, it is felt that the children will perhaps return home as young adults, and not until they have spent a good few years on the street.

An analysis of the sociodemographic variables presents a profile of street children and their families that seems to be no different from millions of other black families in South Africa.

A profile emerges of male adolescents (primarily between 11 and 15 years of age), with four to six years of formal but unsatisfactory schooling, from violence-ravaged areas. This suggests the victimisation they have been subjected to. The large number of siblings and the employment of parents/guardians may indicate neglect. It can be argued that inner (psychological) factors rather than external ones led these children to run away. This point of view is substantiated when it is shown that the respondents display a strong internal locus of control, in that they view events and conditions as being determined by themselves rather than by others.

It could also be that their strong internal locus of control made them rebel against an external reality over which they had no control, thus triggering the runaway response.

Becoming a street child

The part played by the church in giving help

The findings indicated that only 7 (or 3,6 per cent) of the total respondent group sought help from the church prior to running away from their homes. Several tentative reasons can be posited for this. It may be that in terms of cultural upbringing and tradition, seeking help from an *outside* organisation may not be the norm. This seems likely if one considers the strong extended and family kinship systems that exist in the rural areas. Furthermore, the children may view the churches in the black townships and informal settlements as being beyond their reach and focusing on the spiritual needs of the parents rather than the emotional needs of the child. In addition, black children are inculcated with a strong sense of reverence for their parents and

elders, more so perhaps in the case of the clergy. The tendency not to seek assistance from the church may also be indicative of the children's perceptions of the church as remote or abstract. However, the role played by churches in disorganised townships and informal settlements is unclear and should be investigated.

This calls into question the role played by the church in stemming the number of children who run away from their homes. In view of the children's earlier religious exposure, the researcher believes that this influence could be harnessed to channel frustrations and hurts into less destructive coping mechanisms. One of the service providers pointed out that the church cannot espouse purely abstract doctrines and philosophies, but should offer more practical assistance to those in need, particularly street children.

The research also indicated that 169 (or 87,6 per cent) of the total number of respondents received no help from their respective churches prior to running away. This is significant, especially since a large majority of the respondents (169 or 87,6 per cent) were Christians and of these, 155 (or 91,7 per cent) regularly attended church. It is unclear why only 7 (or 4,1 per cent) of the 169 children sought help from their respective churches. Whatever the reasons for their failure to seek or obtain help from the church of their respective persuasions, it seems clear that the church can and should play a more constructive and active role in dissuading children from the ultimate option, that is, fleeing from their homes.

Reasons for leaving school

The reasons why the street children left school are given in Table 6. The reasons are diverse and indicate some of the factors that mitigate against school attendance. Although the responses are specific to the respondents in the sample, the researcher is of the opinion that they also apply to thousands of other black children of schoolgoing age who have abandoned the pursuit of the three *Rs*. The most frequently recorded reason for leaving school was a loss of interest (26,9 per cent), followed by leaving because friends influenced them to do so

(19,7 per cent). The fact that loss of interest in school is mentioned most often is a telling indictment of an educational system that is unstimulating at best, and proving to be very destructive to many who would otherwise have the potential to reach greater heights. Informal conversations with the street children on the street revealed them to be an enthusiastic, co-operative group of boys, who took an enormous interest in the interviews, and who said that they would like to return to school if the conditions that prompted them to leave could be addressed.

The loss of interest in school may be related to failure, abstract curricula, curricula that do not meet the needs of the pupils, curricula that are totally divorced from cultural and socio-economic conditions, an unstimulating school environment and the punitive atmosphere prevalent in the classroom and school generally. Schärf (1988) found that the majority of the children he studied had failed at least once and some as many as four times before dropping out of school. The author cites disciplinary transgressions, beatings, insufficient schools, poor facilities, overcrowding and teachers overloaded with double shifts who, in frustration, resort to punitive methods, as some of the reasons for children dropping out of school. Schärf (1988:269) notes that "children are ... educationally disadvantaged throughout their schooling, and for many of them school becomes a frightening and alienating experience".

Reasons for leaving home

The findings show that the respondents in the present study left their homes for a variety of reasons (refer to Table 6). The main reason given for leaving home is dislike of school (36,8 per cent), followed by poverty and overcrowding (14,0 per cent). Poverty and overcrowding as the prevailing condition in the lives of street children are well documented (refer to Chapter 2). Poverty is characteristic of the lives of the majority of black people in South Africa who are exposed to the daily grind of hardship and deprivation. For many adults, poverty is a dead-end street and they have absolutely no hope

of attaining a better standard of living. The 27 children in this study who cited poverty as a reason for leaving home, no doubt felt that there was nothing to lose but rather something to gain from running away.

Poverty alone cannot explain the street child phenomenon. If it did, thousands more children would be living on the streets of South Africa. The responses with regard to employment of parents/guardians show a significant number of parents and *others* in employment, indicating relative economic stability in times of widespread unemployment.

The findings support the views of Libertoff (in Richter, 1989a:1), that street children "leave home out of despair with current circumstance" (dislike of school, poverty, township violence, etc.), "and with a youthful hope for a better life". This is confirmed by the fact that nearly all were runaways, not throwaways.

Table 6: Reasons for leaving school and for leaving home

Reason	*N*	*%*
Reasons for leaving school		
Lost interest	52	26,9
Influenced by friends	38	19,7
Parents unable to afford schooling	17	8,8
Violence in district/witchcraft	11	5,7
Left of own accord/dislike school	7	3,6
Parents not interested	6	3,1
Ill treated by school friends/relatives/own ill health	5	2,6
Lost report/unable to gain admission/stole money	5	2,6
Father told him to leave school/misunderstanding with father/mother ill or died	4	2,1
No response	48	24,9
TOTAL	193	100,0

Reason	*N*	*%*
Reasons for leaving home		
Did not like school	71	36,8
To escape poverty/overcrowding	27	14,0
To escape conditions/violence in township	23	11,9
For excitement and adventure/nothing to do in the township	15	7,8
Unhappy at home/heard about shelters in Durban	11	5,7
For a better life/to earn money for the family	8	4,2
Asked to leave by parents/parents fight with each other and with child continually	5	2,6
Other	29	15,0
No response	4	2,1
TOTAL	193	100,0

The researcher believes that drastic changes need to be made to the education system. An equal, free, education system that takes into account the needs and disadvantages of the majority of black children and has well-trained teachers and good schools and facilities will go a long way to stem the tide of truancies and abscondments.

Runaway behaviour and destination following running away

Only 2 (or 1,0 per cent) of the 193 street children in the study were *throwaways* or *pushouts*; in other words, only two were rejected by their families. The overwhelming majority were *runaways*, having taken the voluntary decision to leave their homes, schools and communities.

On further investigation it was found that the majority of respondents in the sample (106 or 54,9 per cent) had run away for the first time. Twenty-one (or 10,9 per cent) ran away once previously and 27 (or 14,0 per cent) ran away twice before. Thirty-five (or 18,1 per cent) had run away three or more times previously. These boys seem

to have developed what is referred to in the literature as "the runaway reaction", that is, the tendency to flee repeatedly from the family, school, stress and what they perceive as problem situations. The fact that many had run away several times gives credence to the view that the runaway phenomenon may be irreversible.

With the exception of Jayes, none of the authors reviewed made reference to the number of times street children had run away from home. Her study revealed that the majority of boys had run away repeatedly (Jayes, 1985:62). The fact that the majority of street children in this study were first-time runaways had implications for their involvement in deviant behaviour. Richter (1989b:9) states that

> the longer runaways stay on the street, and the more they repeat running away, the greater becomes their criminal involvement, and the less likely it is that they will make an adequate social or occupational adjustment.

The researcher believes that because the majority in this study were first-time runaways, their attitudes and patterns of behaviour were less likely (though not unlikely) to have been contaminated by the harshness of street life. Even though they engaged in deviant activities to survive, and even though prolonged participation can reinforce later delinquency, the researcher believes that positive interaction and management of the problem at an early stage can forestall future delinquent and criminal careers.

The various destinations after leaving home are given in Table 7. The beach front was the most popular destination after running away (66 or 34,2 per cent). Durban city centre also attracted a fair number of runaways in the study (28 or 14,5 per cent) and 24 (or 12,4 per cent) of the children made their way to a number of other areas or suburbs away from their homes. Sixteen (or 8,3 per cent) left home to do casual work and 12 (or 6,2 per cent) went to friends.

The attraction of the majority of respondents to the beach front area is hardly surprising in terms of the variety of outdoor and indoor sleeping places available there. The many attractions and the carefree

atmosphere that prevail are in sharp contrast to the drabness of township life. The beach front area, which is a mecca for tourists both local and from abroad, provides many children with their most frequently pursued income-generating activity—begging. Tourists, perhaps from guilt or as part of their good deed for the day, can easily be persuaded to part with some money to a pathetic, hungry-looking waif. City centres likewise provide ample opportunities for begging and theft.

Table 7: Destination after leaving home and place where street child slept

Response	*N*	*%*
Destination after leaving home		
Durban beach front	66	34,2
Durban city centre	28	14,5
Other suburbs	24	12,4
Casual work	16	8,3
Durban/Berea Station	15	7,8
Friends	12	6,2
Other	24	12,4
No response	8	4,2
TOTAL	193	100,0
Place where street child slept		
Bushes	34	17,6
Bayhead place of safety	30	15,5
With friends/relatives	30	15,5
No fixed place	21	10,9
Employer's place	16	8,3
Durban/Berea station	15	7,8
Other	19	9,9
No response	28	14,5
TOTAL	193	100,0

Swart (1988c), citing Sanders, states that street children are most often to be found in commercial centres, at railway stations and in prosperous residential zones, since these areas typically allow children to generate an income without which they cannot survive alone on the streets (Swart, 1988c). Similar trends are evident in the present study.

Not all children who leave their homes become street children; they may live with other relatives rather than return home. Therefore, if it were not for the safety net provided by relatives, there may be far more street children than there are at present. A number of children in this study reported doing casual work after leaving home, but these jobs proved to be of a temporary nature, and these children also found their way to Durban.

Length of stay at original destination and place where street child slept

The length of time spent at the various places to which the respondents went varied from one day to two years. Informal conversations with the children indicated that those who had spent long periods of time away from their homes did not stay long at the places to which they originally went. They tended to be itinerant, and went wherever the prospects of survival seemed better. The responses indicated that 26 (or 15,1 per cent) were arrested by the Durban City Police on the day of their arrival in the city. They were generally arrested, or picked up for three reasons:

- Absconding from a place of safety.
- Appearing "in need of care" in terms of the Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983.
- Being involved in illegal activities.

Although two years appears to have been the longest time spent on the streets (this applied to two of the boys), many of the children in the sample (especially those who had run away several times) had perhaps spent altogether far longer than two years on the streets. Of the 172

who provided information on this topic, the majority (56 or 32,6 per cent) reported that they had spent between one and eight months on the streets; 39 (or 22,7 per cent) had spent between one and seven weeks on the streets; 26 (or 15,1 per cent) were arrested or picked up on the day of their arrival, while 12 (or 6,9 per cent) spent from one to two years on the street.

The findings relating to the places where the street children slept (refer to Table 7) indicated that 34 (or 17,6 per cent) slept in bushes and 30 (or 15,5 per cent) slept at Bayhead Place of Safety. The children also slept with relatives and friends, on the station or had no fixed place where they slept. The research indicated that the children did not stay in one particular spot, but tended to move around in order to avoid police harassment.

Length of time spent on the streets or in institutions

At the time of the study, the average length of time that the children had spent on the streets was 34,6 days. Even though the maximum length of time spent on the streets was four and a half years, 83 of the boys had run away more than once, and eight had run away as many as five times. The total length of time spent on the streets, therefore, may far exceed the most recent length of time. The children were often hazy with regard to the concept of time and may have spent longer or shorter periods on the streets than that reported.

Only 15 boys responded when asked how long they had spent in the shelter. These boys indicated that they had spent an average of 168,5 days at a shelter (Khayalethu or Zamani). By the same token, 34 boys reported an average of 137,2 days stay at a place of safety.

The findings indicated that the respondents had spent unduly long periods of time at the places of safety to which they were committed. In effect, places of safety are supposed to offer temporary refuge while alternative placements are being found. However, due to the chronic lack of children's homes, children are left to languish in such institutions, where they are exposed to negative subcultures and influences, in addition to various types of abuse.

Placement of street children

None of the respondents in the study had been in foster care or a school of industry. Four (or 2,1 per cent) had been in children's homes, and a further 4 (or 2,1 per cent) in reform schools. The majority (177 or 91,7 per cent) had been at either Bayhead, Umlazi or Pata Places of Safety. Some had been in more than one place of safety. Thirty-five (or 18,1 per cent) had been in police cells, while 8 (or 4,1 per cent) had been detained in a prison. Twenty-eight (or 14,5 per cent) children stated that they had been in some *other* place. *Other* here refers to both Khayalethu and Zamani Shelters.

If detention in reform schools, prisons and police cells is an indicator of deviance and delinquency, then at least 47 (or 24,1 per cent) children in the study have been labelled deviant. The number of those who have committed acts of deviance, but were not apprehended, is not known.

A close inspection of the interview schedules revealed that several children had more than one placement or detention in the above places. It seems that several of the boys interviewed had run the gamut of running away, being detained at a place of safety, absconding from there, being redetained at either the same place of safety or another and again running away. Some reported eventually finding a measure of solace at the shelter.

The tendency to place children—not only street children—in institutions such as children's homes, reform schools, schools of industry and places of safety (including police cells), has been severely criticised. Cockburn (1990) believes that lack of alternative care placements is responsible for swelling the number of children living *on* and *of* the streets.

Institutions that range in philosophy from the "benign to the punitive" do little or nothing to address the causes of the street child phenomenon (Schärf, cited in Swart, 1988c:52). The researcher believes that children's experiences in institutions are negative and unhappy and their physical separation from the outside world hinders any feeble attempts at rehabilitation.

The factors reviewed here relate to the themes of causation, victimisation and deviance that form the basis of the study. The *runaway episode* provides the final link in the chain of causality, thereby completing the process of becoming a street child. It is evident that the major institutions in the lives of the respondents—family, school and church—fail to provide a supportive, nurturing and disciplined milieu and through omission and commission, contribute to the victimisation of these youth, thereby precipitating the runaway episode. Viewed from the interactionist perspective, the negative interactions between the respondents and these institutions help shape the meanings and interpretations they attach to their situations. Those who make the decision to run away must have evaluated the rewards and costs of staying against the rewards and costs of leaving. Negative interactions between the child and his family, school and church are replaced by negative interactions between the child and the public, police and social workers and as a result of labelling, a pattern of deviance develops. This does not suggest that the street child is a passive pawn in the victimisation/deviance cycle. It is generally accepted that street children are streetwise and have their wits about them. The decision to engage in primary deviance, whether through coercion or volition, would have entailed a similar evaluation to that made prior to running away. However, it is argued that secondary deviance, which in turn is the result of negative reactions and labelling, limits their legitimate options.

Involvement in deviant behaviour

Findings relating to arrest by the police

Table 8 shows that 102 respondents had never been arrested, while 90 had. A further two children reported at a later stage of the study that they had been arrested.

The term *arrest* has been used in a broad sense in this study. Children who were picked up by the Durban City Police for absconding from a place of safety, or because they appeared to be "in need of care", were regarded as having been arrested. Sixty-five of the

92 who said they had been arrested were picked up by the Durban City Police for this reason. Only 20 were arrested for actual crimes, while eight stated that they had been arrested, but did not specify the reason. Labelling theory suggests that contact with law officials is important in understanding deviant behaviour. A child who is regarded as a delinquent or a street child, and who has not yet attained the age of 18, may be referred to a place of safety. However, if a child in such institutions does nothing but kick a ball around day after day he has little chance of learning sound, acceptable morals and values. Constructive programmes need to be developed, and enlightened legislation needs to be enacted to meet the varied physical, psychological, social, intellectual and other needs of the children so labelled. Such children need to be diverted from their deviant tendencies and runaway responses before these take hold and become an integral part of their being.

It was disconcerting to note that the street children interviewed on the streets had a higher rate of arrest than those at both the place of safety and the shelter (except for those arrested once), which does not augur well for their future. This confirms the finding of other researchers that the longer a child remains on the streets, the greater the likelihood of involvement in delinquent and future criminal activities (refer to Chapter 2).

A review of the literature indicates that street children have frequent contact with the police, since many of their activities are illegal. The encounters between them occur periodically as part of police efforts to round them up, which may result in their redistribution to other areas of the city, or to other cities, or in their return home. The sight of the police evokes tremendous fear in the children, since many have been intimidated and brutalised by the police while in their custody (Swart, 1988c).

By the same token, some children have experienced great kindness from the police. This was witnessed by the researcher during the course of the interviews. The street children in Durban have developed a great liking and rapport with a particular sergeant who has worked with them for a number of years. Generally, however, street children

are fearful of the police. Swart's study revealed that allegations against the police included being kicked, teargassed, set upon by police dogs, thrown into lakes even though they cannot swim, and forced to drink or smoke glue, then beaten for drunkenness (Swart, 1988c).

Police corruption, exploitation and victimisation of street children is not peculiar to South Africa, and has also been reported in respect of street children in other countries.

With regard to the reasons for arrest, Table 8 indicates that 34 (or 17,6 per cent) were arrested for absconding from a place of safety and 31 (or 16,1 per cent) were arrested as children in need of care. Two (or 1,0 per cent) were arrested for vandalism, 16 (or 8,3 per cent) for theft which included shoplifting, theft of cars, theft from cars, burglary and bicycle theft, and 1 each (or 0,5 per cent) for assault and possession of dagga respectively.

The arrests took place in the heart of Durban, the surrounding areas, and even further away. Of the 92 who were arrested, 28 took place at the beach front, which is a very popular venue for the street children and the place that attracted the most number of children after they left home. Fifteen were arrested in areas surrounding Durban such as Clairwood, Pinetown, Inanda, Mayville, Isipingo Beach, Brighton Beach, Tongaat, Verulam and Montclair. Four were arrested in areas further away such as Inchanga, Thornville, Amanzimtoti and Pietermaritzburg. Sixteen were arrested in the city's streets; eight in the vicinity of the Workshop, also a very popular haunt of street children; and nine at Durban Station, Berea Station and the Indian Market respectively.

Only 5 (or 2,6 per cent) of the 193 respondents were arrested while still living at home. This can be attributed to a greater degree of conformity to family, community and legal norms, and also indicates that street existence is more likely to lead to delinquency.

Table 8: Findings relating to arrest by the police

Response	*N*	*%*
Number of times arrested		
Never	102	52,9
Once	76	39,4
Twice	10	5,2
Three or more times	4	2,1
No response	1	0,5
TOTAL	193	100,0
Reasons for arrest		
Absconding from place of safety	34	17,6
"Child in need of care"	31	16,1
Theft	16	8,3
Vandalism	2	1,0
Assault	1	0,5
Possession of dagga	1	0,5
No reason given	8	4,1
Never been arrested	100	51,8
TOTAL	193	100,0
Place of arrest		
Beach front	28	14,5
City centre	16	8,3
Areas surrounding Durban	15	7,8
Durban/Berea Station/Indian Market	9	4,7
The Workshop shopping centre	8	4,1
Areas further removed from Durban	4	2,1
No response	13	6,7
Never been arrested	100	51,8
TOTAL	193	100,0

The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents were arrested in the city centre as opposed to the suburbs. This suggests that street children are more deviant in the city than they are in the suburbs or in their homes. The ecological theory suggests that the city is more conducive to crime and delinquency because of its vastness, impersonality and anonymity and the opportunities it affords for committing crime.

On the other hand, the greater number of arrests in the city can be attributed to greater police presence and more efficient policing in the city.

Three questions need to be asked:

- Why are so many more children arrested in the city than in their areas of origin?

- If arrests are an indicator of deviance, can we conclude that street children are in fact deviant?

- Are street children more deviant in the city than they are in their areas of origin?

In response to the first question, one can postulate that there is greater and more effective policing in the city, that there is greater concern for the plight of these children and the risks they present, that they are especially visible amid the relative affluence of city dwellers, and that they are driven to crime by need, which leads to arrest.

In response to the second question one may state that in all civilised countries arrests are equated with the violation of legal norms. One assumes that the same holds true for South Africa. This being the case, given that 92 (or 48,1 per cent) were arrested, one can conclude that street children have violated both legal and social norms and are deviant. This is borne out by the range of deviant activities that the children in the sample engaged in.

With regard to the third question, lower arrest rates in their areas of origin suggest less deviance while living at home. It appears that the

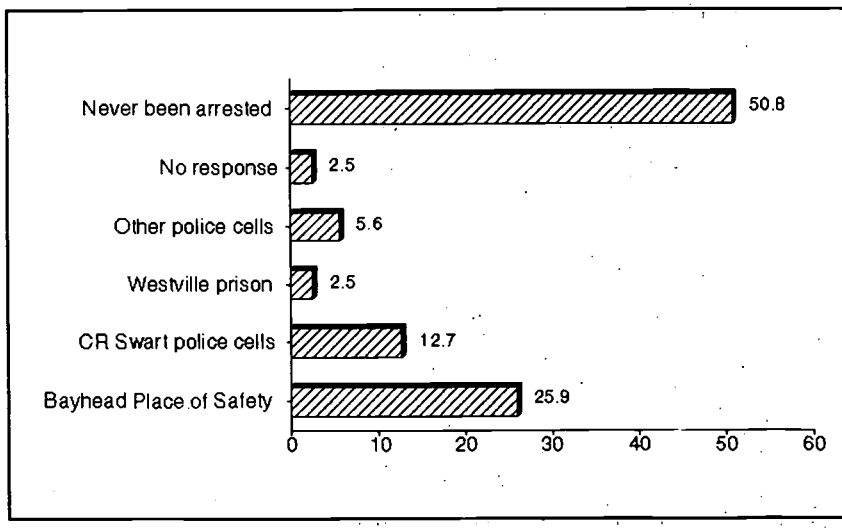
street children were more deviant in the city than they were at home, due no doubt to the possibilities and opportunities afforded by the city. The appearance and untamed behaviour of the children increasingly closes the door to legitimate jobs, necessitating their participation in illegal activities as an alternative form of support.

Place of detention

The places where the children were detained are given in Figure 2. There were 97 detentions for the 92 arrested. Three of the children who were interviewed had more than one detention. One boy had been detained three times, while the other two had two detentions each.

The findings indicate that 51 (or 25,9 per cent) of the total number of the respondents were detained at Bayhead Place of Safety, either because they had absconded from a place of safety, appeared to be in need of care, or were awaiting trial after being arrested for criminal acts.

Figure 2: Place of detention



Twenty-five (or 12,7 per cent) respondents were detained at CR Swart police station, perhaps due to its proximity to the city centre, beach front area and Durban City Police headquarters.

Five (or 2,5 per cent) were detained at Westville prison. The remainder who were detained were kept at various other police cells in and around Durban. Five (or 2,5 per cent) did not specify where they had been detained. These findings illustrate the tendency to incarcerate street children predominantly in a place of safety or police cell. The children are therefore repeatedly victimised in a chain of events over which they have no control. The detention of children in what may best be described as *holding pens* has severe negative consequences. Some of these are labelling, ostracism, conformity to delinquent subcultural norms, isolation from conventional norms, gang membership and homosexuality.

The questions that need to be posed here are, how can a so-called civilised society confine children who have been emotionally, physically and politically battered in such places, and what purpose does this serve?

Only 29 of the street children who had been detained gave an indication of the length of the detention (refer to Table 9). A total of 2 336 days were spent in detention—an average of 80,1 days per child. The fact that the majority of those detained had spent from 30 to 1 095 days in detention is cause for concern.

The detention of children in places of safety, prisons and police cells for excessively lengthy periods is unacceptable, and defeats the stated goal of rehabilitation. The incarceration of juveniles with older and hardened criminals exposes them to physical and sexual abuse.

The Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977 provides the police with several discretionary measures to ensure a child's attendance in court. Alternatives such as bail, the provision of a written notice to appear in court, or placement in the custody of parents/guardians, are seldom used, and incarceration in police cells (the easiest and most convenient option) has become the rule rather than the exception (McLachlan, 1984). Detention of children in police cells, prisons and places of

safety is counter-productive to the rehabilitation and integration of children into society, and should be used sparingly.

Table 9: Duration of detention

Response	*N*	*%*
One day	1	0,5
Two days	3	1,6
Five days	2	1,0
Seven days	5	2,6
Fourteen days	3	1,6
Thirty days	6	3,1
Sixty days and longer	9	4,7
No response	64	33,2
Never been arrested	100	51,8
TOTAL	193	100,0

Street children's assessment

Five of the nine children who provided information on the conditions in prison said that the *accommodation* in prison was good, while four said that it was bad. Two said that the *food* in prison was good, while the majority, (seven) said that it was bad. Four said the *medical treatment* in prison was good, while five said it was bad.

The majority (25) of the 31 children who gave details on the conditions in police cells said that the accommodation was bad. With regard to the *food*, two said that it was good, 26 said it was bad and three said it was satisfactory. Five said that the medical treatment was good, 22 said it was bad and four said it was satisfactory.

With regard to children's homes, two of the four children who had been there indicated that the accommodation and food were good. Of the four children who were at reform schools, only one provided

information on the conditions. He reported that the accommodation, food and medical treatment were all satisfactory.

All the children (157) who had been in a place of safety said that the accommodation, food and medical treatment were good. All of those who had been to the Khayalethu and Zamani Shelters said that the food and medical treatment were good, while most felt that the accommodation was good.

From the responses received it appears that the places of safety and the shelters offer adequate care in terms of accommodation, food and medical treatment. Prison accommodation also seems to be good, but not the food and medical treatment.

The majority of the respondents found police cells to be altogether bad. Accommodation, food and medical treatment at children's homes were reported to be good, while these were satisfactory at the reform school.

The researcher believes that the responses to the above question may not be an entirely accurate reflection of the boys' feelings and experiences of detention. Their physical needs may be met at the places of safety but it is unlikely that their emotional needs are met. The children's educational needs are definitely not being met. Boredom may account for the large number who continually abscond. Informal conversations with the boys on the streets who had been at a place of safety at some stage of their street existence revealed that they were averse to being recommitted. No specific reasons were given for the way they felt, nor were any stories of gross maltreatment recounted. The impression gained was that the physical isolation of the institution and the unstimulating environment contributed to the boys' unhappiness and spurred their desire to abscond.

Extent and nature of punishment during detention

A large majority (170 or 88,0 per cent) indicated that they were not punished during detention. Of the 23 who said they had been punished, 3 (or 13,0 per cent) were punished while in prison, 12 (or 52,2 per cent) while in police custody and 8 (or 34,8 per cent) while at a place

of safety. Therefore more children in police custody were punished than at a place of safety or in prison. Five of the 23 children who said that they had been punished indicated that the punishment had amounted to assault.

These findings revealed that only a small number of respondents were punished in the various institutions to which they had been confined. On the other hand, it is possible that the children's fear of victimisation and harassment by the police and institutional staff prevented some from responding truthfully.

Over the years, the South African public have been informed of the inhumane treatment of children by the police while in detention. Similarly, the Detainees' Parents Support Committee (1986:71-72) has graphically illustrated the abuses perpetrated against children in detention. This study finds the police to be the main perpetrators of punishment, but not to the degree that one would have expected after having read such adverse reports.

Media reports have over the years likewise focused on the abuse of children in institutional settings, mainly children's homes and places of safety. The findings of the present study do not support these reports.

Nature of deviant activities

The findings given in Table 10 show that begging is by far the most frequent activity (124 or 64,2 per cent). It is usually the smallest, most pitiful-looking children who are used for this purpose and if there is a girl among them, "she may do the begging on behalf of the group" (Schärf, 1988:276-277). Schärf states that after dark, begging on the streets is replaced by door-to-door begging, which includes asking for food and clothing in addition to money. Swart (1988c:135) reports that older boys are resented for begging since the public feel that they should render some service rather than beg (Swart, 1988c:135).

Some of their other activities are as follows:

- *Gambling*—82 (or 42,5 per cent) children engaged in this activity. Swart reports that street children are at risk of arrest for gambling even though the children regard *Tiekie-dice* as only a game (Swart, 1988c:137-138).

- *Smoking dagga*—45 (or 23,3 per cent) children smoked dagga. Other research findings confirm the use of dagga by street children. Garman (1987:49) reports that of the 15 subjects in her study, "all of them used at least two types of other drugs (other than glue), and in most cases they used three other drugs".

Table 10: Nature of deviant activities

Activity	*N*	*%*
Begging	124	64,2
Gambling	82	42,5
Smoking dagga	45	23,3
Glue sniffing	44	22,8
Benzine sniffing	32	16,6
Drinking alcohol	32	16,6
Petrol sniffing	31	16,1
Inhaling paint thinners	15	7,8
Theft from shops	11	5,7
Theft from cars	10	5,2
Bag-snatching	8	4,1
Assault	8	4,1
Theft from houses	7	3,6
Theft from shoppers	6	3,1
Homosexuality	3	1,6
Prostitution	2	1,0
Other	32	16,6

- *Glue sniffing*—44 (or 22,8 per cent) children sniffed glue. Through observation and informal conversation with the children interviewed

on the streets, it was found that glue sniffing was a highly favoured activity and was used to lessen sensitivity to hunger, cold, pain, fear and the many dangers faced by children on the streets daily.

Glue sniffing as a predominant activity engaged in by street children is widely referred to in the literature. Swart reports that "smoking glue is the commonest form of addiction among the Malunde [person of the street]", and that it is "directly related to the triggering of aggression and fighting". She states that the street child's addiction to glue is out of step with street children abroad, "many of whom have turned to hard drugs" (Swart, 1988d:129,168,198). Schärf also states that street children's "favourite highs are derived from sniffing glue, paint thinners and sometimes benzine" (Schärf, 1988:276).

Other types of deviant activities engaged in by the children were benzine and petrol sniffing, drinking alcohol, theft from shops, cars and houses, bag-snatching, homosexuality and prostitution (refer to Table 10).

The findings of this study are significant since they confirm the involvement of street children in a wide range of deviant activities, thereby lending credibility to the focus of this research.

It appears that the children in this study are no different to street children elsewhere in this country, as indicated by the various studies cited. They do tend, however, to be less involved in what are often regarded as sexually deviant activities, that is, homosexuality and prostitution. The reasons for this are unknown but may be linked to the fact that many of the children spent a substantial number of years in school or to the conventional values that they hold.

There appears to be a certain pattern in so far as their deviant activities are concerned, with the majority resorting to begging, a relatively innocuous offence, then progressing to solvent abuse, gambling, drug abuse, theft, assault and sexually deviant activities. It may be assumed that the turning point in their deviant activities occurs with the use of drugs and the turning to theft as a means of support.

The role of friends in involvement in deviant activities

The majority of the respondents (111 or 57,5 per cent) said they engaged in deviant activities with friends, while 78 (or 40,4 or per cent) said they engaged in deviant activities alone. Thirty-five (or 18,1 per cent) engaged in deviant activities with gang members, while 23 (or 11,9 per cent) said they did so with older criminals.

It is not surprising that the majority of the respondents did not engage in deviance alone, since most of the activities mentioned can best be enjoyed with friends. The spirit of friendship and camaraderie among street children is well documented in the literature and explains the tendency to want to do things and share activities with friends.

It is interesting to note that although the majority of children left their homes alone they very soon teamed up with a network of friends. This illustrates the strong need adolescents have to be part of, and accepted by, a group.

A significant feature that emerges from the findings is the children's involvement in deviant activities with older criminals and gang members. Association with older delinquents and criminals holds definite implications for their future involvement in delinquent and criminal activities. Whether they do so out of fear or in an attempt to appear brave or *macho*, the implications are the same. The young, vulnerable, lonely street child may hero-worship older delinquents because of their perceived prowess in committing illegal activities. If they are successful in what they do, the children may want to imitate their exploits in the hope of attaining money, power and prestige. Furthermore, criminals, gang members and street children may all share the brotherhood of street life, and a few *crumbs* thrown at the children may procure limitless devotion and loyalty. The exposure of vulnerable youngsters to law-violating and anti-social patterns of behaviour, especially over long periods of time, will encourage similar attitudes and behaviour, since this behaviour is seen to be the norm.

This tendency can be theoretically explained in terms of Sutherland's theory of differential association. This theory states that an individual becomes criminal when, through a process of association,

attitudes favourable to the violation of the law predominate over the view that the law should be obeyed. The individual therefore identifies with the norms and values of a deviant group and behaves accordingly.

Although the respondents in the present study did not appear to be members of gangs (i.e. this was not revealed during informal conversations), it appeared that 22 (or 11,4 per cent) children were forced by gang members and older criminals to engage in deviant activities. It is contended that their exposure to older delinquents and criminals is likely to set them on a path to delinquency and crime.

The arrest of street children and their detention in places of safety, prisons and police cells means that contact with hardened offenders is likely to occur. The detention of children in prisons has become a focal concern of the Government of National Unity (GNU), so much so that President Mandela, in his *State of the Nation* address to parliament, called for the release of the 14 000 juveniles in detention (*Natal Mercury*, 25 May 1994).

The findings show that street children are engaged in many deviant activities. Their deviant behaviour may lead to labelling and stigmatisation which can result in secondary deviance and the development of deviant careers.

Social world of street children

Income-generating activities

The respondents in this study engaged in a variety of legitimate and illegitimate activities to earn money. The most common activities were the following:

- *Begging*—129 (or 66,8 per cent). This is a favoured activity of street children and for the younger, more pathetic-looking children, it can prove to be relatively lucrative.

- *Parking cars*—114 (or 59,1 per cent). Street children are frequently seen directing cars into vacant spaces at parking lots. It appears that this activity does have its pecuniary rewards.

- *Gambling*—97 (or 50,3 per cent). Street children can often be seen crouched on the pavement or grass, engaged in some type of game of chance. It would appear that gambling fulfils the three-fold purpose of bringing in money, providing entertainment and a chance to socialise with friends.

- *Washing cars*—75 (or 38,9 per cent) boys were engaged in this activity.

- *Selling fruit and vegetables*—54 (or 28,0 per cent) boys sold fruit and vegetables to bring in some money. These children can often be seen doing this around the Indian market area.

- *Pushing trolleys*—52 (or 26,9 per cent) pushed trolleys for customers at supermarkets in order to earn money.

- *Selling newspapers*—14 (or 7,3 per cent). Only a small number of the children interviewed sold newspapers to earn money.

- *Theft from cars*—13 (or 6,7 per cent) boys said they obtained money through thieving from cars. It is probable that these boys were used by older criminals and gang members to steal from cars, in return for a small fee.

- *Theft from houses*—11 (or 5,7 per cent) boys were engaged in this activity. It is likely that they too were recruited by older criminals and gang members for this. Their agility and size would stand them in good stead for burglary, and if caught, the penalties will be greatly reduced in view of their age.

- *Theft from shops*—9 (or 4,7 per cent). A comparatively small number of the children *earned* money in this way, due perhaps to the greater precautions taken by shops to deter shoplifters.

- *Theft from shoppers and bag-snatching*—6 (or 3,1 per cent) children engaged in these activities, which do not appear to be as lucrative as other activities.

Table 11: Income-generating activities

Activity	*N*	*%*
Begging	129	66,8
Parking cars	114	59,1
Gambling	97	50,3
Washing cars	75	38,9
Selling fruit and vegetables	54	28,0
Pushing trolleys	52	26,9
Selling newspapers	14	7,3
Theft from cars	13	6,7
Theft from houses	11	5,7
Theft from shops	9	4,7
Theft from shoppers	6	3,1
Bag-snatching	6	3,1

The literature indicates that street children undertake a great many legitimate and illegitimate activities to generate an income. Richter (1988b:18) reports that money is earned through "informal services" such as ushering cars into parking spaces. She found that a smaller number earned money from "gambling, sexual activities or selling newspapers".

Swart categorises the working activities of street children into four main groups, namely begging, theft, scavenging and odd-jobbing. The latter involves payment for services such as shoe-shining, washing and parking cars, helping shoppers with their parcels and pushing trolleys, sweeping shop frontages for shopkeepers, prostitution and selling newspapers, fruit and flowers. The children's income ranges from fifty cents to five or ten rands from Mondays to Thursdays, and from two

to twenty-five rands on Fridays and Saturdays, with Sundays bringing in far less money. Children who are recruited by adults for housebreaking *earn* considerably more, which may be anything from one hundred to three hundred rands per job "depending on their age and expertise" (Swart, 1988d:42,135,248).

Way in which money is spent

The majority of the respondents (63 or 32,6 per cent) listed buying food as their main priority. This was followed by 40 (or 20,7 per cent) who said they went to the cinema. Thirty-nine (or 20,2 per cent) said they took the money home to their families and 35 (or 18,1 per cent) bought clothes. Eleven (or 5,7 per cent) played video games and 2 (or 1,0 per cent) spent their money on their friends.

The ways in which the children spend their money reflect an ambivalence of adult-like responsibility and child-like abandonment. The need to buy food, clothes and to take their money home is indicative of their maturity and responsibility towards themselves and their families. On the other hand, going to the cinema, playing video games and spending money on friends, makes one realise that they are still children with the need for enjoyment and fun like any other carefree child. The children are young at heart, yet old beyond their years, burdened with responsibilities that other children of similar ages take for granted. The children thus combine a mixture of hedonism and practicality in their lifestyle. Although the money generated was spent on food, clothes, the cinema, etc., the findings also revealed that drug abuse (dagga) and abuse of solvents was prevalent, indicating that money was also spent in this way, although this was not mentioned by the children.

Participation in recreational activities

The recreational activity most frequently engaged in was playing soccer (61,1 per cent). This was followed by drawing (60,1 per cent), listening to music (59,1 per cent), singing (56,5 per cent), fixing cars and machinery (54,9 per cent), playing music (53,9 per cent),

carpentry (49,2 per cent), dancing (48,7 per cent), painting (43,5 per cent) and acting (38,5 per cent).

The majority of the respondents were never idle (93,3 per cent) or never went to shebeens (86,0 per cent). Most seldom engaged in acting (57,5 per cent).

The data revealed that the respondents in the study were interested in a great many activities. If they were encouraged and taught additional skills (such as drawing, music, mechanics and carpentry), their latent interest and potential would be stimulated, and their energy could be channelled into constructive, perhaps even lucrative pursuits.

Table 12: Participation in recreational activities

Activity	*Frequently*		*Sometimes*		*Never*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Playing soccer	118	61,1	19	9,8	53	27,5
Drawing	116	60,1	16	8,3	59	30,6
Listening to music	114	59,1	17	8,8	60	31,1
Singing	109	56,5	16	8,3	66	34,2
Fixing cars/ machinery	106	54,9	16	8,3	68	35,2
Playing music	104	53,9	21	10,9	65	33,7
Carpentry	95	49,2	15	7,8	81	42,0
Dancing	94	48,7	18	9,3	79	40,9
Painting	84	43,5	23	11,9	84	43,5
Acting	75	38,5	5	2,6	111	57,5
Going to shebeens	17	8,8	5	2,6	166	86,0
Doing nothing	4	2,1	4	2,1	180	93,3

Street children's perceptions and attitudes

Persons whom street children regard as their friends

Most of the respondents in the study (85,0 per cent) stated that their friends were other street children. The spirit of friendship and camaraderie that prevails among street children is well documented in the literature. These children are able to identify with others who are in the same predicament and who unconditionally share their hardships, sorrows, fears and joys. This friendship and bond among street children was witnessed by the researcher while conducting the interviews on the streets. They all knew one another, chatted, laughed and teased, seemingly without a care in the world. It would seem that if street life had done little else for them, it had forged strong bonds of caring and sharing. If they never knew friendship or acceptance before, they surely came to experience it on the streets.

Fifty-two children (or 26,9 per cent) said that their friends were gang members, while 50 (or 25,91 per cent) mentioned that older criminals were their friends. It may well be that these children looked up to older criminals and gang members for what they perceived to be bravery and daring. It is also possible that older criminals and gang members protected and guided the children. A small proportion of children (4,1 per cent) cited shopkeepers and shoppers as their friends.

These findings serve to confirm that the street children were part of, and supported by, an extensive network of peer group relationships. The supportive, caring network to which street children belong has been extensively written about by Aptekar, who found that the older children took responsibility for the younger ones "in spite of their own obvious problems" (Aptekar, 1988:85).

Aptekar found that the peer relationships on the streets led to the development of many coping mechanisms. The older children taught the younger ones the skills, poses and attitudes necessary for survival on the streets, and like substitute parents, doled out "affection, concern and attention" (Aptekar, 1988:85).

Views and behaviour of street children towards their friends

The results show the overwhelming regard and concern the children have for their friends.

Nearly all the respondents (191 or 99,0 per cent) said they liked their friends and 169 (or 87,6 per cent) said they depended on their friends. One hundred and eighty (or 93,3 per cent) said they helped their friends when they were sick and 179 (or 92,7 per cent) said they helped their friends when they were in trouble. A small proportion (6,2 per cent) said they fought with their friends.

The picture created by these findings is one of caring and concern and a great deal of love towards each other. The researcher is of the opinion that children who are capable of these finer feelings are not a totally *lost cause*. The feelings they express for one another indicate that they are not completely anti-social. Therefore, when they engage in deviant activities, as the findings indicate, it is either because legitimate avenues for earning a living are closed to them, or because they are coerced into such activities by older criminals and gang members.

Street children's perceptions of the views and behaviour of their friends towards them

It appears that according to the perceptions of the respondents their friends like them as much as they like their friends. The findings revealed that 185 (or 95,9 per cent) said their friends liked them and 175 (or 90,7 per cent) said their friends depended on them (as opposed to 169 who said they depended on their friends). One hundred and eighty one (or 93,8 per cent) said their friends helped them when they were sick and 179 (or 94,3 per cent) said their friends helped them when they were in trouble. A slightly greater proportion of the respondents (14,0 per cent) said that their friends fought with them, compared to the proportion (6,2 per cent) who indicated that they fought with their friends.

These findings once again confirm the reciprocal network that exists between street children. It can be argued that without this vital support

group, life on the streets would be very difficult, if not impossible. The peer group becomes the primary reference group, and performs functions that normally would be undertaken by the family. Under such circumstances, strong bonds of loyalty and allegiance are forged. This loyalty can be seen as both good and bad. If the children's friends are prone to deviance and delinquency, the non-deviant child will feel pressurised to engage in similar conduct because of the loyalty he feels towards his friends. On the other hand, loyalty is a commendable characteristic, and is once again indicative of the depth of feeling the street children are capable of.

Foremost experiences and fears of street children

Thirty-six respondents (or 18,7 per cent) said that hunger was the feeling they experienced most often while 8 (or 4,1 per cent) said they feared hunger the most. Thirteen (or 6,7 per cent) experienced cold most often and 7 (or 3,6 per cent) feared getting sick the most.

One respondent said he experienced arrest by the police most often as a street child while 12 (or 6,2 per cent) said they feared arrest most. Two respondents said they feared their friends the most in their lives on the streets.

Hunger appears to be the foremost experience, while arrest is the foremost fear. Hunger as a constant theme in the lives of street children is echoed in the findings already given, which show that the majority of the respondents buy food with the money they earn. The children's fear of arrest is to be expected in view of the maltreatment of a large number of street children at the hands of the South African Police Service (SAPS) (refer to Chapter 2). However, since the majority of children in this study are favourably disposed towards the Durban City Police, it seems that they have been less victimised than their counterparts in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Their fear of arrest may indicate that they have not yet become hardened by street life. If they were, they would be more nonchalant about arrest and perhaps even brazen, since arrest and imprisonment are seen by gang members and delinquents as status-enhancing.

Aspirations of street children

Street children appear to identify with conventional values, since the overwhelming majority reported wanting to be respected (93,3 per cent), loved (95,3 per cent), successful (93,3 per cent) and famous (91,2 per cent) (refer to Table 13). The predominant need of the children is for love. The data in earlier tables indicated that apart from physical and verbal abuse, there were no other pathologies in the families from which the street children came. Many of the children came from physically intact families, lived with both parents, came from average-sized families, had a senior primary educational level, and yet still ran away from home. The researcher believes that this need to love and to be loved may be an important factor in motivating these children to run *from* unsatisfactory family and township conditions, and run *to* what they perceive as happiness, excitement, independence and success. Deteriorating family and township conditions provide the backdrop against which the drama is enacted. The overriding factors in the children's decision to leave are, in the researcher's view, their personalities and their expectations, which their home circumstances are unable to meet.

The findings regarding aspirations indicate two things. Firstly, the children's need for love supersedes their need for respect, success and fame, although these too are highly valued. Street children's need for love is apparent in other studies. Swart reports that one of the children's greatest fears is "that they will end up alone and unloved". This fear, she states, has "been echoed by many other street children" (Swart, 1987:6). She also states that the street children "want very much to belong and to be cared for, but not at any price" (Swart, 1989:10). The findings of this study show that the children also adhere to values that are esteemed by society at large, and are therefore "astonishingly conventional in their outlook" (Agnelli, cited in Swart, 1988d:55).

Table 13: Aspirations of street children: Affirmative responses

Aspirations	*N*	*%*
To be		
feared	11	5,7
hated	16	8,3
respected	180	93,3
loved	184	95,3
successful	180	93,3
famous	176	91,2

Table 13 also shows that 11 (or 5,7 per cent) would like to be feared and 16 (or 8,3 per cent) would like to be hated. Perhaps they equate fear and hatred with power, and therefore find them desirable.

Self-concept of street children

Most (184 or 95,3 per cent) of the children said that they were self-confident. One hundred and eighty-one (or 93,8 per cent) said that people liked them and 180 (or 93,3 per cent) said that they were independent. Only 20 (or 10,4 per cent) believed that people disliked them and 16 (or 8,3 per cent) felt that they were failures. One hundred and sixty-two (or 83,9 per cent) said that they would make progress in life.

Although the responses to this question may be regarded as being of limited value in accurately determining the children's self-concept, they nevertheless do point to positive rather than negative self-concepts. The extreme confidence and independence of the majority of these children may also have been precipitating factors in their decision to leave their homes. It seems unlikely that these children would have left their homes, no matter how bad conditions were, if they had not thought they would be able to survive on the streets.

A tentative conclusion is that internal, more than external, factors caused the children in this study to leave their homes. By internal factors, the researcher refers to aspects of the children's personalities, that is, the unique combination of attitudes and feelings that motivate the individual to action. The external factors relate to the physical and social conditions in which the child finds himself.

The findings relating to the children's self-concept indicate that the boys have an intact and good sense of self-esteem or self-regard, and therefore show considerable internal locus of control. These findings appear to agree with those of Richter (1988b:65), who states that internal locus of control correlates with less psychopathology and positive peer relationships. Those who have spent longer periods of time on the street, tend to exhibit an external locus of control that correlates with the presence of psychopathology (Richter, 1988b:60).

The findings in this study also reveal that the negative attitudes of society towards street children have not yet influenced their perceptions of themselves. This in turn suggests that though the children have spent varying lengths of time on the streets they have not internalised society's negative attitudes towards them.

Street children's feelings about their current circumstances

The majority of the children (180 or 93,3 per cent) indicated that they felt sympathetic to others in similar circumstances. This feeling for others is also reflected in the responses given in previous sections. One hundred and seventy-three (or 89,6 per cent) said they were envious of people who had more than they had, 164 (or 85,0 per cent) expressed sadness that they were street children and 152 (or 78,8 per cent) said they felt bitter. Nearly one-third of the children interviewed (63 or 32,6 per cent) said they were angry while only 26 (or 13,5 per cent) said they were happy.

It is disconcerting to note the number of respondents who are bitter, angry and envious—feelings that may precipitate their involvement in further acts of deviance and delinquency. Deviant behaviour provides the vehicle whereby rage and rebellion towards an indifferent society

is expressed and such behaviour is often a plea for help and attention. It is generally accepted that adolescents are angry and rebellious. Envy and bitterness, however, are corrosive in children so young and may lay the foundations for anti-social behaviour in the future.

Street children's views on how their current circumstances can be improved

Table 14 shows that virtually all of the respondents interviewed felt that all the proposals mentioned to them should be implemented. The proposals related to some of the problems and difficulties faced by street children once on their own on the streets. The responses indicate that street children hold many conventional values and look forward to having good jobs, stability and a normal life. They realise that education is an important means of achieving their goals, and as previous responses have shown, are not averse to education as such, but are frustrated by unsatisfactory and unrelated curricula, punitive teachers and unstimulating classroom environments.

The Child Care and Criminal Procedure Acts do not offer sufficient protection to children in general. This is particularly true in the case of street children, who have no one to fall back on. Their age, language and comprehension abilities and ignorance of the law all weigh heavily against them in appearances before either the Children's Court or Juvenile Court. In a Children's Court inquiry, social workers ask that their charges be declared "in need of care", and the document on which this decision hinges is the social worker's report. If the street child is declared to be in need of care he invariably finds himself in a place of safety because of the unavailability of children's homes. The point that needs emphasis is that the child's future depends on the social worker's report, which should be "a thorough investigation of the child's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs" (McLachlan, 1986:46). In effect though, this is not always the case. The professional standards of these reports are often questionable. In addition to this,

> there is no obligation on the court to request a social worker's report. This is an alarming omission, particularly since no provision is made for the child's independent legal representation (McLachlan, 1986:46).

Furthermore, social workers are frequently young and inexperienced, often have an inadequate knowledge of legal provisions and court procedure and may find themselves intimidated by the atmosphere in the Children's Court. Child Commissioners are magistrates who have no special training to prepare them to make complex decisions on children appearing before them. They therefore rely heavily on the social worker's reports, which often appear to be scanty.

Table 14: Views on how current circumstances could be improved: Affirmative responses

Ways to improve current circumstances	*N*	*%*
Laws to protect street children	189	97,9
Free legal advice for street children	189	97,9
Provide educational opportunities	186	96,4
Provide job opportunities	184	95,3
Devise programmes for street children	180	93,3
Have more say in running of shelter/place of safety	184	95,3
Better living conditions in shelter/place of safety	185	95,9
Better recreational facilities in shelter/place of safety	188	97,4
Provide financial help to parents	185	95,9
Provide accommodation to parents	186	96,4

It is for the above reasons that numerous calls have been made for free legal representation for children in order to redress the imbalances that exist (McLachlan, 1984:23-25). McLachlan speculates on "the chances of a fair trial for a young child alone in court conducting his/her own defence within the complex technical principles of the criminal procedure". Although an accused may apply for legal aid, it is not

automatic even if the applicant does satisfy the means test. "The State Legal Aid Board has been criticised for its failure to make its services more accessible to those in need" (McLachlan, 1984:23-24). It is envisaged that the proposed family courts will provide for the legal representation of children.

Street children's views on the occupations they would like to pursue as adults

The street children expressed many different views regarding their desired future occupations, indicating a variety of preferences, dreams and aspirations for the future. For convenience, the responses have been categorised into skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, professional, sporting, clerical and other.

The findings revealed that 41 (or 21,2 per cent) respondents wanted to do jobs that could be classified as *skilled*. These included mechanic, driver, welder, plumber, panelbeater, builder and carpenter. In this category, the majority wanted to be drivers.

Four boys (2,1 per cent) chose occupations that can be regarded as *semi-skilled* (such as traffic inspector and security guard). Six (3,0 per cent) indicated occupations that could be classified as *unskilled*, such as sweeper, hawker, car washer, gardener, herdsman and farmer. The boys in this group did not seem to be very optimistic about their futures.

Sixty (or 31,1 per cent) respondents said they would like to do jobs that could be categorised as *professional*. These jobs included social worker, doctor, nurse, being in the army, engineer, attorney, musician, teacher and policeman. Twenty (or 10,4 per cent) boys wanted to be sportsmen such as a soccer player or a boxer. Ten (or 5,1 per cent) wanted to do *clerical jobs* that included clerk, typist and bank teller.

Five (or 2,6 per cent) of the children indicated occupations such as ballroom dancer, artist and film star. Three (or 1,6 per cent) indicated that they would do any job, 10 (or 5,2 per cent) said they did not want to do anything special, 24 (or 12,4 per cent) did not respond, and 10

(or 5,2 per cent) said that they did not know what they would like to do when they grow up.

From the responses received it is clear that the majority have goals and objectives in life and want to pursue legitimate careers and jobs. A large proportion chose professional occupations and, in view of their current circumstances, these goals would seem to be unrealistic, yet at the same time they reflect a good deal of optimism and confidence in their abilities.

Their future employment expectations provide further evidence of the conventional values held by street children. Schärf (1988:280) states that the types of jobs the strollers expect to hold as adults are unrealistic and out of reach, considering their low educational attainments. Of the 31 strollers in his study, only eight chose unskilled jobs. The rest wanted to be traffic police, bricklayers, signwriters, drivers and most often, policemen, not unlike the children in this study.

From the findings of this study, a social profile emerges of a resilient, likeable, sociable street child with a good self-concept and strong internal locus of control, engaged in a variety of associations—criminal and non-criminal. This appears to be contradictory to the victimisation/deviance theme that pervades the study. It is perhaps true that these very characteristics led the children to choose street life over family life, knowing that they had the inner resources to cope. This in no way negates the fact that street children have been victimised in their families and communities and on the streets. It is argued that the allure and thrill of street life persists and being part of a support network of peers cushions to an extent the realisation of their victimisation. However, the fact that they engage in deviant activities confirms their victimisation, if the deviance (primary and secondary) occurs as a result of legitimate options being unavailable or closed.

The respondents' admission to liking the various people with whom they are in contact can be regarded as reactivity, which in observational studies is the giving of expected answers. Of significance is the number of respondents who admitted to having criminals and

gang members as friends. The implications for deviance and their further victimisation are obvious.

Summary of findings

The majority of children in the study were between 11 and 15 years of age, the pre-adolescent and adolescent stage of development. Cronjé *et al.* state that this period in a child's life is associated with many adjustment problems relating to rapid physical and psychological changes that cause "confusion, insecurity and very often bad behaviour" (Cronjé *et al.*, 1976:35). This is especially true if one considers that street children are entirely self-supporting, and that this support often comes from involvement in a wide range of deviant activities. Ahlstrom and Havighurst (cited in Cronjé *et al.*, 1976) state that boys who are maladjusted during this period often have discipline problems at school. This no doubt is one explanation for the tendency of the children in this study to leave school due to loss of interest.

All of the children in the study were black and most were male. They were mainly Christian and had attended church regularly while living at home. The majority stated that they still attended church, even though they no longer lived at home. Very few children sought help and the majority received no help from their respective churches prior to running away.

The majority of the children attained either a senior primary or a junior secondary level of education and may therefore be regarded as literate. However, if one considers the low standard of black education and the length of time many of the children have spent on the streets, they may rather be regarded as functionally illiterate.

Although several reasons were given for leaving school, the most frequently cited reason was "loss of interest", followed by "being influenced by friends" to do so.

The children came from a very wide area that included Durban and surrounding areas, Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas, Zululand and Transkei. They came from a variety of townships, small towns, informal settlements and rural areas to the North, South and West of

Durban, most of which have been racked by internecine conflict and violence over the past few years.

The majority of the children came from large families of between four and 13 siblings. Almost half came from physically intact nuclear families, that is, they lived with both parents prior to running away. However, although the families were physically intact, they may have been psychologically broken. It was further found that more fathers than mothers had died or had deserted their families.

The data indicated that only five of the total number of children in the study (193) were orphans, while 21 reported being illegitimate. However, if Western norms were applied, this number would probably be higher.

A significant number of parents was employed, pointing to relative economic stability. These findings do not agree with the South African studies reviewed. However, the fact that both parents were employed may indicate neglect of the children, who may have been left unsupervised during the day. Contact with parents and siblings was minimal once street children left their homes.

Several reasons were given for leaving home, the main being "dislike of school". An interesting finding was that only two of the subjects were *throwaways* or *pushouts*. The overwhelming majority were *runaways*, having made the conscious decision to leave their homes, schools and communities.

The most popular destination for the children was the beach front. They slept in a variety of places, although bushes appeared to be the most common sleeping place.

The children spent varying lengths of time on the streets, ranging from one day to two years. However, since 62 children ran away two or more times, the maximum length of time on the streets may refer only to the present stay, and not previous times spent on the streets. In total, the length of time may far exceed two years. This is highly probable if one considers that several children reported staying at Khayalethu Shelter, which burned down in 1988. The majority of children had stayed at either Bayhead, Pata or Umlazi places of safety, or in more than one of these.

The length of time spent on the streets has definite implications for deviant behaviour (refer to Chapter 2). Ninety-two children had been arrested by the police. Of these, 20 were arrested for actual crimes committed, such as possession of dagga, assault, theft and vandalism. It is possible that many more children had engaged in criminal activities, but that only 20 had the misfortune to be arrested, or reported being arrested. The average total length of time spent in detention was 80 days.

The majority were detained in police cells and 12 said they had been punished while in detention. Of these, five said they had been assaulted, while the remaining seven did not specify the nature of the punishment meted out to them.

More children were arrested while living on the streets than while living at home, suggesting that street life has of necessity definite implications for deviant behaviour.

The children were involved to a greater or lesser extent in all types of deviant activities, while many were involved in more than one such activity. The majority were involved in begging, followed by solvent abuse, gambling, drug use, theft and sexually deviant activities.

Begging appeared to be the most common deviant activity to generate an income, while parking cars was the foremost legitimate income-generating activity. Slightly more children were engaged in legitimate than illegitimate activities to generate an income.

The predominant spending of children on the streets centred around food, the cinema and sending money home to their families.

Hunger is the foremost experience of children living on the streets, while fear of arrest is also common.

The children reported liking the various individuals with whom they came into contact, including gang members and older criminals. They also reported helping their friends in times of sickness and trouble, indicating a generosity of spirit, which should be reinforced.

The street children in the present study had other street children as their friends, though they also cited older criminals and gang members as friends. Most of the children wanted to be loved, respected and successful, once again indicating conventional values.

It appears that the street children in this study have a high degree of self-confidence and self-esteem and these qualities may have been motivating factors in the children's decision to run away.

With regard to future jobs, 60 children (or 31,1 per cent) wanted to do jobs that were categorised as professional. In view of their past and present circumstances, these aspirations indicate conventional values and unrealistic expectations.

The overwhelming majority of children agreed that there should be laws to protect them, that they should have access to free legal advice and that they should be provided with better educational and recreational facilities and job opportunities.

Most of the children expressed sympathy towards others in a similar predicament, as well as envy, sadness and bitterness. Only a small number purported to be happy. Under the bravado, therefore, lies a sadness that points to their vulnerability and child status.

Apart from the significance of the findings themselves, the study illustrates the two-way victimisation of the respondents, that is, before resuming a street life and while on the streets. Victimisation while on the streets sets in motion the process of primary and secondary deviance which may well open the way to a deviant career, and further victimisation. Once begun, escape from the cycle of victimisation, deviance and victimisation is near impossible.

The findings of the study highlight the psychosocial factors involved in the decision to leave home. As important as political, social and family factors are in leading to the disengagement of the street child from significant others, it is argued that his voluntary, personal disengagement is a more pertinent factor, especially in relation to the runaway, which is what the majority of the respondents in the present study are. Factors within the child himself reassure him that he is running to something better; this sets him apart from millions of other black children in similar circumstances.

5 Managing street children: An analysis of approaches and services to street children in Durban

Introduction

In Chapter 4, data obtained from street children in Durban on their background, victimisation, involvement in deviant activities and views on a number of aspects were presented. While it is important to examine street children's responses to a number of issues relevant to them, it is equally important, in any attempt to reach some understanding of the street child phenomenon, to study the perceptions of the people involved with them. This is particularly relevant since this study argues that the perceptions of service providers influence the ways in which they interact with street children, and the measures they adopt to handle the phenomenon.

This chapter aims to study the views of service providers in order to understand how they perceive street children, and how the children are currently being dealt with. These views will be used to propose suggestions for the more effective management of the street child phenomenon, and the minimisation of their victimisation and deviance, in the following chapter.

The same methodology that was utilised during the research described in the previous chapter was used for this part of the study. A quantitative method (questionnaire) was used to elicit the views of service providers on a number of aspects relating to street children. Open and semi-structured questions were included in the questionnaire. These are often used in symbolic interactionist studies to arrive at an understanding of people's perceptions, and therefore provide the qualitative dimension of the study.

The empirical findings relating to service providers are presented in the following section.

Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample of service providers

It is generally agreed that age, among other factors, influences attitude and that caution or conservatism increases with age. The age of respondents therefore has implications for rendering services, since it can be assumed that younger service providers will display more enthusiasm and/or idealism in their work, while older respondents, jaded by the system, suffer from considerably higher levels of burnout.

Table 15 indicates that the majority of the respondents (23 or 32,4 per cent) were between 31 and 40 years of age, followed closely by 22 (or 31,0 per cent) in the 20 to 30-year age category. Fifteen (or 21,0 per cent) were between 41 and 50 years of age, while 10 (or 14,1 per cent) were over the age of 50—an age that is nowadays considered to be relatively young, owing to better living standards and conditions and longer life expectancy. Viewed conversely, however, it is likely that the majority of service providers have had at least a ten to 15-year working life, in which case they may be seriously at risk of burnout. Justification for this point of view comes from McLachlan (1986:126) who points to the stressful conditions faced by childcare and institutional workers who have to deal with socially and psychologically scarred children on a daily basis. There is, she reports, "a high burn out rate amongst institutional and childcare workers". Although she refers specifically to childcare and institutional workers, this view can also apply to other workers who deal with similar problems in their respective work situations.

The table further reveals that one-third of the respondents (24 or 33,8 per cent) were childcare workers, 11 (or 15,5 per cent) were social workers, 7 (or 9,9 per cent) were general assistants and the remainder were clerks, policemen, nursing sisters, city councillors, housemothers, field assistants, businessmen/women and teachers, etc.

Table 15: Age and occupation of service providers

Occupation	20-30		31-40		41-50		Over 50		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social worker	2	2,8	6	8,5	1	1,4	2	2,8	11	15,5
Childcare worker	11	15,5	9	12,7	3	4,2	1	1,4	24	33,8
Nursing sister	-	-	-	-	3	4,2	1	1,4	4	5,6
Clerk	2	2,8	3	4,2	-	-	-	-	5	7,0
Housemother	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2,8	2	2,8
General assistant	1	1,4	1	1,4	5	7,0	-	-	7	9,9
Field assistant	-	-	-	-	2	2,8	-	-	2	2,8
City councillor/ businessman	1	1,4	-	-	1	1,4	4	5,7	6	8,5
Policeman	3	4,2	2	2,8	-	-	-	-	5	7,1
Teacher	2	2,8	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2,8
Co-ordinator	-	-	1	1,4	-	-	-	-	1	1,4
Administrator	-	-	1	1,4	-	-	-	-	1	1,4
No response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1,4
TOTAL	22	31,0	23	32,4	15	21,0	10	14,1	71	100,0

Notes:

Social worker = A professionally qualified person registered as a social worker with the South African Council for Social Work.

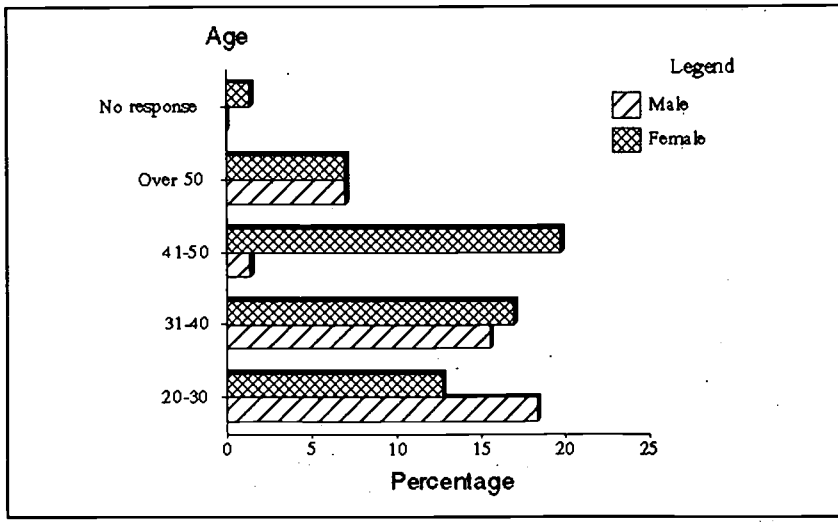
Childcare worker = Promotes optimum development of children, youth and their families. Child and youth-care work involves professional people providing direct care to children and youth.

The findings revealed that the childcare workers in this study were primarily responsible for rendering services to street children at the places of safety and were faced with the challenge of dealing with problem children on a day-to-day basis. Whether they are suitably qualified to do so is questionable. McLachlan (1986:128) refers to the

unsuitability of childcare workers, who she states are not qualified to deal with children who experience severe problems.

Thirty (or 42,3 per cent) of the respondents were male and 41 (or 57,7 per cent) were female. This suggests that more females than males render services to street children. In addition, slightly more males (24) than females (21) were under the age of 40 (refer to Figure 3).

Figure 3: Age and gender of service providers



In her study of wife abuse among South African Indian women, Padayachee (1988:390) is of the opinion that "the sex of the professionals may have implications for the type and quality of services they offer". Since South African society still leans heavily towards patriarchy, one may expect that male service providers may not be very sympathetic towards unschooled street children, many of whom will not be able to provide adequately as head of the household for their dependants.

The service providers in the present study represent a variety of occupations and are all attached to either the Bayhead and Umlazi Places of Safety, the City Health Department, the Durban City Police, Streetwise or the City Council.

The majority of the females (10 or 14,1 per cent) were social workers, 7 (or 9,9 per cent) were childcare workers and 7 (or 9,9 per cent) were general assistants. The other female providers were nursing sisters, clerks, housemothers and teachers.

The majority of the males (17 or 24 per cent) were childcare workers, 5 (or 7,0 per cent) were from the Durban City Police, 4 (or 5,6 per cent) were city councillors, and there was a social worker, clerk, general assistant and co-ordinator. An interesting feature is the predominance of male childcare workers in a field hitherto dominated by females.

The research results indicated that the majority of service providers (29 or 40,9 per cent) had obtained matric, 15 (or 21,1 per cent) obtained degrees and 14 (or 19,7 per cent) had achieved scholastic levels ranging between Standards 2 and 8. Eight (or 11,3 per cent) service providers did not give information on this topic.

It can be argued that respondents with higher educational qualifications have a broader world view, which will be reflected in their attitudes and responses to street children. The opposite can also hold true, in that higher educational qualifications may foster superior attitudes that preclude identification with street children and the ability to empathise with their problems.

The findings of the research show that the majority of the respondents (43 or 60,6 per cent) had an educational level equivalent to, or lower than matric, with no further training to equip them to handle the special problems of street children.

Stein (1990:33) emphasises the need for street child projects to "supply regular, structured and relevant in-service training for their staff, in addition to BQCC* training, staff supervision, etc."

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* BQCC refers to Basic Qualification in Child Care.

The lack of higher education and further training for many of the respondents in this study raises severe doubts about the quality of care provided for street children in Durban.

Service providers' views on street children

Views on reasons for street children leaving home

Service providers' views on why street children left home varied (refer to Table 16). They felt that in most cases several factors combined to provide the ultimate impetus for children to abandon family, school and community. Most respondents felt that adverse conditions at home, violent township conditions, and dislike of school largely contributed to street children running away.

The majority of the respondents (61 or 85,9 per cent) saw escape from home conditions (poverty and overcrowding) as the main reason for running away, 56 (or 78,9 per cent) cited township violence as a cause, and 54 (or 76,0 per cent) mentioned unhappiness at home as a factor. An almost equal number cited dislike of school (49 or 69,0 per cent) and escape from conditions in the township (48 or 67,6 per cent) and 44 (or 62,0 per cent) said the children left home for adventure and excitement. Less importance was placed on earning money for the family (24 or 33,8 per cent) and parents telling them to leave (15 or 21,1 per cent). The other reasons given for children leaving their homes focused on the children's search for an identity, an act of rebellion against existing social values, the influence of the peer group, the generation gap between parents and children, feeling the pain of rejection and isolation, being promised employment in an urban area, dislike of being disciplined, not receiving enough care and love from their parents and disagreements with step-parents. Finally, one respondent stated that all the factors listed might apply to some of the children, and that it should be borne in mind that they were individuals, and not merely a social phenomenon.

Table 16: Views of service providers regarding the reasons for street children leaving home

Reasons	*N*	*%*
To escape conditions at home	61	85,9
To escape violence in township	56	78,9
Unhappy at home	54	76,0
Did not like school	49	69,0
To escape conditions in township	48	67,6
For excitement and adventure	44	62,0
Heard about shelters for street children	42	59,2
Parents fight with each other continually	40	56,3
Nothing to do in township	39	54,9
For a better life	38	53,6
Parents fight with child continually	31	43,7
To earn money for the family	24	33,8
Parents told them to leave	15	21,1
Other	12	16,9

The responses of the children to the same question varied considerably from those of the service providers. The reason given most often by the street children was the dislike of school, followed to a significantly lesser extent by the need to escape from poverty and overcrowding (refer to Chapter 4).

The tendency of the service providers to emphasise township and home conditions to explain the large number of street children on our streets indicates that they perhaps do not understand the children as well as they ought to.

Township violence and appalling home conditions are a feature of life for the majority of black South Africans. The impact of such violence and disorganisation has had a ripple effect on every aspect of their lives. Researchers are divided in their views regarding the impact of township violence on street children. The Detainees' Parents Support Committee (1986:156-157) reports that it is believed that there

is no connection between township violence and street children. Workers who assisted the refugees of township violence in Johannesburg believe that these children are only temporary sojourners, and that they soon return to their homes with the help of social workers. However, Schafer (1989:21) writes that the razing of schools in the townships and fear of comrades and police action have caused children to flee from their homes to the streets. However, if township and home conditions are so undesirable, one may ask why there are not far more street children than at present.

The researcher believes that although all the above factors, either singly or in combination, were reasons for the street children running away from their homes, inner motivation (the desire for independence, excitement and adventure) appears to be an equally strong initiator of flight. This can be seen by the fact that virtually all the children were runaways, not throwaways. They deliberately chose to leave, and must have been sure of their ability to survive the hardships and rigours of street life. This is confirmed by Richter, who reports that some of the boys in her study displayed tremendous resilience despite the enormous hardships they faced on the streets (Richter, 1988b:78).

Attitudes of service providers towards street children

It is important to probe the attitudes of service providers towards street children for the following reasons:

- Their attitudes influence their interactions with and provision of services to street children.

- Their attitudes may reflect the values of the organisations for which they work.

- There appear to be opposing or differing ideological approaches on the part of service providers as to how street children should be managed. There are those who adopt a punitive approach, believing the children to be a nuisance and a danger to the public. On the

other hand there are those who prefer a rehabilitative approach, believing that street children are victims of their circumstances, and that every effort should be made to prepare them for possible reintegration into society and school.

The findings indicated that the overwhelming majority of the respondents were sympathetic to street children, with staff at Umlazi Place of Safety being most sympathetic, followed by Bayhead Place of Safety, city councillors, Streetwise, and the Durban City Police. The staff of the City Health Department were the least sympathetic to street children.

Two respondents expressed ambivalence towards street children, another said that street children were being denied the fundamental rights of children and that they needed action, not sympathy. One respondent expressed sadness rather than sympathy. Two respondents said they felt both sympathetic and unsympathetic, depending on the child.

An analysis of the responses of the various categories of service providers revealed similar results. Of the 11 social workers in the study, 9 (or 81,8 per cent) were sympathetic to street children, 23 (or 95,8 per cent) of the 24 childcare workers were sympathetic towards them, as well as 5 (or 83,3 per cent) of the 6 city councillors and 3 (or 60,0 per cent) of the 5 members of the Durban City Police.

It appears that of the various categories of service providers, the Durban City Police are the least sympathetic towards the children. This may be explained by the fact that they have initial and frequent contact with street children, many of whom continually abscond from Bayhead Place of Safety, and who need to be repeatedly returned there. This no doubt engenders a great deal of frustration on the part of the Durban City Police.

Service providers' views on the position of street children in the community

The findings in this section elaborate on some of the concerns expressed in the local media and form the basis of the two opposing ideologies in respect of street children. Street children have become an emotive issue. Councillor Hotz (cited in the *Natal Mercury*, 15 July 1988) said that "the programmes for street children had become politicised ... and the whole issue had the effect of making many people feel 'threatened'". An analysis of Table 17 indicates that the majority of the respondents (57 or 80,2 per cent) felt that street children should be protected from the public. It can be added that while only some members of the public are openly abusive to street children, the scruffy, unkempt appearance of the children may be said to antagonise the public at large, and make them wary. This is especially true if one considers past media reports that detail the deviant activities engaged in by the children.

Table 17: Views on street children's position in the community: Affirmative responses

Views on street children	*N*	*%*
Street children—		
should be protected from the public	57	80,2
pose a health risk	55	77,4
are victims of their circumstances	52	73,2
are a public nuisance	46	64,8
are a threat to conventional society	42	59,2
exacerbate the problems of conventional society	35	49,3
Other	9	12,7

The respondents' concerns that street children should be protected from the public are legitimate. Street children fall prey to adult street

dwellers and gang members (Swart, 1989) and are victims of police brutality (Peacock, 1990; Goniwe & Bishop, 1989).

Table 17 also indicates that 55 (or 77,4 per cent) respondents felt that street children posed a health risk. The conditions under which street children live on the streets are appalling, to say the least. Newspaper reports indicate that they sleep in doorways, on pavements and in stormwater drains, with only cardboard and paper as protection from the elements (*Daily News*, 1 March 1990 and 11 July 1987). Maureen Stacey of the then-Durban African Child and Family Welfare Society was quoted in the *Sunday Tribune* (25 June 1989) as saying that "there will be an epidemic of disease if something isn't done shortly".

Peacock (1990:9) refers to a mortality rate of more than 50 per cent among street children, attributable to Aids and rectal haemorrhaging due to "sexual abuse concomitant with prostitution". It seems clear that street children are at risk of ill-health and they may in turn be unwitting carriers of disease through the various services they render and activities they engage in with the public. This contention has been hotly denied by Cockburn, who believes that sensational statements such as these harm, not help, the children.

Fifty-two (or 73,2 per cent) respondents stated that street children were victims of their circumstances. A review of the literature indicates that this is indeed the case. Wilson and Arnold (1986:6-7) poignantly capture the circumstances of most street children globally when they say, "they leave homes that range from vicious and violent to unconcerned and suffocating. Their silent scream and inner rage surface as they cut loose and take to the streets". Schärf *et al.* (in Burman & Reynolds, 1986:266-269) cite broken homes, hostility with step-parents, drinking by parents, abuse and no extended family support system due to family disintegration as some of the factors characteristic of the families of street children. It would appear that broader social issues impact on the most basic and fundamental of social institutions, the family. It is ironic that the weakest, least powerful members, suffer the most.

Forty-six (or 64,8 per cent) respondents believed that street children were a public nuisance. All the city councillors and members of the Durban City Police in the sample believed street children to be a public nuisance. These views are indicative of a harsh, punitive attitude towards street children, which is reflected in official policy.

Forty-two (or 59,2 per cent) respondents believed that street children were a threat to conventional society. Once again, all the members of the Durban City Police Street Child Unit believed this to be the case. This view is confirmed by a senior member of the Durban City Police quoted in the *Daily News* (3 February 1990:7) as saying that "they are a menace to the community". He does, however, admit to understanding "their inevitable plight".

The researcher believes that one can, to an extent, understand the sentiments expressed by the Durban City Police. They have to deal with the casualties of social, political and economic upheavals. Their only recourse is the Bayhead Place of Safety, from which the children inevitably abscond. They are constantly rearrested by the Durban City Police and returned to Bayhead. In addition, the children are engaged in activities that "range from minor transgressions like begging to major crimes like housebreaking" (*Daily News*, 3 February 1990:7). These actions are hardly likely to endear them to the police. This impasse calls attention to the urgent need for more shelters, enlightened programmes, government funding, improved legislation and co-ordinated services on behalf of street children.

Thirty-five respondents (or 49,3 per cent) believed that street children exacerbated the problems of conventional society. It would seem that the fears of the public and officials alike are mirrored in the responses to this question. These fears, if arising from concern for the children's present and future involvement in deviance, appear to be justified. The literature and the present study reveal widespread involvement in prostitution, homosexuality, glue sniffing, petty theft, housebreaking, and numerous public nuisance offences such as begging, spitting, shouting, swearing and being drunk or dirty (refer to Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion).

If, on the other hand, these concerns are the result of bias or prejudice, they are unjustified and call for a thorough re-examination of attitudes towards street children.

Service providers' views on action that should be taken

This topic once again highlights the varied approaches to street children that are adopted. The responses confirm that a punitive rather than a rehabilitative approach is adopted by all members of the Durban City Police, most of the staff at Bayhead, all but one of the city councillors, nearly all of the childcare workers and half of the respondents from Streetwise.

Table 18 shows that the majority of the respondents (55 or 77,5 per cent) stated that street children should be sent to a school of industries. The majority of staff from Bayhead, all the members of the Durban City Police, all but one of the councillors and half the respondents of Streetwise felt that institutionalisation in a school of industries was necessary.

Table 18: Views of service providers on action to be taken with regard to street children: Affirmative responses

Action to be taken	*N*	*%*
Send them to a school of industry	55	77,5
Send them to a place of safety	53	74,6
Send them to a children's home	50	70,4
Send them to shelter for street children	35	49,3
Send them back to areas from which they came	33	46,5
Placement in foster care	30	42,3
Detention in police cells	1	1,4
Imprisonment	-	-
Other	10	14,1

Pinnock (1984:64-75) makes a scathing attack on state institutions and contends that they are responsible for brutalising the youth who pass through them. He states that such institutions introduce the inmates "to the compensating devices of violence, gang activity, homosexuality and criminal refinement" and concludes that reformatories and schools of industry "are institutions of social revenge".

Schools of industry are reported to widely resort to the use of corporal punishment and lock-up cells are also commonly used. It is unrealistic to expect a child who has been brutalised by life, and then again in an institution, to emerge physically and psychologically unscathed. In the researcher's view, commitment to a school of industries is definitely not the answer to the street child problem and should by no means be resorted to. Placing street children in places of safety and schools of industry is tantamount to keeping them out of sight and out of mind.

A large number of respondents (53 or 74,6 per cent) also favoured commitment to a place of safety. The same argument with regard to schools of industry pertains here. One of the major criticisms against Bayhead Place of Safety gleaned from numerous conversations with the street children is that there is nothing to do there. At the time of the interviews, the children were receiving no schooling whatsoever, and the only form of observed recreation was soccer. It is not surprising that the rate of absconsion is high. Data made available to the researcher by a member of the Durban City Police indicated that from 1990 to 1991, a total of 936 absconcions from Bayhead Place of Safety took place.

Fifty (or 70,4 per cent) respondents felt that street children should be sent to children's homes. The very limited number of children's homes for African children that are available "have the worst facilities, living conditions, least qualified staff and highest staff-pupil ratios" (McLachlan, 1986:61).

Only 33 (or 46,5 per cent) of the respondents favoured the return of street children to the areas from which they came, 30 (or 42,3 per cent) supported their placement in foster care and 35 (or 49,3 per cent) favoured shelters. The service providers in favour of street children

being accommodated at shelters were mainly from the City Health Department, the City Council, the Durban City Police and Streetwise. Very few childcare workers and social workers supported shelters.

The responses of the Durban City Police and the city councillors are contradictory, since they also advocate that street children be committed to schools of industry and places of safety (indicative of a punitive approach). The responses of the social workers are also surprising, since one would presume that they would be more in favour of shelters for street children (indicative of a rehabilitative approach).

The responses recorded as *other* in the table are suggestions such as the creation of holiday programmes for the children; giving them *Christian care*; dealing with them according to their individual needs since each child is unique; and providing shelters and letting the children decide whether to go to them or not.

These findings differ from those of Swart, where "just over half the respondents recommended 'soft' options such as placing the children in 'homes', foster homes or educational and training institutions ..." (Swart, 1988d:189).

Service providers' views on who should take responsibility

The majority of the respondents (62 or 87,3 per cent) believe street children to be the state's responsibility, while the least number of respondents (39 or 54,9 per cent) believe them to be the police's responsibility.

It is clear that the policies of the state over the past 40 years have caused untold deprivation, disorganisation and misery in the lives of millions of black people in South Africa. Today we are faced with the problems of mass unemployment, large-scale poverty and crucial housing shortages and a host of other problems, the effects of which have been felt most keenly by the family. The street child is an indirect result of forces and policies at a high level that have impacted on the weakest, most vulnerable of South Africa's citizens. Having caused the problem, the previous government refused to acknowledge

its responsibility and its predominant response was one of denial and indifference. The few shelters and children's homes that exist are the result of the endeavours of private welfare agencies. If the homes and shelters are not registered, they do not qualify for state subsidies. However, registration places great restrictions on their functioning, thereby limiting their effectiveness (McLachlan, 1986).

It is ironic that shelters and children's homes are non-government funded while the state, in the attempt to uphold the apartheid structure, wasted money on the "multiplication of facilities, resources and manpower. The shortage of funds for 'children in need of care' reflects the State's sense of priorities compounded by an unnecessary waste of finances" (McLachlan, 1986:127).

Table 19 indicates that after the state, most respondents (53 or 74,6 per cent) believe that after the state, welfare agencies should be responsible for street children. The findings revealed that all the members of the Street Child Unit of the Durban City Police, the majority of the city councillors and the majority of staff from the places of safety believed street children to be the responsibility of welfare agencies. On the other hand, very few of the social workers and streetwise workers believed this to be the case. The tendency to shift responsibility to the welfare services is blatantly apparent in the responses. It is also apparent that the social workers themselves deny responsibility for street children.

A significant proportion of the respondents (51 or 71,8 per cent) believed that all South Africans should be responsible for street children. The researcher agrees with this point of view. However, it is difficult to sensitise individuals who have become insensitive and uncaring to others who are different to them. Unfortunately, the scruffy, unkempt appearance of the street child does little to endear him to the general public, and this may largely explain their indifference.

An almost even number of the respondents felt that the City Health Department (47 or 66,2 per cent), Durban City Council (46 or 64,8 per cent), their communities of origin (45 or 63,4 per cent), the Durban City Police (43 or 60,6 per cent) and the church (42 or 59,2

per cent) should be responsible for street children. Included in the *other* responses are those who felt that the parents themselves must be held responsible. One respondent said that the reasons for the phenomenon must be addressed, regardless of who should be responsible. According to another respondent, fathers who beget children and then leave them must be held responsible.

Table 19: Views of service providers on who should take responsibility for street children: Affirmative responses

Responsibility for street children	*N*	*%*
The state	62	87,3
Child Welfare Society	53	74,6
All South Africans	51	71,8
City Health Department	47	66,2
Durban City Council	46	64,8
Their communities of origin	45	63,4
Durban City Police	43	60,6
The church	42	59,2
Durban's citizens	40	56,3
The South African Police Services	39	54,9
Other	6	8,5

The foregoing responses reflect the view that the state should be primarily responsible for street children, followed by the welfare agencies and all South Africans. That the state has neglected its responsibility towards black South Africans in general, and street children in particular, is undeniable. Major changes have to be brought about by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) if the imbalances are to be redressed, and if the growing number of children running away to the streets is to be curbed. Such changes can only be possible if the right of every individual is respected, and if he is allowed to maximise his potential unconditionally. A further probing

of the opinions of service providers to determine whether they think non-governmental or governmental organisations should bear *more* responsibility for street children revealed the opinion that both should bear equal responsibility.

An overall analysis of the views and opinions of service providers on the topics discussed in this section revealed sympathetic feelings towards street children. Despite these feelings, it is disconcerting to note the large number of respondents who agree that street children are a public nuisance, since such views undoubtedly influence the ways in which the children are dealt with. It is therefore not surprising that arrest and detention in police cells and places of safety are commonly resorted to.

Views on the deviance of street children

The review of the literature in Chapter 2 confirmed the involvement of street children in a wide range of deviant activities, ranging from spitting and being a nuisance, to minor theft and housebreaking. In addition to this, children who forsake hearth, home, school and community are considered deviant in terms of the norms regulating family life and community relations in general. Informal conversation with Sister Helena from Streetwise affirmed this view. She pointed out that their own communities initially deny their existence, and refer to them as *skebengus* or delinquents. Later they realise that there are reasons why the children leave home, and are more sympathetic and supportive.

Research shows that street children do, of necessity, engage in deviant activities. The longer they remain on the streets, the more likely they are to be forced to engage in deviant activities, as legitimate opportunities become increasingly closed to them because of the labelling and victimisation they experience on the streets. The implication of minor deviance is that it may lay the foundations for deviant careers, with all the negative consequences for society that such acts generate. The deviant and delinquent of today may easily become the criminal of tomorrow.

The majority of the respondents (51 or 71,8 per cent) believed that street children would become hardened criminals. These views correspond with Swart's findings; the majority of the respondents in her study expected street children to be criminals or drop-outs in adulthood (Swart, 1988d:185).

Two respondents qualified their response to this question by saying that the possibility of becoming a hardened criminal depended on the child, and that gravitation to delinquency and crime might be used as survival strategies by some children.

When street children are arrested they are incarcerated with adult offenders who groom them in the *tricks of the trade*. This association with hardened offenders is likely to entrench their criminal careers.

Forty-one (or 57,7 per cent) respondents believed that street children were delinquent and 36 (or 50,7 per cent) respondents believed that street children were deviant. These findings once again support other research findings, and this view of street children is a consistent theme in the literature.

Reasons given by service providers for regarding street children as deviant

The respondents were required to justify why they had said that street children were deviant, delinquent or likely to become hardened criminals. The following responses summarise their views:

> The children tend to become contaminated by their peers and criminal elements while on the streets.
>
> Their need to survive makes them deviant.
>
> Rejection by their families and society is responsible for fostering such behaviour, and whether the child is deviant depends on the particular child.

Views on the type of deviant activities engaged in

The deviant activities referred to in Table 20 are commonly engaged in by street children and are consistently referred to in the literature (refer to Chapter 2). In Chapter 4, the same question was asked of the street children, and their responses confirm their widespread involvement in one or more of the undermentioned activities. As a control measure, the researcher considered it necessary to compare the responses of the street children with those of the service providers. It was felt that the service providers' ongoing contact with street children placed them in an ideal position to either confirm or deny the involvement of street children in these activities. It would also show how well they knew and understood street children, and how they felt about them.

The deviant activities engaged in by street children, as reported by the service providers, are presented in order of priority in Table 20. The majority of the respondents (67 or 94,4 per cent) reported *glue sniffing* as the predominant deviant activity of street children. Street children's preference for glue relates to its relatively low cost, easy availability and the *cushioning* effect it provides from hunger, cold, fear and illness.

Sixty-six (or 93,0 per cent) respondents cited *begging* as the next important deviant activity of the children and 64 (or 90,1 per cent) respondents cited the use of *dagga* by street children as a popular activity. Sixty-three (or 88,7 per cent) of the service providers mentioned *drinking of alcohol* by street children and 57 (or 80,3 per cent) respondents reported the involvement of street children in *prostitution* and in *theft* from shops respectively.

Fifty-six (or 78,9 per cent) of the sample cited the involvement of street children in *homosexuality*. The views of the service providers do not agree with those of the street children. Only 3 (or 1,6 per cent) of the children admitted involvement in homosexuality. In view of the perceived negative public reaction towards homosexuality, the children may have been embarrassed to discuss this aspect of their lives.

Also of interest is that although a large number of service providers said the children engaged in prostitution, only 2 (or 1,0 per cent) children admitted to this activity. If this is so, the children are engaged in prostitution far less frequently than the service providers believe to be the case. On the other hand, it is "not generally considered acceptable to speak of such things, since selling sexual favours was a criminal offence and looked down with reprehension by many members of the community" (Swart, 1988d:167). The children may also be embarrassed to admit their involvement in prostitution.

Table 20: Views regarding the deviant activities engaged in by street children: Affirmative responses

Deviant activities	*N*	*%*
Glue sniffing	67	94,4
Begging	66	93,0
Smoking dagga	64	90,1
Drinking alcohol	63	88,7
Theft from cars	60	84,5
Theft from shops	57	80,3
Prostitution	57	80,3
Homosexuality	56	78,9
Bag-snatching	56	78,9
Theft from houses	55	77,5
Benzine sniffing	54	76,1
Pickpocketing	52	73,2
Gambling	48	67,6
Petrol sniffing	45	63,4
Inhaling paint thinners	43	60,6
Assault	38	53,5
Other	7	9,9

An equally large number of respondents cited the involvement of street children in various types of *theft*. They included 60 (or 84,5 per cent)

who said street children stole from cars, 57 (or 80,3 per cent) who cited shoplifting, 56 (or 78,9 per cent) who mentioned bag-snatching, 55 (or 77,5 per cent) who cited theft from houses, and 52 (or 73,2 per cent) who noted pickpocketing.

Forty-eight (or 67,6 per cent) respondents mentioned *gambling* as an activity engaged in by street children. However, the street children who were interviewed cited gambling as the second most important activity they engaged in. Gambling is pursued enthusiastically by the children, and provides considerable diversion from the serious business of making a living and surviving in largely hostile surroundings. Forty-five (or 63,4 per cent) and 43 (or 60,6 per cent) referred to *petrol sniffing* and the *inhaling of paint thinners* respectively. The street children themselves reported far less involvement in these activities, that is, 31 (or 16,1 per cent) and 15 (or 7,8 per cent) respectively. Swart confirms that these are sporadic activities that tend to precede glue addiction. She notes that because benzine sniffing was so rife in the 1950s among street children, they were called the *Benzine Road Kids* (Swart, 1988d:132).

Assault as a deviant activity was mentioned least often by the respondents (38 or 53,5 per cent). The street children similarly reported assault as one of their least frequent activities. Several reasons for this can be considered. Firstly, research indicates that it is the street child who is assaulted, rejected and marginalised by those with whom he comes into contact. He is therefore a passive victim rather than the initiator of aggression. Secondly, research points to the tremendous bond and camaraderie that exists between street children, with the older boys assuming responsibility for the younger ones. Street children abide by their own code of conduct and the assault of a fellow street child is not acceptable. They must, of necessity, stick together to survive. Lastly, the tendency to flee suggests a passive response to problem solving rather than an aggressive one, characteristic of assault. For these reasons, the researcher believes street children seldom resort to assault.

It can be presumed from the responses that the views of the service providers on the deviant activities of street children are gleaned

through prolonged interaction with, and knowledge of the children. On the whole, the responses of the service providers confirm the involvement of street children in a wide range of deviant activities, and are in agreement with other research findings (refer to Chapter 2).

The view that street children will become hardened criminals and that they are deviant and delinquent is significant and relates to the second stage of the path to a deviant career, as described by Champion *et al.* (1984) (refer to Chapter 4). The perceptions of the respondents, especially the Durban city councillors, are pessimistic and may account for their refusal in the past to take responsibility for the street children in Durban. The fact that the respondents expect no good from street children will influence the children's perceptions of themselves. This may mean the acceptance of the label and the fulfilment of the promise of deviance.

Management of the street child phenomenon

The service providers were asked to list the facilities/resources/services for street children that they were aware of. The majority of the respondents (28 or 39,4 per cent) cited places of safety, 12 (or 16,9 per cent) mentioned Zamani Shelter, 7 (or 9,9 per cent) cited Streetwise, 5 (or 7,0 per cent) said there were no facilities/resource/services and 4 (or 5,6 per cent) referred to welfare services. One or two respondents mentioned children's homes, Ark Ministries and the provision of food, money and clothes to street children by volunteer organisations. Other responses related to a feeding scheme, skills training (presumably the one run by Streetwise), foster parents, Living World Ministries and Khayalethu Shelter.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these responses. It is clear that the majority of the respondents do not know of services for street children other than their own (some did not even cite their own organisation). They appear to be vaguely aware of other facilities/resources/services but do not know them by name. The respondent who cited Khayalethu Shelter is unaware that it burned down in the late 1980s. It seems that the majority of the respondents

regard places of safety as the foremost facility for street children in Durban. This would indicate perhaps an acceptance of places of safety as a refuge for street children. A great deal of criticism has been levelled against the institutionalisation of children (refer to Chapter 1). McLachlan (1986:131) states that children

> are placed in institutions that practise archaic and dickensian methods of 'caring' for children. The staff of such institutions and the relevant government departments appear to have little knowledge of modern child care practices and theories.

The same holds true for schools of industry, now called childcare schools. These schools are officially described as being for pedagogically neglected children and there are 18 for whites, three for coloureds and two for Indians. There are no schools of industry for African children.

Children's homes are established and managed by welfare associations and/or churches. McLachlan (1986:61) reports that there are 119 such homes throughout the country, 76 for whites, 26 for coloureds, six for Indians and nine for Africans, including one each in the former Ciskei and the former Bophuthatswana. It is clear that there is a desperate shortage of children's homes, hence the reliance of the authorities on places of safety. It appears that the respondents who refer to children's homes as resources for street children are unaware of their virtual non-existence.

The tendency to disregard welfare services (only four respondents referred to them) indicates that not much faith is placed in the contribution of this type of service to street children. Perhaps it also indicates rivalry between service providers or a lack of concern for the welfare of street children. A substantial number (25) did not respond, which was interpreted by the researcher as a "don't know" response. This suggests that a number of service providers are ignorant of services/resources/facilities for street children other than their own.

This ignorance emphasises the need for an inter-disciplinary, co-ordinated, national strategy for programmes and action on behalf of street children.

Views on the adequacy of services for street children

The overwhelming view of the respondents was that not enough was being done for street children in Durban. This opinion was expressed by 58 (or 81,7 per cent) of the respondents, regardless of the organisations they served. Five (or 7,0 per cent) respondents from Bayhead Place of Safety felt that enough was being done for street children, 2 (or 2,8 per cent) did not know and 6 (or 8,5 per cent) did not respond, indicating perhaps that they did not know. The respondents from the City Health Department and the Durban City Police were unanimous in their view (100,0 per cent) that not enough was being done for street children in Durban. Seventeen (or 70,8 per cent) childcare workers and 9 (or 81,8 per cent) social workers stated that not enough was being done for the children. All but one of the Durban city councillors (5 or 83,3 per cent) felt that not enough was being done for street children. The role of the Durban City Council with regard to the provision of services/facilities for street children has thus far been minimal and indifferent. The fact that only 6 (or 20,0 per cent) of the 30 city councillors responded to the questionnaire indicates their apathy and indifference to a growing social problem.

Reasons provided for the inadequate provision of services to street children

The reasons given for the inadequate provision of services can be summarised by the following responses:

> Nobody has shown any interest in the plight of the street children.
>
> Places of safety do not provide recreational facilities, compulsory education and job training.

There is insufficient information on street children available to us.

Institutions are not aiding in the rehabilitation of the street child.

There are not enough shelters for them.

There is a lack of funds.

People/organisations are abdicating their responsibilities and/or being prevented by the state/the Durban City Council from responding with community initiatives.

A shelter closer to the city with rehabilitation services rendered by a registered welfare organisation is what is needed. Bayhead is not conducive to rehabilitation, resulting in the high number of abscondments.

There are too many street children and not enough places of safety for them.

The large number of varied responses indicate several shortcomings in the provision of services to street children. Respondents emphasised the need for more schools and proper recreational facilities in the areas from which the children came. The need for more information on street children, and parent and community involvement was also stressed. Criticisms were levelled at the places of safety for being too punitive and for not aiding in the rehabilitation of street children. Some respondents expressed the need for more shelters, children's homes and places of safety. Many respondents referred to the apathy of the community, the state and local government alike, and the shortage of funds and facilities. The need for centrally situated places of safety was also expressed by one of the respondents.

Service providers' views on shelters

The statements reflected in Table 21 were extracted from the literature and local media reports and highlight the generally negative views of shelters. Respondents were asked to give their views on the statements.

The provision of services for street children is scanty to say the least. At the time of the study there were only two shelters catering for the growing number of street children in Durban. The Zamani Shelter is a project run by Durban Child Welfare Society, while Streetwise has a shelter in Clermont. Streetwise commenced its operation in 1987 as an education project in Hillbrow. Since then it has grown and developed branches in Johannesburg, Soweto, Pretoria and Durban, and accommodates more than 400 children in its schools, homes and shelters. Streetwise has now acquired the Old Mill in Mariannhill, which will provide accommodation, schooling and a new way of life for about 100 boys from the streets and broken homes. It is in the process of phasing out its operation in Clermont and is trying to move those boys under the age of 16 to the Mill in order to streamline teaching (*Daily News*, 12 December 1992). Apart from these two shelters and the government's institutional facilities, funding and services are grossly inadequate, despite the best efforts of many dedicated workers.

The initial response to the emerging street child phenomenon was the establishment of soup kitchens and feeding schemes, run once or twice weekly in church or community centres. However, the growing demand for something more tangible than these irregular feeding schemes resulted in the establishment of shelters providing for the children's basic needs. A phased approach is now being adopted in the shelter projects. Phase one operates on a walk-in, walk-out basis in an area which is easily accessible to the children. Phase two caters for those children who cannot return home and who are more amenable to committing themselves to school attendance and abstention from solvent abuse and who do not present with any serious behavioural problems. The third or final phase may be regarded as the after-care or bridging phase, which attempts to link the children's present shelter experiences with the real world.

Although shelters may not be the ideal solution to the street child's problems, they are nonetheless far more effective and acceptable than the government's institutional response. In support of this viewpoint, Cockburn says "it has been shown over the years that street children

do not benefit from traditional facilities, so alternative ways of addressing the problem have had to be sought" (Cockburn, 1990:8). To this end, the Homestead, the first shelter for street children in Cape Town, was opened in 1982.

Schärf (1988) describes the initial suspicion of the then-South African Police towards shelters. The police now realise that they are a far more effective and desirable alternative than the official processing of street children for petty matters.

The view that shelters attract street children away from their homes is unfounded, since the number who may have been attracted to them is minimal (Swart, 1988a:12).

Table 21: Views on shelters for street children: Affirmative responses

Views	*N*	*%*
Shelter staff should have regular in-service training	61	85,9
Street children should be treated in context or else they learn to adapt to the facility and not to their real world environments	49	69,0
Shelters will attract street children away from unfavourable home environments	47	66,2
Shelters are able to reintegrate street children into society	41	57,9
Shelters for street children trap them in a system of inequality	25	35,2
By sponsoring a shelter we will be harbouring sodomists and criminals	22	31,0
Shelters for street children are a waste of time and money	14	19,7
The people helping street children are training them to be terrorists/revolutionaries	9	12,7

It is the researcher's contention that shelters offer immediate refuge to children in distress. In the absence of permanent solutions, they offer an ideal safety net for street children before damage accrues from

contamination with street and institutional life. Street children cannot be kept in a physical, emotional and intellectual *deep-freeze* while government and non-governmental organisations hotly debate their future. The value of shelters therefore cannot be discounted.

Table 21 indicates that service providers have both a favourable and unfavourable response to shelters. The majority of the respondents (61 or 85,9 per cent) felt that shelter staff should have regular in-service training. This is in keeping with current trends, whereby regular in-service training is considered a necessity in service-oriented occupations. However, the researcher believes that in-service training should apply to all the categories of professionals in this study, and not only to shelter staff. Children in institutions frequently have severe social and personal problems. Often these problems are compounded by the treatment offered by unqualified staff. The researcher's earlier study on child abuse (Chetty, 1986) revealed that none of the service providers interviewed (doctors, lawyers, social workers, teachers and magistrates) had had any training that enabled them to handle the specific problems of the abused child.

Forty-nine (or 69,0 per cent) respondents said that street children should be treated in the context of their real world environments. Forty-seven (or 66,2 per cent) respondents agreed that shelters would attract street children away from unfavourable home environments. This point of view has been disputed by Swart, who says that the number who may have been attracted to them is minimal (Swart, 1988a).

Richter acknowledges the dangers of creating shelters that are more comfortable and stimulating than the home environments from which street children come. She advocates outreach programmes to assist black families in crisis, and the development of social policies and mechanisms "before parents and children lose their capacities for nurturance and affection towards each other" (*Natal Mercury*, 15 June 1988).

Forty-one (or 57,9 per cent) respondents felt that shelters were able to integrate street children into society. UNICEF supports this point of view and recognises South Africa's Streetwise programme as one of

the best in the world (Swart, cited in *Sunday Tribune*, 25 June 1989). In a similar vein, Schärf (1988) applauds the numerous groups, organisations and shelters for street children in the Cape and the increasing professionalism of the staff.

Other study responses were that shelters trapped street children in a system of inequality (25 or 35,2 per cent) and that sponsoring a shelter led to the harbouring of sodomists and criminals (22 or 31,0 per cent). Fourteen (or 19,7 per cent) respondents stated that shelters for street children were a waste of time and money, while 9 (or 12,7 per cent) stated that the people helping street children were training them to be terrorists/revolutionaries.

If one considers the official response to the street child phenomenon, namely confinement in places of safety, shelters, though not ideal, are a far more humane and effective option. The two shelters reviewed in the present study offer a wide range of educational, remedial and job training skills designed to maximise and stimulate potential and to facilitate transition into community life. In the absence of children's homes, foster care, central and local government initiatives and funding, the importance of shelters in offering immediate relief to needy children must be appreciated.

These findings reflect the dearth of alternative placement facilities for street children in Durban and the ignorance of service providers as to existing facilities. Since the time that the study was undertaken, two more shelters have been established. These are Sinetemba Shelter in the central business district, which is run by Durban Child Welfare Society and Found City in Cliffdale. In addition, the Durban Street Children Network has been established to aid communication between the different street children organisations on an informal basis. The network links 18 such organisations.

Any programme for street children must be evaluated in terms of its success in educating and rehabilitating the children. If one were to draw a comparison between Bayhead Place of Safety and Streetwise, the latter far outstrips the former in terms of the wide range of activities offered, such as street outreach, education, assessment and graduate programmes, and their relative success (Schurink, 1993:214).

Obviously, every effort is being made at Streetwise to salvage the street children and to minimise their further victimisation. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of places of safety, which by their very design, appearance and functioning, physically and emotionally isolate boisterous adolescents and reinforce their victimisation and labelling.

Alternative future methods to deal with the street child phenomenon

Views on improving the situation for street children

The majority of the respondents (66 or 93,0 per cent) agreed that street children should be provided with educational opportunities and 61 (or 85,9 per cent) said that educational programmes should be devised for street children (refer to Table 22). In the open-ended questions, the respondents consistently stressed the importance of education. It was felt that education, not only for street children, but for the majority of black school-aged children who had been denied the right to a free and equal education, had to be a priority. Severe criticisms have been levelled at the black education system, which is seen as encouraging a high drop-out rate and alienating children from the formative influence of education.

Compulsory and stimulating schooling can provide a safety net that will prevent many children from resorting to the runaway response. However, a broad-based education must also be available to children who are currently on the streets, to equip them to cope with street life and life after the streets. To this end, various educational programmes have been designed and implemented by Streetwise and the Homestead.

Sixty (or 84,5 per cent) respondents said that there was a need for laws to protect street children. As has already been stated, the Child Care Act does not sufficiently protect children in general and the street child in particular, nor does the Criminal Procedure Act. New laws must be enacted that take into cognisance the needs of street children,

offer more humane and effective protection, and consider individual and cultural needs and differences.

Table 22: Views of service providers on the improvement of the situation for street children: Affirmative responses

Views	*N*	*%*
Provision of educational opportunities	66	93,0
Educational programmes for street children	61	85,9
Laws to protect street children	60	84,5
Improvement of recreational facilities in the shelter	57	80,3
Provision of job opportunities	56	78,9
Improvement of living conditions in the shelter	55	77,5
Provision of adequate accommodation to parents so that they can return home	42	59,2
Provision of financial help to parents so that they can return home	39	54,9
Laws to allow disadvantaged minors to work	37	52,1
Other	7	9,9

Fifty-seven (or 80,3 per cent) respondents felt that recreational facilities in shelters should be improved and 55 (or 77,5 per cent) indicated that living conditions must be improved. It appears that although shelters provide a far more valuable service in rehabilitating street children than places of safety, their living and recreational facilities must be improved. Funds must be made available by the state for this purpose. Although the improvement of recreational facilities in shelters is important, such facilities are urgently needed at the places of safety since the majority of children are presently being accommodated there. The lack of facilities observed at Bayhead by the researcher makes it impossible for children and adolescents to expend their energies in constructive ways. This may account for their boredom and their repeated tendency to run away.

Fifty-six (or 78,9 per cent) respondents stated that street children should be provided with job opportunities and 37 (or 52,1 per cent) felt that the law should allow disadvantaged minors to work. Since the large number of children currently on the streets will not be reintegrated into formal schooling, they must be equipped with skills that will enable them to support themselves and their dependants.

Agnelli (1986) believes that governments should extend greater legality to the informal sector which absorbs many street children as car washers, shoe-shine boys, etc. She states that their working life can be combined with nutritional, informal and recreational programmes. The children can be organised into co-operatives and recognition can be given to the positive contributions made by individuals who employ street children.

In a similar vein, Cockburn states that the entrepreneurial skills of street children must be encouraged, and that we should not impose our middle-class values which denigrate working children or child labour. According to her, we should equip the children with marketable skills to enter the labour market. "Ideally, they must take their place, even if it is within the informal sector with knowledge and dignity" (Cockburn, 1990:8).

To a lesser extent (42 or 59,2 per cent) the respondents supported the view that adequate accommodation should be provided to parents so that the children can return home. Thirty-nine (or 54,9 per cent) respondents said that financial assistance should be provided to parents so that the children can return home.

Other suggestions for improving the situation of street children were:

> Where it is not possible to return the children to their homes, they should be cared for in proper children's homes.
>
> The staff in places of safety should be suitably selected to facilitate integration.
>
> The police should be discouraged from apprehending children at random, since many school children are brought to institutions.

People must be paid sufficiently for the work they do to enable them to take care of their children.

Street children must be integrated with *normal* children.

Recommendations made by the service providers

The majority of the respondents (66 or 93,0 per cent) said that street children should be taught basic literacy and numeracy skills and 63 (or 88,7 per cent) agreed that street children should be equipped with marketable skills to enter the job market. A review of the literature reaffirms the value of literacy and numeracy skills programmes for street children as well as the teaching or development of marketable skills. Such programmes are essential to equip the children in finding their niche in society, as well as to give them confidence in themselves and their capabilities.

Agnelli (1986) states that educational programmes for street children must be flexible and must appreciate that for the poor child, high school may be a luxury he can ill afford. She states that education for prospective working children must be practical and should focus on basic numeracy and literacy.

In a survey of national street children organisations it was found that 90 per cent had the stated goals of teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills, reintegration into formal schooling and, if this was not possible, preparation for training or employment.

MacCurtain believes that a training project for street children requires well-qualified and experienced teachers, flexible methods and a knowledge of African languages. He notes that this task is not for the inexperienced enthusiast, and needs ongoing dialogue between the teachers, helpers and children regarding their interests and aspirations (MacCurtain, 1988).

Table 23: Recommendations of service providers: Affirmative responses

Recommendations	*N*	*%*
Street children should be taught basic literacy and numeracy skills	66	93,0
Street children should be equipped to enter the job market with marketable skills	63	88,7
Street children should have access to free legal counsel	55	77,5
Street children should be reintegrated into their communities of origin	52	73,2
Legislation should prohibit the selling of glue to minors	47	66,2
The Child Care Act offers sufficient protection to street children	36	50,7

Streetwise, regarded by UNICEF as one of the most successful projects for street children,

> is geared specifically to realising the potential of each child in the project through education, remediation and job skills training in accordance with the child's interests and abilities (Swart, 1988a:13).

An equally successful project, the *Learn to Live* venture, was started by the Homestead in Cape Town. It comprises six components that concentrate on:

- Remedial teaching, which prepares selected boys for re-entry into schools.

- Vocational training which, like a cottage industry, teaches candle-making, the making of wire toys, screen printing, bicycle repairs and weaving.

- The vocational training mentioned above is linked to a small business venture since it is accepted that not all the boys are school material and will therefore find their way into the informal sector.

- Functional literacy and numeracy.

- Life skills.

- Enrichment programmes that use art, music, drama and dance to encourage non-verbal expression, since many of the boys have underdeveloped verbal skills (Cockburn, 1990).

The need to equip street children for their future roles in society is therefore paramount. Unfortunately, at the time of the interviews at Bayhead (August 1991), nothing was being provided for the children in respect of educational, vocational and remedial programmes or life skills education. This once again indicates the apathy and indifference of the authorities towards street children.

Fifty-five respondents (or 77,5 per cent) agreed that street children should have access to free legal counsel. The question of free legal counsel or advocacy is intrinsically linked to the position of the child in the criminal justice system, which in the case of the black child, is seen as unjust.

McLachlan (1986:351) argues that "the most fundamental flaw in the legislation is the lack of automatic legal representation for children". Although an accused has the right to a lawyer from the time of his arrest, he is seldom informed of this right. Children are often unaware of legal aid services, which in any case are limited. Despite the fact that the Criminal Procedure Act No. 51 of 1977 has certain provisions that safeguard the child, there are several loopholes that leave the child unprotected. These discrepancies are briefly described below:

- A child can be released into his parent's custody pending a court appearance. The tendency, however, is to detain the child in a police cell, which is regarded as a place of safety.

- The court is obliged to ensure that the child appears in court only if he lives in the same magisterial district as the one over which the court presides. As this is seldom the case, the child appears in court alone, unaided and intimidated by the formal legal machinery.

- Although the court has the choice of several welfare dispositions, they are seldom utilised due to the chronic shortage of probation officers, children's homes, places of safety and reformatories.

- A magistrate is not obliged to request a probation officer's report (pre-sentence report). He may therefore make a decision on the child's future without adequate knowledge of the child's background and the circumstances that may have led him into trouble in the first place. The magistrate's background and training is purely legal and is based on rules of evidence and procedure. The *human element* is often omitted in the process of establishing concrete evidence, intention and culpability.

- The law allows for a child who appears before the juvenile court, to appear before the children's court if it appears to the magistrate that the "child is in need of care". This is referred to as the conversion procedure and negates the harmful effects of stigmatisation and conviction inherent in the juvenile court. This alternative, however, is seldom utilised, and many black children who should appear in the children's court find themselves in the juvenile court, which follows the same rules of procedure and evidence as the adult court (McLachlan, 1986).

Fifty-two (or 73,2 per cent) respondents stated that street children should be reintegrated into their communities of origin. From the findings it appears that social workers do not place much value on the

reintegration of street children into their communities. The integration of street children is a debatable question; not all street children want to return to the intolerable conditions from which they have escaped. They have fled domestic violence, township violence, poverty, neglect and fractured home and community lifestyles.

The researcher believes that in order for integration to occur, the child must be a willing participant, and likewise his family and community. The society that spawned the street children must open its heart to them. It is not sufficient to provide food and accommodation; mutual acceptance and caring is a prerequisite for integration. Elaborating on this point of view, Agnelli states that

> care is indeed the heart of the problem, and the genuine integration of street children into the core culture can only take place in a society which gives greater recognition and a more central place to the caring ethic (Agnelli, 1986:93).

Forty-seven (or 66,2 per cent) respondents said that legislation should prohibit the selling of glue to minors. The street child's addiction to glue is widely referred to in the literature (Swart, 1988b, 1988c; Bothma, 1988). The consequences of addiction are many and varied. They include giddiness, lack of motor co-ordination, slurred speech, impaired judgement, double vision and in some cases brain damage, brain marrow deterioration and death due to asphyxiation. Aggression followed by violence may also occur. These substances lead to psychological dependence and a progression to dagga and mandrax—both common drugs in South Africa. If one considers these side effects, together with poor diet, lack of medical care, exposure to the elements and other physical dangers on the streets, the consequences for the child are even more serious. These factors led Cockburn to call for legislation to control the sale of solvents to minors (Cockburn, 1990).

Thirty-six (or 50,7 per cent) respondents stated that the Child Care Act offered sufficient protection to street children. The Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983 imposes the duty of care and support on any person

legally liable to maintain the child. This duty may be extended to prison and police officials. "The Act provides that a place of safety includes any place suitable for the reception of a child, into which the owner, occupier, or person in charge thereof is willing to receive a child" (McLachlan, 1986:347). Although the Child Care Act does not specifically include a police cell in its definition of a place of safety, it may qualify as such if "the owner, occupier, or person in charge thereof is willing to receive a child" (McLachlan, 1986:347).

The widespread detention of children in both prisons and police cells, as reported by the Detainees' Parents Support Committee (1986), is a flagrant violation of human rights and contrary to the stated duty of care and support imposed by the Act. The Child Care Act clearly fails to protect children in this regard, including street children.

Further recommendations of service providers

Some of the service providers offered additional recommendations regarding solutions to the street child problem. Some of the responses are mentioned below:

> There must be a unification of values and practices in child and youth care, and a uniform policy on street children.
>
> A national study must be conducted on unmet needs in residential care settings.
>
> The state must provide homes to all to prevent an increase in the street child population.
>
> More social workers are needed in the areas from which the street children come.
>
> Street children cannot be helped in isolation. Their families and communities must be involved in the treatment process.
>
> Shelters must be available in town where the street children congregate.

Legislation must ensure rehabilitation rather than punishment of street children.

The welfare agencies must give street children the opportunity to uplift themselves with self-help schemes.

The children should be taught independence, morals and ethics.

It is clear that these recommendations focus on prevention at both the macro and micro levels, and emphasise the involvement of street children, their parents, communities and the state in a joint management endeavour.

Other comments of service providers with regard to street children

A variety of comments was received from the service providers in the study, some of which have been expressed in previous sections. The following are additional examples of the responses received:

There should be more dissemination of knowledge to the public on street children.

The government must legislate on loitering by eight to 12 year old children.

The law must prohibit businessmen from exploiting street children.

The parents are to blame regardless of their circumstances. They must respect each other and teach their children respect as well.

Street children should not be over-protected and *molly coddled.* They must realise that being on the streets is not an answer to their problems.

Shelters attract street children and must be done away with. There is a need instead for more schools of industry.

Parents are not responsible enough to raise a family. There are too many unmarried couples bringing unwanted children in to the world.

More research is urgently required before embarking on any programmes to assist street children.

A co-ordinated, multidisciplinary approach to children on the streets is needed.

Good shelters, recreational facilities and job opportunities are what is required.

From these responses it is clear that parents are criticised for failing to behave more responsibly, and that a co-ordinated, multidisciplinary approach to the problem is emphasised.

The findings of this section of the study indicate that everyone must to some extent bear the blame for the increasing number of children living on the streets in South Africa. Parents, communities, the state, and welfare organisations all have a role to play in alleviating the plight of street children.

The foregoing recommendations have focused on both short and long-term solutions to the phenomenon. However, if prevention is to succeed, attitudes towards street children will have to change. It is believed that even the most humane and far-sighted legislation will be to no avail if individuals remain indifferent or unsympathetic.

Summary

The findings of the research conducted among service providers showed that there were more female than male service providers, with most of them in the 31 to 40-year age category. The majority of service providers had not proceeded beyond matriculation level and were employed at Bayhead and Umlazi Places of Safety, mainly as childcare workers, clerks and general assistants.

Many of the respondents cited escape from home and township conditions (violence, boredom) as the main reasons for the children running away from their homes. The responses of the children to the same question differed greatly, indicating that the service providers do not understand the children as well as they ought to.

Most of the service providers expressed sympathy for street children, although this is not reflected in official policy towards the children. The majority cited places of safety as the predominant existing facility/service/resource for street children.

The service providers stated virtually unanimously that not enough was being done for street children in Durban. They were also critical of the indifference of the children's parents, communities, the City Council and the state to the children's problems. The public's lack of knowledge about street children and Bayhead's punitive stance were also criticised.

Most respondents felt that the state should be responsible for street children. It was felt, to a lesser extent, that the child welfare societies and all South Africans should bear responsibility for the children. The respondents also said that governmental and non-governmental organisations should take *more* responsibility for street children.

The respondents advocated largely punitive measures in respect of street children, stating that they should be placed in schools of industry and places of safety. Most agreed that street children were likely to become hardened criminals. Some of the reasons given in support of this statement were that the children refused to listen, they isolated themselves from the community (and the controls inherent in them), crime was a means by which they could survive on the streets, they were influenced by their peers and criminals, and rejection by their families and society forced them into a deviant adaptation.

The service providers confirmed the involvement of street children in a wide range of deviant activities (as did the children themselves in response to the same question). The behaviours mentioned most often were glue sniffing, begging, smoking dagga, drinking alcohol and theft from cars.

The children's main legitimate income-generating activity was reported to be parking cars, while begging was cited as the main deviant income-generating activity. These responses agreed with those of the street children.

Favourable responses were received with regard to shelters, with the majority of the respondents disagreeing that shelters were a waste

of time and money, that they harboured sodomists and criminals, and that the people helping street children were training them to be terrorists and revolutionaries. However, some respondents provided alternative viewpoints, stating that shelters should be destroyed, that they appeared to be a breeding ground for future criminals, that the state should appoint a commission of inquiry into them, and finally that they promoted rather than decreased the problems of street children.

With regard to recommendations in respect of street children, the majority of the respondents agreed that they should be taught basic literacy and numeracy skills, be equipped to enter the job market with marketable skills, and have access to free legal counsel. It was also felt that the children should be provided with educational opportunities and programmes and protective legislation should be passed for them.

Further recommendations related to both short and long-term strategies concentrated at micro and macro levels, and the joint involvement of parents, the community and the state.

The findings reflect a leaning towards *hard* options (commitment to schools of industry and places of safety) rather than soft options (children's homes, shelters and foster care), and are inconsistent with the sympathy that was expressed for street children. This indicates that the respondents' personal views are overshadowed by the organisations for which they work, which in turn are influenced by the Child Care Act and the Criminal Procedure Act. Both these Acts are incapable of protecting street children and entrench their victimisation and deviance.

6 Recommendations and conclusion

Introduction

Street children are victims of social injustice and are symptomatic of the many social problems evident in South African society today. Any attempt to ameliorate their initial victimisation must address the causes, not merely the symptoms. The first line of attack must be primary and secondary prevention programmes and policies, aimed at the comprehensive, holistic management of the street child phenomenon. The situation at present stops at implementing tertiary preventive measures that are largely punitive and counter-productive to the acquisition of pro-social norms, values and behaviour. Indeed the converse outcome results, in that exposure to the criminal justice system, and the labelling that is part of it, leads to the development of a negative self-concept and lays the foundation for secondary deviance.

The RDP, which concentrates on social upliftment, should be accompanied by human reconstruction and development. People whose lives, families and communities have been deliberately torn asunder must now actively receive support and help to rebuild the social fabric of their lives—only then will the street child phenomenon be eased.

Primary and secondary prevention entail early identification and intervention using a multipronged approach. The goal is to foster a sense of community, belonging, identification, empowerment and responsibility, thereby minimising the negative factors that contribute to the *distancing* of individuals, and the alienation, marginalisation and victimisation of youth. If street children are to be saved from embarking on self- and socially-destructive behaviour, family and community life must offer far more than it does at present. Macro primary prevention programmes and micro tertiary prevention programmes are discussed in the sections that follow. It is believed that these programmes will go a long way towards stemming the flow of

disgruntled youth to the streets, averting the double victimisation they experience, and preventing the deviant activities they engage in. This discussion is preceded by an overview of the main findings of the research.

Main findings of the study

Several pertinent findings emerged from the study, the most important of which are as follows:

- The political dispensation of the Nationalist government was responsible for bringing about, *inter alia*, massive social disorganisation, poverty, unemployment and gross disparities in the distribution of resources. These have impacted significantly on black family life. The failure of fractured families to provide a stabilising and supportive milieu is echoed by the failure of schools to stimulate and bond pupils to discipline, a work ethic and an appreciation of education. Black children have thus been victimised and abandoned by the two most important socialising institutions in their lives—the family and the school. The dislike of school is cited by many respondents as the reason for leaving home, and any preventive strategy aimed at stemming the flow of children to the streets must take cognisance of this.

- Owing to the relatively recent interest in street children in South Africa and the disinterest of the previous government, no specific legislation designed to protect street children exists, although the GNU has vowed to urgently attend to the plight of street children. However, in view of the long overdue socio-economic upliftment and development needed, and the considerable demands being placed on the GNU, one wonders whether women and children will receive the attention that has so long been denied them. The findings of this research indicate that the Child Care Act and the Child Protection Act do not afford street children any safeguards

but in fact condemn them to detention in prisons, police cells and places of safety.

- According to the labelling perspective, contact with law officials is an important factor in explaining deviant behaviour. This suggests that contact with the criminal justice system should be minimised, not maximised (which appears to be the trend at present). The detention of street children in prisons, police cells and places of safety brutalises children who have already been victimised by their families and an unjust system. Detention in such places exposes them to contamination with hardened offenders and provides the push towards deviance. It also illustrates their victimisation and labelling by those in positions of authority, and this experience can catapult them towards secondary deviance and further victimisation. Escape from the victimisation-deviance-victimisation cycle appears to be near-impossible once a deviant career is embarked upon.

- Apart from the deviant activities engaged in while in detention, the street child's association with and liking for gang members and criminals can also foster deviance, especially if he admires them and wants to belong to the *in* group.

- Although being a street child, compared to being a robber, rapist or murderer, fits into the lower consensus deviance category, it nevertheless carries maximum censure, which is evident from the labelling and management practices adopted in respect of them.

- The social profile of the families of street children in this study appear to be typical of black families in general. The reason why some children become street children while others do not can therefore not be explained simply by external factors. The researcher believes that rather than running from adverse conditions, the inner motivations, expectations and evaluation of costs and rewards made by the children, coupled with their strong internal locus of control, propels them into street life in the belief

that they can survive and that they are running *to* a better life. A sociopsychological explanation therefore seems to be relevant in explaining the street child phenomenon.

- Although service providers express sympathy for street children, by regarding them as "deviants, delinquents, future criminals, public nuisances", etc., they have already labelled them. As has been pointed out, this has implications for their victimisation and secondary deviance. It also appears that despite professing sympathy for the street child, service providers still advocate *hard* options (places of safety/schools of industry) for their care.

- Responses to shelters were both favourable and unfavourable. If one weighs the negative, destructive conditions prevailing in institutions against the informal, flexible initiatives undertaken in shelters the latter, though not ideal, have a far better chance of effecting the rehabilitation of the street child than do institutions.

Prevention programmes on the macro level

The street child phenomenon necessitates a partnership between governmental and non-governmental organisations to provide for policy, legislation, funding and resources and to translate programmes into concrete plans of action. The previous government abdicated responsibility for a problem it created, and the new government must now address it. The implementation of primary prevention programmes on a macro level requires a great deal of planning and forethought. These programmes are long-term, rather than immediate, remedies to the problem.

The state

The GNU has a major role to play in the reconstruction and development of South African society and the prevention of the street child phenomenon. Drastic improvements encompassing short and long-term goals have to be undertaken at both micro and macro levels.

One of the many legacies of apartheid has been the destruction of black family life and morale and an increasing flow of children from unhealthy family and community relationships to the city.

Townships need radical improvements such as proper streets, pavements, electrification, street lighting, sanitation and regular refuse removal. There should be sufficient hospitals, schools, crèches, clinics, parks, libraries, community centres and welfare services to provide for the large populations resident in the townships. The quality of life in black townships needs to be drastically improved and basic needs must be met.

A report for UNICEF (Kenridge, 1989:116) notes that pollution levels in black townships resulting from the inefficient combustion of coal are extremely high. "In Soweto, the largest Black township, the concentration of suspended particles frequently exceeds safety limits, and may be related to respiratory infections." However, it is encouraging to note that the state has committed itself to the introduction of national health schemes and primary health care which is geared towards reducing high infant mortality rates.

Given that the basic needs of black people in South Africa have largely been denied, the GNU is embarking on the RDP, which for the first time in South Africa presents a "coherent socio-economic programme which holistically attempts to redress the imbalances caused by apartheid whilst simultaneously contributing to economic growth"(*Implementing the RDP in KwaZulu-Natal*, 1994:Preface).

Plans to address the critical housing shortage were announced in December 1994. The White Paper on Housing recognises a 1,5 million housing backlog and intends to build 150 000 homes over the next ten years, to introduce subsidies of R15 000 for individuals who earn less than R800 a month, to make more land available for housing and to develop strategies that encourage loan schemes and lending facilities for low-cost housing (TV1 news, 8 December 1994).

In addition to the fundamental structural, political and economic changes that the state must make, the question of confinement of children in institutions needs reconsideration. Institutions (police cells, prisons, reformatories, schools of industry and places of safety) are

counter-productive to the stated goal of rehabilitation. The inherently punitive atmosphere, the underqualification and lack of concern of staff, and the exposure to delinquent subcultures reinforce the negative, anti-social attitudes of the children confined in them. Places of safety as a means to manage street children are definitely not the solution to the children's problems—instead they exacerbate and compound them.

This suggests that the Correctional Services Amendment Bill, which advocates detention in places of safety rather than in prison, is inadequate. It appears that the new government is pursuing a policy of containment, under the punitive ethos of the old government, believing places of safety to be the lesser of the two evils. It is therefore crucial that officials in the present government liaise with non-governmental organisations, who are in a far better position to assess the difficulties and needs of street children, in order to tailor the policy, legislation or guidelines that are made. The government should recognise grassroots organisations and provide financial and technical aid and support so that their work with street children can continue.

In Chapter 4 it was noted that the school system was directly responsible for the majority of children running away from their homes. The facts speak for themselves: if schooling for black children causes them to run away, then by the same token it can be used to keep them at home and at school, where they belong. Drastic improvements must occur with regard to the relevance of the syllabus, funding equality, provision of free books, facilities, class size, the qualifications of teachers, feeding schemes and a non-punitive approach to pupils.

Traditionally, schools have been geared to developing only the academic and athletic abilities of pupils and have neglected their social and personal development. Nowadays, the emphasis is falling increasingly on dramatically altered school structures and processes wherein freedom to choose and express oneself, democratic decision making, constructive communication and liaison between pupils, staff, parents and the community allow for a more effective learning environment and a decrease in those factors that impede the learning process. The researcher believes that the individuals concerned with

the provision of a unitary education system should strive to ensure a congenial atmosphere in schools. This can be attained by boosting staff morale, improving teacher qualifications, regular in-service training, workshops and seminars, providing psychological and social support services to teachers, opening lines of communication between teachers, principals and the hierarchy, and improving conditions of service. Teachers who are happy will better serve the needs of their pupils than those who are disgruntled.

The whole culture within schools should change. At present the goal of secondary school education is to have as many pupils attain a matriculation exemption as possible, the pass or failure rate being a reflection on the value of the teachers and the school. There are countless numbers of children for whom school is a totally frustrating experience, who begin to truant and eventually drop out, preferring delinquency, gang membership and street life.

It is clear that the RDP should urgently address these issues. Schools have a major role to play in the primary and secondary prevention of the street child phenomenon and should therefore admit partial ownership of the problem.

An examination of the booklet *Implementing the RDP in KwaZulu-Natal* leads the researcher to believe that in the attempt to correct the educational imbalances of the past, schools will still be largely academically oriented and bureaucratically administered. A Provincial Department of Education will assist in establishing a National Institute for Curriculum Development and a Provincial Curriculum Council (*Implementing the RDP in KwaZulu-Natal*, 1994:20-22). The proposed establishment of so many bureaucratic councils leads one to wonder whether the child will be forgotten in the process.

New legislation should be enacted that adequately protects the rights of all children under the law and prohibits the detention of juveniles in prisons, police cells and places of safety. It will be recalled from Chapter 2 that the Child Care Act and the Criminal Procedure Act fail in their duty towards children, especially black children. The street child phenomenon is a sharp reminder of the inequalities that exist in South Africa since street children are overwhelmingly black (or in the

Cape, coloured). The law must guarantee the right of every child to grow and develop healthily and to his fullest potential.

People/organisations who wage a constant battle to help street children and who are frustrated by the Act should be consulted in formulating amendments to it, or in drafting new policies and legislation that accommodate the needs of street children.

Although legislation is an urgent consideration, the researcher believes that the new government should go a step further and create a Ministry of Juvenile Affairs or Youth Services, with the express aim of handling all matters pertaining to juveniles. The criminal justice system at present takes no account of negative consequences of institutionalisation, disregards the special needs of juvenile offenders and treats them the same way it does adults. Courts and the legal system should be more child-centred and user-friendly and make provision for child advocacy or court companions (as they are referred to in Australia).

Durban City Council

The structure and processes underlying local government have been changed to include RDP units, which will maximise community participation and serve the interests of all citizens. Nevertheless, the Durban City Council has stood accused of *passing the buck* and dragging its feet on the issue of street children. A denial of its responsibility for welfare services has been used as an excuse for abdicating responsibility for street children, hence its non-involvement in prevention programmes and management practices.

The policy that dictates the functioning of the City Council is seen as restrictive, and by implication, not sufficiently flexible to meet changing community needs and problems (informal conversation with Councillor Yvonne Hart, Durban city councillor).

The City Council should embark on a needs assessment in deprived communities, to identify needs, problems and resources (human and material). Existing facilities should be given moral and financial support, while those that are lacking should be provided.

In this way local government could play a constructive role in community affairs and not function in isolation from the people it serves.

Community awareness and development programmes

The two bastions in the forefront of primary prevention are the community and the family. The family is situated within a particular community and is not impervious to its influence. The community is an extension of the home and cannot be overlooked in any preventive efforts. The spotlight nowadays falls increasingly on the community, with emphasis on community social work, community medicine, community schools and community-based programmes for delinquents and adult offenders. Community-based programmes are aimed at mobilising community resources and getting members of the community to take pride in and responsibility for themselves.

The cohesion that is forged under such conditions enhances and promotes a sense of *oneness* or belonging, social responsibility and a greater degree of informal social control.

In order to strengthen community ties attempts must be made to draw on the resources within them. Agnelli writes extensively on the need for community involvement and solidarity in any efforts designed to help street children. To this end she makes several recommendations that are equally applicable to South Africa. She notes the importance of voluntary and self-help groups tackling their own problems, and government and non-governmental initiatives being mutually reinforcing (Agnelli, 1986).

Youth in the townships have emerged as a powerful resource, and have been successful in mobilising "communities which lacked organisation, helping to set up civic bodies and women's groups" (Detainees' Parents Support Committee, 1986:48). The youth have been credited for establishing *people's power* in 1985, which involved different types of organisation. This initiative gave people power over their own lives and denied state control over their communities. The researcher believes that young people, together with the street children

who have made a successful adjustment to community life, can put their organisational skills and abundance of energy to use in preventing other youth from running away. This can be done by organising clean-up campaigns, youth theatre, big brother programmes, information workshops, etc.

The researcher also believes that businessmen and their organisations, politicians and professionals in the black community all have an essential role to play in the social upliftment of black people, particularly the youth. Businessmen can be approached to make financial contributions towards and to sponsor shelters, grassroots organisations and sport and recreation programmes. Politicians can use their influence to acquire land and premises for sheltering projects and outreach programmes. Doctors, nurses, teachers and lawyers can also give of their time where possible. Social workers have an essential role to play by identifying community needs, problems and resources and by networking.

The family is the primary social unit and is fundamental in providing physical and emotional care and nurturance to its individual members. Systems theory holds that all parts contribute to the smooth, efficient functioning of the system as a whole. The analogy can be extended to the family. If one or more members are functioning inharmoniously, the equilibrium and functioning of the family is in jeopardy. The stresses and strains that beset most families, particularly black families, can lead to family dysfunction and street children can be regarded as the outcome of such dysfunction. The parents should be the logical starting point in any preventive effort. Their faith in themselves and their parenting abilities must be restored. If the parents are strong, this strength will be communicated to their children, providing them with a sense of security and stability and negating the need to run away in search of fulfilment of these needs.

The importance of the family and the need to reach out, support and strengthen it has received much attention from authors such as Agnelli and Richter. Agnelli (1986) believes that intervention should ideally be aimed at the child, his family and the community. She refers to a United Nations study on youth maladjustment which found that it was

not poverty and rapid industrialisation that resulted in juvenile delinquency, but "... the strength of adult-child relationships, most notably family relationships"(Agnelli, 1986:89).

Richter emphasises the pivotal role played by the family and believes that strategies must be devised that provide "solidarity with and support for [its] children" (Richter, 1989a:14). She states that outreach programmes should be designed "before parents and children lose their capacities for nurturance and affection towards each other" (Richter, 1988a:16).

Education is a powerful tool and should reach all segments of the population. Health educators must intensify their efforts to spread the message of responsible parenting and sexuality. Due consideration must be given to the number of children parents can provide for, both physically and emotionally. Family planning can no longer be regarded with suspicion, but with realism.

The decision to have children should be a conscious one, and should not be linked to an assertion of masculinity, femininity and cultural identity. Parents should be empowered to take greater responsibility and control over their lives and those of their children.

More family planning clinics, free contraception and the education and empowerment of women will go a long way in alleviating the plight of families labouring to support their offspring. Related to this perhaps is the need for enlightened legislation with regard to abortion. The taking of life cannot be condoned, but can society look the other way when so many children are being beaten, starved and neglected, and are daily dying of malnutrition and preventable diseases?

In addition to these measures, pre- and post-natal health care, psychological services to individuals suffering from the effects of prolonged violence, literacy and informal education programmes, skills training, child-minding facilities and after-school/holiday programmes will alleviate the pressures upon parents.

Tertiary prevention programmes on the micro level

These recommendations are aimed at those children who have already begun a street life.

Shelters

The state should place more reliance on the establishment of shelters as refuges for street children, instead of places of safety. Subsidies should be allocated to each child in the shelter, regardless of registration under the Child Care Act. It is futile to apply First World standards to a Third World problem and to expect institutions to conform to unrealistic standards before state subsidies are granted.

This dogmatic adherence to registration indicates a disregard for street children and a denial of their self-worth. It has already been noted that registration places severe limitations on the running of the shelter, and the number of children accommodated in them. Shelters should be allowed to function informally, free from bureaucratic restraints but with financial assistance from the state. They should be centrally situated, with first phase shelters operating on a walk-in, walk-out basis. Although shelters are not the only or ideal solution to the street child's problems, they nevertheless have an essential role to play in *catching* the runaways and in meeting their need for accommodation and food.

Other informal initiatives

Reliance on shelters alone to effect the rehabilitation of street children is not feasible, for the simple reason that there are not enough of them to accommodate all street children. In addition, there are many street children who prefer to live on the streets, and programmes must be designed to also reach this target group.

Outreach programmes as advocated by Schurink (1993:244) make use of street workers who locate street children in parking areas, shopping arcades and business areas, and offer ongoing support and various programmes run by appropriately trained staff.

Other measures could include mobile clinics where examination and administration of medication would ensure the physical wellbeing of the children by, for example, the detection of cholera and sexually transmitted diseases. Health cards could be kept which, apart from providing health details, could also be useful in monitoring their migratory habits.

Soup kitchens, where food vouchers or stamps are issued entitling the child to meals for a specified period of time, should be instituted.

Theatre workshops aimed at developing personal and social skills and behaviour would be beneficial.

For the older children, whose needs are different, programmes should focus on job and skills training and networking with organisations that will absorb them into the work sphere. The National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO) could be approached to devise delinquency prevention programmes for street children.

The thrust of primary and tertiary prevention programmes aimed at macro and micro levels should be multidimensional if street children are to be deterred from running away and engaging in deviant activities on the streets.

Recommendations for further research

It is recommended that research be conducted on the following topics:

- Norms, values and ideals of western culture are deemed to be universal and as such amount to cultural hegemony. Programmes and services for street children should be designed that incorporate the needs and talents of street children and guard against unrealistic expectations.

- Comparative studies on governmental and non-governmental institutions should be undertaken to determine the success or failure of their programmes.

- Comparative follow-up studies on institutionalised and non-institutionalised street children should be conducted to determine whether they pursue deviant careers and the extent of their deviance.

Conclusion

The street child can be seen as both *offender* and *offended*. His presence offends societies' sensibilities, and so too do the varied deviant activities in which he engages. He is also offended, since many children take to the streets rather than endure unbearable conflict and abuse in their homes.

He is also offended while on the streets. Whatever the reason(s) for the child being on the streets, the negative consequences of prolonged street life to the child and society are undeniable.

It is hoped that this study and the recommendations that arise from it will in some way contribute to street children being guaranteed the *place in the sun* they deserve.

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