FINDING ROSES AMONGST THORNS: HOW INSTITUTIONALISED CHILDREN NEGOTIATE PATHWAYS TO WELL-BEING WHILE AFFECTED BY HIV&AIDS

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

in

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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PRETORIA

2008

For dad, my guiding star from up above…

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my pillars of support who illuminated my path with rays of light and beacons of hope:

To the children in my study, thank you for all you have taught me about love, life, loss, joy and happiness.

To Liesel Ebersöhn, thank you for being the bottomless well from where I drew my fortitude.

To Irma Eloff, thank you for enveloping me with your warm glow throughout this endeavour.

To my mum, who personifies dignity, hope and optimism, thank you for your constant encouragement and your words of wisdom.

To Tahlia, my precious younger daughter, may you never lose your zest for life. You were beside me every step of the way and for that, I thank you.

To Tashta, my pride and joy, thank you for your gentleness and for your strength. May you flourish in the years ahead.

To Vicky, my dearest - words cannot express my deepest gratitude to you for having created various spaces within which I could pursue my dreams. Thank you for providing me with love as well as real and surreal support from day to day.

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Declaration of Authorship

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I, Kamleshie Mohangi, declare that

Finding roses amongst thorns: How institutionalised children negotiate pathways to well-being while affected by HIV&AIDS

is my own work and that all sources and citations from literature have been acknowledged in-text and referenced in full.

Signature:..

Date: ....

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Abstract

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Against a burgeoning worldwide discourse on the psychological and emotional impact of HIV&AIDS on children's development, I conducted an empirical inquiry to explore how a group of nine orphaned and vulnerable children who were residing in a children's home negotiated pathways to well-being while they were affected by HIV&AIDS. The study aimed to explore, understand and describe the phenomenon of well-being within the specific context of the child participants' perspectives of their life-worlds. The study was informed by a qualitative and instrumental case study design within an interpretivist paradigm. In addition, it was guided by a conceptual framework derived from key concepts within the fields of HIV&AIDS, positive psychology, coping and resilience theories.

The study employed both inductive and deductive methods for knowledge development. I utilised task-based participatory activities to guide the informal and conversational interviews with the children in the study as the main data generation strategy. I incorporated the use of informal observations and an examination of documentation as additional data generation methods. By means of a thematic analysis approach incorporating principles of the constructivist grounded theory analysis of the children's expressions, I gained insights that informed my understanding of the children's perceptions and experiences of well-being, risks, challenges and stressors.

Findings indicate that the children in the study experienced risks, challenges and stressors arising from personal illness, stigma, discrimination, orphanhood, residential care, death and bereavement. The study has further revealed that those children who portrayed characteristics of well-being and resilient adaptation utilised psychosocial coping mechanisms. In addition, they were supported and strengthened by their positive intrapersonal characteristics and affirmative relationships that offered emotional and psychosocial support within their environments. The findings of the study suggest that feelings of well-being, hope and optimism might have co-existed with feelings of despair and hopelessness in the daily lives of the children in the study who were affected by HIV&AIDS. I concluded this study by suggesting that the well-being experiences of the children in this study may exist on a continuum and may depend on specific events, occasions or incidents on a day-to-day basis.

Key concepts:

- HIV&AIDS
- Orphaned and vulnerable children
- Residential care
- Risks, challenges and stressors
- Positive psychology
- Well-being
- Intrapersonal characteristics
- Positive and enabling systems
- Coping
- Resilient adaptation