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RESEARCH PROCESS AND ORIENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse against children can be considered one of the most atrocious acts that a human being can inflict upon another person. The only person that totally understands the real impact of this phenomenon is the victim him-/herself. The sexual abuse of children is not merely a social problem in South Africa; it is criminal behaviour. Child sexual abuse is not easy to prosecute (Venter, 2004). It is often difficult to determine whether this form of abuse has occurred, as sexual abuse often occurs in privacy, away from potential eyewitnesses (Chetty, 2006:24). More often than not, the perpetrator is also a member of the victim's family. Sexual abuse is also difficult to prove, because abusers of children rarely leave physical evidence of their crime. Instead of bruises or physical scars, child sexual abusers usually leave their victims wracked with varying degrees of psychological and emotional trauma (Carstens, 2002:108).

Intervention in sexual abuse cases has several important purposes (Berlinger, 2003:12):

- To assess risk to children and to establish a safe family environment.
- To identify sex offenders, to hold them accountable and/or to protect the community.
- To treat the psychological consequences of abuse experiences.
- To promote healthy development that will reduce risk for long-term negative outcomes.

After a suspicion of child sexual abuse comes to light, an investigation into the allegation is conducted to determine whether sexual abuse occurred or not. If abuse is substantiated, a criminal case is filed and an arrest made if the name and whereabouts of the perpetrator is known (Coetzee, 2004; Swart, 2003). The first step in the investigation is to conduct a comprehensive interview with the child in

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order to gather details of the alleged offence. A person can be arrested on a single statement of a child alleging sexual abuse (Lock, 2006).

Conducting interviews with child sexual abuse witnesses is one of the most demanding interview situations due to the sensitivity of the topic, the reticence of the victims and the potential conflict between evidentiary and therapeutic goals (Spencer & Flin, 1990:276). Children, like adults, can have problems remembering and giving accurate accounts of events (Bruck & Ceci, 2004:231; Loftus, 2006). The importance of a legally defensible interview procedure or protocol can therefore not be overemphasised.

It is not a new phenomenon for a child to be referred to a social worker for an assessment to determine whether abuse took place. This often results in the parent's decision to file a criminal case, or the South African Police Service (SAPS) deciding whether a *prima facie* case can be proved. A criminal case will be opened after the statement of the child has been taken (Majokweni, 2002:11; South African Law Commission, 2002:4). The researcher worked as a social worker in the South African Police Service where her main task was to investigate allegations of child sexual abuse. After disclosure, a thorough interviewing process must take place to enable the social worker to determine whether or not sexual abuse occurred. The researcher has investigated many allegations of possible child sexual abuse during the past four years in private practice. She advised parents, social workers and the SAPS on aspects in the children's statements which could contribute to a *prima facie* case.

Several international guidelines on the interviewing of children exist, e.g. *The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Investigative Protocol* (Orbach, Hershkowitz, Lamb, Sternberg, Esplin & Horowitz, 2000:733; Cronch, Viljoen & Hansen, 2006:202) and *Memorandum of Good Practice* (Home Office, 1992:2) and its updated version *Achieving Best Evidence* (Bull, 2003a:3). However, in the South African context no such protocol or guidelines exist.

Each child is unique and therefore effective interviews should be tailored to the child's unique needs and circumstances. Professionals from a range of disciplines

and with varying training and experience levels are confronted with child sexual abuse in their work. There is currently no existing interview protocol guiding the social worker in forensic interviewing (Carstens, 2004). According to the South African Law Commission (2002:3) as stated in their executive summary:

> …all public structures responsible for formal intervention in sexual offence cases, and non-government bodies which are mandated to perform this task, must deliver services which are prompt, sensitive, effective, dependable, fully co-ordinate and integrated and carefully designed to avoid secondary trauma.

It is thus imperative that the social work profession be equipped with guidelines to deliver a service regarding forensic interviewing that is researched, culturally sensitive, effective and legally defensible.

Based on reports from child protective agencies, there are approximately 150 000 to 200 000 new cases of child sexual abuse investigated in the United States of America each year (Wood, Orsak, Murphy & Cross, 1996:81). Research conducted by Homeyer (1999:1) in the United Stated of America concluded that one out of every four girls and one out of every seven boys in her study were sexually abused in some way or another. Further conclusions by Homeyer (1999:1) indicated that approximately 33% of incest victims were abused for the first time before the age of 6 years.

The researcher is of the opinion that these statistics are not unique to the United Stated of America and that the situation in South Africa is probably the same or even worse. According to research conducted by Van Wyk (2002:6) more girls than boys are sexually abused, and girls tend to report these crimes more frequently than boys. According to the South African Police Service there were 32 000 rape and attempted rape cases filed between January 2000 and June 2001 (Simmons, 2001:1).

It is the aim of this study to focus on children in the middle childhood. Middle childhood starts at the age of 6 up to 11 years (Berger, 2003:299). Middle childhood is a time of growth of physical and intellectual abilities, expansion of interest,

mastery of even wider and more diverse circles outside the home and the growth of sexual and personal identity (Turner & Helms, 1987:231; Lieberman, 1979:32).

During the researcher's M.A. studies, she has determined that the average age of children that are sexually abused in the Vaal Triangle (Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark and Meyerton Magistrate Districts) is between 9 and 11 years (Fouché, 2001:27). During the four years in the researcher's private practice, more children in the middle childhood have been referred for assessment than any other age group (Case register, 2003-2007).

It is commonly believed that a child will disclose sexual abuse at the first possible opportunity. However, studies of adult survivors of child sexual abuse indicate a great tendency on the part of child victims not to disclose the abuse (De Voe & Faller, 1999:217; Hershkowitz, Orbach, Lamb, Sternberg & Horowitz, 2006:753). Children may initially disclose abuse to family members, most often their mothers (Sauzier, 1989:458), or may disclose for the first time during formal investigation, which is carried out because of suspicion of abuse.

Denial has according to Sorenson and Snow (1991:3) and Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones and Gordon (2003:527) been identified as a frequent response when the child is feeling too threatened, frightened, or insecure to acknowledge the abuse (Malloy, Lyon, Jodi & Quas, 2007:163). This, among other reasons, lead to many children suffering in criminal court; trying to explain why they took up to six years to disclose. These children are very resistant to disclose and it takes an experienced interviewer with sound knowledge of the dynamics of child sexual abuse, child developmental issues, non-leading play-related communication techniques and a defensible interview protocol to lead the child to a disclosure that can be substantiated.

The accuracy of children's reports depends largely upon the ability of the interviewer to ask questions in a non-threatening manner, in a language that children can comprehend, and about concepts they can understand (Kuehnle, 1996:138). The purpose of a clinical or therapeutic interview is to provide treatment for the patient, whereas that of a forensic or investigative interview is to

establish the facts of the incident under investigation (Müller, 2001:8; Fouché, 2006:206). The purpose of the forensic interview is according to Müller (2001:8) "… to obtain a truthful account from the child in a manner which will best serve the interests of the child while at the same time being legally acceptable".

Parents, teachers and concerned community members suspecting child abuse, report children on a daily basis to the South African Police Service or a welfare organisations, who on their turn refer the children to social workers with specialised knowledge and training for an investigation (Fouché, 2006:207). State prosecutors, uncertain about proving a *prima facie* case, will also refer the child to a specialist for forensic interviewing. The social worker needs to be familiar with a proper and legally sound interview protocol to ensure that no contamination will take place during the investigation. Unfortunately a researched interview protocol for children in the middle childhood does not exist in South Africa. It is therefore the aim of this study to develop an interview protocol that will facilitate legally sound disclosure.

As this study aims at developing a forensic interview protocol, and not therapeutic intervention, the researcher did not make use of a specific theoretical approach.

1.2   PROBLEM FORMULATION

A new awareness of the rights of children was developed at the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to which South Africa was a signatory and which was ratified in 1995. Three of these rights for children can be highlighted (Human, 2000:156):

• The best interest of the child.
• Regard for a child's dignity.
• A child's right to voice an opinion in any situation and procedure in which the child is involved.

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The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), Section 28, acknowledges that a child's rights have to be protected. Section 28 (1)(d) states that every child has the right "to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation".

Crimes against children and women have elicited a strong response from South Africans and have led to a greater effort in the combating of these hideous crimes by the South African Police Service and the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) of 1996 (Inter-departmental strategy team, 1996). Improving the quality of service to children and women was the third of the five policing priorities for 1998 – 2000 (SAPS, 1998:21; SAPS, 1999a:16). The following statement was included in the *Policing Priorities and Objectives* (SAPS, 1998):

> One of the greatest threats to the future of this country is the continuing humiliation of women and children through acts of violence and abuse. Rape, domestic violence and child abuse require special attention because of their prevalence and negative effects and impact on the rights of women and children.

According to Scott (2001:9), South African statistics show that one in every three girls, and on in every five boys will be sexually abused before the age of 13 years. In conjunction with this, Scott (2001:9) indicated that in South Africa a child is sexually abused every eight minutes and a child is raped every 24 minutes. The increase in child sexual abuse is reflected in the number of cases that have been reported to the South African Police Service. Since its formation in 1986, the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offence Units (FCS) – previously known as the Child Protection Unit – have dealt with more than 140 000 cases of crimes against children (September & Loffell, 1998:4).

The increase in reporting of child sexual abuse can be attributed to different organisations which promote children's rights. Some of these organisations are the IMC (Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk), NCCAN (National Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect) and SASPCAN (South African Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) (September & Loffell, 1998:1-5).

In cases of physical abuse, the legal system will commonly rule on insufficient explanations of primary caregivers when compared to the medical reports (Venter, 2004). In the majority of child sexual abuse cases, the victim and the perpetrator are the only eyewitnesses. Typically, there is an absence of medical evidence, and admission by the perpetrator is unusual (Kuehnle, 1996:1). In many cases the child's statement becomes the critical factor for determining whether sexual abuse has occurred. When abused, victims of child sexual abuse must give a verbal statement of events regardless of the outcome of the medical examinations. It is the experience of the researcher that in many cases of child sexual abuse, no medical evidence can be found, and children must give a verbal statement of the abuse and indicate who the perpetrators are. The combination of often confusing behaviour exhibited by victims and the prejudices held by the general public, can lead to doubt that the child has been truthful. Prosecutors attempt to provide alternative explanations for unusual behaviour exhibited by alleged victims of child sexual abuse. Prosecutors may obtain expert testimony from social workers and psychologists who have experience in dealing with sexually abused children (Venter, 2004; Van Drunick, 2003). The testimony of a social worker may be crucial in prosecution, because of the fact that the victim may never be believed without explanatory testimony from a social science expert.

The Domestic Violence Act, 1998 (Act No. 116 of 1998) and the Prevention of Family Violence Act, 1993 (Act No. 133 of 1993) state that all incidents of child abuse must be reported to police officials, child commissioners or social workers. Due to the dynamics of child sexual abuse and the consequences when opening a criminal case, many parents report their children to a social worker or other professional for so-called "therapy" or "assessment" before a criminal case is filed. It is not necessary for a criminal case to be filed after each allegation (De Villiers, 2004), and it is the opinion of Coetzee (2003) that a social worker can investigate and must determine if he/she has sufficient information to refer the case to the South African Police Service. The social worker then conducts an interview to advise the parents on further handling of the matter. The researcher was one of 21 social workers, working in the South African Police Service, whose main task was the facilitation of disclosure, interviewing victims and evaluating the

allegations, which resulted in the writing of court reports and occasionally testifying in criminal courts.

The researcher developed play-related communication techniques over a period of four years and it resulted in M.A. studies where it has been applied by means of a translator to children of African cultures (Fouché, 2001:73). This M.A. study has already produced play-related communication techniques to facilitate initial disclosure of possible child sexual abuse.

Currently the researcher is in private practice where the majority of cases handled are child sexual abuse investigations. These play techniques as described above are utilised on a daily basis to facilitate a disclosure of possible child sexual abuse. A limitation regarding a comprehensive interview protocol exists (Van der Linde, 2004; Makhubu, 2004; Kirchner, 2003; Louw, 2004) and it is the purpose of this study to develop and evaluate an interview protocol.

Spencer and Flin (1990:276-277) state that the quality or reliability of a child's evidence depends largely on the interviewing skills of the interviewer. For the child to give a complete, relevant, unbiased and accurate account, the interviews must be conducted with considerable expertise and sensitivity.

Many professionals still believe that it is unlikely for suggestive questioning to produce false allegations of abuse (Carstens, 2004; Makhubu, 2003). It is imperative for any professional to follow a structured interview protocol to limit the likelihood that a true allegation will be mistakenly regarded as false because of poor questioning. If false information is suggested to a truly abused child, the child's story may start to sound incredible, or simply inconsistent. Child sexual abuse cases will have to be carefully scrutinised for signs of contamination by pre-trial influences. A candidate for such influence is the professional who first heard the child's disclosure. It is supposed by a Vereeniging magistrate (Willemse, 2001) that, due to suggestive questioning of children and the absence of a structured forensic interview protocol, the statement taken by the South African Police Service is not reliable if the child was interviewed by a professional who asked leading questions beforehand.

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It is the experience of the researcher that abused children often find it difficult to discuss abuse. Anything dealing with nakedness and genital touch is potentially embarrassing; even more so if the child recognised that the touching was wrong. Sexual abuse is often treated as a secret. Abusers frequently warn or threaten their victims not to tell (Sorenson & Snow, 1991:3), and even without warnings, the secrecy surrounding the abuse teaches the child not to tell. Sexual abusers are often violent towards the child and the child's mother, reinforcing a reluctance to disclose. Perpetrators also seduce their victims, making the child reluctant to tell for a different reason. If the child or his/her family has positive feelings towards the abuser – most likely if he is a family member or a friend of the family – he/she will be reluctant to get him into trouble and to hurt others who love him. Fear, loyalty and embarrassment are disincentives to disclosure (De Voe & Faller, 1999:226). Even if a child is motivated to disclose, cognitive immaturity may make it difficult to do so. Young children often provide more information when asked recognition questions than when simply asked to tell "what happened". Children have limited understanding of what details are important, and limited ability to estimate time or number.

The solution to children's difficulties with disclosing abuse may seem simple: The interviewer can ask very direct questions in order to elicit a report, and if the child refuses to disclose, apply pressure on the child. However, pressure has some obvious problems:

- One does not know before the interviews which children have been abused. Pressure on a non-abused child may lead to a false allegation.
- Pressure may taint truly abused children's reports and make them look incredible or inconsistent.
- The helping professional may experience pressure when interviewing children in an unstructured way, which involves leading and suggestive questioning. It can lead to the wrong handling of the situation (Sorenson & Snow, 1991:5; De Voe & Faller, 1999:217; Müller, 2001:14; Ongena & Dijkstra, 2007:145).

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Professionals from a range of disciplines and with varying levels and types of training confront child sexual abuse in their work. Due to disclosure being gradually folding (which may be accompanied by embarrassment, shame, or fear) interviewing strategies need to be flexible. Multiple interviews and a flexible protocol may be necessary to fully assess if anything has happened to a child (De Voe & Faller, 1999:225). In South Africa there is not an existing structured forensic interview protocol to guide professionals. Interview protocols used in England, *The Memorandum of Good Practice* (Home Office, 1992:3) and in the United States of America, *The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Investigative Protocol (*Orbach *et al.,* 2000:733; Cronch *et al.*, 2006:202; Hershkowitz *et al.,* 2006:766*)* are available, but have not been developed and evaluated in the South African context. These protocols also have a limitation with regard to the facilitating of the initial disclosure (Bull, 2003) and accommodating children from different age groups. It means that the people interviewing the child often experience a problem to obtain the initial disclosure before they can continue with the interviewing process.

It is therefore important for professionals involved with victims who have allegedly been sexually abused, to follow a structured forensic interview protocol that contains all the prerequisites to facilitate the disclosure in a non-leading way, as it can have serious consequences for a person who is accused. It can have serious implications if a professional follow a protocol that may be highly suggestive; it can result in an innocent person being arrested and spending time in jail. The influence of suggestive questioning can also cause the case to be lost (Willemse, 2001) due to defence lawyers arguing that the child was not interviewed properly and therefore the information in the statement is not a true reflection of what has happened.

The impact of poorly conducted forensic evaluations can be profound. Social workers' negligent use of concepts and techniques or irresponsible use of data can cause great harm. Whether a sexually abused child is left unprotected with an abusive parent, or whether a parent is falsely accused of abuse and the parent-child relationship is permanently destroyed – either cost is too high.

The explosion of cases involving allegations of sexual abuse exceeds the resources available to deal with the problem. Many professionals lack specific training in this area and the legal profession is often confronted with an array of self-identified experts who have emerged to fill the void. Unfortunately, these professionals often use inadequate evaluation techniques or fail to evaluate the child within the context of the family. If conclusions are drawn on the basis of inadequate or insufficient information, children may be harmed, parent-child relationships seriously damaged and cases contaminated. The best way to protect children is to conduct investigations in a responsible manner; in a way that may lead to the discovery of what really happened by means of a legally sound interview protocol.

The research problem is that there is an absence of a forensic interview protocol, which is legally defensible, which accommodates different developmental issues, is non-leading and includes play-related communication techniques to facilitate disclosure. According to the South African Law Commission (2002:3) as stated in their executive summary, "… it is recommended that all persons who work in the field of serving victims of sexual offences… should undergo an accredited training course and that standards or codes of good practice be developed in order to ensure quality service."

Due to the absence of an interview protocol, the increase in cases being reported to welfare organisations and the expectations of the legal system for legally sound practices of professionals, it is imperative to develop an interview protocol (Makhubu, 2004; Schoeman, 2004).

1.3   PURPOSE, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.3.1   The purpose of research

The purpose of this study was to develop an interview protocol, which can be implemented by social workers during their daily confrontation with child sexual abuse victims. In order to achieve this, the researcher needed to utilise

exploratory research regarding existing literature on middle childhood development, linguistic issues when working with children, child sexual abuse and current interview protocols utilised in other countries. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42) state: "The goal of exploratory research is to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person." Exploratory research aims to make a beginning study; gaining information about a topic and the implications thereof, where little is known (Babbie, 2001:10).

The research will have a descriptive nature, as the interview protocol was described. Descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focus on the "how" and "why" questions (Neumann, 2000:22).

1.3.2 Goal of the study

A goal can be defined as "an aim or desired result" (*The Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus and Wordpower Guide*, 2001:546). According to Fouché and De Vos (2005:106) a goal can be seen as "the end toward which effort or ambition is directed". A goal is thus what you ultimately want to achieve with a specific effort or ambition, while an objective denotes the more concrete, measurable and more speedily attainable conception of such end toward which effort or ambition is directed.

The goal of this study was:

> **To develop, implement and evaluate a legally defensible interview protocol for social workers to facilitate disclosure of child sexual abuse for children in the middle childhood years.**

1.3.3   Objectives of the study

An objective is the steps one has to take, one by one, realistically at grass roots level, within a certain period of time, in order to attain the ultimate goal (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:105). To set objectives, means to plan in an organised way.

The following objectives were set in order to achieve the goal of the study:

- To develop a theoretical framework regarding:
    - child development in the middle childhood;
    - dynamics in interviewing children;
    - a sound knowledge base regarding child sexual abuse;
    - the facilitation of disclosure of child sexual abuse; and
    - forensic interviewing of children.
- To develop a forensic interview protocol for social workers to facilitate a disclosure of child sexual abuse victims in the middle childhood.
- To develop a checklist, containing all the fundamentals included in the seven-phase forensic interview protocol, in order to evaluate interviews conducted in both the experimental and comparison groups.
- To implement the forensic interview protocol with ten girls in the middle childhood who were allegedly sexually abused and evaluate by means of the self-developed checklist.
- To evaluate an independent social worker's interviews with ten girls in the middle childhood who were allegedly sexually abused, by means of the self-developed checklist.
- To evaluate the protocol.
- To make recommendations for further utilisation of the protocol by social workers.

1.4   HYPOTHESIS FOR THE STUDY

A proposition is defined by Dubin in De Vos (2002a:35) as a truth statement about a theoretical model. A proposition needs to be tested against reality before it can be accepted as a valid theory or part of a valid theory. When a researcher empirically tests or evaluates such a proposition, it becomes a hypothesis. Mouton (1996:119) also states that when a researcher first formulates a statement, without knowing whether there is any empirical warrant, accepting it as reasonably valid or even true, it is called a hypothesis.

The hypothesis for this study was as follows:

If this interview protocol will be applied in cases of alleged sexual abuse against children of the middle childhood, it would facilitate the disclosure in a more legally acceptable and defensible manner.

1.5   RESEARCH APPROACH

For this study a quantitative research approach was followed.

A quantitative study can be defined as an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory consisting out of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalisations of the theory hold true (Fouché & Delport, 2002:79).

The quantitative approach is more highly formalised, as well as more explicitly controlled than the qualitative approach, with a range that is defined more exactly and relatively close to the physical sciences (Mouton & Marais, 1990:155-160; Vermeulen, 1998:13). Data collection methods for researchers working from a quantitative approach can be categorised into questionnaires, checklists, indexes and scales. A checklist consists of a list of items and a checkmark is made after each individual item (Delport, 2005:159).

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A self-developed checklist as measuring instrument was used. It measured fundamentals representing a legally defensible and acceptable interview protocol (Appendix 5).

1.6   TYPE OF RESEARCH

The type of research in this study is applied research. Applied research addresses immediate problems that are encountered by professionals in practice. The purpose of applied research is to resolve these problems. Applied research is thus aimed at the practice and entails the use of existing knowledge from research or personal experience to develop and enhance service, processes and methods (Neuman, 1997:22). This study intended to utilise existing knowledge to address the problems which social workers experience in the field of child sexual abuse regarding guidelines for effective forensic interviewing.

Intervention research is introduced as a new view of applied research in social work. Intervention research consists of the development of a programme, the application of the programme (intervention) and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention (De Vos, 2005:394). Developmental and evaluation research are combined. Schilling (1997:174) defines intervention research as follows: "Intervention is an action undertaken by a social worker or other helping agent, usually in consideration with a client or other affected party, to enhance or maintain the functioning and well-being of an individual, family, group, community or population".

1.7   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Mouton (2001:55) a research design is like a route planner. It is a set of guidelines and instructions on how to reach the goal that the researcher has set and how he/she intends to conduct the research. It can be seen as a detailed plan, blueprint or strategy by which data is collected and analysed, questions are answered or hypotheses are tested (Fouché, 2002:271). The researcher sees the

research design as the plan, structure and strategy of the study and the investigation. Babbie (2001:107) holds that the term "research design" basically has two connotations namely: alternative logical arrangements to be selected and the act of designing the study in its broadest sense.

The quasi-experimental design was applied. The comparison group post-test-only has a built-in capacity for comparison of the results of two groups, equivalent to the experimental and control groups in true experiments. In the comparison group post-test-only design, one group is the experimental group, which will be exposed to the independent variable X (newly developed interview protocol) (Leedy, 1985:211; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000:537). The other group, the comparison group, is not exposed to X (newly developed interview protocol). Sampling is purposive and not random (Fouché & De Vos, 2002:145). In this study, both the experimental group and the comparison group were evaluated by means of the checklist to determine whether the newly developed interview protocol (X) facilitates disclosure in a legally defensible manner by means of adhering to specific fundamentals (O_1).

- Experimental group: X (seven-phase forensic Interview protocol) and O_1 (fundamentals imperative for a legally defensible forensic interview were assessed by means of a self-developed checklist).
- Comparison group: O_1 (fundamentals imperative for a legally defensible forensic interview were assessed by means of a self-developed checklist).

The following was covered in the quantitative approach: The legally defensible interview protocol was developed to address immediate problems in the community. To evaluate the protocol, the researcher measured the intervention through a self-developed checklist after each interview to determine if the interview protocol followed by the researcher included the indicators that facilitates legally sound disclosure.

- A seven-phase forensic interview protocol was developed after a thorough literature study, consultations with experts and extensive experience of the researcher.

- A self-developed checklist, as measuring instrument measured all the fundamentals represented from a legally defensible interview protocol.

- The seven-phase forensic interview protocol was applied with the experimental group, which consisted of ten girls in the middle childhood referred to the researcher by local welfare organisations due to allegations of child sexual abuse, and evaluated by means of the checklist (See paragraph 1.12 for reasons why only 10 children in each group were selected).

- A comparison group, conducted by an independent social worker from the Teddy Bear clinic in Johannesburg who has the same experience as the researcher in interviewing victims of child sexual abuse and expert testimony, was exposed to a different interview protocol as used by the independent social worker and evaluated against the same checklist. The comparison group consisted of children of exactly the same ages and gender as the experimental group reported for possible allegations of child sexual abuse. The results were compared to measure the effectiveness of the developed protocol.

- All interviews were audio-recorded, and the self-developed checklist was completed in order to evaluate whether the social worker's interview was legally defensible

The independent variable (X) was not applied during interviews in the comparison group.

The 119 fundamentals included in the self-developed checklist were clustered into the following 23 groups (De Voe & Faller, 2002:6; Holliday, 2003:729; Lamb, Sternberg & Esplin, 2000:1586; Orbach, *et al., 2000:*733-752):

- Rapport-building and facilitation of initial disclosure.
- Ground rules.
- Distinguish between truth and lie before the abused-focused questioning starts.
- Conduct a morality check.
- Truth-and-lie check after abused-focused questioning.

- Use clear and age-appropriate language.

- Invite free narrative.

- Questioning format.

- Determine the number of times the alleged abuse happened.

- Use pictures to explore alleged abuse.

- Determine the identity of the perpetrator.

- Explore explicit accounts of sexual abuse.

- Determine context explanation.

- Emotional content.

- Explore the existence of internalisations.

- Observing and following up on nonverbal behaviour.

- Investigate multiple hypotheses.

- The use of anatomical dolls.

- Test for consistency.

- The interviewer's conduct.

- Practical arrangements.

- Global check.

- Closure of interview.

The following variables occurred:

- Knowledge of the researcher and the social worker from the comparison group.

- Disclosure process of each child in either the experimental or comparison group.

- The nature of the abuse that took place differed and had an influence on the type of details that were disclosed.

- The developmental level of children differed, which resulted in some children being more verbal than others.

- Personalities of different children. Introverted children found it more difficult to communicate.

- Personalities of interviewers differ.

- Threats posed to the children influenced the disclosure process.

- Influence from parents.

- Trauma experienced by the children.

Due to the utilisation of an intervention research study, the process of the knowledge development and the six phases of the design and development model according to Rothman and Thomas (1994:5) and De Vos (2002b:394-418) will be discussed. Although phase models, like intervention research, are performed in a stepwise sequence, it cannot be viewed as patterns of one phase following the other rigidly.

The model of Rothman and Thomas (1994:5) is a phase model and consists of six phases:

- Problem analysis and project planning.

- Information gathering and synthesis.

- Design of the protocol.

- Early development and pilot testing.

- Evaluation and advanced development.

- Dissemination.

1.7.1   Phase one: Problem analysis and project planning

Problem analysis and project planning constitute the first phase of intervention research and involve the identification and analysis of key problems in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders (De Vos, 2002b:397).

Hasting (1979:119) quotes the following definition of social problems: "Social problems are conditions of society that have negative effects on large numbers of people; a social problem is a condition that has been defined by significant groups as a deviation from some social standard, or breakdown of social organisation".

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1.7.1.1 Identifying and involving clients through various processes

Part of the researcher's task during six of her ten years in the South African Police Service was to conduct forensic interviews with victims of child sexual abuse. The researcher has been in private practice for four years and received referrals from welfare organisations in the Vaal Triangle, Gauteng, in order to conduct forensic interviews with possible victims of child sexual abuse.

The child respondents in this study were those referred by Nederduitse Gereformeerde (NG) Welfare Vereeniging and Child Welfare Vereeniging. A social worker, employed by the Teddy Bear Clinic has conducted interviews with ten respondents from the comparison group.

1.7.1.2 Gaining entry into and co-operation from all relevant stakeholders

It is the opinion of De Vos (2005:396) that successful intervention researchers have a collaborative relationship with representatives of the setting by involving them in identifying problems, planning the project and implementing selected interventions. Although the researcher knows many professionals who work at welfare organisations in the Vaal Triangle, it was accepted that entry into their "working environment" would not be so easy. Due to the researcher's working relationship with the social workers at these organisations, they gave their commitment to full co-operation and willingness to participate.

Access to children who are reported to social workers has been gained through written permission from the office heads of each organisation. The office heads did the selection and referral. The social worker who has been selected to conduct the interviews for the comparison group gave her full co-operation (Appendix 1 & 2).

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1.7.1.3 Identifying concerns of the population

The researcher had to try to understand what the most important issues for the population are. Professionals from a range of disciplines and with varying levels and types of training are confronted by child sexual abuse in their work. Professionals from the legal system are concerned about the subjectivity of professionals, which results in the use of leading questions.

Discussions with numerous legal professionals, social workers, psychologists and members of the South African Police Service regarding the absence of a legally defensible interview protocol took place (Venter, 2004; Willemse, 2001; Lock, 2004; Makhubu, 2004; Van der Linde, 2004; Kirchner, 2003; Oberholzer, 2003). The researcher has also been conducting workshops for the past five years, and during discussions and practical sessions it became evident that social workers are not aware of what is expected from them during a forensic interview. From the researcher's experience during forensic investigations, it is clear that an interview protocol that is legally defensible is imperative.

In order to identify concerns regarding this problem, initial interviews were conducted with key informants, including clients, managers of social welfare agencies, the caseworkers and the parents of the subjects.

1.7.1.4 Analysing concerns and problems identified

The nature of the difference between the ideal and the true stand of the problem had to be analysed. Questions were stated to determine who experiences the problem and why previous interventions to address the problem were not successful. The data had to be screened and analysed with the purpose of identifying emerging general themes and key focus areas for the broader knowledge development phase (De Vos, 2005:397).

The problem of the absence of a structured interview protocol exists not only in social work, but also in the legal system where the South African Police Service

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also experiences a need for a structured legally defensible interview protocol. Although structured interview protocols exist in other countries (refer to paragraph 1.2) they have not been tested and applied within the South African context.

1.7.1.5 *Analysing the broad areas of concern to guide the development of data collection instruments*

During this step the concerns of the population that is experiencing the problem was analysed. They were confronted with the following questions and scenarios:

- Should there be different interview protocols for children in different developmental levels?
- Is a legally defensible interview protocol the main focus in practice? Problems they anticipate regarding how to follow a time-consuming interview protocol.
- During data collection different perspectives were involved and the possibility of conflict existed and had to be defused.

1.7.1.6 *Setting goals and objectives*

The goal and objectives were formulated. Refer to paragraph 1.3.3.

1.7.2 Phase two: Information gathering and synthesis

When an intervention research project is planned, it is crucial to determine what other research has been done to address the problem (De Vos, 2002:405). This process involves the application of knowledge development research methods for gathering, processing and synthesising data. A knowledge development (KD) study was conducted to gain an understanding of the current state of forensic interviewing of allegedly sexually abused children. As a facet of intervention research, KD has its own objectives, methods and outcomes, and may be linked to

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or may be conducted as a separate research process with its own aims and methods. In this study, KD was linked to design and development. The findings of the KD process are intended to provide an understanding of the current situation of forensic interviewing and evaluation of information. Information gathered from the first phase was used to develop the themes, questions and patterns for the KD process (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:109).

The literature study is important for the clear formulation of the problem and for the execution of the planning and actual implementation (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:109). A thorough literature study on child development, dynamics in interviewing children, the phenomenon of child sexual abuse and existing interview practices was completed and guided the researcher during development of a preliminary intervention.

Information gathered from the literature study, consultation with experts and the researcher's experience over the past six years were utilised to draft the interview protocol.

1.7.2.1 *Utilising existing resources of information*

The literature study includes the study of selected empirical research and practice reports. A national and international computerised database is vital in locating information. It is imperative that intervention researchers must study literature outside their own field of study. Integration of different views out of the different disciplines in the human sciences is one of the aims of intervention research (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:109).

Due to the researcher's MA studies, various literatures on child sexual abuse were obtained. From the current literature study it is clear that numerous linguistic information exist concerning forensic interviewing and evaluation of information. None of this was tested in the South African context. Current literature on the subject of interviewing children and prerequisites regarding such a protocol were explored. The researcher explored various internationally interview protocols

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namely: *The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Investigative Protocol (*Orbach *et al.,* 2000:733; Cronch, *et al.,* 2006:202) and *Memorandum of Good Practice* (Home Office, 1992:2) and its updated version *Achieving Best Evidence* (Bull, 2003a:3), the five phases of forensic interviewing suggested by Jones (1992:30), the *Step-Wise interview protocol* developed by Yuille (Poole & Lamb, 1998:95) and the extended forensic evaluation model developed by Carnes (2005).

Discussions and observations of social workers during discussions in workshops and training sessions were also taken into consideration during the development of the seven-phase forensic interview protocol.

1.7.2.2   *Study of natural examples*

According to De Vos (2002b:406) an useful source of information is observing how community members faced with the problem have attempted to address it. Consultations with experts in the field of interviewing sexually abused children were conducted to obtain their opinion regarding existing practices. Experts from the legal field were also interviewed to get their opinions and recommendations regarding the proposed study. Experts consulted with were:

- Mrs. Engela van der Linde, social worker in private practice currently specialising in forensic assessment of sexually abused children;

- Mrs. Elsabe Louw, senior social worker, formerly from Child Welfare Vereeniging.

- Mrs. Sarie Schoeman, head social worker at Child Welfare Vereeniging.

- Mrs. Petra Oberholzer, supervisor at the Department of Social development, Sebokeng (probation department);

- Mrs. Karien Alberts, social worker at the Department of Social Services, Sebokeng.

- Mrs. Lindi Makhubu, social worker in private practice, conducting forensic assessment of sexually abused children and also head of a place of safety;

- Mr. Ettienne Venter, regional court prosecutor at the Sebokeng sexual offences court;

- Mrs. Retha Willems, regional court magistrate at Vereeniging Court;

- Inspectors Lindi Lock, Johan Swart and Engela Coetzee, investigative officers at the former Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit; and

- Mrs. Louise Kirchner, educational psychologist in private practice specialising with the forensic assessment of sexually abused children.

- Advocate Renate Carstens, admitted advocate of the High Court, Johannesburg and former social worker specialising in the investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse.

- Mrs. Ronel Coetzee, senior control prosecutor at Vereeniging Magistrate's court.

Current interview protocols utilised in other countries have been explored to determine whether parts of it could be included in the suggested interview protocol.

1.7.3 Phase three: Design of the protocol and self-developed checklist

According to Thomas (1989:584) and De Vos (2002:400) the problem analysis, information gathering and synthesis phases will precede the design of this protocol. The findings and the outcomes of the knowledge development phase provided the contextual basis for the design and development of the protocol. The design phase may be conceptualised as problem-solving for seeking effective tools to deal with the problem. The goal of this phase was to design the first draft of the protocol.

The proposed forensic interview protocol consisted of seven definite phases as discussed in chapter five. The self-developed checklist included 119 fundamental categorised into 23 clusters (Refer to paragraph 1.7 and chapter five).   The Research Proposal and Ethics Committee formally approved the study (Appendix 4).

Although the first step of phase one of the seven-phase forensic interview protocol included the facilitation of the initial disclosure, the development of this is not part of this research. The researcher has already covered this during her M.A. studies (Fouché, 2001:76).

In South Africa suspicions of child sexual abuse are often referred to welfare organisations for forensic assessment interviews by a concerned community member, parent or the South African Police Service. Due to lack of skills, knowledge and expertise many police officials struggle to obtain legally defensible information from children (Swart, 2003; Coetzee, 2003). An appointment would be scheduled with the parent or caregiver after which an assessment process would start.

The newly developed interview protocol was applied (intervention phase) from the moment the child started to disclose alleged sexual abuse (e.g. when the child indicated that someone gave her a bad touch and/or secret touch). If disclosure started in the first session, the interview protocol was followed. If disclosure has not occurred by the third session, a fourth session took place, which was a more direct session. A maximum of four sessions took place to accommodate shy, scared or threatened children.

Each session started with a semi-structured questionnaire (Fouché, 2001:57) and the child was invited to draw a picture for the researcher's wall. Each session, irrespective of whether disclosure took place or not, was ended with an empowerment technique in order to send the child home on a positive note. Each session was approximately 60 minutes, depending on the child's unique process and attention span.

The independent social worker received referrals from organisations in Johannesburg and conducted her interviews according to her own interview protocol at the Teddy Bear Clinic in Johannesburg.

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1.7.4 Phase four: Early development and pilot testing

Thomas (1989:584-587) defines development as the process by which an innovative intervention is implemented and used on a trial basis, developmentally tested for its adequacy, and refined and redesigned as necessary. This step involved the process through which the intervention could be implemented and tested on an *ad hoc* basis.

1.7.4.1 *Developing a prototype or preliminary intervention*

Early development and pilot testing constitute the fourth phase of intervention research. During this phase, a preliminary design of the intervention (protocol) and measuring instrument (checklist) was finalised for the main investigation. The self-developed checklist was compiled after a thorough literature study, consultations with experts and researcher's own experience in this field. The checklist was finalised with the assistance and guidance from two staticians of the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria (Refer to chapter six).

1.7.4.2 *Conducting a pilot test of protocol and checklist*

The drafted interview protocol was applied as a pilot test when interviewing three girls reported to the researcher's private practice during November 2005 and January 2006. After exposure to the protocol (X) a self-developed checklist was completed to measure whether legally defensible fundamentals were adhere to. Initially the checklist consisted of 20 clusters, but after the pilot study, the researcher sub-divided three of the clusters into two for statistical purposes, resulting in 23 clusters.

1.7.4.3 *Applying design criteria*

The following questions were considered:

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- Is the checklist effective?

- Is the checklist repeatable, i.e. will it be able to repeatedly measure the same item under the exact conditions?

- Does the checklist have linearity i.e. will it still work properly and hold true results over time?

- Is the checklist easy to use and understand?

- Is it practical?

- Is it adaptable to various contexts, e.g. different cultures?

The results of the pilot test were considered and the checklist and intervention were prepared for the main investigation. (Refer to chapter six).

1.7.5   Phase five: Evaluation and advanced development

This phase involved selecting an experimental design, collecting and analysing data, replicating the intervention under field conditions, and refining the intervention. Feedback and recommendations were evaluated, adapted and refined. The newly developed protocol was implemented and presented to the respondents.   The results are discussed in chapter six.

1.7.5.1   Collecting and analysing data

Quantitative data was collected:

- **Checklists**

  A checklist is a type of questionnaire consisting of a series of items (Delport, 2002:184). A researcher can develop a checklist if a suitable one is not available. For the purpose of this study the researcher developed a checklist, consisting of fundamentals representing a legally defensible interview protocol. A blank checklist was completed after each disclosure interview with the ten children in the experimental group. Blank checklists

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were also completed after the disclosure interviews with ten children from the comparison group.

- **Experimental group**

  The checklist was completed by the researcher after the disclosure interview with each child. The researcher conducted interviews with the experimental group. The children were referred by the organisations as mentioned in paragraph 1.7.1.1. The criteria for referral are described in paragraph 1.9.4.1.

- **Comparison group**

  The interviews with respondents in the comparison group were conducted by a social worker from the Teddy Bear Clinic in Johannesburg. This social worker has extensive experience in forensic assessment interviews in the field of child sexual abuse and did undergo specialised training. She represents the majority of social workers in South Africa, confronted with child sexual abuse on a daily basis and who conduct interviews as they deem fit. The researcher's aim was to compare whether the newly proposed protocol is indeed a new intervention in the field of social work in South Africa. Through the self-developed checklist as measuring instrument the researcher aimed to evaluate whether the social worker in the comparison group adhered to fundamentals representing a legally defensible interview protocol.

After the researcher has completed the checklist and checked for consistency, the data were submitted to the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria to do the quantitative data analysis. Data analysis in the quantitative paradigm entails that the analyst breaks down data into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions (De Vos, Fouché & Venter, 2002:223). The data analysis and interpretation were compared and explained through graphics and statistics in chapter six. The aim of the data analysis was to determine whether the newly developed checklist was indeed a new intervention to the field of social work.

1.7.5.2   Refining the intervention

The data from the checklist would be utilised to refine the protocol after the study and the results would be distributed to social workers in practice in South Africa.

1.7.6   Phase six: Dissemination

This step does not form part of this research.

1.8   DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION, DELINEATION OF THE SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

The research population or universe refers to all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested (Strydom, 1994:67).

1.8.1   Universum

Mouton (1996:134) defines universum as: "… the complete set of elements and their characteristics about which a conclusion is to be drawn on the basis of a sample." The universum refers thus to all potential respondents that can be part of the research.   The universum of this research is: **All children in South Africa who are alleged to have been sexually abused.**

1.8.2   Population

A population is the totality of persons, events, organisation of units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned (Strydom & Venter, 2002:199; Strydom, 2005:192-194). McBurney (2001:248) explains that a research population can be defined as the sampling frame.   The research population of this study consists of all the children in the middle childhood years

who have been reported to Child Welfare Vereeniging and NG Welsyn Vereeniging due to allegations of child sexual abuse during the period February 2006 and April 2007. sit iets in van klein populasie

1.8.3 Delineation of the sample

A sample is explained by Huysamen (1993:38) and Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:86) as a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons, which together comprise the subject of the study. Strydom and Delport (2002:334) state: "In interviewing where the emphasis is placed on collecting individual, detailed and in-depth information, the qualitative rather than the quantitative elements of the information are important." The *New Dictionary for Social Work* (1995:55) defines a sample as the number of units which are representative of the total number of units in the population concerned. A sample is the element of the population in which the researcher is interested for inclusion in the study.

1.8.4 Sampling method

The researcher made use of non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling refers to any procedure in which elements have unequal chances of being included (Vermeulen, 1998:54). The researcher will make use of purposive sampling.

According to Strydom and Venter (2002:207) purposive sampling is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements which contain the most characteristic, representative of typical attributes of the population. Purposive sampling involves selecting specific units of interest (Vermeulen, 1998:55). This type of sampling is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher. For the purpose of this research it is imperative that the respondents will be selected purposely to ensure that the intervention will measure what it intends to evaluate.

Twenty children have been purposely selected by social workers from the mentioned organisations. These children were selected according to the criteria as explained in paragraph 1.9.4.1.

1.8.4.1 Participants for the experimental group

The head of office from Child Welfare Vereeniging and NG Welsyn Vereeniging were given the following criteria for referring children:

- Female.
- 7-12 years old.
- Afrikaans and/or English speaking.
- Reported to offices for possible sexual abuse.
- Time of reporting between February 2006 and April 2007
- Children without any developmental difficulties like ADHD or speech problems
- Children who have not been assessed before

1.8.4.2 Participants for the comparison group

The participants involved in the comparison group were those reported to the independent social worker's office and also to the organisations mentioned above, and interviewed by the social worker as part of her daily task. The social worker that has been selected, works with sexual abuse victims on a daily basis at the Teddy Bear Clinic in Johannesburg. The children who were part of this research have been reported to the Teddy Bear Clinic, Johannesburg primarily due to the need for an investigative interview into alleged sexual abuse. The social worker selected children according to the following criteria:

- Female.
- 7-12 years old.

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- Afrikaans and/or English speaking.

- Reported to offices for possible sexual abuse.

- Time of reporting between July 2006 and July 2007.

- Children without any developmental difficulties like ADHD or speech problems

- Children who have not been assessed before

1.9   ETHICAL ISSUES

Despite the existence of ethical guidelines and committees, which may support the researcher in her decision-making, the final responsibility for ethical conduct rests with the researcher. Ethical guidelines also serve as standards and as the basis on which each researcher ought to evaluate his/her own conduct (Strydom, 2002:63). According to Babbie (2001:470): "Anyone involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreements about what is proper and improper in scientific research."

Both the researcher and social worker from the comparison group are registered under the Social Work Act, 1978 (Act No. 110 of 1978) with the South African Council for Social Service Professions and with SAASWIP, the organisation for social workers in private practice, and adheres to the ethical rules set by these two bodies.

For the purpose of this research the following ethical issues were identified (Strydom, 2002:62-75; Babbie, 2001:470-471; Huysamen, 1993:189-191):

1.9.1   The right to experimenter responsibility

Every participant could expect that the researcher would behave responsibly. The researcher had to be sensitive to human dignity and his/her intentions in respect of the research had to be above question (Vermeulen, 1998:17).   It is the

researcher's responsibility to protect respondents against any harm during the research process by informing them about the potential harm and by identifying vulnerable respondents. Participants could be harmed in either a physical and/or emotional manner. The researcher gave the participants the assurance that they would not be harmed in any way by their participation in the research.

The respondents who were involved in this study were those who were primarily referred after a suspicion of child sexual abuse came to light. An investigative interview was imperative in order to make a case decision. Normal working procedures were followed, namely: It is the child's right to know the truth about what will happen after the interviews and his or her right to be present when feedback is given to the caregiver.

1.9.2   Informed consent

All adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the research procedure to be followed during the investigation and the credentials of the researcher were rendered to the subjects, so that the subjects would wilfully participate in the investigation and make a reasoned decision about their participation (Bailey, 1986:409). Signed consent from the parents was obtained (Appendix 3). The child subjects were also informed about the research. They were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time (Appendix 3).

It was anticipated that it could be traumatic for the respondents to talk about the alleged sexual abuse. The manner in which the researcher and the social worker conducted their interviews was sensitive, understanding and non-judgemental. No force or intimidation to give detailed information was applied if the child did not want to talk about it. They were sensitive regarding their facial expressions, tone of voice and understanding of the child's unique process. Signed consent in order to make audio-recordings was also obtained.

1.9.3 The right to privacy / anonymity / confidentiality

Over and above the rights to privacy and anonymity, the right of the confidentiality of personal information should also be honoured (Vermeulen, 1998:17). It was imperative that the researcher be reminded of the importance of safeguarding the privacy and identity of respondents and that information was handled confidentially at all times (Strydom, 2002:67; Bailey, 1986:413). Every participant was represented by a symbol during the study, and the researcher ensured that it would not be possible to identify the subjects. Audio-recording was handled confidentially and, with the written consent of respondents, given to examiners for evaluation of the research.

1.9.4 Actions and competence of researcher

Researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation. The researcher worked for ten years in the South African Police Service where she investigated more than 360 allegations of child sexual abuse. She is currently in private practice where she extensively investigates allegations of child sexual abuse. The researcher also trains professionals all over South Africa in the assessment of sexually abused children and forensic interviewing of victims of child sexual abuse. The researcher has acted as expert witness in criminal child sexual abuse cases in the Vereeniging and Sebokeng regional courts. She is up to date with the recent literature on the topic of interviewing children and is regarded by her colleagues as an expert in forensic assessments. The researcher is familiar with research methodology. The researcher receives supervision on a two-monthly basis and completed a master's degree on the topic of assessment of sexually abused children.

Due to the fact that the researcher has been conducting interviews with sexually abused children for the past ten years and the researcher's experience regarding training of social workers all over South Africa over a period of two years, it can be

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assumed that the researcher has the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to conduct this research.

1.9.5   The right to equivalence

Despite individual differences in status and abilities, all people are equivalent. In research involving people, both the experimental group and the control group should be dealt with equally (Vermeulen, 1998:17). Although the researcher did not have control over the process that the other social worker followed in her protocol, the researcher ensured that the participants were treated with dignity and that factors as described in paragraph 1.9.7 were covered. Both the researcher and the social worker are registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions and follow the ethical codes prescribed by the Council.

1.9.6   Release and publication of the findings

Subjects would be informed on the findings of this study in an objective and responsible manner after completion of the research report. The findings of the study would be introduced to social workers in writing. Ethical responsibility rests upon the researcher to present a study that fulfils all ethical requirements.

1.9.7   Recovery of respondents

It is the researcher's procedure in her practice to not let the child client who is interviewed on allegations of sexual abuse leave the office depressed, sad and uninformed. The researcher informs the child on issues which will be discussed with the parent or caregiver.   The researcher also conducts empowerment exercises after each interview to equip the child client with skills which he/she may make use of at home e.g. a relaxation exercise, breathing exercises and aggression relieving.

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The children from both the experimental and comparison group were referred for therapeutic intervention to either a private practitioner or the local hospital's social worker, for services free of charge as discussed and arranged. Those children who had to give evidence in court would undergo court preparation.

The researcher ensured that the independent social worker followed the same procedure as described above.

1.10   DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.10.1 Child sexual abuse

The following definition is used by Trepper and Barret (1989:XVI) to describe child sexual abuse and incest:

Any sexual contact, defined as:

- touching, with the intention to arouse the child's sexually, or to provide sexual arousal for the offending adult (relative).
- kissing, in a prolonged manner, or by one whose purpose is similar to touching.
- fondling of genitals or other parts of the body in a sexual manner.
- overt sexual contact, such as oral-genital contact, manual stimulation of genitals, or intercourse.

According to Faller (1991:87) child sexual abuse is defined as:

> … physical contact between persons at different stages of development (usually an adult and a child) for the purpose of the sexual gratification of the mature person. While the encounter may have other functions aside from sexual, as an exercise of power of one person over another or an interaction which is humiliating to both parties involved, it is first of all a sexual act.

For the purpose of this research child sexual abuse can be defined as any intent to stimulate a child sexually, or when an adult uses a child to stimulate and satisfy

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his/her sexual needs. This behaviour does not necessarily mean physical contact, but can be done through showing the child pornographic material or through "dirty" talk.

1.10.2 Forensic interviewing

According to Müller (2001:8) the purpose of a forensic interview is to establish the facts of the incident under investigation.

The goal of a forensic interview is to obtain a statement from a child, in a developmentally sensitive, unbiased and truth-seeking manner, which will support accurate and fair decision-making in the criminal justice and child welfare systems (Practice Notes, 2002). Although information obtained from this interview may be useful for making treatment decisions, this interview is not part of a treatment process.

An interview is defined according to the *South African Oxford School Dictionary* (1998:224) as "… a formal meeting with someone to ask him or her questions or to obtain information."

Forensic interviews are testing hypotheses rather than confirming hypotheses, and forensic interviews should be child-centred rather than adult-centred (Fouché, 2006:206).

A forensic interview for the purpose of this study, according to the researcher, is a structured process with specific goals and objectives that is utilised when an allegation of child sexual abuse is investigated.

1.10.3 Disclosure

The *Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus and Wordpower Guide* (2001:348) defines "disclose" as follows: "make (secret or new information) known."

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Some scholars see disclosure as a distinct event in which a child makes a straightforward report of sexual abuse (De Voe & Faller, 1999:218). Disclosure of child sexual abuse is conceptualised by Sorenson and Snow (1991:3) as a process of incremental revelations that may include denial or recantation.

For the purpose of this research a disclosure is defined as a process of revealing a verbal statement about sexual abuse that has taken place. The disclosure can occur over a period, where factors such as the child's personality, threats posed upon the child and the rapport between the child and the interviewer are taken into consideration.

1.10.4 Interview protocol

According to Kuehnle (1996:110) interview protocols attempt to improve the validity of professional judgements by incorporating relevant social science knowledge.

An interview protocol facilitates internal consistency (Vieth, 1999:1), uniformity and covers the entire process of involvement with a client, from the first instruction received to the closure of the case (Carstens, 2002:81).

The researcher sees an interview protocol as structures, guidelines and checkpoints which interviewers use to orientate them throughout the interviewing process.

1.11   PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED DURING THE STUDY

The following problems were experienced during the study:

- Finding a social worker with the same years of experience as the researcher who was prepared to conduct and audio-record ten interviews with alleged victims of child sexual abuse who disclosed the abuse.

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- A lot of time and effort went into ensuring that the children from both the experimental and comparison groups were of the same age, gender and language group.

- Designing a workable checklist which is repeatable, has linearity and can be analysed statistically.

- Developing the different categories in the checklist in order to accommodate the dynamics in the interviewing process.

- Finding a qualified professional to independently code 50% of all the interviews.

- Initially the researcher planned to use video-recordings or to observe behind the two-way mirror, but due to logistical constraints it could not be done and it was decided to use audio-recordings.

- Parents of some of the selected children indicated that they did not want to participate in the research and therefore new respondents had to be selected, prolonging the duration of the research.

- Several children selected for the research, did not disclose and the researcher and the social worker from the comparison group had to select other respondents.

1.12   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations were identified:

- For quantitative data analysis, the relatively small number (20) of respondents who participated in this research, proved to be a limitation. As a sole researcher, the research was subject to time and logistical constraints.

- All children were referred for a comprehensive forensic investigation process. This process consists of three to four assessment sessions to facilitate the initial disclosure by means of play related communication techniques, corroborating interviews with all relevant role players, a comprehensive evaluation process and the writing of a detailed court report. Therefore the investigative interviewing process could take up to 4-6 weeks to complete with

one child. It has happened in a number of instances that the whole process of the investigative process has been done with a child only to find that the child did not disclose, or recanted, or the parents failed to bring the child for the final interview.

- In some instances the parents refused to give permission for the research.

- Although a great deal more cases of alleged sexual abuse were reported in the Vaal Triangle, referrals were only received from two welfare agencies.

- The social worker who conducted interviews with the comparison group were also hard pressed to find children that meet the criteria. One of the constraints was that referrals were made to different social workers thus limiting the actually number of children referred to the selected social worker.

- The number of 10 children per group was thus realistic taking into consideration abovementioned factors.

- Due to the small number of children involved in this study is can thus be concluded that the results should not be generalised, but rather be viewed as suggestive of nature. Despite the small number of participants involved in this study, this research nevertheless reflects some interesting trends and is a step forward opening up the field for further research.

- As it is the practice in South Africa, the researcher did the coding herself. However, a sample of 50% of the interviews was independently coded by another qualified professional to measure agreement and address reliability.

- The fact that the interviews were not video-recorded, resulted in four of the fundamentals on the self-developed checklist not being evaluated, namely "follow-up on non-verbal behaviour'; the SOLER skills, "nodding", and "avoiding of suggestive actions".

- The study excluded children from other races, boys, children with attention deficiency problems or developmental difficulties. This could be addressed during follow-up research.

- The protocol does not include guidelines to address children who recant allegations. This should be covered in follow-up research.

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1.13 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research study will be divided into the following chapters:

CHAPTER 1: Research process and orientation of the research study

CHAPTER 2: Sexual abuse and the impact on the child in the middle childhood

CHAPTER 3: Developmental factors when working with middle childhood children in the field of child sexual abuse

CHAPTER 4: Facilitation of disclosure and interviewing victims of child sexual abuse

CHAPTER 5: A forensic interview protocol for social workers

CHAPTER 6: The empirical process

CHAPTER 7: Summarised conclusions and recommendations