Tshwane street children's experiences of learning life skills through the medium of sport

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the mini-dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MA (Counselling Psychology) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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SUMMARY

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South African street children are marginalised with limited access to appropriate resources for the purposes of learning and self development (Hatting, Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 1998). They are often vulnerable to abuse and neglect with restricted opportunities to overcome the adverse conditions they reside in (Ensign, 2006). This research study considers Tshwane street children's experiences of learning life skills through the medium of sport. It followed a qualitative, Narrative research inquiry, whereby six street children residing in a Tshwane-based shelter, were interviewed on their experience(s) of a sports programme run by the Masters Counselling Psychology students of Pretoria University in 2006. Findings of this study indicate that despite these children's life circumstances, fuelled by the dominant societal narrative of irreparability and hopelessness, the message of experiencing happiness and hope is sent through their narratives. The alternative narrative of Fridays emerged. Fridays being the day we played sport with them. Further narratives of liking, helpfulness, change, learning, and niceness developed from the interviews, which they constructed through storylines of learning, respect, talking, and self improvement through play. Additionally, reference was made to the transference of these life skills to the context of the shelter. Limitations, applicability and the relevance of these findings are discussed.

Key Terms

Street children; life skills; sport; experiential learning.

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CHAPTER 1:
AT THE HARBOUR

This mini-dissertation provides an account of a research study conducted on Tshwane street children's experiences of learning life skills through the medium of sport. The research study employed a qualitative, Narrative research inquiry, whereby six street children residing in a Tshwane-based shelter, were interviewed on their experience(s) of a sports programme run by the Masters Counselling Psychology students of Pretoria University during 2006.

The metaphor of a harbour is used to illustrate the two narratives existing within the South African context regarding street children, namely, the harbour representing a place of safety for ships where cargo is loaded and disembarked, versus the sea, a place of danger, where ships are at risk due to the tumultuous conditions they encounter. The South African judicial and educational system have aimed to harbour children through the South African constitution as well as other child protection acts, however, children, more specifically street children, are often marginalised and exposed to the extreme dangers of the street environment. The statistical, societal, and health context emphasise the risks of them being stranded at sea, as opposed to the protective harbour where most children are sheltered from the treacherous elements.

Our concern as Masters Counselling Psychology students lay with these children out at sea, and so our project or 'intervention' constituted taking sport to them with the aim of teaching them life skills through this medium; whilst the research study focused on the reflection of their experience(s) of playing sport, and the impact of their experience(s) on the dominant societal narrative of 'pathologysing' street children.

Our journey thus began at the harbour where the narratives surrounding street children were contextualised before we paddled out to sea. Therefore, this chapter refers to these

influential contexts, and includes the research question, goals of this study, and overview of the succeeding chapters of this mini-dissertation.

CONTEXT(S)

This experiential study was set amongst and shaped by diverse contexts as well as various cultural narratives as briefly mentioned above; the consecutive discussion thus provides further detail in this regard.

Legal Context

South Africa is a multiparty democracy in which constitutional power is shared between the president, namely, Thabo Mbeki of the African National Congress (ANC), and parliament. The first free and fair national election took place in 1994 (South African Government Information, 2006), ending the apartheid regime of legalised racial discrimination evident since 1948 (Spain, 1984).

According to the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution (1996), which forms the cornerstone of democracy in our country by affirming values of human dignity, equality and freedom; children have the right to basic education, nutrition, shelter, basic health care and social services. More specifically, section (28) of the South African Constitution (1996) stipulates that every child has the right to the following:

1. Parental, family or appropriate care when removed from the family environment.
2. Basic nutrition, shelter, health care, and social services.
3. To be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation.
4. Not to be detained with persons over the age of 18.
5. To have a legal practitioner (at the state's expense) assigned to the child in civil proceedings if substantial injustice would otherwise result.
6. A child's best interests are paramount in any matter concerning the child.

As evident from relevant provisions within the South African Constitution (1996), the democratic government has introduced policies and measures in attempt to ensure the wellbeing of South African children, by providing a platform where children can bask in the care and safety of the harbour. However, despite these measures, research studies and reports reveal that children remain exposed, and reside within hostile environments in dire need of social and psychological services (Lockhat & Van Niekerk, 2000). So although the country's political and legal system aim to protect the rights of each child, the government, non governmental organisations, and local media have reported infringements on the human rights of South African children. This has been in the form of forced child labour related to child prostitution as well as pervasive violence against children (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2006). Street children within the South African context are vulnerable to exploitation, failing to obtain the services and care that they should justly receive. These children are commonly ill, malnourished, neglected or abused, and detained as juvenile offenders in prisons with adults due to the overcrowding of South African correctional services and holding cells. These adverse conditions make such children susceptible to sexual and other forms of abuse resulting in physical and emotional ramifications. Street children are particularly at risk due to age and socio-economic status, often stigmatised and deprived of their human rights (Ensign, 2006).

These dynamics elicit the breach between policy and reality and thus call for researchers, youth workers and policymakers to collaboratively develop and implement social policy, prevention, and intervention strategies informed by relevant research findings (Kidd & Davidson, 2006), so that street children are removed from the precarious sea and protected within the safety of the harbour where children can receive basic education, nutrition, shelter, and other services as stipulated in the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution (1996).

Statistical Context

To look a bit closer at the sea…there are approximately 10 000 street children in South Africa, ranging from three to 18 years of age, with the ratio of boys to girls being 75:25 (Tshwane Alliance for Street Children Fact Sheet, October 2005). The majority lie between the ages of 13 and 16 which is younger than the mean age of street children in First World countries (Richter, 1991). The preponderance of male South African street children is due to the reduced rate of girls being abandoned, as well as the fact that girls tend to find alternate accommodation and fall into prostitution (Swart, 1988). Additionally, most street children in South Africa are black and considered to be victims of the prior apartheid policy and urbanisation, culminating in the breakdown of extended family affiliations (Ross, 1991; Swart, 1988).

A profile on South African street children indicated that one third of children return home after a brief period on the street, another third remain on the streets for a period of six to 18 months, whilst the remaining third live on the streets for over two years. These statistics exceed the one month period of First World countries (Le Roux, 1993). This extended duration reduces the possibility of rehabilitation as the children become immersed in the street life culture (Gebers, 1990). Furthermore, this duration hinders the attainment of life skills which are typically learnt through familial and scholastic systems.

The statistical context through its numeric narrative highlights the ineffectiveness of the harbour in containing children, and ensuring that all children are protected and provided with the necessary critical foundations.

Societal Context

The general public along with law enforcers often treat street children with hostility and scorn (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). In an article by Dashuber and Dulaart (1999) on homelessness and poverty in South Africa, these authors state how black boys learn to survive on the street to escape the poverty and abuse experienced at home. This intricate

structure entails, "…carving out a place for yourself in a hierarchy that dictates who wears the jersey on cold nights. Even if you are freezing, the worst enemy is not being cold but being alone." This dismal picture highlights the challenges these children are subjected to on a daily basis, with limited support from society, hence them left out at sea, almost forgotten by those on safe land who experience the luxury of safety and care.

Educational Context

Education is an additional concern; globally approximately 130 million children of primary school age are not attending school, with more than 600 million children living in poverty (UNICEF, 2000). Act (108) of the Bill of Rights contained in the South African Constitution (1996) states that everyone has the right to basic education (including adult basic education), as well as the right to further education, which the state needs to make progressively accessible. Furthermore, the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) stipulates that education is compulsory for learners between the ages of seven and 15, or until reaching grade nine, depending on whichever occurs first. It is thus the role of the Department of Education to ensure that education and training policies of the constitution are actualised within a national framework.

A study by Hatting, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh (1998), highlights the insufficient educational opportunities of Hillbrow street children in South Africa, these findings are echoed in a more recent study in Alexandria, Egypt, where the lack of educational opportunities of street children is also emphasised (Salem & Abd el-Latif, 2002). A study in Nigeria reinforces this by indicating that the majority of street children have not completed their primary schooling (Olley, 2006). These figures strengthen the image of street children slipping through the rocks of the harbour and being dragged by the current further and further away from the educational institution, the one place where these children can learn the necessary skills to swim back to shore. Thus exposed to the intensified medical risks of being out at sea without the knowledge and skills to find safety.

However, despite this literature, the Statistics South Africa General Household Survey (2003) indicated that 97% of children between the ages of seven and 15 were enrolled in school, with those not enrolled tending to be children with special needs. One is thus left uncertain of these results as it is a common occurrence to observe street children begging at robots during school times?

Health Context

Street children suffer from increased health problems and malnutrition (Salem & Abd el-Latif, 2002). Research on the health status of street children revealed that the majority of street children have stunted growth and are underweight with a high prevalence of disease symptoms (Greksa, Rie, Islam, Maki & Omori, 2007). These findings were reiterated in another African study, where respiratory and skin diseases were the primary causes of morbidity within this population (Ayaya & Esamai, 2001).

Street children commonly self medicate with substances readily available, such as shoe glue and paint thinner which causes kidney failure, irreversible brain damage, and fatality (Ayaya & Esamai, 2001). A large number of street children use drugs and sex as a form of coping and survival (Sherman, Plitt, Ul Hassan, Cheng & Zafar, 2005; Olley, 2006). Street children are thus at risk of substance abuse, mental illness, and blood-transmitted diseases (Nyamathi, Christiani, Windokun, Jones, Strehlow & Shoptaw, 2005).

A study on sexual and illicit drug use on Brazilian street children indicated a high proportion of risky sexual behaviour and drug exposure, confirming HIV and STD susceptibility within this population, with these behaviours increasing with the duration on the street (De Carvelho, Neiva-Silva, Ramos, Evans, Koller, Piccinini & Page-Shafer, 2006). A pilot survey of 100 street children in Ghana revealed that 54% of street children perceived themselves to be at risk of contracting the HI virus (Wutoh, Kumoji, Xue, Campusano, Wutoh & Ofosu, 2006).

However, fear of HIV infection is overpowered by daily survival concerns such as food, money, and clothing, and thus many street children engage in sex for money, goods, or protection, often raped by older boys (Swart-Kruger & Richter, 1997; Olley, 2006). They tend to express negativity towards condom use, whilst engaging in the unprotected selling of penetrative sex to both men and women, as this is perceived as the best method of making money (Richter & Swart-Kruger, 1995).

There is also an interplay between substances and sex, as focus groups conducted around South Africa, indicated that street children are more likely to have risky sex and are more vulnerable to rape when intoxicated (Richter& Swart-Kruger, 1995).

With the HIV/AIDS pandemic South Africa is facing, the number of children living on the streets is likely to be amplified due to the increase in the number of children orphaned by this virus. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for more than 80% of orphans due to HIV/AIDS (Shetty & Powell, 2003). The South African government has struggled to contain the spread and impact of this virus, with a contributing factor being the lack of relevant research appropriate to the cultural milieu of South Africa (Freeman, 2004).

Without adequate caregivers, these children are susceptible to malnutrition, insufficient education, migration, homelessness, and abuse (Shetty & Powell, 2003). A study conducted by the Human Science Research Council of South Africa (2004) indicated that 5.4% of children between the ages of two and 18 are HIV positive, with three percent of children between the ages of 12 and 18 heading households, and 25% of children between 15 and 18 years of age having lost at least one parent. This health problem is further exacerbated by the lack of scope for anti-retroviral therapy for children, as the Child Care Act (Act 74 of 1983) Section 34 (7) stipulates that only an individual over 14 years of age is competent to consent to medical treatment. This leaves the question: What about HIV positive children under the age of 14 who do not have a legal guardian to consent on their behalf? These factors indicate society's disregard for these children, and with the above mentioned statistics, negative psychological sequelae is inevitable.

Research Context

A glance at sea, through discussions between the registrar of Pretoria University and representatives of the City of Tshwane and the Tshwane Alliance for Street Children, revealed that the streets of Tshwane are inundated with street children who are resistant to the rigidity of available shelters within the area. Although the shelters can accommodate these children, the children struggle to adjust to the more structured and disciplined environment these shelters provide. Therefore, a psychoeducational project tailored to provide the necessary life skills to facilitate adjustment to the shelter context, would empower these street children and increase the likelihood of them remaining off the streets and in the shelters. This project aimed to overcome the injustices of their suppressive contexts and utilised the medium of sport to develop and enhance life skills in children. Therefore, this project intended to take sport out to sea, and in so doing, these children may learn the necessary skills to swim back to the harbouring shelter where further support and care can be actualised, contradicting the dominant narrative of neglect within the South African context.

Sport Context

Sport is a significant aspect of society (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2004), covering areas such as group cohesion (Morris & Summers, 1995), stress management (Anshel, 2001), as well as cultural and racial diversity (Corey, Corey & Callanan, 1998). Furthermore, sport has provided the platform for equality and good relations in South Africa (Paterson, 1991). Due to these aspects as well as the fact that sport assists a child in life skills development and increasing youth identity (SASC, 2004; Carrington, 1998), this medium provided a viable method to use when enhancing life skills in South African street children, as the sport context carries the potential to make those who experience neglect (such as street children), the opportunity to establish alternative narratives about themselves and their capabilities.

It was with the understanding of this cultural predicament and a proposed experiential project to remedy some of these debilitating contextual issues that the research question and research goals surfaced.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How did Tshwane street children experience learning life skills through the medium of sport?

GOALS

General Goal

The generic goal of this research study was to attain an understanding of how Tshwane street children experienced learning life skills through the medium of sport, and how this experiential knowledge could be used to their advantage.

Specific Goals

The specific goals of the research project included:

1. To compile a literature review.
2. To describe the research inquiry.
3. To conduct the research project.
4. To write the mini-dissertation.

OVERVIEW

This introductory chapter stated the research question as well as stipulated the general and more specific goals of the research project. Additionally, the setting in which this

research project was situated, was addressed through recognition of the dominant cultural narratives as well as diverse contexts relevant to the research project at hand.

The subsequent chapter will provide a synopsis of the research topic whilst considering prior studies conducted within the research area. The chapter thereafter will describe the research inquiry followed during the research project and address the following matters: research context(s), research participants, research position, research material, ethical considerations, as well as the relevance of the research project. Chapter four will provide an account of the research findings which emanated from the research project; whilst conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the research project will be delineated in the final chapter of this mini-dissertation.

SUMMARY

Street children swim in a sea riddled with dangers. These dangers come in different forms, from out rightly hazardous, as evident from the literature on the daily activities of street life, to the more oppressive dominant societal narrative, which to some extent reinforces the distance between them and the safety of the harbour, where most children reside. It was not only through academic literature that I came to understand the contextual underpinnings of this research study, but these narratives were co-constructed through personal observations of my world whilst on this research journey. This involved reflections on the way we as a society look at the street child begging at the street intersection, to conversations with friends about substance use and crime amongst street children in South Africa.

My conclusions being that street children exist in and are surrounded by criticism and the dominant narrative of hopelessness, this makes it increasing difficult for them to change their circumstances and proliferate as individuals. This challenge is further heightened by the lack of judicial, educational and societal checks to harbour their growth and development, and inadequate measures to ensure that they receive the protection and care pledged in the constitution and child protection acts of this country.

These observations thus constituted the start of this journey, in that I began to contextualise the children I would play with, and later interview. My next step was to look at other ways people have worked with street children, and so before we jumped into our boats at paddled out to meet them; a weather report was attained and scrutinised for possible storms we may have encountered on our journey.

CHAPTER 2:
THE WEATHER REPORT

Before embarking on our journey to sea, a closer observation of the swells, currents, and anticipated storms was considered. This forecast provided some indication of the circumstances and conditions these street children have endured, as well as some insight into possible outcomes of our journey.

As stated in the preceding chapter, my research question was: How did Tshwane street children experience learning life skills through the medium of sport? The objective of this chapter is to offer an overview of prior studies (currents, swells and storms) in areas related to or associated with the research study under discussion, and attempt to answer the research question through this literature review. Therefore relevant concepts, the 'norm' at harbour, the absence and consequences of the absence of the 'norm' at sea, as well as the relationship between sport, experiential learning and life skills are included in the discussion to follow. This chapter also embodies reference to the role of sport in South Africa and concludes with the necessity of research of this nature.

CONCEPTS

The weather report begins with an account of the concepts addressed in this research study. These entities are explained in descriptive terms. It starts with our participants progressing from the general description of a child, to the more specific description of a street child as conceptualised in this research study, and ends with the two concepts of sport and life skills.

According to the Child Care Act (74) of 1983, a child is any person under the age of 18 years. Therefore, the participants of this research study (who were all within the adolescent age bracket) are referred to as children in this document.

A street child is a child who resides or spends most of his/her time on the street, detached or connected with his/her family, or is in institutional care as a result of homelessness (Gauteng Street Children Shelters Act (16), 1998).

A shelter is utilised for the reception, protection, and temporary care of more than six street children, inclusive of a drop-in centre on the premises (Gauteng Street Children Shelters Act (16), 1998). It thus provides institutional care for homeless children who reside in these facilities on a voluntary basis and may vacate these dwellings at any time.

To specify the details of the living arrangements of a street child as conceptualised in this research study; the definitions supplied in an African study conducted by Ayaya and Esamai (2001) on street children in Kenya, are stipulated below:

1. Type 1: Children who spent most of their time on the street, but went home in the evenings.
2. Type 2: Children who lived on the streets with no familial links and no home to go to.
3. Type 3: Abandoned children residing in a shelter.
4. Type 4: Normal primary school attending children.

Based on these descriptions, the definition most fitting for the participants of this research study was the type 3 definition i.e. abandoned children residing in a shelter, as these children had spent some time on the street, but later found residence in a Tshwane-based shelter.

To take a closer look at the other concepts of this research study, namely, life skills and sport, these two entities are explained in accordance with each one's attributes as well as how they relate with one another.

Sport refers to a range of activities, processes, and social relationships, with physical, psychological, and social outcomes (Council of Europe, 2001). Application of the principles learnt through sport (such as problem solving, working within a team or system, and handling failure) transfer to behaviours (such as effective communication)

and attitudes or cognition (such as effective decision making), and are labelled life skills. These life skills equip individuals with the tools to succeed within their environments and the necessary skills differ based on the individual's context (Danish, Nellen & Owens, 1996, in van Raalte & Brewer, 1996). Therefore, the life skills this project aimed to develop within these children would be specific to their context(s) and need to survive or proliferate within these context(s).

LIFE AT THE HARBOUR

Due to the age of the participants of this research study, namely, between the ages of 14 and 17, the developmental milestones that most children within 'normal' environments work through during this age frame are discussed. This discussion includes reference to the following developmental theorists: Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky.

So what should happen for this age group at the harbour…Piaget (1971) viewed the age of 11 onwards as a time of cognitive development, where a child begins to generate hypotheses and think inductively in formal operational mental processes i.e. develop abstract reasoning. Although there are deviations between children in terms of their cognitive development, the four developmental stages as described in Piaget's theory are listed below:

1. Sensorimotor stage (birth – 2yrs): children experience the world through movement and senses and learn object permanence.
2. Preoperational stage (2 – 7 yrs): acquisition of motor skills.
3. Concrete operational stage (7 – 11yrs): children begin to think logically about concrete events.
4. Formal operational stage (11 onwards): development of abstract reasoning.

When a child is learning and working through these stages, knowledge is constructed internally, but may be discarded, modified, or reconstructed based on its utility in the child's world (Piaget, 1971).

Erikson (1968) on the other hand, states that identity formation during adolescence is the primary issue for this age group, and is influenced by social, cultural, and historical context. This sense of identity consists of three components: identity concerning one's abilities, social identity, and personal values and ideals. Identity formation requires cognitive development in order to experiment with various possibilities, so that logical reasoning concerning future identities is possible.

Vygotsky (1962) belied that culture affects human cognition and is thus socio-cultural. His writings emphasise the part history, cultural, and social factors play in cognition, with language being the most symbolic tool that society provides individuals. Higher mental functions are developed through social interactions with significant adults, such as parents and teachers. The knowledge gained through these interactions forms the shared knowledge of a culture, referred to as cultural mediation. Interactions with other children through play contribute to the establishment of rules of behaviour. According to Paterson (1991) perceptual mental actions develop during adolescence and ethnic attitude is less emphasised. This implies that one can imagine alternatives to their current state of reality.

The dominant narrative of these theories illustrates how context shapes a child's self identity, and how this in turn influences the child's capacity to develop and access alternate ways of being. This narrative is constructed through storylines of cognitive development, environment, and culture; enforcing the notion that a child should and needs to grow in an environment that facilitates the processing of 'normal' developmental milestones. So what happens to children where there is absence of this 'normal' environment?

LIFE AT SEA

When children are not harboured in 'normal' environments where 'normal' development can occur, as in the case of the street children in this research study, the adverse and often destructive environment they are exposed to and develop within, can have a negative shaping influence on them as people.

The lack of an adequate relationship is the greatest emotional health issue for street children (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994), which has detrimental effects on the development of emotional security and trust according to Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1980). Traumatic childhood experiences have a profound impact on different areas of functioning as early patterns of attachment effect the quality of information processing; in that secure infants learn to trust both what they feel and how they understand the world, and are thus more confident to deal with difficult situations, and express and communicate their emotions, and seek help as adults when struggling to find solutions. A street child is often ostracised and left with limited support options, fuelling the likelihood of emotional disturbance, as the importance of early childhood attachment and bonding within a caring home environment acts as a buffer and provides adaptive factors to emotional stability (Straker, Moosa, Becker & Nkwale, 1992; WHO, 1998). This coupled with poverty and poor education may enhance the probability of crime and violent activities from these children (Freeman, 2004).

According to Cole & Putman (1992), traumatised children have difficulty with emotional self-regulation and poor impulse control, resulting in aggression towards the self and others, distrust and suspiciousness, problems with intimacy, and social isolation. Research indicates that developmental trauma, in the form of abuse or neglect, leads to unfocused responses to stress (Cicchetti & Toth, 1995), attention and dissociative problems (Teicher, Andersen, Polcari, Anderson, Navalta & Kim, 2003), and an increase in criminal activity (Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan & Mericle, 2002).

The dominant narrative thus far concerning street children informs us that these children tend to experience inadequate attachments, poor social and cognitive development, resulting in problematic behaviours. So at this point one is left with the question: Why are there so many children at sea where such negative implications for themselves and their development subsist?

TURNING TO THE SEA

The forecast now takes on a rather etiological stance and builds on the above segment by considering the storms street children are exposed to within their home environments, which culminate in them seeking alternate residence at sea.

Precipitating factors to leaving home according to a US study in North Carolina include gender, age, region, urbanicity, and family structure (Sanchez, Waller & Greene, 2006). Street children tend to be victims of family breakdown, and sexual and physical abuse (Salem & Abd el-Latif, 2002), with family violence, abuse, parental alcoholism, poverty, and personal reasons being motivating factors for leaving home according to South African street children (Le Roux, 1996).

The majority of street children are male (Le Roux, 1996; Aderinto, 2000; Salem & Abd el-Latif, 2002; Johnson et al., 2006) and tend to have poorer sexual health attitudes and behaviour than their female counterparts (Johnson, Rew & Sternglanz, 2006). Young women in Australia are more likely to report sexual abuse, pregnancy, or emotional issues, whilst young men tend to include substance abuse and problems with the law as reasons for being homeless (Rosenthal, Mallett & Myers, 2006).

A multi-method comparative study in Nigeria, Africa, on street children versus non-street children indicated that street children are predominately male, from large families with low-levels of education. Their parents tend to be unskilled workers, with deprived education levels, experiencing marital disruption. The boys leave their familial environments due to poverty and parental/familial reasons, seeking income-yielding activities on the street as a substitute living arrangement (Aderinto, 2000).

According to Le Roux (1996) there are pulling and pushing factors within the South African context which result in a child leaving home. Pulling factors include the desire for independence and improved living conditions, whilst pushing factors include urbanisation, population pressure, need for increased income, family size, and child

abandonment or neglect. These factors impact on whether a child seeks mental health support prior to running away from home, as minority racial groups in the US who have experienced family abuse, are less likely to see a mental health professional than abused white youth (Berdahl, Hoyt & Whitbeck, 2005). According to another US based study, drug related service utilisation is lowest amongst youth who are most entrenched in the street life culture, as medical service utilisation is primarily the highest amongst those attempting to leave the streets (Carlson, Sugano, Millstein & Auerswald, 2006). Longer duration on the street is associated with greater distance from institutional or healthcare facilities, as evident from a South African study on street children in Tshwane (Le Roux, 1996). Therefore, these children become and more and more immersed in this lifestyle drawing further away from what most children their age experience. These studies emphasise the narrative of neglect and somewhat address the question of why they turn to the sea. Let's now consider the effects of this environment on these children.

EFFECTS AT SEA

Being open to the elements at sea has some weathering effects on these children. It has not been definitively established whether psychological disorders are the cause or consequence of homelessness, however, a quasi-qualitative study on 35 street children between 14 and 25 years of age, revealed that levels of the clinical disorder increased once homeless, with trauma being a common experience proceeding homelessness (Martijn & Sharpe, 2006).

A study by Cockburn (1991) indicated that 80% of street children have confronted abuse on a physical, sexual, or emotional level. Furthermore, street children who do not have a history of sexual abuse, have significantly greater sexual health resources, less social support, and exhibit less sex-risk behaviours than their non-abused counterparts (Johnson, et al., 2006).

A South American based study using semi-structured interviews and a sentence completion task with 69 street children, revealed that the street life shapes and restricts

how these children perceive their future, as pessimistic responses were provided in the sentence completion where the sentence began with "For me, the future…" (Raffaelli & Koller, 2005).

Most street children (70%) living in Ukrainian shelters exhibited behavioural and emotional difficulties, with 74% of 97 children scoring for depression on the Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (Kerfoot, Koshyl, Roganov, Mikhailichenko, Gorbova & Pottage, 2007).

Although values such as parental love, education, religion, and education were expressed by a sample of 216 adolescents in Kenya, Africa, dysfunctional coping skills such as drugs and sex working tend to be utilised by this group, with researchers concluding that social changes in developing countries have heightened the uncertainty experienced by youth (Balmer, Gikundi, Billingsley, Kihuho, Kimani, Wang'ondu & Njoroge, 1997). An additional dysfunctional coping mechanism to deal with anger and frustration is cutting (Sherman et al., 2005).

When considering the effects of HIV/AIDS, the ability of a child to cope with the death or terminal illness of a parent rests on various factors, namely, personality characteristics, family and social environment. Alternate community support systems, such as schools, have also provided much support (Wild, 2001). However, the large numbers of orphans in South Africa are not able to access the necessary support for emotional development, with possible emotional disturbance within this group of individuals (Children's Institute of the University of Cape Town, 2002).

The life of a street child lacks structure. Psychological attributes within these children include low self esteem, apathy, and fatalism (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). However, internal locus of control tended to lessen pathological symptoms in street children (Richter, 1988), reiterating this as a life skill a street child should attain whilst at the harbour.

Adolescents in general, are faced with social, cognitive, and physical challenges, and statistics reveal that one in every four adolescents engage in high-risk behaviour (Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius & Presbrey, 2004).

With the above mentioned effects of living at sea, street children are placed at an added risk during this developmental stage of their life and are left without the necessary life skills (most children gain at the harbour whilst growing up) to swim out of this debilitating environment.

After all these currents of adversity, the forecast finally predicts some sunshine, some way to restore the damage of these unsympathetic waves and storms, and so we consider a medium, in the form of sport, for these children to receive the gains promised by the institutions of the harbour. There are many ways to repair the impact and consequences of living at sea where the 'norm' is not withheld, such as shelter, attending therapy, and teaching life skills. One medium to address this situation where life skills can be taught to these children is through sport.

HARBOURING SPORT

The first psychological data on the correlation between exercise and mental health materialised in the 1926 issue of *Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation,* and indicated that exercise relieved depression by promoting nervous system stimulation and glandular secretion. Literature then trickled in the decades thereafter with the 1980's initiating great interest in the therapeutic value of exercise within the realm of mental health. Between 1983 and 1990, 42 studies of this nature were sited on PsycINFO alone, which assessed the association between exercise and anxiety, mood and other psychological symptoms. The 1990's then saw reviews into the connection between exercise and self concept where psychometric measures were used to evaluate self esteem constructs. Additionally, data was collected examining exercise as a buffer to stress reactivity (Rejeski & Thompson, in Seraganian, 1993). This progression thus indicated a move from a more pathological focus to a self enhancement modality.

These studies mentioned were conducted on adults, but Gruber (1986) revealed a positive correlation between physical activity and changes in children's self esteem and/or related personality dimensions through controlled experimental studies.

Physical activity contributes to the integrated development of body and mind, whilst improving self confidence, social and cognitive development, as well as promoting academic achievement (Talbot, 2001). More specifically, sport affords youth the opportunity to communicate interpersonally, assume different social roles, learn social skills such as tolerance for others, and work within a team context, through processes such as cooperation and cohesion. These skills thus transfer to personality development assisting one's self esteem and reducing depression and anxiety levels. Although these assertions indicate the benefits of sport involvement, they are not without criticism for their lack of scientific evidence (Bailey, 2004).

To observe circumstances where these principles have been implemented, the forecast glances at the scholastic context abroad. Schools provide the ideal context for physical activity participation (Stone, McKenzie, Welk & Booth, 1998). Based on the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations, schools in the US should include the following aspects in their school curriculum:

1. Establish policies that promote physical activity.
2. Ensure that the physical activity takes place in a safe and enjoyable environment.
3. Implement quality daily physical activity instruction.
4. Implement health education to equip students with behavioural skills.
5. Provide sufficient personnel training in physical activity instruction.
6. Provide extra-curricular approaches relevant to the needs and interests of all students (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000).

Unfortunately, no information was provided as to whether these recommendations have been implemented as suggested.

The benefits and outcomes of physical education and sport in English schools have shown contributions in children's movement skills and physical competencies, social

skills, self esteem, attitude towards school, as well as some academic and cognitive development. These areas thus transform into the following domains: physical, lifestyle, affective, social, and cognitive enhancements. These domains are mediated by the nature of the interaction between teacher and child, with contexts promoting positive experience and engaging all participants; increasing the potential benefits of their participation (Bailey, 2006). This reiterates the concern that sport participation tends to emphasise excellence, as there seems to be a connection between level of success and level of enjoyment (Henry, 1999).

The academic performance of a child may be enhanced through physical activity and sport as the blood flow to the brain is increased, improving mood and mental alertness. Studies in sport reveal a positive relationship between intellectual functioning and regular physical activity in children (Bailey, 2006). In prior studies where the academic curriculum time was reduced to incorporate physical education, students' academic results were maintained or improved, with less behavioural problems and less absenteeism (Sallis, McKenzie, Kolody, Lewis, Marshall & Rosengard, 1999; Shephard, 1997).

Self esteem is influenced by the perception of competence or adequacy hence the association between physical activity and self esteem, which ripples into a more positive attitude towards school for some pupils when physical activity and education are included in the school curriculum (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Fejgin, 1994). Generally, physical activity and sport can contribute to the process of inclusion by joining diverse individuals with a variety of social and economic backgrounds, with a common interest by offering a sense of belonging, and developing social networks and group cohesion (Bailey, 2004).

Although it has been well documented that regular activity positively impacts on the psychological wellbeing of children and young adults, the underlying mechanism for these impacts remains unclear (Dishman, 1995). Most literature indicates an improvement in children's self esteem (Fox, 2000), whilst some literature identifies the relationship between regular activity and reduced stress, anxiety and depression

(Hassmen, Koivula & Uutela, 2000). There is however, evidence that prosocial behaviour can worsen with physical activity and sport participation (Beller & Stoll, 1995), but most data confirms that appropriately structured and presented activities positively contribute to the development of prosocial behaviour and reduce antisocial criminal tendencies in high-risk youth (Bailey, 2006; Larson, 2000). Although they are some negative outcomes correlated with sport participation, the positive outcomes supersede these negative ramifications by promoting personal and social development in youth (Larson, 2000).

The most productive contexts for the development of social skills and values are mediated by suitable trainers where students can model the behaviour of their facilitators (Bailey, 2006). This is consistent with Social Learning theory which suggests that one learns by observing and imitating others (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 1994). International literature suggests that sport-based interventions promoting life skills attainment, should provide a safe and positive environment where excellence is not the focus of the venture. This thus debases the endorsement of the competitive narrative, which is a common narrative associated with sport participation within the sport context.

The physical outcomes of sport include improved quality of life and reduced risk of diseases such as diabetes, blood pressure, and obesity in children (Bailey, 2006). With the decline in physical activity amongst youth in the US, there has been an increase in obesity and other weight related chronic diseases (Hedley, Ogden, Johnson, Caroll, Curtin & Flegal, 2004). Studies indicate that inactivity in childhood follows into adulthood (Raitakari, Porkka, Taimela, Rasanen & Viikari, 1994). This then culminates in a lifestyle associated with ill-health (Bailey, 2006). Therefore, sport and exercise exceed the psychological benefits which are the focus of this research study, but include physical reimbursements by engaging in such activity, which reflect additional long-term positive effects.

SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the prior apartheid era, sport was used by government to sway national and international attitudes towards South Africa (Riordan & Kruger, 1999), and exclude many potential achievers from participating in sport (Hendricks, 2004; Martin, 1998). However, since the democratic elections of 1994, an affirmative action policy including a quota system has been implemented in sport (Rainsford, 2002; SASC, 2004), indicative of the shaping influence of the political context on the sport context (Hendricks, 2004). It was established in the early 1990's that sport provided the platform for equality and good relations in South Africa (Paterson, 1991). Therefore, sport has the potential to create a sense of national unity (SARFU, 2004). This was evident in events such the Rugby World Cup of 1995 and 2007, as well as winning the Soccer World Cup bid.

Sport is an important aspect of society (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2004), and covers areas such as group cohesion (Morris & Summers, 1995), stress management (Anshel, 2001), as well as cultural and racial diversity (Corey, Corey & Callanan, 1998). There are many stakeholders involved in a sporting event, from the players, to coaches, administration personnel, media, to the spectators. Therefore, soccer for example, is not only a South African sport, but a social event. Due to the above mentioned factors as well as the fact that sport assists a child in life skills development and youth identity (SASC, 2004; Carrington, 1998), the South African Sports Commission (SASC) is committed to athlete support, talent identification, and sport development in South Africa (SASC, 2004).

Sport in South Africa has thus moved from a tool of segregation promoting the narrative of difference, to one of inclusion and unity. It has the potential to make those who experience neglect, such as street children, to experience an alternative narrative of equality on the sport field, and hopefully this narrative can thicken through other experiences of inclusion in their lives. This makes this medium a viable method to use when working with street children.

EXPERIENCING THE HARBOUR

"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p 38). Experiential learning is related to the Constructivist Learning theory and based on the philosophy of engaging learners with direct experience through various experiential methodologies, and reflecting on this experience so as to enhance knowledge, develop skills and establish values.

This contrasts to rote learning in the typical education setting where the teacher is the purveyor of knowledge, whilst learners are passive recipients. In the experiential learning setting, teachers become experience providers and learners become knowledge gatherers and creators, it thus empowers learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Kraft & Sakof, 1988). Experiential learning assists the following areas: improving self concept, trust building, goal setting, and problem solving (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988).

Adventure education is one type of experiential education which extends beyond experiential learning by adding the element of perceived risk, and promotes team and group skills in adults and children, through ropes courses and other adventure related activities (Rohnke, 1989). Evaluations of adventure-based programmes were conducted in schools in the US. Quasi-experimental designs were used and results illustrated a significant increase in self concept scale scores ($p < .001$) (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988). This finding is supported by another adventure-based intervention with adolescents, where benefits included improved self control, independence, self efficacy, and assertiveness. These positive changes increased in the two years following the intervention (Cason & Gillis, 1994), indicating possible gains of the intervention including assimilation with the group's norms, identifying with the group membership, and acquiring new qualities such as initiative (Larson, 2000).

Experiential learning challenges the traditional preconceptions of how knowledge and skills should be transferred to children and adolescents, therefore the narrative of teaching steps back and the narrative of learning through experience takes centre stage.

This approach seems to be congruent with how the street children in this research study have survived thus far i.e. learnt through experience, as opposed to gaining knowledge from the educational system situated at the harbour which they cannot access. This implies that an experiential stance was likely to be well-received by the participants of this project.

SPORT HARBOURS LIFE SKILLS

Sport can be interpreted as a metaphor for other life situations (Danish et al., 1993, in van Raalte & Brewer, 1996), and participation in sport has a positive effect on psychosocial development (Danish et al., 1990, in van Raalte & Brewer, 1996). A study using soccer and taekwando as a medium for social skills enhancement with physically disabled children (aged 10 to19), revealed statistically significant results on the social subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for Children ($t(44) = 2.42$, $p = .02$). The children qualitatively benefited from sport in terms of social and assertiveness skills (Moffet, Dummer & Fraser, 2006).

Successful sport-based programmes afford participants with experiences favourable to personal development such as interpersonal connections, working within a group, gaining self worth, helping others, a positive outlook, and problem-solving abilities for learning and adaptability (Carnegie Council, 1995). A vast amount of literature on the value of sport for adolescents has centred on its influence on identity development and competency amongst adolescents (Danish, 1983; Danish, Kleiber & Hall, 1987; Danish et al., 1990; Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991, in van Raalte & Brewer, 1996). An investigation into the impact of combined life skills and community service intervention on adolescents' prosocial values ($n = 100$), revealed that the programme had a significantly positive impact on adolescents' empathic concern and social responsibility (Brunelle, Danish & Forneris, 2007).

A multi method study of 176 adolescent women in the US explored the association between organised sport participation during high school years and sexual

behaviour/health. Quantitative results of this research indicated that adolescent women's involvement in organised sport was favourably correlated with sexual-risk behaviour, sexual/reproductive health-seeking behaviour, and sexual/reproductive health. Qualitative results, in the form of content analysis, confirmed that functional body orientation and self-empowerment/efficacy were mediators between sport participation and sexual behaviour/health in this sample (Lehman, 2004).

There has been evidence in prior literature that sport participation and substance use is associated (Rainey, McKeown, Sargent & Valois, 1996; Gutgesell & Canterbury, 1999). A randomised experimental study on alcohol prevention within the context of a sport programme with 465 eighth graders of diverse ethic background and inclusive of both genders, from three schools in the US, found that alcohol consumption was reduced, whilst exercise frequency was increased. Along with self report questionnaires, a "dipstick" saliva pipeline procedure was utilised, so as to enhance the validity of the self reported substance use measure. Data collection in this form was conducted at baseline and three months post intervention. The data collected was analysed via chi-square tests and ANOVA procedures. Not only were there decreases on alcohol use in all the intervention groups as physical activity increased, but negative expectancy beliefs, self control, and perceived peer prevalence also improved over time. This intervention was initiated due to the high incidence of alcohol-related deaths in the 10 to 24 age bracket, as well as the insufficient physical activity resulting in other illnesses associated with a lack of physical activity, such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer (Werch, Moore, DiClemente, Owen, Jobli & Bledsoe, 2003). Another study on 329 youths used a physical fitness programme over a 12-week period. Post intervention data of this study indicated significant reductions in the percentage of substance use in this sample, therefore, lowering the risk of substance use patterns when fitness levels were increased (Collingwood, Sunderlin, Reynolds & Kohl, 2000). This suggests the pairing of these two entities in projects addressing youth, and with the likelihood of substance use and abuse in street children (Ayaya & Esamai, 2001; Sherman et al., 2006; Olley, 2006), inventions of this nature would be a worthwhile venture to consider.

There are advantages to implementing an intervention programme using sport to enhance life skill development in urban youth, as adolescents exposed to this intervention develop initiative and feelings of self-efficacy, as was evident in an empirical, qualitative study of 252 adolescents between 13 and 17 years of age in the US, where the majority of the adolescents were from minority and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The focus of this intervention, namely, "The play it smart programme", was life skills enhancement as opposed to remediation of pathology or criminal behaviour. The participants were encouraged to identify transferable skills from sport to other life domains, such as academic preparation, developing productive relationships, goal setting, and self confidence in the workplace. This intervention followed a collaborative approach involving parents, academic-coaches (trained in counselling psychology), school personnel, and community leaders. It was tailored to the needs of each site according to available resources, potential support and challenges. Group norms and cohesion were established via team building activities such as ropes courses. Parents were included as partners in the programme to reinforce the goals and values of the programme at home, whilst the academic-coaches assisted in identifying the values, needs and interests into transferable life skills. Feedback from school personnel was used to strategise additional individual support in school as well as the local community. The success of this positive goal-oriented programme in terms of academic performance and community service activities, has resulted in the programme being extended to 88 high schools across the US. Key factors to its success include a sound relationship between participants and academic-coaches based on trust and mutual respect, as well as the creation of a positive group experience for the participants, reinforced in the form of caps and shirts to promote identification with the programme. The objective is to create an environment where the participant feels valued, but not entitled (Petitpas et al., 2004). These outcomes are possible to attain outside the typical school setting and thus provide encouragement for working with street children using a similar programme, as street children are not in the school context where sport participation is easily accessible.

A life skills educational intervention with 169 street children in Nigeria, Africa, found that some of their anti-social behaviour had been exhibited for financial gain or survival.

Overall, this study emphasised that implementing a life skills programme to address these antisocial behaviours will boost the well being of street children in less developed countries in Africa (Olley, 2006). Integrated programmes covering mental health, substance abuse, and health issues is recommended when working with street children on a street outreach basis (Nyamathi et al., 2005). This is reiterated in a South African study where social and mental health services were perceived as inaccessible, and although street children were aware of HIV/AIDS, this knowledge was not transferred into safer sex practices. Therefore, health and social policy needs to address this area (Snell, 2002), as street children assigned to a Community Reinforcement Approach in the US resulted in significantly reduced substance use, depression, and increased social stability. These findings indicate possible success in treating street children with such interventions (Slesnick, Prestopnik, Meyers & Glassman, 2006).

It would be short-sighted to assume that participation in sport provides the necessary life skills for productive futures; however, sport participation introduces the platform for self-insight, peer relationship development, adult mentoring, goal setting, and goal attainment (Petitpas et al., 2004). This harbour pier extends some safety and form of nurturance to these abandoned children at sea, so that those who wish to grab on to this pier and develop alternative narratives for their futures have the opportunity to do so.

CALL FOR HARBOUR

It is apparent from the literature that sport can be viewed as a vehicle for psychosocial development in youth, however less is known about the interventions or implementation strategies that are likely to produce positive outcomes (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte & Jones, 2005). Further research and evaluation on the benefits of physical activity and sport on children's development, and the context in which this development occurs is required so a greater understanding of these contributions is attained and repeated (Bailey, 2006).

Street children have reported positive experiences as research participants, but would have preferred more detail on how the researcher(s) plan to use the data collected. Researchers should obtain input from street children on the appropriate design of research studies concerning them, as well as the appropriate use of research incentives (Ensign, 2006). This information illustrates that there is certainly a need for research of this nature, and that these endeavours tend to be well-received by street children. I imagine that it ties into the premise that these children experience a piece of harbour through research projects where researchers are providing an alternate narrative of concern, contrasting that of general society.

It has been well documented, as evident from the discussion on the effects of living at sea, that street children may have experienced comprised childhoods due to insufficient harbouring. These children tend to experience inadequate attachments and lack the appropriate environment for optimal development under the safe mentorship of adults. This suggests the need for a psychosocial project tailored to expose these children to the harbour where their deprived and problem-laden histories become less dominant. Our research study thus intended to initiate an alternative narrative for these children to draw on, where their self identities are not entwined with their destitute pasts.

SUMMARY

The objective of this literature review was to draw on quantitative and qualitative research conducted by former researchers in the field, so as to gain an understanding of the topic at hand, and thus build on existing data within the area. This literature informed the conceptualisation and direction of this research project, as prior studies ineffectively addressed the research question posed by this study, as they tended to be more outcome-based as opposed to a reflection on the children's experiences of learning through the medium of sport. This fissure confirmed the need and relevance of this research study so as to tap into the psychosocial needs of street children living within the South African context where the 'norm' is lacking, and where interventions or programmes can be implemented in an innovative and context-specific manner.

Based on the dominant cultural narrative regarding street children, I was left with the following message cited in the James Frey (2003) novel entitled, "A million little pieces":

"The young man came to the old man seeking counsel.
I broke something, old man.
How badly is it broken?
It's in a million little pieces.
I'm afraid I can't help you.
Why?
There's nothing you can do.
Why?
It can't be fixed.
Why?
It's broken beyond repair. It's in a million little pieces."

The weather forecast designated some dim prospects through narratives on the problems of street children, but at the same time rays of sunshine were predicted, illustrated through sport and play. This contradicted a pessimistic outcome with the potential of an alternative life narrative for these children to hold on to, where the narrative is not irreparability, but hope.

So as we prepared to embark on our journey out to sea, we considered this dominant narrative saturated with 'perceived' facts and figures, enough to instil disillusion and suspension of this project, but opted to sail on, with the objective of exposing these children to this harbour of hope and the prospect of an alternative narrative. The next chapter outlines the steps of this alternative journey.

CHAPTER 3:
SAILING OUT TO SEA

As we sailed out to sea equipped with our weather forecast, compass, and sporting equipment, so the dominant narratives which clouded our minds at the inception of this venture were washed away with each passing wave, and so we arrived at our destination and greeted these children with open minds and a hopeful outlook.

It is in this chapter that the research inquiry of this study is described. The following areas are therefore, stipulated and addressed respectively: research context(s), research participants, research position, research material, and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a demarcation of the relevance pertaining to this research study.

CONTEXTS

The following contexts had a shaping influence on the research project:

Academic Context

The Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria constituted the academic context. This department offers undergraduate and postgraduate training in Psychology. There are three postgraduate training programmes in professional psychology. These include: MA (Clinical Psychology), MA (Counselling Psychology), and MA (Research Psychology). The MA (Counselling Psychology) programme has two specialisation areas, namely, Sport Psychology and Community Psychology. This research study fell under the MA (Counselling Psychology/Sport Psychology) programme.

This context impinged on the research project on multiple levels, this included a prerequisite of the therapeutic intervention, namely, the sport played and reflections thereof, following the narrative of teaching and empowerment. Therefore, the narrative of

academia was 'played' out, on and off the field, and provided an expectation of knowledge being attained through this process. This then filtered into the behaviours of the participants, MA Psychology students, and myself as the researcher. Such behaviour included feeling compelled to comply with the appropriate behaviour as implicitly stated by the tertiary institution, in accordance with a Western framework of suitable conduct within an academic setting. As the process moved into a reflective phase, in terms of the interviews, data analysis, and report writing, so this underlying culture influenced the structure, conceptualisation, and interpretation of the research study. More specifically, my interpretation and report writing, needed to conform to academic expectations and standards set out by the university.

Organisational Context

This research project was conducted in conjunction with the High Performance Centre, the City of Tshwane, the Tshwane Alliance for Street Children, and the following Tshwane-based shelters: 'Crossroad Shelter for Street Children' and 'Child Soul Care'.

To ascertain the intervention, a needs assessment was conducted by the MA Counselling Psychology (Sports specialisation) students of Pretoria University, whereby interviews were held with various stakeholders, namely, the Registrar of Pretoria University, a representative of the City of Tshwane and the Tshwane Alliance for Street Children, the shelter heads, as well as students of the High Performance Centre who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. This collaborative approach aimed to promote the exploratory nature of the research project and tap into the psychological needs of Tshwane street children. Therefore, this needs assessment informed how the sport would be played at sea.

These organisational settings, each with their own latent culture, influenced the development and implementation of the project, which in turn affected the responses of the participants during data collection, as well as my personal reflections and analysis of the participants' experiences of this project. These influences were specific to each

organisation, namely, the High Performance Centre elicited a dominant narrative of sport and excellence, the City of Tshwane constructed the narrative of discipline and appropriate conduct, whilst the Tshwane Alliance for Street Children as well as the relevant shelters, followed an altruistic narrative, affecting the research and myself as a researcher, on the level of having to provide a humanitarian function. These narratives were very diverse as each organisation had its own agenda and perception of the intervention and research study, which shaped each session as well as my conceptualisation and perception of the relevance of the research study, thus influencing my interpretations and reporting of the interviews conducted.

PARTICIPANTS

Street Children

This research study drew on a non-probability purposive sampling technique; therefore, the participants were selected according to certain criteria which served the purposes of the research, without randomisation. This sampling technique was suitable to the qualitative nature of the present study as its aim was to attain rich, in-depth data as opposed to attaining strong external validity (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004).

Six of approximately 30 children who were residents of 'Crossroad Shelter for Street Children' and partook in the six-month research project, held at Jopie Fourie Primary School in Tshwane, were invited to participate in the research study. They were informed of the details and purpose of the research study as well as the voluntary nature of their participation.

Researcher

I was the sole researcher of this study. Having completed a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand in Research Psychology, and being registered in this

specialisation; my academic training and experience in the corporate sector, influenced my perception and conveyance of this research project.

Although I have a personal preference for qualitative research and have opted for multi-method studies so as to include some basic statistics in prior research I've conducted, such as my MA (Research Psychology) research report on, "The Effects of Stroke on the Family System" and research studies on Depression, Suicide and HIV/AIDS during my internship year; my training and preceding work environment have afforded me skills in the field of statistics. This is in contrast to the mini-dissertation I undertook in partial fulfillment of my MA in CounsellingPsychology/Sport Psychology through the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria in 2006/2007, which followed a Narrative research inquiry, and thus challenged the knowledge and skills I've received during my research endeavours thus far. These prior undertakings have primarily served a financially beneficial purpose, in that corporate stakeholders tend to favour positivist research. I thus have greater experience within the statistical arena, with Masters training in Narrative principles for the therapeutic context.

POSITION

The research position of this research project fell within the realm of Narrative Psychology, in which "narrative" is the guiding metaphor for everyday experiences (Monk, Winslade, Crocket & Epston, 1997; Edwards, 1997).

Narrative analysis is located in the postmodern school of thought where explorations of subjective experience are paramount. This is in stark contrast to modern, positivist research where randomised, controlled trials are perceived as higher quality evidence. However, a shortcoming of positivist research is that it ignores the complexity of individual variation as it elicits a preference for the general over the specific, congruent with its mechanistic view; whereas interpretive research, such as Narrative research, with its inductive stance, surmounts this limitation with increased ecological validity (Roberts, 2000).

The Narrative perspective has links with the Systems epistemology as both paradigms acknowledge the importance of context, interaction, and the social construction of meaning (Narrative Therapy, 1998). Power relations as well as social and individual contexts provide the basis for the construction of meaning (Leahy & Harrigan, 2006).

Although language is traditionally perceived as a transparent medium by other postmodern, interpretative approaches, Narrative Psychology sees language as meaningful and subjective. It brings subjectivity to the fore and deconstructs the norm, seeking the unique, not the general. It moves beyond Discursive Psychology whose focus is exclusively on language and text, by considering the realm of experience (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Sclater, 2003). Reading narratives enables insight into the complexities of the individual (Sclater, 2003), as reality and meaning is socially constructed through language (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990). Analysis of the narrative exposes the individual, as well as the social, and cultural elements of language and meaning (Denzin, 2000).

The selves and narratives are connected as our narratives form the cornerstone of our identity. We feel, think, and act in accordance to narrative structures. So we are who we are through the narratives regarding our lives, and we live the narratives we tell. Therefore, there is a complex interplay between narratives and self identity, as we reveal or conceal the self through the narrative, and this process negotiates the self's position in the world (Sclater, 2003).

Experience

As people we experience on a daily basis. These experiences are diverse in nature and include, for example, happiness, frustration, aggression, and anger. It is due to our embodiment that we are experiencing human beings who interact and are shaped by our world (Barlow & Durand, 1999).

Experience and Narrative

Narratives imply the manner in which individuals learn, explain, and organise their experience(s), therefore, these experiences become more accessible though their narration (Wiles, Rosenberg & Kearns, 2005).

In the modern framework, a narrative is perceived as a neutral expression of thoughts and emotion as the narrative and experience is considered synonymous (Gergen, 1985). However, according to White (1997), the primary focus of the Narrative approach is on people's expressions of their life experiences, these narrations of experience engage people in interpretive acts which provide meaning to their experiences of the world.

Meaning does not pre-exist the interpretation of experience i.e. meaning and experience are inseparable. The meaning people attribute to their experience(s) is influenced by their assumptions, thinking style, and context (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990).

Experience, Narrative and History

Experiences are shaped by narratives which do not occur in isolation, but are influenced by culture and history (Doan, 1998). History and culture provide interpretive frameworks to make sense of experience (White & Epston, 1990).

Gergen (1998) states that narratives are framed through conventions which indicate the beginning and end, whilst also generating direction and a sense of purpose. The events within a narrative are placed in a specific arrangement. Narratologists emphasise the presentation of the narrative i.e. the narrative act, as opposed to the narrative plot per se (Culler, 1983). It is this 'narrative arrangement' or 'narrative act' that provides the reader with a sense of how history was employed in the narrative.

The narrative provides a forum of experience in which the self negotiates its position in the world in relation to culture, and integrating time through remembering and telling (Sclater, 2003). Therefore, the contexts in which we develop play an integral role in the way we interpret our experiences and thus formulate narratives of these experiences.

Experience, Narrative and Culture

According to Cortazzi (1993, p. 58) a narrative is "a discourse structure or genre which reflects culture. It is a central medium of cultural expression, organisation and learning". It also creates cultural contexts.

It is through dominant cultural narratives that one attaches meaning to one's experiences and develops personal narratives through these filters (White, 2000). In so doing, language frames this expression whilst social norms, values, and power relations constrain or are reiterated through the narrative (Wiles et al., 2005). Narratives inevitably have an interpersonal nature with social and cultural dimensions. As Sclater (2003) mentions, subjectivity is really intersubjectivity.

Interactive texts enable researchers to relate one's experience(s) to the broader social relations and embodying contexts, such as family and community (Wiles et al., 2005). Although Narrative analysis focuses on the content of the texts, it looks closely at the context of narration, as a narrative is intertwined with social, cultural, and political narratives (Mishler, 1986), as the texts within the narrative are socio-political (Parry & Doan, 1994), and tend to serve as the 'norm' against which an individual is judged and valued (Venter, 2000).

MATERIAL

The material for this research project was produced, analysed, and reported by means of the following process:

Phase 1: Narration

The participants were asked to narrate their experience of being involved in the project. The project ran over a six-month period and involved the subsequent process on a weekly basis:

1. Briefing – we provided rules and conditions for the game.
2. Intervention – in the form of sport (soccer, cricket or rugby) was played.
3. Debriefing – discussion of their experience(s) of the session e.g. what have you learnt, and how, where, and when can you use this skill.

The method of "telling" constituted semi-structured interviews (see appendix A). These interviews were conducted at the Jopie Fourie Primary School location once the project was completed. The interviews were audio-taped via a Dictaphone to ensure that vital information was not lost.

The semi-structured nature of the interview process enabled me to work with the narratives of each participant and ask questions specific to each participant's responses; whilst ensuring that all aspects pertaining to the intervention were reflected on through an inherent structure of additional questions which I asked to elicit a thicker description of their personal experiences of the project. This format emanated during the data collection process as I found that the participants had limited experience with interviews and narrating their experience(s). They thus provided relatively thin descriptions of their experience(s), and this form of questioning assisted in drawing more detail and thickening their descriptions.

Phase 2: Transcription

I transcribed the data verbatim and the tapes were deleted after use.

Phase 3: Analysis

The data was analysed qualitatively by means of Narrative analysis, involving inductive reading of the data, with the aim of understanding how history and culture were employed by the participants to construct their narratives of learning life skills through the medium of sport.

The following process was employed:

1. Phase 3a: Reading the field narrative i.e. the entire text.
2. Phase 3b: Selecting the research narrative(s). This included information pertaining to my research question.
3. Phase 3c: Analysing the research material. This addressed the message of the narrative, as well as the historical and cultural evidence for this message. By coding and categorising, one may loose the embedded meanings and context of the interview, as the Narrative analysis technique ranges from "…more formal structural analysis to looser interpretive strategies" (Wiles et al., 2005, p. 90). These looser strategies tend to be more contextualised interpretations. Therefore, I opted for a looser strategy of analysis, so the context and influential narratives of every participant were considered.
4. Phase 3d: Reflecting on the research material. The narratives affected me as the recipient, as I found myself ruminating about the contexts in which these street children were situated and the limited scope for opportunities to shed these debilitating, dominant narratives and proliferate as individuals. I was left with the metaphor of a snake needing to moult a tightening, almost suffocating old skin, but unable to do so, not innately flawed, but lacking the skill to do so, as not having witnessed it done by older snakes. Without this form of evolvement, the

snake remains its size, susceptible to being preyed on by fellow snakes and other species.

Phase 4: Reporting

The results were written up in the form of a mini-dissertation for an academic audience.

Analysis of the text from this perspective focused on deconstruction, where my interpretations of the experience(s) of the participants were provided, with an invitation for alternate interpretations from you, the reader. According to the Narrative epistemology, it is in the process of telling and re-telling that the identities of the participants are formed and re-formed.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Tshwane Alliance for Street Children was asked to sign consent forms pertaining to the research study as guardians of the children (see appendix B and C).

Child assent was obtained from the children. I explained the research study and ensured that each child understood the implications of their participation. Follow-up counselling sessions were offered if the need arose. This was offered at my personal expense.

Permission to conduct the research study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria and the Tshwane Alliance for Street Children.

Before any results are published in research or informal articles, the children who participated in the research, with the assistance of their shelter head, will be asked to view the publications for final approval.

RELEVANCE

This experiential study provides valuable data in a relatively novel area. By intervening at a grass roots level, this intervention assisted these children with much needed life skills to increase the probability of adapting to the more structured and disciplined environment of the shelter. In so doing, these children will be better equipped for re-integration into society, thus less vulnerable to the negative influences of the street life culture, and the diverse contexts which shape their lives. The dominant narrative of limited success in helping or rehabilitating street children is thus challenged, and experiential learning, as opposed to structured training, is emphasised.

The findings of this research study emphasise the need for further studies within this area, whilst highlighting the utility of sport as a rehabilitation medium. This information may be utilised by social workers, educators, psychologists, and programme developers who plan to implement measures to empower street children. Therefore, this research study acts as an informal needs assessment and pilot study, which provides insight into the needs of street children, the correlation between sport and life skills, as well as the positive response of street children to sport within the South African context.

SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the steps of our Narrative journey. It described the children and contexts that influenced this study as well as the games we played at sea. It also explained how I worked with the narratives of these children's experiences. These narratives are further delineated in the following chapter of this research report, where the research results are portrayed and discussed according to the Narrative position.

CHAPTER 4:
TIME AT SEA

This segment of the mini-dissertation illustrates how the participants of this research project experienced the time spent with us at sea. It aims to articulate their experience(s) of learning life skills through the medium of sport. Each child's interview responses are discussed and juxtaposed against relevant literature pertaining to their narratives.

Before I delve into these narratives, let's revisit the research question which I aimed to answer through my analysis of this research data. As formerly stated my research question constituted: How did Tshwane street children experience learning life skills through the medium of sport? Having affirmed my research question, this research report now portrays the results of this Narrative study.

LIKING PLAY

'A' was a 16 year old boy who had spent two months on the street and one year in the shelter. He provided invaluable feedback for me as a researcher and budding practitioner in the sense that when I asked him why he liked the project, he responded saying, "Because I like to play this." and then proceeded to say that, "I like to play rugby…I like to play ball". This response although given in a very concise form and thus easy to overlook, supplies the preliminary point of this discussion, in that his narrative (although thin in its description) provides insight into how one should work with street children, namely, play with them.

Footnote: For the purposes of this document the names of each participant is omitted and replaced by an alphabetical letter to protect their confidentiality. Furthermore, the letters R and P are used as abbreviations for researcher and participant respectively.

I deduce, especially when drawing on the dominant narrative about street life culture where abuse and neglect runs rampage (Cockburn, 1991; Balmer et al., 1997; Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Lockhat & Van Niekerk, 2000; Ensign, 2006), that this alternative experience may have been a contradiction to what street life is about and was thus liked. I therefore, take from 'A's narrative that this project where sport was the medium of intervention was experienced by 'A' as enjoyable. His narrative of enjoyment is echoed in the literature where children and adolescents have enjoyed sport-based programmes (Larson, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Petitpas et al., 2004; Slesnick et al., 2006; Bailey, 2006).

For me there is much significance to his narrative when viewing it in the context of the stormy sea 'A' resides in. In this environment, play is not a typical experience, particularly when interacting with adults. So through play, 'A' was able to be a child again and re-discover and re-connect with this positive experience. 'A's ability to raise his head above water and experience happiness in relation to the world, implies resilience and contradicts the dominant cultural narrative that street children are irreparable and hopeless. It thus instils a sense of hope for me and confirms the validity of this experiential medium when working with street children.

FROM BORING TO HELPING

'B' was a 17 year old male who had spent one month on the streets and had lived in the shelter for three months before our project commenced. His narrative, along with my perception of how history and culture were employed to make sense of his narrated events, is provided in the table below:

R/P	Narrative	Landscape Of Action (History)	Landscape Of Meaning (Culture)
R	How have you experienced this project?	Event: Project.	

P	I experience it you are really helping us by doing this things cause if you are not doing this things we are going to be on the streets, we are not going to do something. It's the right thing for you guys and for us – you are helping us.		He stipulates how the project helps. It provides an alternate to the street. The right thing to do is to help street children. If not, they are bound to live on the street.
R	How have we helped you, in which way have we helped you?		
P	I like it because it keeps me out of the streets. I have something to do on Fridays so I don't go out and do such things like stealing or drinking, or do things that are not right to do.		He further builds on this narrative of helping by stating that Fridays are an alternative to stealing or drinking.
R	Ok, so what have you learnt through the project?		
P	I've learnt many skills. How to play soccer, how to respect other players, and how to talk to people.		He further constructs his narrative of helpfulness by giving three examples of how it helps. In this, he names these areas moving from more concrete sport skills, to more abstract skills of respect and talking to others.
R	Do you use these skills in the shelter?	Event: Shelter.	
P	Ja I do.		
R	Could you give me an example?		
P	If someone is angry, I just talk to him nicely and if he's really angry, I'll leave him, then I'll talk to him later.		He picks up on the storyline of talking and takes it to the context of the shelter. He illustrates through his example that he has learnt how to talk to people.
R	So you've learnt how to handle it when someone is angry?		
P	Yes.		
R	Alright. Is there anything else that you've learnt?	Event: Project.	

P	Ja. To respect other people also.		He now picks up on the storyline of respect.
R	What was like choosing a different sport to play instead of soccer? Everyone had a different opinion, how did you handle that?		
P	No… I thought maybe last we time we chose, we chose soccer and the others wanted to play cricket. I thought maybe today we can choose cricket. We always choose soccer and the others do not want to play soccer…they are not good at it. That means it's not good for them.		Respect for him is about diversity.
R	Is there anyone else in your life who taught you how to respect others and how to speak to people?		
P	Ja, my grandmother.	Event: Family.	
R	Ok. How did she teach you that?		
P	No…she's been teaching me about herself, telling me how I should respect her, cause if I don't respect her it means I won't respect other people. So… if I respect her can I respect the others also.		He picks up on the storyline of respect again but in the context of the family.
R	Who else teaches you?		
P	The pastors at the shelters, they are also teaching us.	Event: Shelter.	His story of learning outside this context (project) is thickened.
R	What didn't you like about this project?	Event: Project.	
P	No, there is nothing I didn't like.		
R	What should they do next year, what would you like to be done?		
P	Maybe going to school, also playing soccer.	Event: School and Soccer.	He introduces the new storyline of school and soccer.
R	Any for this project?	Event: Project.	
P	No…the thing that I'm missing is that I want you guys to help us more.		He asks for more help.
R	Ok. How would you like us to do that?		

P	Like twice a week next year, it will be something.		He asks for more Fridays i.e. more alternative narrative experiences.
R	So you'd like it to take place more often.		
P	Ja.		
R	And is there anything else that you'd like to say about your experiences of the project. For example what did you expect the first time you came, was it different?		
P	The thing that I like is that…the first time I came here I thought it was going to be boring. But it was not boring. Even the following week I was like when is it going to be, I wish it was Friday so that we can play soccer again. I started liking to come.		He expected it to be boring; he began feeling excited about it after the first session. Perhaps his expectation of boring was informed by the dominant narrative that projects are boring, in turn influencing his expectations. His experience(s) however, initiated an alternative narrative of helpfulness.
R	Why did you not find it boring. What did you enjoy about it?"		
P	Cause we are playing soccer…at least we are doing the sports here. Everyone is becoming happy, no one gets angry.		Sport is an alternative, it makes people happy.
R	Why did you expect it to be boring, what other projects have you been involved in?		
P	No. Its only soccer.		No alternative to Fridays, no comparison.
R	Only this project.		
P	Ja.		
R	Ok. Thanks B.		

It seems from 'B's narrative that when he first arrived at the project his expectation was that of boring, as evident from his response, "…the first time I came here I thought it was going to be boring. But it was not boring". However, he did not experience the project in this way as 'B's narrative is one of helpfulness. This project thus exceeded his expectations, namely, that of "boring" as 'B' illustrates his enjoyment of his participation in the project by asking for more frequent sessions, "Like twice a week next year…"

He constructs his narrative of helpfulness through examples of what he has learnt such as, "How to play soccer, how to respect other players, and how to talk to people". In this three-part list he opts to pick up on the storyline of talking and takes us to the shelter where he applies these skills, and illustrates it with an example. Moving back to the event of the project for a second time, he then picks up on a second storyline of respect and provides a relevant example for that as well. It seems that for him helpfulness, is about respect (in particular respecting diversity in people), and talking. He has learnt respect in another context, namely, that of the family, where he mentions his grandmother, but in picking up on this storyline of respect one is led to understand that it is a prominent reason why he describes his experience of the project as helpful.

'B' shifts between the project and the shelter (with thin and somewhat disjointed or isolated storylines of his family and school) to get us to understand what he has learnt in his experience of the project and how and where he uses these experiences. In essence, the message I was left with, is that this project was not just about sport, for 'B' it was also about learning respect and how to talk people. It provided something different to the 'norm' of the street where "…stealing or drinking…" typically occur, and he tells us he likes this difference and wants more of it.

'B's narrative is consistent with research abroad on life skills development with urban youth (Petitpas et al., 2004) as well as another African study by Olley (2006) in Nigeria. His point on the difference to street life culture is reiterated in literature where prosocial behaviour is increased, and antisocial tendencies decreased in youth when partaking in sport (Larson, 2000; Bailey, 2006; Moffet et al., 2006; Brunelle et al., 2007).

Due to the ceased formal schooling of these children, I held my own culturally influenced expectations of their capacity to see beyond the game and reflect on their experiences, but found myself amazed at 'B's level of insight. This comprised insight into his life, his alternatives, and his relationships with people and sport. Although 'B' has spent is life swimming in seas with limited guidance, his narrative portrays his readiness to learn new things despite his "boring" history. He reflects a willingness to swim back to the harbour by gripping on to more frequent sessions of life skills through sport. This indicates his perseverance and determination to carve out alternative "helpful" possibilities for his future.

PLAYING THE GAME OF CHANGE

'C' was also 17 years old and resided on the streets for three weeks before being brought into the shelter four months prior to our project. His narrative is supplied below:

R/P	Narrative	Landscape Of Action (History)	Landscape Of Meaning (Culture)
R	How have you experienced this project?	Event: Project.	
P	Participant is silent.		
R	Do you know what experience means?		
P	Ja…I experience like when we play here ne, we get to know respect, to know each other, respect each other. We treat each other as a team. So we show each other a right thing, not the wrong thing. Understand each other, that's the thing that we do experience…and dignity and respect.		Although they play, they learn as well. This learning involves knowing respect, knowing each other, and lastly respecting each other. Respect for him is about diversity and working together. Respect enables teaching and understanding in a team context.
R	Do you ever learn these things somewhere else?		

P	In my life, in the school I was taught.	Event: School.	Learning outside of this context.
R	But now you're not going to school hey?		
P	Now I'm not going to school.		He no longer gets to learn outside this context.
R	During this time of your life, is this the only place where you get to learn this?		
P	Ja, it's the only place. Maybe like ok…usually when I come here when I go home after this project, I go home being happy. I'm happy. Like I experience a new thing in my life…and things, respecting things, like treating people in a equal way. No discrimination towards each other.	Event: Project.	He introduces the new storyline of happiness. He takes this happiness with him to the shelter. He then picks up on the previous event and selects the storyline of respect.
R	Ok…tell me what did you expect from the project? When you came here the first time what did you think it would be like.		
P	I thought that it was like a soccer ne, and athletic. The things that I thought of, but when I arrived here I saw… ok, it's a big project. Soccer, sometimes cricket, what you call… rugby. It surprise me. I thought it was something like a gym. Soccer practice each and every Friday. But as time goes by I saw it's not a soccer practice, its all about your ability. To improve…maybe the way you treat people.		He moves from sport to exercise, time, abilities and then psychosocial development. He expected it to be solely about sport, but he sees it's more than that. He picks up on the storyline of respect again.
R	And how do you find it when we sit and talk after these sports? What is that like for you?		
P	It's coming up with a solution. After practice then we talk…like solution. What can we do better?		He picks up on the storyline of improving from his previous text.
R	Is there anything that you have learnt here that you do at home, in the shelter?	Event: Shelter.	
P	Ja.		

R	Ok…so what have you learnt that you take home with you?		
P	Ok, the thing that I'm learnt ne, just respect other people's views. Usually I didn't respect other people's views. Now I respect them cause I was taught here.		He has learnt something different to his past behaviour. He picks up on the storyline of respect again. He thickens the alternative of more experiences in other contexts.
R	Ok…how did you learn that here? What happened?	Event: Project.	
P	It's like…when people come with suggestions. Usually I disagree with their suggestions but you taught me that I must respect other people's suggestions.		Learning from us, perhaps imitating or modelling us? He continues with the storyline of new behaviour from his previous text and respect. He seems to reiterate what he has learnt (respect) and that he has changed.
R	What did you like about the project?		
P	Like in a project, usually ne…this project basically, when I look at this project, it makes people to change from worse to the best.		He picks up again on the storyline of change and uses this storyline to illustrate what he has learnt.
R	Has it does this for you?		
P	Ja, and for us all.		It's universal change, not exclusive to him.
R	What do you think they can put in this project for next year?		

P	Like… for next year, I so wish that for other people, who like cricket, play cricket each and every Friday. And others who like rugby, they have to play rugby. So that they can develop.	The project needs to accommodate diversity so all can develop skills in their preferred areas. He thus continues the storyline of respect.
R	So you're saying that each player plays what they like.	
P	Ja.	
R	What else can we work on for next year?	
P	Making us to have great opportunities.	
R	Opportunities?	
P	Like a career.	Sport is an alternative.
R	Are you wanting to make a career of sport?	
P	Ja.	He affirms that he wants to make a career of sport.
R	Is there anything you want to say about the project?	
P	This sport…ok…usually when I'm sitting at home like on Friday, its so boring cause you sit the whole day, but when I come here I learn new things that I don't know. But I tell myself that it's better than nothing. I have to appreciate.	He talks about typical Fridays and that he needs to appreciate this little difference of helpfulness. Alternative narrative of Fridays.
R	Alright. Thanks very much for your time.	

I perceive the narrative provided by 'C' as one of change; in that this project has helped him and others "…change from worse to the best". He further constructs this narrative by referring to respect (specifically "…respect each other"). He sequences his narrative by starting with the storyline of respect, and moves to the emotion of happiness that he feels

when learning new things, and then picks up on the storyline of improving through this learning, and then draws on respect again. He then repeats this sequence relatively similarly a second time, with respect, namely, respecting diversity, being a strong theme throughout his narrative. It seems that for 'C' respect is about, "understand each other…dignity …" and "…treating people in an equal way." Therefore, he has learnt to work and treat other people better, with this being a change to his prior behaviour, "Usually I disagree with their suggestions but you taught me that I must respect other people's suggestions".

The storyline of learning is elicited in the event of school and his narrative in this regard leaves me with the understanding that he no longer learns new things outside of this project as he states, "Now I'm not going to school".

It seems that 'C' expected the project to focus solely on sport, but he realised that it's more than that and draws on the storyline of respect again as he states, "I thought it was something like a gym. Soccer practice each and every Friday. But as time goes by I saw it's not a soccer practice, its all about your ability. To improve…maybe the way you treat people." Other studies have shown congruent findings in terms of social skill enhancement post sport-based interventions (Larson, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Moffet et al., 2006).

For 'C' sport appears to be an alternative to his current lifestyle and asks for more opportunities, "Like a career". This illustrates the hope that sport brings to his life as it is within the context of sport that he can change himself, respect others, and create a future.

'C's narrative of change is coloured in using the storylines of respect and self improvement. The way he constructs and sequences his narrative with the concept of respecting others being woven into the entire narrative, for me highlights the life skills that 'C' learnt through his experience(s) of playing with us at sea. It also appears that he applied these skills in the context of the shelter as well as the project through the discussions where the focus was on "…coming up with a solution".

His narrative illustrates his desire to proliferate and change his circumstances through sport. For 'C' sport provides "great opportunities", perhaps the opportunity that will empower him to surpass living the dominant narrative of a street child? Perhaps this all begins with changing oneself and respecting others? This may be one way for these forgotten children to swim back to shore.

A RESPECTFUL FUTURE IN SPORT

'D' was a 16 year old male who had never permanently lived on the streets at any time, but had spent nine months in the shelter before the commencement of our project. His narrative along with how history and culture were employed to construct his narrative is provided below:

R/P	Narrative	Landscape Of Action (History)	Landscape Of Meaning (Culture)
R	How did you experience this project? What was it like for you coming here on Fridays?	Event: Project.	
P	It was like nice for me…and it was like…you know we learn so much about sport. It's nice to learn about sports so that we can have a future of sports.		He learnt about sport so he can have a future in sports. Storyline that sport carries hope.
R	Ok. Did you learn anything else, apart from sport?		
P	Mmm…yes.		
R	Tell me about that.		
P	I learnt respecting other guys in sport.		He learnt to respect other players. He thus introduces a new storyline of respect. For him respect means respecting others.

R	Have you used what you've learnt at the shelter with other people?	Event: Shelter.	
P	Yes.		He has applied what he has learnt in the context of the shelter.
R	How is that?		
P	Like we learn sport at home too…and we learn how to respect each other.		He draws on the storyline of sport and then respect, and states that he continues learning this at the shelter.
R	What were you expecting from this project?	Event: Project.	
P	I thought it was going to be nice to see new faces, other people.		He thought it would be new. Something different perhaps?
R	What did you think you were going to learn?		
P	I didn't know what I thought I was going to learn.		No expectations of learning.
R	Alright…and how did it make you feel not knowing?		
P	Mmm they told us that we must just come here and we'll see what will happen.		He was told to just come.
R	Ok, and what didn't you like about this project?		
P	I liked everything. It was alright for me.		He enjoyed it. Agreeable. Perhaps no comparison and little expectations thus hard to evaluate it?
R	So is there nothing you want them to add in next year?		
P	No, it was like…nice for me.		Agreeable. Ties in with no expectations.
R	Is there anything else you'd like to say?		

P	Ah…yes. It was like nice having somewhere to learn us sports. And the project is nice so that we can learn how to respect each other in sports for our future.	The project provided a platform for learning, this opens up future prospects. He ends with the same sentence from the beginning of the interview. He reiterates the future in sports but includes the storyline of respect.
R	Ok, thank you.	

'D's narrative is one of learning and he articulates his experience(s) of the project through the use of two storylines, namely, that of learning sport and that of learning respect. He begins his narrative with the event of the project and introduces sport. This storyline has two elements to it: its "…nice to learn about sport…" and "…we can have a future of sport". Through my probing, he then establishes a new storyline of respect and it seems that respect for him is about diversity as he states, "I learnt respecting other guys in sport". This meaning he attaches to respect may be informed by his cultural narrative of respect.

He then sequences his narrative in a way that he reinforces these two storylines by drawing on learning sport first and respect second, and applying them to the context of the shelter, as evident in the text, "Like we learn sport at home too…and we learn how to respect each other".

Through my questioning on his expectations of the project, I learn that his only expectation was that it would be something new with no expectation of what he was going to learn, "I thought it was going to be nice to see new faces…", "I didn't know what I thought I was going to learn". As I then give him the opportunity to comment on any aspect of the project, he again picks up on the two storylines of sport and respect within the context of

learning, and opts to end his narrative with a very similar sentence to that which he started where he stipulates "…sports for our future". He thus reinforces this message.

I am left with the sense that for 'D' his experience was about learning, and the hope or prospect of a future in sport. His narrative of learning is confirmed by Kraft and Sakof (1988), Petitpas et al., (2004), and Bailey (2004), where children learn many skills through the medium of sport. However, 'D's narrative of learning is somewhat optimistic and future-oriented, inconsistent with findings in the US where street children tend to have a pessimistic outlook on life and their future (Raffaelli & Koller, 2005). This tells us that playing entertained his ideas for the future, and despite his current stormy context, he dares to dreams for more. It appears that 'D' rebels against the dominant narrative of neglect surrounding street children by aspiring towards a respectful future in sport.

PLAYING NICELY WITH RESPECT

'E' was 14 years old and had lived on the streets for six months and has resided in the shelter for the past two years. His narrative is provided below:

R/P	Narrative	Landscape Of Action (History)	Landscape Of Meaning (Culture)
R	I just need you to tell me what its like for you to come here and play sport with us on a Friday?	Event: Project.	
P	This project… ja…it was nice. We did play stuff and it did teach us a lot of stuff, it was nice, it was cool.		He describes learning through play.
R	What were you taught here?		
P	Mmm, doing the purpose here to respect others and respect our friends and…you know that kind of stuff.		He learns to respect others. He thus builds on the storyline of learning.

R	So you're saying that you learnt a lot about respect, how have you used this?		
P	Ja, at the shelter where I'm staying. I'm using it there.	Event: Shelter.	Transference of skill to the shelter context.
R	Could you give me an example, have you got an example for me?		
P	Mmm, not really.		He could not be specific as to how he applies respect.
R	Ok. Just generally you use it.		
P	Ja.		
R	What didn't you like about this project?	Event: Project.	
P	Ja, actually I like everything there's nothing I didn't like. Everything good, everything was perfect.		He is agreeable, does not critique.
R	Can you think of anything that we can do extra for you guys next year?		
P	Mmm, ja…I think if you can get people, like TASK people to come and challenge us to play soccer. That would be nice for us.		He requests games for next year. New storyline of competition.
R	So…you'd like more competitive games.		
P	Yes, please.		
R	What would that do for you, why do you want that?		
P	Because they would learn us how to play soccer…and the skills and everything.		He wants to partake in games so he improves as a soccer player. Thus enhancing the storyline of competition and drawing on his storyline of learning.
R	Ok. That's fine. Thank you.		

His narrative seems to be one of niceness in that 'E' utilises this word to describe his experience(s) of his time with us and introduces the storylines of playing and learning, "This project… ja…it was nice. We did play stuff and it did teach us a lot of stuff, it was nice, it was cool."

He then sequences his narrative by drawing on the second storyline of learning and thickens it by stating that, "…the purpose here to respect others…" In so doing one begins to understand that he has learnt to respect others. 'E' applies this aspect of the second storyline, namely, respect, to the event of the shelter, so we understand how he applies what he learns, thus further describing why he experienced this project as "nice". Culture is employed to understand and give meaning to respect, and he shifts between the event of the project and that of the shelter to illustrate the link between them and the continuity in his learning.

Niceness is further developed when I asked him to critique the project and 'C' responds saying, "…actually I like everything there's nothing I didn't like. Everything good, everything was perfect". However, he then decides to provide a recommendation of games, thus introducing the storyline of competitiveness as he stipulates that he would learn and improve as a soccer player. He thus enhances the storyline of competitiveness by providing some rationale for his recommendation and draws on his storyline of learning therefore, picking up on this storyline for a second time within his narrative.

His narrative echoes results in studies by Bailey (2004) where respect and learning occurred through play. 'E's request for games to improve as a player and enjoyment of competition confirms the point made by Henry (1999), whereby there seems to be a connection between level of success and level of enjoyment in sport.

Although 'E's narrative is relatively concise incorporating thin descriptions, I understand his experience(s) to be have been "good" as he constructs this understanding through his use of the play and learning storylines, building on them with his descriptions of respect and competition. This reflects his eagerness to learn and develop despite his current

context. It demonstrates his positive disposition and willingness to swim against the current and change his life script.

NOTHING BUT SPORT

'F' was 17 years old and had been left at the shelter by his parents one year ago as they "…could not pay for him". His narrative including the use of history and culture to exemplify his experience(s) of the project is supplied below:

R/P	Narrative	Landscape Of Action (History)	Landscape Of Meaning (Culture)
R	What was your experience of the project?	Event: Project.	
P	I like to maybe (pause) to exercise…and to play soccer. I to to teaching me a spacing, whatever, you see, and I like to play soccer ne. I like to communicate. I like to hear my coach what he is saying there in the ground you see and they teach me maybe…when you play this, you must do this. You remember that time you were teaching me rugby…ja… I like that thing because if you're a person you mustn't know how to play soccer also, they teaching me cricket, that's what I like to the soccer you see, that's what I like in this project.		He talks about how he enjoys playing soccer, learning new skills, and learning about new sports such as rugby and cricket. He thus introduces his narrative of learning sport.
R	So… you're saying you learn new things here and you like that?		
P	Yes, I like that and I like to been with you. My dream ne is to play soccer. Maybe I will be like someone playing soccer.		He continues with his narrative of sport and introduces the storyline of dreaming to be a soccer player.

R	Ok and tell me what else have you learnt?	
P	From you?	
R	Ja, apart from learning to play certain sports, did you learn anything else?	
P	Yes…I learn spacing, you know when you put a cones like this, this cones, I learn those ones, I learn positions, and I learn a exercises. Yes, even if you're not here maybe Tuesday or Monday I starting to do the exercises with my team you see.	He picks up on the soccer skills storyline from his first text and builds on it with positions and spacing. Within this same text, he then introduces the storyline of sport on other weekdays. He therefore, thickens the alternative narrative of Fridays with Tuesdays and Mondays.
R	What do you enjoy about exercising with your team?	
P	Exercise ne I teach them how to exercise.	Mondays and Tuesdays are purely about exercise.
R	Alright, what would you like us to do extra that we don't do?	
P	Extra?	
R	Ja.	
P	Positions. When you play soccer you have the positions, there are other positions I know and some I don't know. They can tell me that is my strike but I don't know how must I do to play.	He picks up on the storyline of sport skills and asks to learn more. Asks for more structure in the game (positions).
R	And tell me what is it like when we sit in a group and talk. What is that like for you?	
P	Silence.	He seems unsure through his silence.

R	You know how after we play, we sit and talk?	
P	Yes.	
R	How do you find that?	
P	To talk with my team…maybe to talk with my team if there is a mistake, maybe if you saw someone making a mistake ne you mean like we playing soccer and he doesn't what to move the ball you mustn't make any noise to him. After game you will talk. You tell him after the game…you do this and this, this is wrong.	For him the group talk is about coming up with solutions and communicating mistakes i.e. he further constructs his narrative of learning sport in the project.
R	Is there anything you would like us to change about how we run the project?	
P	Here?	
R	Ja.	
P	To change?	
R	Yes.	
P	Maybe…like you see those small boys you can broke him.	He introduces the storyline of age and sport.
R	So you are worried about the safety of the younger boys?	
P	Yes.	
R	When you say younger boys, how old, under which age?	
P	Maybe…12 because they want to grab that ball and that boy will get broken.	Players under 12 may get hurt. Reflects the parenting of the younger boys or possibly wanting the project to run on a more professional level?
R	Alright, is there anything else you want to say?	
P	Like what?	
R	Anything about the project.	

P	What I want to say ne maybe when I'm in the shelter sometimes when I want to come here sometimes the pastor they like to make problems. Like to say you mustn't come here, sometimes say you must come. You see…that is the problem. They want us to play with you also, they don't want us to play maybe if you're not here you see.	Event: Shelter.	He talks about the incongruent messages he receives at the shelter, thus introducing a new storyline of discipline in the new event of the shelter.
R	Alright. Thank you.		

'F's narrative is one of learning sport and he appears to construct this narrative through the storylines of play and skills. These two storylines are introduced in the start of his narrative with the event of the project. He introduces another storyline of dreaming and this ties into his goal of being a soccer player, "My dream ne is to play soccer".

He picks up on the storyline of skills when he mentions learning, "spacing" and "positions". This narrative of learning is thickened when he refers to Mondays and Tuesdays as he states, "Yes, even if you're not here maybe Tuesday or Monday I starting to do exercises with my team you see". Even in this alternative, he validates that it is also purely about sport, using the words, "Exercise ne I teach them how to exercise".

He later draws on the skills storyline for a second time mentioning "positions" again, and then continues with this storyline and further constructs his narrative of the project being about learning sport, when he experienced the group talk as being about "the game".

A new and thin storyline of age in sport is brought into his narrative when he refers to "…small boys you can broke him". It seems that he has concerns about the safety of these players, but maintains and continues to build his narrative of this project and learning sport.

His final text takes us to the shelter where he introduces a diverse and novel storyline of "problems" at the shelter. His narrative concerning the shelter focuses on the pastor and

'F's difficulty with his incongruent messages concerning the project, as 'F' states, "…the pastor they like to make problems. Like to say you mustn't come here, sometimes say you must come. You see…that is the problem".

'F's narrative regarding the project focuses on his experience of learning sport and it appears that for him that is how he understood the project i.e. he experienced it as play and skills. Interesting, he appears to struggle with the discipline and structure at the shelter, but asks for more structure in the project through positions. His narrative emphasises sport skills with no reference to 'soft skills' of any sort. His narrative is thus incongruent to those of the other participants where their experience(s) of the project seem to incorporate learning beyond the sport context. The literature also fails to confirm this finding as the studies quoted in chapter two of this mini-dissertation have shown psychosocial benefits through sport (Fejgin, 1994; Sallis et al., 1999; Larson, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Petitpas et al., 2004; Bailey, 2006; Slesnick et al., 2006; Moffet et al., 2006; Brunelle et al., 2007).

For me 'F's narrative reflects how engrained he is in the sport culture and perhaps his life experiences, such as being left at the shelter by his parents, have contributed to his incapacity to see beyond the game. Although he does not share the insight of the other street children, his narrative sends the message of motivation and reflects the life skill of independence. He asks to be empowered through sport skills so he can rise above the narrative that street children merely sit on our streets sniffing glue. He dreams of being a soccer player and creates experiences such as additional practices with his team mates, to create his own harbour devoid of the frustration he experiences in his current reality.

Before these findings are discussed in greater depth against the backdrop of the dominant narrative of street children; consideration of my personal position in this journey is given.

SELF REFLECTION

As I boarded the boat along with my fellow peers, so my personal assumptions as well as the academic and organisational contexts which shaped this research, jumped in with us. Although I aimed to leave these discourses at the harbour and sail towards these children with a clear canvas on which to paint our experiences, they insistently sat right next to me throughout this journey. This discussion reviews the impact this had on this research study.

I begin this discussion with a reflection on my academic training and work experience as a Research Psychologist. These experiences contributed to my evaluative approach towards my conversations with these children, in that the questions I used during the interviews with each participant conformed to a certain format - a check list of sort. This involved probing into their experiences, expectations, applicability and recommendations for our project. I conclude this based on the following text examples: with participant 'B' when he talks about liking the project, I ask, "Ok, so what have you learnt through the project?" therefore, immediately probing into the benefits of our project, and although I do not use the same wording, I repeat this with the other participants when stating, "Do you ever learn these things somewhere else?", "Ok. Did you learn anything else, apart from sport?", "What were you taught here?" and "Ok and tell me what else have you learnt?" I also directly asked the participants what their expectations were, stating, "What were you expecting from this project?" My evaluative framework, is further reinforced by asking, "Do you use these skills in the shelter?", thus assessing whether these life skills have been transferred to other contexts. My inherent check list surfaces more explicitly, when I ask for likes, dislikes and recommendations for the project.

Apart from my leading questioning supported by my prior outcomes-based research experience, an additional area of reflection for me involved my difficulty in following the narrative of the participant, and my struggle in withholding my personal assumptions. This was evident in the dialogue between 'B' and I where he refers to "respect" and I ask him, "What was like choosing a different sport to play instead of soccer? Everyone had a different

opinion, how did you handle that? Therefore, assuming that his understanding of respect is about respecting others in instances of diversity.

With participant 'C' I automatically interpret his silence as a language barrier and ask "Do you know what experience means?" In accordance with my Narrative position, perhaps I should have asked him what the silence was about, instead of making my own interpretations informed by my experiences of history and culture.

An additional example is with participant 'D' when he introduces the storyline of future in sport; instead of staying with this I direct his narrative by asking him, "Ok. Did you learn anything else, apart from sport?" Similarly with participant 'E' I fail to continue with his storyline of respect and opt to ask for recommendations for the project by asking, "What didn't you like about this project?"

A personal critique of my interviews includes my occasional deficiency in using the participants' language. In reading these texts I was left with the sense that I struggled to discuss their experiences with them, as I assumed an academic stance using the language I am more comfortable with. For example, when participant 'E' said, "Mmm, ja…I think if you can get people, like TASK people to come and challenge us to play soccer. That would be nice for us.", I respond with, "So…you'd like more competitive games." Perhaps I could have reflected on what "challenge" means to him, instead of introducing "competitive".

My concern with my data collection rests with the inconsistency it has with the Narrative position of this study. In other words, I tended to direct the conversations instead of allowing the participants' narratives to naturally unfold and allowing them to drive the process. I feel that the academic and organisational contexts placed implicit expectations on this research study and influenced my data collection, as my perception of the aim of the project from their position, involved the goal that these children would attain life skills that they could utilise in life contexts beyond this project. This was thickened by my preconceived idea of writing this research report for a specific academic audience.

However, I consider my analysis of these interviews as more congruent with my methodology framework. This was primarily due to the guidance of my supervisor, reading of relevant literature, and greater therapeutic experience within the Narrative position; as my data analysis was conducted whilst completing my Counselling Psychology internship where I consistently used this paradigm as my explanatory and applicatory model when working with therapy clients.

I now discuss the research findings in the context of the literature and research question.

DISCUSSION

It appears that the dominant cultural narrative concerning street children constitutes hopelessness and irreparability. This perception is further thickened through the well documented stormy sea of neglect and marginalisation (Cockburn, 1991; Balmer et al., 1997; Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Lockhat & Van Niekerk, 2000; Ensign, 2006). Street children face this sea of adversity with little support from the harbour, which promises to protect them from the precarious currents and storms they endure (South African Constitution, 1996), whilst desperately trying to find their way back to safety. However, in spite of this challenging environment, there have been success stories where the necessary life skills were gained, equipping children for their swim back to the harbour (Ayaya & Esamai, 2001; Sherman et al., 2006). This is corroborated through narratives of children abroad, where the medium of sport, provided the life skills to withstand the stormy sea, and avert being washed away with strong, debilitating currents (Larson, 2000; Petitpas et al., 2004;Bailey, 2006; Moffet et al., 2006; Brunelle et al., 2007).

However, the above mentioned success stories only partially addressed the research question of this study, as the literature publicised the advantage of using sport to develop life skills in children, by narrating an increase in social skills and prosocial behaviour (Larson, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Moffet et al., 2006). Prior studies thus looked at what children learnt, but failed to consider how they experienced this. My research question aimed to focus on this void, by reflecting on street children's experience(s) of learning

life skills through this medium, sport. I turn to the research findings and consider to what extent these narratives were able to answer the research question I posed.

As evident from the narratives of the six research participants, it seems that our time at sea elicited unique experiences for every individual. Simultaneously the narratives of the five participants reflect strong overlaps, namely, the narratives of liking, helpfulness, change, learning, and niceness, as these participants appeared to experience the project as beneficial beyond the realm of sport, and refer to the storylines of learning, respect, talking, and self improvement through play. These children thus send the message of resilience, determination, willingness, and hope.

It seems that their expectations of the project, as indicated in 'B's storyline of boring, and 'D's storyline of novelty, were exceeded as these two participants constructed narratives of helpfulness and learning respectively. There was no information as to what shaped these expectations, but I hypothesise that they may be based on past experiences of being taught at school or at the shelter where a more traditional teaching medium was utilised. Our project which comprised of an experiential, sport medium elicited positive experiences for these children and enabled them to re-discover their playful selves, whilst providing an alternative narrative to that of the stormy sea.

An additional storyline of career in sport ran through the narratives of 'C' and 'D' and this reflects the hope that sport provides and the opportunities perceived in this context. These assumptions or personal narratives of sport may be influenced by social norms, values and the power relations these children reside in, as narratives tend to have an interpersonal nature (Sclater, 2003). This may explain the correlations between their narratives in their reference to respect, in particular respecting others. They have learnt to swim on their own drawing support from one another. This is substantiated in 'E's narrative where he discusses excluding the younger boys so that they do not get hurt. Is this perhaps evidence of the African 'ubuntu' philosophy of group unity?

From these narratives, I begin to understand how they experienced the project and feel a sense of hope as all the participants, even participant 'F', benefited on some level. The nature of the life skills they gained through this experience ranged from more concrete, sport skills, to the more abstract, psychological and social skills, which the participants referred to as respect, talking, and improving. However, implicit reference to life skills was provided in their messages of improving through play, which has much significance in the context of where they are living, reflecting their capacity to endure rough seas, whilst maintaining a sense of hope.

Along with these narratives, an alternative narrative seems to be woven into the responses of these participants, namely, that of Fridays being different, different to what they know and different to their normal context. I am not entirely certain of what their norm is or how they experience it, however, the literature tends to paint the picture of a rather stormy sea where neglect and abuse are the currents dominating their environment. From their narratives, I thus hear that this project provided an alternative glimmer of hope through play, an experience they would like to extend further to include other weekdays.

The findings of this research study thus reflect the advantages of sport being utilised as a teaching medium for life skills, as these children's narratives portrayed the experience of learning and hope. Analysis of the research data adequately answered my research question, as the findings reveal that Tshwane street children experience learning life skills through sport as beneficial, hopeful and different. As I approached the end of this adventurous journey, I was left with the thought: Perhaps this playful wave is one these children are able to ride back to the harbour?

SUMMARY

This chapter not only delineated the results of this study, with deliberation of my research position, but highlighted the significance of these findings. It portrayed the most vital part of our journey, namely, our time spent playing with these children at sea. As we paddled back to shore, our boat felt heavier, we soon realised, we carried their narratives of hope

back with us. This positive experience needed further reflection and consideration, so shortly after we unpacked our boat, my three devoted peers and I sat for a while and gazed at the sunset as we discussed the outcomes of our journey.

CHAPTER 5:
GAZING AT THE SUNSET

Although our weather forecast predicted some dim prospects for our journey, in the form of a tempestuous sea evident in the marginalised context South African street children reside in (Cockburn, 1991; Balmer et al., 1997; Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Lockhat & Van Niekerk, 2000; Ensign, 2006), my peers and I opted to venture on and sail out to these children, with the endeavour to expose them to a small piece of harbour through sport. This chapter is a reflection on our exploratory journey, incorporating conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future studies of this nature.

CONCLUSIONS

Most projects with street children in Africa conform to the more traditional educational system where collaboration between learner and teacher is somewhat restricted or lacking (Nyamathi et al., 2005; Olley, 2006). This reiterates the dominant cultural narrative concerning street children, where negative perceptions exist and are replicated in the media and other informative, cultural sources. This research study thus challenged the belief system that street children are to some extent irreparable, it discarded the notion of working with the problematic behaviour exhibited by these children (Cockburn, 1991; Balmer et al., 1997; Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Lockhat & Van Niekerk, 2000; Ensign, 2006), and embraced a novel, experiential approach.

Prior studies abroad have indicted the psychosocial benefits of sport, reflecting an increase in social skills and prosocial behaviour (Larson, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Moffet et al., 2006), suggesting that this would be a constructive medium when teaching Tshwane street children life skills. However, these studies solely addressed what children learnt, but failed to consider how children experienced this. This left my research question unanswered, as it focussed on street children's experience(s) of learning life skills through sport.

The Narrative perspective of this project and subsequent research study afforded street children the opportunity to learn new life skills via their own experiences by providing a platform void of judgement and expectations. In so doing, an alternative narrative of Fridays emerged for these children. This narrative holds hope, difference, benefit, and alternatives for them. Further narratives of liking, helpfulness, change, learning, and niceness emerged from the interviews, which they constructed through storylines of learning, respect, talking, and self improvement through play. Additionally, reference was made to the transference of these life skills to the context of the shelter as the participants described cases where they have applied skills, in particular respect for others, obtained through their involvement in the project. Contradictory to the five participants' narratives reflecting psychosocial benefits in the project, one participant experienced the project to focus exclusively on sport and enhanced his sport skills though his participation. Although this participant did not articulate the experience of learning life skills or soft skills per se, he did benefit on some level, providing the information that this exercise was not fruitless for him.

So despite the well documented stormy sea of neglect where street children face currents of adversity with little support from the harbour, the narratives of these children reflect their resilience, determination, motivation, and hope of finding their way back to safety. Although they appear engulfed by debilitating narratives, they maintain their ability to experience happiness, maintain their capacity to play, maintain their eagerness to learn, and dare to dream for superior futures.

The findings of this research study echoes literature on the advantages of sport being utilised as a teaching medium for life skills (Larson, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Moffet et al., 2006), as these children's narratives portrayed the experience of learning respect, talking, and self improvement through play. Analysis of the research data effectively answered my research question, as the findings reveal that Tshwane street children experience learning life skills through sport as beneficial, hopeful, and different to their current context of the stormy sea. It appears that sport provides a way back to the harbour.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Each interview was unique, occurring within a socio-spatial context and reflecting the social and historical background of the narrator (Wiles et al., 2005), as each narrative has a certain function and is shaped according to this objective, whilst influenced by the narrator's sensitivity to the audience. Power relations are also influential in the communication of narratives as both the researcher and participant are cognisant of the audience and the necessity to communicate certain knowledge and experiences (Wiles et al., 2005). This preconception may have played out in this research study as there seemed an inherent requirement to experience the project in a positive light, and when reflecting on my questioning, I influenced the events of the participants' narratives to some extent, but despite this, the storyline was maintained. This might have affected the way in which the participants opted to convey themselves to the world when considering and portraying their experience(s) of the project.

The context of the interview informs the nature of the narrative (Wiles et al., 2005). In this research study a recording device in the form of a Dictaphone was utilised to capture the data, and this may have influenced the nature of the interaction between the participant and I. Particularly due to the unfamiliarity of being recorded for the participant.

Furthermore, the interviews were not conducted in the first language of the participants and this may have altered their narratives. It may also be a contributing factor to their thin descriptions. However, longitudinal studies based on attachment theory, reveal that children who tell coherent narratives tend to have developed secure attachment during infancy, as opposed to insecurely attached children where their narratives may be confused, highly elaborate or flippant (Roberts, 2000). This may be an additional aspect to consider, as the participants of this study have most likely experienced inadequate parental attachment whilst growing up living either on the street or in the shelter, and this may add to the little auto-biographical competence displayed by them. Regardless, of their thin descriptions, these children were able to narrate their experience(s) of playing at

sea, by making one aware of the alternate narrative of Fridays and the meaning they attach to this experience through their use of language such as help, change, learn and nice, which made this project valid. It thus initiated a new and different experience for the children who partook in this project, giving them some experience of the harbour which many of them have never had the opportunity to previously experience, where life skills are typically gained for most children under the safe auspices of their parents, guardians, and teachers.

A challenge was to decipher the important elements of the interview in need of interpretation. When analysing a text attention is also paid to the pauses, sighs, and use of unrelated narratives to the researcher's questions during the interview (Wiles et al., 2005). Riessman (1993) states that ideational meaning refers to the content of the narrative, interpersonal meaning considers the interplay between narrator and listener so social and personal relations filter through the conversation, and textual content is semantically oriented as the social discourses which encompass a narrative need to be included in the interpretation. It emphasises how in-depth a Narrative analysis is. Furthermore, Narrative analysis does not provide specifications as to which part of the text to select and interpret. Perhaps the participants may not have selected and labelled the same text as important (Wiles, Rosenberg & Kearns, 2005), and in hindsight a follow-up meeting with the participants where their consent is provided on my interpretations would have increased the validity of these results. Unfortunately, time constraints did not permit this follow-up process, but should be considered for inclusion in further research studies on this topic.

The findings of this research study fall short in their applicability i.e. the external validity of the study was compromised, due to the contextual nature of the research inquiry. This may be perceived as a limitation from a traditional positivist research perspective, which advocates the study of variables, whilst other variables are held constant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The sampling technique as well as the self report measure used, meant that the quality of the data rested on the accuracy and honesty of the participant's responses, an area one is unable to assess with full certainty.

Having stated these limitations, this research study provided valuable insight into how South African street children experience learning life skills through sport. The research question formulated at the onset of this endeavour was thus adequately answered through the feedback received by the six research participants who were interviewed during the data collection phase of this research study. Contrarily to the partial ability of the literature, which primarily centred on sports programmes conducted abroad employing outcomes-based evaluations, to effectively address this research question. The comments received by the research participants of this study were of a positive nature, suggesting that such interventions, namely, utilisation of a sport-oriented medium, can be applied to teachings with street children in the South African context. This feedback holds much recommendation for social workers, educators, psychologists, and programme developers who plan to implement measures to empower street children, in that experiential and sport or adventure-based programmes can provide a positive learning curve and experience for street children. Furthermore, such children, or children in general, may be more receptive to learning and applying the skills attained from programmes which follow a more experiential approach.

SUMMARY

As I gaze at the sunset, I find myself echoing the same narrative depicted by the street children of this research study, namely, that of hope. This narrative has not only developed through the productive research findings of this study, but largely rests with the knowledge that this ripple in the sea continues to spread hope, as this project has become an ongoing constitute of the MA (Counselling/Sport Psychology) programme at Pretoria University. Escalating in 2007 by including more weekly sessions, more shelters, and providing a competitive element in the form of an informal league; a factor requested by the participants of this research study. Therefore, people (psychology students) continue to deploy their preconceived and culturally constructed assumptions, and paddle out to sea holding some harbour of hope, so that street children can be exposed to and experience the benefits of learning in a context where they are treated with respect and

equality. Thus the opportunity for these street children to re-author their narratives arises, in ways that enable them to dream and actualise more positive futures.

On a more personal note, this experience elicited a range of emotions and challenges for me. These difficulties centred on one primary theme, 'letting go', this involved letting go of my instruction booklet, and it seems that my narrative paralleled the shackles constraining street children in the South African context. It has been through this journey that I gained insight into the impact of my past experiences, and how this has created my dominant narrative as a researcher. Although initially excited at the prospect of this challenge, namely, conducting and writing a research report from a framework somewhat foreign to me, during this experience I often felt like, "An Englishmen in New York". Hence my academic writing style, reiterating my need to conform to the academic narrative (the well-engineered pier), which has played such an instrumental role in my professional development. You are probably wondering, what possessed me to challenge myself in this way. Why not follow a well-known 'winning' formula? Not an easy one to answer…Perhaps, I simply needed a unique moment of rebellion, to contradict my dominant narrative of a conservative academic who always plays by the rules. However, in true Narrative style, you are more than welcome to draw your own conclusions and formulate your own interpretations in this regard. Despite the reasons for my delve into this social constructionist framework, I end this journey knowing that I will never read or conduct research and therapy in the same way again, I've learnt the value and importance of bracketing my assumptions, disarming myself from my personal preconceptions, and acquiring the freedom to accompany and understand another individual on their journey regardless of context and diversity. What an experience!

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APPENDIX A

Unstructured Interview

How have you experienced this project?

The above question was used to initiate the interview and further questions were asked guided by the responses of each participant.

APPENDIX B

Child assent letter

Hello,

During this year you have been in a project with the Psychology students from Pretoria University, which teaches children life skills by playing sport. I would like to ask you how this experience has been for you. This information will be used for research that looks at teaching children life skills through sport.

Your name will not be used but I will tape the interview so that I do not miss any information.

This interview will take about 30 minutes to complete.

There are no risks involved and you will not receive any payment for the interview. You do not have to be in the research study, and you may also change your mind, or choose not to answer a question if you do not want to.

Regards,

_____

Mary Thomas
Researcher

Child: _____
Researcher: _____
Witness: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____

APPENDIX C

Consent form for being audio-taped

The interview for the research study requires audio-taping in order to ensure that vital information is not lost during the research process. Please sign below if you consent to the interview with the child being audio-taped.

Guardian: _____

Researcher: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____