

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction and research methodology

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Crime is one of the most serious problems South Africa faces today. It puts a strain on the public, the business community, the economy and the government. Shop theft is a specific type of theft that is a cause for serious concern, and compels criminologists to conduct research regarding this issue.

The main focus of this research will be on the South African shop theft situation, as it manifests in a township environment. It specifically examines shop theft perpetrators in terms of age, gender and scholastic details, with emphasis on the extent of young people's involvement. The nature of shop theft as a criminal offence is also analysed from a criminological point of view. Furthermore, this chapter deals with the basic notions regarding the theory of research methodology, and describes the practical execution of the research as it was conducted for this study.

Cant (1991:203) mentions that research, as a scientific enterprise, is carried out with a particular consideration in mind - the discovering of new facts regarding a specific phenomenon. These facts are then used to describe and measure human behaviour in a particular social environment. In order to acquire these intended research goals, it is imperative that the research findings should be accurate, and possess a precision that is statistically measurable.

In order to comply with such standards, this chapter will now focus on an explanation of the methodology used. The content focuses on aspects such as the research design, the aim of the research study, definitions of key terms and the method and procedures of data collection. The scope of the study, in terms of universum, number of participating schools, and the duration of the study will also be discussed. The rationale behind the use of a

random sample, the survey questionnaire and the number of completed questionnaires will be examined. Other factors such as ethical issues and the pilot study will be reviewed. Challenges encountered during the research, such as the accuracy of detail, poor instructions, and defects in the formulation of the questionnaire will be addressed, and overall remarks will be made. Finally, there will be a brief outline of the presentation of the research report.

The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight the problem statement, and discuss the research steps, procedures and processes undertaken in this research study. The aims and hypotheses of the study will also receive attention. Permission to conduct such a study, as well as the data capturing and statistical analysis of the data will be clarified. The definition of the conceptual delimitation, as well as access and ethical issues, will also be discussed.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Shop theft - as a universal criminological problem - is a serious economic problem, with a negative effect on company profitability. Most crimes in South Africa, including shop theft, have increased over the past few years. Shop theft is not only a South African problem, but it is a global concern. The problem continues to grow and, as Farrell and Ferrara (1985:2) argued, some time ago, shop theft remains to be a problem for merchants. The emergence of self-service created more opportunities for thefts from shops.

According to the SAPS Crime Information Analysis Centre (1999) the ratio of shop theft per 100 000 of the population for the years 1994 to 1999 appears to have remained fairly stable since 1995; that is, in terms of incidents reported to the South African Police Service.

Table 1: Shop theft per 100 000 of the population, 1994 to 1999

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1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
115.1	104.3	102.5	102.9	96.4	101.3

The five percent decrease in 1998 should not be viewed as a real decline, but rather as a decline in the number of incidents reported to the police.

The Central Statistical Service report (now Statistics SA) of 1998 showed that a total of 27 978 shop theft cases were prosecuted during the period of 1995/96; 4 867 of these cases comprised young adults (aged 18-20) and 3 366 juveniles (aged 7-17).

Buckle and Farrington (Barlow 1990:251) conducted a study during 1984 in England regarding the number of shop theft incidents that occurred at one shop in a week. They found that the incidents in that shop were ten times higher than the number of incidents reported by the police, in the entire city and its surrounding areas. Other research findings also indicate that only about 10 percent of incidents involving shop theft are usually detected by staff members, which explains why there is such a significant difference in shop theft reporting between various establishments.

### **1.3 Aims**

Neuman (2000:446) accurately illustrates that the goals (aims) of literary research are to demonstrate familiarity, link the new research with prior research, synthesise the results, and finally, to learn and stimulate, as well as assist with the design of a measuring instrument. This type of information is used and integrated with empirical research, in order to describe, explain, prevent, control or predict a criminal phenomenon.

Based on these statements, the aims of this research are to describe, analyse and explain (where applicable) young people=s views regarding the following:

- \* what, according to their views, constitute crime,
- \* the seriousness of shop theft in relation to other types of property crimes such as burglary and other types of thefts,
- \* what constitutes shop theft, with a specific focus on the value of the merchandise and the type of goods taken from stores,
- \* the reasons for shop theft, with emphasis on opportunity, peer pressure, and rationalisation,
- \* the appropriate punishment for shop theft in relation to the theft of similar merchandise from the homes of the respondents and
- \* the respondents views regarding their involvement in shop theft and their motivation for the offence.

The researcher will then endeavour to describe:

- \* the profiles of the victims and offenders involved in shop theft,
- \* the nature and extent of shop theft,
- \* applicable aspects of policing, court procedures and punishments relating to shop theft,
- \* and explain the involvement of juveniles in shop theft with reference to some aspects of different crime explanation theories.

The researcher will also attempt to suggest an appropriate shop theft prevention programme based on the research findings.

These aims, as well as the findings based on the literary research, directed the development of the hypotheses.

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

Dixon *et al.* (1987:39) regards a hypothesis as a statement that asserts a relationship between variables. It is also regarded as a provisional answer to the question that the investigator intends to answer through the research mechanisms. A statement regarding something that ought to be observed in the real world, if the theory is correct, can also be viewed as a hypothesis. It can furthermore be defined as an expectation, with reference to the nature of things extracted from a theory. They can be formulated negatively (nil-hypothesis) as opposed to the alternative hypothesis, which is constructed positively. The tests of statistical significance for this research was set at the 95 percent level (prob. 0,05) and better.

##### Hypotheses 1

Ho The gender of the learners will influence their perceptions on shop theft.

Ha The gender of the learners will not influence their perceptions on shop theft.

##### Hypotheses 2

- Ho The age of the learners will influence their perceptions on shop theft.  
Ha The age of the learners will not influence their perceptions on shop theft.

#### Hypotheses 3

- Ho The grade of the learners will influence their perceptions on shop theft.  
Ha The grade of the learners will not influence their perceptions on shop theft.

#### Hypotheses 4

- Ho Shop theft is caused by opportunistic acts.  
Ha Shop theft is not caused by opportunistic acts.

#### Hypotheses 5

- Ho Shop theft is caused by inadequate security.  
Ha Shop theft is not caused by inadequate security.

#### Hypotheses 6

- Ho Shop theft is caused by friends daring each other to do it.  
Ha Shop theft is not caused by friends daring each other to do it.

To attain the goals for the research and to test the hypotheses, a particular research procedure was implemented.

### **1.5 Research procedures and implementation**

### 1.5.1 The process

In the first place, literary research was conducted. The literary research was utilised to construct the measuring instrument. Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted to finalise the questionnaire. The empirical data was captured, statistically manipulated and integrated with the literary research.

### 1.5.2 Permission to conduct the research

Neuman (2000:352) refers to a gatekeeper as someone with the formal or informal authority to control access to a site. As far as this research undertaking is concerned, the notion refers to school principals or headmasters of the selected institutions where the study was to be conducted. Some of the aspects the researcher took into account were:

- \* The researcher made telephonic contact with the gatekeepers with regards to the intended research visits.
- \* Personal visits by the researcher followed each of the selected schools, in order to make preliminary arrangements with the gatekeepers.
- \* In the absence of the concerned gatekeepers, the deputy or a senior staff member was consulted.

### 1.5.3 Geographical delimitation

Regarding the geographical delimitation, the research was limited to the Mabopane area. Geographically, the area is situated approximately 35 kilometres north of Pretoria. It is an African township situated in the North West Province. Two high schools were selected for the survey, located not further than 5 kilometres apart.

#### 1.5.4 Empirical data collection

The following procedure was implemented with regards to data collection: The researcher requested and was granted permission by the principals of the selected high schools to distribute and administer the completion of the questionnaires at a suitable time without interfering with the learners' daily academic activities.

During the empirical data capturing process the following instructions were provided to the learners:

- \* this is not a test, but a questionnaire about young people's views pertaining to shop theft,
- \* there are no right or wrong answers,
- \* your answer is the right answer for you,
- \* mark the appropriate box using a tick,
- \* please read every question and statement carefully before answering.

#### 1.5.5 Developing the measuring instrument

Babbie (2001:148) maintains that Rensis Likert has largely formalised the approach used in this research project, through the development of the Likert scale (a model in which research respondents are asked to strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree or disagree) as used in the final questionnaire pattern for this study. Both questions and statements are employed in the questionnaire. The use of both in the measuring instrument allows the



investigator more flexibility when items are constructed, and makes the method of information gathering interesting.

The measuring instrument is used to record the questions and the answers. This measuring instrument is formulated to satisfy the requirements of the research project, of which it is an imperative aspect.

Attention was given to the nature and types of questions asked, as well as the wording, phrases and logical sequence of the questions. This made provision for the recording of responses and the division of directives to the respondents and therefore ensured the sufficient registration of the responses.

To ensure uniformity, questionnaires had to be taken down orally - which yielded better results in terms of the purposes of this study. All instructions were communicated verbally and appeared in the questionnaire in order to ensure clarity and avoid ambiguity. Open-ended questions were included, and each question was thoroughly explained to the learners.

#### 1.5.6 Open-ended and closed-ended questions

Babbie (2001:148) states that, when questions are posed to respondents, researchers have two options available to them: open-ended and close-ended questions. The first option is to ask open-ended questions, in which research participants are requested to submit their own responses to the question. An example of this type of approach is contained in the final questionnaire, attached to this research document as Appendix A.

Burton (2000:339) argues that open-ended questions provide a response format that affords research respondents the latitude to give any response that they prefer. The

investigator has to make logical sense of these responses, formulate relevant categories, and then code the categories, so that the accumulated information can be statistically analysed. Managing open-ended questions is time consuming but contains an interesting aspect. Even simple questions can generate a substantial number of responses, in which they render cardinal and unpredictable knowledge and insight in the study of human behaviour. The other option, closed-ended questions, implores the respondents to select an answer from a list provided by the researcher.

Close-ended questions are common in social research, because they provide more uniform responses and are easy to refine. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, have to be coded first, before one can process them for analysis. The close-ended questions can directly be transferred to computer format. In the formulation of close-ended questions, the researcher was challenged by two structural requirements. The first requirement was that the response categories should be explicit; they included all the possible responses that might be expected. The investigator ensured this by adding a category labelled Other (specify ...). The other requirement was that the response categories should be mutually exclusive; the respondents were not forced to choose more than one response. In ensuring that the researcher's categories were mutually exclusive, each combination of categories prompted the researcher to ask: Could a person provide more than one response to this question? It was also meaningful for the researcher to affix specific instructions, asking the respondents to select the appropriate response.

The researcher ensured that questions were clear (ambiguous questions were avoided), and double-barrelled questions were also avoided. The researcher also determined beforehand that the research respondents were competent to answer the questions, they were prepared to answer them, and questions were relevant and appropriate to the study. Short questions apparently yielded the best results, dissent questions were averted and biased questions and notions were also avoided.

## **Pilot study**

According to Oppenheim (1992:64) the pilot study plays an important role in formulating the correct wording of questions, since extremely vague questions may crop up in the most unexpected sections of the measuring instrument. It also assists in determining the time it will take to complete a questionnaire. This enables the investigator to allow the appropriate time for the actual completion of the measuring instrument and encourages the investigator to think ahead, towards the analysis.

For this research undertaking, only one school was selected to conduct the pilot study. Forty (40) randomly selected learners in grades 10, 11, and 12 completed the measuring instrument. The headmaster made all the arrangements for the administering of the pilot study and the administering of the pilot testing took place on the agreed date.

### **1.5.7 Delimitation and sampling**

When human behaviour is researched in the context of Criminology, it is impossible to study the whole population. The researcher drew a manageable sample to research the study regarding shop theft perceptions, since the researcher was advised against a comprehensive study of everything and everybody.

According to Babbie (1998:92) there is no limit to what or who can be researched, or the units of analysis in social research. The features of individual people - gender, age, scholastic details, perceptions, attitudes and motives, are taken into account. The researcher combines these descriptions to represent a composite picture of the group of learners, who then have to complete a designed measuring instrument.

## **Population and sampling**

In addition to refining concepts and measurements, the researcher decided *whom or what* will be studied. This researcher's target population is high school learners from grades ten [10] to twelve [12] between the ages of fourteen [14] and twenty-one plus [21+]. The investigator will not manage to investigate all the members of the population under scrutiny, and will not be able to study every possible observation of the target population (as discussed above). In each case, the researcher selected a sample from the population to collect information and do research.

The total sample comprised 500 questionnaires and each school was allocated a total of 250 questionnaires. A random sampling method was used and learners from grades 10, 11 and 12 were selected. In the process of questionnaire compilation two grades were included, namely 8 and 9. It came to the researcher's attention that, when a pilot study was conducted, only grades 10, 11 and 12 attended the selected schools, and no learners could be selected for grades 8 and 9. When the questionnaires were distributed, and before the participants completed the questionnaires, the researcher gave clear instructions to the learners that they should ignore the first two blocks which refer to grades 8 and 9. There were 208 male and 291 female respondents. One hundred and sixty of the respondents (160) were in grade 10, one hundred and forty four (144) in grade 11 and one hundred and ninety six (196) in grade 12 and the gathered information was treated as strictly confidential.

### **Selection of schools**

In order to preserve the anonymity of the participating schools an undertaking was given to the gatekeepers that no school or learner will be identified during the investigation. The researcher's choice of schools can be explained as follows:

- \* schools= location were easy to access,
- \* gatekeepers of those schools were the first to be approached by the researcher,
- \* the researcher used to be a learner at one of the schools where this research was conducted.

There are a total of six (6) high schools in the Mabopane area, but because of the above mentioned reasons, the researcher selected only these two .

### **Selection of respondents**

Different societies (to which people of all races and belief systems belong to) exhibit different types of shoplifters. Shoplifters may be male, female, transvestite, homosexual, heterosexual, young, old, rich or poor or a combination of these types. The gist is too broad to include everybody in as far as this research work is concerned. The study was thus delimited in accordance with the practical investigation that was conducted and the selection of learners were based on the following criteria:

- \* the learners participation was strictly voluntary,
- \* only learners in grades 10, 11 and 12 participated,
- \* boys and girls were between the ages of 14 and 21 years, because children in this age group are legally capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and, more importantly, able to use their own discretion,
- \* learners were competent to read, write, and understand basic English as used in the questionnaire.

## **1.6 Data capturing**

It took an average of 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The English used in the questionnaire was of a standard suitable for learners in these particular grades, and whose home language was not English. The researcher also consulted educators for guidance in this regard. The research respondents completed the questionnaires anonymously, and detailed instructions were given beforehand. It was also stressed that there were no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. The questionnaires were completed over a period of six months, April 2000 to September 2000.

In order to gather the desired information in a research survey, a measuring instrument had to be designed and drafted by the researcher. This measuring instrument was completed by the participating schools and returned to the investigator. Gatekeepers and teachers were not allowed to constitute part of the learners=group, as this may lead to a feeling of uneasiness on the side of the learners. The researcher flashed each question on a screen and explained, in an objective manner, the questions to the learners. This eliminated misunderstandings, misconceptions, and possible ambiguities of questions, words, or phrases. An overhead projector and transparencies were used during the field research. The researcher checked to ensure that all the responses were provided - this resulted in an accurate completion of the measuring instrument (by the learners). The researcher himself captured the data.

## **1.7 Language**

When conducting the pilot study it was observed that, even among the grade 12 learners who are in a much higher than the average school grade, the use of English in the questionnaires presented difficulties for some respondents. It was thus decided not to translate the measuring instrument into Setswana (Setswana is a common language learners speak in the research area - their mother tongue or vernacular). Furthermore, it was important to use simple English in this study, as all the respondents use English as a second language. The process of interpretation, especially since it happened immediately, does not necessarily mean that some of the semantic contents of the questions were lost, but the time to complete a questionnaire was extended with seven minutes.

Attention was also given to the appearance and presentation features of the measuring instrument, to create the impression that it is easy to complete, but at the same time this also emphasises the seriousness of the research project. Consideration was also given to the wording, phrasing and definitions of unfamiliar concepts, in order to assist the research respondents to complete the survey questionnaire.

### **1.8 Responses achieved**

A total of five hundred (500) questionnaires were distributed to the learners, of which 498 (99.6%) were returned by the respondents, during the field research period. This figure represented a percent return of the response achieved on completed questionnaires, as almost all the learners at the selected schools participated in this research survey.

There were no unusable or spoilt questionnaires.

The researcher can only ascribe such a good response to the high level of motivation present among the respondents, and the nature of the questions and instructions.

### **1.9 Statistical analysis of the data**

The analysis and interpretation of the data was performed with the aid of the SPSS9.0 computer program. Calculations were made to compute frequency and percentage tables for a descriptive analysis. The data was also analysed in terms of gender, age and grade variables.

The following statistical techniques were used:

- \* frequency and percentage tables
- \* Chi-square - test
- \* A 5% ( $p < 0,05$ ) level of significance was set for the f-test and the Chi-square- test.

The final phase, before the empirical data capturing could commence, was the pilot study.

To enhance the geographical delimitation, the following key concepts are used in this research study, and the meanings attached to them are indicated in the ensuing definitions.

### **1.10 Conceptual delimitation**

The following concepts are used in this research project as indicated by the following definitions:

#### **Shop theft**

Naudé (1976:16-7) indicates that shop theft refers to the unlawful taking of goods intended for sale, from a shop, by customers, who pretend to be legitimate, with the intention of depriving the proprietor of such ownership.

#### **Shoplifter**



This is a person who steals merchandise or goods from shops after entering as a legitimate customer.

## **Youth**

Newburn in Maguire, Morgan and Reiner (1997:613) regards the term as an elastic concept. This concept has a different meaning to different people, at different periods, and in different contexts. It can refer to all people perceived as young, very often within the context of teenagers, juveniles and adolescents. More importantly it focuses on the type of conduct regarded as against the conventional norms and values of the society, often associated with young people. In this research it refers to 14-21 year olds.

### **1.11 Access and ethical considerations**

Babbie (2001:469) describes research ethics as subscribing and conforming to the standardised conduct of a particular profession or group. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001:154) states that, when human behaviour is subjected to scientific investigation, it involves ethical issues. Two key factors that a researcher is confronted with the minute a project commences, and the desired information for the envisaged empirical research study is collected, are access and ethics. These issues are a continuous concern throughout the different phases of information collection, and even afterwards. They are related to what type of information the investigator is able to gather and how it is acquired, as well as the way in which it is used by the researcher. Social scientists developed different ethics, and used various perspectives that exist when a relationship between the researcher and the researched population is forged. Blaxter *et al.* (2001:160) referred to them as common ethical issues, namely: confidentiality, anonymity, legality, and professionalism. Babbie (2001:469) referred to these issues as the four pillars that ensure ethical considerations are in place, especially in social sciences - voluntary participation (pillar 1), no harm to the respondents (pillar 2), anonymity and confidentiality (pillar 3) and

no cheating of colleagues (pillar 4). These ethical considerations are not the only applicable ones, there are other ethics that also deserve attention, such as deception and informed consent. The researcher also acknowledges that some categories of respondents require careful consideration, such as young people, thus ethical issues were borne in mind throughout the research study. Each ethical issue will now be discussed.

### **Informed consent**

Every survey engages ethical concerns in terms of protecting respondents=confidentiality. Similarly, all surveys engage ethical concerns in terms of informed consent, to which the main threat is deception (Presser 1994:446). When this research study was conducted, the researcher needed the assistance of volunteers to respond and was morally obliged to inform research participants in detail of the extent to which the researcher needed their co-operation, before embarking on the information-gathering phase. It was only when the research respondents were in possession of detailed information regarding the project, and able to make a fully informed decision regarding their participation, that the researcher moved on to the next research preparation phase. In this study the researcher even gave the respondents personal details about himself, his origins, why he was visiting their school and the importance of their involvement.

### **Voluntary participation**

Voluntary participation is seen as a fundamental ethical rule in the social sciences. Research respondents should be allowed to volunteer their participation in the research project, their participation must not be forced, they have a right not to participate in a research study, because they have a choice and free will to partake or not. In this research study the research respondents were in the beginning given the opportunity to volunteer, after being appropriately informed about the research project. No respondents were forced to take part in this research, it was, instead, gratifying to see that most of the learners were willing to assist the researcher. Their overwhelming response may be attributed to the fact

that they believed that they were doing something worthwhile in assisting the investigator, and they believed it to be for a good cause.

The investigator was never in the position to entice the respondents with gifts or money to get their co-operation. The incentive offered to them was a free-of-charge executive summary of the research findings. The researcher did not overemphasise the benefits of the study to the research participants to obtain their willingness to co-operate.

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality remains one of the key issues in this research. The investigator assured respondents that the information provided by them would be treated as confidential and their anonymity was guaranteed, and the investigator honoured his word. The issues of confidentiality and anonymity were applied throughout the process of information collection, analysis and presentation. When the researcher assured his respondents of confidentiality, it meant that research respondents were protected against any possible harm. The nature of assurance was carried out in a number of ways, such as:

- \* completed questionnaires or survey results were only accessed by people directly involved with this research project,
- \* once the information has been collected, it was the investigator's responsibility to keep it safe, whereby it was securely stored.

The research respondents' confidentiality were emphatically assured and they were reassured regarding their questions pertaining to who would be entitled to the information they had provided. This process enable the respondents to know exactly where they stand regarding the research, and they are reassured that the researcher is trustworthy and competent in maintaining confidentiality.

### **No harm to respondents**

According to Babbie (1998:286) no harm to research respondents is an important ethical rule within the social sciences, when one conducts field research. While the investigators do not deliberately harm the research subjects, they may hurt them if they are not careful.

The researcher maintains that the respondents were never exposed to situations where the researched felt that their privacy was infringed upon, no sensitive questions were asked orally or in the questionnaire, they were treated with respect and human dignity.

The investigator kept in mind that, should damaging information be revealed about the researched, this ethical rule would have been transgressed. The researcher continually asked during the research planning process of this study whether the intended project will injure those whose behaviour is to be studied. The researcher had to weigh the relative danger posed by the questions against the importance of the research project.

### **Professionalism and no cheating of colleagues**

According to Babbie (2001:475-76) no cheating of colleagues should be viewed as the investigator-s responsibility to the scientific community. Researchers are said to know what the limitations and failures involved in their research study are, thus researchers have a moral duty to inform their readers of these limitations. Even the negative findings should be reported, since such findings are linked to the investigation, and can be viewed as encouraging transparency and honesty. It is also mentioned that honest investigators save their colleagues the annoyance of making similar mistakes.

Babbie (1998:286) states that investigators deceive their research respondents for various reasons. Their justification is that the information will be more valid and reliable, and the

research respondents are more natural and honest in their responses, if they do not know that the investigator is conducting a research project. If research entities are aware that they are being investigated, chances are that they may modify their behaviour.

With regards to this particular research study, during the course of this research, from the beginning to the end, no research respondents or colleagues were deceived. The respondents were provided with accurate information regarding the researcher, as well as the aim, significance and purpose of the exercise, thus it can be stated that the researcher was honest to himself and the research respondents.

### **1.12 Gatekeeping access**

According to Burton (2000:100) people who are responsible for providing permission to access have moral duties towards their learners and staff. The gatekeepers first determined that ethical issues would not be violated before they granted access to individuals at the institution. A personal tie with the school provided access to the schools, but was not used to avoid the proper channels to obtain entrée. The ethical duties of both the school and the researcher towards the school meant that the researcher obtained informed consent from the schools for the research work and personnel, and not only the individual member at the point where the access was needed. At the same time, the schools highlighted that they had ethical duties with regards to promoting the pursuit of knowledge and could not deny the researcher access to information.

### **Access procedures**

It should be mentioned that access procedures vary from school to school. It can be an informal or formal arrangement that allows access to the school for a particular research study. Although formal procedures can appear to be unnecessary, bureaucratic and a waste of time to the researcher, this might not be the case from the institution's point of view. These procedures are intended to protect the interests of the institutions, for example, managing staff time. Although the research might need relatively limited time

from the teachers, it may be one of many such requests, which may add up to a substantial workload. Secondly, the application of consistent and informed judgement regarding research requests is needed, and right of entry was examined against pre-determined criteria. Criteria used by gatekeepers differed, but the three most important criteria were that the investigation should be conducted competently, ethical considerations should be considered, and the resources of both the learners and the teachers should be respected.

In conjunction with the latter aspect, it is worth mentioning that the researcher appreciated the time the schools set aside in order to participate in this project. The researcher specifically refers to the fact that there may be no quick way to identify learners who fit the investigator's specifications, or perhaps the information may not be available in an easily accessible form. Aspects like these were taken into account in this study.

Research respondents were called on during prescribed school hours, especially during free periods or during career guidance periods. They were grouped according to their grades: 10,11 and 12.

The initial session started with an explanation of the study in order to establish interest and commitment among the learners. This entailed that they were informed that the researcher is a lecturer (criminologist) who is interested in their views regarding shop theft. The researcher mentioned that he perceives shop theft among young people as a subject to be investigated in detail, and that he hope that the subject would enlighten him and the researched on what exactly it was that he observed. The investigators would use the information he obtained from them to acquire a clearer understanding of the problem. The results will be used to write a thesis a dissertation.

### ***1.13 Measuring instrument***

Delahunty and McDonald (2002:572) describe questionnaires as a written set of questions aimed at the research respondents, in which they are requested to give particular information on a particular subject that is under investigation. It is a method of information gathering from within a specific (universum) environment, used by researchers, where

questions are asked in a systematic way. Neuman (2000:517) defines it as a written document used in survey investigations, which has a set of questions that are allocated to the research respondents or utilised by an interviewer to solicit questions with the purpose of registering the responses.

A standardised questionnaire was formulated by the researcher, completed by learners from the participating schools in the selected area, and returned to the researcher upon completion. The literacy level of the population targeted was also taken into consideration: unfamiliar words, ambiguity and technical terms were avoided, and terms were clearly defined. The style of English used in the questionnaire is very basic and simple, so that everybody could understand it. The majority of the respondents were not eloquent English speakers, and English is considered a second language among the selected population.

Setswana (vernacular) as the mother tongue was sometimes used to explain difficult words, which was meaningful in conveying an atmosphere of mutual understanding between the researcher and the respondents.

Open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire, for particular reasons. These questions afforded the respondents the opportunity to express themselves freely, to provide their own points of view. Neuman (2000:260-61) refers to open-ended questions as unstructured type of questions, whereby respondents provide their own free responses.

In addition, each questionnaire contains the following section: If relevant, what was your main motivation for taking the property mentioned in 9.2 above. The purpose of this open-ended question is to categorise the primary reasons behind their choices. By providing these questions, it was also anticipated that research respondents would consider the facts pertaining to the ensuing descriptions more carefully before making their choices.

Neuman (2000:260-61) regards close-ended questions as structured, fixed response questions that provide respondents with fixed responses from which to choose the preferred option. The researcher made use of such types of structured questions, as indicated in the final survey questionnaire.

### **1.14 Conclusion**

In this chapter the focus was on an introduction of the research problem and the methodological foundations of the research. It provides an overview of the problem statement and the methodological foundations used in this research. The research aims, steps, processes and procedures that were followed were also highlighted. Statistical analysis of the data, the pilot study as well as research ethics and gaining access were discussed in detail. In chapter 2, the emphasis is on describing and analysing the nature and extent of the problem of shop theft.