

**FACTORS RELATED TO SCHOOL REFUSAL OF BLACK  
ADOLESCENTS IN THE IMPENDLE AREA**

**BY**

**BONGINKOSI REGINALD CHEMANE**

**SUBMITTED IN PART FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION-WITH SPECIALISATION IN  
GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

**AT THE**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SUPERVISOR: DR. S BURGER**

**NOVEMBER 1998**

**DEDICATED TO ANDILE, MY ONLY SON**

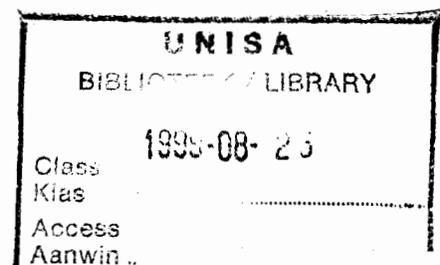
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the following people for their support in realisation of this dissertation.

- \* My supervisor, Dr. S. Burger, for her perceptiveness, sense of humour, encouragement, support and availability in times of need.
- \* Educators and learners of Impendle secondary schools who sacrificed their time and participated in this research study.
- \* Parents of learners who were kind and supportive enough during interviews.
- \* My beloved mother who is always encouraging and inspiring.
- \* Christine for the time she spent typing this script.

Lastly the financial assistance of the centre for Science Development (HSRC South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are however those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

373.1295096847 CHEM



0001729187

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** Factors related to school refusal of black adolescents in the Impendle area.

**BY:** B.R. Chemane

**DEGREE:** M. Ed - with specialisation in Guidance and Counselling.

**SUPERVISOR:** Dr. S. Burger

### SUMMARY

The specific aim of this research study was to identify, explore, describe and interpret the factors related to school refusal of black adolescents. An overview of literature was used to arrive at a broader appreciation of issues pertaining to school refusal phenomenon and also to black adolescents.

Ten subjects participated in this study. Data were gathered qualitatively using ethnographic interviews. The following factors were found to be contributory to the problem of school refusal: School refusers who stay with grandparents instead of staying with biological parents; fear of something specific at school; lack of insight into the refusal problem; lover plays a role in refusal behaviour; protective parents; poor social relationships; fathers that play a marginal role in the family; parents' worldview; emotional problems and weak or no attempts to stop behaviour. The emphasis was on the understanding of the refusal phenomenon rather than on cause and effect.

### KEYWORDS:

-school refusal	-adolescents	-non school attendance
-school phobia	-Impendle area	-emotional upset
-separation anxiety	-fear of school	
-rural blacks	-absenteeism	

## DECLARATION

Student number: 658-903-0

I declare that "Factors related to school refusal of Black Adolescents in the Impendle area" is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



.....  
SIGNATURE

(MR B.R. CHEMANE)



.....  
DATE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(i)
DISSERTATION ABSTRACT	(ii)
OPSOMMING	(iii)
DECLARATION	(iv)
TABLE OF CONTENTS	(v)

## CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION, AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM, ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS	1
1.1 Introductory Orientation to the research project	1
1.2 Awareness of the problem	1
1.3 Analysis of the problem	2
1.3.1 Introduction	2
1.3.2 The nature of school refusal	3
1.3.3 Possible factors that may precipitate school refusal	5
1.3.4 Prevalence and prognosis	5
1.3.5 Differentiation among school refusers	6
1.3.6. Theories on the etiology of school refusal	7
1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	9
1.4.1 General statement of the problem	9
1.4.2 Specific statement of the problem	9
1.5 THE AIM OF THE STUDY	10
1.5.1. General Aim	10
1.5.2 Specific Aims	10
1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY	10
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	11
1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS	11

1.8.1 School Refusal	11
1.8.2 Adolescence	12
1.8.3 Factors	13
1.8.4 The term "Black" as it is used in the South African context	14
1.8.5 South African rural/tribal Blacks	14
1.9 PROGRAMME OF STUDY	15

## CHAPTER TWO

SCHOOL REFUSAL: ITS NATURE AND EFFECTS	17
2.1 INTRODUCTION	17
2.2 WHO IS THE SCHOOL REFUSER	17
2.3 THE CAUSES OF SCHOOL REFUSAL	25
2.4 TREATMENT	38
2.5 DIAGNOSTIC CONSIDERATIONS	42
2.6 DIFFERENTIATING AMONG SCHOOL REFUSERS	45
2.7 CONCLUSION	51

## CHAPTER THREE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS	53
3.1 INTRODUCTION	53
3.2 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS	53
3.3 IDENTITY FORMATION OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS	58
3.3.1 Pupil Identity formation	59
3.3.1.1 Factors influencing pupil-identity formation	61
3.3.1.2 The relationship between identity formation and school refusal	65
3.3.1.3 Synthesis	67
3.4 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADOLESCENT	68
3.4.1 The influence of the family	68
3.4.2 The influence of the older siblings	71

3.4.3	Socialisation	72
3.4.4	The relationship between social developmental factors and school refusal	74
3.5	EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	75
3.6	THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL FACTORS AND SCHOOL REFUSAL	79
3.7	CONCLUSION	80

## CHAPTER FOUR

	EMPIRICAL DESIGN	82
4.1	INTRODUCTION	82
4.2	THE AIMS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	82
4.2.1	General aim	82
4.2.2	Specific aims	82
4.3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	83
4.3.1	Research approach	83
4.3.1.1	Definition of ethnographic research	83
4.3.1.2	The nature of qualitative research	83
4.3.1.3	Historical perspective	87
4.3.2	Rationale for employing the qualitative research methodology	89
4.3.3	Research instruments	94
4.3.3.1	Introduction	94
4.3.3.2	Qualitative interviewing as a research tool	94
4.3.4	Procedure	96
4.3.4.1	Gathering background information	96
4.3.4.2	Exploring the feasibility of the study	97
4.3.4.3	Selection of subjects	98
4.3.4.3.1	Access	99
4.3.4.3.2	Composition	99
4.3.4.3.3	Criteria used in selection	99
4.3.4.4	Interview schedule	100

4.3.4.5	Interviewing	102
4.4	CONCLUSION	105

## CHAPTER FIVE

5.1	THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	106
	SECTION A	
5.1.1	Introduction	106
5.1.2	The transcription of interviews	106
5.1.3	Interpretation	107
5.1.4	Problems of analysis and reporting	109
	SECTION B	
5.2	DESCRIPTION OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	110
5.2.1	Introduction	110
5.2.2	Description of the school refusers	110
5.2.2.1	Nkosinathi	110
5.2.2.2	Bonga	111
5.2.2.3	Ntombinkulu	112
5.2.2.4	Sonto	113
5.2.2.5	Themba	114
5.3	BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS	115
5.4	HOME CONDITIONS	115
5.5	ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOME	116
5.6	SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	117
5.7	ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	119
5.8	MAIN PROBLEMS RELATED TO SCHOOL REFUSAL BEHAVIOUR	120
5.8.1	Protective parents	120
5.8.2	Ignorance on the part of parents	121
5.8.3	Lack of insight into the problem	122
5.8.4	Grandmothers too old or sickly to care	123
5.8.5	Parents' beliefs	123

5.8.6	Lack of authority	124
5.8.7	Fear of something specific at school	125
5.8.8	Influence of non-schooling and schooling friends	125
5.8.9	Opposite sex partner	126
5.9	CONCLUSION	128

## CHAPTER SIX

	FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	129
6.1	INTRODUCTION	129
6.2	FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY	129
6.2.1	Findings regarding school refusal:its nature, causes and effects	129
6.2.1.1	The nature of school refusal	129
6.2.1.2	Causes of school refusal	130
6.2.1.3	Effects of school refusal	131
6.2.2	Findings regarding the significance of cultural and environmental effects on the social and psychological development of black adolescents	131
6.2.2.1	Cognitive development	131
6.2.2.2	Identity formation	133
6.2.2.3	Social development	133
6.2.2.4	Emotional development	134
6.3	FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	135
6.3.1	Introduction	135
6.3.2	An intergration of the empirical findings with literature	135
6.3.3	Brief summary of the findings	140
6.3.4	Reflecting on the research process	144
6.3.4.1	The sample	144
6.3.4.2	Difficulties during data gathering	145
6.3.4.3	Selecting the data	146
6.3.4.4	Reflecting on self-as-instrument	146
6.4	CONCLUSIONS	147



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION, AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM, ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM, AIMS OF THE STUDY, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS.**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Absenteeism is an age old problem which has captured many researchers' interest. This problem has been researched under its different forms, such as: truancy, school phobia, separation anxiety and school refusal. Absence from school, especially recurrent and long-term absence, constitutes a formidable problem for parents, teachers, doctors and perhaps, social workers. It is no wonder this problem was already troubling researchers as early as 1932 (Kearny & Silverman 1990:341). Nine years later Johnson and her co-workers (1941) coined the term 'school phobia' to describe prolonged absences from school.

#### **1.2 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM**

The researcher, as a school teacher himself, became aware of the problem of absenteeism in his own school and the surrounding schools and was upset by seeing learners dodging classes, skipping teaching periods, being absent without valid reasons and leaving before school closing time.

Concerned and worried by this behaviour, the researcher has discussed the problem with colleagues of other cultures. The researcher found that although the problem is cross-cultural, it seems to be worse in the black schools.

The problem is so disconcerting to most headmasters that in most Principals' Association meetings in the Impendle area it usually features as one of the matters for discussion.

In the researcher's own school the problem of absenteeism, coupled with late-coming, features every year on the agenda of parents' meetings. The parents have attempted to offer some solutions to the problem of absenteeism. Some have suggested that some form of punishment should be administered to the learners concerned to remedy the problem and still others felt that the parents of the absentees should be called in so that the child will be warned by both the teacher and parents.

The fact of the matter, however, is that with all the suggestions having been put forward and implemented the problem of absence from school is still a standing reality and it seems, far from being solved.

### **1.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM**

#### **1.3.1 Introduction**

Whilst considerable research studies have been conducted in the field of absenteeism, specifically school refusal, not much has been done in South Africa as compared to other overseas countries. Moreover, in doing nexus search, the researcher discovered that even the little that has been done in South Africa was mostly done in other cultural groups, other than Blacks. Hence the researcher has chosen to revisit the road that has been travelled by many researchers and look at the problem of non-attendance under the specific topic, school refusal. The term 'school refusal' will be used in its broader sense to include all psychological disorders such as: phobia of the school environment or people within it, separation anxiety, depression and so forth (Naylor, Staskowski, Kenney & King 1994:1331)

In other words, adolescents in this research who fail to attend school with the knowledge of their parents and despite their physical ability to do so, will be designated school refusers (Naylor, Staskowski, Kenny & King 1994:1331). Many researchers regard school refusal

as an affective disorder (Borchardt, Giesler, Bernstein & Crosby 1994; King, Tonge, Heyne, Tinney & Pritchard 1994). This implies that school refusal is an indication that the learner is suffering from some kind of emotional disturbance (Berg 1982:208).

A review of existing literature regarding school refusal has revealed that there are factors that may precipitate school refusal, there is differentiation among school refusers and that school refusal behaviour is pervasive (Borchardt *et al* 1994; Coolidge, Peck & Han, 1957). These aspects and other relevant research findings will now be dealt with to give a basic point of departure from which the problem, school refusal, will be studied.

### 1.3.2 the nature of school refusal

The major symptom of the disorder "school refusal" is as obvious as it may sound - the child's reluctance or refusal to go to school (Clyne 1966:46; King *et al* 1994:22). School refusers, especially in patient ones (that is, those who are kept in clinics or hospitals), may indicate signs of affective disorders, especially major depression (Clyne 1966:71; Burke, 1987; Borchardt *et al*, 1994:263;).

Many authors also report signs of social adjustment difficulties in school refusers, such as avoidance of personal relationships, being isolated and exhibition of uneasiness in social situations (Kahn, Nursten & Carroll 1981:44; Berg 1982:209; Borchardt, *et al* 1994:256; Honma 1988:37).

Symptoms of separation anxiety are reported by most researchers. Fear to be separated from the figure of attachment underlies this anxiety (Clyne 1966, Kelly 1973, Kahn, Nursten & Carroll 1981;

Burke 1987, Bernstein, Garfinkel & Borchardt 1990; Plapp 1990; King *et al* 1994; Naylor, Stawoski, Kenny & King 1994;)

Berg and his associates (1969) developed the following criteria for identification of school refusing children:

- Severe difficulty attending school often resulting in prolonged absence.
- Severe emotional upset including excessive fearfulness, temper outbursts, or complaints of feeling ill when faced with prospects of going to school.
- Staying at home with the knowledge of the parent when the youngster should be at school.
- Absence of antisocial characteristics such as stealing, lying and destructiveness.

On psychological examination school refusing children may also exhibit an overanxious disorder. Children with this disorder tend to excessively worry about their performance at school, as well as worry too much about future events like examinations and school camps (Bernstein, Garfinkel & Borchardt 1990:773, King *et al* 1994:23).

The onset of school refusal is usually described by parents as abrupt and dramatic (Clyne 1966:49) Also, according to Clyne, school refusal may be of a long duration, may be shortlived or may even be intermittent or recurrent.

If school refusal is not treated early enough, especially if it started in the early teens or adolescence, it may predispose other disorders in later adult life. Many authors have asserted that social adjustment problems may follow after school refusal problems during adult life

or in work settings (Berg 1982:209, Burke 1987; Flakierska, Lindström & Gillberg 1988:837; Borchardt, *et al* 1994:256;) In follow-up studies of adults who had been school refusing children or adolescents, it was found that agoraphobia was exhibited by some of them (Berg 1982:208; Berg & Jackson 1985:366; Burke 1987:5; Flakierska, Lindström & Gilberg 1988:837).

### **1.3.3 Possible factors that may precipitate school refusal**

School refusers, especially inpatient (hospitalised) school refusers, are likely to come from violent and disrupted families. Some studies also indicate that single-parent families are apt to give rise to school refusers (Borchardt, *et al* 1994:261).

Poor attenders, as a group, seem to have a less favourable attitude towards school. They also seem to have social adjustment difficulties (Kahn, Nurstern & Carrol 1981:44). Some children also fail to come to terms with failure at school. This in itself may result in non-attendance. Other things such as corporal punishment, sarcastic teachers, unfair treatment, bullying by other children, leadership styles of other teachers may precipitate school refusal (Kahn, Nursten & Carrol 1981:46-49). These factors will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 2.

### **1.3.4 Prevalence and prognosis**

Before the incidence and prognosis of school refusal is discussed, it is worth mentioning that school refusal behaviour is a difficult problem for school psychologists and educators because of its pervasiveness, correlation with other behaviour disorders and heterogeneity (Kearney & Beasley 1994:132.) The different research studies seem to concur in that school refusal behaviour

seems less prevalent than other anxiety related disorders (Kahn, Nursten & Carroll, 1981:7; Berg 1982:208; Wicks-Nelson & Israel 1991:122). Burke (1987:2), however rates school refusal as one of the more common anxiety-related problems seen in children referred for treatment.

Other studies have found that children referred for school refusal treatment tend to be male (Kearney & Beasley 1994:131) and that most are between 7 to 12 years of age. The latter findings, however, do not accord with the findings of a research study conducted by the National Association of Chief Education Welfare officers in 1975 (Kahn, Nursten & Carrol 1981:7) which found that more girls than boys were categorised as school refusers, whilst more of the boys than the girls were catergorised as truants.

School refusal can be found in children of all ages and intelligence levels (Kahn, Nursten & Carroll 1981; Wicks-Nelson & Israel 1991:122; King, *et al* 1994). Most research findings agree that, as regards prognosis, there is an age trend in that adolescent school refusers have a higher risk of becoming adult psychiatric patients than younger school refusers (Flakierska, Lindström & Gilberg 1988:836; Burke 1987:2, Wicks-Nelson & Israel 1991:123).

### **1.3.5 Differentiating among school refusers**

Clyne (1966:3-6) distinguished three forms of school refusal. Each of the three forms was dominated by the attitude of one of the people chiefly concerned with the syndrome, namely:

- the child
- the parents, (mainly the mother) and
- the family doctor

The first form he distinguished was what he called 'grandmal' manifestation of school refusal. In this form of the syndrome the child frankly refuses to go to school. The second form is characterised by the child's complaints of abdominal pains, nausea, or headaches. In this one the child's reluctance to go to school is less obvious than in the 'grandmal' type. In the latter type both the child and the parent participated in the creation and maintenance of the disorder, and the doctor's views about the ability of the child to go to school were of lesser importance.

In the third type of the disorder the emotional aspect is obscured by the signs of somatic illness. The doctor would advise that the child should be kept at home, probably in bed, and child and parents would readily agree.

It becomes apparent from the theories of etiology and treatment, as will be seen in later sections, that school refusal is a complex emotional disorder from which different symptomatic signs can be identified. One can for example identify school refusers who are school phobic, school refusers who experience separation anxiety, school refusers who are child management problems and school refusers who are depressed (Burke 1987:15)

### **1.3.6 Theories on the etiology of school refusal**

A number of authors have focused their attention on mental mechanisms and postulated these as causal patterns of school refusal. According to King, Ollendick and Tonge (1995:18) for example, anxious children may engage in negative self-talk when faced with fear-producing situations such as exams. According to these authors high test-anxious children may show negative self evaluations such as : "I am doing poorly" and off task thoughts such

as: "I wish I were home". Others have, however, tried to understand school refusal as an expression of its underlying anxiety. A specific kind of anxiety, separation anxiety, has been postulated. This is the kind of anxiety in which the child is afraid to leave the mother. The basic assumption underlying this explanation is that a strong attachment leads the child to fear that something may happen either to the self or to the mother during separation (Coolidge, Tessman, Waldfoegel & Willer 1962:330).

Depression, as another possible cause of school refusal, has also been postulated by some researchers (Clyne 1966:167; Burke 1987:14; Borchard *et al* 1994:263; King, *et al* 1994). A research study conducted by Plapp (1990) posits Tourette syndrome (TS) as a possible cause of school refusal. According to Plapp (1990), school refusal presents as a symptom of a problem which is Tourette. He discusses a number of case studies which, after investigation through in-depth interviews, indicated Tourette as the basic cause. After the prescription of medication to treat Tourette, those children returned to school and on doing follow-up studies such children were found to be doing well. In Plapp's study it would seem that these children refused to go to school because they were being a subject of ridicule by others at school. This means that the other children laughed at these children's tics and this triggered reluctance in the school refusers to go to school.

Other researchers, however, view this disorder differently. Naylor and his associates (1994:1331), for example, have it that language disorders cause significant frustration in the academic setting and may predispose the susceptible child or adolescent to school refusal. According to the research findings of these researchers, school refusers achieve at a lower level academically than non-refusers in all areas of reading, mathematics and written language.

These results demonstrated the co-morbidity of school refusal and language or learning disabilities in depressed adolescents. These authors, however, conceded that the causal relationship between communication or learning disabilities and emotional disorders remains an area for research and debate. Other researchers (Rubenstein & Hastings 1980:781) feel that whilst the application of the psychoanalytic model, which links school refusal to separation anxiety, is highly appropriate to the consideration of school phobia in children, it does not allow for a broad enough conceptualisation of school refusal in adolescence where many developmental tasks, other than separation anxiety, are involved. These researchers draw attention to the need for a thorough diagnostic assessment of all areas of functioning in the adolescent in order that major clinical problems are not overlooked.

Berg (1982:209) reported that girls with school refusal have shown a better response than boys to treatment directed towards improving social skills, such as establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships.

## **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

### **1.4.1 General statement of the problem**

Absenteeism is a complex problem with many and diverse causal factors. School refusal is one form of this umbrella term. There is a definite need to study this phenomenon as it occurs in Black adolescents.

### **1.4.2 Specific statement of the problem**

A reflection on the researcher's awareness brought about specific questions:

- What is school refusal?
- What causes school refusal?
- What does the school refuser typically look like?
- What are the effects of school refusal?
- Can school refusal be treated? If so, how?

## **1.5 THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

### **1.5.1 General aim**

The general aim of this research is to study the phenomenon school refusal. In this study the focus will be on:

- The nature of school refusal
- The causes of school refusal
- The school refuser as a person (including all his relationships)
- The effects of school refusal.

### **1.5.2 Specific aims**

The specific aim of this study is to obtain an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon, school refusal, so as to design specific guidelines for parents and teachers to:

1. Identify possible school refusers.
2. Help school refusers to re-enter school.

## **1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY**

The object of the present research study is to surface precipitating, predisposing and primary etiological factors that contribute to the pervasion of school refusal. The researcher intends to investigate this phenomenon of school refusal disorder as exhibited by the black adolescents of the Impendle secondary schools. Adolescents were chosen as the focus of the study. This does not imply that school refusal only occurs in the adolescent phase.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research will be conducted as follows:

- A literature study will:
  - \* explore the phenomenon of school refusal.
  - \* explore the black adolescent and his various relationships (that is, with himself, parents, peers, educators and objects)
- The empirical research will be conducted as an idiographic investigation. School refusers, their parents and educators, will be interviewed in order to obtain a profile of the school refuser.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

### **1.8.1 School refusal**

The concept 'school refusal' is used to describe learners who only attend school sporadically or who absent themselves from school for prolonged periods. These learners are not truants as they remain at home with their parents' knowledge. They are not physically ill, although they may complain of some illness in order to convince their parents to let them stay at home. These learners are so anxious on the thought of going to school that they refuse to attend

(Burke1987:1-2). The term school refusal is preferred to such narrow terms as school phobia. The latter presupposes that the child's avoidance of school is due to fear of the school situation and/or people within it. The term 'school refusal', however, describes the incidence(s) of the child's avoidance of school in the absence of physical illnesses and with the knowledge of the parents. The reasons for the child's avoidance of school may be school phobia, for example fear of evaluative situations or social situations in the school, separation anxiety, depression and so forth. As it can be seen, the term school refusal is more comprehensive than such terms as "school phobia" or "separation anxiety" (Wicks-Nelson 1991).

For the purposes of this study the term school refusal will be used in its comprehensive sense to mean absence from school with the knowledge of the child's parents. The adolescent will be considered a school refuser if they absent themselves for an average of at least 2 days a week in the absence of diagnosable physical illnesses.

### 1.8.2 Adolescence

Adolescence is the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood. The term "adolescence" is derived from the Latin verb, "adolescere", meaning "to grow up" or "to grow to adulthood". Due to individual and cultural differences the age at which adolescence begins varies from 11 to 13 and the age at which it ends varies from 17 to 21 (Louw 1991:377). Although there may be individual and cultural differences with regard to the age of onset of adolescence, it seems that all societies agree that puberty marks the onset of this stage of development (Knopf 1984; Mussen, Conger, Kagan & Huston 1990; Louw 1991). In the black society the age of onset was

not significant. The physiological changes were the prime indications that the child was now entering the adult world. The boys, for example, began to: grow stronger and powerful, grow pubic hair in their private parts, have deep voices and became muscular. Girls began to develop pubic hair in their private parts, their breasts swelled up and they began to menstruate. Lessons of cleanliness and self-care from adults began for both sexes, but particularly for girls during menstruation. As well known, times changed and blacks have drastically adopted the Western ways. The perceptions of blacks regarding the concept of adolescence have also changed. Nowadays black society perceives the concept adolescence in much the same way as does, for example, Western society. The physical and physiological characteristics described above are still important to mark the onset of adolescence but age is now considered as well by blacks.

As one philosopher rightfully remarked, adolescence begins in Biology (puberty) and ends in culture (Mussen, et al 1990:569). The end of adolescence is, however not indicated by clear characteristics as is the beginning. From a social point of view adolescence ends when an individual begins to assume adult roles, such as following a career, starting a family and thus becoming more independent (Louw 1991:337). Adolescent learners are mostly found in secondary schools, hence the present study will be conducted done in the Impendle Secondary schools.

### 1.8.3 Factors

By factors in this study is meant those things or people which contribute to or influence the occurrence of the phenomenon of school refusal. These factors may be causes of school refusal to a certain extent. They may, for example, be precipitating factors,

which means they are not responsible for the occurrence of the disorder as such, but they serve as triggering agents; they may be predisposing causal factors, which means although they are not the primary causes, they pave the way for the occurrence of the disorder; or they may be primary causal factors, which means they are directly responsible for the occurrence of the disorder. In other words the latter type of factors must be there for the disorder to occur.

#### **1.8.4 The term “black” as it is used in the south african context**

The nature of South Africa's apartheid system of the old regime required the application of a racial nomenclature. Officially there are four groups, the asians (largely of Indian descent), the blacks (formally officially termed the bantu or indigenous African people), the coloureds (of mixed blood) and the whites (Thabethe 1991:10).

The asians, blacks and coloureds are sometimes referred together as “Blacks, to express a collective identity, and avoid the possibly depreciatory term “non-whites” (Smith 1982 in Thabethe 1991:10). In this research study the term “black” will be used to refer to the “bantu” (the Native African People).

#### **1.8.5 South african rural/tribal blacks**

As the sample of the present study will be exclusively drawn from a rural/tribal area (Impendle), it seems appropriate at this point to give a brief clarification of the concept “rural” as it will be used in this study.

According to Thabethe (1991:12), "traditional tribal institutions exist in rural settings in which there is simple technology and a simple division of labour. Relatively small, closed groups co-operate on the basis of Kinship and/or neighbourhood, while authority is based on age, seniority and political position".

The conditions described by Thabether (1991) above are highly descriptive of the Impendle area where the present research sample will be drawn from. The communities served by the schools where the research sample will be drawn from are economically poor. The parents often live far from their places of employment, migrant labour is common practice, the level of training of the parents is low (often lower than standard 8) and the social conditions are poor. The families are also usually more tradition-orientated (that is, they strongly believe in supernatural powers like ancestral spirits). Most families in this area are single parent-families, either because of migrant labour consequences, father and mother unmarried or because the other parent (usually the father) passed away through natural death or got killed in the political violence.

Due to their low-level of academic training the parents of school children in this area are usually uncertain of their role in the education of their children. Many of them do not even bother to attend parents' meetings called by headmasters for their schools.

## **1.9 PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

- Chapter 1 is an introduction to the research problem. The statement of the problem, aims and definitions of key concepts were dealt with.
- In Chapter 2, the phenomenon of school refusal will be studied.

- **Chapter 3 will focus on the black adolescent.**
- **In Chapter 4 the research design of this study will be described.**
- **Chapter 5 will consist of the empirical research.**
- **Findings, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further research will be presented in Chapter 6.**

## CHAPTER 2

### SCHOOL REFUSAL: ITS NATURE AND EFFECTS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

School refusal has been subject to definitional and diagnostic confusion owing to its pervasiveness to other disorders and its complex nature. Heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, that characterises this disorder has caused its etiological and presenting symptoms to be insufficiently understood by researchers. This chapter aims at presenting to the reader the views of various researchers in their attempts to report on various aspects of this phenomenon, such as clinical features, etiology, diagnostic criteria, treatment strategies, and effects of different types of school refusal disorder.

#### 2.2 WHO IS THE SCHOOL REFUSER ?

The school refuser frankly refuses to go to school. If pressure is placed on the child to go to school, he or she may show signs of anxiety, panic and maladaptive fears. Somatic complaints, such as abdominal pain, nausea and headaches, may also be reported by such children (Hersov 1960b; Chazan 1962; Clyne 1966; Kahn, Nursten & Carrol 1981; Lock 1986; Blagg 1987; Flakierska, Linström & Gillberg 1988; King & Ollendick 1989; Wicks-Nelson & Israel 1991; King, *et al* 1994; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995;). These complaints can, usually, not be confirmed by medical examinations. Despite the efforts of parents and teachers, regular school attendance breaks down for these children. Other writers and researchers have noted that some school refusers exhibit affective symptoms such as depression, withdrawal, irritability and aggressive behaviour and obsessions (Hersov 1960b; Chazan 1962; Clyne 1966; Bryce & Baird 1986; Lock 1986; Burke 1987; Flakierska, Linström & Gillberg 1988; King

& Ollendick 1989; Bernstein, Garfinkel & Borchardt 1990; Borchardt, *et al* 1994; Naylor *et al* 1994; King *et al* 1994; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995;).

According to King and Ollendick (1989) and Blagg (1987), the depressed school refuser may even threaten suicide. Signs of being overprotected in school refusing children have also been noted by some authors (Waldfoegel, Coolidge & Hahn 1957; Hersov 1960b; Chazan 1962; Leventhal, Weinberger, Stander & Stearns 1967; Nichols & Berg 1970; Rock 1980; King, *et al* 1994; Crystal 1994; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995;). King and his associates (1994:23) and King and Ollendick (1989) report signs of introversion in school refusers. This, however, remains to be empirically replicated, especially given the heterogeneous nature of school refusal.

According to a number of research studies (Clyne 1966; Nichols & Berg 1970; Muir 1981; Reid 1982; Cooper 1984; Church & Edwards 1984; Honma 1988; Brand 1993; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995;) school refusers as a group display self-derogation or a low self-esteem. Atkinson and his co-workers (1989:194), nevertheless, cite psychoanalytically-oriented studies and psychodynamically-oriented studies to substantiate their claim that, contrary to the above, the school refuser has an inflated self-image. They argue that it is this inflated self-image that leads to school refusal behaviour since the adolescent avoids those places where his self-image is threatened. School is one of these places. The child with this type of self-image, these authors claim, is also a perfectionist. Therefore he/she cannot cope with failure. Leventhal and his associates (1967:64) also support the claim that the school refusers overvalue themselves and their achievements and that they try to hold on to their unrealistic self-image. When this unrealistic self-image is threatened in the school situation they retreat to another situation (usually the home) where they can maintain their narcissistic self-image. Utsugai (in Honma 1986:79) shares this view when he says "school refusal clients have omnipotent self-images".

As it can be seen the postulations of these theorists are at direct variance with those of the theorists who maintain that school refusers as a group tend to display a low self-esteem. In their study intended to test Leventhal and Sill's (1964) hypothesis that refusers over-value themselves, Nichols and Berg (1970) found that there was no difference in the way acute refusers and non-school phobics evaluate themselves. They, however, found a small but definite tendency towards lower self-evaluation in chronic refusers. This contradiction indicates that the phenomenon of school refusal still requires further research.

Atkinson, Quarrington, Cyr and Atkinson (1989:191) described the following characteristics of the school refuser and people and/or environment surrounding him:

a) **CHILD (School refuser)**

- demanding and passive at home;
- manipulative;
- slept longer than is usual (longer than one year) with parents;
- displays low or average or high intelligence.

b) **MOTHER**

- emotionally deprived as child;
- feels incompetent in maternal role;
- shows signs of depression;
- dependent on child for companionship;
- lacks interest outside family;
- overprotective;
- did not desire to become pregnant;
- is the dominant spouse;
- birth of the patient was feared and/or difficult

c) **FATHER**

- dominated by family;

- peripheral to family affairs
- ineffective in dealing with family problems;
- heavy drinker;
- emotionally deprived as a child;
- Rock (1980:14) adds that fathers tend to be weak, unconcerned or wish to dissociate themselves from the female-dominated situation.

d) FAMILY INTERACTION

- poor marital relations;
- marriage is intact;
- mother and child interdependent;

e) SCHOOL

- teachers are perceived as being mean;
- classmates are perceived as being rough;
- academic performance poor;
- child failed at least one school year;
- child fears specific aspects of school;
- child acts out at school.

Difficulties of social adjustment, for example, inability to enter into and maintain social relationships, uneasiness in social situations, have also been reported in school refusing children (Rock 1980; Kahn, Nursten & Carrroll 1981; Berg 1982; Tatara 1987; Dunbar 1988; Brand 1993; Borchardt, *et al* 1994;). Social maladjustment problems make it difficult for these children to enter into meaningful relationships with their peers (Coolidge, *et al* 1962; Kahn, Nursten & Carroll 1981:15; Tatara 1987:16; Brand 1993:26;).

Fukuda and his co-worker, Hozumi (1987:683) posited filial violence as one of the clinical features of a school refuser. Their study revealed that some school refusers may exhibit an unusual sleep and wakefulness cycle

(rest-activity cycle). During irregular rest-activity cycle these youngsters exhibit symptoms of emotional disorder.

Fukuda and Hozumi's (1987) claim that a school refuser may also present with filial violence was also shared by other researchers, namely, Tataru (1987) who stated that delinquents, neurotic school refusers and borderline types show frequent outburst of violence. Along similar lines, Plapp (1990:150) describes a case of a 10-year old boy who was diagnosed with school refusal disorder. This young boy is reported to have been physically and verbally violent towards his mother whenever she tried to enforce school attendance. Still supporting violence towards parents as one of the symptoms of school refusal, Lock (1986:101) presents a case of a 15-year-old boy who hit his mother and one of his sisters on several occasions and threw furniture and dishes at the wall whenever faced with the prospect of going to school.

Although Tataru (1987), Lock (1986) and Plapp (1990) do support Fukuda and Hozumi's (1987) claim of filial violence, they did not mention an unrythmical rest-activity cycle problem.

Waldron and his collaborators (1975:802) report that school refusers may, amongst other things, exhibit excessive dependency, unresolved separation anxiety and reliance on projection and displacement. Parents of school refusers, according to these researchers, present with qualities such as excessive dependency and ambivalence. Furthermore, they regard the family interaction as characterised by mutual clinging of mother and child, overindulgence and inconsistency of discipline or marital disharmony with competition for the child's favour. Other psychoanalytically-oriented theorists (Waldfoegel, Coolidge & Hahn 1957; Hersov 1960a & b; Coolidge, *et al* 1962; Berg, Nichols & Pritchard 1969; Nichols & Berg 1970; Skynner 1974; Rock 1980) also concur with Waldron *et al* (1975) or at least allude to these clinical features.

Cooper's (1986:17) research findings suggest that adolescent school refusers often feel lonely in spite of belonging to a protective, often indulgent family. Cooper further states that school refusers are generally timid and inhibited away from home. Cooper's findings are compatible with Hersov's (1960b:139) findings, which revealed that the majority of his subjects were timid, fearful and inhibited away from home, and Nichols and Berg's (1970:133) conclusion from their study that "school phobic children tend to be anxious and timid away from home but wilful and controlling within the home". Along similar lines, Rock (1980:14) asserts that school refusing children appear tired and withdrawn in school while they are powerful or dominating at home.

The above researchers' findings, however, are in contrast with Atkinson and colleagues (1989:191) who maintain that school refusers are outgoing when away from home. This type of disagreement in research studies indicates that more research on the personality traits of school refusers is necessary. One may, nevertheless, speculate here that the heterogeneous nature of school refusal explains these conflicting research findings.

In reviewing the literature, Brand (1993:26) claims to have noted the following characteristics in the school refusing children, over and above the ones mentioned above:

- severe school non-attendance;
- low level of academic performance;
- drug abuse;
- deviant and criminal activity;
- wilful disobedience both at school and at home;
- dysfunctional families;
- sexual, physical and emotional abuse;
- unsuccessful or inappropriate educational experiences leading to under-achievement or failure.

Brand's (1993) characteristics about drug abuse, deviant and criminal activity resemble the characteristics of delinquents.

Tatara (1987:16-18) reports the following characteristics in children with school refusal behaviour:

- They usually show better performance and achievement as compared to other types of school absenteeism such as the borderline and delinquent types.
- Tend to be obsessively preoccupied with the feeling that they must attend school as compared to other types.
- They show more separation anxiety as compared to other types of school absentees.
- Tend to be seclusive within their home. Granell-de-Aldaz and co-workers (1987:407) state, in collaboration with Tatara's (1987) last characteristic above, that school refusers are characterised by social isolation.

Tatara (1987) also contends that there are overlapping symptoms in children who are violent towards their parents. According to him, at least three clinical groups exhibit frequent outbursts of violent behaviour, namely:

- delinquents
- neurotic school refusers and
- borderline type of school refusal.

Tatara (1987), however, argues that although these three types show frequent outbursts of violence, the meaning and expression of violence toward parents are different among these groups.

Granell-de-Aldaz, Feldman, Vivas and Gelfand (1987:406) describe refusers as a group as:

- socially ineffectual;
- dependent and
- dysphoric

According to these researchers, their research group of refusers were perceived by their parents and teachers as unusually dependent, socially isolated, shy and depressed. Granell et al (1987), however, question the perceptions of teachers and parents on the grounds that it is not clear from such an observation just how much of the children's constriction preceded and how much followed the development of school refusal.

Kahn, Nursten and Carroll (1981:15) state that school refusers may also present with psychosomatic symptoms such as: faddiness over food and they often refuse breakfast. They may lose weight and even lose the use of their legs. If pressure over school is withdrawn, most of these symptoms go into abeyance although the children remain maladjusted.

In his study of a school refusal group, Cooper (1984:236) found that school refusers see themselves as hardworking and well-behaved. Cooper also found that refusers see themselves as being able to manipulate people. Clyne (1966:98) made similar observations in his case studies. Clyne, however, added that some school refusers are ambitious children who break down in making the effort to surpass their peers.

Berg (1982:208) contends that school refusers have similar problems to patients with agoraphobia. In both, there is a neurotic disturbance, they tend to stay home excessively and often require the support of the family or close friend to go into certain situations.

The clinical presentation of school refusal also appears to be influenced by developmental factors such as age (Granell-de-Aldaz et al 1987; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995). Fear of separation from parents is more typical of the clinical presentation of young children. On the other hand, fear of teachers or other children is seen more frequently in older school refusers. Social-evaluative fears, such as fear to participate in sporting activities, are also seen more frequently in older school refusers.

### **2.3 THE CAUSES OF SCHOOL REFUSAL**

School refusal and school phobia have been reported to be frequent problems in children of school-going age. As it was made clear in Chapter 1, school refusal refers to persistent avoidance of school (refer to Chapter 1, paragraph 1.8.1). More recent studies (Hersov 1960; Chazan 1962; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995) have emphasised the importance of fears about and negative attitudes towards school in this type of avoidance behaviour.

It is important once again here to distinguish between school phobia and school refusal. The former refers to persistent refusal to attend school resulting from anxiety or fear of some aspect of the school situation

whereas the latter is a more general term referring to failure to attend school because of a variety of reasons (excluding simple truancy) (Eysenck & Rachman, as cited by Granell-de-Aldaz *et al* 1984:722).

An array of theories have been put forth in an attempt to explain the genesis of school refusal syndrome, several of which will be discussed here. As it will be clear from these theories, school refusal is not a true clinical entity with a single, unique etiology and treatment. According to Hersov (1960) for example, the precipitating and etiological factors vary with school setting, family composition and circumstances, and characteristics such as age.

In reviewing the literature it has become apparent that while theorists of various orientations put forth different hypothesis as causal patterns for school refusal, most of them seem to agree that separation anxiety is one possibility that keeps most school refusers away from school. Johnson and her colleagues (1941) were the first to argue that the basis of school refusal (which they referred to then as school phobia) was separation anxiety produced by an unresolved mother/child dependency relationship. This viewpoint has been shared and elaborated upon by several other subsequent theorists and researchers (Hersov 1960b ;Coolidge, Tessman, Waldfogel & Willer 1962; Nichols & Berg, 1970; Skynner 1974; Tyrer & Tyrer 1974; Tatara 1975; Waldron *et al* 1975; Rock 1980; Valles & Oddy 1984; Cooper 1986; Atkinson, Quarrington, Cyr & Atkinson 1989; King *et al* 1994;).

The above viewpoint is clearly detailed in the paper advanced by Estes, Haylett and Johnson (in Blagg 1987:27). The dynamic development of this neurosis, according to these authors involves:

- An early, poorly resolved dependency relationship between mother and child.

- Inadequate fulfilment of the mother's emotional needs, usually because of a poor marriage.
- Temporary threat to the child's security causing a transient increase in the child's dependency needs.
- Exploitation of this situation by the mother.
- A similar relationship between the mother and her own mother.
- Expression of hostility towards the child, not only making him more dependent - but also by direct inhibition of any opportunity for the child to express aggressive or hostile feelings and also by seductive behaviour towards the child.
- Development of strong hostility towards the mother, largely unconscious, and expressed by exploitation of the mother's guilt towards him and also by fears for the mother's safety caused by unconscious destructive wishes, thus forcing him to be with her to assure himself of her safety.
- Displacement of this hostility towards his teacher, so that she becomes a phobic object.

It must, however, be pointed out at this juncture that although a number of authors and researchers subscribe to the conceptualisation of school refusal as separation anxiety, as cited above, not all of them regard a hostile-dependent mother-child relationship as underpinning this anxiety.

Atkinson and his collaborators (1985:84) have summarized the hypothesis of school refusal, which consistently occurs in literature, into three theories:

- **PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES: FEAR OF SEPARATION** (separation anxiety)

Virtually all psychoanalytic practitioners (Walfogel et al 1957; Hersov 1960 a&b; Coolidge et al 1962; Berg, Nichols & Pritchard 1969; Nichols & Berg 1970; Skynner 1974; Waldron, Shrier, Stone & Tobin 1975; Rock 1980;)

have seen a mutually dependent, mutually hostile relationship between child and mother (or sometimes father) as central to school refusal. The researchers who include the father as the possible figure in the pathological parent-child relationship show that there is beginning to be a paradigm shift from the traditional emphasis on the mother as central in the pathological relationship. Skynner's (1974) work is one such example.

- **PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORIES : FEAR OF FAILURE**

Blagg (1987:29) refers to this hypothesis of school refusal as **self-concept theory**. The well-known authors to advance this theory were Leventhal and Sills (1964) and Leventhal, Weinberger, Stander and Stearns (1967). The argument invoked by these authors is that theories based on separation anxiety are not descriptive of children who have successfully attended school for several years before the onset of symptoms. According to these authors such hypothesis better fit younger children. Furthermore, the argument continues, separation anxiety as the key determinant of school refusal does not account for why some children continue to function adequately and autonomously in other areas. These authors have alternatively pointed to the inflated self-image as the result of school refusal (Leventhal & Sills 1964; Leventhal *et al* 1967; Waldron *et al* 1975; Cooper 1986).

Leventhal *et al* (1967:64) put this as follows: "these children commonly overvalue themselves and their achievements and then try to hold onto their unrealistic self-image. When this is threatened in the school situation, they suffer anxiety and retreat to another situation where they can maintain their narcissistic self-image. This retreat may very well be a running to a close contact with mother" Leventhal *et al* (1967:64) give examples of some of the typical threats to these children's real or imagined position as: changes to another class or new school, return to school after illness, a minor episode in school that led to a feeling of humiliation or

embarrassment to the child and actual or fantasised academic or social failure. These children's unrealistic expectations and power beliefs are often reinforced by an indulgent parent and/or other adults.

Cooper (1986) has echoed the above authors' argument, adding that there is a tendency in adolescent school refusers to overestimate status, abilities and performance, and to set unrealistic goals. Rubenstein and Hastings (1980) have argued similarly, that while the psychoanalytic model is highly appropriate to the consideration of school phobia in children, it does not allow for a broad enough conceptualization of school refusal in adolescence where many developmental tasks, other than separation from parental figures, are involved.

Dynamic theorists also view school refusal as an anxiety disorder that develops because of pathological parent-child relationships. However, dynamic theorists characterise the parent-child relationship as one in which parents use overinvolvement with their child to avoid focusing on problems in the marriage while the child uses school refusal behaviour to maintain his or her position as the centre of attention and to hold the family together (Skynner 1974; Burke 1987).

- **LEARNING THEORIES: FEAR OF SEPARATION OR FEAR OF SCHOOL**

The principles underlying the behavioural postulations regarding the causation of school refusal are derived from the learning theory (Blagg 1987:30). In contrast to psychoanalytic theory, the learning theory has evolved from experimental studies in laboratory. Quite simply, phobias, according to the learning models, are seen as learned responses (Atkinson, Quarrington & Cyr 1985). According to learning theorists, neutral stimuli develop phobic qualities when associated with a fear-producing state of affairs (Atkinson *et al* 1985:85). Garvey and Hegrenes (Kearney & Silverman 1990:342) stated that behaviour patterns, such as

school refusal, were learned as a result of specific environmental contingencies. School refusal behaviour may be positively or negatively reinforced or result as a conditioned response to some traumatic event (Kearney & Silverman 1990:342).

Blagg (1987:30) and Kearney and Silverman (1990:342) state that the pioneers of behavioural learning theory, Watson & Rayner (1920) were the first to demonstrate that a young child could learn to fear a neutral stimulus. (a white rat) by pairing a loud bang with approaches to the stimulus. From this, behaviour theorists speculated that fear of parental separation were paired with the school setting, which then became a phobic stimulus. In this way school refusal was conceptualized as a simple phobia of school maintained by negative reinforcement.

Other behaviourists viewed school refusal behaviour as maintained by positive reinforcement. For example, many children find it more pleasurable to stay at home and watch television or visit with friends than go to school. Simply put, the rewards for not attending school are greater than those for going (Turner 1984; Blagg 1987; Burke 1987; King & Ollendick 1989; Kearney & Silverman 1990:343;). In addition, parents may inadvertently reinforce school refusal behaviour via rewards for somatic complaints (Granell-de-Aldaz *et al* 1987). The behaviour continues because the parents are either unwilling or unable to effectively alter the contingencies maintaining it (Burke 1987:12).

Vicarious conditioning principles may also be an influence in the development of school refusal. For children who are constantly exposed to peers and siblings who are afraid of school, there is a potential for acquiring a similar fear through observational learning (Turner 1984; King & Ollendick 1989:216; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995). From the foregoing explanation of the learning model of the etiology of school refusal behaviour it becomes clear that the conditioning process itself is likely to be

interactive in the development and maintenance of school refusal. For example a child already upset by a death in the family suffers a traumatic experience at school (classical conditioning), observes another child's fear behaviour of school (vicarious conditioning) and now receives an inordinate amount of attention for his nervous behaviour (operant conditioning) (King & Ollendick 1989:216; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995:17).

The above three theories on causation of school refusal have demonstrated that discrepancies among writers of diverse persuasions may involve differences of focus rather than of substance. Dynamic theorists stress the fear of failure which was noted, but not highlighted, by psychoanalytic theorists. While analysts stress the fear of leaving for the school, some learning theorists emphasise the fear of going to school. In a similar manner, the psychodynamically-oriented theorists stress potential failure in the school situation while some learning theorists emphasise school as a potential failure situation (Atkinson, Quarrington & Cyr 1985:86). In addition, some modern researchers have speculated on the etiology of school refusal syndrome along the lines of cognitive processes. According to King, Ollendick and Tonge (1995:18) for example, several controlled investigations have shown that anxious children engage in negative self-talk when faced with fear-producing situations. King and his co-workers (1995:18) cite the study conducted by Zatz and Chassin (1983,1985) which found that high test-anxious children showed more task debilitating cognitions during testing, including negative self-evaluations (for example, "I am doing poorly") and off-task thoughts (for example, "I wish I were home") and fewer positive self-evaluations (for example: ("I am doing the best that I can do").

According to Granell-de-Aldaz and her associates (1987:405) it is not uncommon for parents of school refusers to have a history of school refusal or for siblings to have current or previous school attendance difficulties.

From this it follows that school refusers in these homes may have vacariously learned their refusal behaviour from their siblings.

The problem of dysfunctional, unfavourable family dynamics or pathological family relationships have also been implicated by a number of authors (Waldron *et al* 1975; Church & Edwards 1984; Valles & Oddy 1984; Honma 1986, 1987, 1988; Brand 1993; Berg *et al* 1993; Borchardt *et al* 1994; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995;) as the possible precipitating and in some cases predisposing factors of school refusal.

Some of the research studies conducted seemed to suggest that school refusal tends to be brought about most frequently on the condition in which the mother is dominant and interfering and the father is weak (Honma 1988:42). In his serial studies, Honma (1986,1987 and 1988) found that adolescent school refusal emerges as the confusion of the goal orientation. According to this author, the adolescent's school refusal behaviour is meant to sensitise the parents that the adolescent needs help.

In their study of the clinical treatment of school refusal behaviour, Kearney and Beasley (1994:131) concluded that "youngsters refuse school to avoid aversive social and/or evaluative situations". Common examples, according to these authors, include new social interaction, tests, oral presentations, athletic performance, and curricular/homework difficulties. In addition, these authors found that only a minority of youngsters refuse school because of fear of circumscribed school-related objects (for example fire alarms, bus, hallway).

Many authors have also alluded to loss through death in the family as a possible predisposing factor for some refusers (Atkinson, Quarrinton, Cyr & Atkinson 1989).

Fukuda and Hozumi's (1987) study revealed that school refusal behaviour can be triggered by experiences of frustration (for example, poor achievement in an examination, quarrels with friends). This seems to be a problem of adolescents.

Dunbar (1988:27) puts the following as the factors that may contribute to the school refusal condition:

- anxiety about something at home, for example, parents quarrelling.
- generalised anxiety about self - often kept at bay by child through repetitive or obsessional behaviour, for example, excessive tidiness, fussiness about food, nail biting.
- poor social skills especially in peer relations.
- some circumstances of exceptional trauma (for example sexual abuse).

Some of the factors mentioned by Dunbar (1988) above were echoed by some other authors. The "exceptional trauma" hypothesis, for example, was also mentioned by Brand (1993).

Another hypothesis which will be termed "curriculum hypothesis or academic self-concept hypothesis" was also mentioned by some authors (Chazan 1962; Wade 1979; Reid 1982; Granell-de-Aldaz *et al* 1987; Fukuda & Hozumi 1987; Naylor *et al* 1994). Reid (1982:183) states that it is possible that constant patterns of failure in school might lead some pupils to withdraw from the offending stimuli. When pupils perpetually receive low grades in school, their academic self-concepts may be reduced to such a point that to absent themselves from school becomes a source of relief. Along similar lines, Naylor and his collaborators (1994:1331) stated that developmental learning or language disorders cause significant frustration in the academic setting and may predispose the susceptible child or adolescent to school refusal. These authors also state that children and adolescents with specific learning disabilities are vulnerable to

emotional and behavioural disorders. They further posited that depression may be accompanied by impaired cognitive abilities, thereby mediating the development of learning disorders and language deficits, predisposing the vulnerable adolescent to school refusal.

Chazan's (1962) view is in accordance with the above authors. He contends that educational retardation should not be ruled out as a possible factor in the causation of some cases of school refusal.

Another possibility is social factors, particularly with regard to some of the grammar school children. These children's reluctance to go to school was an unwillingness to leave the neighbourhood and to lose sight of old associates rather than a fear of leaving home.

Wade (1979:25) agrees with Naylor *et al's* (1994) postulations concerning language disorders but adds that "in normal and special schools we should give careful attention to the curriculum, teacher's attitudes and the use of language ;in learning."

Granell-de-Aldaz and her co-workers (1987:406) posited a couple of possible precipitating and predisposing factors along the lines of academic self-concept hypothesis, namely external stressors and heightened adaptation requirements. These factors may precipitate refusal in psychologically vulnerable children. Examples of external stressors are:

- beginning of the school year
- a period after changing schools or teachers.

These same authors further argue that "as the child attempts to cope with the more stressful academic situation, family factors assume importance also as the child naturally looks to siblings and parents for coping strategies".

Multiple factors may be implicated in the etiology of school refusal, including the child's avoidance of school. Particularly noteworthy in Granell-de-Aldaz *et al's* (1987:407) results was the high percentage of cases in which refusal appeared in connection with a child's pattern of frequent changes of schools. The authors speculated that the stress associated with new academic demands and the social isolation associated with academic transitions were important factors in the child's fear-motivated avoidance of the school.

Granell-de-Aldaz *et al* (1987) concluded by speculating that children who are shy, who are given to feelings of depression and who are highly dependent on their parents, may find it especially difficult to make friends in a new school and this may render them vulnerable to school refusal.

Plapp (1990) postulated a completely different hypothesis in his attempt to shed light on the mystery of the etiology of school refusal. This author showed, by means of three case studies, that school refusal may manifest as a result of Tourette's syndrome (T.S.). Plapp's argument is that children may avoid school through fear of being jeered by other learners at school because of their symptoms. According to Plapp (1990:150) "School refusal, separation anxiety, and social anxiety may develop from experiences of loss of control and peer ostracism resulting from T.S. symptoms, just as agoraphobia may develop following a panic attack". Plapp by this implies that school refusal *per se* is not a problem but a symptom of an underlying problem, which in this case is T.S. More research is still needed to substantiate or refute this claim.

Finally, a consideration of Margaret Lock's (1986) view on school refusal in Japan. Lock's report is based on her observations and interviews with professionals in Japan. She gives a long list of what each of the

professionals she consulted with believes are the causes of school refusal.

Briefly these causes are:

- According to Dr Nagai (Lock 1986:104), the school refusal problem is usually the result of a combination of two basic factors: a low I.Q. and "self-centred" mothers who are full-time house-wives. She (Nagai) blames the mothers of having grown up being surrounded by material abundance and therefore treat their children like "pets". She also blames the school of being theoretically designed so that all children of the same age group stay at the same level and work at the same pace. She believes that this puts a great strain on the slower children.
- Dr Sakama (Lock 1986:104), on the other hand, maintains that poor diet is central to school refusal syndrome. He is particularly opposed to sugar and white rice. Dr Sakama concedes that bullying at school and the parent/child relationship may act as precipitating factors in school refusal but he believes that a more basic issue is the problem of 'nervous exhaustion' from poor diet, lack of exercise and excessively concentrated studies at school.
- Mr Maeda (Lock 1986:104), an ex-teacher and school administrator blames the problem on the 'selfishness' of parents and children involved. He states that children have expensive tastes and many dislikes about food and that they are unable to stick at anything. He believes that school refusal children are poor at expressing their needs and cannot make choices. This he attributes to a combination of an over-competent and bossy mother and a father whose presence is not felt.
- According to Manbusho, the Ministry of Education report (Lock 1986:105), the basic causes are thought to be in the child's personality;

one or more of the following traits are common: the child is anxious, unadaptive, does not fit well into groups, cannot make decisions, is inflexible, takes things too seriously and is emotionally immature, is high strung, and nervous about grades, his or her health and so on. Important contributing factors, the report continues, are the home environment, the parent/child relationship, particularly overprotection and spoiling, and parental personalities. The report argues further that at school the children lose confidence easily when they cannot keep up in class and in clubs activities. They lack the tenacity to deal with the hard discipline necessary for most sports. The child is poor at making friends and frightened too easily by the scolding of a teacher.

- Dr Tajima (Lock 1986:105) states that at the root of the school refusal problem are mothers who have no purpose in life except their children. He adds that mothers such as these cannot allow their children to develop independence, and in fact the mothers often depend upon their adolescent children, especially since their husbands are rarely present in the house. He adds that the general competitiveness in Japanese society has cascaded down to the school, putting a burden on children. He says children who do not do well are criticised by teachers, parents and the other children, and soon lose confidence in themselves. Dr Tajima believes that school refusal is an expression of a family conflict and a rapidly changing social system.

Having looked briefly at what these professionals in Lock's study (1986) think about the school refusal problem, it is worth mentioning that while some of them say things reminiscent of what a lot of other researchers have said and/or found in research, others are way out. The "diet" hypothesis of Dr Sakama's for example, is a reductionistic approach and an oversimplification of an otherwise complicated problem.

Dr Nagai's low I.Q. hypothesis is also not consonant with the findings of many researchers for example those of Kahn, Nursten & Carroll (1981), King and Ollendick (1989), Wicks-Nelson and Israel (1991) which have stressed that school refusers show a normal distribution of intelligence and that they include children with learning disabilities.

Lock (1986:109) sees school refusal behaviour in Japanese children as their plea for acceptance. She contends that these children are expressing their protest against 'soft rule' conformity and the contradictions they encounter in their supposedly harmonious and equalitarian society. She says these children are asking to be recognised for what they "are" not for what they "represent" to their father, mother, school mates and teacher. Their refusal is a silent and lonely protest about their perceived failures and inadequacies.

The heterogeneity of the school refusal concept becomes more apparent as one peruses literature on this syndrome. The problem of heterogeneity in school refusal has made treatment (which will be discussed next) even more of a problem.

## 2.4 TREATMENT

Theories on treatment will be touched on very briefly since this does not directly form part of the phenomenon presently being researched. The reason this section on treatment is included here, even if very briefly, is that by looking at the treatment methods of school refusal employed, one is able to detect the therapist's/researcher's/author's beliefs as regards the causation of the syndrome.

Early treatment work with school refusal was largely psychoanalytically based (Johnson et al 1941; Coolidge, Hahn & Peck 1957; Blagg 1987). Nevertheless, beneath the psychoanalytic umbrella, strategies and styles of

intervention have varied enormously. In particular there have been major differences of opinion with respect to who to treat, where to treat and whether to insist on immediate return to school before, during or after treatment (Blagg 1987:36). Blagg contends that much of the pioneer work was concerned with the psychopathology of the child although most studies broadened the treatment focus to include the mother-child relationship.

Views by Skynner (1974), Bryce and Baird (1986) and Valles and Oddy (1984) express the idea that treatment should be based on a family system model with the father included as well. These views indicate an analytic view that school refusal originates from pathological family relationships, and the argument seems to be that returning the child to school will serve no purpose if the relationship problem, which bred the school refusal problem in the first place, is not resolved.

Psychodynamic treatments have generally emphasised community-based or out-patient treatment. The drastic and sudden separation experiences involved in hospitalisation seem to run counter to the general principle of developing insight and understanding as a way of resolving difficulties (Blagg 1987:37). Some researchers have, however, regarded admissions to hospital in-patient units as necessary for certain cases (Hersov 1960b). The majority of dynamically-oriented therapists, according to Blagg (1987:37), strongly advocate an early return to school as the prime objective of any treatment or management of school refusal. Therapists who support this idea are: Leventhal *et al* (1967) and Skynner (1974). Valles and Oddy (1984) have, however, warned that, while early return may work well for younger children, for adolescent refusers an early return may predispose social adjustment problems in adult life if the adolescent is returned to school before the family conflicts are resolved. This opinion was shared by Hersov (1960b) and Kurita (1991). Along similar lines, Thompson (in Blagg 1987:37) adds that any form of pressure of an early

return is likely to be dangerous, making phobia worse and more difficult to treat.

Still supporting the idea of 'correct timing' of the return to school, Waldfogel, Coolidge and Hahn (1957) claim that a rapid return to school may lead to the child and family withdrawing from treatment leaving emotional conflicts and issues unresolved. To illustrate the importance of timing the return further, Blagg (1987:37) quotes Sperling as saying "If psychotherapy is planned it is better to uncover the dynamics underlying the phobic behaviour in treatment, and when this is achieved, the child will return to school voluntarily and assume responsibility for doing so himself. Any other method exempts the child from this responsibility and places it instead on parents, teachers, principal, truant officer or therapist."

In the main, psychodynamic treatments have either ignored or de-emphasised the role of school factors in the etiology and treatment of school phobia (Blagg 1987:38). Nevertheless a couple of authors (Chazan 1962; Wade 1979; Reid 1982; Bryce & Baird 1986; Naylor *et al* 1994) have stressed the significance of co-ordinating the family-based treatment with the school personnel.

Other researchers have also suggested that school refusal is a childhood form of either panic disorder or depression (Burke 1987:14). Therapists or more specifically, pharmacotherapists with this belief prefer to use antidepressants to treat school refusal. Plapp (1990), for example, is of the opinion that Tourette's syndrome (T.S.) is the basic cause of school refusal. Hence to treat school refusal effectively, T.S. must be treated. Plapp suggested drugs such as Haloperidol and Carbamazepine, depending on the diagnosis, to treat T.S. Along similar lines, Bernstein and his collaborators' (1990:780) results indicated that both Alprazolam and Imipramine may be efficacious in treating symptoms of anxiety and depression associated with school refusal. However, according to Burke

(1987:14) adding drug treatment to psychotherapy did not increase the level of improvement that can be achieved by psychotherapy alone over a more extended period of time. This, according to Burke (1987), lends support to the theory that antidepressants act by suppressing panic attacks in school refusers rather than decreasing levels of depression.

Behavioural researchers have also become interested in the problem of school refusal. Treatment approaches typically employed are usually dichotomized.

In the first instance treatment is planned in accordance with the conceptualisation of school refusal as a phobia, either of school itself or separation from the mother (Burke 1987). This view is a direct response to analytic and dynamic theories of the syndrome. In these instances, school refusal is treated with standard anxiety reducing techniques such as systematic desensitisation (Turner 1984; Church & Edwards 1984; Burke 1987; Blagg 1987; King & Ollendick 1989; Kearney & Silverman 1990; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995) and flooding (Smith & Sharpe 1970).

In the second conceptualisation, school refusal is viewed as a parenting or management problem in which the behaviour is maintained by secondary gains obtained from the parent (Burke 1987; Kearney & Silverman 1990). To treat such cases contingency management techniques such as contingency contracting (Turner 1984; Burke 1987; King & Ollendick 1989; Kearney & Silverman 1990; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995;) and other planned reinforcement systems (Turner 1984; Lock 1986; Burke 1987; King & Ollendick 1989; Kearney & Silverman 1990; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995) are employed. In a study conducted by Gullone and King (1991) whose intention was to solicit the evaluations/perceptions of students, caregivers and professionals regarding treatment strategies of school refusal behaviour, management techniques emerged as the widely popular and accepted treatment technique.

As it was stated earlier, it was not the intention of this study to provide a painstaking treatment regimen of school refusal. The interested reader is referred to the sources cited here above for elaborate explanation of treatment strategies.

To conclude this section, it is worth mentioning that, while emphasis in treatment strategies has, for many authors, been focused on the refuser and the family (Valles & Oddy 1984; Hersov 1960b; Skynner 1974) there are researchers who do not only implicate the school as the important party in therapy, but go even further to specify that remedial education is necessary in some cases (Chazan 1962; Wade 1979; Reid 1982; Naylor *et al* 1994). Reid (1982) goes even further to suggest, not only remedial education, but also preventive measures. Granell-de-Aldaz and her co-workers (1987) support Reid's preventive measures view, adding that such programmes can be prepared only for those learners who appear to be vulnerable to school refusal disorder. Examples are children who are shy, who become depressed easily, who are particularly dependent on their families and whose families are troubled or have a history of similar problems. Such children are referred to as "high risk students" (Granell-de Aldaz *et al* 1987:407)

## 2.5 DIAGNOSTIC CONSIDERATIONS

As it became evident in section 2.2, there is considerable heterogeneity in the clinical picture of children and adolescents who present with school refusal. Such heterogeneity in the clinical presentation demands thoughtful and sensitive considerations regarding the formulation of the clinical problem, the assessment to be pursued and the treatment to be undertaken (King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995:10). In this section the researcher will comment briefly on diagnostic considerations.

For most part, children and adolescents who present with school refusal meet criteria for one or more of the anxiety or affective disorders described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III-R, DSM-IV) put forth by the American Psychiatric Association (King, Ollendick & Tonge, 1995:10). School refusal, however, does not appear as a disorder within the DSM-III-R or its recent revision, DSM-IV (King & Ollendick 1989:215; Burke 1987:20). Of special relevance to school refusal are the anxiety disorders of childhood and adolescence including separation anxiety disorder (Hersov 1960b; Burke 1987; King & Ollendick 1989; King *et al* 1994), avoidant and overanxious disorders (Burke 1987; King & Ollendick 1989; King *et al* 1994).

Depending on their clinical features, school refusers may be given other diagnoses including simple phobia, social phobia (Burke 1987; King & Ollendick 1989; King *et al* 1994; King *et al* 1995), panic disorder (Burke, 1987; King & Ollendick, 1989), depression (Rock 1980; Kahn, Nursten & Carroll 1981; Berg 1982; Tataru 1987; Burke 1987; Dunbar 1988; Atkinson *et al* 1989; Bernstein & Garfinkel 1990; Brand 1993; Borchardt *et al* 1994; King, Ollendick & Tonge 1995). Frequently, co-morbidity (co-occurrence) of these diagnoses, in the same children or adolescents, seems to be a rule rather than an exception. Hence diagnostic heterogeneity prevails.

Rubenstein and Hastings (1980), however, claim that other diagnoses, over and above the ones cited above, may manifest in adolescent school refusers. These authors argue that youngsters of this age (adolescence) may be diagnosed with a borderline personality disorder. According to these authors, as the youngster advances toward adulthood, the diagnostic criteria of borderline personality may be superseded by more specific evidence supporting a change in diagnosis to that of psychosis, psychoneurosis, or inadequate and hysterical personality disorders. Similarly, temporary identity crisis with regression to the behaviour characteristics of earlier stages of development have to be distinguished

from the personality disintegration that may precede the onset of serious psychotic conditions such as schizophrenia or manic depressive psychosis (Rubenstein & Hastings 1980:777).

Burke (1987:21) expresses her doubts about the usefulness of the DSM classification system as regards the prescription of treatment for the school refusal disorder. She draws attention to the numerous criticisms levelled to this system. One such criticism is the relative lack of a developmental perspective in the description of the childhood behaviour disorders or the non-age specific categories such as depression or panic disorder (Burke 1987:22).

Burke further argues that there is a lack of continuity between childhood disorders and their adult counterparts. To add to Burke's (1987) criticisms above, the researcher has noted in reviewing literature, that although the descriptions of the clinical presentation of school refusal paint a fairly vivid picture of the manifestation of school refusal, the majority of authors and researchers fail to state explicit behavioural criteria for diagnosing the condition.

Perhaps it is because of the criticisms cited above that most researchers, including King & Ollendick (1989), Blagg (1987), Atkinson and colleagues (1989), and Kurita (1991), have reverted to the diagnostic criteria put forth by Berg, Nichols and Pritchard (1969).

Berg and his collaborators (1969:123) developed the following guidelines as diagnostic criteria for school refusal behaviour:

- severe difficulty attending school often resulting in prolonged absence.
- severe emotional upset including excessive fearfulness, temper outbursts or complaints of feeling ill when faced with the prospect of going to school.

- staying at home with the knowledge of the parents when the youngster should be at school
- absence of anti-social characteristics such as stealing, lying and destructiveness.

These criteria maintain the distinction between school refusal, which is often associated with anxiety disorders and school truancy, which is frequently associated with conduct disorders (King *et al* 1994; King & Ollendick 1989).

What has earned Berg *et al*'s (1969) criteria popularity and frequent use is their call for evidence for prolonged absence, excessive fearfulness, somatic complaints and adamant refusal to attend school - all characteristics which are commonly observed in school refusing children (King & Ollendick 1989).

## 2.6 DIFFERENTIATING AMONG SCHOOL REFUSERS

In general, lines seem to be drawn round philosophical and theoretical orientations with psychodynamically-oriented clinicians preferring a separation-anxiety hypothesis and behaviourally-oriented clinicians favouring a fear-of-school hypothesis. King and Ollendick (1989:214), however, argue that lines are not clearly drawn and that the actual state of affairs may well fall somewhere between the turfs of these two camps. Granell-de-Aldaz and co-workers (1987) claim that their study results revealed that there may be several different types of refusal, each associated with different etiological factors, levels of severity, age ranges, and probable prognosis.

Coolidge, Han and Peck (1957) dichotomised school refusal into neurotic and characterological subtypes. This distinction, repeated by the same researchers (Waldfogel, Coolidge & Hahn, 1957) was later adopted by

other workers, for example Kennedy (1965). Kennedy, however, relabelled Coolidge *et al's* (1957) neurotic-characterological distinction as Type I and Type II.

Other researchers (Atkinson *et al* 1985; Nichols & Berg 1970; Berg *et al* 1969) prefer the acute-chronic dichotomy. Atkinson *et al* (1985:86) described neurotic type school refusers as : "... characterised by an abrupt onset after several more or less trouble free years. At home, these children became stubborn, tense, and clinging. They no longer responded to previously successful measures. Although resisting school and being difficult at home, these children's social and intellectual functioning continued satisfactorily". Characterological school refusers, on the other hand, were more disturbed and more severely crippled. For them, fear of school was merely one symptom representing a diffuse, generalised fear of the outside world. Mistrusting, hypersensitive, and depressed, the characterologically disordered led a constricted life revolving entirely around the household (Atkinson, Quarrington & Cyr 1985:86). These same authors further note that the mothers of both neurotic and characterologically disturbed children were overprotective, encouraged dependency and had failed to resolve their dependency on their own mothers.

King and Ollendick (1989:215) described Kennedy's (1965) Type I and Type II as follows:

"Type I or the neurotic variety, is characterised by the following features:

- the present episode is the first;
- Monday onset, following an illness the previous Thursday or Friday;
- an acute onset;
- concern about death;
- mother's physical health in question or at least the child fears so;
- generally good communication between the parents;

- father and mother well-adjusted;
- father involved in household management and child-rearing;
- parents easy to work with and have basic understanding of what child is experiencing.

In contrast, Type II or characterological refusal is characterised by an obverse pattern: gradual, insidious onset in an older child in whom death themes are not present and whose parents are considerably more difficult to work with, showing little insight into the child's behaviour".

According to Kennedy (1965), the Type I or acute or neurotic type school refusers have a better prognosis than Type II or chronic or characterological type. Granell-de-Aldaz *et al* (1987) and Burke (1987) concur with Kennedy's claim above.

As it has become apparent above, the method of classification which characterises school refusal may have different preferred labels but the two types identified in each case are basically the same. The first type, for example Type I, neurotic, sudden (Tisher 1983), acute (Berg *et al* 1969) is characterised by a rapid onset of problem with no prior history of similar problems (Burke 1987:16). The second type [Type II, characterological, gradual (Tisher 1983), chronic (Berg *et al* 1969)] is characterised by gradual onset (over months or even years) with a history of poor adjustment (Coolidge *et al* 1957; Burke 1987).

Burke (1987:15) concluded from her literature study, that one can identify school refusers who are school phobic, school refusers who are child-management problems and school refusers who are depressed.

Waldron and his collaborators (1975), after researching significant factors in a sample of 35 families of 5 - 12 year old school refusers, concluded that one can differentiate among four types of school refusers as follows:

- Type 1 includes those cases in which school refusal is seen as a consequence of separation anxiety in the context of a mutually hostile dependent relationship in which the mother (or rarely, the father) and child cling to each other. This kind of phobia can be characterised as the family interaction type.
- Type 2 school refusal is often described as a phobia that involves the defences of displacement, projection, and externalization and differs from other childhood phobias only in that the presence of the mother is more mandatory. This is the classical phobia type.
- Type 3 school refusal includes cases in which the child has a barely concealed, overwhelming conscious concern about what will happen to a parent while the child is away. This felt danger might be stirred by an actual threatened danger, such as medical illness or acute depression in the mother. For these children, the complaints about school may represent flimsy rationalisation that can easily be abandoned by the child. The child is therefore not suffering from a phobia but from an acute anxiety reaction. This school phobia is thus called the acute anxiety type.
- In Type 4 school phobia, the child may avoid school out of fear of real situations in school that threaten the child with failure, loss of self-esteem or even bodily harm. This is called situational-characterological type of school phobia (Waldron *et al* 1975:802-803).
- Renouf (1985:79) summarised Waldron *et al*'s (1975) two classifications, namely classical phobia type and family interaction type as follows:

- In the classical phobia type the child's sources of fear were intrapersonal rather than interpersonal and the irrational fear that the child showed towards school was a displacement of the inner fear. The child exhibited symptoms such as vomiting, sweating of the hands and accelerated pulse rate.
- In the family interaction type, the family characteristics were unclear generation boundaries, inadequacy of communication, and imbalance in the system whereby the school phobic was more important to the mother than the father was.

King, Ollendick and Tonge (1995:8) differentiated school refusal according to the sources of fear. They maintained that fear of separation from parents is more typical of the clinical presentation of young children, whereas fear of teachers or other children is seen more frequently in older school refusers.

Honma (1986) also showed interest in subdividing school refusal. He differentiated among five subtypes of adolescent school refusers as follows:

- **FAMILY CONFLICT TYPE**

The adolescent refuser in this type refuses school with a view to draw attention to the family relation conflicts. The parents are not supportive of his attempts to attain independence. This lack of family support for him culminates in him opting to refuse school so as to force the family conflicts into the open.

- **SCHOOL-ORIENTED TYPE**

An adolescent refuser in this type has a desire to achieve success in school and good relations with school communities but he is, unfortunately,

poor at achieving it. Thus he experiences anxiety and set-back and this becomes a trigger for absence from school.

- **SEARCHING-FOR-GOAL TYPE**

The refusers of this type have not joined well in the school community in their life history. In many cases school refusal happened when they changed their school or entered senior high school. They cannot find their existence place at school and feel anxious about it. They are unable to cope with the conditions so well that they begin to be absent from school. They have poor skills to control their interpersonal relations and attain their goals.

- **NEUROSIS TYPE**

The refuser of this type show low activity and has no or unrealistic goals so that he feels maladjusted to social life including school. The condition may show a vicious circle where one finds the refuser afflicted by psychosomatic symptoms, the symptoms cause lower activity levels and he becomes more distressful. The communication and interaction within family members are conspicuously inadequate. He cannot display the power to be independent of his family and they cannot support him.

- **ACTING-OUT TYPE**

Adolescents falling into this category were those who were separated from juvenile delinquent groups. As a group, after they separated from juvenile delinquent groups, they realised that they were not accepted by their school communities and refused to attend school. As they had high activity levels they searched their courses outside school, such as finding a job (Honma, 1986:78-80).

As it can be seen from the foregoing paragraphs, there is controversy about all aspects of school refusal.

Atkinson *et al* (1985) present five parameters which may help distinguish between school refuser types as follows:

1. **EXTENSIVENESS OF DISTURBANCE**

This has been dichotomized into neurotic-characterological or Type I & II school refusers.

2. **MODE OF ONSET**

Some refusers experience acute, others a chronic mode of onset.

3. **FEAR SOURCE**

This varies too. Some children are generally fearful, while others are afraid of maternal separation, failure, or school in general.

4. **Age**

5. **Gender**

In addition to the above, Kolvin *et al* (Atkinson *et al*, 1989:190) divided school refusers into depressed and non-depressed subtypes.

2.7 **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, one may point out that the degree of disagreement among researchers about many aspects of school refusal, including classification of refusers into subtypes clouds the already clouded problem. The

question is: To what extent will these different sub-classifications be of assistance in planning treatment strategies. Further, it is difficult to generalise these subtypes because most of them are based on the findings of the studies where case studies, rather than large samples, were used.

It also transpired from this chapter that different theorists postulate varying etiological hypotheses. Some of them stress different things but basically state the same thing. It has also become clear that diagnostic heterogeneity is prevalent in the school refusal condition. Because of its complex nature, school refusal may easily be given other diagnoses such as simple phobia, social phobia, panic disorder and so on. This misdiagnosis may delay the treatment process and may even aggravate the problem.

As it became clear in this chapter, most of the studies in school refusal were conducted in overseas countries and mostly in the white communities. As this study sets out to research black adolescents, it would be interesting to have a chapter on Black adolescence so that the reader may see how black adolescents behave in comparison with other cultural groups and how their behaviour link up with school refusal condition. The next chapter will address this issue.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS.**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is a stage that is characterised by a number of developmental tasks that the adolescent has to accomplish. This is the stage where the areas of development reach a peak before the adolescent enters the adult world. It is, however, true that a lot of what happens during adolescence depends largely on what happened during other developmental stages prior to this stage.

The adolescent's development is invariably influenced by a number of factors related to the family, peers and also other educators. In this chapter, the following areas of development will be addressed:

- cognitive development
- identity formation
- social development
- emotional development

#### **3.2 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS**

Smith (1985) studied the role models and values of South African Black adolescents. The broad aim of his study was to identify and gain understanding of social sources of influence on the cognitive development of urban black adolescents as reflected in their choice of role models and achievement related values. Analysis of results revealed that educational, social and political values were most prevalent. Political values were more

salient for males and for science pupils, while social values, altruism in particular, were more solicited for females.

More than half the sample chose service professions as the desired careers. Accepted and rejected models were chosen from people subjects had come into contact with more than from the mass media (television, magazines and newspapers).

A similar study was conducted by Kotze (Thabethe 1991:81) to determine the role of the mass media in political socialisation of South African school children. The results showed that the black matriculant group had the largest percentage of daily newspaper readers in the sample. This group mostly read black and liberal English-speaking papers. The black group was mostly interested in reading about politics (41,1%). According to Thabethe (1991:81), this percentage was nearly twice as high as the second highest rating, that is, Indians and Coloureds. The White group manifested the least interest in politics. The black group also preferred the English (64%) and African (61,3%) radio services to the music stations.

In view of these findings, it may be concluded that for black adolescents politics and educational values seem to provide a lot of cognitive stimulation. They read papers, listen to the radio, get influenced by role models, and watch television. These all serve as intellectual stimulation for this group. Over and above all this, Thabethe (1991:84) concluded from his own findings, that blacks, unlike the other groups, "may be much more family orientated".

A research study conducted in a Southern rural environment in the U.S.A. with a view to investigate the important psychosocial variables associated with the educational development of black adolescents revealed that the youth identified as successful were characterised by the following:

- They received a high degree of parental encouragement.
- Extended family members also participated in parenting, encouragement and listening to problems and concerns.
- Their nieces served as role models.
- Church attendance was a major factor in the families of these students.
- They had a high degree of achievement motivation.
- Boyfriends and girlfriends also helped with homework, listened and understood problems and also offered encouragement.
- They showed a strong future orientation.
- They manifested a strong positive view of the self and a high level of self-confidence (Lee 1985).

These findings have been included in this section because, although it looks as if it can fit better with social development, if one looks at the characteristics identified one realises that they can influence development in all other areas, that is, emotional, cognitive as well as social development. Parental encouragement for example may take the form of praise or buying your child educational toys which, when chosen carefully, may improve the cognitive functioning in the child.

The characteristics identified by Lee's (1985) study may hold true for the South African black adolescents as well. These characteristics indicate the need for significant others to lend support to the adolescent. An adolescent who has this support is apt to show strong achievement motivation and future orientation.

Contemporary cognitive development studies are largely influenced by the findings of a well-known cognitive psychologist, Jean Piaget. Piaget's theory tries to offer a comprehensive explanation of the child's understanding and interpretation of his world. This psychologist identified four stages of cognitive development namely:

- the sensory motor stage (0-2 years)
- the preoperational stage (2-7 years)
- the stage of concrete operations (7-12 years) and
- the stage of formal operations (12yrs+) (Piaget 1966)

The formal operational stage coincides with adolescence and adulthood stages of development. This stage is the highest level of thinking attainable by man. At this level, the person is no longer restricted to concrete reasoning, but is capable of going beyond concrete evidence as he uses his imagination. A person who has attained this level of operation is able to concentrate his thoughts on things that have no existence except in his own mind. A person who has attained formal operations can perform a variety of tasks involving the use of hypothesis, trial and error, prediction, the definition of terms, abstractions and drawing of logical and scientific conclusions ( Mwamwenda 1995:97-98).

Piaget's formal operational stage has met with an array of criticisms. Clearly, his stages of development disregard the environment as a factor that can influence the attainment of cognitive development. If children are to attain the stage of formal operations, it is essential that they are provided with a suitable environment as a factor that can influence the attainment of cognitive development. Schau and his colleagues (as cited by Mwamwenda 1995:98) argue collaboratively, that: "If appropriate environment experiences are not provided during later childhood, the transition from concrete operations to formal operations may be delayed. Children in extremely disadvantaged circumstances may never reach the stage of formal operational thought unless changes in the environment are brought about while development is still possible."

It is clear therefore from the foregoing paragraphs that intelligence cannot be measured out of context. Mwamwenda (1995:141) contends, for example, that the value African children attach to Piagetian concepts is not

the same as the value that their western counter parts attach to the same concepts. It follows from this that the way the two sets of children reflect on such concepts is likely to be proportionally different. Mwamwenda (1995:141) states that expecting the two cultural groups to perform equally well on the tasks would be less realistic.

Dasen and co-workers (in Mwamwenda 1995:141) state that "cross-cultural research has repeatedly demonstrated that cultural differences in cognitive development do not influence the attainment of cognitive stages except the rate at which they are attained." Carlson (Mwamwenda 1995:141) argues collaboratively, that the order in which Piagetian stages are acquired is universal, but that the age at which they are attained is subject to the environmental milieu which accounts for either acceleration/retardation or normal development.

Dasen (in Mwamwenda 1995:141) holds the view that ecological factors have an influence on cognitive development, for example, a nomadic and hunting-and-gathering type of life contributes to the development of spatial concepts, whereas a sedentary and agricultural lifestyle facilitates the acquisition of quantitative reasoning such as conservation.

The chronological difference in the attainment of cognitive stages may be accounted for by both the quality and frequency of cognitive stimulation provided by a given environment which becomes increasingly significant as one moves towards higher stages, namely concrete and formal operations (Piaget 1972:7).

According to Mwamwenda (1995:141) it is still debatable whether the influence of culture on cognitive development is restricted to the rate of attainment and has very little to do with the actual cognitive structure unless this is attributed to biological factors. This same author stresses

that the role of culture or environment in cognitive development goes beyond influencing the rate at which stages are attained.

In conclusion, it may be argued that, if what Thabethe (1991:84) says, that "... black adolescents are much more family oriented than other groups", is true, then it is likely to get different reactions if all is not well in the family relations of an adolescent. One such reaction may be school refusal behaviour, which behaviour the adolescent may revert to with a view to draw the attention of the parents to the conflict-stricken parent-adolescent relationship (see Chapter 2 section 2.3).

Further, one may stretch Mwamwenda's (1995:141) point further and say that adolescents who come from environmentally-impooverished backgrounds may find that their intellectual development is slow. As a result such adolescents may find that they are not able to cope with intellectually demanding tasks that their counter-parts can cope with. If, for example, black adolescents from an environmentally deficient background go to a white school where most of the children's cognitive development level is in accordance with Piaget's theory because of the environment where they come from, they (black adolescents) may feel inferior and discouraged. This may in turn lead them to withdraw from a threatening (school) situation. School refusal behaviour may then ensue.

### **3.3 IDENTITY FORMATION OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS**

As has been stated, there are certain developmental tasks that the adolescent must master. One of the most important tasks is the acquisition of an own identity (Myburgh & Anders 1989:123). Mwamwenda (1995:73) aptly describes this stage as follows "The search for one's identity becomes a preoccupation. The adolescent wants to know who he is, what he is capable of achieving, what he wants to do in life, what values he wants to adopt as his own, whom he wants to marry, the kind of family he

wants to have, and whether he or she is sex-appropriate and capable of sustaining friendships and commanding the respect of others."

The adolescent stage coincides with Erikson's (1968) developmental task referred to by him as identity versus role confusion (diffusion). Westaway (1986:36) regards adolescence as the period when identity becomes the focal point. During the acquisition of his own identity, the adolescent gains knowledge about himself and evaluates himself in view of this knowledge (Vrey 1979:114). This evaluation, according to Myburgh and Anders (1989:123), is based upon the evaluation by significant others.

During this stage of development the adolescent experiments with different roles without committing him/herself to anyone of them at first. This is termed psychological moratorium (Monyemorathwe 1992:2) or psychosocial moratorium (Erikson 1968:157; Hauser 1971:36; Westaway 1986:35; Gerdes 1988:289). During this experimentation the adolescent is in the middle of an identity crisis. If during this experimentation the adolescent does not succeed to find himself or answer the question 'who am I', role confusion (diffusion) occurs.

The researcher will confine the rest of this section to pupil-identity formation since it is this type of identity that is closely linked to school refusal behaviour.

### **3.3.1 Pupil-identity formation**

Erikson (1968) viewed the developmental tasks of adolescence as a crisis. That is why he named these tasks in a positive versus negative dichotomy, that is, ego identity versus role diffusion. What Erikson wanted to indicate here was that if the adolescent successfully resolves the crisis he will develop an ego identity, while failure to resolve the crisis will result in role confusion. The latter is characterised by indecision, a feeling of

indifference about present affiliations and lack of future goals, especially in the occupational field. This leads to a sense of futility, personal disorganisation and aimlessness, which may cause the individual to remain unattached and uncommitted (Gerdes 1988:290).

Hauser (1971) gave examples of a few role confusions that an adolescent who failed to accomplish his developmental tasks can fall into:

- *identity foreclosure*

Hauser (1971:35) and Mussen and colleagues (1990:621) view identity foreclosure as an interruption in the process of identity formation. These authors argue collaboratively, that a foreclosed identity is a premature 'fixing' of one's self-images, thereby interfering with one's development of other potentials and possibilities for self-definition. An individual like this does not emerge as all he could be.

Along similar lines, Gerdes (1988:290) contends that foreclosed identity means that a person accepts, uncritically, the definition of himself imposed on him by others and that he complies unquestioningly with the wishes of society or his family. This type of identity may occur when:

- A person has no opportunity to explore alternatives.
- A person has been confused by strictly imposed rewards and punishments.
- A person over-identifies with a role model.
- A person's identity is decided for him by others, for example, when he is compelled to follow in his father's footsteps and join the family firm regardless of whether he is suited to this.

- *negative identity*

This type of identity is defined by Hauser (1971:35) as: "arbitrary identity formation, premature fixation of self-images, thereby halting further evolution of self definition". Gerdes (1988:290) defines negative identity as "identification with anything which is in direct opposition to what an individual is expected to be".

As can be seen above, identity foreclosure and negative identity are, by definition, similar in that both are characterised by 'fixation' of self images prematurely, thereby resulting in the formation of a false, unrealistic identity. The only difference is that in the case of the former, the individual does not necessarily fixate on the negative as he does in the latter, but both result from the individual's avoidance of other alternatives and restrictiveness which eliminates ambiguities. This, according to Hauser (1971:35), results in an impoverished, limited self-definition and sense of continuity. Factors influencing pupil-identity formation of the adolescent will now be addressed more specifically.

### 3.3.1.1 Factors influencing pupil-identity formation

#### (a) the school and pupil-identity formation

For adolescents, according to Vrey (1979:28) identity formation can be influenced by significance attribution (assignment of meaning), involvement, experience and self-actualisation.

#### (i) meaning attribution and pupil-identity formation

Meaning attribution refers to the meaning given to things (Mathunyane 1992:106).

Mathunyane (1992) is of the opinion that the adolescent will be in the position to know and understand that aspect of his life-world known as 'school' after he has attributed meaning to the subject matter, peer groups and educators. Once the adolescent knows and understands, he is in a better position to establish meaningful relationships with ideas, subject matter, peers and educators and thus develop his pupil-identity. The nature of pupil-identity the adolescent forms largely depends on how he views himself in relation to the subject matter (or learning), school and educators. The relationships, concepts or ideas that have been understood, make learning meaningful. Vrey (1979:31) aptly puts this as follows: "Meaning exists in the mind of someone who understands."

Due to language barriers, a black adolescent may find the subject matter totally incomprehensible. As a result the subject matter may become meaningless. This may result in the adolescent failing to understand why he should study those subjects in the first place, and consequently it may lead to the formation of a diffuse pupil-identity or negative identity in relation to those subjects or to the school as a whole.

The adolescent attaches a positive meaning to educators who sympathise, empathise and award positive remarks to his school work. They esteem themselves positively when they achieve good marks or get praised for an effort they put into their work. If the adolescent attributes positive meanings to his school experiences, he is apt to form a positive pupil-identity (Mathunyane 1992:106)

(ii) involvement and pupil-identity formation

It is through involvement with the world that the adolescent's activities or actions define his identity (Mathunyane 1992:107). Brown and his co-workers (1981:17) concurrently state that successful identity is achieved through involvement with others. Malulyck (1978) argues along similar

lines with the authors above and says that each pupil learns better when he is actively involved in the didactic situation. From this it follows that, in order for the adolescent to learn and form a positive pupil-identity, he has to involve himself with the educators, class mates and the learning matter.

The interpersonal contact with a competent educator may result in the formation of a positive pupil-identity.

(iii) experience and pupil-identity formation

Learning experience is, according to Tyrer (1950:41), the interaction between the learner and the external conditions in the environment to which he can react. Learning takes place through the active behaviour of the student; it is through what he does that he learns. Matseke (1981:38) on the other hand, argues that it is through accumulation of experiences that the child gathers more information about things and events, thereby enlarging and refining his initial concept. This, by implication, means that the adolescent may accumulate considerable knowledge by being exposed to a variety of situations.

If the adolescent experiences his relationships with concepts, peers, parents and educators positively, it is likely that his pupil-identity will be positive.

Many Black secondary schools make attempts to increase the experiences of the adolescents by exposing them to environments beyond their neighbourhood. These excursions help them to widen their lifeworlds. Since the Black adolescents are rarely offered such chances, these visits are a reason to stay at and like school. This may strengthen the adolescent's pupil identity ( Mathunyane 1992:110)

(iv) **self actualisation and pupil-identity formation**

Basically, the idea of self-actualisation refers to a person's constant striving to realise the potential within and to develop inherent talents and capabilities. Self-actualising behaviour is what is seen when people strive to be the very best they can be (Maslow 1987).

Self-actualisation is, according to Maslow (1968:197), defined in various ways by various psychologists, but in spite of this, all definitions accept or imply:

- a) Acceptance and expression of the inner core or self, that is, actualisation of these latent capacities and potentialities, "full functioning", availability of the human and personal essence.
- b) Minimal presence of ill health, neurosis, psychosis, of loss or diminution of the basic human and personal capacities.

The above explanation was further interpreted by Behr (1975:5) who stated that self-actualisation is a need to achieve in accordance with the child's abilities. The realization of this potential within the child is based on how the child experiences his relationships (with concepts and significant others), the meaning he attributes to these relationships and how involved he is with them (Vrey 1979).

In the educational situation, assistance is given to the child in his self-actualisation. The child, according to Oosthuizen (1982:21), is assisted "in his becoming what he can become, what he wants to become and what he ought to become".

Pupil-identity formation is a prerequisite for self-actualisation because the child can only be a self-actualiser if he has seriously committed himself as a scholar (Swanepoel 1990:98). Committing himself in this instance means

devoting himself whole-heartedly to his school work. This type of commitment is likely to breed mastery of the subject matter which will in turn lead to competence in that particular subject. In concurrence with this, Hamachek (1990:55) argues that competence leads to positive self-esteem and positive self-esteem leads to psychologically healthier people. By the same token, pupils with positive self-esteem will find every reason for being at school and this will surely strengthen their pupil-identity formation.

### 3.3.1.2 The relationship between identity formation and school refusal

While it is important for the adolescent to enter into meaningful relationships with the subjects, peers and educators at school, it is also as important for him to establish positive relationships with peers, ideas and significant others, for example, friends and family members, outside the school.

Monyemorathwe (1993:8) states that: "Those families whose homes are experienced as homes, where adolescents are accepted and good communication is realised, have a significant influence on the black adolescent's self-concept and his view of his lifeworld." The family is the primary socialising agent. It is the practising ground, as it were, for the adolescent to try new experiences, new roles, to be fully himself without being afraid of being mocked or ridiculed. If these characteristics of a good home are lacking to a large extent, the adolescent may develop a negative family self-concept. This type of self-concept is likely to contaminate all other identities, including pupil-identity, the adolescent will have formed. Watson and Protinsky (1988:288) concur with this when they say "The adolescent's identity exploration is influenced by family feedback process that either encourages or discourages individuality and innovation."

When the family's structural organisation no longer fits the adolescent's needs, the adolescent may respond by becoming either rebellious or

passive. In either case there is a threat to the adolescent's achievement of ego-identity and psychological well-being (Watson & Protinsky 1988:288). Minuchin and Fishman (1981) state collaboratively with Watson and Protinsky above, that the family structure is an important predictor of the psychological adjustment of individual family members.

As the adolescent's attendance of school is one of the parents' instructions, the adolescent from a conflict-laden family may engage in a power struggle with his parents. One such struggle may be a school refusal behaviour. By refusing school the adolescent might be forcing the family to attend to the conflict immediately (Honma 1986; Lock 1986 see section 2.3 Chapter 2).

According to Myburgh and Anders' (1989:129) findings, the black adolescents place a high premium on the opinion of the teacher. It goes without saying then that whatever the teacher says is taken seriously by black adolescents. The teacher can damage the self-concept and by implication the pupil-identity of the adolescent by speaking carelessly, uttering negative words about the adolescent's physique and by being sarcastic. Senekal (1978:56) is of the opinion that "the adolescent is affectively highly susceptible to influence and his self-image is very labile. This gives rise to the fact that the adolescent is sensitive about his own imperfections." In other words, whatever others, particularly the teachers, say to him and about him is regarded highly, so that if what is said is negative the adolescent will internalise it.

If the adolescent fails to secure healthy relations with school mates, educators, ideas and subjects, he is likely to become frustrated. This situation may lead to resentment of school and may very well be a trigger of school refusal (Fukuda & Hozumi 1987 see Chapter 2 section 2.3).

As previously mentioned, an adolescent whose pupil-identity is diffuse, whose relationships with significant others and peers are negative, is likely to develop diffuse types of identity such as identity foreclosure or a negative identity. Identity foreclosure may also result if the adolescent's significant others are not being honest with him. An example of the latter is when the adolescent is given the impression that he is good at something or everything when in fact that is not true. According to Leventhal and Sills (1964) such an adolescent would develop an inflated self-concept. These authors contend that when such an inflated self-image is threatened in the school situation the adolescent withdraws and school refusal behaviour may ensue.

According to Rogers (1959:200), each person develops a specific view of himself - which in Roger's terms is his self-concept - which plays an important role in determining behaviour. Rogers argues that the tendency to actualise potential (the actualising tendency) and the tendency to act according to the self-concept (the self-actualising tendency) are both central to human functioning. Rogers further contends that the greater the congruence between the self-concept and true potential, the greater the possibility that the individual will actualise his potential. Conversely, if the self-concept is not a true reflection of or congruent with the individual's potential, he will tend to move in a direction that agrees with the image he holds of himself, and this can be a movement away from the actualisation of his potential (Rogers 1959:196-197).

### **3.3.1.3 Synthesis**

In view of the above, it may be concluded that an adolescent who has an unrealistic negative academic self-concept of himself may develop a poor or negative pupil-identity. This may result in him failing to actualise his potential as a pupil and may very well withdraw from school.

Developmental influences that help establish confident perceptions of oneself as separate and distinct from others, as reasonably consistent and integrated, as having continuity overtime, as being similar to the way one is perceived by others contribute to an overall sense of ego identity. By the same token, influences that impair these self-perceptions foster identity confusion (or diffusion) (Mussen, *et al* 1990:615), "failure to achieve the integration and continuity of self images' (Erickson 1968:212).

### **3.4 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADOLESCENT.**

#### **3.4.1 The influence of the family**

Lerner and Spanier (Mathunyane 1992:36) define a family as a "unit of related individuals in which children are produced and reared". Broadly speaking, the family is a unit of people who value one another, work as a system towards achieving common goals and who share the resources gladly and equally with one another. According to Rogers (1985:222) the home is the reservoir of strength upon which children draw to meet their physical and emotional needs; its warmth and intimate contacts contribute to their feelings of security and belonging. Harmonious family relationships relate to high self-regard and effective social functioning in adolescence.

Mathunyane (1992:36) is of the opinion that unhealthy family relationships relate to conduct disorders and poor social relationships in adulthood. The adolescent, through helping in the family, learns domestic roles of significance for both sexes within the family which contribute to healthy family relationships.

According to Myburgh and Smith's (1990) findings, black and white adolescents alike placed a high premium on their parents, wanted to accompany their parents to places and felt themselves dependent upon their parents.

Westaway's (1986) findings are consonant with Myburgh and Smith's (1990) findings. This author concluded from her findings that for both black and white adolescents, peers are not more influential than parents.

The findings of several other researchers have run counter to the claims made by the above authors. Coates (1987), for example, argues, contrary to the above findings, that neither parents' nor peers' influence is more important than the other, but that they occur differently and are complimentary. Hunter and Youniss (1982) and Valiant (1983) also substantiate Coate's findings above. The latter authors added that parents and peers serve different functions. Parents are overwhelmingly nominated as primary material resources while peers are chosen significantly more often as emotional resources.

Mwamwenda (1995:72-73) argues, collaboratively with Hunter and Youniss (1982), Valiant (1983) and Coates (1987) above, that parents have a greater influence on long term issues such as values, moral development, occupational choices and political thinking, while peers have strong influences on behaviour relating to immediate status and in areas such as dress, hairstyle, interests and social relations.

Still extending the argument similar to Mwamwenda's (1995), Mussen and co-workers (1990:604) assert that peer influence is more likely to dominate in such matters as tastes in music and entertainment, fashions in clothing and language. Parental influence, on the other hand, is more likely to dominate in such areas as underlying moral and social values and understanding the adultworld.

The variance in study findings above may perhaps be explained by the fact that the findings were captured from different countries and from different cultural backgrounds. Myburgh and Smith's (1990) and Myburg and

Anders' (1989) findings were captured from South African based Black and White samples. Westaway's (1986) study is also South African based. Mwamwenda (1995) is talking about blacks in general but his findings are mostly based on Blacks from other parts of Africa, other than South Africa. Coates' (1987) findings are based on studies conducted in America (Mid-eastern Atlantic cities and Washington, Baltimore area). On the whole, these contradictions in findings indicate that more research is still needed with regard to development in black adolescents.

A child who comes from a warm, loving and accepting family atmosphere uses his home base as an anchorage point from which to venture forth and establish relationships with others outside the home. Such an adolescent knows that in times of difficulties and uncertainties he can always retreat to a loving home and seek advice and refuge.

Adolescence is the stage where the adolescent demands considerable amount of freedom from the parents. If he is denied such freedom, the adolescent is apt to turn against his parents. To substantiate this claim, Mwamwenda (1995:72) says: "The adolescent's assertion of this independence may cause conflict between himself and his parents, who wish to control him as they always have done."

Westaway's (1986) assertion, however, seems to run counter to Mwamwenda's (1995) postulation above regarding black adolescents. From this author's study it transpired that independence is not regarded as essential for close parent-adolescent relationships within the Zulu culture. According to Westaway's (1986) study findings, decision-making appears to be firmly in parental hands, and parental rules and regulations are perceived as being in the best interests of children. The adolescents are also comfortable with this status quo.

As it can be seen, this finding points to the cultural difference that exists between Black and White adolescents. This parental authority is accepted as a norm or a common practice in the Black communities. If anything deviating from this norm occurs, problems may arise. If, for example, the adolescent perceives his parents as peripheral and lacking in authority, the adolescent-parent relationship may become conflictual. This may result in the adolescent taking on unacceptable behaviours - behaviours the adolescent knows his parents will not approve of. This may be done as a strategy to draw the attention of the parents to the problem. Honma (1986) and Lock (1986) collaboratively contend that a conflictual adolescent-parent relationship may breed school refusal. The latter behaviour may be reverted to as a means to force the family members into a family therapy situation so that the relationship problems may be resolved. Honma (1986) argues further, that once the conflicts are resolved the adolescent may return to his regular attendance of the school.

#### **3.4.2 The influence of the older siblings**

In black communities it is a norm that a younger child must respect, listen to and take orders from an older child. The young children look up to the older children to give them guidance in the day to day issues. If both parties accept this norm, the healthy relationships may endure to adulthood. In view of this norm, one can also find the younger children copying even the adverse behaviour simply because they look up to their big sisters and brothers as their role models.

From this it follows that the adolescent, whose 'role models' in the family are school refusers, is likely to school refuse (Granell-de-Aldaz *et al* 1987). The learning theory (Thabette 1991:47) supports this according to this theory learning takes place through vicariously imitating one's models.

The adolescent may imitate other role models, other than the siblings, as long as he admires those people and their behaviour.

The adolescent may imitate other role models, other than the siblings, as long as he admires those people and their behaviour.

Siblings also often provide companionships and friendships, and meet one another's need for affection and meaningful relationships. They act as confidants for one another, are able to help one another when there are problems, and share many experiences (Mathunyane 1992:37).

### **3.4.3 Socialisation**

Socialisation is part of the social development of an adolescent. Socialisation can be broadly seen as the lifelong process whereby individuals attain the role expectancies, values and attitudes of society through interpersonal relationships (Thabethe 1991:47).

As said earlier, the family is regarded as the primary socialising agent. This means that the parents have a duty to socialise its members into the norms and values held dear by the society of which it is part. As the child grows older and reaches adulthood, its social circle widens to include more members than just the family. In the child's/adolescent's other social circles the process of socialisation continues to unfold.

The adolescent's social circles include peer group circles. This group also plays an important role in imparting norms and values. Such norms and values may differ from norms and values learnt in the families and society at large. As the adolescent becomes involved in different groups, for example football clubs, peer group, church choir, he learns that there are norms and values in each one of them that regulate behaviour. Groups may also apply pressure on its members and punishments may be administered to maintain it (Thabethe 1991:48).

In the traditional Black society a group of children of the same age used to be grouped together by the older adolescents and youth and taught the acceptable behaviour. The groups were sexually homogeneous. Big girls would socialise young adolescents into the expected norms and values of society. These girls would even tell the growing adolescents and youth how to respond when young gentlemen court them.

These practices however, have been dispensed with as most of the black communities nowadays have become westernised. During the olden days adolescents and youth were taught that it was a shame and disgrace to have sexual intercourse before marriage and the youth who infringed this norm were ostracised by peers and became objects of ridicule.

Through the process of socialisation the adolescent learns values as well as attitudes acceptable in his society. During this stage, the adolescent also begins to have several interests. These can be classified in terms of three categories, namely, personal interests which include physical attributes, grooming, voice and dress, conversation - expressing one's opinion, writing autobiographies, studying, engaging in some work at home or elsewhere. Social interests which include attending parties, dating, engaging in games and sports, reading newspapers, magazines and books, watching television, listening to the radio and watching motion pictures. Vocational interests which include deciding on one's future career, choosing the right subjects in line with one's envisaged future career (Thabethe 1991:52).

It is interesting to note that while the peer group during adolescence is usually associated with negative outcomes, for example adolescents conflicting with parents because of differences of opinions, norms and values, there are advantages as well. Mwamwenda (1995:71) mentions three such advantages:

- As an adolescent reflects on his past in later years, he is likely to feel proud of having been associated with such a group provided that it still reflects his internalised values.
- Peers play an important role as the adolescent becomes emancipated from parental control;
- The adolescent develops social skills that will continue to be important in his relations with his own family, people in his community and his colleagues in the workplace.

Ausubel (1965:347) adds the following to Mwamwenda's (1995) list:

- The peer group provides a new frame of reference.
- The peer group provides a source of value outside the home.
- The peer group is the major training institution for adolescent in society.
- Heterosexual contracts are made in the peer group.
- The peer group stabilises the entire transitional period of the adolescent.
- The 'we feeling' of the peer group provides security and belongingness and a source of loyalty to group norms.

#### **3.4.4 The relationship between social developmental factors and school refusal**

As can be seen, the foregoing paragraphs focused only on the positive side of socialisation. Things can however, turn negative, where an adolescent fails to secure meaningful relations or find himself rebuffed by his peer group and so become an isolate. An adolescent like this may find himself idling around in the family premises, having nowhere to go. If a situation like this is allowed to prevail for much longer, the adolescent may eventually dread the company of peers or classmates/school mates, become wrapped up in himself and withdraw into his own cocoon. He may have little or no interest in many things including the school. School refusal behaviour or even truancy may result.

Rogers (1959:208-209; 1980:116) contends that apart from the strong need for actualisation, there are two other basic needs underscoring and directing behaviour, namely, the need for positive regard by others and the need for positive self-regard. The need for positive regard by others concerns the human being's basic need for approval, acceptance, appreciation, love, admiration and respect.

Rogers' theory of the self-concept has an implication for adolescents as well. If the adolescent's basic need for positive regard by others is not satisfied, an adolescent may develop a negative self-regard (self-esteem). If the adolescent's significant others at school, for example educators and peers/classmates/schoolmates, are the ones who do not fulfil this basic need, whereas the adolescent's parents and peers outside the school do fulfil this need, the adolescent may find himself forced to withdraw himself from school in order to associate himself with those who accept, appreciate, admire and respect him. This may result in school refusal.

### **3.5 EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Adolescents experience various emotions as they relate to teachers, parents, peers and society at large. The emotions may be aggressive and inhibitory (fear, anxiety and worry) or joyous in nature (Mwamwenda 1995:75). Mwamwenda further says that during adolescence, outbursts of anger and physical violence are common.

Rogers (1985:497) defines emotions as a "complex feeling state with characteristic glandular and motor accompaniments." Mathunyane (1992:23) is of the opinion that adolescents' emotionality can be attributed mainly to the fact that boys and girls come under social pressures and face new conditions for which they received little, if any, preparations during childhood.

The implication in Mathunyane's statement above is that adolescents have received very little, if any, training or guidance as to how they should deal with their emotions in a mature manner. This is particularly true for negative emotions such as aggression, anger and hatred. Mwamwenda (1995:75) substantiates Mathunyane's (1992:23) claim by his assertion that during early adolescence, outbursts of anger and physical violence are common. According to Mwanwenda (1995:76), however, as they grow older, adolescents do their best to control their aggression.

The emotional response of boys and girls to various social pressures has three main components according to Mathunyane (1992:23), namely: it has a mental component since it involves such feelings as happiness, anger, excitement or fear. It has a physical component since it embraces a vast complex of internal changes, including muscular, chemical, glandular and neural activities. It has also a motivative component since it involves continuous readaptations to problems inherent in an ever-changing environment.

Different authors like to categorise emotions in adolescence according to their characteristics. Hurlock (1973:48), for example, differentiates two categories, namely, pleasant emotions of love, joy, happiness or curiosity and unpleasant emotions of fear, anxiety, anger, aggression, grief, jealousy and envy. These two categories will be briefly explained:

- pleasant emotions

A very important development in the adolescent's emotional life is his capacity to give and to receive love, affection and joy (Mathunyane 1992:24; Mwamwenda 1995:76). The adolescent wants to know that he is

recognised, accepted, considered and loved. He is pleased if his friends of the opposite sex show him affection (Hurlock 1973:57-58).

Other pleasant emotions of adolescents are being alone together with a member of the opposite sex, petting, kissing and in some cases consummation of their relationship with sexual intercourse. Sometimes adolescents derive pride and happiness from their achievement and success in various spheres of their life, for example, in sports, school subjects and many others. Considerable pleasure may also be derived from involvement in activities such as school politics, drama, dances and school trips (Mwamwenda 1995:76).

- unpleasant emotions

In adolescent, rage and fear are more often evoked by persons than things. In other words, the causes of negative emotions in adolescents are more of a social origin than anything else. Feelings of anxiety, according to Mathunyane 1992:25), may also be experienced during this stage. The author argues that anxiety, like worry, is a form of fear.

Anxiety, according to Hurlock (1973:51) is a persisting distressful psychological state arising from inner conflict. The distress may be experienced as a feeling of vague uneasiness or foreboding, a feeling of being on edge, or as any of a variety of other feelings, such as fear, anger, restlessness, irritability, depression, or other diffuse and nameless feelings. Santrock (1984:663) argues collaboratively with Hurlock that anxiety is a diffuse state since the adolescent cannot pin down the specific reasons for his nervousness.

According to Mwamwenda (1995:76), during adolescence, especially early adolescence, boys and girls worry about many things. They may worry, for example, about sexual development, being under or overweight, school

work and examinations. They are also afraid of the dark, of strangers, certain animals, being alone and social relations. The author further argues that girls worry more than boys about performing satisfactorily at school, while boys are more concerned about a lack of trust on the part of teachers. They think that teachers think that adolescents cannot be trusted. Adolescents also worry about matters such as not being able to make friends, their education, their body build, not being able to afford clothes and hairstyles of their choice.

In addition to the above unpleasant emotions, Papalia and Olds (1987:519-521), mention the following emotions:

- A serious conflict that arises when the adolescent rebels against the unacceptable difference between that which he is and what he would like to be.
- The special kind of self-consciousness which characterises adolescence and which influences emotional development because it causes nervous tensions - the adolescent is subject to emotional changes and becomes moody and depressed because of irritation caused by nervous tension.
- Emotional outbursts out of all proportion to the stimulus. Girls giggle and cry; boys become brutal/aggressive or completely introverted. Boys and girls become very critical of parents and other educators and easily influenced against them.
- Feelings of inadequacy (especially with regard to social success) are hidden behind masks of carelessness, rebelliousness or arrogance.
- Conflicting feelings which are brought about by the emancipation process. While striving for freedom and independence they also wish for the security of the parental home to neutralise inadequacies.

### **3.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL FACTORS AND SCHOOL REFUSAL**

The foregoing paragraphs on emotional development have indicated that adolescence is characterised by various emotions. It must be remembered that one's experience which is accompanied by emotional extremes is apt to have a profound effect on one's attitudes, values, and future behaviour. Such an effect, according to Hurlock (1973:59-60), may be favourable or unfavourable, depending on the emotion aroused, its intensity and previous experiences associated with the emotions.

In view of the above, it must be emphasised that educators and parents need to be very careful of how they deal with adolescents' emotional reactions. An adolescent, for example, who is given the impression by his educators, that he is useless and stupid will harbour these feelings within himself, evaluate himself negatively and may even hate school and/or his home/parents.

Adolescents must be guided very carefully and with love as to how they should deal with or handle their emotions in a manner that will not be detrimental to them and people around them. The development of low self-esteem as a result of mishandled emotions may jeopardise the adolescent's ego-identity or his pupil-identity.

Rosenberg (1965:152) holds the view that people who hold rather negative opinions of themselves, but who are not absolutely, unequivocally, consistently self-deprecatory, appear to have the most changeable pictures of themselves. Unstable self-concepts leave the adolescent in a state of emotional stress and confusion, resulting in a feeling of uncertainty, low

self-regard, self-derogatory attitudes and inferiority feelings. Regrettably, these are characteristics of an unsuccessful student. This by implication means that the scholastic achievement of such a student is adversely affected. Such a student may even choose to withdraw from the school situation, which may appear to him as threatening and meaningless. Should a student opt for the latter, he may become a truant or a school refuser (see Chapter 2).

Failure to accept the adolescent as he is and not as the educator thinks he should be, may result in him failing to accept himself as he is as opposed to what he would like to be or what his educators would like him to be. This may result in a situation where one finds some adolescents expressing unpleasant feelings towards their own selves simply on the grounds that their ideal selves are different from their real selves.

People like these may even withdraw from social situations and become loners. An adolescent like this may easily hate school as one of the social situations.

A situation which, although different, but is as detrimental to the adolescent's realistic ego identity development, is the one whereby the adolescent identifies, erroneously, with the ideal self and reject his real self. Leventhal and Sills (1964) refer to this as 'inflated self concept'. These authors further add that an adolescent like this carries a false belief that he is good at everything. When such an adolescent is proven wrong in some situations, for example the school, he withdraws into those situations, usually the home, where he can maintain his false beliefs and his narcissistic self-concept. The inflated self concept may result in school refusal behaviour (refer paragraph 2.3 in Chapter 2).

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the effects of culture and environment on social, identity and the cognitive and emotional development of black identity, cognitive and emotional development of black adolescents. Due to paucity of literature on black adolescence and the fact that most of the available studies rely on small research samples in drawing conclusions, it has been difficult to draw valid conclusions for this study. Nevertheless, the literature reviewed has established the significance of cultural and environmental effects on social and psychological development of black adolescents.

It is also worth mentioning that the areas of development have been considered separately only for the purposes of clarity. In actual fact psychological and social development of adolescents cannot be understood separately from each other since development, according to Erikson (1968), is a synthesis of biological, psychological, and social components within a historical setting. Each area is important for development in other areas, and it is only when the areas are considered together that a more complete picture of human development during adolescence emerges.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EMPIRICAL DESIGN**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous two Chapters are, in a way, part of this chapter in that they are based on the findings gathered from the literature review. Chapter 2 looked into research findings of different researchers on school refusal whereas Chapter 3 explored literature on adolescence and tried to indicate how this stage of human development may link up with school refusal behaviour. These two chapters resulted in some specific questions that guided the direction of the study. They also helped in selecting an appropriate research design for the study.

#### **4.2. THE AIMS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

##### **4.2.1 General aim**

The general aim of this empirical research is to identify factors in the black adolescent's life which may lead to school refusal.

##### **4.2.2 Specific aims**

The specific aim of the empirical study is to identify, explore, describe and interpret the factors related to school refusal in black adolescents of the Impendle area with a view to design specific guidelines for parents and teachers to:

- 1) identify possible school refusers

- 2) help school refusers to re-enter school.

## **4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.3.1 Research approach**

The researcher chose the qualitative approach or ethno-graphic research method for this study. Before the data gathering procedure is discussed, the researcher will first give an overview of what idiographic research is or is not, its historical background and what it sets out to accomplish.

#### **4.3.1.1 Definition of ethnographic research**

Ethnography may be defined as the research technique of direct observation of human activity and interaction in an ongoing and naturalistic setting (Rist 1975:86). Lecompte and Preissle (1993:2) maintain that ethnographies are "analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes and groups."

#### **4.3.1.2 The nature of qualitative research**

Qualitative research is descriptive and open-ended. The data collected is in the form of words rather than numbers. Open-ended questions asked during data gathering in qualitative research elicit responses which frequently go beyond statistical data and factual material into the area of hidden motivations that lie behind attitudes, interests, preferences and decisions. This approach opens up facts which the researcher might not have been aware of and facts which he may not have been in touch with, but which are only accessible to the research subjects.

State (1995:43) maintains: "The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it".

Qualitative research is directly concerned with experience as it is lived or felt. Its aim is to describe, not fix or judge. This implies experiential understanding involving an appreciation of the complexity of what Stake (1995:12) calls the "multiple realities" of human experience.

A qualitative research approach demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied. Nothing is taken as a given, and no statement escapes scrutiny in idiographic or qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:30).

The focus in qualitative research is on the detail and quality of an individual's experience, rather than the number of people who responded in a particular way (Dickson 1995). Dickson argues that one comes to qualitative research through the types of research questions that one raises. These tend to be general and unspecific. They invite entry into another's world of experience. The author contends further, that it is ethically and academically unsound, when employing this approach, to impose one's meanings of an event or experience on those whose insights and perceptions one seeks to understand.

This research approach demands that the researcher be a flexible instrument, on the one hand, and on the other hand, constantly monitoring his or her own behaviour closely in order to maintain the role of researcher (Dickson 1995.).

The data in idiographic research, is analysed as closely as possible to the form in which they are recorded and spontaneous response material can enhance the interpretation of results. This, according to Mtolo (1996:45), enables the researcher to learn the views, perspectives, opinions, prejudices and beliefs of the respondents and this helps him evaluate his

preconceived ideas of the service rendered. This does not mean being naive or credulous, but it does mean paying attention to the outlook of the people in the setting or culture you're studying (Delmont 1992:7)

Also known as qualitative research, the main aim of ethnographic research is to discover and describe the culture in an educational setting. The approaches used emphasise inductive analysis, description and perception in the natural setting, rather than the concerns with measurement and manipulation characterised by the experimental method (Anderson 1990).

The relationship between theory and data in qualitative research is often formulated in terms of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990) where one conceptual elaboration of data is deferred. Theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it explores and theoretical reflections delayed. In this process, data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. In this particular study, what evolved was more a generation of categories rather than theory as such. These categories emerged from the data and provided a framework within which the researcher could cope with the unstructured complexity of the phenomenon being studied and so attempt to render it meaningful and manageable. The central aim of the study was to gain a greater understanding of adolescents' perceptions of themselves as school refusers and also to obtain the parents' and educators perceptions of these adolescents.

In qualitative research, problems are not specified in advance of fieldwork. Research design and theory making is ongoing (Walford 1981).

Ely and colleagues (1991) drew on the work of Sherman and Webb to produce the following characteristics of the qualitative research:

- Events can be understood adequately only if they are seen in context. Therefore, a qualitative researcher immerses him-/herself in the setting.
- The context of inquiry are not contrived. They are natural. Nothing is predefined or taken for granted.
- Qualitative researchers want those who are studied to speak for themselves, to provide their perspectives in words and other actions. Therefore, qualitative research is an interactive process in which the persons studied teach the research about their lives.
- Qualitative researchers attend to the experience as a whole, not as a separate variable. The aim of qualitative research is to understand experience as unified.
- For many qualitative researchers, the process entails appraisal of what is studied (Ely *et-al* 1991:4).

The above characteristics highlight the importance of natural contexts, holistic and interactive approaches and focus on process as well as content. Unlike in quantitative research, the role of a researcher would be a personal one and there would also be a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (Dickson 1995).

In addition to the above characteristics, Anderson (1990:148-149) contends that ethnographic research involves participant observation, description, a concern with process and meaning and inductive analysis. Ethnographic research, according to this author, is inherently descriptive and in its traditional form, the description takes the form of words or pictures, rather than numbers. Everything observed is recorded, studied and analysed. This includes the setting, the participants, dialogue, events and the observer's behaviour.

In this approach, researchers are primarily concerned with what things mean. Interactions among people are analysed for meaning. The

researcher constantly tries to put him/herself in the position of those being studied. Anderson (1990: 150) further states that ethnographers “tend to go looking, rather than go looking for something”. Consequently, the detailed questions emerge after the researcher becomes immersed in the situation. This is totally different from the deductive approach of the experimental researcher. The process is what some researchers have termed grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss 1967; Anderson 1990; Dickson 1995).

#### 4.3.1.3 Historical perspective

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) outline the following phases in 20<sup>th</sup> century research:

- I. The traditional period begins in the early 1900's and continues into the first World War. During this time, qualitative researchers wrote “objective” accounts of field experiences that were reflective of positivist paradigm.
- II. The modernist phase extended to the 1970's. Here social realism and naturalism were greatly valued. These researchers attempted rigorous qualitative studies of social processes, such as social control in the classroom. Studies of ethnicity and assimilation were common.
- III. Blurred Genres (1970-1986). Qualitative researchers of this period drew on various paradigms, methods and strategies and adopted multi-theoretical frameworks to inform their inquiries. Applied qualitative research gained impetus. The boundaries between qualitative and quantitative research became blurred.
- IV. Crisis of Representation: A significant rupture occurred in the mid-1980s, with the writings of Marcus and Fisher, Turner and Bruner, Geertz and Clifford, amongst others (in Denzin & Lincoln 1994:10). These writers made research more reflexive and questioned the issues of gender, class

and race. Reflexivity stressed that the scientific observer is an essential part of the setting, context or culture he or she is trying to understand and represent. This led to a greater self-criticism and self-reflection among qualitative researchers.

V. The Fifth Moment: The Present. Theories are now read in narrative terms, what Van Maanen (in Denzin & Lincoln 1994:85) calls "tales of the field" and they will reflect the researcher's direct and personal engagement. There remains a preoccupation with the representation of the "other" (Dickson 1995:101). The idea of the aloof, detached researcher has been abandoned, as have many established and preconceived values, theories and perspectives. Emphasis is placed on more action-oriented research as well as on social criticism and critique.

From the above it becomes apparent that over the past few decades a paradigm and methodological revolution has taken place in the social sciences. The positivist era, in which the claims of empirical scientific research were held to be absolute, has been eclipsed by the powerful thrust of qualitative research, which, although it has been around for centuries, has recently been reactivated by a new intellectual interest which sees social research as an impure art (Dickson 1995:101).

Qualitative research has become a field of inquiry in its own right. It is multidisciplinary having been used extensively in education, sociology, anthropology, psychology and social work, and it is also multi-method in focus, drawing upon and utilizing the approaches, methods and techniques of ethnomethodology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, interviews, cultural studies and participant observation amongst others (Dickson 1995). Central to this innovative field of research is a commitment to study human experience from the ground up. Levi-Strauss (in Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2) maintains that a qualitative researcher can be seen as a bricoleur, " a jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-

yourself person". It is the opinion of this researcher that this is an unhelpful and unfortunate description as it implies a "master of non" connotation which, in turn, lends weight to the criticism that qualitative research is a "soft" science, superficial and spurious in nature (Dickson 1995:102). In striving to best describe and interpret the experiences and perspectives of other peoples and cultures, qualitative researchers have become disillusioned with the omniscient voice of science which silences too many other voices which need to be heard (Dickson 1995).

#### **4.3.2. Rationale for employing the qualitative research methodology**

As said in paragraph 4.3, the researcher chose the qualitative research method for this study. The case study method or idiographic research in particular will be employed. In attempting to reach a deeper understanding of adolescents' perceptions of themselves as school refusers, the researcher selected a research paradigm in which subjective reality is pre-eminent. The adolescent school refusers would have stories to tell concerning their school refusal behaviour. The researcher then grappled with issues such as how best to preserve that form. Furthermore, the stories would be very different stories so the research methodology would need to be flexible enough to embrace this uniqueness while at the same time allowing for a method of analysis which could synthesise findings, extrapolate patterns, themes, inconsistencies and congruencies which emerged.

What became clear was that a questionnaire or survey method would be totally inadequate and too inflexible to use as research instrument, mainly as a result of the degree of structure which it imposes. "The degree to which observation is structured reflects the extent to which the researcher decides beforehand what is to be recorded" (Stone's Crus Guide 1984:4). A questionnaire might well produce superficial data instead of the attention to rich and deep detail possible in qualitative research.

It is Stone's contention (in Kruger 1988:150) that, in any scientific study, the phenomenon under investigation should be given priority, rather than a pre-established methodological approach. He cites Giorgi to support this: "The problem of methodology cannot be considered in isolation, but only within the context of the phenomenon to be investigated and the problem aspect of that phenomenon".

Three essential characteristics of qualitative research made it the most appropriate and desirable route to follow for this study:

1) IT IS HOLISTIC: Its contextuality is well-defined; it is case-orientated; it does not favour reductionism; and it is relatively non-comparative in that it seeks to understand the subject involved rather than to understand how this subject differs from others. One of the most fundamental differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches seems to be the differences in searching for causes (quantitative) against searching for happenings (qualitative). This researcher, in addressing the issues which framed the conceptual structure of his study, saw his task, not only as explaining why things are as they are, but to describe how things are at a particular place and time for particular people. A person's situation can have neither simple causes nor manifestations. Dickson (1995:104-105) maintains that issues are not simple but are intimately linked up to political, social, historical and, particularly, personal contexts. Issues can, therefore, not be separated from the broader milieu.

The understanding of human experience is also far greater than a matter of causes and effects. Quantitative researchers often tend to treat the uniqueness of cases as "error" falling outside the system of scientific explanation (Dickson 1995:105). Qualitative research emphasises the uniqueness of individuals' lives and experiences.

ii) IT IS EMPIRICAL : The researcher's understanding and insight arise out of experiential learning. This learning rests on what can be observed and includes the observations made by the subjects in the field. There is a dynamic interaction between researcher and those being researched. It is also naturalistic and non-interventionist in nature with a preference for natural language description (Dickson 1995:105). This approach also tries to endow the individual with a kind of dignity as a unique source of important information.

According to Bryman (1988:104), the potential of the attention to rich detail in qualitative research, to policy-making and other "applied" contexts is gaining increasing recognition. He cites an interesting anecdote from Okely: "... in the 1983 general election [in the UK] the Conservative Party geared its campaign to the daily reactions of the floating voter in marginal seats. These potential supporters were the subjects of in-depth qualitative interviews several times a week. Feedback from these data was used within days to adjust the emphasis in campaign issues".

iii) IT IS INTERPRETIVE: There is an emphasis on emic issues, those concerns and values in the behaviour and the language of the people studied. Qualitative research aims to establish an empathic understanding for the reader through description, trying to convey what experience itself would convey. Clifford Geertz (in Stake 1995:42) calls this "thick description". This subjective description assists in stimulating reflection in the reader.

Interpretation is not confined then, as is the case in various other methodologies, to the identification of variables, the development of instrument before data gathering and to analysis and interpretation for the report. The researcher is the interpreter, placed in the field to participate, observe, record and to constantly examine, refine and substantiate the meaning of what is happening.

Initial research questions may be modified or even changed completely in this process which Stake (1995) calls "progressive focusing", a term borrowed from the work done by Malcon Parlett and David Hamilton.

The interpretive component of qualitative research is atuned to the fact that research is a researcher- subject interaction and it stresses the complexity of such interactions and thereby tries to preserve the differing and even contradictory views of what is happening (Le Compte 1993; Dickson 1995; Stake 1995).

This approach, according to Le Compte (1993:3), represents the world-view of the participants being studied.

This study is essentially exploratory, descriptive and interpretative in nature. The researcher started with questions but without well-defined hypothesis or interpretations and no predetermined methodology or decisions with regard to field techniques. Hence a research design was sought which would best serve the needs of the area of interest and the aims intrinsic to it.

The researcher's questions, as such, were loosely framed: What is school refusal? What causes school refusal? What does the school refuser typically look like? What are the effects of school refusal? Can school refusal be treated? If so, how?

As with much hermeneutic research (Packer 1989; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Kellehear 1993), there was no clear *modus operandi* when undertaking this qualitative research. The research questions, method of data collection, and analysis, and the review of relevant literature developed concurrently, each informing the development of the others.

The central data-gathering methods used by the researcher were the literature survey (see Chapters 2 and 3) and the in-depth case study interviews.

The concept of self as instrument implied that the interviewer should be comfortable with the process and feel able to try to meet the demands of this method. It is the potentially vibrant interaction inherent in naturalistic research (and in interviewing, in particular) which appealed to the researcher, partly because of the researcher's own training and personality characteristics, but also because it seemed to be the only appropriate way of addressing the very open-ended research questions raised at the start.

The interviews in this research can be seen as both intrinsic as well as instrumental case studies. According to Stake (1995), an intrinsic case study demands an intrinsic interest in it. In other words, one is interested in it because one needs to learn about that particular case and not because by studying it, one learns about other cases or some general phenomenon.

With instrumental case studies, one studies an individual case in order to understand something else. The case study is instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding that particular case. In the case of this study, then, the individual subjects form unique cases and the researcher strives to understand each individual case as a unique case, but also, the case studies together make up a collective case study which becomes instrumental in helping the researcher understand the phenomenon, school refusal, in general.

The researcher's primary interest in this study is to understand school refusal from the school refuser's, parent's and educator's perspective. The idea behind the study being that it is easy to understand something from someone with a first-hand experience than hypothesising about it. This is one of the reasons that prompted the researcher to employ a descriptive method.

### **4.3.3 Research instruments**

#### **4.3.3.1. Introduction**

In selecting research instruments which could be appropriate for this particular study, the researcher was guided by a desire for methodological congruity. The methods should be carefully chosen to match the principles articulated and the philosophical assumptions which underlie the research being planned. Essentially, this research is seen as a co-operative enterprise in which the subject joins the researcher in making an inquiry. The method chosen, which will best serve the exploratory, descriptive nature of this co-operative endeavour, is the in-depth case study interview. The traditional survey research interview with its emphasis on statistical patterns would be inadequate as an exploratory device and would not allow access to the wide range of information which is sought.

#### **4.3.3.2. Qualitative interviewing as a research tool**

Interviewing is more than gathering talk together. It is fundamentally a process of social interaction (Dickson 1995:110). The dynamic quality of this interaction can easily be lost as soon as it is collected. Whitehurst (in Powney & Watts 1987) observes that it is "like catching rain in a bucket for later display. What you end up with is water, which is only a little like rain." The challenge then, is to employ a method of interviewing that best captures this dynamic quality. For that reason the researcher used a tape recorder to capture interviews.

Kruger (1988:151-152) identifies three advantages of recorded interviews as a method of data collection:

- They are more spontaneous than written reports.
- They allow feedback and clarification of confusing data.

- They allow the interviewer to remain as near as possible to the actual lived-experience.

Each interview is, according to Dickson (1995:111), dependent on the skills of the interviewer and the willingness of the interviewee to participate. Ely *et al* (1991) suggest that the structure of a qualitative interview is shaped in the process. These authors are of the opinion that "While some believe that the ethnographic interviewee can go in any direction, and that the interviewer is passive, nothing is further from reality. Actually, the interviewer knows the areas that need to be explored and sees to it that this occurs. It is how this is done that defines the difference between an ethnographic interview and others. The key is that the person interviewed is a full partner in the endeavour and often provides the surprising and useful directions not allowed by other, more researcher-centred interviews. The tasks of an ethnographic interviewer include providing focus, observing, giving direction, being sensitive to clues given by participants, probing, questioning, listening, amalgamating statements, and generally being as involved as possible. At their most useful, ethnographic interviews are interwoven dances of questions and answers in which the researcher follows as well as leads" (Ely *et al* 1991:58).

The above description stresses the unique character of the interview, where both individuals influence each other as they negotiate the structure and meanings created within the interaction. There is a relinquishing of control on behalf of the interviewer as he aims to gain insight into the perceptions of a particular person; within a particular situation. The schedule is relatively unstructured from the interviewer's point of view. Powney and Watts (1987:17-18) see this more subtle method of collecting data as the main characteristic of "respondent interviews" which are structured primarily by the intentions of the researcher and where the purpose of the interview is to satisfy the researcher's questions. In

informant interviews one seldom arrives at answers but often discovers new questions to ask.

In in-depth interviews one has to learn to trust oneself as a flexible instrument of observation. As the data base grows, the questions and issues shift and change in a cyclical process, and provide further direction for the study. It takes confidence in oneself as an ethnographic interviewer to accept this mutability of questions as one plays the roles of both insider and outsider simultaneously. One is an intimate stranger, at once observing oneself and others and yet also being intensely involved in the action (Dickson 1995). This is in accordance with the ecosystemic view of observer inclusion into the system he is observing.

#### **4.3.4. Procedure**

Carrying out the study involved (not strictly in chronological order) the following steps:

- Gathering background information.
- Exploring the feasibility of the study.
- Choosing the sample.
- Interview schedule.
- Interviewing the subjects.
- Analysis and interpretation of data. (This will be covered in Chapters 5 & 6)

##### **4.3.4.1 Gathering background information**

An intensive literature survey of books, theses, periodicals and journal articles was undertaken to equip the researcher with the background information necessary for a framework of reference, decision making and a method of approach to the study envisaged.

Information was sought about, amongst others:

- Educational research methodology
- Effects of lack of involvement in learning process on pupil - identity formation of adolescents
- How school refusal can be treated.
- Causes of school refusal behaviour.
- Incidence of school refusal behaviour.
- Developmental tasks that the adolescent has to accomplish and how the failure to accomplish these is related to school refusal.
- Manifestation of school refusal behaviour.

#### **4.3.4.2 Exploring the feasibility of the study**

The overview of the literature revealed that researchers had gathered information by personal interviews and questionnaires. The feasibility of this study depended on the co-operation of the subjects. Moreover, there was only a single interview with each subject, which meant a one-off opportunity to interact productively and meaningfully.

A pilot study was conducted, which helped reassure the researcher of the feasibility of the study. The pilot study performed four functions:

- a) It served as a check that the structure and organisation of the interview met the requirements of the research project.
- b) It was a practical test of the logistics of the interview.
- c) It afforded the researcher with the opportunity to practise the social interactive skills necessary.
- d) The outcomes of the interview could be analysed first. This allowed for the opportunity to modify practices.

Trying out the research instrument on someone who shared closely the characteristics of those who will make up the main study, proved to be an invaluable exercise. It provided direction and encouragement and gave the researcher the confidence to proceed.

The subject chosen for the pilot study is known to the researcher and is an articulate, thoughtful and verbal person. From this interview, the researcher has some indication of the range of responses which can be expected. Indeed, the quality of this subject's responses is such that they will be included in the main body of the research.

#### **4.3.4.3 Selection of subjects**

This dissertation is of necessity limited and the researcher has restricted himself to a small field of ten case studies, including the pilot study. The larger the sample the more likely it is that a respondent approach would be adopted, something the researcher wanted to avoid. The sample does not provide a base for statistical generalisation, but raises a number of issues that are intrinsic to the school refusal situation.

In selecting the sample, consideration was given to choosing an appropriate representation of the range of views possibly relevant to the purpose of the research.

The subjects were all strangers to the researcher (except for the pilot study and the other two subjects who were selected from the researcher's school). It was felt that the ability to be true to the researcher's role could be impeded by personal knowledge of the subjects.

Out of the ten subjects identified, five severe cases were selected. These five will be described in greater detail in the study. A summary will be made for the other five so that, although they are not described in full detail,

they too form part of the conclusions of the entire study. Subjects who had been absent from school for a period of a month or more were classified as severe cases.

The teachers and parents of adolescent school refusers were also interviewed.

#### 4.3.4.3.1 *Access*

Access to the subjects was made through visiting the neighbouring secondary schools and talking to the teachers of these schools with a view to introduce the intentions of the study and explaining to the teachers the criteria used to identify adolescents who qualified for inclusion as school refusers. Fortunately all the schools are nearer to the researcher's work and residential place, as a result they were easily accessible for interview arrangements.

#### 4.3.4.3.2 *Composition*

Since the study specifically sets out to research black adolescents, all the participants are black. Out of the ten cases selected it turned out that seven of them satisfied the criteria of severity. The final composition of the sample included four girls and six boys. Two girls and three boys were chosen to be the five severe cases who would be described in greater details in the study.

#### 4.3.4.3.3 *Criteria used in selection*

Adolescents who fail to attend school with the knowledge of their parents and despite their physical ability to do so were designated school refusers.

Moreover, adolescents had to be absent from school at least twice a week on average per month. Adolescents were designated severe school refusers if they absented themselves for a period of a month or longer at a time. To distinguish school refusal from truancy it was necessary to check with parents to ascertain their knowledge of their children's frequent absence from school. If parents said they were not aware it became necessary to drop that case since it would not qualify to be classified as school refusal considering the definition of school refusal: School refusal refers to the child's avoidance of school in the absence of physical illness and with the knowledge of the parents (see Chapter 1 paragraph 1.8.1)

The subjects had to be adolescents and black. The age bracket for adolescence was 11 and 21 inclusive for the purposes of this study.

#### 4.3.4.4 Interview schedule

As the nature of this research is descriptive and exploratory, it becomes necessary to use a research instrument that is sufficiently flexible to enable the area to be studied and fully explored. From the overview of literature and the pilot study, information was obtained about the school refusal phenomenon and the problems peculiar to this situation.

The interview schedule that was employed was extremely loose in structure. Qualitative case study seldom proceeds as a survey with the same questions asked of each subject; rather, each subject is expected to have had unique experiences and special stories to tell (Dickson 1995:120). The researcher prepared a short list of issue-orientated categories which served as a framework for the interview. These categories were derived from the background information which had been accumulated mainly through the literature survey. These categories centred around the following:

1. *Interview schedule for the school refusers*

- a) Questions relating to the self-concept: the adolescent's evaluation of himself.
- b) What stories can the adolescent tell regarding his/her refusal behaviour: What causes the refusal condition.
- c) Fear of failure or fear of school: do adolescents fear something specific at school (if applicable).
- d) Relationships with:
  - Parents: how do they get along with parents?
  - Peers (in and outside school)
  - Ideas/objects, for example, subjects, school.
  - Self: does he/she see him/herself in a positive light ?
  - Teachers at school
  - Siblings
- e) Future goals: Does he/she have goals in life
- f) Separation anxiety: does he/she fear that the parents might be in trouble in his absence?

2. *Schedule for parents:*

- a) Typical day of a school refuser: what does the adolescent do when not at school?
- b) Adolescent's relations; what are adolescent's relations like with:
  - Siblings at home
  - Parents - do misunderstandings between adolescent and his/her Parents occur regularly?
  - His school books -does he/she like his/her school work?

- c) Vicarious learning: has any of the older siblings engaged in a school refusal behaviour?
- d) Parents' general theory: what, in general, do parents think is the reason for the behaviour?
- e) Attempts to stop behaviour: What has been done?

### 3. *Schedule for teachers*

- a) Social relationships: does the adolescent take part in extra curricula activities?
- b) How he/she relates to: teachers, class/schoolmates and his school work?
- c) Self-concept: does the adolescent have a positive or negative self-concept?
- d) General theory: Generally, what do teachers think is the reason for this behaviour?
- e) What attempts have been done to get the adolescent back to regular schooling?

It is important to mention that each subject is expected to present a different personal profile.

#### 4.3.4.5 Interviewing

##### *Initial meeting*

The researcher made the initial entree personally by means of an initial meeting. The researcher preferred making a personal appearance to making arrangements by phone because the former afforded the researcher an opportunity to explain to the subjects in person and give them a freedom of choice to participate or not to participate in the research. During the initial encounter an explanation of the nature of the research

was given and the confidentiality and anonymity of participants assured. The researcher was fortunate to be acquainted with all the principals of the secondary schools from which the subjects were drawn. This made it easy to talk to them or explain telephonically what the study was about and to gain access to their schools.

The researcher met with all the participants before the study began, including parents and teachers, and explained that after the interview the researcher would have no extending responsibility in terms of the subjects. This was done to alleviate any possibility of dependence in the subjects who might have been tempted to view the researcher as a counsellor or champion of their cause. The description of the research was as broad as possible to alleviate the possibility of the subjects consciously or unconsciously changing their responses to defend their presentation of self or attempting to help the researcher.

#### *letter to subjects*

The initial briefing meeting was followed by a letter confirming the arranged time and place of interview and, again, providing an outline of the nature of the research. The letter gave subjects sufficient time to reconsider their participation and it also served as a clear reminder of what had been discussed and agreed upon in the initial briefing meeting. The letter also, hopefully, served the purpose of clarifying any misunderstandings and of imbuing the research with a formality and seriousness.

#### *venues and times*

The interviews with the adolescent subjects and teachers were all conducted in the participants' schools. The parents interview venues depended upon what was convenient for them. If the parent felt comfortable with coming to the researcher's school, the interview was

conducted there. For the most part, however, the interviews with the parents were conducted in the parents' places. It was insisted beforehand that wherever the interview was conducted, there had to be complete silence and privacy, where both the interviewer and interviewee would feel free. The times were also agreed upon between the researcher and the subject concerned. The interviews lasted anything between one-and-one-and-a-half hours each.

### *recording of data*

The researcher sought the subjects' permission for tape recording the interviews. It was felt that tape recording would be less obtrusive than taking notes. One could maintain eye-contact and observe other non-verbal behaviour. The more complex the information, the less the method should rely upon the interviewer's memory (Dickson 1995). Recording, according to Dickson, encourages the rapid flow of information and facilitates ease of interview procedure. The interviewer, nevertheless, considered it necessary to take very brief notes, recording the behaviour and mannerisms of the subjects in order to match it with the tape transcript later.

Sometimes most interesting material, off the 'formal' interview situation can emerge over tea. The researcher was constantly aware of this possibility and talked informally to subjects while noting (in the back of his mind) what the subjects were saying. This informally elicited information sometimes proved to be richer than 'formally' captured information.

### *conducting interviews*

Initially, the biographical details of the subjects were obtained, for example, the age, length of time in the school, number of sisters and brothers and

their ages. This was done as an ice-breaking exercise meant to set the subjects at ease.

The researcher, being a teacher and a school counsellor himself, found his professional skills helpful in establishing rapport and setting the subjects at ease. Taking into consideration the fact that there would not be any second interview as the subjects would be interviewed only once, it became extremely necessary for the researcher to constantly ensure sensitivity, and to get the subjects to open up without the researcher dominating the interview.

It was very important for the researcher to guard against allowing literature and personal experience to impose blind folds in the research. The researcher constantly kept this in mind throughout all the interviews. Dickson (1995:124) concurs with this:

"The qualitative interview is guided by the principles of faith and scepticism; a willingness to listen openly, combined with a mistrust that what is said does not necessarily reflect what is meant."

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is important once again to stress that it was necessary for the researcher to give fictitious subjects' and schools' names to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

This chapter and the three previous ones have served to lay the ground and to put the reader in a clear picture of the phenomenon that this dissertation purports to be studying. This chapter ended this preparation by giving a complete design of the plan drawn by the researcher to capture the stories of the interviewees. What follows then, in the next two and last chapters, are the stories that the subjects have told, their analysis, interpretation and conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5.1 THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

#### **SECTION A**

##### **5.1.1 Introduction**

The interpretation and analysis were made from the body of research material which was both recorded and unrecorded. The recorded data was made up by the interview transcriptions plus the log kept by the researcher throughout the research process. Unrecorded data included impressions and observations of non-verbal behaviour like body language. This resulted in big volumes of collected data. It was realised that not all the material would be used. At the time of data-gathering, the researcher did not know what information would assume relevance and significance. The information gathered required some processing, it was not immediately available for interpretation and analysis. Field notes and interviews captured on tape needed to be transcribed, edited and extended.

##### **5.1.2 The transcription of interviews**

The researcher prepared a verbatim transcript of the tape recording as soon as possible after each interview. In this way the flavour of the subject's words was not lost. The process of transcribing the interviews was extremely time consuming, but this was tempered by the feeling that the research was gaining impetus, that valuable information was safely being stored and that the researcher was becoming aware of the growing body of research information. Transcribing also helped to firmly instil the interview experience in the researcher's mind; it also provided and expanded the details and often presented a fresh perspective on the material.

Even the researcher's close family members were not allowed to lay their hands on the gathered information. This was done to protect the confidentiality of the research subjects. For the same reason, it was decided not to include full transcripts of the interviews in the research findings.

### 5.1.3 Interpretation

As it was said earlier, the material gathered was voluminous and as such the researcher had to do some filtering while at the same time ensuring that valuable information was not lost. This is one of the things that make qualitative research such a difficult task to undertake. Schumacher and Mc Millan (1993:484) support this by saying that "no ethnographer reports all the data; refinement of the study focus before, during and after data collection is necessary." As a qualitative researcher, one has to decide on a method of analysis that will suit one's study. In this sense, according to Ely and colleagues (1991:143), all qualitative data analysis is idiosyncratic.

On the basis of the above, the researcher chose to describe in full details, five of the ten subjects interviewed in this study. The remaining five subjects were not discarded but they formed part of the conclusions of the entire study. The interview transcripts of the said five subjects were not presented in their entirety but direct quotations were heavily made use of to provide meaning, cohesion, and colour to the presentation. These vignettes will, as Ely *et al* (1991:155) put it, serve also to counter the danger of over abstracting. In this way the findings will be firmly anchored in the field that gave rise to them.

The researcher employed a thematic analysis to impose some order and to tease out meaning from the material and to present findings gleaned from the interviews. The following steps were taken:

- A thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts for a sense of the whole was done. To support this, Dickson (1995:129) talks about this immersion in facts as being fundamental to the imaginative leaps researchers make in developing their explanations. The reading and re-reading of the responses helped to give the researcher a "feel" of what was going on in the field. It reconstructed the interview scene in the researcher's mind and provided him with the context for the emergence of meanings and theme to use later on.
- After each interview transcript was made, notes were made below the transcript. These constituted the researcher's impressions, non-verbal observations captured during the interview situation and tentative categories.
- When the researcher had finished with all the interviewees, he set out to construct distinctive descriptions of major elements of what was said by teasing out a set of categories. These categories were identified units of meaning. The categories were then broken down further into sub-categories. All the responses to a particular issue were grouped together. This process was driven by the research questions originally posed and the interview schedule used during the collection of data. The whole process served to identify the key issues being raised by the subjects. Out of the coded data arose the themes. The effort to uncover patterns, themes and categories requires creativity on the part of the researcher. Poor judgements and misinterpretation of the subjects' responses may result in invalid study findings that do nothing more than just misleading the reader:

"Since qualitative analysts do not have statistical tests to tell them when an observation or pattern is significant, they must rely on their own intelligence, experience, and judgement" (Patton cited in Dickson 1995:129).

- The most demanding and creative task was to scrutinise every word, phrase, sentence or paragraph to search for meaning. This meant writing and erasing and re-writing until the suitable meaning was uncovered.
- Another task which was as formidable was for the researcher to identify potential quotes which could be used as vignettes in the presentation.

#### **5.1.4 Problems of analysis and reporting**

The main problem appears to crop up from the very fact that the analysis and reporting represent “filtered” versions of the empirical material. Selecting some information inevitably means that other details get left out. The criteria for inclusion and omission depend upon how the researcher decided to interpret the data (Dickson 1995:131).

Even if one did provide the full version of the interview transcript, this would still represent an incomplete record because what was said in the interview does not necessarily give access to the participants' perceptions as they had articulated them at the time. Hull (in Powney & Watts 1987:192), refers to this as the interviewer's own “black market” of understandings. It is “black market” because there is no public access to the material. The interviewer gives his own interpretation based on his accumulated knowledge of the participants' meaning systems. Such information, according to Dickson (1995:131) remains private and cannot be easily substantiated or authenticated. In the final analysis, the reader must trust the integrity of the researcher.

## **SECTION B**

### **5.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

#### **5.2.1 Introduction**

Powney and Watts (1987:193) maintain that the research report "is the interviewer's story of the interviewee's story ..... In the end, the best interviewer can hope for is insight into the respondent's favourite self-image."

The researcher will now present here below, a brief profile of each subject as an introduction to the findings based on the in-depth interviews, The researcher does this with the hope that the reader will get a clearer picture of the "favourite self-image" of the subjects as understood by the researcher. It must be emphasized once again that, to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the subjects, it was necessary to use pseudonyms for the subjects and their schools where necessary. What follows in the next paragraph then is the interviewer's condensed stories of the interviewees' stories.

#### **5.2.2 Descriptions of the school refusers**

##### **5.2.2.1. *NKOSINATHI***

" I did not feel good about being absent frequently but it just happened naturally."

Nkosinathi told his stories of being absent from school casually as though it meant nothing serious to him. The school refusal incidents mainly referred to in this interview were last year's (1997's) incidents where Nkosinathi suddenly engaged in this behaviour until he eventually left school. He was doing standard 10 (grade 12) at that time. Nkosinathi has got reasons for his behaviour which go like this: " You would find that in the morning I woke up late and decided to stay because I would be late for school." He

decided to stay because he feared that if he arrived late teachers would “think that I am repeating the same thing that I did the previous year where I was the instigator in the group that was questioning the school rules”.

Since Nkosinathi's father has abandoned them, his mother has to work in order to earn a living and provide for her family. The mother works in town far away from home and Nkosinathi, being the eldest son in the family, has to assume both the mother and father roles. That is one of the reasons that he was usually late for school in the morning because “I had to prepare not only breakfast, but also to see to it that the kids would have something to eat at lunch time”.

While the father role meant that he had to socialise his younger brothers into the acceptable ways of behaviour, the mother role was even more demanding in that he had to see to it that there was money to buy small requirements in the house and to make sure that food was enough. This was one of the reasons he had to be absent “because sometimes I had to go to my mummy and ask for money to buy groceries and things.”

That was not all for Nkosinathi. There was one last reason which kept him away from school. He had a court case which “set me thinking all the time”.

#### 5.2.2.2 **BONGA**

“I got mixed up in a lot of things at once and confused myself. I like girls very much.”

Bonga thinks that he is not “a right person,” that is why “I even failed standard eight as I am repeating it right now.” Another problem that Bonga associates with his absence is the fact that he did not have the required school fees, as a result he “started late this year after the school had reopened already.”

There was not always a sound reason for Bonga's absence from school because "sometimes I became absent for no sound reason. I did not care about school. I was just lazy that's all." Bonga has got a lot of friends and most of them do not attend school. Every time when he is absent from school he is with them. Sometimes they contrive to do something and if this has to be done during school hours it means that he has to be absent from school. Bonga, however, does not think it would be fair to put the blame to his friends who are not schooling because "what they did I was also doing - they did not force me to do anything. It was my own free will to share with them".

Girls played some part too in his absence behaviour because " If I love a girl I devote a lot of my time thinking about her. This sometimes disturbs me from concentrating in class, so that if the girl is not schooling I don't mind even going to her instead of going to school".

#### 5.2.2.3 *NTOMBINKULU*

"I am a bright person. If it wasn't for a few things that distract me, my progress would be smooth in all my subjects."

"My biggest problem is that I happened to fall in love with an older boy who is not schooling. This boy sometimes forces me to stay with him and not go to school. Sometimes I stay with him for a week, unable to go to school. If I try to go against his will he even hits me".

This is the only reason, according to this 20 year old girl, that keeps her away from school frequently. She has reported the problem to the boy's parents but to no avail. Her brother has also tried but he is unfortunately too young to match the boyfriends. Ntombinkulu's grandmother feels very upset about this but feels helpless and " I am very old, my son, to deal with

this situation, so I just watch helplessly while my granddaughter is being abused by this drunkard”.

Is that the only problem that keeps this girl from school? The girl seems to think so, but why doesn't she have friends? Why does she say "I would rather not talk about my father's and mother's whereabouts - it's a long story that is too painful to discuss " and she fights back tears in her eyes? Could it be that at times she feels too low (depressed) to face up with the demands of the subjects at school? This was a question that could not be answered until the researcher conducted an interview with the girl's grandmother.

#### 5.2.2.4 **SONTO**

“In essence, I eventually abandoned school last year because we ganged up with my non-schooling friends and we did bad things, strolling up and down with non-schooling boys.”

Sonto still recalls so vividly how it used to feel like when they did this with her friends. She would wake up in the morning and lie to her uncles, if they were home, (her mother is not home most of the time as she is working) that she was not feeling well. She would sleep and pretend to be feeling unwell until they left home. She would then “make myself look beautiful, dress up and go to my friends.”

It was not her aim, however, to leave school but as soon as she started to be involved in “dating older boys my class-mates began to ridicule me”. So each time she went to school she became preoccupied with the prospect of what was going to be said to her by classmates. This became too much for her to take. Another thing is that “I began to lose my friends at school and schooling then became boring.” She was also scared that she was going

to be expelled at school because she was frequently absent and "I quickly took a decision myself to stop schooling".

**5.2.2.5 THEMBA**

"..... as a boy sometimes it so happens that when I have been with my girlfriend the previous night I wake up tired the next morning and that becomes a reason for my absence."

This 19 year old std 8 boy sees nothing wrong in spending a night with one's girlfriend. To him that is a valid excuse for being absent. Another thing is that he is used to going to bed very late at night. Sometimes as late as 11 P.M. This usually results in him oversleeping and seeing that he will be late for school he simply decides to stay at home the whole day.

Themba's relationships with some teachers at school are so poor that "at times I check before I go to bed which teacher is in the morning. If it is the teacher that I do not like I will try to dodge that lesson". Sometimes this becomes the cause of him not going to school that day.

Another thing, although it does not happen frequently, is that sometimes instead of going to school "I go to see one of my non-schooling girlfriends who stays far away from my place" but this has happened "twice if I am not mistaken."

**The findings**

In the following section, the researcher will highlight important themes that emerged from the data. A summary of the responses will be given, followed by excerpts from the original data, but without the researcher's comments at this point. Comments on some of the results and linkages to the earlier chapters will be made in Chapter 6.

### **5.3 BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

Of the ten school refusers interviewed, six were boys and four were girls. Of the four girls one is doing grade seven and two are in grade nine and the fourth one is in grade ten. Of the six boys, four are in grade ten, one in grade twelve and the last one is in grade nine. The ages of the school refusers range from 14 to 20.

### **5.4 HOME CONDITIONS**

As said in Chapter 4 (empirical design), the researcher set out to interview ten adolescent refusers, their parents and their teachers. When the researcher was about half-way through with the interviews, a pattern seemed to emerge where all the cases that had been interviewed up until then appeared to have grandmothers as their parent-guardians. The researcher began to question this. As a result the researcher ended up interviewing thirteen refusers, their parents and their teachers. In spite of the researcher having interviewed thirteen instead of ten subjects in each category (except one adolescent - Nkosinathi who's parent was not obtainable and another one- Enos whose teachers refused to participate in the study), the same pattern still stood. Eventually the three additional subjects (refusers, their teachers and their parents) were dropped to make the data manageable as originally envisaged.

The school refusers stayed with grandmothers for various reasons. Of the ten subjects (refusers), three stayed with grandmothers because the mother is working far away from home and the father is always too drunk to care about the child. One subject (Bonga) stays with his mother who is widowed. Sonto stays with her uncles (her mother's two brothers) because her mother is working about a hundred kilometres away from home. The father is not known. Another boy stays with his grandmother because his

eldest brother and his mother are alcoholics. When they are drunk they ill-treat his sickly father and this was too much for him to watch and bear. So he chose to come and stay with his grandmother.

Nkosinathi stays with his brother. His sister and his mother are working far away from home. His father abandoned them when they were still very small. Ntombinkulu's father died when she and her brother were still young. Their mother just disappeared after being given permission by her mother-in-law (Ntombinkulu's grandmother) to go and look for work. She wrote one or two letters after that, but that was the last time they ever heard from her. Since then the children have been with their grandmother. The other girl who is doing grade seven has both her parents living together. Her grandmother requested to stay with her so she could look after her (granny).

Most of the grannies that were interviewed were illiterate. Even those that went to school a little were by no means in the position to comprehend what goes on in the school situation.

## 5.5 ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOME

All the refusers reported a harmonious atmosphere with the members of their families. The only problem seemed to be with the drinking fathers. Some of the comments went like this: "... in actual fact the relations are good at home. The only person who's problematic is my father when he is drunk. When he comes home drunk he takes a small issue and makes a big deal out of it. I am usually a target. He just picks on me .

Another subject said; "... he is very fond of his alcohol. He is useless; to me he is as good as non-existent. I don't even count him as a living person because he can't buy me a piece of clothing".

## 5.6 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

### a) relationship with peers

The subjects reported that their social relations with their peers were smooth. There were, however, three subjects who were an exception. Nkosinathi, for example, stated categorically that: "... peers don't rebuff me as such but I am a person who is unable to ... how can I put it, I can say I am a person who is unable to enter into relationship with other people." This is a problem to this boy because as the interview progressed Nkosinathi said: "... as regards things that I would like to change about me, I would have liked that I also became a person who is able to mix with other people; be able to have friends and live harmoniously with them." Mr Dlayedwa (Nkosinathi's teacher) confirms this state of affairs: "He is an isolate - even worse this year than last year. Sometimes I even wonder if last year's case did not affect him."

Ntombinkulu is another example: "... friends is what I do not have. I do talk to or go together with a person, but that does not make them my friends." The only difference in Ntombinkulu's case from that of Nkosinathi's above is that Ntombinkulu is not an isolate. Although she does not have friends, she does mix with people and engage into small talk with them. Her teacher confirms this: "she does talk to people generally but she does not have a person or persons she can confide in with her secrets."

Another case is a case of Sonto. She had a problem when her school refusal problem began. Her school and class mates began to ridicule her because of the "big boys" that she was dating. Eventually she found herself having no friend within the school and a lot of friends outside school. Eventually she left school. Her teacher had this to say: "She listens to what you say very attentively and promises to rectify that, but

never does. She also complained that her classmates were teasing her about the bad things that she was doing - like staying with her boyfriend for a day or two away from home. She is also a "one-out - no friends; this especially happened when her problem started".

b) relationship with teachers

Both the teachers and refusers themselves reported nothing out of line with relationships. There were, however, three refusers whose relations with their teachers were not so palatable. Mr Dlayedwa, for example, (Nkosinathi's teacher) reported that recently he had had "a case with one of the Bibs teachers complaining that the boy refuses blatantly to do his work or take instructions from him. Another teacher, in a different case, came complaining to me that Nkosinathi does not give him the respect he deserves as his teacher." During the interview Nkosinathi had said that he hates Biblical studies but had not mentioned anything adverse in his relations with his teachers.

Bonga's teacher said that Bonga's friends (outsiders) had come and harassed the teachers who accused Bonga of being behind or having orchestrated the incident where his friends came to school in a car and ill-treated some girls. This act of Bonga's friends caused the teachers to dislike the boy. The boy also disliked some teachers. Bonga, however, prefers to put the story like this: "... in actual fact it is not that I don't like this teacher or that teacher, but there are teachers whom and whose subjects I don't like."

The third case which also seemed much more serious than the above two is that one of Themba. "My relationship with my teachers is smooth except for a few teachers with whom we don't get along so well. I also do not know why. I hear the way they talk that they do not like me, and this is serious". This at times causes him to feel reluctant to go to school sometimes he

dodges their subject periods: " .... At times I check the time-table before I go to bed. If it is the teacher(s) I don't get along well with in the morning I try by all means to dodge that lesson..."

c) relationship with the self

In most cases relationships with the self were positive. Some subjects did, however, mention a few negative things about themselves which they wished to change. These were some of the responses: " I would like to change being always to blame. I like to be always right" Another subject has this concern "I dislike epilepsy disease in me. I also wish that I was handsome and liked by girls so that I could have myself a girlfriend."

Another response went as follows: " ... as regards things that I would like to change about me, I would have liked that I also become a person who is able to mix with other people; to be able to have friends and live harmoniously with them."

Sonto was very concerned about her cruelty to her little brothers and sisters: "If I could I would change cruelty. When there has been a misunderstanding or a serious quarrel between us it takes me a day or even two to start talking to them again." Bonga is concerned about his womanising problem "I wish to stop my problem of womanising and drinking."

## 5.7 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

It transpired from the interviews with refusers, teachers and parents that refusers fitted into all levels of intelligence: below average, average and above average intelligence. Here, no tests were conducted but the grades they achieved over a long period of time (even before the school refusal problem) were an indication of a steady performance. The problem of

school refusal impacted negatively on the performance of all the subjects. Teachers confirmed this: "...she does not have self-confidence in class as such but in her work it shows that she is bright because she outperforms some of her classmates who are always present". Another teacher said "... he is weak academically. Last year he failed all subjects in Std 8. He is repeating right now. It has become a trend - since standard six. He just fails and repeats each and every class he goes through."

One teacher said: " He is by nature bright but he's lazy. So I follow him a lot to bring the best out of him." Other refusers are very capable in their school work but are underachieving because of their loafing behaviour. That is why one teacher spoke like this: "What I have noticed about him and his work is that he is capable. Even the marks that promoted him to standard seven were not his best. He could have achieved far better marks."

## **5.8 MAIN PROBLEMS RELATED TO SCHOOL REFUSAL BEHAVIOUR**

### **5.8.1. Protective parents**

Some parents were so protective of their children that they wanted to hide the bad actions and take the blame upon themselves. Asked to describe a typical day of her child when he is not at school one parent denied openly that her child is ever absent, quickly adding some trivialities and brags about her child's "brightness" at school which were not called for. These were her words: "... most importantly, I can say perhaps, it is because perhaps he has never been absent extensively e....e....e from school. e....e....e.... in actual fact we were discussing him only yesterday. This one girl said Bonga is very clever at school - he is very bright. He knows everything that we, his classmates, don't know. Then I said I wonder what his problem is, but I quickly said I know why - it is because Bonga is unfortunate. When he touches a boy, they press charges against him and

he gets arrested. That way he misses out at school and gets left behind." She was so evasive to questions that she took very long to answer questions, trying to look for words to cover up for her son: "His biggest problem is just that... that he fights and the other boy will sure press charges. Yes I do admit that at times he does become absent from school. When he is not at school he is usually here at home .. but his biggest problem is that he is unfortunate and that retards him". She went on: "Not that he is a fighter you know, but when he comes to you he hits hard." The conversation went on like this, each time a question was asked she bragged about how bright the child is at school. She, however, admitted that the child had failed almost all the standards he went through but she had her reasons ready to explain that.

Another parent, also along similar lines with the one above, kept emphasizing that the child had been absent extensively because she had asked him to go searching for her lost cattle. She also seemed to forget how many times the cattle had gone missing. Asked about the child's typical day when he is absent from school she responded: "He is not frequently absent this year. He is dedicated to his schooling."

### **5.8.2 Ignorance on the part of parents**

As it was mentioned in paragraph 5.4, of the ten subjects who formed the final sample for the study, six stayed with grandmothers. As it may be known, illiteracy rate is high in the South African Black communities and the old citizens are worse off. A lot of grannies in this study seemed to be out of touch with the reality of what takes place in the schools. One granny said " At times he tells me that his teacher is not in and therefore cannot go to school because there will be no one to teach him" Another one said: " Last year he cried, wanting to go to school. He told me that they were writing final exams, but I told him he cannot fail just because he was absent from exam only one day. So they went to search for my cattle."

### 5.8.3 Lack of insight into the problem

The problem of lack of insight was noted in both the teachers and the parents alike. Some of the teachers' responses went like this: "I should think the problem for this boy emanates from his home background. Even the mark he achieved on his promotion to std 7 was not the mark he deserved. He should have scored a higher mark than that." Asked about the school's attempt to stop the behaviour she said: "I have spoken to him with a view to try to make him see that he is losing out." Another teacher responded as follows: "I thought that perhaps she has a problem at home, or perhaps sometimes she gets scared to walk a long distance alone when she has been left behind by others..." Here is another teacher's response: "The problem was caused by the fact that they live alone at home as children; there is no adult. So they do as they please. If he likes to he comes to school if he does not like he does not come."

The above responses were all vague and they clearly indicated that the teacher had not really cared enough to trace the cause of the problem. Those who did have an hypothesis as to what causes the problem had not tested it. The last teacher was lying in saying that the child was staying with children only, with no adult.

Some parents also showed some ignorance or lack of insight into the problem. One parent for example said: "I don't know what caused this problem. I cannot say it was bad friends because she could have said no. I tried to stop it by hitting her almost every day but it didn't work. Eventually I stopped hitting her".

#### 5.8.4 Grandmothers too old or sickly to care

Another boy said that his grandmother sometimes ask him why he does not go to school but sometimes she does not even ask. One old lady said she does not know what causes the problem: "What can I do my child. She knows I am old and cannot punish her. At times she just wakes up in the morning and stays at home. When I ask why she does not go to school she just keeps quiet." Another granny said: " Most of the time I stay in bed until late in the morning because of ill health. When I wake up I find him in the house. Sometimes I get him to help me with small chores. Sometimes he visits his friends." One parent said: "My son was staying at granny's - my mother's, because I was working far away. My mother is sick and most of the time she goes to the doctor. The boy used that opportunity not to go to school. At times he just refused to go to school and my mother, being old and sickly, just let him get away with it."

#### 5.8.5 Parents' beliefs

Parents' beliefs can make the problem worse instead of doing anything along the lines of solving it. The parents who held superstitious beliefs as to the causation of the problem made things worse because they did not even try to stop it. There were two parents in this study who attributed the problem to the supernatural powers. Both parents believed that their children were possessed with ancestral spirits. According to these parents the behaviour could not be stopped. The only thing that could help is to take the child to the well-known Sangoma (Traditional doctor) who would train the child to become a traditional doctor: "I think the child is possessed with ancestral spirits. She must go for training to become a sangoma" (Sangoma is a Zulu word for a traditional doctor). The other parent said: " I think she has a talent of becoming a traditional doctor. Sometimes she becomes very withdrawn and moody. This is a symptom that she is possessed with ancestral spirits."

There was yet another different case, but still to do with beliefs, where the subject was concerned that he could never enter into an opposite sex relationship because: "the witch doctor, where my aunt and my mother took me to, said I was bewitched and because of that I will never get married and I will never finish school." The subject's aunt confirmed this during an interview with her: "... we went to the sangoma and he said it is possible that he will not get married. Even now Zola does not even care about girls - grown-up as he is."

#### 5.8.6 Lack of authority

The problem of the lack of authority has permeated this study from the beginning of data-gathering right to the end. The subjects live with grannies and as a result they get away with their refusal behaviour with ease. In some cases the fathers are not working, it is only the mother who is working. The child stays with granny because the father is too weak or drinks too much to take responsibility. The following responses support this: "To me my father is as good as non-existent. He drinks too much and he is very fond of his alcohol. He is useless. He can't even buy me a piece of clothing." Another old lady said: "... because even his father is there but he is always too drunk to care for his child. This boy is my responsibility, his father does not contribute anything." One boy said: "... the only person who is problematic is my father. He drinks a lot and when he is drunk I am his target..." Some fathers have lost control because of sickness: "My mother is a drunkard you know. When she is drunk she ill-treats my father because he is disabled. My father was paralysed by a gunshot. That is why I chose to come and stay with my granny."

### **5.8.7 Fear of something specific at school**

There were not many subjects who reported fear of something specific at school. In some cases the subjects reported that at times they were late for school and had chosen to stay at home because: "... I realised that if I arrive late teachers would think that I am repeating the same thing that I did in Std 9 the previous year where I led a group that questioned the school rules." Another boy said at times he oversleeps and seeing that he will be late for school he just stays at home because: "at times the gates are locked for late comers". Another standard seven subject reported that she had eventually chosen to stop schooling completely because her school and classmates had begun to mock her because she had started dating "big-boys" who were also not schooling. In other words the latter subject refused school on being scared of being ridiculed by children at school. There was also another case of a boy who at times became absent because of bad relations with the teachers: " ... at times I check the timetable before I go to bed. If it will be the teacher(s) I don't get along well with in the morning, I try by all means to dodge that lesson.' This boy admitted that very often he ends up not just "dodging the lessons" for those teachers but becoming altogether absent.

A case of being scared of corporal punishment also did come out: "Mr Matubela does not like a person who has not done his homework. If you come to his class he hits you with a stick. So sometimes if I have been unable to do his work, I prefer to stay at home."

### **5.8.8 Influence of non-schooling and schooling friends**

Six out of ten subjects reported to have been with their outside friends (non-schooling friends) on several occasions. "... we were a connection - you would find that sometimes I am absent because my friends and I are going somewhere. Sometimes we would organise with my school friends

to join our non-schooling friends and we would go together.” Sometimes school refusers influence one another and contrive not to go to school: “... it happened perhaps when we had arranged to go somewhere with my friends here at school. That means that they would also be absent so we could go together.”

Another subject said: “ We influenced one another as a group and we engaged in bad habits.” One old lady complained that her grandson spends a lot of time with boys who have abandoned school: “Some other times he leaves as if he is going to school. After some time he shows up and tells me that he is spending time with his friends or sometimes says that he is helping them fix something. I ask him what education can he get from non-schooling friends.”

Themba reported that at times he chooses to visit his girlfriends (non-schooling) instead of coming to school. Another subject said: “ It so happens sometimes that when I am absent my friend is also absent. In that case I go to visit him or he visits me.”

#### **5.8.9 Opposite sex partner**

As said in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.3) one of the developmental tasks that adolescents have to master is identity formation. The adolescent during this stage does a lot of things all of which are aimed at establishing an own identity. Some of these are heterosexual relationships. In this study five subjects out of ten appeared to absent themselves partly because of a boyfriend or girlfriend who are non-scholars. This is what one of the subjects said: “If I love a girl I devote a lot of my time thinking about her. This sometimes disturbs me from concentrating in class, so that if the girl is not schooling I don't mind even going to her instead of going to school” Elsewhere during the interview the same subject said: “I wish to stop my problem of womanising and drinking.”

In another interview one subject said: "In essence, I eventually abandoned school last year because we ganged up with my non-schooling friends and we did bad things, strolling up and down with non-schooling boys." The same subject explained that as soon as she started "dating older boys my classmates began to ridicule me ... I began to lose my friends at school and schooling then became boring. ... I quickly took a decision myself to stop schooling."

Another subject explained that there are times when he misses school because: " ....I have been with my girlfriend the previous night. I wake up tired the next morning and that becomes a reason for my absence" This subject also reported that sometimes he is absent because instead of going to school: "I go to see one of my non-schooling girlfriends who stays far away from my place."

At least the above three subjects were absent from school with their partners of their free will. Unfortunately the following subject was not: "My biggest problem is that I happened to fall in love with an older boy who is not schooling. This boy sometimes forces me to stay with him and not go to school. Sometimes I stay with him for a week, unable to get to school. If I try to go against his will he even hits me."

On a different note one subject was kept from school by the fact that she has got a one-year-old baby. She does not have a baby-sitter/nanny, so sometimes she has to stay at home looking after the baby: "As I sometimes become absent, I do so because I do not have a nanny. My boyfriend's mother, who usually baby-sits my baby, sometimes gets busy with other things and she is therefore unable to baby-sit". Although this subject's case is different from the other four above, it is included here because this standard seven 20 year old girl is having a problem of the baby indirectly because of her boyfriend who impregnated her. Right now she is staying

with her boyfriend's family and this sometimes is a problem to her: "My boyfriend's mother does not like the idea of me going to school. I say this because she always complains when I go to school that I rushed to return to school instead of waiting until the child is grown up"

## **5.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter tried to provide the reader with a picture of how the data was analysed, interpreted and described. In the next chapter the findings of the study, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter sets out to give a global picture of what the study uncovered through the literature review and the actual empirical research. A brief summary will be given as to whether the aims that the study set out to accomplish were in fact accomplished. The empirical research findings will also be paralleled with the findings from the literature overview with a view to see if there were any differences and/ or similarities.

#### **6.2 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY**

##### **6.2.1 Findings regarding school refusal: It's nature, causes and effects.**

###### **6.2.1.1 The nature of school refusal**

As it was said in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2.1), school refusal is a difficult disorder to describe owing to its complex nature and its pervasiveness to other disorders. Other factors, such as age and circumstances surrounding the refuser have also been posited by some researchers as factors that can influence the presenting picture of the disorder, it is to be expected that different researchers will pin-point different clinical features. A child with school refusal problem frankly refuses to go to school.

The complex nature of school refusal has resulted in it being given other diagnoses such as simple phobia by some researchers. This creates a lot of diagnostic confusion.

### 6.2.1.2. Causes of school refusal

A painstaking account of the school refusal causes was made in Chapter 2 (section 2.3). From this section of Chapter 2 it became clear that, like in all other aspects of school refusal, there was a great disagreement among researchers and theorists of different orientations as to the etiological aspect of the school refusal condition. Psychoanalytically based theorists posit separation anxiety as the basic cause for school refusal. According to this hypothesis, the child refuses to go to school because it fears that something "bad" will happen to its close attachment figure in its absence.

Psychodynamically oriented theorists prefer to point at 'fear of failure' as a causal pattern for this disorder. These theorists, with their famous 'inflated self-concept' theory, believe that a child, or more specifically an adolescent, overvalues him/herself and if that unrealistic self-concept faces reality in the school situation - for example reality that the adolescent is not what she/he thinks he/she is, they retreat to a situation (usually the home) where their narcissistic self-concept is not threatened.

The third hypothesis is that of the learning theorists which cite fear of separation or fear of school as a cause. According to this theory, school refusal behaviour may be positively or negatively reinforced or result as a conditioned response to some traumatic event. Learning theorists strongly believe that school refusal may be maintained by positive reinforcement. For example children find it pleasurable to stay at home if they are allowed to watch television or to visit their friends. On the negative reinforcement side, behaviour theorists speculate that fear of parental separation is paired with the school setting and the school then becomes a phobic stimulus. Put differently, the school, according to the child, is the cause of him/her being separated from his/her parent and he/she therefore grows to fear the school.

### **6.2.1.3 Effects of school refusal**

The school refuser, according to the psychodynamic theorists, has an unrealistic self-concept. This type of self-concept affects or more accurately, hampers almost all the areas of the human development. Socialisation skills, for example, in an adolescent school refuser may be blunted because obviously the adolescent will not only pull away from the school situation but virtually from all other situations, including his/her peer relationships, where his unrealistic self-concept is challenged. This may easily result in an adolescent becoming an isolate. The future career of a school refuser is also at stake if the refusal condition is not treated early enough. The frequent absence from school may result in the child or adolescent losing thread or contact with the school subjects. This may in turn lower the refuser's grades which may eventually lead to failure of the standard.

The reader is referred to Chapter 2 for complete details regarding the nature, causes and effects of the school refusal behaviour.

### **6.2.2. Findings regarding the significance of cultural and environmental effects on the social and psychological development of black adolescents.**

This section will only provide a brief summary of the findings from the literature review on Black adolescent development as this is presented in details in Chapter 3. Cognitive development, identity formation, social development and emotional development will be looked into.

#### **6.2.2.1 Cognitive development**

Many studies have been made with an attempt to gain more understanding of cognitive development. Kotze's study (Thabethe 1991:81) for example,

revealed that the mass media can serve as cognitive stimulation for growing children, with the black children according to this study, preferring to read newspapers, listening to the radio, watching television and getting influenced by role models. In the above study the black's interests seemed to be in finding more knowledge about politics.

Other cognitive stimulations were received in the following manner:

- Parental encouragement.
- Extended family members participating in parenting, encouragement, listening to and offering solutions/advices for the problems.
- Attending church services.
- High degree of achievement motivation.
- Boyfriends/girlfriends help with homework, listen to and understand problems and also offer encouragement.
- Having a strong positive view of the self and a high level of self-confidence.

Most of contemporary cognitive psychology is based on the work pioneered by Jean Piaget. Piaget argues that cognitive development levels are attainable through certain developmental stages which more or less coincide with the chronological age. A lot of speculations and arguments have been entered into as to whether Piaget's cognitive developmental stages are influenced by cultural differences (see Chapter 3 section 3.2). A number of theorists argue that the cultural differences do not influence the attainment of cognitive stages but that only the rate at which they are attained can be influenced by cultural differences. As it was clear in Chapter 3, Mwamwenda (1995) is not of the above opinion. According to him, the role of culture or environment in cognitive development goes beyond influencing the rate at which stages are attained.

### **6.2.2.2 Identity formation**

In Chapter 3 it was stressed that identity formation in adolescence (the answering of the question "who am I") largely depends upon the types of relationships that the adolescent enters into. These may be relationships with the parents, teachers, the self, peers and other members of the family. The adolescent's involvement in, experiencing of and the meaning/importance he/she attaches to these relationships will determine whether the identity formed will be a positive or a negative one. It also became clear in Chapter 3 that a child or adolescent who finds rejection at school is likely to develop a negative pupil-identity which may easily see the child/adolescent feeling reluctant to go to school.

A child who is rebuffed in social circles or who finds problems in establishing and maintaining lasting relationships may develop either identity foreclosure or a negative identity. Both these identities may result in the formation of an unrealistic self-concept which may interfere with the child's development in other areas, such as social development, self-actualisation and cognitive development.

### **6.2.2.3. Social development**

During the adolescent stage the identity formation is influenced by the approval/disapproval of the adolescent's actions/behaviour by the significant others. By significant others is meant those people who are close to the adolescent, for example, the family, friends and, maybe, teachers. Before the adolescent meets with any other friends, they first get to know every member of the family. The family is the first circle of all the social circles that the child or adolescent will find him/herself in his/her life. If the adolescent's significant others perceive him/her negatively or do not approve of his actions, the adolescent may change his or her behaviour so that he or she gets positive regard from significant others. If any of these

circles isolate him/her, he/she may develop social problems. These may take different forms, for example, the adolescent may withdraw from those social circles where they feel they are not accepted. If this problem is experienced with the teachers and/or school/classmates, the adolescent may develop a school refusal problem.

Through the process of socialisation the adolescent learns values as well as attitudes acceptable in his/her society.

#### **6.2.2.4. Emotional development**

Adolescents experience various emotions as they grow up. Emotions can take various forms which can be categorised into pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Adolescents, according to Mathunyane (see Chapter 3 section 3.5) experience problems in dealing with their emotions, especially negative emotions such as aggression and anger, because they received very little, if any, training as they grew up as to how they should handle their emotions. As a result of this lack of training, adolescents often find themselves engaging in emotional tantrums, for example, outbursts of anger and physical violence.

Pleasant emotions are expressed when adolescents give or receive love and affection, are being alone together with a member of the opposite sex. Sometimes happiness derives from successes and achievements in various spheres of the adolescents' life, for example, in sports, school subjects and many others.

Unpleasant emotions, such as fear, anxiety, anger and rage can also be experienced by the adolescent. Feelings of being sad and hurt may also be felt, and these are largely of social origin than being caused by objects.

## 6.3 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

### 6.3.1 Introduction

The first three chapters indicated that a number of school refusal issues have been uncovered by researchers and that there is a lot of disagreement about many aspects of this phenomenon. This section will show which ones of those issues were confirmed and which ones were refuted by the present research study. Thereafter, a brief summary of the findings will be presented.

### 6.3.2 An integration of the empirical findings with literature

- *social adjustment difficulties*

Research has shown that school refusers may indicate signs of social adjustment difficulties. In this study, three subjects had this problem. One subject had a problem of being rebuffed by her school mates and classmates. The other two subjects both had unhealthy relations with their teachers. This problem in some cases (see Chapter 2 paragraph 2.3) may be attributed to poor social skills which make it difficult for a person concerned to enter into meaningful relations.

- *separation anxiety*

Psychoanalytically based studies cite separation anxiety as a causal factor in school refusing children. In this study this claim was not confirmed. Maybe the findings of this study are consonant with the dynamic theorists' postulation that separation anxiety is noticeable mostly in children rather than in adolescents (see 2.3)

- *children from troubled homebackground*

Research has uncovered that school refusers are likely to come from disrupted homes (see 1.3.3). As said earlier, eight of the ten subjects researched in this study came from troubled families. Of the remaining two the one subject was from a single parent home, father deceased and the mother is protective and the other subject was from an intact family but she stayed with her grandmother on grandmother's request. For these children the warmth, love and encouragement of the biological parents as significant others was missing. Grandmothers were supportive but they were old and, most of them, illiterate, so they would sure fall short and, being old, might leave much to be desired of a parent.

- *overprotective and over-indulgent parent*

This study has supported research findings in Chapter 2 (see 2.2) which discovered that parents who overvalue their children's achievements and capabilities may cause them to withdraw from those situations where their narcissistic self-images are threatened. The researcher kept asking himself a question as he was interviewing the protective woman as to why was she at pains trying to protect and inflate the image of her son. Her protectiveness had spoiled the boy so much that he had gotten rude at school. He saw himself as a fighter. He felt the power in him. Unfortunately this kind of behaviour is not tolerated at school. His mother did not call it fighting when Bonga fought another boy, she preferred to refer to it as "touching" another boy. The boy internalised all this and to him it was natural and acceptable to "touch" another boy if they offended him.

- *refusers display selfderogation*

Some researchers have found that school refusers as a group display self derogation or low self-esteem (see 2.2). This study, however did not

confirm this research finding. Those subjects who were doing well did say this. Their teachers and their academic record agreed with them and those whose performance was average evaluated themselves as such. Two subjects, however, over-valued themselves. It was interesting to note that one of the two students who inflated their performance was Bonga, whose mother was so protective of him. This shows how much damage this woman's unrealistic evaluation had done to her son. The other subject who over-valued himself was Themba.

- *weak father figure*

As said elsewhere in this chapter, in the cases where the marriage was still intact it was found that the father was not working, weak, peripheral to the family affairs and did not care about the child's welfare. In all cases fathers were found to be heavy drinkers, with the exception of the one who was paralysed by a gunshot and the one whose daughter came to stay at granny's on granny's request. This state of affairs is reminiscent of what was said in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2.2) about weak fathers who play a marginal role in their families.

- *Low level of academic performance.*

All the teachers in this study reported a low level of academic performance in school refusers as a result of frequent absence from school. This is consonant with Brand's (1993) findings.

- *deviant and criminal activity*

Bonga's mother described Bonga as "unfortunate" in that if he "touches another boy he gets arrested" This boy's behaviour fits Brand's characteristics of the refusers (see 2.2). The same subject also fits the

description of “wilful disobedience” which the research has also uncovered. Bonga’s teacher complained that he had grown rude and disobedient to the teachers.

- *observational learning*

Learning theorists maintain that school refusal may develop through observational learning or vicarious conditioning. According to these theorists, this situation may occur if the refuser copies or observes a behaviour from a model (which may be older siblings who are/were school refusers). The same theorists also maintain that the behaviour may be maintained or positively reinforced by pleasurable things that happen when the child stays at home (see 2.3). The same situation was observed in this study. Two subjects had their older brothers being school refusers. Something else which might serve to maintain the condition was the fact that other refusers said they visited friends when not at school. Sometimes they ganged up with their school mates not to go to school so as to go somewhere, where they would enjoy themselves. One granny admitted that when she woke up and found her grandson in the house she got him to do things for her or at times the boy just went to visit his friends. So it was more convenient for these refusers to stay at home than to go to school.

- *experiences of frustration owing to rejection by friends*

The study conducted by Fukuda and Hozumi (1987) indicated that school refusal may be triggered by experiences of frustration as a result of rejection by friends. There was a case in this study also, where the subject reported to have opted to leave school completely because she found herself being a subject of ridicule by her school and classmates after she began dating ‘bigger’ non-schooling boys.

- *anxiety about something at home*

There were three subjects in this study who showed anxiety about something happening at home. Nkosinathi said he was worried by the fact that his mother had a lot of children and so she was overburdened by responsibility; so much that even if he needs something, at times he bottles it up because he is being considerate of his mother since their father left them. Another subject said he was upset by his mother and elder brother ill-treating his disabled father. The third subject was worried about his drinking father who just picks on him when he is drunk and makes an issue out of nothing. These findings support Dunbar's (1988) findings (see Chapter 2 section 2.3).

- *broken home-background*

It was mentioned in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.1) that the family is a socialising agent. For every member of the family the home can be likened to a firm ground in which the roots of a tree are anchored. If the ground is weak or non-existent, the tree will be weak or it will cease to survive. All the subjects in this study are like the above analogy of a tree with a weak base. They were all (except one) from some sort of a broken home background. Nkosinathi's father abandoned them and disappeared, leaving the children's mother struggling to make ends meet. Themba has both parents but his father is a useless heavy drinker. The mother is working far away and hence Themba stays with his grandmother. Sonto's mother is working. The father ran away from responsibility and maintenance of the children. Hence Sonto is staying with her uncles. Vusi's mother is working. The father is a heavy drinker. Vusi therefore stays with his grandmother. Bonga's father is deceased. Ntombinkulu's father died when they were still young. Their mother abandoned them.

The above weakness of the home (which is supposedly an anchorage base) may result in the formation of a negative family self-concept, and, as said in Chapter 3, this type of self-concept may contaminate the other identities, including the pupil-identity, that the adolescent may have formed. Interacting with other factors in the environment, this may result in a school refusal behaviour.

### 6.3.3 Brief summary of the findings

- *refuser stays with granny*

The mother of the refuser in each case was working, either because of being single or had her marriage still intact but the husband having some weakness, for example, a drinking problem which kept him at home unemployed. In either case it meant that the child had to remain with granny while the mother stays far away at a place of work. As it was said in paragraph 1.8.5 Impendle is a rural area. Places of work are usually far away from the people's homes. As a result of this, migrant labour is a common practice. It was therefore inevitable that if the mother or both the parents are working, children remain under the custody of some relative - usually the grand parents. This kind of situation in many cases resulted in the lack of authority and the children exploited it.

- *refuser contrives with friends (schooling or non-schooling) not to go to school*

Many refusers cited the problem of having many "bad" friends, both inside and outside school, as having played part in their refusal behaviour.

- *fear of something specific at school*

Although there were not many such cases who feared something specific at school, some subjects did bring up some factors which played a role on some days in their refusal behaviour for example, a disliked teacher.

- *lack of insight into the problem*

Both the teachers and parents displayed a lack of insight into the problem. In some parents this problem may be attributed to their ignorance which is either due to illiteracy or lack of involvement in the school activities. If the parent is not guided or educated in order to take his/her important part in the education of his/her child, problems of lack of understanding of the ways the school operates may occur. Some teachers lacked insight into the problem, perhaps due to being indifferent or lack of commitment to the education of the child.

- *opposite sex partner playing a role in the refusal behaviour*

There were cases in this study where the subjects reported to have been kept away from school because of being with their lovers during the school hours. In all the cases the partner was non-schooling and were themselves school refusers in that, in their age, they ought to have been still schooling but had stopped schooling before they finished matric.

- *protective parent*

There was a case of a school refuser who was reported to be problematic at school in terms of his lack of respect for teachers and of course his frequent absence from school. In doing an interview with his mother it transpired that his behaviour was shaped by his protective, indulgent

mother who was also exaggerating the boy's capabilities. Another parent also shielded her grandson's behaviour by taking all the blame of school refusal upon herself.

- *poor social relations*

Poor social relationships featured as a problem for some subjects in this study. Some subjects had poor relationships with their teachers while others failed to enter into meaningful relationships with their peers.

- *fathers with a weakness*

As it was said in Chapter 5 most of the subjects (refusers) in this study lived with their grandmothers. In some cases fathers were not working. These fathers were so weakened by the drinking problem that for most of the subjects they seemed out of the picture. This weakness in the fathers contributed to the problem of lack of authority in the homes of the refusers. In one case the father had been weakened by disability and there was violence in the house created by the drinking problem of the mother and the son.

- *refusal problem maintained by positive reinforcement at home*

In probing what the subjects were doing when not at school it came out that many of them engaged in pleasurable acts which made staying at home more convenient than going to school. Even the interview with their parents (grannies) confirmed that granny's reaction to the behaviour seldom did more than just asking why and thereafter gave the boy or girl one or two things to help in the house. After that the refuser would be free to go wherever they wished to go.

- *weak or no attempts to stop behaviour*

In the part of the parents (grannies) the problem in most of the cases was due to the old age which in turn resulted in lack of authority. Teenagers did not take their grannies seriously. That is why even if a granny had an insight into the problem, she could not succeed in stopping it. Other grannies had no comprehension of the problem at all, so they could not stop it. One has to comprehend what one has on one's lap before one can deal with it. This problem was not only noted in grannies but in teachers as well. In some cases the problem was due to their lack of insight. Other teachers did have some theory or hypotheses (on the right track too) as to the cause of the problem but they had never done anything substantial, other than just talking to the refuser, to solve the problem. All they did was just sticking labels to the child which did not help to solve the problem or stop the child's behaviour.

- *parent's belief help maintain behaviour*

The problem of belief system in the family was found in three families in the entire study. The problem of the parent's belief system impeded their understanding of the refusal problem. The refusers capitalised on the beliefs of their parents. The beliefs of the parents were not only maintaining refusal behaviour but, at least in one subject, they were psychologically damaging. One subject had given up hope in despair because he was told by a traditional doctor and his family that he would never get married or have a girlfriend.

- *emotional problems*

One subject explicitly stated that he could not concentrate in class because of worrying about his personal problems (his court case). Another refuser was reported by teachers to be very withdrawn in class sometimes. During

the interview with her she found mentioning her mother's and father's names so agonizing that she ordered the researcher not to raise the subject again. Maybe this girl was fighting hard to repress her unresolved feelings about her parent. It was obvious also that her attempts to repress it were unsuccessful. Her grandmother confirmed in talking to her that the girl did have times when she explicitly expressed resentment for her mother who abandoned them after the death of their father. So, every now and then a feeling of depression did occur.

The last case was the case of the teenager who stayed with her boyfriend's family. This young girl was chased away from her home by her stepfather and her biological mother. During the interview she said she tried hard not to think or worry about her homelessness. Her mother-in-law (her boyfriend's mother) seemed to think that her moodiness and introversion could be attributable to possession with ancestral spirits. It may happen that her emotional problems took the best of her at times and left her low-spirited or depressed.

#### **6.3.4. Reflecting on the research process**

##### **6.3.4.1 The sample**

The subjects that comprised the sample for this study were selected from seven secondary schools in the Impendle area (KwaZulu-NATAL). The subjects were selected by means of the researcher going to each school and requesting the headmaster to give him at least two children who fitted the definition of school refusal (see 1.3.2). The researcher used one subject from his school (Nkosinathi) as a pilot study. This subject was willing to participate and he was very articulate. The interviewer/researcher interviewed one subject out of two given in each case. When the interviews were halfway through, a pattern emerged where all the subjects (except for a pilot-case) were staying with grandmothers. The researcher

kept going until thirteen subjects altogether were interviewed. Eventually the last three were left out.

The subjects in general were very co-operative. They all seemed to be faithful and the way they responded made the researcher believe that they were presenting a true picture of themselves. There were, however some subjects for example the protective woman, who seemed to be hiding something. The more she tried to protect her son, the more the researcher, through his training as a therapist, became aware that there was something suspicious about the woman. As it was not the intention of this research to delve deeper into psychological problems of the subjects, the research did not pursue this.

In one school the teachers refused to participate in the study. Out of the ten subjects interviewed, one subject's parent was not obtainable. Altogether nine parents (eight guardians and one single/widowed parent) and ten teachers were interviewed. This means that there were twenty nine interviewees in this study altogether (not counting the three cases that were dropped, that is, the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> cases).

#### 6.3.4.2. Difficulties during data-gathering

- *mechanical failure*

The interviewer meant to record all the interviews on tape. Fortunately the researcher was familiar with the machine he was using. The interviews were captured very well. Towards the end of the data-collection exercise though, the machine began to give the researcher some problems. The interviews were captured but would not be retrieved from the machine for transcription purposes. The machine had to be taken for fixing. In another incident the researcher thought the machine was recording, only to find that

nothing had been recorded. In the latter case the researcher had no choice but to return to the field to interview the subject again.

#### **6.3.4.3 Selecting the data**

The recorded findings in Chapter 5 represent only a chapter of the stories told by the subjects.

The challenge at the time of interview was to remain open to the emerging data, draw a line (rule off) when necessary, and to accommodate the notion of multiple realities. The researcher constantly and consciously strived to guard against the intrusion of own assumptions and preconceived ideas. This was no easy task, especially considering the volumes of knowledge that the researcher had accumulated through reading and experience.

Also the fact that data had to be reported in a particular manner which would, inevitably, mean the selection and omission of some data was agonizing; especially considering the richness of data that had been accumulated. The task was also taxing in that the researcher had to select very aptly so that, although some material was discarded, the reader would still get the gist of what was happening and said in the field. This would ensure that the study, being qualitative in nature, emphasized the emic categories and patterns more than it did the etic categories.

#### **6.3.4.4 Reflecting on self-as-instrument**

One of the difficulties in employing a qualitative research approach is the very fact that one is supposed to play two roles at the same time, that is, a role of being both an "insider" and an "outsider". The researcher was constantly aware of the dangers of becoming too immersed into the research that he loses his role of being a researcher (outsider). Bryman (1988) warns of the dangers of becoming seduced by the participant's

point of view and so losing one's awareness of being a researcher. One other thing which helped the researcher to succeed to keep the necessary distance was the fact that there was only one interview with each subject, and that, although the interviews were unstructured, a rough schedule was used to give direction and to ensure that the interviews did not wander aimlessly.

Another factor which made the data-gathering exercise quite a formidable exercise was the fact that there were not many examples of substantial, high-quality evaluations employing qualitative methods in the literature studied for this research. At times the researcher felt like he was treading a new ground. This increased his feelings of doubt and insecurity.

## **6.4 CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.4.1 Realisation of the aims of the study**

The aims of the study (refer paragraphs 1.5 and 4.2) were realised. The literature study was reviewed in order to find out what other researchers have discovered with regard to:

- The nature of the problem (refer paragraph 1.3.2)
- The causes of school refusal (see paragraph 2.3)
- The school refuser as a person (refer Chapter 3).
- The effects of school refusal (see paragraph 1.3.4)
- The identification of school refusers (refer paragraph 2.2)
- Factors that may lead to school refusal. (refer paragraph 1.3.3).

The above aims were realised through the study of literature and the details are presented in the sections indicated in brackets. The empirical research has also realised these aims. It would be simplistic here though to designate the factors identified by the empirical research (see 6.3.3) as

causes. The researcher prefers to regard such factors merely as factors which have a potential of interacting with other factors from the environment to breed school refusal. In other words, they may act as either precipitating or predisposing causes.

As school refusal is such a complex, difficult and pervasive disorder, it is very important to guard against pinning any factors identified as primary causal patterns.

#### **6.4.2. Conclusions drawn from the findings**

Findings from both the literature and the empirical study indicate that school refusal has a negative influence on the academic performance of the adolescents. It also transpired that some factors in the adolescent's environment may serve as precipitating or predisposing factors for school refusal. This means that such factors interact with the environmental circumstances to breed school refusal behaviour. Some of these factors are as follows:

- overprotective parents
- adolescents with inflated self-concepts
- lack of authority which may be as a result of a father who plays a peripheral role in the family matters
- rejection by friends causing frustration which may eventually result in the abandonment of school
- pathological family relationships, for example, mother and father always quarrelling
- unhealthy pupil - teacher relationships
- influence of schooling or non-schooling friends
- non-schooling lover who is/was a school refuser him/herself
- parents' worldview or belief system
- emotional problems

This study has also shown that school refusal may result in social adjustment problems later in adult life. This is especially noticeable if school refusal was not treated early enough (Flakierska et al 1988:836). School refusal may also, according to Berg and Jackson (1982:366), predispose neurotic disturbances for example agoraphobia.

It became clear throughout the overview of literature that there is still a lot of disagreement over many aspects of the school refusal phenomenon. This disagreement makes it very difficult for researchers to come to conclusive decisions regarding things like:

- causes
- treatment strategies
- prevalence
- types of school refusers
- prognosis

Lastly, the school refusal syndrome needs to be thoroughly researched until agreement is fairly reached as to its causes, diagnostic criteria and clinical features. Until then, the treatment strategies will achieve no more than just treating the symptoms of the problem. Many researchers are very hasty in proposing treatment plans which entirely focus on restoring regular schooling of refusers without first identifying and treating the root causes of the refusal problem. Another important factor that should be taken into account is cultural difference. This study has indicated that home background conditions and cultural differences may not be ruled out as factors which may trigger or predispose school refusal.

## 6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Interpretation

The most distinctive characteristic of qualitative enquiry is the emphasis on interpretation. The subjects for this study were interviewed in Zulu (their mother tongue). The interviews were then translated into English for the purposes of the presentation in this dissertation. It is possible, therefore, that a word chosen in translation for a Zulu word might not be exact. The researcher, however, tried to consult with professional translators to help with difficult Zulu words. The whole exercise was, however, not so problematic for the researcher, being a Zulu speaker and an articulate English speaker himself.

- Interview biases

The researcher was, throughout the research, mindful of the interview biases possible in any interview situation.

Some of these are:

- The transcript material involved subjective, evaluative responses from the subjects. Besides the biographical data, the rest is an evaluation of a situation by a subject. These interpretations are not controlled in any way. It is in the human nature to want to present the best of oneself. Hence it is possible that what was said by the subjects was not entirely true. The researcher tried to deal with this possibility by including the parents and teachers as research subjects as well, so that the final analysis and report would incorporate their perspectives as well.
- Some of the subjects were supposed to recall the factors that contributed to their refusal that took place a year ago. Germane to this are the fallibility of human recollections of the past. Particularly where recollections are akin to

- The subjects' perception of the interviewer/researcher and the interviewer's perception of the subject are other sources of bias. Through the observation of such things as non-verbal language the interviewer/researcher had to make an impression which would be combined with what the subject had said and a final meaning would come out. A wrong impression based on non-verbal behaviour could be formed. Dickson (1995:128) concurrently maintains that observation can never be objective because it comes out of what an observer selects to see and chooses to deem important. Dickson argues further that, despite bias, the face-to-face interview seems the only adequate instrument to measure significant memories of the past, feelings about, and attitudes to the present, and visions and plans for the future.

In the final analysis, the use of unstructured interviews may lead to subjective interpretation.

- This study, being a report on the findings of only ten single cases, is a poor basis for generalisation. In quantitative research, one finds a predisposition towards large and random samples and the generalisations which result tend to be context-free. In this study, the sample is small and the human behaviour explored is heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs. Hence, findings in this study can more likely be seen as characteristic of, or as pertinent to, the subjects interviewed. Dickson (1995:130), however, argues that people can learn much that is general from single cases and certain responses and problems do come up again and again. What occurs is that understanding becomes refined and so it seems valid to use this as a basis for modifying old generalizations.

## 6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.6.1 Recommendations for treatment

It must be stressed once again here, as it was said in Chapter 2, that it is not the intention of this study to give a blue print of treatment approaches. The researcher intends, however, to recommend one or two things that can be done to deal with some of the problems that were uncovered by this study.

- *parent guidance*

It transpired from the study that one of the factors that contribute to the refusal problem is the belief system of some of the parents. Whilst it may not be easy to change a person's beliefs and convictions, it is important for parents to be guided in their role as a partner in the education of their children. This includes the ignorant parents as well. Teachers should draw up programs by which they will lead parents step by step, educating them as to what exactly their role should be. It might also help to explain to parents how the teaching program work, for example, they must be made to understand that teachers in the secondary school teach by specialisation. This would help to minimize problems like the one that was seen in one of the grannies who believed that if the teacher of her std 8 grandson is not in, her grandson is justified in not going to school.

Parent guidance also helps with other things such as encouraging pupils to do homework, to study and in making sure that children do get allowed sometime at home to study. Parents who are educated must try to help their children with their homework. Parents, however, do not have to be educated to encourage and see to it that their children do get time to do school work. The love of reading must be encouraged too by parents.

- *individual therapy for protective parents*

The researcher could not help wondering what was wrong with the woman who was so protective of her son that she went out of her way looking for whatever she could find to protect her son with. Maybe the woman has still not gotten over the death of her husband. Maybe she is scared that she is going to lose her last born son like she lost her husband. Maybe she hates her son and she is sublimating. The boy's teacher speculated that maybe the boy is bossy at home and the mother is afraid that if she says negative things about him he might hear it and hit his mother. All these speculations and hypothesis need to be verified through providing extensive therapy to the woman.

- *family therapy*

There were a few cases in this study which implicated the relationships in the family as pathological or disturbed. For such cases family therapy may be more appropriate. Even for the protective parent above, family therapy rather than individual therapy may be more appropriate.

- *reappraisal of teacher commitment to the education of the children in his/her care*

It was the feeling of the researcher when some teachers were being interviewed that there are teachers who do not care about their pupils. The teacher is the parent of the child entrusted to her/his care. A good parent spots even the slightest change of behaviour in his/her child. The teachers should identify, at an early stage, trace and deal with the problems encountered by their pupils.

Many teachers seem not to care about children anymore. Some teachers are very quick to label the pupils. Unfortunately children internalize these labels and regard themselves as useless or esteem themselves negatively.

Maybe this problem can be circumvented by ensuring that the applicants who apply to the colleges of education are really the people who are interested in working with and among people - more specifically in working with children. There are tests that can be used to determine this.

- *counselling services in schools*

The teenage boys and girls have a lot of personal problems. These problems either originate from their social relationships with their peers and teachers or their homes and even the community at large. Such problems may be too much for them to handle themselves and very often they try to solve them but usually their attempts create more problems. It would be very helpful for each school to set up a structure to cater for these teenagers. The counselling structure does not necessarily need to be manned by experts. Ordinary teachers may serve the purpose. The teachers, however, would need basic counselling skills in order to provide a meaningful counselling service. This support service would even help pupils with the social skills they need to enter into any meaningful relationship. Many adolescents became frustrated because they cannot secure themselves meaningful long lasting relationships - not necessarily heterosexual, but even an ordinary friendship. Teachers need to understand that building social relationships and even getting along smoothly with people in general is a skill that one learns, it is not an innate thing.

### **6.6.2. Recommendations for further research**

Although the empirical material from such a small sample cannot provide an adequate basis for generalisation, much can be learned that has general relevance from such case studies, and where certain problems or experiences repeat themselves, this can be used to refine one's understanding and perhaps, thereby, as Dikson (1995:196) puts it, "modify old generalizations".

The following issues that came out from this study need to be researched further, using, perhaps, larger samples and/or different research approaches:

- a) Children who stay with grannies seem to have behaviour problems, some of which are school refusal behaviour.
- b) School refusers in this study appeared to have come from pathological families, in which either the father abandoned his paternal responsibility and left the family or is there but still irresponsible, drinking and marginalised figure.
- c) Heterosexual relationships with non-schooling partners seemed to be a contributory factor to the school refusal behaviour. Future research should try to find out why this is the case and whether the problem is peculiar to the Black communities or widespread.
- d) Lastly, the treatment for these problems, especially the problem of refusers who stay with old, sickly grannies, must be researched in depth. Such a problem does not occur much in other cultural communities, like western communities, which believe in keeping their old or senior citizens in old age homes.

## 6.7 CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that school refusal is a complex problem which may occur as a result of an interaction of not just one or two factors but many factors. Pinning the etiology of this syndrome to specific etiological factors as if they were the factors that breed the disorder would result in a simplistic understanding that would also affect the treatment approaches of this disorder. Hersov (1960) concurrently states that the precipitating and etiological factors of school refusal vary with school setting, family composition, circumstances surrounding the refuser and other characteristics such as age.

From the above it becomes apparent that even the treatment of this disorder will largely depend upon the etiological factors that seem to have interacted. It would not serve any purpose, for example, to concentrate on treating the refuser when the other factors that were involved in breeding the disorder are left out. If the problem is in the pathological relationships of the school refuser, that must form part of the whole treatment plan rather than concentrating on bringing the refuser back to regular schooling.

It transpired in this study that most of the refusers were staying with grannies. As it was said earlier, this is a cultural difference. If one looks at other cultural groups, especially western cultural groups, one realises that old people live in old age homes. Blacks do not believe in keeping their old loved ones in old age homes. They would rather stay with and look after them. Very often the old people stay alone and as a result of their age they request their daughters or sons to give them one or two grandchildren to come and stay with them and help look after them. Very often that is where problems begin. Because of their age and also their state of health they tend to lose authority. Children tend not to take them seriously, most probably because they can do nothing more than talking. The teenagers also regard them as old-fashioned. Their illiteracy also adds to the problem

in that they are easily deceived by their grandchildren. An example here is the granny who was usually told by her grandson that he would not go to school because his teacher was not in. The granny, not aware that in secondary schools, teachers do specialisation teaching, accepted that deceit.

The lack of insight into the refusal condition may also hamper the treatment endeavours. It came out from this study that some parents and teachers do not see the problem for what it really is. There were teachers, for example, who had done nothing to stop or trace the problem to its genesis; who had merely spoken to the child or talked amongst themselves as teachers. All they were good at was attaching labels to the children concerned. Some of them did have an understanding but their understanding was so vague that it did not even begin to solve anything. Some of the parents, on the other hand, had a skewed perception of the problem because of their beliefs or their world view. This did nothing more than just aggravating the situation.

The child hears the beliefs of the parent and they live up to the beliefs so that the symptoms grow stronger and so repelling him/her even farther from school.

Lee (see Chapter 3 paragraph 3.2) showed in his study that Black adolescent's academic success can be influenced by, among other things, the following: parental encouragement and boyfriends/girlfriends who show concern for and offer support to homework exercises. Although the unavailability of these things may not be designated as the causes as such, they may to a larger or lesser extent interact with other factors to breed refusal behaviour. In this study it may be rightfully concluded that the lack of parental encouragement, which comes, either out of ignorance/illiteracy on the part of the parents or out of indifference, did contribute something to the refusal condition of the subjects. Another point that came out of the study is that of boyfriends or girlfriends who are school refusers

themselves. It is obvious that such girlfriends/boyfriends will not have a positive influence to their partners since they, themselves, see nothing positive about going to school; hence they rejoice in spending time with their partners during the school hours instead of encouraging them to go to school. It must be remembered that an adolescent looks up to his/her significant others to approve or disapprove his/her actions. If an action is reinforced or rewarded they will internalise it and it forms part of their identity or their behaviour repertoire.

It is the researcher's hope that this study will succeed in shedding some light in the problem of school refusal which has, for so long, remained mysterious in spite of the growing volumes of research. Hopefully, future research will provide some answers to the issues raised by this study.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, G 1990. Fundamentals of Educational research. London: The Falmer Press.
- Atkinson, L; Quarrington, B & Cyr, J.J. 1985. School refusal: The heterogeneity of concept. American J. Orthopsychiatry. 55 (1):83-101
- Atkinson, L; Quarrington, B; Cyr J.J. & Atkinson, F.V. 1989, Differential classification in School refusal. British Journal of Psychiatry. 155: 191-195
- Ausubel, D.P. 1954. Theories and problems of Adolescent development. New York. Grune and Stratton.
- Behr, A.L. 1975. Psychology and the school. Pretoria: van Schaik.
- Berg, I. 1982. When truants and School refusers grow up. British Journal of Psychiatry. 141: 208-210.
- Berg, I ; Butler, A; Franklin, J; Hayes, H; Lucas, C & Sims, R. 1993. DSM -III - R. Disorders, social factors and management of school attendance problems in the normal population. J. Child Psycholo. Psyciat. 34 (7):1187-1203.
- Berg, I & Jackson, A. 1985. Teenage School refusers grow up: A follow-up study of 168 subjects ten years on average after in-patient treatment. British S. Of Psychiatry. 147:366-370.
- Berg, I ; Nichols, K & Pritchard, C. 1969. School Phobia: Its classification and relationship to dependency. J. Child Psychol. Psychiat. 10:123-141.
- Bernstein, G.A. Garfinkel, G.A. & Borchardt, C.M. 1990. Comparative studies of parmacotherapy for School refusal. J.Am. Acad. Child. Adolesc. Psychiat. 29(5):773:781
- Blagg, N. 1987. School Phobia and its Treatment. London: Croom Helm.

- Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. 1992. Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods (2 ed). Boston: Dillyn and Bacon
- Borchardt, C.M. Giesler, J; Bernstein, G.A. & Crosby, R.D. 1994. A comparison of inpatient and outpatient School refusers. Child Psychiatry and Human development. 24(4):255-264.
- Brand, D. 1993. The Park Road Centre: An Alternative school for Adolescent School refusers. Youth studies Australia 12 (4):26-29
- Brown, G; Mc Dowell, R.L. & Smith, J. 1981. Educating Adolescents: With behaviour disorders. Columbus & Toronto: A Bell & Howell company.
- Bryce, G & Baird, D. 1986. Precipitating a crisis: Family therapy and Adolescent School refusers. Journal of Adolescence 9 (3) 199-213.
- Bryman, A. 1988. Quantity and Quality in social research. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Burke, A.E. 1987 Assessment and prescriptive treatment of School refusal. Albany: U.M.I.
- Carlson, J.S. 1976. Cross-cultural Piagetian studies: What can they tell us? 'In Mwamwenda, T.S. Educational Psychology: An African Perspective. Durban: Butterworth.
- Chazan, M. 1962. School Phobia. Brit. J. Educ. Psych. 32: 209-217.
- Church. J & Edwards, B.1984. Helping pupils who refuse school. Special education: Forward trends. 11 (2) : 28-31
- Clyne, M.B. 1966. Absent: School refusal as an expression of disturbed family relationships. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Coates, D.L. 1987. Gender differences in the structure and support characteristics of black adolescents' social networks. 'In: Sex Roles 17(11&12) : 667-687.
- Coolidge, J.C. Tessman, E; Waldfogel, S & Willer, M.L. 1962. Patterns of aggression in School Phobia. Psychoanalytic Study of the Child. 17:319-333

- Coolidge, J.C.; Hahn, P.B. & Peck, A.C. 1957. School Phobia: Neurotic crisis or way of Life. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. 27: 296-306.
- Cooper, M. 1984. Self-identity in Adolescent School refusers and Truants. Educational Review. 36(3):229-237.
- Cooper, M. 1986. A model of Persistent School Absenteeism. Educational Research. 28 (1):14-20.
- Crystal, D.S. 1994. Concepts of Deviance in children and Adolescents: The case of Japan Deviant Behaviour. 15(3):241-266.
- Dasen, P.R.; Berry, J.W. & Witkin, H.A. 1979. The use of development theories cross-culturally. 'In Mwamwenda, T.S. Educational Psychology: An African Perspective. Durban: Butterworth.
- Dasen, P.R. 1988. Between the universal and the specific: The contribution of the crosscultural approach 'In Mwamwenda, T.S. Educational Psychology: An African Perspective. Durban : Butterworth
- Delmont, S. 1992. Fieldwork in educational settings: Methods, pitfalls, and perspectives. London: The Falmer Press.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds). 1994. Handbook of qualitative research. London: Publications
- Dickson, D. 1995. The experience of single parenting amongst divorced women: An exploratory study. M.ED Dissertation. UNP.
- Dunbar, R. 1988. Reintegrating a School-refusing child to mainstream education. Education in the North 24:27-33
- Ely, M.; Anzul, M. ; Friedman, T. ; Gardner, D & Mc Cormack Steinmetz, A. 1991. Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles. London: The Falmer Press.
- Erikson. E.H. 1968. Identity: Youth and crisis. New York: Norton
- Estes, H.R. ; Haylett, C.H. & Johnson, A.C. 1956. Seperation anxiety. 'In Blagg, N School Phobia and its Treatment. London: Croom Helm.

- Eysenck, H.J. & Rachmans, 1965. The causes and cures of neurosis. 'In Granell-de-Aldaz, E; Vivas, E. Gelfand, D.M. & Feldman, L (eds). Estimating the prevalence of School refusal and School related fears: A Venezuelan sample. J. Nervous and mental diseases. 172 (12):722-729.
- Flakierska, N. Lindström, M & Gilberg, C. 1988. School refusal: A 15-20 year follow up study of 35 Sweedish urban children. Brit. J. Psychiat. 152:834-837.
- Fukuda, K & Hozumi, N. 1987. A case of mild School refusal: Rest-Activity Cycle and Filial violence. Psychological Reports. 60 (3) 683-689.
- Garvey, W.P. & Hegrenes, J.R. 1966. Desensitization in the treatment of School Phobia. 'In Kearney, C.A. & Silverman, W.K. (eds). A preliminary analysis of a functional model of assessment and treatment for School refusal behaviour. Behaviour Modification 14(3): 340-366.
- Gerdes; L.C. Moore, C.; Osche, R & van Ede, D. 1988. The developing Adult (2ed). Durban: Butterworth.
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. 1967. The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine.
- Granell-de-Aldaz, E. Feldman, L.; Vivas, E & Gelfand, D.M. 1987. Characteristics of Venuezuelen School refusers: Toward the development of a High-Risk Profile. Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease. 175 (7): 402-407.
- Granell-de-Aldaz, E.; Vivas, E; Gelfand , D.M. & Feldman, L. 1984. Estimating the prevalence of School refusal and school-related Fears. J. Nervous ment. Diseases. 172(12): 722-729.
- Gullone, E. & King, N. 1991. Acceptability of alternative treatments for School refusal: Evaluations by students, caregivers and professionals. The Brit. J. Educ. Psychol. 61:346-354.

- Hamachek, D. 1990. Psychology in Teaching, Learning and growth (4ed). Boston; Allyn and Bacon.
- Hauser, S.T. 1971. Black and white identity formation: Studies in psychosocial development of lower socio-economic class Adolescent Boys. New York: Wiley- Interscience.
- Hersove, L.A. 1960 (a) Persistent non-attendance at school. Child Psych. and Psychiat. 1:130-136
- Hersov, L.A. 1960 (b). Refusal to go to school. Child Psychol. and Psychiatry. 1:137-145.
- Honma, E. 1986. A clinical psychological study of School refusal in Adolescence (I): An approach to Adolescent School refusal through a new classification of the cases. Tohoku Psychologica-Folia. 45 (1-4): 76-88
- Honma, E. 1987. A clinical psychological study of School refusal in Adolescence ii): case studies of the process of change from the view point of individual psychodynamics and family relationships. Tohoku Psychologica Folia. 46 (1-4) 75-85.
- Honma, E. 1988. A clinical Psychological Study of School refusal in Adolescence (iii); the features of the problem and the Therapeutic approach from the point of View of self-esteem. Tohoku Psychologica Folia 47 (1-4): 37-43
- Hunter, F & Youniss, J. 1982. Changes in the Funtions of three relations during Adolsescence. Developmental Psychology. 18:806-811.
- Hurlock, E.B. 1973. Adolescent development. New York : Mc Graw-Hill Kogakusha, Limited.
- Jackson, L. 1964. Anxiety in Adolescents in relation to School refusal. 'In Fukuda, K & Hozumi N (eds). A case of mild School Refusal: Rest-Activity Cycle and Filial Violence. Psychological Reports. 60 (3): 683-689.
- Johnson, A.M.; Falstein, E.I.; Szurek, S.A. & Svendsen, M. 1941. School Phobia American J. Orthopsychiat. 11: 702-711.

- Kearney, C.A. & Silverman, W.K. 1990. A preliminary  
Analysis of a functional model of assessment and treatment  
for School refusal behaviour. Behaviour Modification.  
14(3):340-366.
- Kearney, C.A. & Beasley, J.F. 1994. The clinical treatment Of School refusal  
Behaviour: A survey of Referral and practice characteristics.  
Psychology in the schools. 31 (2): 128-132.
- Kahn, J.; Nursten, J.P & Carrol, H.C.M. 1981. Unwillingly to school: School  
Phobia or School refusal - A psychological problem. (3ed).  
Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Kellehear, A. 1993. The unobtrusive researcher: A guide to methods. Sydney:  
Allen & Unwin
- Kelly, E. 1973. School Phobia: A review of theory and treatment. Psychology in  
the schools. 10:33-42
- Kennedy, W. 1965. School Phobia: Rapid treatment of fifty cases. J. Abnormal  
Psychology. 70: 285-289.
- King, N.J; Ollendick, T.H. & Tonge, B.J. 1995. School refusal: Assessment and  
treatment. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- King, N.J.; Tonge, B.J. Heyne, D; Tinney, L & Pritchard, M. 1994. School  
refusal: Early Identification and treatment. Aust. J. Early  
Childhood. 19(2): 22-26
- King, N.J. & Ollendick, T.H. 1989. School refusal: Graduated and Rapid  
Behavioural Treatment Strategies. Aust. and New Zealand J.  
Psychiat. 23:213-223.
- Knopf, I.J. 1984. Childhood Psychopathology. (2 ed). Englewood Cliffs,  
New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Kotze, H.J. 1985. Mass Media and the matriculant Mind. A case study of political  
socialisation in Southern Africa. 'In: Thabethe,  
J.N.E.V. Role models and values of school-going Black  
Adolescents. M. Soc sc. UND.
- Kruger, D. 1988. An Introduction to phenomenological psychology. Cape Town:  
Juta.

- Kurita, H. 1991. School refusal in Pervasive Developmental Disorders. J. Autism and Developmental Disorders 21(1) : 1-15
- Le Compte, M.D. & Preissle, J. 1993. Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research (2 ed). San Diego: Academic Press, Inc.
- Lee, C.C. 1985. Successful rural black Adolescents: A psychosocial profile. Adolescence 20(77): 129-142.
- Lerner, Z.M. & Spanier, G.B. 1980. Adolescent development: A life-span perspective. 'In : Mathunyane, L.H. Pupil Identity Formation with special Reference to the Black Adolescent. Pretoria: UNISA.
- Leventhal, T. & Sills, M. 1964. Self-image in School Phobia. Americ. J. orthopsychiatry. 34:685-695.
- Leventhal, T. ; Weinberger. G; Stander, R.J. & Stearns, R.P. 1967. Therapeutic strategies with School Phobia. Americ. J. of orthopsychiatry. 37:64:70.
- Lock, M.P. 1978. Teacher competence and the use of micro-teaching in teacher training. M.Ed Dissertation. University of the North. Sovenga.
- Louw. D.A. 1991. Human development. Pretoria: HAUM Tertiary.
- Malulyck, M.P. 1978. Teacher competence and the use of Micro-teaching in teacher training. M.Ed Dissertation. University of the North. Sovenga.
- Mathunyane, 1992. Pupil Identity formation with special reference to black Adolescent. Pretoria : UNISA.
- Matseke, S.K. 1981. The Influence of the social problems of the community on the achievement of pupils with special reference to Soweto. D.Ed thesis Pretoria:UNISA.
- Maslow, A.H. 1968. Toward a Psychology of being. Princeton: Van Nostrand.
- Maslow, A.H. 1987. Motivation and personality (3ed). New York: Harper & Row.
- Minuchin, S & Fisherman, H.C. 1981. Family Therapy Technigues. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Monyemorathwe, S.M. 1993. The Influence of parents and peers on the self-concept formation of the urban black Adolescent. Pedagogiek Joernaal. 1 (14) : 8-14
- Monyemorathwe, S.M. 1992. The Influence of parents and peers on the self-concept formation of the urban Black Adolescent. M.Ed dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria
- Mtolo, M.N. 1996. Tertiary Students' Perceptions of Secondary School career guidance: A consumer Perspective. M.Ed-dissertation. UNP
- Muir, M.M. 1981. An experience with School refusers. Counsellor. 3(3): 3-10
- Mussen, P.H.; Conger, J.J. ; Kagan, J & Juston, A.C. 1990. Child development and personality (7ed). New Your: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Mwamwenda, T.S. 1995. Educational Psychology: An African Perspective. Durban: Butterworths.
- Myburgh, C.P.H. & Anders, M.M. 1989. Identity formation of black Adolescents. South African Journal of Education. (9(1): 123-130.
- Myburgh, C.P.H. & Smith, E. 1990. Comparative analysis of the social development of black and white Adolescents. South African Journal of Education 10(2): 157-162.
- Naylor, M.W.; Staskowski, M. ; Kenney, M.C. & King, C.A. 1994 language disorders and learning disabilities in School-refusing Adolescents. J. American. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiat. 33 (9): 1331-1337.
- Nichols, K.A. & Berg, I. 1970. School Phobia and Self evaluation J. Child Psychol. Psychiat. 11: 133-141
- Oosthuizen, J.D. 1982. Identiteits vorming as taak van skoolvoelliging. Educare. 11:10-21
- Packer, M.J. 1989. Tracing the hermeneutic circle: Articulating an ontical study of moral conflicts. 'In M.J. Packer and R.B. Addison (eds). Entering the Circle: Hermeneutic Investigation in Psychology. New York: State University of New York Press.

- Papalia, D.E. & Olds, S.W. 1987. A Child's world : Infancy through Adolescence.  
New York: Mc Graw-Hill Book company.
- Piaget, J. 1972. Intellectual Evolution from Adolescence to adulthood. Human Development. 15:1-12
- Piaget, J. & Inhelder, B. 1966. The Psychology of the Child. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Plapp, J.M. 1990. Tourettes and School refusal. J.Am. Acad. Child. Adolesc. Psychiatry. 29 (1) 149-150.
- Powney, J & Watts, M. 1987. Interviewing in educational research. London: Routledge & Kegan LTD.
- Reid, K. 1982. The Selfconcept and persistent school absenteeism. Br. J. Educ. Psychol. 52:179-187.
- Renouf, E.M. 1985. Access Refusals by children in post-separated families. Fifth National Conference of Family Therapy. Australian J. Sex, marriage & Family. 6 (2):77-86
- Rist, R.C. 1975. Ethnographic techniques and the urban school. Urban Education. 10:86-108
- Rock, E. 1980. Dealing with School refusal. Camb J. Education 10(1):13-20.
- Rogers, C.R. 1959. A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships as developed in client centred framework. In S. Kock. Psychology: A Study of Science (3ed). New York; Mc Graw Hill.
- Rogers, C.R. 1980. A way of Being. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Rosenberg, M. 1965. Society and the Adolsecent self image. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Rubenstein, J.S. & Hastings, E.M. 1980. School refusal In Adolescence: Understanding the symptom. Adolescence. 15(60): 775-782.
- Santrock, J.W. 1984. Adolescence: An Introduction. Dubugue: Web. W.m.C. Brown Publishers.
- Schau, C.G.; Phye, G.D. Hudgins, B.B.; Theisen, G.L.; Ames C & Ames, R. 1983. Educational Psychology. 'In Mwamwenda. T.S. Educational

- Psychology: An African Perspective (2ed). Durban: Butterworth.
- Schumacher, S & Mc Millan, J.H. 1993. Research in Education: A conceptual Introduction (3ed). UNISA: Harper Collins College Publishers
- Senekal, K. 1978. Identiteitsverwewing by die jeugdige en skoolverlating. M.Ed-dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Skynner, A.C.R. 1974. School Phobia: reappraisal. Brit. J. Medical Psychology. 47 (1): 1-16.
- Smith, L.C. 1985. Role models and values of school-going urban black Adolescents. Unpublished Honours dissertation. University of Natal, Durban
- Smith, R.E. & Sharpe, T.M. 1970. Treatment of a school Phobia . With Implosive Therapy. Journal of consulting and clinical Psychology. 35 (2): 239-243
- Sperling, M. 1961. Analytic first aid in School Phobias. 'In Blagg, N (ed). School Phobia and its Treatment. London: Croom Helm.
- Stake, R. 1995. The art of case study research. London: Sage Publications.
- Stone, S. 1984. Crus guid 6. Interviews. Sheffield: British Library Board
- Strauss, A & Corbin, J. 1990. Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. London: Sage Publications.
- Swanepoel, C.H. 1990. Belangstelling: 'n Voorwaarde vir identiteits vorming. Educare. 19(1&2): 97-102
- Tatara, M. 1987. Some clinical considerations of neurotic School refusal. Hiroshima Forum For Psychology 12:15-18.
- Thabethe, J.N.E.V. 1991. Role Models and Values of School-going Black Adolescents. M.Soc. Sc. Durban: University of Natal.
- Tisher, M. 1983. School Refusal: A depressive equivalent? 'In Burke, A.E. (e.d). Assessment and prescriptive treatment of School refusal. Albany: U.M.I.
- Turner, S.M. 1984. Behavioural theories and treatment of anxiety. New York: Plenum Press.

- Tyrer, R..W. 1950. Basic principles of curriculum and Instruction. Chicago: The university of Chicago Press.
- Tyrer, P & Tyrer, S. 1974. School refusal, Truancy and Adult neurotic illness. Psychological Medicine. 4 (4) : 416-421
- Valiant, G.L. 1983 Adolescents, Parents & Peers: What is one without the other? Adjustment of School refusers. J. of Adolescence. 6:131-144.
- Valles, E & Oddy, M. 1984. The Influence of A Return to School On the Long Term Adjustment of School refusers. J. Of Adolescence. 7:35-44
- Vrey, J.D. 1979. The Self-actualising Educand. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Wade, B. 1979. School refusal and Aspects of Language. Educational Review. 31(1): 19-26
- Waldron; S. Shrier, D.K.; Stone, B. & Tobin, F. 1975. School Phobia and Other childhood neurosis: A systematic study of the children and their families. Am. J. Psychiatry. 132(8) 802-808.
- Walford. G. 1991. Doing educational research. London: Routledge
- Waldfogel, S. Coolidge, J.C. & Hahn, P.B. 1957. The Development, meaning and management of school Phobia. American J. of orthopsychiatry. 27(4):754-776.
- Watson, M.F. & Protinsky , H.O. 1988 Black adolescent Identity development: Effects of Perceived Family Structure. Family Relations 37:288-292
- Watson, J. & Rayner, R. 1920. Conditioned emotional reactions. Journal of experimental Psychology. 3:1-14.
- Westaway, M.S. 1986. Psychosocial development and sex role-orientation of black and white South African Adolescents. PhD. Johannesburg: university of the Witwatersrand.
- Wicks-Nelson, R & Israel, A.C. 1991. Behaviour disorders of childhood (2ed). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Zatz, S & Chassin, L. 1983. Cognitions in test-anxious children. 'In King, J; Ollendick, T.H. & Tonge, B.J. (eds). School Refusal: Assessment and Treatment. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

**APPENDIX A: LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION AND  
MANAGEMENT (S.E.M.)**

**51 Corbett Crescent  
Westgate  
3201**

**31 March 1998**

**Dear**

**I am writing this letter to request permission to work with teachers and learners of Impendle Secondary Schools as subjects towards my Masters degree. The title of my M.Ed - dissertation is: "Factors Related to School refusal of black adolescents in the Impendle area". The aim of this study is to identify, explore and describe factors that contribute to the form of absenteeism called school refusal. I will try to arrange all the interviews in such a way that the normal school programme is not interfered with.**

**Please respond to this letter in writing and let me know whether or not permission is granted.**

**Much obliged.**

**B.R. CHEMANE**

**APPENDIX B: LETTERS TO PRINCIPALS**

51 Corbett Crescent  
WESGATE  
3201

4 April 1998

Dear

This letter serves to confirm our verbal conversation with you concerning my request to conduct a research study in your institution. I would like to come to your school on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ with a view to meet with your teachers and school refusing children so that I can brief them as to the intentions of the study and seek their willingness to participate in the study. If the date and time given above will in any way inconvenience you please give me a call and say so, so that we can set another date and / or time.

Faithfully yours

**B R CHEMANE**

**APPENDIX C: LETTERS TO TEACHERS**

51 Corbett Crescent  
WESGATE  
3201

20 April 1998

Dear

This is a follow up letter that serves to remind you of what we agreed upon concerning your participation in the research study. This letter also serves to confirm the date we agreed upon for the interview which is \_\_\_\_\_.

Should you decide to change your mind about the participation in this study or like to change the date please let me know as soon as possible. Remember that your anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured throughout and in the final script of this study.

Thank you

**B R CHEMANE**

**APPENDIX D: LETTERS TO LEARNERS**

51 Corbett Crescent  
WESGATE  
3201

28 April 1998

Dear

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this important study. As I said to you that day we met, your identity will be protected and everything you say will be treated with high confidentiality (secrecy). The interview will not require you to study or to remember things you learnt, so there is no reason for you to panic.

I just want to say here also that you are at liberty to reconsider your agreement to participate. Should you, for any reason, decide to change your mind that is fine. If you happen to change your mind please just let me know through your class teacher.

If you are still willing I will meet you on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ at your school as we agreed. The interview won't last longer than an hour (including refreshments time).

Thanks

**B R CHEMANE**

**APPENDIX E: LETTERS TO PARENTS**

51 Corbett Crescent  
WESGATE  
3201

28 April 1998

Dear

I am writing this letter to confirm that I have interviewed your son/daughter as I requested. I also want to confirm our appointment of \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. The venue will still stand as we agreed (unless you have thought of an alternative one). Should you decide to change anything about what we discussed and agreed upon (including your participation in this study) please let me know as soon as possible. You can contact me on the telephone number that I gave you.

Lastly, I just want to remind you that our interview with you and your participation in this study will remain a confidential matter in the strongest sense of the word.

Much obliged.

**B R CHEMANE**