CHAPTER 3

CULTURE

1. A CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

The current study is a cultural sensitive emotional intelligence programme. It is therefore important to explore culture and the impact thereof in this programme. The researcher will discuss theory underlying the origin and fundamentals of culture in this chapter to be able to form a theoretical framework in which culture is understood within the research study. Before such an attempt can be made though, the researcher found it necessary to define culture and to understand it within the framework of Gestalt therapy (placing it within the field theory context) and emotional intelligence.

In the following sections the researcher attempted to define culture and used this information together with the theoretical background of the origin and fundamentals of culture to form a working definition, which can be used as a base for this study. Cultural influences on emotional intelligence and on the choice of play therapy techniques are then discussed. This is done to support a cultural sensitive programme to improve emotional intelligence using Gestalt play therapy techniques.

1.2 Definition of culture

1.2.1 A wide variety of definitions

According to the Cross-cultural psychology (2001:1) the definitions of culture vary widely. Even though the latter is the case, it is stated that culture involves patterns of behaviour, symbols and values. Other researchers like Shepperson (1997) and Van

Staden (1997:42) agree with this. Van Staden (1997:42) states that: "After almost forty years of `cultural studies', at least twenty years in South Africa, culture, even more so than ideology, remains one of the most elusive concepts in Western thought".

Geertz in the Cross-cultural psychology (2001:1) states that culture is: ". . . a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life".

According to Miraglia, Law and Collins ([Sa]:1): "People learn culture". They suggest that this is the main feature of culture. Culture is the way people respond on physiological characteristics determined by a human's genetic code. Culture is therefore a learned template that shapes a society's consciousness and behaviour. The latter consists of the following elements or categories:

- Systems of meaning of which language is primary,
- Ways of organizing society,
- The distinctive techniques of a group and their characteristic products

Miraglia, *et al.* ([Sa]:1-2) listed some principles concerning culture, which follow from the definition stated above. These principles include the following:

- The reproduction of culture – learning is an essential characteristic of culture, therefore the way culture is taught and reproduced is essential
- A state of change – some of what is taught gets lost and new discoveries are taught in every new generation, therefore culture changes continuously
- Negotiation – the members of a society should agree on their meaning systems and symbols, a process of negotiation is thus part of the cultural process
- The relativistic character of culture – meaning systems are not essential and universal, a society simply agrees on certain meanings and therefore these systems vary from culture to culture

The researcher summarises the principles concerning culture as follows:

Culture is taught and reproduced, it is in a constant state of change, it is formed through communication of the members of a society and its meaning or contents is not universal, it varies from society to society.

1.2.2 The anthropological view

In the following paragraphs the researcher focuses on an anthropological definition of culture. Bodley (1999:1) states a contemporary anthropological view regarding culture. This view is therefore descriptive, inclusive and relativistic. Edward Tylor (in Bodley, 1999:1), who was a nineteenth-century British anthropologist, originally proposed a modern technical definition of culture. He explains culture as, "socially patterned human thought and behaviour" (Tylor in Bodley, 1999:1). According to Bodley (1999:1) there has been a considerable theoretical debate over what such a technical concept of culture should comprise of. This has an influence on the focus of research concerning culture.

The following are eight diverse definitions of culture from a list of 160 definitions of Kroeber and Kluckhohn (in Bodley, 1999:2):

Topical definition: "Culture consists of everything on a list of topics, or categories, such as social organization, religion, or economy";

Historical definition: "Culture is social heritage, or tradition, that is passed on to future generations";

Behavioral definition: "Culture is shared, learned human behavior, a way of life";

Normative definition: "Culture is ideals, values, or rules for living";

Functional definition: "Culture is the way humans solve problems of adapting to the environment or living together";

Mental definition: " Culture is a complex of ideas, or learned habits, that inhibit impulses and distinguish people from animal";

Structural definition: "Culture consists of patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols, or behaviors"; and

Symbolic definition: "Culture is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a society".

Bodley (1999:2) states that culture involves three components: thoughts, behaviour and products produced by people. "Thus, mental processes, beliefs, knowledge, and values are parts of culture" Bodley (1999:2). Bodley (1999:2) further states that some anthropologists define culture as mental rules, which guide behaviour. Now we see that people within a specific culture know these mental rules, but they don't always act on it. Therefore some researchers focus mostly on behaviour and material products as part of culture. Bodley (1999:2) states the following properties as part of culture: it is shared, learned, symbolic, carried over from generation to generation, adaptive and integrated. Bodley (1999:2) furthermore states that culture is social and learned, not biologically inherited. A child is not born with certain ideas; he learns this from society. This ability to assign a meaning to an object or idea is very creative and distinguishes humans from animals. Humans are the only beings on earth that can assign symbolic meaning to an object. Humans can teach this to an animal though. Bodley (1999:3) does therefore not agree with some anthropologists who propagate the super organic character of culture. The latter means that people are born with certain ways of thinking. People are shaped by a pre-existing culture that continues to exist after they die. This interpretation is seen by some researchers as a denial of free will, thus the human's ability to create and change culture. (Bodley, 1999:3) Bodley (1999:4) concludes with the following definition of culture: "Many humanistic anthropologists would agree that culture is an observable phenomenon, and a people's unique possession".

The researcher found the conflicting views of culture in the discussion above comprising of two main opposing ways of defining culture. The one, more humanistic view, sees culture as learned, thus as a social phenomena. The other view, which the researcher states as the biological anthropology view, sees culture as inherited, a constant biological phenomena. In the current study, it is important to clear the focus on this. It had a considerable influence on the approach of the influence of culture on the teaching of emotional intelligence. The following paragraphs focus on this distinction.

1.2.3 A social definition of culture

According to Van Staden (1997:42) culture tends to be so difficult to define because of many different articulations of culture. It is a category within discourse. The researcher is of the opinion that Van Staden (1997) defines culture as an ontological matter, working with language. Tomlison in Van Staden (1997:42) states that, when we try to define it, we tend to over generalise culture to such an extent that the definition is "theoretically useless". It is better, according to Thorton (in Van Staden, 1997:42) to "say what culture does, and how it does it". According to the researcher it is thus better to look at the effects of culture on teaching emotional intelligence and using Gestalt play therapy group work, rather than to find a specific definition thereof. Although the latter is the case, a cognitive framework of what will be seen as culture in this study is necessary. This might assist the researcher to increase the sensitivity to culture in the current research.

Van Staden (1997:43) reasons further that culture is various sites on maps of our daily lives in which we invest desires, feelings, ideologies, ideas, values, representations etcetera.

Our culture is part of our social environment. As Van Staden (1997:45) states: "Culture exists in complex relations with other practices in the social formation, and these relations determine, enable, and constrain the possibilities of cultural practices."

According to the researcher the definition of Van Staden (1997:45) above captures some truth, which underlies culture, but is still too narrow. The theories in the following paragraphs proof culture to be both social as well as natural and biological.

1.2.4   A biological definition of culture

Even in these co-evolutionary theories Allott (1999:69) states that "a certain fogginess about the idea of culture" still exists. Hundreds of definitions of culture exist. The researcher found in the definitions already listed as well as in the following theories about culture the necessity to include both natural evolution as well as social impact in the definition of culture. Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (in Allott 1999:69 and in Baldassarre, 2001:1) state the following definition, which is modified from the Webster's dictionary:

"the total pattern of human behaviour and its products embodied in thoughts, speech, action, and artifacts, and dependent upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting

knowledge to succeeding generations; the transfer of abstract instructions and explanations in ways that do not require face- to-face observation and direct imitation"

Allot (1999:69) states further that culture is not merely an accumulation of artefacts, but a behavioural potential to create culture in the individual and in its society as a whole. Now the issue of evolutionary source of this potential exists. Allot (1999:69) states that he needs a theory on the non-trivial aspects of culture (language, morality, social systems, science, arts and religion) – its origin, transmission and change. Definitions of cultural evolution are not adequate, according to Allot (1999:71). Little or nothing has been said about the human potential to transmit culture. Allot (1999:71) reasons that the theorists who's theories he quoted, discussed and criticised are inadequate concerning aspects of culture in human evolution, the evolutionary source of the potential to transmit culture and the source and form of major cultural systems.

Other researchers (compare Baldassarre, 2001; Gabora, 1997; Hewet, 2003) reason that culture is transmitted genetically, but not in the form of genes. Culture is transmitted with memes. The following is a quote of Hewett (2003:4) to explain this term: "Richard Dawkins first introduced the idea of the **meme** in *The Selfish Gene* partly because of his discomfort with the sociobiologists approach to human behaviour. A meme is a unit of cultural transmission or imitation. Like the gene, which is a self-replicating molecule, the meme is a replicator; when a meme is imitated it has replicated itself. Dawkins argues that human beings are determined largely by social factors, not just by genetic code and, noting also that social change takes place orders of magnitude faster than genetic change, there must be some other unit of selection at work; the meme".

"Like the information patterns that evolve through biological processes, mental representations, or memes, evolve through adaptive exploration and transformation of an information space through variation, selection, and transmission. Since unlike genes, memes do not come packaged with instructions for their replication, our brains do it for them, strategically, guided by a fitness landscape that reflects both internal drives and a worldview that is continually updated through meme assimilation" (Gabora, 1997:2).

The researcher reasons on the base of the quotes above, that culture is transferable but not initially in the structural form of genes. It is transferred as a mental process and the human brain creates and executes this process to a given to be transferred from

generation to generation. Cultural thought processes can thus be transmitted and the children of the following generations will thus adhere to these thought processes without learning this through social interaction.

"Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so do memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain" (Dawkins in Gabora, 1997:2).

Although this is the case, Allot (1999:71) still finds a lack of satisfactory or different approaches related to biological evolution and culture.

"Culture is Not Just a Predictable Extension of Biological Evolution" (Gabora, 1997:17)

There is thus more to culture than genetic transmission only.

1.2.5   A conclusion on the definition of culture

The researcher therefore concludes that although the research and formation of opinions on culture still continue, it seems that culture is both biological / anthropological as well as social.

It seems that some things are genetically based and these have an influence on how people of a certain society make sense of their world. Their comprehension of the world and their way of transmitting this from one generation to the other is their culture.

The researcher also finds the proof of the interrelated influence of biology and social acts in the following statement of Dobson (2002:50). He reasons that when children are neglected between birth and about two years of age, the excessive secretion of stress hormones cause damage to specific areas in the brain. These areas are related to conscience. The researcher thus understands here that a society's tendency to neglect children is influencing that society's biological state. Such a society will produce many children with deficiencies or damage in the frontal lobe area. Should this tendency be repeated over a big enough number of generations, it might change into a genetic factor.

It relates to this study's focus on a holistic approach – the bodymind (compare Pert, 1997; Goleman, 1996) – behaviour influences our physical state and vice versa. Culture

therefore has an influence on biology and our genetic attributes have an influence on what and how we transmit an understanding of our world. Biological attributes influence culture and culture influence the biology of the human being.

The researcher finalises a definition of culture in the following:
Culture comprises of biological and social attributes that help people to make sense of and give meaning to life.

1.3   The origin of culture

The neo cortex of homo sapiens is much thicker than all the other mammals' ones, with all the distinctly human characteristics added. It is the seat of thought. It adds to a feeling what we think about it and allows us to have feelings about ideas, art, symbols, imaginings etcetera. It also allows the addition of nuance to emotional life – the subtlety and complexity of emotional life – such as to have feelings about feelings. The complexity of the human neo cortex allows a far greater range of reactions to our emotions and more nuances. It provides an extraordinary intellectual edge. (Goleman, 1996:9-12).

The researcher sees cultural thought as that which includes abstract thinking. When people attempt to make sense of their world, to give meaning to their lives, they think about feelings, about the ideas they have about the meaning of life. The researcher thus reasons that cultural thought originated together with the development of the neo cortex in human beings. The left side of the brain handles detailed and sequential thought and is also the location for the language centre (compare Fourie, 1998:18-19; Neethling & Schoeman, 1999:20-24; Ojemann and Mateer in Allott, 1999:76; Studdert-Kennedy in Allot, 1999:76). This means that when people started to do things in specific sequences to cope better in their environment, they also developed a symbolic system to communicate this, called language. This is how they represented the thought patterns and the physical actions, used to make sense of their lives, in language.

The researcher does not study the origin of culture on another or deeper level. This theory of the neo-cortex and the development of language as a result of the sequential behaviour of the human being is applicable to this study. This explains why and how the therapist in the emotional intelligence groups became aware of the children's cultures. The therapist also formed an understanding of the influence of culture on the level of emotional intelligence through the language and behaviour of the children in the groups. The researcher attempted to improve the children in the research groups' emotional intelligence in a culturally sensitive way. A good understanding of culture and its influence on the way of being of the children assisted the researcher as therapist's comprehension of the children. The latter led to better acceptance of the children as they are and insight into the way they make sense of life. In such a way children could be made aware of unfinished business or contact boundary disturbances leading to lower levels of emotional intelligence. Through this awareness the paradoxical theory of change in Gestalt therapy (compare Beisser, 1970:1; Ivens, [sa]:4; Jarsosewitsch, 1995:2) can lead the children to heal themselves and grow in a safe and accepting relationship with the therapist and other group members.

1.4   The fundamentals of culture – different theories

1.4.1   Quantitative approach to culture

Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (in Allot, 1999:67) adopt a quantitative approach. They deal with the changes that occurred in a population concerning the frequencies of the forms of cultural traits. They also recognise that it is difficult to partition between purely cultural and purely genetic transmissions. Some cultural traits are more trivial than others, not altering survival or reproduction of a society. These are non-Darwinian traits and are termed as 'cultural'. Other 'elements of culture' are subjected to processes related to biological evolution. According to these theorists (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman in Allott, 1999:67) there is harmony between cultural actions and biological evolution as the neural structures that permit choice are subjected to natural biological evolution and thus indirectly controls the cultural choices made by a specific society.

1.4.2   Gene-culture transmission

Lumsden and Wilson (in Allott, 1999: 67-68) reason that culture is ultimately gene-culture transmission. They traced the development of culture from genes through the mind to culture. Their approach is similar to the quantitative approach of Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman (in Allott, 1999:67). Lumsden and Wilson (in Allott, 1999:68) reason that culture is basically inherited. The transmission of culture is governed by genetically determined sensory filters, inter-neuron coding, cognition of perception, learning and decision-making. "…culture is created and shaped by biological processes, while the biological processes are simultaneously altered in response to cultural change" (Lumsden and Wilson in Allott, 1999:68).

1.4.3   Darwinian theory

Boyd and Richerson (in Allott, 1999:68) base their theory of the transmission and evolution of culture on Darwin's theory. They define culture as the transmission of knowledge, values and other factors that influence behaviour by teaching and imitation. They reason that, "The evolution of the structure of cultural transmission in humans was analogous to the evolution of the genetic system" (Boyd & Richerson in Allott, 1999:68). The inheritance of genes and culture are distinct systems. Behaviour though is the product of predispositions that result from genetic inheritance and also from cultural inheritance. (Boyd & Richerson in Allott, 1999:68)

According to the researcher this Darwinian theory states that behaviour is partly biologically inherited and partly socially learned.

1.4.4   Theories on the cultural-biological relation

Some theorists like Rindos (in Allott, 1999:68) reason that cultural and genetic (biological) evolution could be explained by exactly the same processes. Culture can therefore be a biological inherited phenomenon.

Hinde (in Allott, 1999:68) on the other hand reasons that culture and biological evolution can, to some extent, develop independently. Although the latter is the case, many every day actions depend on what has been learned in another context – thus inherited from earlier contexts – to promote individual fitness.

Dobzhansky (in Allott, 1999:68) states that human genetics remain the foundation of human behaviour (social and cultural too) and is thus not formed by culture.

According to Allot (1999:68) it is thus evident that, "The interrelationships between biology and culture are reciprocal".

The researcher reasons that, although cultural and biological evolution can develop independently, they are also interdependent. Certain parts of biology and culture influence each other, but some parts can also develop in isolation.

1.4.5   Language and culture

Studdert-Kennedy (in Allot, 1999:76) suggest that linguistic structure may be viewed as, a special case of motoric structure, the structure of action. The goal for language is to derive its properties from other, presumably prior, properties of the human organism and its natural environment. It is hypothesised that the left hemisphere specialises in motoric activities rather than in perception. Kimura, Ojemann and Mateer (in Allott, 1999:76) states that language is drawn to the left hemisphere because the left hemisphere already possesses the circuitry for the fingers and arms, which is the same as for the larynx, tongue, lips and innervated vocal apparatus. Ojemann and Mateer (in Allott, 1999:76) found that language arises in the same cortical sites as for motor function. Allott (1999:76) therefore concludes that language incorporate brain mechanisms originally developed for motor learning. Marsha Bennington (in Kelvin, Hoffnung & Hoffnung, 2000:23), a speech-language pathologist, states that speech or language use has to do with more than only speech problems and even cognitive links. Speech and language also include motor skills, attitudes, feelings, the person's own needs and his support system.

According to the researcher speech and language is thus affected by physical features like motor skills, it is also affected by cognition and by feelings. Furthermore it also depends on the social structure within which such a child lives. Language is therefore influenced by the culture of the child. Seifert, *et al.* (2000:296), who reason that language is more than grammatical rules, support the latter conclusion of the researcher. A child learns, through the acquisition of language, how his community prefers to communicate.

The researcher reasons that certain behaviours are part of culture – different societies tend to behave in certain ways. The researcher notices this in the typical differences in

body language of the many cultures in her community. If language incorporates the mechanisms in the brain developed for motor learning, behaviour and language should have an influence on each other. In Gestalt theory, observing language is part of the holistic view of the client (Mackewn, 2004:44). She states the importance to pay equal attention to how a person says something than to what is being said. It includes body language like how the client enters the room, how he moves, sits, breathes, fidgets, his facial expressions and gestures and how all of these interrelate with the story he is telling. (Mackewn, 2004:44)

It is thus clear to the researcher that spoken- and body language are both part of the communication systems of the client. In Gestalt therapy all of this form part of the holistic view of the client. According to the researcher the client's spoken message as well as body language are part of his self, thus part of his culture, because culture is seen here as the way humans make sense of life (1.2.5 A conclusion on the definition of culture). The way of making sense of life is thus communicated through language and movement. It is not possible to separate these two (language and movement) because it seems, from the discussions above, that both originate in the same areas in the brain. They are one whole.

"Language is the biological link between culture and non-cultural aspects of human evolution both in its role in the development of the brain and cognition and in its continuing role, as part of brain organization and function, as the instrument for the preservation and transmission of culture from generation to generation" (Allott, 1999:77). The latter quote of Allott (1999:77) relates further, to the researcher's opinion, of the relation between language and culture. Culture is transmitted through language, but culture and language also develop together in the human brain. Language patterns and the way language is used as well as pronounced are all culturally linked.

The link between language and culture is also evident in a statement in Words & Language (1997:1). The definition and meaning of words depend on the differences in social and cultural context of a specific language. Words & language (1997:1) states that many descriptive words' meanings depend on what we believe according to our values and cultural beliefs.

The researcher therefore sees language as culturally influenced. As the previously concluded definition of culture (1.2.5 A conclusion on the definition of culture) states, culture is our beliefs through which we give meaning to life. We express beliefs through language. Language is thus influenced by culture and it also transmits culture.

1.4.6   Culture and morality

The researcher wishes to distinguish between morality and culture. In the previous chapter, morality has already been discussed in 2.1.4 Moral development. In the latter section it has been concluded that morality has two dimensions; a cognitive dimension (moral reasoning) and a social dimension (socially learned rules). According to the researcher morality is both learned and inherited. This means that morality is partly universal and partly learned. It differs in this respect from culture. Culture is not universal at all, where certain components of morality can be universal according to theorists like Kohlberg and Piaget (compare Kohlberg in Leman, 2001:204-205; Kohlberg in Mwamwenda, 1996:150; Piaget in Leman, 2001:199; Piaget in Mwamwenda, 1996:149). Bandura (in Coursework Info, 2004:1) states that moral values belong to specific cultures. Each culture's morals only apply to that specific culture. Vasduez and Hummel (in Coursework Info, 2004:1) studied moral reasoning with Indians. The Indians reaction to moral dilemmas differ greatly from American subjects' responses. The idea of cannibalism is also proof of differences in cultures. While cannibalism used to be perfectly acceptable to Indian tribes, it is seen as repulsive and against all morality by many Western cultures. (Coursework Info, 2004:1)

The researcher is therefore of the opinion that the socially influenced part of morality is part of different cultures. Morality therefore belongs to a culture, although moral reasoning might be a universal phenomenon and thus free of the influence of culture.

1.4.7   Culture and humour

Laughter can be a culture sensitive issue, as humour differs from culture to culture. Children in emotional intelligence groups can be made sensitised to this and can have an opportunity to explain why something is funny to them. This might increase the

sensitivity of the rest of the group to other cultures. (Corey, 1996:247) Part of being culture sensitive, might thus be to learn, understand and accept other cultures.

The researcher wishes to include this short paragraph on the importance of humour in culture, because children need to enjoy the learning experience in the current emotional intelligence programme. The researcher explores happiness and joyful living as part of emotional intelligence skills (Le Roux and De Klerk, 2003:11). Laughter is an expression of joy and releases endorphins in the human brain (Pert, 1997:167). These endorphins are healing hormones, helping the children in the group to feel better, to have better immune systems and to have more positive energy. The current programme is a play therapy programme to enhance emotional intelligence. The primary school children in the groups thus learned through play. Pert (1997:277) states that playing and laughing is emotionally healing. This is precisely what the researcher intended to do in the current programme. The children needed to play to heal themselves, to heal fragmented emotions and negative feelings about themselves. They needed to laugh to enhance the healing of feelings and to enhance their cognitive ability to solve their personal problems. The latter are all possible through play and laughter according to Pert (1997:277) and Goleman (1996:85). Goleman (1996:85) states that a good laugh has tremendous intellectual benefits. It helps people think more broadly, associate more freely, and notice relationships that they would not have been able to otherwise. It helps people to think more flexible and with more complexity. This makes problem solving on both intellectual and interpersonal levels much easier and more effective.

The researcher finds the interconnectedness of the human being as a whole also in laughter. It is a physical action, which influences cognition, feelings and the immune system.

In different cultures people find different things funny (Corey, 1996:247). It was thus important to explore humour in the groups of this study. The children in the groups could heal themselves and improve their emotional intelligence by having fun and laughing. What makes them laugh is part of their way of making sense of life and could thus be explored in the therapy groups. The possible relevance (Harris, 1998a:13) of laughter and why and how children laugh is thus important as being part of the field of the children in the group.

Exploring laughter makes sense to the researcher, not only as part of the children in the groups' cultures, but also as a healing experiment to improve emotional intelligence.

2.   A WORKING DEFINITION OF CULTURE TO USE IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

2.1   Culture within the Gestalt framework – the field theory

Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (in Ground level: the field, 1997:1) refer to the human being as being mobile in a great interacting field. The definition of a human being is that of the person/environment field and the creative adjustments that the human being makes in the field. "In looking at the world, we recognise the 'things', but underlying the things are processes – events which reorganise the field" (Ground level: the field, 1997:1).

This theory of the field in Gestalt shows the environment in which we exist as part of the human being as a whole. Gestalt field theory begins with the whole. The human being and its environment or field are part of the same process. We can recognise things in the environment, but underlying all things are the processes that reorganise the field. (Ground level: the field, 1997:1)

Our culture is thus the process of which we are part, it is our present – it is part of ourselves. Our culture is the way we give meaning to life, the way we think and feel about things, and therefore also the way we express ourselves, and the way we behave. According to Buber in Ground level: the field (1997:1), the building blocks of which our world is made are constantly moving – being and becoming. The researcher therefore also understands culture as an ever-changing process. Culture is thus not one constant given – it is a process. This might contribute to the problem that exists when defining culture. Culture is so wide and so inconsistent that it is difficult to assign one definition to this. In the current study, culture will thus be seen as part of the process of the human being.

The researcher cannot understand culture without the human being and vice versa. They are one; it is all part of the whole.

The researcher found the theory of Clemmens and Bursztyn (2003:1) part of this holism. They focus on the embodied selves and the culture in which we live as major components of the field in Gestalt theory. This field is complex. According to the researcher, the embodied self is one way in which culture is expressed. The researcher therefore agrees with Clemmens and Bursztyn (2003:1) that this field is complex. They understand the ways in which culture is expressed through our bodies in Gestalt therapy. Our bodies – the way we think, feel and act – are all part of this one complex and ever-changing field or culture.

The researcher relates this as follows to the holistic view of the current research: The researcher works from a body-mind view, meaning that the physical body and its activities are influenced by the mind and vice versa. The researcher views the mind as both cognition and emotions. Clemmens and Bursztyn (2003:1) and Ground level: the field (1997:1), contribute to the researcher's conclusion that culture is not only part of the field, but it is the field. The client live within a cultural framework, which is both cognitive / biological as well as a social phenomenon (1.2.5 A conclusion on the definition of culture). According to Gestalt therapy (Perls, Hefferline and Goodman in Ground level: the field, 1997:1) the process of the human being's existence is the field. As culture includes all this, the researcher sees culture as the field.

2.2   Application of the field theory in this study

2.2.1   The child's whole self and the field

The field influences the child's whole self, it is part of his being and becoming (Buber in Ground level: the field, 1997:1). Seifert, *et al.* (2000:295-296) reason that both cognitive and physical development are influenced by the child's social experiences. A child's height and weight, for example, influence acceptance by peers – the standards for acceptance might differ from culture to culture. A child's cognitive development (for

example conservation skills) is not only influenced by his own efforts to make sense of the world, but also by his exposure to learning in his specific community.

The researcher therefore reasons that no theory of child development can be understood in isolation of a child's field. Some attributes might be universal, but from the statements of Seifert, *et al.* (2000:295-296) above, it is clear that the child's community or field influences these attributes.

In the holistic frame of mind of this study, it is clear to the researcher that the child's own cognition, emotions and physical self are part of his field or culture. This has an implication to the current emotional intelligence programme. Mackewn (2004:45) reasons that change in one part of the whole leads to change in the whole and change in the whole will provoke change in the parts. If the current programme of which the children are part leads to some change in the emotions or cognition of the children, it will affect the whole child in his field. If a child thus experience improvement in emotional intelligence, it will not only affect his own self, but also the rest of his field – family, culture, community etcetera. This improves the value of such a programme. It means that not only will the child be more content, but this will also influence the community within which he functions as part of his field.

The child's field also includes the group environment in which he will experience the emotional intelligence programme. The following paragraphs will thus focus on the therapy group as part of the child's field.

2.2.2   The field theory and a Gestalt group process theory

The researcher will refer to Harris's (1998a:1-17) theory on the connection between field theory and group processes in the following paragraphs. Harris (1998a:1) states that the application of Gestalt field theory to group process is not a new idea. Harris bases his ideas on a connection between Gestalt ideas and the group analytic movement based on the theories of Goldstein (Duchan, 2001:1-3). The researcher prefers this connection because Goldstein (compare Duchan, 2001:1-3; Harris, 1998a:1) has a holistic view of the human organism. This relates to the researcher's view and understanding of the human organism as an interrelated whole. All parts of the human being are interdependent and cannot be understood in isolation.

Harris (1998a:2) states that he uses field theory as a base for his theory on group process because field theory is based on process, relationship, activity and the dynamic forces of the field.

The following are five principles of Parlett (compare Ground level: the field, 1997:1-3; Harris, 1998a:1-17; Parlett, 1991), which will be used in the discussion on the application of field theory in groups.

2.2.2.1 Principle of organisation

    If we want to understand a part of the world or of a client's way of existing (like his behaviour in a group), we need to place it in the context of the wider whole of which he is part. The more comprehensive view we have of the wider picture, the better we will understand the part of the client that needs to be studied. (compare Harris, 1998a:1-2; Parlett in Ground level: the field:1) The researcher attempted to understand the children in the research groups' level of emotional intelligence and how to improve this within each one's particular field. What happened in a particular group session is also part of the field of the group and is influenced by the members' fields. This is stated as follows by Harris (1998a:1-2): "…what happens in a particular session of a particular ongoing therapy group depends on a myriad factors, including the group culture, current world events, group member's individual histories, their memories of what happened in the previous session, and so on". It therefore seems important to the researcher to have some background knowledge of the specific cultural groups to which the group members belong.

    Harris (1998a:2) listed four contexts, which have an influence on group process. These are: what goes on in the here and now of a group session, the members' current lives outside the group, what has happened to group members in previous sessions, and the past history of the group members – their life stories.

    These zones were considered in the current programme. The here and now in the context of emotional intelligence was approached with exercises and experiments. The experiments usually included the zone of the members' lives outside of the

group. This zone is also included in a life book exercise, which focused on both the members' lives outside the group as well as a little on their life history. The sessions built on each other, thus the zone of what has happened in previous sessions is covertly handled in following sessions. It is thus clear to the researcher that these zones were very concretely represented in the group process of the current programme.

Harris (1998a:7) focuses on the current process, which is of particular interest and use to group leaders. The whole can be understood in three levels, namely the individual level, the interpersonal level, and the group-as-a-whole level. These three levels are part of the infinite hierarchy of life. This is according to the researcher a good way to understand the group process and was used as part of the research process, although not explicitly.

This principle was thus used in the current study to understand the functioning of the members in the field. It could also be used to understand and measure the development of the emotional intelligence of the group members, but was not applied in this way in the current study.

2.2.2.2 *Principle of contemporaneity*

This principle focuses on the influences in the present field, which explains present behaviour. This includes the here and now of Gestalt theory. The group members are not prisoners of their pasts. The focus is on how they act now on what happened in the past and how they are re-creating themselves and the choices they make now. The focus in a therapy group will thus be on awareness of how the members feel, remember, and relate to others in the group. The members can help each other to gain new awareness, to make new and different choices and to experiment with these choices in the here and now. The emphasis is thus on how and not why in Gestalt therapy – how do the members act now and not why.

The group leader has a crucial role here. The leader should not work with a specific expectation of for instance levels of trust. The group leader learns with the group by focusing on how things are now and not how it is supposed to be, or

how he thinks or imagines it should be. This focus on here, now and how encourages real interaction and connection between all group members, the leader included. (Compare Harris, 1998a:9-10; Parlett in Ground level: the field:1.)

The researcher as therapist did therefore go in confluence with the group members and group process. Although the same programme was planned for both research groups, the application was different, because the process of the groups and its members differed.

2.2.2.3 Principle of Singularity

Each situation, which occurs within a group is unique. The group members will thus all have different experiences of what is happening in one given group session. The members' perceptions of what is happening in the group session can vary widely. They all have different perceptions, needs, desires and backgrounds, which are all part of their fields and therefore also part of the field of the group-as-a-whole. It is thus also the case that no situation in the group is completely the same than a former or similar one. No situation can fully resemble another. It can only partly resemble another. Each person and situation in a group process is thus unique. This leads to another difficulty in Gestalt theory. This is the popular notion of determining specific phases of a group process. (Compare Harris, 1998a:11; Parlett in Ground level: the field:1.) The researcher agrees with Harris (1998a:11) when he states: "Such a process is inherently deterministic, and fundamentally flawed". If a group's process adheres to a specific prescribed process, it misses the primary human characteristic of choice. Harris (1998:11) says that without choice, one cannot be fully human. It is thus apparent that a group therapist cannot work on definite rules and recipes. Each person, interaction and each moment of group life is new and fresh.

The researcher finds that this principle requires a lot of flexibility and creativity from the group leader. Parlett in Harris (1998a:11) points that, "…honouring of the singularity of each set of circumstances and each person requires, therefore, both respectfulness and also a willingness to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty".

The positive side of this uncertainty according to Harris (1998a:11) is the opportunity to cast off the shackles of knowledge and being fully present, enjoying and learning with the group members. This democratic principle, where the group leader is free to experience and be creative, is a main source of empowerment and healing for the group. The group leader is not privileged, nor does he have some kind of magic in his words and actions. He has a different role, but is in being the same than all other group members. All members, leader included, are co-creators of the therapeutic capacity of the group. (Harris, 1998a:11-12)

It was thus important that the therapist in the current study be open and flexible to each group's process. The therapist became part of the process, learning and growing with the group. This created, according to Harris (1998a:11) a healing experience. The researcher sees this as the healing capacity of the relationship in Gestalt therapy (compare Jarosewitsch, 1005:1; Yontef, 1993:3; Ivens, [sa]:4).

2.2.2.4 Principle of changing process

This principle is related to the previous one of singularity. This one states that the group field is continuously changing. Individual, interpersonal and group processes all are changing from one session to the other. (Compare Harris, 1998a:12; Parlett in Ground level: the field:2.) In Gestalt theory we are continuously changing to maintain homeostasis. Philippson in Harris (1998a:12) states, "…for Gestalt therapy…homeostasis, often seen as a conservative force, is actually seen here as the driving force behind creativity, and creativity makes homeostasis possible in a changing world". The researcher therefore wants to emphasise the importance of the group leader's ability to be creative. This creativity might help the whole group to grow when the group moves out of homeostasis, then changes to reach it again. Harris (1998a:12) says that this changing process might cause unease in groups where stable group norms and habitual patterns are a need. He states that some stability concerning norms, rules and behaviours are acceptable, but it can get dangerous when the group looses awareness of the roles and routines.

The groups in the current study were in a continuous process of change. The groups and the sessions always differed, although they are making use of the same programme. The therapist or group leader had to be flexible enough to adapt to each group's process as well as the process of a specific group concerning specific situations.

2.2.2.5 *Principle of possible relevance*

According to this principle nothing is irrelevant, although it seems very trivial. It might be very significant to bring something trivial to a group's awareness. All things concerning the individuals, interpersonal relations and group process have an effect on the field. (Compare Harris, 1998a:13; Parlett in Ground level: the field:2.) The researcher can therefore focus on any element that comes up in a group. It can bring significant value to the growth of the group and its members. The group leader can for example bring a special connection, which formed between two group members to their attention. This can act as a significant experiment to discuss and enhance communication and friendship as a theme for enhancing emotional intelligence.

Harris (1998a:13-14) also relates this principle to the figure-ground theory of Gestalt theory. What is relevant at that moment is the figure, but the rest of the group environment, being the ground, is still important as the figure makes sense against the background of the ground. The succession of what is figure and what is ground is continuously changing. It is this succession that's important in Gestalt theory. If this is explored and utilised, the structure and dynamic of a group field can be understood much better. (Harris, 1998a:13)

The figure-ground succession is very important in the current programme. Allthough the same programme with the same goal is used, different groups found different elements to be the figure against the ground of the current theme. The group field (group dynamics) also constitutes a shift in emphasis of different themes. The communication and friendship theme of this programme is a good example. The one group had a need to discuss and find out how to make friends, the other group needed to focus on anger management, because their short

tempers have a negative influence on their relationships and another group needed to work on the relationship between assertiveness and respect for self and others. Here different figures existed within the ground of the communication and relationship theme.

It was important here, that the researcher as therapist or group leader of this programme should have been a good observer. Harris (1998a:14-16) discusses three rules or steps in the phenomenological method, concerning observation, listed by Spinelli (in Harris, 1998a:14). Phenomenology is the experience of one self as you are (compare, Yontef, 1993:2-3; Zinker, 1977:77; 1.2.1 Discussion of concepts in Chapter 4 of this study). This means that the researcher attempted to experience the group process or field just the way it is. In order to do this, the researcher made use of the following three steps: In short this includes, to set aside initial biases and prejudices, to observe without jumping to premature conclusions and to treat all observations as equally useful for an overall picture of the group. (Harris, 1998a:14-15)

The researcher wishes to conclude by mentioning, that the observations in this research study were as open as possible. All information should were seen as possibly relevant. Anything that occurred in a group could be brought to the awareness of the members and could be a relevant learning and growth experience for the group.

The five principles discussed above can be summarised in the following:

- Knowing as much as possible about the bigger whole into which each group member fits
- Being aware of the immediate influences of the group on the members
- Acknowledging that all situations in groups are unique, as well as the way in which each group member will experience and perceive such a situation
- The group and its needs are continuously changing and
- Everything that happens in a group is relevant and can be used for growth and development.

**3.	THE IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURE FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE CHOICE OF PLAY THERAPY TECHNIQUES**

## 3.1	Introduction

In this section the researcher focused on the relevance of the field of the children in the therapy groups concerning their level of and the improvement of their emotional intelligence. The researcher also considered the impact of a cultural sensitive programme on the choice of techniques that will be used. This programme consciously focused on the impact of the field or culture of the children in the groups. The latter focus had an influence on the choice of techniques applied in the intervention programme.

## 3.2	The therapist's role in enhancing emotional intelligence

The therapist had an important role in the field of the children in the current therapy groups. The therapeutic relationship is one of the most important catalysts for growth according to the Gestalt theory. (Compare Ivens, [sa]:4; Jarosewitsch, 1995:1; Schoeman, 2004b:120; Yontef, 1993:3.)

The role of the therapist within the holistic view of the field theory includes an awareness of the therapist of himself as a whole in the relationship with the children. The therapist needs to pay attention to all his own reactions and responses too. In this case, nothing is irrelevant. (Mackewn, 2004:47)

The researcher thus rather focused on the therapist who should adapt to the culture or field of the children in the groups, than to try to let the children fit into the paradigms of the therapist. The following is a discussion on attributes needed from a therapist working in a multicultural environment.

3.2.1   General professional responsibilities in a multicultural environment

Sue and Sue (in Freedman, 1999:1) state the following responsibilities of mental health professionals when working in a multicultural environment:

● Mental health professionals should gain awareness of, confront and take action in dealing with biases, assumptions etcetera concerning human behaviour

● Become aware of clients from other cultures' biases and assumptions concerning human behaviour

● Develop programmes and intervention strategies to take influence of culture and environment into account when dealing with clients from different cultural backgrounds

It is important for a mental health professional to remember that his own worldview, ideology and set of values are not the best way to see the world. The challenge is to help the client to find his own best way that will heal himself within his own cultural field. The professional working in a multicultural environment should work on himself so he doesn't feel threatened by the different values and views of his client/s. He should also not be ignorant of the values of the cultures he works with. (Freedman, 1999:1-2)

The researcher understands here that the mental health professional should be sure enough of himself and his own values, that he does not have the need to feel threatened by another's different set of values. The professional should also have knowledge of the typical value structure of the cultures he works with in order to improve his understanding of his clients. Freedman (1999:2) states that multi-cultural counselling is a way of life. It is a general orientation towards other people.

Freedman (1999:2) reasons that it might be better for the therapist to adapt to the culture of the client, rather than otherwise. The therapist should thus be aware of cultural differences and work within that to gain knowledge, understanding and acceptance of the cultural framework of his client. Culture is the way of thinking used by the client to make sense of the world and life itself. The therapist should focus on this way of thinking to be able to have a proper understanding of the client. This relates to the need to understand the process (compare Schoeman, 2004a:46; Schoeman, 2004b:153) of the client in Gestalt therapy.

Freedman (1999:13) points out that there are differences in how people from different cultures handle communication, especially on the base of emotions and personal growth issues, like assertiveness and instant self-disclosure and also body language. These were important issues to consider in the current study, because they are all related to the content of the current emotional intelligence programme (3.5 Improving emotional intelligence in Chapter 2 of this study).

Freedman (1999:13) also noted that effective counsellors who operate in a truly multi-cultural environment (like the U.S. where he lives) would have to adapt to the cultural differences of their clients in many ways. He noted another important attribute from the counsellor's side. It is important to encounter more out of office experiences with different cultures.

All these are rather important to the researcher as therapist in the current study. The researcher made an effort to get in touch with the different cultures represented in the groups participating in the research process. This includes community projects and contact with the children and their teachers in a variety of schools. The latter (variety of schools) is important, as it seemed as if different schools also have different cultures. It was therefore important for the researcher to get in touch with the schools and their teachers to improve comprehension of their way of doing. Getting in touch involved discussions with principals and / or teachers about the children and even short workshop-like presentations to explain difficulties concerning the children and answering questions from the teachers. In such a way it was possible to pick up the attitude and thinking patterns of both teachers and children.

3.2.2   Obligations of the group leader in the field – Field theory

Harris (1998a:8) discussed the group leader's functioning in the field, where the field is the environment in which humans exist (Ground level: the field, 1997:1). Although the group leader has an important role to play, he is still part of the field of the group. It is important to understand, in Gestalt theory, that the leader is not an objective, separate figure that distances him from the rest of the group. The group leader is part of the group, helping to co-create the group process. The group leader brings along his "being-in-the-

world" (Harris, 1998a:8), influencing the group process. The group leader can get to know and understand the group field because he gets to be part of this field. (2.2.2.1 Principle of organisation) Furthermore Harris (1998a:9-10) states that the group leader should not come to the group with certain expectations, which should be fulfilled. He learns with the group by focusing on how things are here and now. The leader is included in the interaction in the group. He learns, grows and develops with the group. (2.2.2.2 Principle of contemporaneity) Although the group leader has a different role than the members, he is still in his being the same than all other group members (2.2.2.3 Principle of singularity). Finally Harris (1998a:12-13) states that the group leader should be flexible enough to adapt to each group and each session's process, demands and possibilities of growth and change (2.2.2.4 Changing process). The group leader should also remember that all things that happen in the group is possibly relevant for growth. The leader can bring a seemingly insignificant situation to the awareness of the group and the group can grow and change from this awareness (2.2.2.5 Principle of possible relevance). (Harris, 1998a:8-17)

3.2.3   The role of the multicultural group leader summarised and applied to the current study

The group leader or researcher as therapist in this study was part of a field where children from different cultural backgrounds, with different needs came together to grow as a whole person. Although the focus of this field was to improve emotional intelligence, the researcher is of the opinion that growth in one part of the whole will lead to growth in the rest too. The group leader or researcher as therapist needed specific attributes to fit into this field and to facilitate growth in all the members, including herself. This was an ever changing field, filled with primary school children who for some or other reason really needed to learn more about themselves and love themselves more to live happily in the here and now.

The following is a summary of the essential attributes of a group leader in a field like this:

The group leader needs to be aware that his world view is not necessarily the best view for this field, but needs to facilitate the children in this field to be aware and to develop

and love their own world view. The group leader need to be willing to learn, grow and develop with the children, as he is part of the field. The group leader will thus not feel the need to defend his own view, as his view and its growth is part of the field.

The group leader needs to get to know the field by gaining knowledge about the cultural backgrounds of the children in the groups. Different cultural backgrounds lead to differences in attributes related to emotional intelligence. The group leader needs to be aware of this. This awareness can be part of the process of group development and growth though. Awareness of different cultures is increased if the group leader has contact and is exposed to a variety of cultures in outside-of-the-office-experiences, like community work.

The group leader needs to be aware of the fact that his way of being will influence the group process. His expectations might thus not be fulfilled because each group grows in its own way and the leader is part of this process. The group leader thus needs a great deal of flexibility to adapt to the continuously changing groups and situations. All situations in the group sessions are possibilities of experiments to grow and the group leader needs to continuously be aware of this fact. (Compare Freedman, 1999:1-2,13; Harris, 1998a:8-17; Schoeman, 2004a:46; Schoeman, 2004b:153.)

3.3 The influence of the Namibian cultural environment on the current programme

The group members of this study all belong to the Namibian cultural environment. This is part of their field and might therefore have an influence on the emotional growth of the children. The following discussion will thus focus on this cultural environment and the possible implications for improving emotional intelligence.

3.3.1 Overview of the Namibian cultural background

The researcher wishes to give this overview in order to give an impression of the general culture of the country, thus the field in which the members of the research groups live. The country has a population of about 1 677 000 people. About 86% of the population

are black African in origin, and the remaining 14% are of European or mixed origin. (McIntyre, 2003:17) McIntyre (2003:17) also states that the people in Namibia are generally delightful and interested in other people. The researcher sees such an opinion as representative of the type of worldview or sense of living of the Namibian population.

The other important issue concerning the Namibian culture is the view that people abroad have of the people living in Africa. McIntyre (2003:17) states that people abroad see Africans as belonging to a multitude of culturally and linguistically distinct tribes. The word tribe is a very vague concept describing a group of people speaking the same language, follow the same leader or live in the same area. He states that to the contrary, although many ethnic groups exist, the people are closely related to each other in terms of language, beliefs and way of life. (McIntyre, 2003:18)

There are as many as 28 different languages in Namibia. Although language and culture go hand in hand (1.4.5 Language and culture above), most Namibians speak at least two languages. There are some cultural differences between ethnic groups living in different areas in Namibia, but these are not very clear. People tend to marry over cultural boundaries and in general little friction exist between the different cultural groups. The different people of Namibia tend to live peacefully together. (McIntyre, 2003:18) The researcher has in general the same experience of the different cultural groups in Namibia. At times though an antagonism is experienced between the Herero and Owambo people. This is not a violent conflict, but rather a kind of peaceful rivalry, where people from these ethnic groups work or school together and would at times flock together with their own group and compete or joke with the other group.

McIntyre (2003:18) discusses Namibian culture as a typical African country with over 10 different ethnic groups with different languages. He (McIntyre, 2003:18-19) divides the ethnic languages in two groups, namely Khoisan and Bantu. Many of the ethnic groups also speak Afrikaans.

The researcher experiences the focus on a second language during the last few years to also include English, as this is the official language of the country at the moment. It is the researcher's opinion that many ethnic groups still associate Afrikaans with the old

colonial regime and therefore rather wish to speak English as this has a connotation of freedom and the new independent Namibia.

The following is a short discussion on some indications of the cultural background of the different ethnic groups represented in the current study.

3.3.1.1 Basters

The Basters are mostly Afrikaans speaking people. They originate from the Southern Cape province in South Africa. They were born from indigenous Hottentot women and Dutch settlers who arrived in the Cape in the 16 hundreds. Neither the Hottentots nor the Dutch people accepted the children. They therefore formed their own cultural group creating farming communities with their own social and cultural laws. They moved up North to avoid conflict with colonialists and settled near Rehoboth in Central Namibia. This group is very proud and called themselves Basters. The Rehoboth community gained the status of an independent state in the 1970's. Today the Basters still have a strong sense of identity and many of them still have farms on the sideline if they are not practicing cattle farming for a living. (Compare McIntyre, 2003:19; Malan, 1999:138.) According to Malan (1999:139) the greatest majority of the Basters have Afrikaans surnames, from their Dutch ancestors. One third have German surnames and a number of families are from English or Scottish descent. According to Malan (1999:139) this is a typical Western culture community. They have Christian norms in society, prefer monogamous Christian marriages, and Christian education for their children. Politically they are patriotic people and their traditional leader at the time of independence of Namibia in 1990, remained as such after a declaration of the high court, although in reduced form – a traditional but non-political role (The Windhoek Advertiser in Malan, 1999:141) sees the Basters as a happy and content local community who makes a meaningful contribution to the objectives of national peace and stability.

The researcher agrees with this, but also gained another insight in the community during community work in Rehoboth. It seems as if the community is still proud

and community bound with people still relying much on Christian values. Although this is the case, it also seems as if alcohol is abused as a coping skill for life and financial stresses. It seems as if social problems like alcoholism, sexual and physical abuse and neglect are increasing in the community. Many youngsters are relying on their parents to take care of them and seem to have little motivation and self-confidence to reach their own potential. The researcher wants to emphasise that this is not the case for the whole community. The researcher spent time working in Rehoboth for a two year period and focused work on children with learning and behavioural problems. This included working in schools, presenting coping skills workshops for teachers and gaining insight into community projects of the Rehoboth community itself.

The researcher concludes that the Basters are a proud community bound group with many positive and Christian values. Unfortunately it seems as if some negative coping skills and some typical social problems are gaining weight in the community. This causes concerns regarding the emotional intelligence of the children of the present generation. These children grow up in families with on the one side a strong Christian value system, but most of the times one or both parents and / or other extended family members are abusing alcohol. This leads to parents getting divorced and at times family violence. These children therefore have experiences of broken families, few effective role models and little emotional support and security.

3.3.1.2 Damara

The Damara people are presumed to be of the original inhabitants of Namibia, together with the Nama and Bushman people. They all speak a similar (Khoi) click language. They were primarily hunting people who owned a few cattle or goats. They supported the German people against the Hereros and Namas. The Germans gave them a bigger homeland for this effort, where they started to practice agriculture. Unfortunately not many Damaras remained in the homeland. Most are now working on commercial farms, in mines or as labourers in towns. They share their language with the Namas and the women's traditional dress

resembles the Victorian dress, like those of the Namas and Hereros. (McIntyre, 2003:21)

In older times the major social grouping among the Damara was the patrilocal extended family. (Malan, 1999:133) The researcher wishes to rather focus on the more recent development of this culture as a society, adhering to the importance of here and now in Gestalt therapy (compare Zinker, 1977:78-82; Yontef, 1993:16) It is therefore important to note that during later years most of the extended patrilocal families dispersed because of economic and other influences. The men either did migratory labour or took their wives with them to places of employment. The extended family became segmented into nuclear families. Most of the Damara people kept their old religion despite a long time of compliance to the Namas. Later on though, large numbers of them accepted the Christian faith.

The researcher thus sees the Damara people as mostly Christian people who are labourers on mines and farms. Only a few of them still stay in the homeland where some of the older traditions and religious norms are still practiced. The current study will mostly focus on the current cultural norms of the Damaras, as the Damara children in the groups are urban citizens in Windhoek. They might be more part of the Katutura society or of the more Western trend in the city. The researcher sees the culture of this group as that of labourers with mostly Christian norms. The researcher also experiences that many Damara people are not only labourers anymore, but have moved up in the socio-economic structure of the city. This might be the case for all the other ethnic groups represented in this study.

3.3.1.3 Nama

According to McIntyre (2003:23) the Nama people are very close to the Bushmen, thus being one of the first peoples of Namibia. They resemble the Bushmen sharing similar 'click' sounds of the Khoisan language, the same light coloured yellow skin tone and hunter-gatherer way of life. These people's tribal areas were communal property as well as all other items, unless individually made. The differences in perception about ownership of land and stock led to frequent conflicts with Herero people in the past. Most Nama people still live in

the area, which was their tribal ground, Namaland, in the South of the country. At present many Nama people are still working on commercial farms. They are traditionally stock farmers. The traditional dress of the women is still based on the Victorian tradition and shared with the Damara and Herero women. (McIntyre, 2003:23)

Malan (1999:120) states that the Nama people are superficially monogamists in marriage. The standard in morals is extremely low. In the tribal villages the children remain in their parents' hut until married. Children can marry a parallel first cousin nowadays. Previously or traditionally a man behaved to his wife's sisters as he would behave to his wife, and a woman considered her husband's younger brothers as her husbands. As many Nama people accepted the Christian faith, marriage ceremonies are either outmoded or integrated with the Christian practices. Malan (2003:122) also notices that the Nama people are very sociable. In traditional settings they spend social gatherings around the fire telling stories, making music and dancing.

These people lived from the food provided by nature – collecting !Naras (a form of wild lemon), eating everything edible they could find from the sea and hunting. As the natural food sources got depleted, their sedentary life style needed to change. The latter led the Namas to turn to the labour market for work on farms, in towns and in the industrial centres in Windhoek. (Malan, 2003:124)

Nama people were exposed to intensive Christian missionary work and therefore many left their traditional religious practices and turned to Christianity. It is notable though that many Namas fused the two religions in their views and practices today. Budack (in Malan, 2003:127) states that the Nama traditional culture has been reduced to a mere shadow of its former vitality. He seems to reason that in recent times there are strong signs of a revival. Many of the different tribes tend to cooperate much more and this gives hope to keeping the Nama's unique cultural heritage alive.

The researcher will not discuss the traditional heritage in much detail, because the present culture is more important for this study. The researcher understands from the authors quoted above that the Namas tend to be sedentary and rather prefer to

live from nature. As the latter is not possible anymore they are now mostly labourers. They are also very sociable people and tend to have a Christian religion, although in some cases mixed with traditional religious activities. Looking at their marriages as discussed above (Malan, 1999:120) it seems as if they don't really apply much of the Christian moral values.

3.3.1.4 Herero

McIntyre (2003:21) discussed the Herero background by stating the loss of half of their numbers in a war against the Germans. According to Malan (2003:70) the Herero people have a history of settlement and war with the German settlers in Namibia. As stated above, this led to big losses in numbers. McIntyre (2003:21) states that few of the Hereros survived but they grew again to the third largest ethnic group in Namibia.

The Hereros are traditionally cattle farmers and their prestige and influence depend on the number of cattle they possess. Today they are still well-known for their cattle-handling skills on commercial farms.

The Herero women wear heavy traditional / Victorian garments consisting of layers of petticoats and head-dresses. The Missionaries introduced these in the 1800s to cover the women's traditional half naked bodies. The women are still wearing these heavy and very hot garments in several cases. (McIntyre, 2003:22)

Malan (1999:68) noted that although many Herero people still live in traditional settlement areas, a considerable number of Hereros now live in urban areas. They keep close contact with their relatives in the traditional villages though.

Cattle are described as the life of the Herero. Strict measures are enforced to protect the interests of all concerned. (Malan, 1999:76) It is important to note here that the high degree of acculturation had a far-reaching influence on especially the southern Herero. Their whole technology has been extensively conformed to that of the European culture. Although they have been exposed to education and training in industrial professions, they still cherish cattle farming above all. They

therefore very seldom offer their services on the labour market and tend to leave it to the Owambo and other people to fill these vacancies. (Malan, 1999:77)

The researcher's experience of the Herero people, especially the women, is that of very proud people.

3.3.1.5 Owambo

This is the largest cultural or ethnic group in Namibia, making up half of the population. Their language is Bantu based. Most of them still live in their traditional areas in remote parts of the North of the country. This part of the country is fairly rich in natural resources as it receives one of the highest rainfall in the country. The people can thus easily grow a range of traditional crops and practice cattle farming. The Owambo people belong to one of eight tribes and have traditionally been traders and businessmen. (McIntyre, 2003:23)

According to Malan (1999:15) the Owambo people are culturally closely related to the agriculturalists of Central Africa. The Owambo people speak one of eight dialects of the OshiWambo language according to the specific tribe they belong to. (Malan, 1999:17) The Owambo people followed a matrilineal social structure. It means that kinship is determined through the mother. Who the father of children is, is thus of less importance. The women are not the people of authority in the community though. The mother's male relatives fulfil the most important roles in the lives of the children. "The sons are the heirs-to-be of their maternal uncle" (Malan, 1999:19). The maternal uncle becomes the head of the family. Malan (1999:19) also states that this tradition is changing and that the father now exercises much more authority over his children in more resent years. A marked degree of social instability takes place because of the conflicting interests between patrilocal and matrilineal groups – thus the mother's family and the father of the house. Major family quarrels and disputes thus arise after the death of a father. Children tend to hide their father's money from their uncles on mother side. These conflicts are a driving force behind Owambo families slowly moving away from matrilineal traditions.

It seems as if the Owambo culture experienced a lot of change on many levels as a result of the Owambo culture moving away from matrilineal traditions. These include political, socio-economic and religious change. Political change is evident in the ruling political party in the country as that of the Owambo people, SWAPO. "Swapo's victory in the independence elections can largely be attributed to the fact that, as a popular liberation movement in the absence of strong traditional leadership, it gained the overwhelming political support of the Owambo" (Malan, 1999:33). Socio-economic change is evident in the rapidly changing socio-economic life-styles among Owambos as a result of the dispersal of matrilineages. The loss of contact with matrilineal kinsmen led to the acceptance of an alternative religion in the form of Christianity. The Owambo people propagated liberation theology under the name of the church, which supported SWAPO's liberation struggle. (Malan, 1999:34)

The researcher finds that the Owambo people don't have a very strong traditional value system as it changed away from the matrilineal tradition. SWAPO therefore used its political power on all cultural levels. As Malan (1999:34) states, the Owambo people have an atmosphere of openness to change away from tradition, which was used skilfully by SWAPO to not only politically rule the Owambo people but the whole country.

The Owambo people are thus much more politically oriented in their culture and more prone to conflict in liberation struggle from colonialism than having traditional cultural values.

3.3.1.6 White Namibians

The white Namibians are mostly of European origin. The first whites to settle in Namibia were the Germans who quickly declared Namibia as a German colony. White farmers of Dutch origin moved away from the British influence in South Africa and settled in Namibia as farmers. They soon outnumbered the Germans. These Namibians from European descent now run most of the commercial farms in the country, but is spread through the whole economic structure of the country.

White Namibians also manage most of the tourism industry. They are normally amongst the more affluent members of society. (McIntyre, 2003:24)

The white Namibians mostly has a Christian value system and value a family structure and economic growth.

Although the white Namibians are of European descent, most of them were born in Namibia and is very patriotic. Malan (1999:141) states that conflicts occurred because of the incompatibility of aspects of African and European cultures and value systems. However this fusion of cultures (African and European) also had many positive outcomes. "The contributions by the various groups have established common resources on which the entire country can draw" (Malan, 1999:141). It seems that unity in diversity is not an unattainable goal in this country. Malan (1999:141) is very optimistic about the ethnic diversity that cannot be argued away. He states that all the groups can enjoy security and can join in a common pursuit to reach objectives that will benefit all people in the country.

The researcher experiences that the white Namibians were for a long time ruling the country under colonialism. After independence the whites and African cultures fused their interests. The group members from European descent might need mostly to develop emotional intelligence concerning the understanding and acceptance of the other cultural groups and their different way of making sense of life. It might be that this is already happening to a great extent as most children are in schools with mixed cultures and have friends across cultural barriers.

3.3.1.7 Conclusion

The researcher concludes with the following:

Most of the ethnic cultural groups living in the city area adopted the Christian religion and value system. Although the groups generally have Christian norms, these are not always applied as discussed above in the case of the Basters and Namas. Many groups are still labourers and farmers and therefore tend to practice these jobs in the city too. It seems that the groups in general keep contact with families who are living in rural areas on farms and in traditional villages. The

people in rural areas seem to follow more cultural traditions than their urban relatives. Urban groups therefore still have contact with traditional cultural habits, but do not practice these intensively in the city. Some groups, like the Owambo people, are more politically oriented. Others like the Herero people, are rather proud and tend to be cattle farmers, even though in most cases as a sideline while living and working in the city.

It therefore seems as if all the different cultural groups are uniting in a city culture with only a few differences between the groups, based on their ethnic cultures.

3.3.2   The researcher's experience of the cultures discussed

After the attempt above to explore the different cultures of Namibia, the researcher came to the insight that the authors did not provide a comprehensive enough representation of the cultural situation at present. This is a developing country with fast changing and developing cultural groups. Although the past has an influence on the present situation, cultures are functioning differently from what has been recorded in books on the history and origin of these cultures. The researcher therefore used questionnaires about the cultural habits of Namibians received from the parents of the children in the research groups as well as from a few volunteers. Freedman (1999:13) emphasised the importance of contact with the cultural communities in which a multicultural therapist functions.

The following is thus information gained from people of Namibia who are part of the cultural groups represented in this study. The researcher believes that this information is also applicable to be able to gain a better understanding of the field in the here and now.

3.3.2.1 Basters

Baster people reported that they do not really follow any traditional cultural habits anymore. The Baster culture is very close to the Western culture. Basters living in the city, Windhoek, tend to follow Western cultural habits. Some of the Basters follow very strict Christian norms, while other groups in the city suffer under social problems, which mostly include alcoholism and all the problems related to this.

Family norms and rules, which seem important, include having respect for each other, to care for their living environment and to attend special occasions like birthdays of family members etcetera.

Children reported family rules and norms like having respect for adults and children having to ask before they do things. They have family time of playing, swimming or playing with pets together. They also eat together on certain days during the week and visit friends regularly.

3.3.2.2 Damara / Nama

Most of the Damara and Nama people in Namibia tend to see themselves as part of one cultural group named the Damara / Nama group. These people in general reported to still follow some of their traditional habits. This also seems to depend on the area where they live and the family's income.

It seems that many of these people still follow traditional rituals concerning marriages and funerals. In some cases traditional medicine and messaging done by an experienced older lady, are used during pregnancy and when caring for an infant. In some families they still arrange special occasions, once or twice per month, when they eat in the traditional way. This usually includes porridge and meat ("pap en vleis") eaten with the hands.

Family rules and norms include children to respect adults and do what they are told to. Children are also given chores to complete around to the house. Many of these families have a Christian religion and attend church services together. Family culture includes family time like eating and going on holidays together.

3.3.2.3 Herero

The researcher's experience of Herero people is that they are very proud and hard working people. The women especially are proud ladies and usually very determined to get what they want.

The children who attended the research groups and also those who made use of other services at the researcher's practice seemed to still go to traditional villages during holiday times or when they are ill.

Herero children reported to have family norms and rules including showing respect for adults like always asking before you take something. The children have chores like washing the dishes. Some reported that they should also not run in the house and should not watch television late at night.

Family time includes going to the family farm together (some families visit the traditional villages), watching television and working in the garden together. They also go shopping together.

3.3.2.4 Owambo

Owambo people reported to still follow some traditional cultural habits. These include eating habits, like eating porridge with the hands. Some families also still believe in traditional habits, which include the following:

- Not sweeping dust or rubbish out of the house during the evening, it will bring bad luck
- Never sit on a table or stand while eating
- Boys may never eat from the pot, they should always eat from their plates
- Never borrow or lend salt, needles or matchboxes after sunset
- Never sweep even the smallest part of the house while you have visitors, it shows the visitors are not welcome
- Do not put coins on a bed or count it on the bed

Concerning family rules or norms, showing respect for other people are important, especially in the case of children towards adults. Children should be in the house when the sun sets and must not argue with adults. Children should assist adults with chores in the house. They should always say "thank you" when given something. The girls bend their knees and the boys nod their heads when saying thank you, as a sign of respect towards any authority figure. Children should also

always ask before taking something. Many families have a Christian religion and in those families they pray together before meals and attend church services together.

Family culture usually includes spending time together like eating together or having picnics outside in the park. Some families also work together in either the house or garden.

Some respondents reported that they do not follow any of their cultural habits anymore. They have adapted to the Western city culture. It seems that many of these are higher-income families.

Children reported to have chores at home like washing the dishes and cleaning the rooms. Children should respect and obey adults. They have family time like eating together, having family barbeques over weekends and going on holidays. Children should also not play in the house.

3.3.2.5 *White, Western Namibians*

Many of the White Namibians adapted to city culture, which is very much part of a Western way of doing. This includes respect for other people, thus respect for their lives and belongings too. Families follow some cultural habits relating to Christian holidays like Easter and Christmas. These are Western traditions usually including decorating and hiding chocolate eggs on Easter together with a family gathering and attending church services. During Christmas the families usually have a holiday together, decorate a tree and the house and/or garden with Christmas lights and decorations. They also buy presents, which are distributed usually at midnight of the 24th of December. Marriages and funerals are also more traditional rituals, mostly based on Christian values.

Family norms and rules include respect for others and their belongings. Children also have daily chores like cleaning their rooms, feeding pets, watering the garden

or washing cars occasionally. Honesty and other Christian norms also seem important in these families.

Family culture is usually seen in family time like playing games together, exercising together, family meals and family holidays.

Children reported family rules and norms like having respect for adults, not swearing and having chores in the house like washing the dishes. They have family time, which includes eating together, playing games, going to restaurants, shopping together, and having barbeques.

3.3.2.6 Conclusion of the researcher's experience of the cultures discussed

Some of the respondents mentioned that society changes rapidly and that they tend to adapt to these social changes. They thus adapt to a new city culture, rather than keeping to their traditional cultural habits.

Many children from different cultures reported parents that work hard and who do not have much time for the children. They usually have family time over weekends and they go away over holidays. Family time from different cultures includes eating together, and having barbeques. They also play games, work in the garden or go to friends. Family rules and norms from different cultures include respect for adults, doing chores in and around the house, and asking adults before doing something. It thus seems as if the different cultures are practicing much the same type of family rules and norms and family time. Although these general cultural habits were experienced across a big spectrum of cultures, the researcher is still of the opinion that family cultures differ in nuance. The researcher's contact with children proofed that each child has his own field, which includes his family culture. The children's individual processes together with their fields made up a whole, which is different from all other children.

The following paragraphs indicate the implications of such cultural environments on emotional intelligence.

3.4 Implications of culture on emotional intelligence

After discussing the field as the Namibian cultural environment, the researcher now relates culture and emotional intelligence. The following paragraphs indicate the influence of culture on emotional intelligence.

3.4.1 Emotional intelligence and culture

Cultures vary in how they express emotions. How well or poorly people express their emotions is a key social competence, according to Goleman (1996:113). Emotions are expressed differently in different cultures and age groups in the following examples:

- *Minimising*

In the Japanese culture, the norm for the expression of feelings of distress in the presence of an authority figure is to minimise. (Goleman, 1996:113) They will thus not show the intensity of their feelings, but rather hide it.

- *Exaggerating*

A six-year old will exaggerate his emotions when complaining to his mother about his older brother teasing him. He might dramatically display a frown and complain with quivering lips. (Goleman, 1996:113)

- *Substituting*

In some Asian cultures people give positive assurances instead of saying 'no', because saying 'no' is impolite. (Goleman, 1996:113)

Goleman (1996:113) calls the ways in which we express emotions display rules. He reasons that people learn these display rules very early by explicit instruction and modelling of behaviour. Goleman (1996:113) gives the example of the child who is told

not to show his disappointment when he receives a bad present from a person with very good intentions. Goleman (1996:114) reasons that display rules can teach a child that he needs to mask his real feelings when they can hurt someone he loves and substitute it with a phoney, but less hurtful one. It seems that the use of these display rules requires some skill. If the verbal message is different from the non-verbal, then the person who receives the message might feel hurt by the mixed message. Emotional displays therefore have immediate consequences on the lives of the recipient/s. The lessons children learn about display rules differ, because the people teaching them are not all evenly skilful in doing so and in the way they use these rules. (Goleman, 1996:114)

It seems to the researcher that these display rules and the proper use thereof is culturally based. If they are well used they can have a positive effect, according to Goleman (1996:114), but if not they can be hurtful. The researcher therefore agrees with Goleman (1996:113-114) that these display rules are part of emotional intelligence. The researcher furthermore describes these rules with the concept of manners. Certain behaviours and ways of displaying emotions are seen as good and some as bad manners. The skilful use of display rules having a positive effect on the emotions of others and on relationships shows therefore emotional intelligence skilfulness and good manners and vice versa. If these display rules are not consciously used and managed, if the display rules and the choice of user are not well thought through, it can lead to the contact boundary disturbance named an introject (compare Blom, 2004:6; Schoeman, 2004b:79; Yontef, 1993:9).

It is thus clear to the researcher that emotional intelligence is part of the cultural field of the children in the current study. Their culture will depict how emotions are handled and will therefore influence emotional intelligence. It is important for the researcher to have knowledge of these processes to know which parts of a child's emotional intelligence might for example be introjects.

3.4.2   The African environment

The current study is set in an African environment. Some of the group members are from a European background, such as the white Afrikaans, English and German cultural groups. Although this is the case, they are still living in Africa, where African cultural

influences have an impact on them. Emotional climate is transferable (compare Goleman, 1996:114; Van Jaarsveld, 2003:97). The different cultures living in one country will thus influence each other when they have contact.

Vermeulen (1999:185) discusses the impact of culture on emotional intelligence by quoting Stephen Covey. He (Covey in Vermeulen, 1999:185) reasons that a person moves from independence to interdependence in the process of emotional maturity. Vermeulen (1999:185-186) reasons that the latter process (interdependence) is part of the African culture from ancient years. Within all the violence, corruption, starvation and hardship in Africa, exists a very sophisticated and supportive social system. Vermeulen (1999:185) states that this social system is emotional intelligence in action. This social system values people and community above money and power. Colonisation interfered in this system though and this might be the reason for the researcher's experience of a shift in focus towards money and power. This study is written in an African environment and as stated by the principle of possible relevance above (2.2.2.5 Principle of possible relevance), even the smallest attribute is important enough to consider in the process of growth. The African environment will therefore influence the field of the research groups in this study.

Vermeulen (1999:186) sees this African social system, which she calls ubuntu, as people living their values and morality. The people know that they cannot succeed alone and they have compassion for each other. The researcher therefore specifically included a part on communication and friendship in the current programme, and the outcomes of this intervention greatly relies on the impact of the relationship of the therapist / group leader with the group members.

Vermeulen (1999:186) included more emotional intelligence related attributes to her theory about African culture. She mentioned the true meaning of ubuntu – to make your own contribution. It means to use your own life to make a contribution, to add value to a society rather than trying to take whatever you can.

The researcher sees this paragraph above in relation to empathy as part of emotional intelligence. A person would therefore grow emotionally and personally and contribute these things to the social environment. The person will therefore not only receive, but makes an effort to understand others and to give something of his own life to others – to show some real understanding for others, thus showing empathy. (Compare Chapter 2, 3.2.3. Empathy, effective communication and good interpersonal relationships; Goleman, 1996:96; Van Jaarsveld, 2003:203.)

Vermeulen (1999:186) also included the emotional intelligence skill of responsibility. A person is taking responsibility for and managing his own growth and development. In such a way all people in a society is equally responsible for themselves and others.

The researcher used responsibility as one of the key themes of emotional intelligence and it is also a key concept in Gestalt theory. (Compare Vermeulen, 1999:158; Yontef, 1993:3,9; Chapter 2, 3.2.2 Taking responsibility for your own life - controlling your feelings, thoughts and behaviour.)

The members of the current groups are all primary school children. It seemed applicable to the researcher to include the following short section on the influence of culture specifically on children.

3.4.3   Culture and emotional intelligence in children

"The conditions that trigger complex emotions such as pride, envy and shame depend upon the culture so children have to learn when these emotions are appropriate" (Kail 1998:254)

We cannot focus on children in isolation. They are part of a specific cultural background. Much of what they learn is influenced by the cultures around them and mediated by their parents. Children's intellectual development is greatly influenced by their interactions with their cultural surroundings and the people who carry this culture, like parents and other significant others in their lives. The latter view is greatly supported by the work of Feurstein. (Compare, Vygotsky and Social Cognition, 2004:1; Sharron & Coulter, 1994:36-51.)

It is thus clear to the researcher that children's emotional growth and development and also the current level of this development is greatly influenced by their fields or cultures. This influence is part of the child as a whole.

3.5   Implications of culture on the choice of play therapy techniques

The researcher used the culture of the children in the research groups as part of their field. Their culture was the way they made sense of life, it was part of their cognition, emotions and behaviour. What they said and how they said it was part of their culture. Culture was also part of the children's own process – their individual personality and behaviour styles. This influenced the choice of play therapy techniques in the emphasis on how it was applied and what themes were included in the group therapy programme. The themes included in this programme influenced the choice of techniques used. A cultural sensitive study like the current programme tends to include one or two sessions on sharing different cultural views. Such sessions guided the researcher to make use of specific play therapy techniques, depending on the chosen way in which such sharing of experiences was managed. The following are main aspects regarded as important focus points in connection with play therapy techniques in the current study:

3.5.1   The therapeutic relationship

The therapeutic relationship is one of the main healing factors in Gestalt therapy (Chapter 4, 1.4 The therapeutic relationship and 2.2.4 More theoretical principles: The therapeutic relationship in Gestalt play therapy). This healing relationship included the unconditional acceptance of the children in the groups' cultural habits. The researcher was in a healing relationship with the different children from different cultures. The children were allowed within this relationship to fully be themselves and to experiment with different behaviours in a safe environment. The children in the research groups might have experienced, within their cultures or field, an inhibition of certain emotional intelligence skills. The latter could include the open identification and expression of emotions or the experience of uncontrollable expression of anger or poor abilities to communicate with

friends, which could be due to self-image and –confidence problems too. The children's fields thus contributed to their level of emotional intelligence. Their operation in their different fields could thus change toward a more content experience where they could have the courage to develop their own potential to the full. These changes could happen within a secure relationship in the field of the group of this Gestalt play therapy programme. Here the therapeutic relationship was thus a specific play therapy technique, which was used to improve emotional intelligence skills.

The children's cultural fields might thus have had an influence on the level of their emotional intelligence, including their level of self-awareness. Goldberg (2001:111-112) questions the influence of culture on the human being's ability of self-awareness and what people experience as their selves. He reasons that it might be that cultural concepts formed part of what people experience as their self in the following quote: "…the biological evolution of the frontal lobes is not in and of itself sufficient for the completion of cognitive self-nonself differentiation and that some additional, cumulative cultural effect is required,…" (Goldberg, 2001:112). The researcher finds the influence of culture on the children's experience of themselves and their emotional intelligence in this former quote.

3.5.2   Attributes of the therapist

The therapist's contribution to the change, growth and development of the children included in this programme was closely related to the relationship discussed above. Part of the contributions of the therapist was the creation of a safe and accepting relationship, which promotes change and growth. (Compare Chapter 3, 3.2 The therapist's role in enhancing emotional intelligence; Chapter 4, 2.2.4 More theoretical principles: The therapeutic relationship in Gestalt play therapy – Objectives more applicable to the therapist.) The most important attribute of the therapist to emphasise here is the attitude of not trying to fit the children in the groups into the culture of the therapist, but rather to adapt, understand and work within the children's own cultural fields. The researcher sees the latter as the most important attribute of the therapist in connection with a culturally sensitive programme.

3.5.3   Dialogue

The dialogue used in the Gestalt play therapy sessions is part of the healing relationship and a specific technique used in this programme. It created I-Thou moments with real connection on a horizontal level between the therapist and the children in the group. (Chapter 4, 1.8 Dialogue) Other situations in the process of dialogue were more objective discussions of the exercises used in the programme. This is, according to Mackewn (2004:84), situations where the therapist is more task and outcome oriented. The therapist will thus in I-It type of dialogue focus on analysis, judgement and reflection rather than meeting the person.

In such an I-Thou focused relationship the therapist considered not only what has been said, but also how it has been said. This was the cultural component. Children's way of being, their behaviour and expression of emotions are all closely related to language, as it developed along the same route in the brain. (Chapter 3, 1.4.5 Language and culture) Dialogue was thus not only used as a healing component of the therapeutic relationship, but was also used to gain some understanding of the children in the groups' cultural fields and levels of emotional intelligence.

3.5.4   Experiments

The experiment is a very important tool in the process of change and development in Gestalt therapy (Chapter 4, 3. APPLICABLE TECHNIQUES, 3.1.1 Experiments). Corey (1996:247) states that the therapist should be sensitive to the client's cultural background as a guideline to apply experiments. The researcher as therapist saw this in the context of knowing which experiments will show respect for the way of being of the individual children in the groups. If a child's culture depicted of him to be reserved and not act out a lot, such a child was not forced to participate in very exposing activities like dancing, acting, or performing tasks stated on cards in a game, in the therapy situation. This might have created a negative experience of the emotional intelligence group environment. As stated in Chapter 4 (2.2.4.3 Objectives of the therapeutic relationship), the children learn and grow much better if they enjoy the experience. The researcher as therapist in this programme therefore always worked within the framework of the cultural fields of the

children. This is why it is so important to have knowledge about what is comfortable and what not to the children according to their cultures.

4.   APPLICATION OF CULTURE IN THE CURRENT STUDY

This study applied Gestalt play therapy techniques in group-settings to improve the emotional intelligence of the primary school children in the groups. The importance of a cultural sensitive approach is evident to the researcher in the following explanation by Newman and Newman (1987:280): The child in the middle school age phase learns the fundamental skills of his culture. He spends a great deal of his day learning skills that are valued by society. These include academic skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic or other skills like fishing, hunting or sewing. As a child gain confidence in these skills, he develops a more realistic image of his possible contribution to society. The primary school child is able to enjoy many of the resources and opportunities of his culture without much responsibilities and social obligations (Newman & Newman, 1987:280).

In this study the researcher made use of the knowledge of the children's cultural fields to gain an understanding of a child's functioning as a whole. In the same process of gaining awareness of the children's way of being, the researcher needed to be aware of her own cultural attitudes, behaviour and language. This awareness helped the researcher not to try to lead the children towards the researcher's way of making sense of life. The children needed to learn more about themselves, their feelings, their communication and motivation to live a full life – all within their own field or cultural environment. Culture was thus used as the field in which each child operates individually. The fields were explored to gain a better understanding of all group members and to increase acceptance between group members.

5. **CONCLUSION**

Culture is the way the group members and the group leader make sense of their lives. It is the field that all the individual members bring to the group. By understanding what culture is and how it functions in the Namibian environment, the researcher as therapist could gain an effective understanding of the children in the research groups' way of being and level of emotional intelligence.

A cultural sensitive programme will thus use the cultures of the individuals in the groups to gain a better understanding of them. Culture in this study functioned as the background against which the children in the groups were understood. This background was part of each individual in the group. The group members' culture, their feelings, cognition and physical being are all part of an interrelated whole.

This culture sensitive programme is best represented by the following diagrammatic representation of this study – a cultural sensitive programme to enhance the emotional intelligence of primary school children (as holistic beings), using Gestalt play therapy techniques.

Figure 3.1   **Cultural field as part of the person as a whole**