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**Experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities**

by

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**Experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in  
impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities**

by

**TILANA KNAFO**

submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

in the subject

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SUPERVISOR:            PROF P. MARAIS  
JOINT SUPERVISOR:    PROF B. SMIT

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That story is working on you now. You keep thinking about it. That story is changing you now, making you want to live right. (Basso, 1996:59)

## DECLARATION

**Student no: 4992334**

I Tilana Knafo hereby declare that “Experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities” represents my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



.....

SIGNATURE

**4 December 2015**

.....

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to all the ECD practitioners in impoverished communities making a difference in young children's lives under difficult circumstances.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the people who played a significant role in assisting me to pursue and to complete this dissertation.

- My supervisors Prof. Petro Marais and Prof. Brigitte Smit who guided me with their expertise and insight;
- My dearest friend Harry Swart who inspired me, shared his time, wisdom and knowledge with me and actively supported my on a daily basis;
- My sister Dr. Renche Nel (for leading the way), my brother Carel and my mother for all their encouraging phone calls and prayers;
- The two participants to this study, Thea and Rina, whom I deeply admire. They not only shared their experiences regarding their work, but also opened their hearts to me; and
- My heavenly Father who made everything possible.

## **SUMMARY**

Poverty is a global concern and the implementation of a quality early childhood development (ECD) programme is one of the most powerful ways of breaking the poverty cycle. Although research has been done regarding ECD centres in impoverished, marginalised and predominantly black communities (informal settlements), there is little, if any, similar research regarding predominantly white settlements. The purpose of this narrative study is to explore and understand the experiences of ECD practitioners regarding their work in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities.

I, therefore, conducted this study from a social constructivist paradigm. The participants constructed their realities based on their lived experiences and interaction with others. The experiences of the participants were also influenced by their entire ecological system – their everyday experiences in their work and lives, as well as more distal influences for example South-Africa's socio-political dispensation and cultural influences. Consequently the study was framed within the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner.

I collected data through narrative interviews with two participants (ECD practitioners), and through field notes from observations, documents, photographs and artefacts. From the coded data, four main themes emerged – social and personal experiences, experiences concerning place, experiences with camp leadership and experiences concerning support infrastructure. These themes will be useful to determine the kind of support that practitioners need to ensure the quality of ECD programmes to support the optimal development of the children.

## OPSOMMING

Armoede is 'n globale probleem en kwaliteit kleinkinderontwikkelingsprogramme (KKO-programme) is een van die kragtigste maniere om die armoede-siklus te verbreek. Alhoewel daar navorsing omtrent KKO-sentra in verarmde en gemarginaliseerde oorwegend swart gemeenskappe (informele nedersettings) gedoen is bestaan daar min, indien enige, soortgelyke navorsing in oorwegend blanke nedersettings. Die doel van hierdie narratiewe studie is om die ervarings van KKO-praktisyns in hulle werk in verarmde en gemarginaliseerde oorwegend blanke nedersettings te ondersoek en te verstaan.

Daarom het ek hierdie studie vanuit 'n sosiaal-konstruktivistiese paradigma uitgevoer. Die deelnemers het hulle realiteite geskep gebaseer op hulle geleefde ervarings en interaksies met ander. Die ervarings van die deelnemers is ook beïnvloed deur hulle hele ekostelsel – hulle daaglikse ervarings in hulle werk en lewens, asook verwyderde stelsels van invloed soos Suid-Afrika se sosio-politieke bedeling en kulturele invloede. Gevolglik is hierdie studie geformuleer binne die Ekologiese Sisteemteorie van Bronfenbrenner as raamwerk.

Ek het data versamel deur narratiewe onderhoude te voer met twee deelnemers (KKO-praktisyns), en deur veldnotas van waarnemings, dokumente, foto's en artefakte. Uit die gekodeerde data het vier hoofemas navore gekom – sosiale en persoonlike ervarings, ervarings met betrekking tot plek, ervarings met kampeierskap en ervarings rakende ondersteuningsinfrastruktuur. Hierdie temas sal bruikbaar wees om die soort ondersteuning te bepaal wat praktisyns benodig om 'n kwaliteit KKO-program te verseker om sodoende die optimale ontwikkeling van die kinders te ondersteun.

## **KEY CONCEPTS**

Impoverished and marginalised community; informal settlement; squatter camp; predominantly white community; Early Childhood Development centre; Early Childhood Development practitioner; non-government organisation; volunteers; young children.

## **SLEUTELKONSEPTE**

Verarmde en gemarginaliseerde gemeenskap; informele nedersetting; plakkerskamp; oorwegend blanke gemeenskap, kleinkinderontwikkelingsentrum; kleinkinderontwikkelingspraktisyn; nie-regeringsorganisasie; vrywilligers; jong kinders.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>DAP</b>	Developmentally appropriate practice
<b>ECD</b>	Early childhood development
<b>ECLS-B</b>	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort
<b>Grade R</b>	The Reception Year, the year before Grade 1
<b>IHDP</b>	Infant Health and Development Program
<b>LBW</b>	Low Birth Weight
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government Organisation
<b>NICHD</b>	National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
<b>NLSY</b>	National Longitudinal Study of Youth
<b>SAHRC</b>	South African Human Rights Commission
<b>SAIMDC</b>	South African Index of Multiple Deprivation for Children
<b>SES</b>	Socio-economic Status
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

## PSEUDONYMS

In order to protect the identity and respect the privacy of individuals and communities, I used pseudonyms for all the persons and organisations mentioned by name in this narrative inquiry.

**Organisation H** Organisation H is an NGO working nationally with a focus on white poverty

**Organisation D** This organisation is an NGO working in impoverished white communities in the Tshwane metropolitan area. This organisation supported the community on Oom Deon's farm.

**Oom Deon** Owner of the farm on the outskirts of a metropolitan area who started a settlement catering for impoverished and homeless families and individuals.

**Hannah** Representative of organisation D who coordinated support and assistance to the community on Oom Deon's farm.

**Mia** Volunteer at Organisation D. Principal and owner of an ECD centre who started and supported the ECD centre for the impoverished white community on Oom Deon's farm.

**Thea** Principal and practitioner in the ECD centre on Oom Deon's farm and one of the two main participants in the study.

**Chrystal** One of the children in Thea's class at the ECD centre

**Willem** One of the school-going children in Thea's aftercare class

**Riaan** One of the school-going children in Thea's aftercare class

**Janet** Volunteer who worked in the ECD centre on Oom Deon's farm for a short period of time.

**Organisation B** This organisation is an NGO working in impoverished communities in the greater Johannesburg metropolitan area.

<b>Zian</b>	Volunteer and main organiser at Organisation B, actively supporting the informal settlement at an abandoned caravan park in a large town in Gauteng.
<b>Hein</b>	Self-appointed manager / shack lord of the informal settlement at the caravan park.
<b>Cindy</b>	Volunteer who comes in every day to work as practitioner with the older group in the ECD centre at Hein's informal settlement. Also the main coordinator for donations to this community.
<b>Rina</b>	Practitioner in the ECD centre in Hein's community and one of the two main participants in the study.
<b>Petro</b>	Seventeen-year old member of Hein's community and assistant to Rina in the ECD centre.

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# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The first of 17 sustainable development goals identified by the United Nations (United Nations, 2015) is: “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”. Statistics South Africa (2015: 14) echoes this sentiment, stressing that the eradication of poverty is one of the world’s most pressing issues begging for solutions. Jensen (2009: 6) defines poverty as a complex condition that is chronic and debilitating and affects the whole person – mind, body and soul, as a result of many unfavourable synergic risk factors.

At the same time, United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon (2015: 3) has announced that the UN Millennium Development Goals initiative has been the most successful drive against poverty in human history. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been more than halved from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015 (United Nations, 2015a: 4). Yet, the World Bank (2015) believes that this percentage is still unacceptably high. Meanwhile, poverty amongst poor whites in South Africa, although low compared to that amongst other races in South Africa, has remained consistent between 2006 and 2011, whilst poverty amongst other race groups has dropped (Statistics South Africa, 2014b: 27).

Since the 1960s, an abundance of longitudinal studies have shown that poverty negatively impacts all facets of a child’s development – ranging from health, language and cognitive development to social and emotional development. As a result, children who live in poverty are ill-equipped to independently escape the poverty spiral. Subsequently, these children grow into adults who will become parents to another generation of children deprived of opportunities and, most likely, they will be impoverished in adulthood as well (Heckman, 2013: 3; Noble, Wright & Cluver, 2007: 53–71; Grunewald & Rolnick, 2007: 18; Mustard, 2007: 43–84; Barnes, Wright, Noble & Dawes, 2007: 1; Ryan, Fauth & Brooks-Gunn, 2006: 323).

Despite this sombre picture regarding the poverty situation in the world, Nobel laureate for Economics in 2000, James J. Heckman (2013) believes that early intervention provides a powerful mechanism to bring about sustainable change that will ensure economic growth (Heckman, 2013: 5). This sentiment is strongly echoed by the World Bank throughout their publication *No Small Matter: The Impact of Poverty, Shocks, and Human Capital Investments in Early Childhood* (2011). Economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Rob Grunewald (2015: 3) believes that return on investment in early childhood development (ECD) “can pay for itself many times over”. On the other side of the same coin, Grunewald (2015: 7) warns against the detrimental effect of low-quality childcare, which he believes creates excessive stress that is harmful to the healthy development of children.

Yet, our first concern should not be the stimulation of economic growth. Our moral responsibility is to protect the well-being of all children, including those whose well-being is seriously compromised by poverty. This responsibility becomes even more compelling in light of the arguments of a number of prominent scholars and economists (Terreblanche, 2014; Heckman, 2013, Monbiot, 2011; Freire, 1970). These writers refer to the misfortune of being born in the wrong place and into the wrong class – what Heckman (2013: 3) calls the “accident of birth”. Both Monbiot (2011) and Terreblanche (2014: 147) postulate that it is often a fallacy that individuals have earned the wealth they enjoy through hard work and enterprise. Many of those who are rich today are rich because they landed lucrative careers as a result of being born into privilege. This viewpoint, although justifiable, contributed to the fate of the poor white person.

Being born white in the previous political dispensation in South Africa meant that a person was born into privilege (Bottomley, 2012: 39). Therefore, affirmative action was introduced after 1994 to redress the injustices of the past (Terreblanche, 2014: 98-99). This policy is experienced by many as discriminatory against whites, with those from the working class and without skills being mostly affected (Mashaba, 2015; Bishop, 2014; Simpson, 2013).

Unfortunately, the situation regarding poor whites, especially those living in informal and marginalised communities (informal settlements) has, on the one hand, been popularised in the media as an interesting and novel phenomenon. Le Riche (2014) describes this hype: “The people at the squatter camp have been exposed to their fair share of media types and journos, all looking for their slice of the story or award-winning shot”.

On the other hand, it is a highly politicised topic often used by civic organisations as well as political groupings – such as the Council of Conservative Citizens (2015), Le Riche (2014) and Nieuwoudt (2013) – not only in South Africa but also internationally, to demonstrate systemic discrimination by the government against whites. Yet, there is no specific attempt to change the plight of these communities’ children in the various reports. Reference to children is made merely to demonstrate the misery of the camps or settlements. I also could not find any academic research on ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised white communities. However, research has been done on education in black informal settlements (Maarman, 2009) and even on ECD centres in black informal settlements (Dawes, Biersteker & Hendricks, 2012; Van der Vyver, 2012; Ebrahim, Killian & Rule, 2011). This paucity of research on ECD centres in white informal settlements was confirmed by the Executive Director of Solidarity Helping Hand, Dr Danie Brink (2015), with whom I communicated personally. It is significant that Solidarity Helping Hand, which states that its strategic intent is to find solutions for Afrikaner poverty, has not done any research on the education and care of young children in these communities. This is even more meaningful in light of the power of ECD centres to contribute to the breaking of the poverty cycle as explained by dominant economists, such as Grunewald (2015), Heckman (2013), Rolnick and Grunewald (2011), Grunewald and Rolnick (2007). Regarding investment in the education and care of young children, Bernanke (2012), former Chairperson of the Federal Reserve Bank of the United States, states that “very few alternative investments can promise that kind of return”.

A plethora of literature, including the much-quoted work of Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), has indicated the effect of poverty on the developmental outcomes of young children. Affected areas include physical health, cognitive development, and

emotional and behavioural outcomes. Azzi-Lessing (2010) describes all the conditions associated with poverty that create risk for young children, for example, depression, substance abuse, a lack of resources, the stress of living with poverty and domestic violence. Young children growing up in poverty come to school with high needs levels but ECD centres in poor communities often do not have the necessary resources or support to address the problems of such highly vulnerable children (Azzi-Lessing, 2010). Thus, the ECD practitioner working in an impoverished community has to care for and educate children who face a number of challenges.

This is why I became interested in how practitioners working in impoverished and marginalised communities experience the challenges concerning their work with vulnerable children. I chose to focus on predominantly white communities, since there is a paucity of research in this regard and in the hope that findings from this study would contribute to a better understanding of the needs and challenges of ECD practitioners in these communities. My hope was that, ultimately, the findings of this study would contribute in a modest way to more appropriate education and care for children growing up in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities.

The following section contextualises the study before presenting the rationale for the study. Following this is an outline of the problem statement, the research question and the sub-questions, as well as the aims and objectives to guide the study. Also included are the research design and the ethical measures to be taken for the study. The chapter concludes with a layout of the whole study and definitions of some of the key terminology used therein.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

A definition of poverty as a unidimensional concept (i.e. merely as lack of income) fails to account of the other contributing aspects, such as lack of education or ill-health. A poor person experiences poverty in various dimensions of deprivation (Statistics South Africa, 2014a: 2). 1998 Nobel laureate economist, Amartya Sen (2000: 18) explains:

*Human lives are battered and diminished in all kinds of different ways, and the first task, seen in this perspective, is to acknowledge that deprivations of very different kinds have to be accommodated within a general overarching framework.*

A number of initiatives have been undertaken since 2000 to profile poverty in South Africa by using household level data presented for the total population to fill in the gaps between the ten-yearly censuses (most recently, in 2001 and 2011) (Statistics South Africa, 2014a: 2). The South African Index of Multiple Deprivation for Children (SAIMDC, 2001) was developed to focus specifically on the deprivations experienced by children growing up in poverty (Barnes, Wright, Noble & Dawes, 2007: 2). ‘

Barnes et al. (2007: 9) identify the following domains of deprivation:

- **Material deprivation** – relating to a lack of material and financial resources;
- **Human capital deprivation** – relating to inadequate education and skills development;
- **Social capital deprivation** – relating to lack of support networks that could ensure social inclusion;
- **Living environment deprivation** – relating to inadequate housing and unfavourable neighbourhood characteristics such as pollution and neighbourhood crime;
- **Physical safety deprivation** – relating to crimes against children, accidental injury and death;
- **Adequate care deprivation** – relating to a loss of primary caregivers, inadequate supervision, and neglect;
- **Abuse** – relating to sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect;
- **Health deprivation** – relating to poor physical and mental health.

A more up-to-date profile of child deprivation across South Africa, the South African Index of Multiple Deprivation for Children 2007 at Municipality Level (SAIMDC, 2007), has been constructed using data from the 2007 Community Survey (Wright, Noble, Barnes & Noble, 2009: 3). Five domains of child deprivation were identified in the SAIMDC 2007 as a result of slight modifications to the wording of the questions in the 2001 census. These domains include income and material deprivation, employment deprivation, living environment deprivation, education deprivation, and biological parent deprivation (Wright et al., 2009: 4).

Another advantage of the SAIMDC 2007 study by Wright et al. (2009: 3) was that the levels of child deprivation according to the 2001 statistics could be compared to those of 2007. This comparison found moderate improvement nationally in terms of children experiencing some kind of deprivation. Nevertheless, child deprivation still remained very high (Wright et al., 2009: 17).

Multiple deprivation and marginalisation are two sides of the same coin, according to Africa Forum Executive Secretary, Prof John Tesha, with whom I communicated personally on the subject (2015). This implies that each domain of deprivation contributes to the marginalisation of the deprived individual or community.

Marginalisation, as defined in the Executive Secretariat of the Africa Forum's *Study on the Most Marginalized Populations in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2010: 5), is a social and economic concept and implies being in a marginal or peripheral position from the centre of the main development activities or decision-making processes. The present study focuses on the experiences of ECD practitioners in predominantly white informal settlements as examples of marginalised communities; marginalisation is therefore a central theme. My literature review indicated that poverty per se has a marginalising effect on those held captive by it. All or most poor communities experience a level of exclusion and marginalisation.

A review of research into the experiences of poor children in the United Kingdom found that poverty limits these children's social relations and participation. Furthermore, these children fear being marginalised as a result of their being socially

different (Ridge, 2011: 73). Ridge (2011: 76) also indicates that transport problems (the result of either unaffordability or poor service delivery) jeopardise friendships and participation in sport and leisure activities. Poor housing has an effect on children's social lives as well, since cold conditions, a lack of space, and friends' reluctance to visit leave children feeling stigmatised and socially isolated (Ridge, 2011: 78).

Socio-economically disadvantaged adults also seem embarrassed about their predicaments. Solidarity Helping Hand (2010: 3), in its report on white poverty, quotes a resident from an impoverished area in Pretoria, who confessed that poor people hide their poverty because they are ashamed of it. Meanwhile, behind closed doors, hungry children cry at night. The poor are often also physically marginalised. This tendency is illustrated in a number of international studies. With reference to the Paris *Banlieue*, Angélil and Siress (2012: 60) talk about a "discriminatory spatial design". Angélil and Siress (2012: 61) explain that, in the 1980s, the poor were pushed to the margins of society due to widespread lay-offs and unemployment in France. Stigmatisation of these neighbourhoods contributed to their marginalisation. An unfortunate consequence of such practices is that the poor become disconnected from the macro-economic trends and so cannot benefit from economic upturns, as their physical space isolates them (Angélil & Siress, 2012: 61).

Another example of this marginalisation due to poverty is the Roma minority group of Central and South-eastern Europe, whose marginalisation spans centuries (Šabić, Knežević, Vujadinović, Golić, Milinčić & Joksimović, 2013: 55). Their fate seems to be similar to that of the poor white residents of informal settlements in South Africa.

In their report, *Gesigte van Afrikanerarmoede*, Solidarity Helping Hand (2010: 6-10) portrays the conditions of extreme poor health in these settlements and how the health system failed the poor dismally. The report also describes social woes often associated with poverty (ibid: 10-11), such as child abuse and child neglect, abandoned new-born babies and prostitution practised by teenage girls. These people live in caravans, wooden huts, corrugated iron structures and chicken pens, or under trees, bridges, plastic sheets, hungry and without electricity (ibid: 11-12). BBC World Affairs Editor, John Simpson (2013) describes the unhygienic conditions

he observed during a visit to a white informal settlement in South Africa – mosquitoes breeding in pools of dirty stagnant water, insufficient toilet facilities for the residents, and general neglect and littering. Similarly, Šabić et al. (2013: 55) explains how living conditions in the slums of Belgrade compromise the poor's health and jeopardise their chances of finding jobs and obtaining social security, as slum conditions separate them from society. They, too, suffer from the same adversities as those experienced by informal settlement dwellers in South Africa – poor nutrition, no sanitation or electricity, and unhygienic conditions (Šabić et al., 2013: 74). In fact, although they are on separate continents, these impoverished settlements in Europe and South Africa even look the same.

Photographs of Roma slum areas in Belgrade (Šabić et al., 2013: 74) and informal settlements in South Africa reveal that these areas are remarkably similar. The shacks, referred to as “barracks” by Šabić et al. (2013: 73), in Belgrade bear a close resemblance to the typical shack in an informal settlement in South Africa, irrespective of whether the settlement is predominantly black or white. Šabić et al. (2013: 72) highlight the global dilemma of the marginalisation of the poor:

*No country in the world is an exception to the existence of such settlements. They are the ‘invisible part of the city’, often spatially excluded from the official maps and documents and usually physically hidden from the eyes of tourists and foreign visitors behind the colourful facades of the local authorities.*

As I have argued, extreme poverty has a marginalising effect on all its victims. Yet, white poverty has certain unique challenges, whether perceived or real. My personal observation, during conversations with white residents of informal settlements and with the aid organisations active in these settlements, was that these perceptions are held both by poor whites themselves and (even more so) by aid organisations focusing on white poverty. However, despite the clearly pressing nature of this issue in poor white communities, research regarding ECD centres in informal settlements in South Africa has, to date, focused exclusively on predominantly black informal settlements.

Although white informal settlements share certain universal characteristics with other informal settlements and impoverished communities, they also have unique characteristics due to specific socio-cultural circumstances. Solidarity Helping Hand (2010: 5) states that unemployment amongst whites increased by 150% between 1994 and 2005. In the Tshwane district alone, there were 77 white informal settlements at the time and 430 countrywide. The organisation claimed that 600 000 Afrikaners were classified as poor. However, determining the exact number of whites living in informal settlements seems to be a problem. A number of 400 000 had been quoted by BBC World Affairs editor, John Simpson (2013) but this figure was questioned in an online response *Do 400 000 whites live in squatter camps in South Africa? No* by Julian Rademeyer (2013) of the Africa Check. The reaction of Solidarity Helping Hand to Rademeyer's claims was that there are no reliable statistics, and the organisation then quotes the most recent available figure at 600 000. Simpson himself responded that census figures for people on the edge of society are often unreliable (Rademeyer, 2013). This view is supported by Provost (2012), who alleges that, although it is often claimed that one billion people worldwide live in informal settlements, no one really knows how many people live in these settlements, since they are usually "invisible" in official statistics.

Meanwhile, in 2013, then Deputy Chief Executive of the South African Institute for Race Relations, Frans Cronjé published articles in the *City Press* (Cronjé, 2013a) and *Beeld* (Cronjé, 2013b) newspapers, indicating that whites have actually benefitted from the new political dispensation. Although the white unemployment rate has risen from three percent to 5.7%, white unemployment is still relatively low. Following their exodus from the public sector in 1994, many whites became self-employed. He concludes that the new dispensation drove white people into entrepreneurship and relative economic success. Yet, the poor did not benefit from a changing political situation. The situation did not serve as an incentive to the poor to become self-reliant and successful; instead, they retreated to the fringes of society, hidden in informal settlements.

The white poverty issue has hitherto been hidden from the public eye. Potential donors, philanthropists, welfare organisations and non-governmental organisations

were oblivious to the plight of these people. Potgieter (2009: 4) quotes Executive Director of Solidarity Helping Hand, Dirk Hermann, who refers to white poverty as the “silent poverty”, which is probably the only form of poverty in the world that is politically incorrect to discuss.

The perception exists, correctly or incorrectly, that whites do not have access to state and other forms of support. In research conducted on behalf of the Umsobomvu Youth Fund, Robin Pharoah (2008) found that the poor white youth in South Africa is the most marginalised group in the country. Poverty and affirmative action deprived them of job opportunities. These communities have largely fallen through the cracks of the current system; they do not know about programmes available to them and, for this and various other reasons, do not access these programmes (Pharoah, 2008: 1).

In the article *Armoede het nie velkleur* (Poverty does not have a skin colour), Kruger (2010: 10) claims that poor whites do not feel welcome in South Africa and do not apply for help because they believe that they will not receive assistance because of the colour of their skin. In support of such statements, O’Reilly (2010) expresses the following sentiment:

*South Africa’s unskilled whites find themselves on the wrong side of history, gaining little sympathy from those who perceive them as having profited unfairly during apartheid years.*

In conclusion, all those living in poverty (including children) suffer from deprivations in various domains. However, poor whites in South Africa are doubly burdened. This is the result of the effort to reverse the effects of decades of racial inequality. Not only has affirmative action impacted the ability of whites in South Africa to generate income but poor whites also believe they are side-lined by government in terms of financial and social support. Since black poverty is such an overwhelming problem in South Africa, white poverty is easily ignored. Hall and Sambu (2014) point out the high racial disparities in child poverty in South Africa, with 63% of black children and only one percent of white children living below the poverty line in 2012. Thus rendered invisible behind the broader problem of black poverty and deprivation in South Africa,

poor whites are ignored by the dominant classes – both black and white (Bottomley, 2012: 186). Against this background, the rationale is explained in the next section.

### **1.3 RATIONALE**

Despite considerable evidence of the damaging effects of poverty on the development and well-being of children as well as the high level of child poverty in South Africa, I could not find any research on the functioning of ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities. I therefore became interested in the experiences of ECD practitioners working in these communities. The rationale for my study is discussed under the headings: a) effects of poverty on children; b) levels of child poverty in South Africa; c) my interest in the study; and d) dearth of research.

#### **a) Effects of poverty on children**

The effects of poverty on the development of young children have been extensively researched by, among others, Jensen (2009), Mustard (2006), Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), and Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997). The influence of high-quality ECD programmes on child poverty has also been studied by a number of scholars, including Heckman (2013), Naudea, Marinez, Premand and Filmer (2011), and Magnuson and Shager (2010). Subsequently, early childhood development programmes have been developed in several countries to serve young children growing up in poverty. These include the Proyecto Integral de Desarrollo Infantil in Bolivia and the Colombian Programme Hogares Commmunitarios de Bienestar (Walker, 2011: 136-137), Head Start (Gordon & Browne, 2011: 25-27), the Carolina Abededarian Project (Sparling, Ramey & Ramey, 2007: 109), and the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program (Schweinhart, 2007: 88-91) in the USA. If one considers the high rate of child poverty in South Africa (discussed below), the establishment of ECD centres in impoverished areas in South Africa is at least as crucial as in these other countries.

## **b) Levels of Child Poverty in South Africa**

According to Hall and Sambu (2014), 56% of children lived below the lower poverty line of R635 in 2012. Biersteker, Dawes and Hendricks (2012: 3), furthermore, found that only 30% of South Africa's poorest children have access to formal early learning programmes. Ebrahim, Seletji and Dawes (2013: 66) meanwhile, suggested an even lower percentage of 20%. Whilst this difference can probably be attributed to the fact that both figures are based on educated guesses rather than official data, it is more than likely that the actual percentage does fall within this range (20-30%).

Nevertheless, the percentage of poor children attending ECD programmes remains disappointingly low. This unsatisfactory situation was partly explained during initial interviews with organisations and individuals involved in the setting up of ECD centres in white informal settlements. Here, it was indicated that the economic, social and physical environments of such communities pose certain challenges to the implementation of programmes where young children can derive optimal benefits from early education experiences. An effort to understand these challenges was undertaken by Dawes, Biersteker and Hendricks (2012). The purpose of The Sobambisana Initiative, a research project conducted over a four-year period and carried out in five informal and rural communities, was to assess the effectiveness of integrated ECD interventions. These included community playgroups, home visiting programmes, practitioner training, and parent guidance workshops. At a 2012 conference focused on strategies to overcome poverty and inequality, Biersteker (Early Learning Research Unit), Dawes (University of Cape Town) and Hendricks (ELRU) explained that the objective of this initiative was to develop, implement and evaluate examples of ECD services that would improve not only the quality of ECD services to children in poor communities but also their access to these services.

## **c) My interest in the study**

Since childhood, I have been concerned about people surviving in poverty and was painfully aware that being born in poverty not only is unfair but also dictates people's chances of success and wealth. I came to realise that education (specifically quality

early child education and care for young children) could serve as a powerful mechanism to change the destinies of these children.

**d) Dearth of research**

In spite of research on ECD centres in predominantly black informal settlements (for example, Dawes et al., 2012), there is a gap in poverty research regarding ECD centres in white informal settlements, which my study endeavours to fill. Furthermore, as I have indicated, impoverished white informal settlements have a degree of correspondence with other impoverished and marginalised communities, not only in South Africa but also internationally. Therefore, the results of this study may also have some significance for similar studies in other communities, over and above the particular idiosyncrasies of poverty in white communities in informal settlements.

**1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The ECD centre is an integral part of the community it serves. The primary role-players in the centre, the children and the practitioners, come from the community. In this research the community, as microsystem of the child and practitioner, is impoverished and marginalised. And this condition of poverty together with its concomitant multiple deprivations determine the experiences of the practitioner in terms of the children in her care, her personal life, the settlement where she resides, the members of the community and the help the community and the ECD centre receives.

The effect of poverty on the young child is already visible at school entry as poor children are less prepared for the demands of formal schooling than non-poor children (Ebrahim et al., 2013: 69; Magnuson & Shager 2010: 1186). Nonetheless a high quality ECD experience can level the playing field between poor and non-poor children (Heckman, 2013: 5; Ebrahim et al., 2013: 69; Magnuson & Shager, 2010: 1186). However, in order to provide high quality education and care for children from poor communities their contextual challenges as well as that of their practitioners have to be understood. Since the practitioners are from the communities and have

first-hand understanding and experience of the hardship of life in a poor and marginalised community, their insights can hardly be ignored. Furthermore, by disregarding the practitioners' experiences they are excluded from the poverty discourse. Paulo Freire (2009: 96) explains:

*It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their situation in the world.*

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

The research question is therefore stated as follows:

What are the experiences of practitioners in ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities?

The following set of sub-questions was formulated to investigate the different spheres of the practitioners' experience.

1. What are the experiences of practitioners regarding children-at-risk coming from problematic home environments?
2. What are the experiences of the practitioners regarding the perceptions and characteristics of the parents of children-at-risk that could pose challenges to the practitioners in performing their task professionally?
3. How do practitioners' personal issues affect the quality of education and care they offer?
4. What are the experiences of practitioners regarding their respective contexts that could pose challenges in terms of the quality and safety of education and care?

## **1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this narrative inquiry was to explore and understand the experiences of two ECD practitioners regarding their work and their lives in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities. It is anticipated that, through the documentation of these people's narratives concerning their experiences and challenges in their work, future involvement by organisations and individuals to support the centre can be made more effective. The support of these organisations and individuals will then not be directed by personal perceptions but will rather be informed by real issues. The acknowledgement of these practitioners' insights will serve to recognise them as equal partners. Furthermore, having someone listen to and accept their narratives will validate their ingenuity in handling everyday challenges and issues in their work and lives in a hostile environment, thereby empowering them. Thus, the main aim of the study was to determine the experiences of practitioners in ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities.

The following objectives were identified:

1. To explore and understand the experiences of practitioners regarding children-at-risk coming from problematic home environments;
2. To explore and understand the experiences of the practitioners regarding the perceptions and characteristics of the parents of children-at-risk that could pose a challenge to the practitioners in performing their task professionally;
3. To determine how personal issues of the practitioners affect the quality of education and care;
4. To explore and understand the experiences of the practitioners regarding their context that could pose a challenge in terms of safe, high-quality education and care.

## **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This dissertation uses the Ecological Systems Theory, developed by developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1986), as its theoretical framework. This theory explains how everything about the child and the child's environment affects how the child will grow and develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 37). Therefore, the different contexts that have an effect on the child directly (parents, neighbourhood friends) and indirectly (unemployment, social stigma, policies regarding grants and subsidies to the ECD centre) create the specific contexts faced by the practitioner in the ECD centre in a marginalised community.

## **1.8 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Fouché and Delport (2011: 66) regard a qualitative approach as suitable for research of a relatively unknown phenomenon in order to understand the meaning that individuals ascribe to an experience that is socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 8; Creswell, 2014: 4). Therefore, a qualitative approach was appropriate to this study, with its focus on the experiences of ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised communities. I based this study on the ontological assumption that "experience" creates social reality, as formulated by American theorist, John Dewey (1938). Experience, as it is created and expressed in everyday living, is storied in everyday living and telling (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 38). As I searched for a genuine understanding of their experiences, participants' natural language was used (Fouché & Delport, 2011: 66) and data was collected in the participants' settings (Creswell, 2014: 4).

I also adopted a social constructivist approach to this qualitative research study. I based my study on the participants' view of their situation and allowed them to construct the meaning of their experiences by asking open-ended questions (Creswell, 2014: 8; Butler-Kisber, 2010: 5). I sought to understand the participants' contexts by spending time in these settings and establishing close relationships with the participants (Butler-Kisber, 2010: 5). At the same time, I acknowledged that my

interpretation of the participants' narratives was shaped by my own background (Creswell, 2014: 8).

## **1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopted a narrative inquiry design within a qualitative research approach. Experience is the phenomenon to be studied in narrative inquiry; and it is recorded as a story (Clandinin, 2013: 13). The stories are told primarily through interviews but also through observations, documents, photographs and artefacts (Creswell, 2013: 71; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 106, 113). Since the focus of my study centres on the experiences of ECD practitioners, I found narrative inquiry to be the most appropriate methodology to analyse and understand their experiences. The participants told their stories by means of narrative interviews, which allowed the participants to tell their own stories in their own way (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 111).

## **1.10 RESEARCH METHODS**

Creswell (2013: 22) refers to the emerging and inductive nature of qualitative research methodology. This implies that the data-collection strategy may change to enable a better understanding of the research problem. Whereas my research question was originally focused on the challenges of the participants, I realised that the successes in their work were dominant and therefore changed my focus to that of the experiences of the participants.

### **1.10.1 Site selection and sampling**

Two sites, which could be described as “shelters” or “informal settlements” providing roofs over the heads of poor and unemployed white people, were selected. The one settlement housed 200 homeless, exclusively white families in wooden huts (Wendy houses) as well as a number of single men in caravans on a privately owned farm on the outskirts of a city. The second predominantly white community illegally occupied a piece of land within a big town that used to be a caravan park. Between 300 and

600 homeless people lived there in makeshift housing, tents and caravans. Information-rich cases – namely, two women who were part of the communities where they lived and worked as ECD practitioners – were selected. One participant, a woman with a family who was forced to move to the settlement when she and her husband lost their jobs and the family became homeless, was in her late thirties. The other participant was a single woman in her mid-forties with a B.Sc. degree who chose to move to the settlement and work with the children of an impoverished community. Although from different backgrounds, both had first-hand experience of life and work as ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities.

#### **1.10.2 Data collection**

I collected data for this study using multiple methods, such as interviews and conversations with the participants, field notes of non-participant observations, documents, artefacts, and photographs. These methods are discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

#### **1.10.3 Data analysis**

I used eclectic coding (Saldaña, 2013: 262) to analyse the participants' experiences. Seven coding methods were used to code interviews of and conversations with the two participants, field notes made during field visits, photographs, documents, and artefacts. Four dominant themes were constructed after codes were clustered into categories. Data analysis is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

#### **1.10.4 Trustworthiness**

I endeavoured to ensure trustworthiness by spending a considerable amount of time in the field – I paid numerous field visits to record interviews and to make non-participant observations (Creswell, 2013: 250). These interviews were recorded electronically and non-participant observations were jotted down in as much detail as possible when incidents occurred (Strydom, 2011: 335). Informal and telephonic

conversations were written down as soon as possible after the conversations took place. Furthermore, I took photographs in support of the observations I made during visits and captured details I might not have recorded at the time. I also continually verified transcriptions and interpretations with the two participants (Creswell, 2013: 252; Butler-Kisber, 2010: 13). As this is a narrative inquiry, the participants' voices were prominent throughout the study (Butler-Kisber, 2010: 13) but I also bore the participants' personal, social and contextual influences, which coloured their experiences, in mind. Moreover, I accounted for my assumptions and biases through researcher reflexivity and by including my autobiographical narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2013: 251).

## **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1.11.1 Informed consent**

I informed each participant about who I am, the purpose of the study, and who will benefit from the study. I explained to the participants that the interviews would be recorded and notes would be made during field visits. As my participants were from impoverished and marginalised communities, I followed the recommendation of Mouton (2009: 245) to respect the rights of "vulnerable" people by not offering any compensation for participation in the study. I further explained to the participants that the process should be empowering as their insights were valued and other ECD practitioners in similar communities could learn from their experiences. Both participants understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the research process without penalty. Letters of consent, which stated these conditions in writing, were signed by both participants. Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the self-appointed manager/shack lord at the one settlement and the representative of the NGO responsible for the centre at the other settlement and letters to this effect were signed by both parties (see Annexures B to E).

### **1.11.2 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality**

I respected the privacy of the participants by using pseudonyms not only for them, but also for every person named by the participants or anyone involved in the centre or community. Faces on photographs were blocked out as well and did not reveal the location of the sites (Creswell, 2013: 174).

Because the study was based on the experiences and narratives of the participants, anyone in either of these two communities who, in future, might read the dissertation or parts thereof would be able to: firstly, figure out who the narrative deals with and, secondly, identify who had said what. Yet, by not revealing the identities of anyone involved in/from these settlements, it maintains the confidentiality of the narrative as well as the anonymity of all those involved, preventing anybody from the outside world from identifying the participants.

### **1.12 PARTICULARISABILITY**

In qualitative research, due to the small number of participants and the contextualised nature of the research, one situation cannot be generalised to another (Butler-Kisber, 2010: 15). Clandinin (2013: 52) indicates that narrative inquirers are interested in how people live their lives in relation with people and situations over time and in a particular place. As knowledge produced from a narrative study is incomplete, particular and uncertain, it allows less for generalisations and more for pondering and envisioning alternative possibilities. Consequently, Butler-Kisber (2010: 15) suggests the term “particularisability” to describe how a certain study resonates with people in another situation, which leads to confirmation of their understanding of their experiences or to new understandings of their experiences. Whereas the one community illegally occupied a piece of land that used to be a caravan park, the other community was invited by a farmer to live on his farm in wooden huts and caravans. Both communities, however, were impoverished white communities (the farm community was exclusively white, whilst the caravan park community was predominantly white). Furthermore, both communities experienced social as well as political marginalisation. Although the two practitioners came from different

backgrounds and experienced their situations differently, they also had many experiences and frustrations in common.

## **1.13 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

### **1.13.1 Community versus settlement**

I decided on the term “community” rather than “settlement” in this study, since one of the research sites did not quite fit the definition of “settlement” by Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006: 3). Their definition refers to settlements as living spaces of the urban poor, developed as a result of illegal land occupation. This research site, although it possessed many of the characteristics (physically and socially) of an informal settlement, did not develop on land that was illegally occupied. In order to conceptualise the term “community” I briefly discuss it from a sociological anthropological and community psychology perspective to arrive at an integrated definition applicable to this study.

The sociologists Flora and Flora (2008:13) identify three elements of community. Firstly it refers to the location in which a group of people interacts. Secondly, it looks at the organisation or social structure through which a group of people addresses their needs. Thirdly the term “community” describes a sense of shared identity of a group of people even if they do not share the same geographic space. Furthermore, with higher levels of mobility characteristic of the twenty-first century, these three elements of community are increasingly separate. Bruhn (2005:47) elaborates on this viewpoint, explaining contemporary understanding of community as a series of networks of varying sizes, density and purpose that extend beyond a physical location. This conceptualisation of community focuses more on the interpersonal ties between people.

An emphasis on the social aspects of community also emerged from an anthropological case study conducted by sociologist and urban anthropologist Krase (2012:213). Krase (2012:214-215) identified several emergent conceptual categories of community based on residents’ perceptions. These included a sense of

togetherness, consensus and solidarity among members of a community; physical and social boundaries; the quality of social relationships including friendliness, warmth, helping each other and looking out for one another; oppression and vulnerability as well as categories of “we” and “they”; the desire to be recognised and stigma; the impact of personal community models as a guide for present and future activities; the problem of organisational skills; the importance of the community’s physical appearance.

From a community psychology point of view the concept “psychological sense of community” is a valued construct and forms the foundation for this discipline’s understanding of “community”. McMillan and Chavis (1986:9) proposed the following definition of sense of community:

*Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging,  
A feeling that members matter to one another and to the group and  
a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their  
commitment to be together.*

At the same time Comeforo (2016: 621) points out that community includes not only relational, but also territorial aspects as defined by community psychologists. The function of boundaries is to distinguish between “us” and “them”, to protect “us” from “them” and to provide a safe place to connect with one another.

Membership to a community refers to a feeling of belonging and sharing and of personal relatedness. According to McMillan and Chavis (1986: 14) a “shared history” and “shared experiences” are also aspects that members of a community have in common, which creates a “spiritual bond”. They (ibid.) describe this bond as perhaps the most “definite element for true community”.

In a true community individuals matter to the community and believe they can make a difference in the community. At the same time the community matters to the individual. By helping others and the community in general individual needs are met.

Therefore the individual obeys the rules and standards of the community. (Comeforo 2016: 621).

From a sociological, anthropological and community psychology clarification of the concept “community” it seems that community refers to the physical aspect or location of the community. It also refers to the relationships or sense of cohesion and emotional relatedness between the individuals who regard themselves as members of a specific community. However, in this study I differentiate between community as cohesive social entity and the physical location where the members of these communities connect with each other. I make this distinction since this study is a narrative inquiry and the experiences of the practitioners from the two communities are interpreted within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Their experiences play out and are interpreted within this space with place as one dimension, the personal and social as second dimension and temporality as third dimension. Their stories are shaped not only by their social experiences within their respective communities, but also by the quality and impact of the place where they reside.

In this study, I use the word “community” to refer to the social groupings of which the two practitioners are part and within which they live and work. I refer to their settlements as the physical contexts in which they live and work. Both the physical and social contexts have an influence on the practitioners’ experiences.

### **1.13.2 ECD – Early childhood development**

A number of definitions refer to early childhood development (ECD) as the total development of the child – physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, morally and spiritually (Berry, Biersteker, Dawes, Lake & Smith, 2013: 25; South Africa. Department of Social Development, 2015: 14). Nonetheless, I have adopted a working definition of ECD as jointly proposed by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2014: 11) as the activities aimed at stimulating the various domains of children’s development during their pre-school years. The Draft National Early Childhood Development

Policy (South Africa. Department of Social Development, 2015: 14) regards this period as spanning from conception until formal school entry (Grade R). For the purposes of this study, Grade R learners were included, since Grade R learners also attend the selected centres in the marginalised areas as their parents cannot afford to send them to the Grade R classes at the local primary schools.

### **1.13.3 ECD centre**

The Department of Social Development in a web document (no page numbers) defines an ECD centre as “a facility that provides learning and support appropriate to the child’s development age and stage” (South Africa. Department of Social Development, 2016). In its 2006 publication Guidelines for Early Childhood Development Services (South Africa. Department of Social Development, 2006: 6) the Department specifies that this building or premises can be used for gain or not “for the admission, protection and temporary or partial care of more than six children away from their parents”. These centres or sites can admit babies, toddlers and/or pre-school aged children depending on their registration.

The two centres where the research was conducted provided education and care to roughly 25 children from ages two to five, and about 24 children from babies to six years of age, respectively.

### **1.13.4 NGO – Non-governmental organisation**

According to the South African Department of Social Development (2006: 7) non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are all non-governmental, non-profit organisations that are concerned with the betterment of society or the individual. They define NGOs as private, self-governing, voluntary organisations operating not for commercial purposes but in the public interest, for the promotion of social welfare and development.

### **1.13.5 Organisation H**

Organisation H is an NGO working nationally with a focus on white poverty. The organisation provided me with information regarding white poverty but, at the time, found it difficult to gain access to impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities and could not, therefore, introduce me to any.

### **1.13.6 Organisation D**

This organisation is an NGO working in impoverished white communities in the Tshwane metropolitan area. Organisation D introduced me to one of the communities where I conducted the research.

### **1.13.7 Organisation B**

This organisation is an NGO working in impoverished communities in the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area.

### **1.13.8 Poverty**

Although extreme poverty is pegged at \$1.25 per day (World Bank & International Monetary Fund, 2015: 1), Statistics South Africa (2014a: 2) points out that income is only an indication of the means to a better life; it is not, in itself, a better life. Therefore, I have based this study on Jensen's (2009: 6) definition of poverty as a persistent condition as a result of many risk factors that, collectively, have a disabling effect on the total person.

### **1.13.9 Practitioner**

The South African Institute for Distance Education (2010: 22) explains the position of the ECD practitioner in South Africa:

*Historically many of the ECD practitioners are women who do not have Grade 12, but who have completed either the ECD Level 4 and/or Level 5. A large number of these women are good teachers, and some of them have gone to teach Grade R, either in public schools or in community schools.*

The Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (2001) refers to the term “practitioner” as an umbrella term that includes not only pre-school teachers, but also caregivers and teaching assistants. Hence practitioners encompass workers taking care of children with different levels of qualifications, levels of expertise and roles and responsibilities.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the term “practitioner” includes formally and informally trained individuals as well as individuals who did not receive any training to act as educators in an ECD centre for children from birth to Grade R.

#### **1.13.10 Quality education**

For the purpose of this study, the term “quality education” refers to developmentally appropriate programmes offered to children from birth to school-going age to support them to develop optimally in all domains – physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral/spiritual – of child development (Rutgers, 2015: 38). These programmes facilitate learning through play (ibid: 45).

### **1.14 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY**

#### **Chapter 1: Orientation**

Chapter 1 is a general orientation and covers the rationale for the research, the main problem statement, the research question and sub-questions, the research aims, and the research design and methods. Significant concepts are also clarified and the demarcation of the study and the chapter division are outlined.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework: Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) Ecological Systems Theory, which frames this study, is described in this chapter.

## **Chapter 3: Challenges of the ECD practitioner: An ecological systems analysis**

This chapter contains an overview of literature on poverty relevant to this study to place the research problem in a broader context. I describe and quote research done on the effect of poverty on young children and their families. This effect determines the practitioners' experiences of these children's learning and development that takes place in an ECD centre. The point of departure of this study is the importance of quality ECD programmes, especially for poor young children. Therefore, literature on the physical environment of poor communities, which has an effect on their children and the working environment of practitioners, was studied to the extent that it influences their experiences.

The members of impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities are further faced with problems specific to this group. They experience their marginalisation not only as a result of poverty but also as a result of a political dispensation. I furthermore considered the effect of the macrosystem – the political dispensation affecting the well-being of impoverished white communities – and how societal change has affected these communities. All these conditions create the context within which the practitioners' experiences play out.

## **Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

The epistemological paradigm guiding the study is described in this chapter. An exposition and description of the research design, methods, approach, field note collection and analysis procedures is given as well as strategies to ensure trustworthiness and ethical conduct by the researcher.

## **Chapter 5: Practitioner narratives of their experiences in white informal settlements**

In Chapter 5, I capture the narratives of the participants within a timeframe of present, past and future as it is played out in their respective contexts and in relation to the self and others.

## **Chapter 6: Interpretation and discussion of participant experiences**

In Chapter 6, I present the findings of the study within the dominant themes that I have constructed from the field notes. The literature relevant to the study is invoked to confirm or refute my findings.

## **Chapter 7: Summary, discussion and recommendations**

In Chapter 7, I present a synthesis of the preceding chapters, as well as a reflection on the research design and methodology. I revisit field notes and draw conclusions based on the findings of the study. I also make recommendations based on my findings.

### **1.15 SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided a general orientation regarding the research under review. The background to the study, the rationale, the research question, aim of the study, research design and research methods, definition of terms, and chapter division have all been set out. In the next chapter, the focus is on the theoretical framework within which the study is constructed.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study has been conducted with Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) Ecological Systems Theory as the theoretical framework to explore the experiences of ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities. In my research on the existing literature regarding ECD practitioners' experiences of poverty-stricken children, I encountered a number of such studies conducted with the Ecological Systems Theory as their theoretical framework. These include research by Brown, Ackerman and Moore (2013); Martin, Gardner and Brooks-Gunn (2012); Komro, Flay, Biglan and Promise Neighborhood Research Consortium (2011); Maarman (2009); and Dawes and Duncan (2005). Also, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan and Maritato (1997: 8) find Bronfenbrenner's theory to be the most influential theory in studies on childhood poverty.

At the same time, I realised that the experiences of the practitioners, although influenced by their entire ecological system, are not objective truths "out there", but are constructions based on the lived experiences of the participants and their interaction with others as explained by Creswell (2013:36). Therefore, I have used a social constructivist lens to view their stories, inviting the participants to become active co-creators of the study and indeed to "become partners in the total endeavour" (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011: 7). In the same vein, I acknowledge my subjective interpretation of the experiences of the participants and application of Bronfenbrenner's theory regarding the specific context where I have conducted the study. The social constructivist paradigm is thus appropriate for this study.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and its later offshoot, the Bio-ecological Model, this dissertation assumes the point of view that the experiences of the practitioners in their work with young children are determined by the entire ecological system in which child and practitioner exist and develop. The various systems that influence the experiences of the practitioner also influence the child's

development. Just as Bronfenbrenner (1979: 230) regards *experience* as a critical element in his ecological model, the *experiencing* of the practitioner is central to the current study. Bronfenbrenner refers specifically to Dewey's emphasis on the child's everyday experience (ibid.). This study is also based on Dewey's notion of experience, as demonstrated in Chapter 4. Thus, it is evident that the experiences of the person in each of the various systems are important. This implies that the person's subjective experiences – and not only the objective properties of the environment – play a role in how the different systems influence him or her.

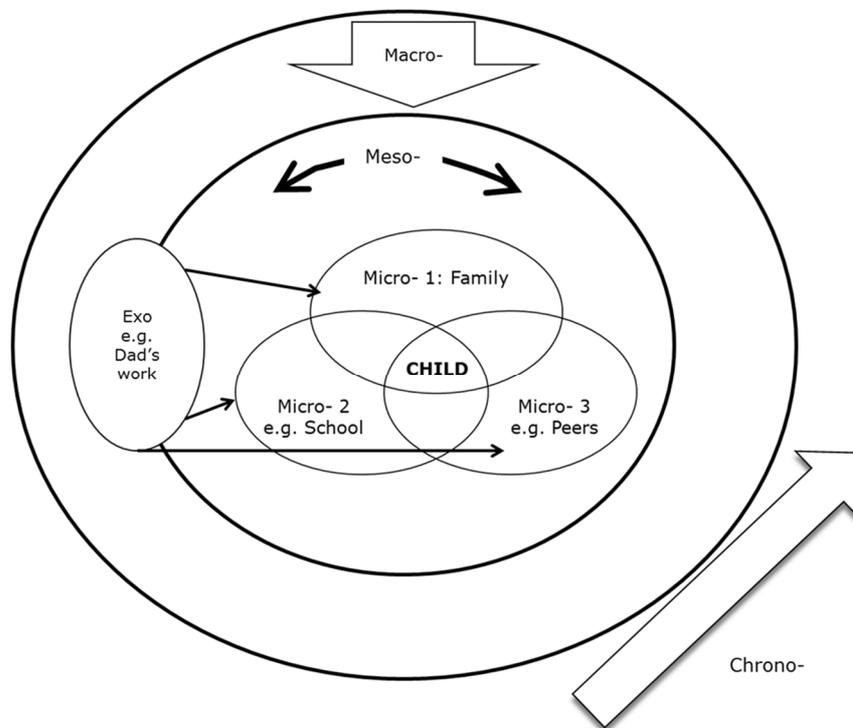
As co-founder of the Head Start Programme, launched in 1965 (Tregaskis, 2015), Bronfenbrenner (1917 – 2005) understood the plight of the impoverished young child. Head Start aimed at providing an extensive range of services – including educational, medical, dental, nutritional, and social services – to pre-school children from low-income families (Gordon & Browne, 2011: 24). In 1979, Bronfenbrenner published the ground-breaking book *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*, in which he set forth his Ecological Systems Theory. In 1986, he went on to rename his theory the Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development, to emphasise that the child's own biological disposition is a primary environment coming together with environmental forces to shape his or her development. Similarly, the practitioner's psychological disposition together with the environment determines her experiences.

Bronfenbrenner (1994: 38) further defines the properties of his model through two propositions. The first proposition states that human development takes place through an ever-more complex process of interaction between a person and the objects, persons and symbols in his or her immediate environment. For the interaction to be effective, it must be direct, persistent and take place in the immediate environment. An example of such an interaction is the relationship between the practitioner and the child in her care. These interactions are referred to as “proximal processes” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 38; Dawes & Donald, 2004: 3). The second proposition states that the nature of the interactions (or “proximal processes”) that influence development is determined by the characteristics of both the child and the environment (both the immediate as well as the more remote environment), within

which the processes take place, as well as the nature of the development process being observed. From Propositions 1 and 2, the following four interacting dimensions can be identified that influence child development (Dawes & Donald, 2004: 3):

- **Person factors** (i.e. the characteristics of the child or practitioner);
- **Process factors** (i.e. the type of interaction taking place between child and practitioner);
- **Contextual factors** (i.e. the neighbourhood in which the child or practitioner lives);
- **The time factor** (i.e. changes that occur in the child or practitioner over time and changes in the immediate environment of the child, for example the family moving to a new neighbourhood).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory can be depicted graphically as a series of concentric circles – the systems of interaction – each nested inside the other. Bronfenbrenner (1979: 3) compares this structure to “a set of Russian dolls”.



**Figure 1: Graphic Depiction of Bronfenbrenner’s Nested Systems**

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana 2002:52

## **2.2 ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY**

### **2.2.1 Microsystem**

Bronfenbrenner (1979: 22) defines the microsystem as:

*[A] pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics.*

Bronfenbrenner (1979: 22) then goes on to define a setting as a place – for example, school, home or the playground – where people can engage directly (in other words, face-to-face) with one another. The microsystem is the most immediate environment of external influence on the child through direct and continuous contact with the important people in the child's life (ibid.). Therefore, Swick and Williams (2006: 372) call this context “the child's venue for initially learning about the world”.

Whereas the microsystem was originally thought to only encompass the immediate everyday influences on the child, it was later also found to include the child's activities, relationships and roles (Lerner, 2005: xvii). This means that the outcome of the interaction is influenced not only by the significant others in the child's life but also by the child. The child is actively and dynamically involved in the interaction. Although the adult affects the child's behaviour, the child's temperament, personality and abilities also typically have an effect on the behaviour of the adult towards the child (Dawes & Donald, 2004: 5). For instance, a sick child may be unhappy and grumpy, which may affect the way the child treats others and, in turn, this could influence how others respond to the child.

### **2.2.2 Mesosystem**

The family is the primary context within which the young child develops but there are several other settings in which personal growth and development can happen. In other words, the same person can be involved in activities in more than one setting –

for example, both in the home and at school. Moreover, the processes influencing the child in different settings are not independent of each other. In fact, a social network is established across the settings containing the child. The mesosystem can be defined as the system of interrelations between the different microsystems of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25). Consequently Bronfenbrenner calls the mesosystem “a system of microsystems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 40). An example is the interaction between the parent of the child and the teacher of the child, which may influence the child’s success at school.

Bronfenbrenner (1979: 210-211) goes on to identify four different types of links.

1. **Multi-setting participation:** The developing person is usually involved in more than one setting – for example, school and home. The connection between two settings is established when the person enters a new setting (setting transition) – for example, when the child starts school. The developing person is called the primary link and other people – for example, a parent attending a parents’ evening or a teacher paying a home visit – involved in the two settings are called supplementary links. If the child enters the new school unaccompanied, only a single direct link, called a solitary link, exists between the two microsystems. However, if the parent comes with the child to school, the link is dual. A mesosystem is weakly linked if there are no other links, apart from the original link involving the child, or if the links are indirect.
2. **Indirect linkage:** The same person does not actively participate in both settings but a third party establishes a connection between the two. Participants in the two settings do not meet face-to-face – for example, where a taxi driver drops the child off at school or an au pair brings the young child to school.
3. **Inter-setting communications:** This connection refers to the messages transmitted from one setting to another through face-to-face interactions, telephonic conversations, written communication, or indirectly through chains in the social network.

4. **Inter-setting knowledge:** This refers to the information that exists in one setting about the other setting through inter-setting communication or through external sources – for example, through books or newspapers.

Bronfenbrenner (1979: 211) further hypothesises that the mesosystem has a positive influence on the person's development if the initial transition into a new setting is not made alone but with one person from the prior setting (for example, the mother accompanying her child to school). He also hypothesises that the mesosystem has a positive influence on development if there is mutual trust, goal consensus, and a positive orientation between the settings. This is also the case if role demands in the different settings correspond – what the parent expects from the child is compatible with the expectations of the teacher. Furthermore, although Swick and Williams (2006: 372) regard the mesosystem as a positive power to connect two or more systems, one may assume that the mesosystem might also be a negative power – for example, when the relationship between parent and teacher is hostile.

### **2.2.3 Exosystem**

The exosystem refers to settings which may influence the child although the child is not directly involved in these settings. However the people who have proximal relations with the child are directly involved in these settings and are influenced by events in these settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25). For example, if the parent experiences excessive stress at the workplace, this might impact on the child at home. Another example is that of the relationships between the child's teacher and the other staff members of the school or centre. If these relationships are negative, the child's teacher might act negatively towards the children in his or her care in the classroom.

Regarding the exosystem of the child, Bronfenbrenner (1994: 40) identifies three exosystems that are especially likely to influence the development of the young child. These exosystems have an influence on the family, the school, and the child's peer group and include the parents' workplace, family social networks, and the community

networks in the neighbourhood. Inversely, the child can also have an influence on his or her exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 240). For example, the parent of a disabled child might worry excessively about the child while at work. This might impact on the parent's work performance and the parent's chances of a promotion. Bronfenbrenner (1979: 241), furthermore, refers to research indicating that support networks and church attendance have preventative effects on child abuse in low-income households. In addition, he quotes the influence of the noise levels in homes due to traffic outside as another example of the exosystem. This research shows that noise levels outside children's homes affect their auditory and verbal skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 243).

The child's exosystem has a bearing on the practitioner's experiences by means of its effects on the child. Similarly, the practitioner's experiences are also coloured by her own exosystem – for example the child's home circumstances. She might not be directly involved with the parents of the children in her care but the way in which they bring up their children has an effect on the children's development, which, in turn, has a direct bearing on the practitioner's experiences.

#### **2.2.4    Macrosystem**

The macrosystem is the outermost system or circle that encompasses and influences all the other levels; that is, the micro-, meso- and exo-systems (Lerner, 2005: xiv). Bronfenbrenner (1994: 40) describes the macrosystem as a “societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture”; in other words, the unquestioned way in which a society functions and from which it does not deviate. This implies that, within a given society or social group, the structure and content of the micro-, meso- and exo-systems seem to be similar, “as if they were constructed from the same master model” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 8). As an example, Bronfenbrenner (2005: 47) refers to school classrooms that look the same and function in the same way within a specific culture or sub-culture. Therefore, children (and practitioners) from a specific sub-culture – be it socio-economic, religious or ethnic – tend to have similar experiences in these settings.

In the macrosystem, Bronfenbrenner (1994: 40) includes laws, belief systems, broad ideology, norms and customs of a specific culture or sub-culture, lifestyles, hazards, and material resources. In some cases, the macrosystem might serve as an umbrella of support and services to families and children – for example, legislation that ensures quality childcare. In other cases, however, it might also be detrimental to the members of the culture/sub-culture or citizens of a country – for example, cultural values might give rise to practices in childcare that would impact negatively on the well-being of the young child. To describe the macrosystem, Dawes and Donald (2004: 6) use the analogy of a culturally determined script (cultural conventions or unwritten laws), which prescribes harsh disciplinary measures and corporal punishment when a child is seen as disobedient or disrespectful.

I assume that the negative impact of the macrosystem might be even greater when people are not intellectually, emotionally, politically, morally or financially empowered to make independent choices and decisions and to have control over their own lives. Due to financial constraints, they may not have a choice in terms of where they reside. Therefore, they have to live within the norms, customs, values and lifestyle of their neighbourhood. Where the laws of a country fail its citizens, the economically empowered often have the financial means to compensate for the shortcomings in the system. They can send their children to private schools with a high educational standard. They can pay for their safety and security. They can join a private medical aid scheme or pay for a lawyer to fight for their rights when they are violated.

### **2.2.5 Chronosystem**

Bronfenbrenner (1992: 201) points out that the environment used to be studied at a single point in time, presumed to remain constant. However, in the mid-1970s, researchers began to study consistency as well as change that takes place in people as well as in the environment over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986a: 724). The term “chronosystem” refers to the influence of changes (and continuities) in a person’s different environments that, in turn, affects the person’s development. According to Bronfenbrenner (1992: 201), these developmental changes are caused by events or experiences. In fact, human development cannot be explained except in relation to

time, because development inherently implies continuity and change (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: 82). He (ibid.) identifies a life transition as the most basic form of chronosystem, which can either be normative (for example, school entry) or non-normative (for example, parents getting divorced). Another aspect of the chronosystem is historical time – for example, a time of economic depression or political violence. Historical time can have stable elements as well, according to Dawes and Donald (2004: 6). The 1994 transition to a democratic dispensation in South Africa could have been a time of violence. It seems, however, that the elections brought stability and normalisation to South Africa. Should this transition not have taken place, all indications were that civil war and turmoil would eventually have erupted in South Africa (Southall, 1994: 629).

However, there is a sector of the population that feels wronged by this change. Unskilled poor whites experience themselves as being in a disadvantaged position. According to Potgieter (2009: 5), this sector of the population has been systematically overlooked by the present government, almost as if they do not exist. Terreblanche (2014: 90), meanwhile, believes that the new political dispensation has doomed the poor, both black and white, to a permanent condition of poverty.

Yet, historical time not only indicates events and transitions in the global arena; it is also part of every system and every subsystem. Swick and Williams (2006: 373) use the “history” of relationships in families to demonstrate that, collectively, a sequence of processes in a relationship affects the relationship. This “may explain more about parent-child relations than is evident in existing dynamics” (ibid.).

## **2.3 SUMMARY**

While this study focuses on the experiences of a practitioner in an impoverished and marginalised predominantly white community, the development of the children in his or her care is paramount. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory is used to frame the discussion of the practitioner’s experiences in the next chapter. Bronfenbrenner depicts the different spheres of influence as concentric circles – the most immediate circle being the microsystem. According to Dawes and Donald

(2005: 9), poverty's influences on child development (as well as on the experiences of the child's practitioner) originate in the macrosystem but have an effect on all levels of influence on the child. The practitioner is also affected by his or her context, which contributes to the challenges in his or her work. Thus, all levels of influence on the child, as well as on the practitioner, have been discussed in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CHALLENGES OF THE ECD PRACTITIONER: AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

I have conducted an extensive literature review regarding the experiences of ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised communities. The experiences of the participant practitioners were embedded in their immediate environments, in addition to being shaped and influenced by more indirect and remote forces. The young children, as microsystems of the practitioner, came from poverty-stricken backgrounds and this can have a severe impact on their development. This, in turn, had a direct influence on the work of the ECD practitioner as it affected the total functioning of the child. Being trapped in poverty, the children (and their families) may not have the financial means to escape the effects thereof in all the respective spheres of their lives. Thus, the parents, as the most conspicuous and direct influence on their children, were part of the practitioner's exosystem.

The most immediate sphere of influence – the microsystem (the children and colleagues at the practitioner's place of work, the practitioner's family, the community in the informal settlement, and so forth), the mesosystem (the relationship between the practitioner's colleagues and the children in the centre) and the macrosystem (the larger circle of influence – the socio-economic culture of the society) all contributed to the practitioner's experiences. Political change that took place over time (the chronosystem) had an effect on the residents of the informal settlements, as they were generally not empowered to absorb the change. Families lost their homes and a life of self-respect and independence and had to move to a life of depending on charity. Moreover, parents were probably not able to provide for their children's basic needs to develop optimally. These hardships had an effect on every resident in both settlements. This included the two participant practitioners and their colleagues, who lived in the same conditions of poverty and were faced with many experiences similar to those of the children and their parents. Furthermore, the ECD centres, located in

impoverished and marginalised communities, were also affected by the financial and social conditions of the communities.

Hence, for each of the practitioners, their working environments created challenges that she had to face on a daily basis. My survey of the literature focused on the different systems that could have an effect on the practitioner's situation, which, in turn, could determine their experiences. Since the practitioner's situation in my study was characterised by poverty and marginalisation in both her (both of the participants in my study were female) work and private life, this condition directed the literature review.

### **3.2 THE CHILD AS MICROSYSYSTEM OF THE PRACTITIONER**

The child, as microsystem of the practitioner, often comes to school with a host of problems that directly influences the practitioner's work. Dawes (2003: 8) regards the child as a set of inter-connected subsystems (biological as well as psychological) that are influenced by other subsystems in the microsystem and that, in turn, influence yet other subsystems in the microsystem. A substantial body of research suggests a link between poverty and diminished physical and socio-emotional well-being as well as impaired cognitive functioning in both adults and children (Azzi-Lessing, 2010; Jensen, 2009: 7; Conger & Conger, 2008: 64; Mustard, 2007: 46; Ryan et al., 2006: 323; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 55; Shore, 1997: 48). This implies that the ECD practitioner has to teach and care for a child who possibly has physical, emotional, behavioural and cognitive challenges.

Although the young child is totally innocent in terms of the financial situation he or she has been born into or entered into at a young age, the child's experience of poverty generally impacts on various domains of his or her development. According to Shore (1997: 48), the effect of poverty on the young child is often difficult to determine, as other intertwined risk factors may also have an influence. Stanton-Chapman, Chapman, Kaiser and Hancock (2004: 227) point out that the risk of problems of children growing up in poverty already arises at conception. Adversities such as maternal smoking during pregnancy (Ekblad, Korkeila & Lehtonen, 2015),

prenatal stress (Lefmann & Comb-Orme, 2014), and inadequate maternal nutrition during pregnancy (Prado & Dewey, 2014) all affect the optimal development of the fetus. These conditions are all often associated with poverty. The child thus enters the world already at a disadvantage, as the consequences of social disadvantage start before birth (Ritchie, 2014: 78). The adverse conditions in which these children then grow up typically continue to hinder their optimal development.

Jensen (2009: 7), a prominent researcher in educational neuroscience, describes the snowball effect as follows:

*One problem created by poverty begets another, which in turn contribute to another, leading to a seemingly endless cascade of deleterious consequences.*

To summarise, the child, as microsystem, may come to the ECD centre with a multitude of challenges with which the practitioner has to deal on a daily basis. These include poor health and physical development, socio-emotional and behavioural problems, and cognitive delays, as well as non-school-readiness in children of school-going age.

### **3.2.1 Poor physical health**

The Canadian physician and world leader in early childhood development, J. Fraser Mustard (Barnett & Fitzgerald, 2011) emphasises the correlation between the socio-economic status of individuals and their health and well-being. This correlation has been labelled a “socio-economic gradient in health” (Mustard, 2007: 46). Similarly renowned scholars in child poverty, Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997: 57) conclude that poor children in the United States are physically less healthy compared to more privileged children. Research done by Hillemeier, Lanza, Landale and Oropesa (2013: 1858) found that only a quarter of the number of poor children participating in the research could be classified as healthy – compared to more than half of the number of non-poor children who participated. Poor children were also more likely to experience a variety of challenges, including low cognitive achievement, behaviour

problems, low social skills, and chronic health conditions (of which asthma and obesity were the most prominent).

Regarding the monitoring of child health in South Africa, Saloojee (2007: 108) indicates that health status measures focus mainly on negative aspects such as mortality – damage that is already done. Conditions such as chronic ear infection are not measured, although the impact thereof can be drastic in terms of children's ability to hear and so take part in discussions, follow the teacher's instructions, listen to a story, or participate in dialogue with a grown-up. Furthermore, all of these typically impact on children's acquisition of vocabulary, pronunciation, and knowledge of the world around them.

Factors contributing to the health status of the child in poverty may be a lack of adequate nutrition and health care. Where parents do not belong to a medical aid scheme, children may receive little or no treatment for illness and are far more likely to die from injuries or infections than are children of well-off parents (Jensen, 2009: 42). Jensen (2009: 8) also refers to higher crime rates in poor neighbourhoods and states that physical attack is, therefore, a possibility.

A further aggravating condition to ill-health is stress due to various triggers faced by the child living in poverty. Research conducted by Busacker and Kasehagen (2012: S80) found that children living in poverty were more subject to residential instability than other children. Where children had experienced three or more residential moves, they displayed poorer overall physical health, oral health and moderate or severe chronic conditions compared to children who experienced fewer episodes of residential moves. Busacker and Kasehagen (2012:S85) explain that the link between poor health outcomes and high mobility of poor children is partly due to a lack of access to regular medical and dental care. They further believe that stress caused by high mobility may also contribute to poorer health outcomes for these children (ibid.). Frequent moves imply that daily routines are disrupted, friendships and social networks cannot develop or be maintained, and children's learning is compromised. At the same time, moving may be the result of other stressful events – for example, divorce, eviction, or parents losing their jobs (ibid.).

Neighbourhood disadvantage further affects children's health through its influence on family functioning (Jutte, Miller & Erickson, 2015: S49). Family well-being is often upset by aspects such as a lack of neighbourhood social ties, social capital, residential stability, and safety from conflict, abuse and violence, as well as financial strain and exposure to violence (ibid: S50). According to Jutte et al. (ibid.), a substantial body of research points to the link between neighbourhood conditions and long-term health outcomes. In this regard, Jutte et al. (2015: S49) refer to "toxic stress" due to community adversity influencing gene expression and brain development.

Not only neighbourhood conditions but also housing conditions are important determinants of child health (Sengoelge, Hasselberg, Ormondy & Laflamme, 2014: 286). Sengoelge et al. (ibid.) found a correlation between high levels of poverty and reduced access to safe housing. In their research, they looked into housing hazards such as leaking roofs, damp floors and walls, pollution, noise from the neighbours or the street, inability to keep the house adequately warm, crime, vandalism, and violence in the neighbourhood (ibid.).

In conclusion, children cannot develop optimally if they are not physically well. The practitioner is thus likely to be dealing with children whose development is jeopardised by ill-health.

### **3.2.1.1 Birth outcomes**

A host of research has found that there is a correlation between lower socio-economic status of mothers, on the one hand, and low birth weight (2 500 grams and less), pre-term babies (babies born before the 37<sup>th</sup> week of gestation), birth defects and infant mortality, on the other (Kayode, Amoakoh-Coleman, Agyepong, Ansah, Grobbee & Klipstein-Grobusch, 2014: 1; Nkansah-Amankra & Twumasie-Ankrah, 2013: 167; Jensen, 2009: 42; Saloojee, 2007: 101; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 57). Possible causes of low birth weight (LBW) are poor maternal diet and nutritional status, maternal smoking and passive smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, maternal depression, domestic violence, and lack of medical care during pregnancy (Louw &

Louw, 2014: 79-81; Kayode et al., 2014: 2; Subramanian, Katz, Rodan, Gantz, El-Khorazaty, Johnson & Joseph, 2012: 545; Mustard, 2007: 57).

Higher levels of psychosocial strain resultant of living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods – for example, limited social support, incivilities, lack of job opportunities and social amenities, and interpersonal problems and single parenthood – are all contributing factors to LBW (Kayode et al., 2014: 3; Nkansah-Amankra & Twumasi-Ankrah, 2013: 170; Lundquist, Seward, Byatt, Tonelli & Kolodziej, 2012: 159). Women who are socio-economically disadvantaged often do not have the means to address risk behaviours that have an impact on the foetus. For example, untreated depression that is often associated with poverty may be a mediator for other negative health behaviours that may affect the foetus. Furthermore, mothers from impoverished backgrounds often present multiple risk factors, which may be difficult to address (Subramanian et al., 2012: 546). For instance, pregnant women who struggle with psychosocial stressors associated with poverty, mental health problems and substance abuse find it difficult to stop smoking, while there is a decline of smoking among pregnant mothers from the general population (Lundquist et al., 2012: 158).

The implications for the practitioner of the children's LBW and children being born prematurely, together with the teratogens that caused this, are far-reaching. Firstly, LBW is not only the leading cause of neonatal death but also a risk factor for infant and "under five" mortality (Kayode et al., 2014: 1; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 60). Furthermore, LBW is associated with various co-morbid conditions – for example, asthma (Hillemeier et al., 2013: 1858) and childhood hypertension, non-insulin dependent diabetes, and coronary heart disease (Kayode et al., 2014: 1) – that might affect the child's health and well-being now and later in life. Other challenges may include cognitive, motor and socio-emotional problems, mental disorders, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These conditions often result in lower IQ scores, learning difficulties, and the need for special education (Louw & Louw, 2014: 75-81; Kayode et al., 2014: 1; Mustard, 2009: 59; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 60). To conclude, the practitioner working with children with LBW or with children born prematurely as well as those with in utero exposure to teratogens

will probably experience challenges regarding the children's cooperation and social skills, their emotional development, and their cognitive and social development.

### **3.2.1.2 Malnutrition**

Malnutrition and food insecurity among children are often associated with poverty (Wight, Kaushal, Waldfogel & Garfinkel, 2014: 12). Wight et al. (2014: 1) define food insecurity as the lack of a steady access to sufficient food. They refer to a growing number of studies confirming that food insecurity has a negative effect on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development as well as their academic achievement (ibid.). Wight et al. (2014: 2) cite low income, residential instability and poor participation in food and nutrition programmes as reasons for food insecurity. This connection is explained by Wight et al. (ibid.): when income is low, households have to make decisions that can result in inadequate food supply. Furthermore, it has an effect on the child's weight and growth. Stunting is the most common result of malnutrition (Saloojee, 2007: 100; UNICEF, 2001: 16). Another result of insufficient and inconsistent nutrition during critical periods of growth (between conception and two years of age) is that neurocognitive development may be negatively affected (Louw & Louw, 2014: 165; Jensen, 2009: 97).

### **3.2.2 Cognitive Abilities**

The relationship between poverty and cognitive ability has been widely investigated – for example, in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY), the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP), and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). These studies have found that children from lower socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds scored significantly lower in standardised tests than their more affluent peers. The impact of poverty was significantly greater on children in families that experienced long-term poverty compared to those who experienced short-term poverty (Planty, Hussar, Snyder, Kena, KewalRamani, Kemp, Bienko & Dinkes 2009: 8; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 61). Jensen (2009: 25) and Mustard (2007: 61) ascribe the poor performance of young children in adverse conditions to a change in brain structure. Adverse conditions, according to Jensen (2009: 24-25) and

Shore (1997: 40-47), include traumas such as child abuse, domestic violence, evictions, forced mobility, material deprivation, neglect, and maternal depression and substance abuse (including maternal smoking). Jensen (2009: 25) explains the process of change in brain structure as follows:

*Compared with a healthy neuron, a stressed neuron generates a weaker signal, handles less blood flow, processes less oxygen, and extends fewer connective branches to nearby cells. The prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus, crucial for learning, cognition, and working memory are the areas of the brain most affected by cortisol, the so-called “stress hormone”.*

Furthermore, it seems that not only severely deleterious conditions but also less dramatic influences – for example, poor parental education – have a negative impact on the developing brain of the child. A large body of research has found a correlation between parental education and the cognitive outcomes of children (Schady, 2011: 2306; Naudeau, Martinez, Premand & Filmer, 2011: 11; World Bank, 2010: 12). In addition, Schady (2011: 2305) regards mothers having limited vocabularies as contributing to their children’s poorer cognitive development. He found that the vocabularies of children between three and five years of age closely corresponded to those of their mothers (ibid.).

Possible explanations for poorer cognitive outcomes for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds include less early stimulation by parents, for example, parents who do not read to their children (Schady, 2011: 2306); less maternal responsiveness towards the child; less language stimulation by the mother; less learning materials available at home (World Bank, 2010: 14); and a less stimulating learning environment (Naudeau et al., 2011: 11).

The 2010 World Bank Report (World Bank, 2010: 13) indicates that even in utero conditions – for example, a lack of antenatal care available to the mother – are responsible for developmental delays. Other considerations which play a role in

stunting and less optimal cognitive development and, consequently, children's ability to learn, include malnutrition, hunger and disease (World Bank, 2010: ix).

Planty et al. (2009: 8), Ryan et al. (2006: 362), and Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997: 51-77) quote numerous research studies suggesting that poverty impacts on children from a young age. In these studies, the difference between the cognitive abilities of those children above and those below the poverty line was significant from the age of two and older. Even more alarming is that this gap grew larger as the children grew older (Naudeau et al., 2011: 11). Hanson, Hair, Shen, Shi, Gilmore, Wolfe and Pollak (2013) explain this progressive tendency of deterioration in capabilities of children by means of MRI scans. The researchers studied the brain volumes of children from different socio-economic backgrounds at birth, at two years, and at four years of age (ibid: 5). They found that the infants from the different backgrounds started off with approximately the same volume of grey matter but, by toddlerhood, children from low socio-economic backgrounds already had significantly lower total grey matter volumes when compared to children from middle- and high-income backgrounds (ibid.). They further found that the parietal and frontal areas of the brain were particularly vulnerable to the effects of early poverty (ibid.). This in turn can have an impact on the behaviour of children from low socio-economic backgrounds, as they displayed more externalising problems – for example, rule breaking, excessive aggression, and hyperactivity. Less grey matter volumes in the frontal brain areas also had an effect on poor children's executive functions in terms of poorer planning skills, impulse control, and attention control.

This implies that the ECD practitioner working in an impoverished community typically educate and care for children with a lower cognitive capacity and more behavioural problems than her counterpart working in a financially better-off community. Since language plays a central role in children's cognitive development, the impact of poverty on children's language development will be discussed in detail below.

### 3.2.3 Language development

Gordon and Browne (2014: 383) say that language and thought enable us to understand and interact with the world. Unfortunately, for many children raised in poverty, language-development opportunities, such as one-on-one conversations, at home are extremely limited (Bond & Wasik, 2009: 468). In fact, multiple risk factors associated with poverty may influence children's language development, which, in turn, has an influence on children's cognitive development.

Stanton-Chapman et al. (2004: 227) refer to children's language disability due to these risks as "specific language impairment". Specific language impairment is defined as poor achievement in language despite normal hearing and nonverbal intelligence. These risk factors include a lack of rich and varied experiences with concrete objects and real-life situations and conversations about these experiences (Gordon & Browne, 2014: 384; Bond & Wasik, 2009: 467), poorer quality, quantity and context of parents' speech (Jensen, 2009: 35), and lower parental education (Jensen, 2009: 10; Lucchese & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007). Literature on maternal book reading indicates that both poverty and maternal depression generally impact on the quality and quantity of maternal book reading (Bond & Wasik, 2009: 468; Raikes, Alexander Pan, Luze, Tamis-LeMonda, Brooks-Gunn, Constantine, Tarullo, Raikes & Rodriguez, 2006: 927; Sohr-Preston & Scaramella, 2006: 74).

Various studies – such as Byeon and Hong (2015); Vernon-Feagans, Garrett-Peters, Willoughby, Mills-Koonce and The Family Life Project Key Investigators (2012); and Chonchaiya and Pruksananonda (2008) – found a relationship between television viewing and language delay in young children. Vernon-Feagans et al. (2012: 340) consider chaotic family environments to be detrimental to young children's language development. Specifically, household chaos and excessive ambient noise (for example, television sounds), as aspects of disorganisation, were found to likely influence language development. Vernon-Feagans et al. (2012: 340) believe that economic insecurity may require that more people move in to ensure that the family's economic viability is sustained. In a household with excessive ambient noise (due to overcrowding and television background noise), the young child receives too many

auditory distractions and may withdraw as a result of overstimulation. The young child is, therefore, not able to process the language directed at him or her.

Also, the nature of television as one-way communication hampers the child's language development, since it limits child-caregiver interaction (Byeon & Hong, 2015: 9). Chonchaiya and Pruksananonda (2008: 980) have found that watching television on their own has an even greater effect on children's language development, since they then have no one with whom to interact. Where Byeon and Hong (2015: 4) have found more than three hours of television watching per day detrimental to young children's language development, Chonchaiya and Pruksananonda (2008: 980) believe that children who start watching television before the age of two and are exposed to more than two hours of television watching per day are at serious risk of delayed language development.

Sohr-Preston, Scaramella, Martin, Neppl, Ontai and Conger (2013: 1047) use the family investment model, developed by Conger and Dogan (2007) and Conger and Donnellan (2007), to explain the correlation between parents' income and children's language development. This model proposes that parents with higher income and educational attainment levels typically invest more in their children – not only financially but also in their education and through communication, than low-income parents, who focus on basic needs to survive (Sohr-Preston, et al. 2013: 1049). They further posit that parents with more education and income generally demonstrate more responsive communication styles with their children – the mothers speak more to their children, using richer vocabulary, and children are expected to respond (ibid.). Children then adopt their parents' communication styles and use richer vocabularies – what Sohr-Preston et al. (2013: 1049) call “intergenerational continuity in parenting”.

#### **3.2.4 Emotional and behavioural outcomes**

Poor children often suffer from behavioural and socio-emotional problems more frequently than their wealthier peers (Jensen, 2009: 15; Ryan et al., 2006: 328; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 62). Although the effects of poverty on the behaviour of the child are smaller and less significant than on cognitive outcomes, there is still

evidence that growing up in poverty is generally harmful to children's social and emotional development (Ryan et al. 2006: 328; Mistry, Biesanz, Taylor, Burchinal & Cox 2004: 727; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 63). Another aspect to keep in mind is that the different domains of development (cognitive, physical, social and emotional) might affect or interact with each other (Gordon & Browne 2014: 68). A child, who is physically not well because he or she is under-nourished, will not perform well academically; therefore, his or her self-esteem might suffer and the child might have trouble making friends. Thus, poverty has a direct influence on children's mental, emotional and behavioural well-being. At the same time, poverty co-factors mediate the effects of poverty on children's well-being (Yoshikawa, Aber & Beardlee, 2012: 274).

One of these co-factors is parental emotional distress due to economic stressors. The Family Stress Model, first proposed by Conger and Elder (1994), posits that economic hardship influences children through their parents' emotional and behavioural problems due to economic pressures and this may lead to harsh and inconsistent parenting (Conger, Conger & Martin 2010: 692-693). These emotional and behavioural problems may further cause conflict between parents which, in turn, may lead to divorce or separation, adding to the financial hardship of the resultant single-parent family. These conditions not only disrupt positive parenting but also may have a direct influence on children's behaviour and emotional well-being when a parent moves out or the family has to move after a divorce (Blair & Raver, 2012: 310; Conger et al., 2010: 693).

Due to work and financial instability, low-income households are frequently on the move. Singh and Ghandour (2012: S167) regard the stress of moving and family conflict associated with moving as contributing to children's behavioural problems. Roy, McCoy and Raver (2014: 1894) have found that children who remain stable in high-poverty neighbourhoods have lower levels of teacher-reported dysregulation compared to children who move between high-poverty neighbourhoods. In addition to increasing uncertainty and the loss of a familiar environment for the children, these moves also disrupt social interactions with friends, the community and the academic environment (Singh & Ghandour, 2012: S167; Jensen, 2009: 27).

A further influence on children's behaviour is the material context of poverty. Elements thereof include neighbourhood and housing conditions (for example, crime), physical disorder (for example, littering), vandalism, dilapidated housing, high levels of crowding and violence, and social disorder (Blair & Raver, 2012: 308; Singh & Ghandour, 2012: S167; Yoshikawa et al., 2012: 274; Sampson, 2004: 107). However, residents' social support of one another moderates the impact of the environment on their well-being (Sampson, 2004: 108).

Jensen (2009: 25) explains how all the above stressors impact on that part of the brain that controls the child's emotions. The brains of children in these circumstances produce larger volumes of "fight-or flight" stress hormones, like cortisol and adrenalin, which atrophies those areas of the brain that control emotional regulation, empathy, and social functioning, all of which are necessary for healthy emotional development. Chronic stress also impacts the amygdala, the brain's centre of emotion. Whereas chronic stress diminishes the complexity of neurons in the frontal lobe and the hippocampus, it increases the complexity of neurons in the amygdala. The chronically stressed child has a heightened emotional memory (of events, such as abuse and trauma, which caused emotional stress) and a reduced declarative memory (the aspect of memory that stores standard knowledge and learning). In the face of physical and psychological threats, the child is physiologically geared to faster and more reactive responses (Blair & Raver, 2012: 310). Chronic exposure to adversity shapes the child's physiological and behavioural development to adapt to the threatening environment. At the same time, this change is potentially harmful in the long run (Blair & Raver 2012: 313). As the stress responses of these children are more reactive and less reflexive, they find it difficult to adapt socially as self-regulation (the regulation of attention, emotions, and executive functions in order to achieve a goal) is compromised by neural changes (Blair & Raver, 2012: 311).

Several studies have identified the social and emotional outcomes for children raised in poverty. These typically include conduct problems (cheating, lying, disobedience, and headstrong behaviour), emotional problems (anxiety, dependency, inappropriate emotional responses, a more limited range of emotional responses, and depression), anti-social behaviour (peer conflict, bullying and social withdrawal, rudeness, and less

empathy for others) and inattention/hyperactivity or hypo-reactivity (Kiernan & Heurta, 2008: 789; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 59; Jensen, 2009: 19; Blair & Raver, 2012: 313). The social and emotional development of the children in their care may seriously affect the practitioners' work. Not only are children with socio-emotional problems disruptive in the group but also their capacity to learn is diminished, as explained by Jensen (2009) and Blair and Raver (2012).

In the study by Kiernan and Heurta (2008) mentioned earlier, mothers rated their children's behaviour. The problem with this is that the objectivity of the report of a parent in financial distress regarding the child's behaviour might be questioned. A depressed and anxious single parent without social support and under financial pressure might regard a very active child as hyperactive. The wealthier parent might regard the same behaviour as normal and healthy and enrol the child in a sports club to channel his energy.

The inadequate, overwhelmed teacher in an overcrowded classroom in a poor community without resources might classify the child who is always asking questions as "demanding a lot of attention". The teacher in a well-equipped classroom with a limited number of children and an assistant to support her might find all the questions stimulating and take time to do research with the children to find answers to their questions. He or she might, in fact, encourage other children to also ask questions and to research topics. This teacher might regard the question-asking child as self-assured and intelligent. The teacher from a community where children are encouraged to be submissive and obedient, however, might regard this child as head-strong and ill-mannered.

Children's emotional and social development, together with their cognitive development, play equally important roles in terms of school readiness. The practitioner in an impoverished community also has to prepare the children in her group to be school ready in order to succeed in formal education. However, as discussed, the practitioner is confronted with many challenges in terms of the children's cognitive, social and emotional development, which influence their school readiness.

### 3.2.5 School readiness

Chronic stressors created by poverty have been shown to impede the development of skills important for school success (Willner, Gatzke-Kopp, Bierman, Greenberg & Segalowitz, 2015; Mistry, Benner, Biesanz, Clark & Howes, 2010). School readiness refers to the broad range of skills that children need in order to benefit from the educational experiences of formal schooling. This comprehensive concept includes the development of the physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains of child development.

School readiness skills in the different domains include physical health and the child's ability for self-care, well-developed motor skills, social competence (the ability to form relationships with peers and teachers, prosocial behaviour, and communication skills), emotional competence (knowledge as well as regulation of emotions and behavioural self-regulation), academic skills (emergent literacy, numeracy skills and language skills), and learning-related behaviours, which include the ability to pay attention, work independently, and persist at challenging tasks, as well as curiosity and motivation to learn (Willner et al., 2015: 1148; Moore, Cooper, Domitrovich, Morgan, Cleveland, Shah, Jacobson & Greenberg, 2015: 130; Engle & Black, 2008: 244; Ryan et al., 2006: 326).

A number of studies researched the relation between cognitive development and school readiness as a precursor for school success. Research by Dilworth-Bart (2012: 420), for example, found that executive functioning is important for school readiness and is influenced by the child's context. She defines executive function as "cognitive self-regulation necessary for planning and completing complex tasks" (ibid: 416). Subskills that play a role in completing these tasks include inhibitory control, attentional control, and working memory (ibid: 419).

Additionally, in a 2013 study of the association between inhibitory control, as a subskill, and school readiness, Brown, Ackerman and Moore found a relation between young children's family adversity, inhibitory control, and school readiness. Inhibitory control develops fast in the years before school and Brown et al. (2013:

443) found that this mental skill plays a role in emergent literacy and mathematics preceding formal school entry. Their findings were partly supported by Dilworth-Bart (2012: 421), whose research found that executive functioning mediates the association between socio-economic status and mathematical skills.

In their study, Brown et al. (2013: 449) observed that the more unstable and chaotic the young child's family life is, the more the development of inhibitory control is compromised over time. Instability, household chaos, crowding, and noise – all stressors to which low-income families are often exposed – have been associated with decreased inhibitory control and capacity for self-regulation (Brown et al., 2013: 444). These stressors may also have an indirect impact on children through their effect on parenting, causing, for example, maternal depression, diminished parental responsiveness, and reduced support of children's learning (Brown et al., 2013: 444; Dilworth-Bart, 2012: 421).

Similarly, a study conducted by Mistry, Benner, Biesanz, Clark and Howes in 2010 found that the effect of risk on school readiness is mediated by parental warmth and responsiveness as well as the provision of language and literary experiences at home (Mistry et al., 445). The researchers (ibid.) further established that the level of adversity experienced by the family correlates negatively with children's cognitive stimulation as well as with sensitive and responsive caregiving.

Although the development of the young child has much more than school readiness as its ultimate objective, the child from an impoverished background is at risk of starting his or her school career at a disadvantage due to a lack of cognitive, social and emotional stimulation and support. Preparing the young child for formal schooling is mainly the responsibility of the practitioner. Yet, due to the challenges in all domains of development that children in poverty generally experience, this goal is often not achieved, possibly leaving the practitioner with a sense of failure.

### **3.2.6 The child as active participant**

Children are not merely passive recipients of the blows dealt to them by their adverse circumstances. In fact, they are active participants in their own becoming and development, influencing the people and circumstances in their world. Blair and Raver (2012: 309) explain that development is the product of biology and experience. This implies that the environment as well as the child's genetic make-up influence behaviour. For example, when children respond positively to their parents' involvement, they encourage their parents to become more involved. Raikes et al. (2006: 945) state that, in the case of joint-reading of books, a more linguistically developed child typically encourages his or her parents' involvement and, at the same time, the child benefits from it. Blair, Raver, Berry and the Family Life Project Investigators (2014: 562) found that this principle also applies to children's level of executive functioning. Children with higher levels of executive functioning elicit higher quality care from their caregivers.

Meanwhile, children's behaviour may also evoke negative reactions from an already overburdened parent. Sohr-Preston and Scaramella (2006: 69) indicate that irritable and taxing behaviours displayed by infants of depressed mothers may worsen or maintain maternal depression and may interfere with positive parent-infant interaction. Swick and Williams (2006: 374) use the baby who won't stop crying as an example of stress created by the child. The persistent crying stresses the father who, in turn, conveys his negative reactions to the mother. This may result in both mother and baby being hurt.

The same principle applies in the classroom. The adverse circumstances of poverty may negatively affect the behaviour of the child to a greater or lesser extent. Mustard (2007: 56) explains that the individual child's gene structure determines whether the child is resistant to the adverse effects of poverty during the early years. The child's behaviour can either elicit a positive or a negative response, as well as either more or less involvement, from the practitioner. This, in turn, contributes to either the practitioner's challenges or her successes as a teacher.

### **3.3 THE CHILD'S FAMILY AS EXOSYSTEM OF THE PRACTITIONER**

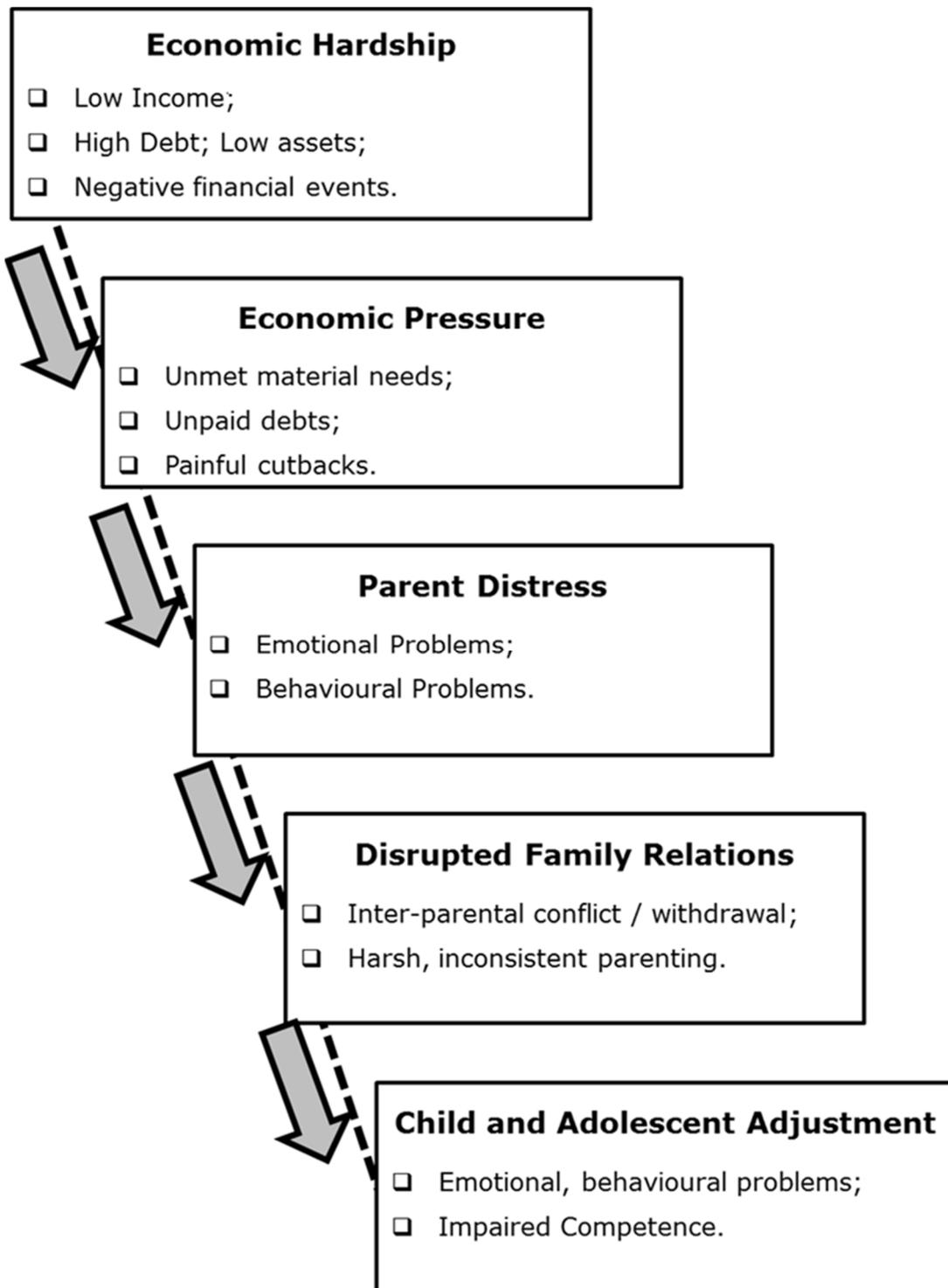
The family is the child's first and most intimate circle of influence, shaping the child who comes to school. This context determines how the child views the world and him- or herself (Slaby, Loucks & Stelwagon, 2005: 51).

#### **3.3.1 Familial financial hardship**

A family's financial predicament can influence a child directly when parents can barely afford to meet the basic needs of the family. Generally parents then cannot afford learning materials or access to experiences to stimulate children's cognitive development (Votruba-Drzal 2003: 341). Moreover, the economic situation of the family can also affect a child indirectly through its emotional impact on his or her parents.

As indicated, the Family Stress Model (Conger & Elder, 1994) demonstrates the influence of financial hardship on parents' psychological and emotional well-being, which may lead to harsher, less supportive, and more detached parenting behaviour, which affects children's behaviour and emotional and social adjustment (Jensen, 2009: 24; Conger & Conger, 2008: 66; Ryan et al., 2006: 329; Yeung et al., 2002: 1862). Less responsive parenting also implies less interaction and engagement with children and, subsequently, less cognitive stimulation (Votruba-Drzal 2003: 342). Figure 2 (overleaf) graphically demonstrates the processes through which economic hardship influences families and children.

The Family Stress Model is primarily used to explain how financial loss causes disruption in family relationships, which typically impacts on the behaviour of adolescents. Much research has examined this model in relation to adolescents and older children (Ryan et al., 2006: 329-330; Yeung et al., 2002: 1863). However, Ryan et al. (2006: 330) quote a study, using data collected just prior to the onset of the Great Depression, which found that family instability often had a greater effect on young children's achievement than it did on adolescents, most likely because young children need more nurturing and guidance from adults than older children do.



**Figure 2: Graphical Representation of the Framework of the Family Stress Model**

(Adapted from: Conger and Conger, 2008: 67)

Similarly, Yeung et al. (2002: 1863) share the opinion that the associations between low family income and children's development are stronger for young children than for adolescents. However, it seems that parental inability to handle stress is the main cause of the young child's deficient social and emotional development. In other words, it is not parental stress per se but, rather, the disruptive effect of stress on parenting styles and parent-child interactions that impacts negatively on the child's socio-emotional behaviour. Thus it follows that, if parents are able to maintain positive parenting behaviours, despite added stress, the negative effects of poverty on children might be buffered.

When parents manage to develop warm and supportive relationships with their children, in spite of being poor, they can create an environment that reduces the developmental risks that are normally associated with children-at-risk due to poverty (Barajas, Philipson & Brooks-Gunn, 2008: 321; Shore, 1997: 48-49). Be that as it may, poor parents are faced with a number of risk factors that make it difficult to maintain a healthy family life.

These risk factors include the following:

- **Social and emotional problems** for example substance abuse, single-parent families, domestic violence, and parental depression (Azzi-Lessing, 2010; Waldfogel, Craigie & Brooks-Gunn, 2010: 87; Jensen, 2009: 8-9).
- **Family violence** for example being raped, molested or physically abused, often without access to social or emotional support (Solidarity Helping Hand, 2010: 10; Jensen, 2009: 24; Swick & Williams, 2006: 375).
- **Financial instability** such as when the family's emotional well-being is affected by fluctuation in income (which has an impact on housing stability and food security) regardless of their level of poverty (Oberge, 2011: 553; Mistry et al., 2004: 728).
- **Social exclusion or marginalisation** such as when people are pushed to the edge of society because of poverty. This can either be passive exclusion because of a lack of basic competencies or social and economic

circumstances, or active exclusion because of discrimination or policies to exclude people (Council of the European Union, 2004:10). Mallon and Stevens (2012: 66) explain that personal and structural traits – for example, limited basic skills, learning disabilities, poor understanding of workplace norms and work ethics, poor physical and mental health, lack of access to childcare, and transport problems – can have an exclusionary effect.

- With regard to **parental perceptions** Abela and Tabone (2008: 152) indicate that the perceptions of parents from poor backgrounds about their children's performance at school continue to label them as failures. Parents' expectations, attitudes, and styles of interacting with their children are a reflection of the family's socio-economic status, their children's well-being, and the cognitively stimulating experiences offered to their children (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002: 382).

### **3.3.2 Maternal education**

Maternal education is another variable identified to be a strong predictor of young children's cognitive development (Naudeau et al., 2011: 31; Schady, 2011: 2305-2306; World Bank, 2010: 12). Bornstein, Hahn and Wolke (2013: 160) conducted a 14-year-long large-scale study and found that maternal education played a major role in toddler mental development, child intelligence, and adolescent achievement. In fact, a study by Ozkan, Senel, Arslan and Karacan (2012: 1820) established maternal education to be the most important factor in terms of young children's cognitive development, even in premature at-risk babies. In contrast with earlier research that focused only on maternal education, this research (ibid.) found that paternal education also plays a role in children's cognitive and behavioural development.

Dilworth-Bart (2012: 421) explains how maternal education influences children's cognitive outcomes. Mothers with higher levels of education may create more enriching environments for their children and may engage in higher quality conversations, using richer vocabularies, with their children. Schady (2011: 2305) believes that this gives these children an advantage early in their lives. Maternal

education further determines not only the amount of time a mother tends to spend with her children but also the composition of time she may spend with children from different ages. In 2012, Kalil, Ryan and Carey found that more educated mothers spend their time with babies on basic care and play, while time is spent in learning activities (reading and problem solving) with children from three to five years of age (Kalil et al., 2012: 1377). These researchers believe that highly educated mothers promote their children's development at different developmental stages by adapting the composition of time spent with their children (ibid.). The quality of parental involvement seems to be the key aspect in terms of child development.

### **3.3.3 Parents' work**

A further indirect influence on the well-being of children is parents' work or lack of work. When employed, low-income parents often work long hours with less time to spend with their children. They also have less financial resources to pay for quality childcare services and provide for their children's developmental needs. In other words, they are likely to experience intense work-family conflict (Jensen, 2009: 28; Yeung & Glauber, 2008: 299). Furthermore, low-paying jobs often do not provide opportunities for workers to use their skills and come with a number of negative conditions. For example, these jobs are often dangerous, offer little job security and often do not offer benefits such as medical aid and pension (Pharoah, 2008: 7). Pharoah (ibid.) further points out that parents who are in low-income jobs often find work far from their communities. Subsequently transport fees are another complication as few can afford cars, and even those who have cars, cannot afford fuel for the cars. Should these parents accept jobs far from their community, a lot of time is spent on travelling, with the result that less time is available to spend on their children.

Although employment is a prime need of poor parents, Chatterji, Markowitz and Brooks-Gunn (2013: 285) found that early maternal employment can indeed affect maternal health and well-being. Mothers who returned fulltime to work when their infants were three months old, showed depressive symptoms, parenting stress and lower levels of self-reported health. Chatterji et al. (2013: 299) suggest that mothers

benefit from longer maternity leave and reduced work hours once they return to work, especially mothers with a history of depression and less social support (which is often the case with mothers in poverty). However, mothers in poverty generally cannot afford longer maternity leave, or to compromise on income by working less hours.

### **3.3.4 Quality of parenting**

Heckman (2013: 34) proposes that the appropriate measure of child adversity is not poverty or parental education but the quality of parenting. At the same time, poverty and parental education may correlate with the quality of parenting (ibid: 40). Meanwhile, research by Duncan, Morris and Rodrigues (2011) found that policy-induced income increases for families were associated with significant academic improvement in young children. A possible explanation is that an income increase reduces parental stress, which, in turn, has a positive influence on parenting.

Blair et al. (2014: 555) refer to past work, which found that an improvement in income is associated with an improvement in parenting, which, in turn, has an influence on children's cognitive development. The research of Blair et al. (2014: 562) indicated that higher parenting sensitivity and responsiveness at 36 months are associated with higher child executive functioning when the child is older. Yet, this interpretation was refuted by Duncan et al. (2011: 1267), who found no improvement in parental warmth, harsh parenting, depression, or provision of learning experiences at home when the family's financial situation improved. However, a few studies indicated that an increase in income was spent on childcare, clothes and food for children (Duncan et al., 2011: 1267).

When parents demonstrate less positive parenting due to economic hardship, their children are at risk of both diminished positive adjustment (e.g. cognitive ability, social competence, school success, and attachment to parents) and increases in internalising (unhappiness, depression, anxiety, social withdrawal and dependence) and externalising (hyperactivity, bullying, headstrong behaviour, aggression, defiance and anti-social behaviour) problems (Conger & Conger, 2008: 68; Ryan et al., 2006: 328; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 62). Behaviour research further indicated that

children from impoverished homes develop psychiatric disturbances and maladaptive social functioning at a greater rate than their more well-off counterparts (Jensen, 2009: 17). The irony, however, is that poor parents are less equipped than well-off parents to adjust their parenting to the demands of higher-needs children (ibid.).

The impact of poverty on the family, as discussed here, might not create direct challenges for the practitioner working with the child coming from an impoverished family. However, the characteristics and challenges of the family from an impoverished background might indirectly cause challenges for the practitioner with which her colleague in an ECD centre in a more affluent community might not have to deal. Family poverty often directly influences children's abilities and behaviours, which they bring to school. It also influences parents and their relationships with their children, which, in turn, may affect the children's behaviour.

Parents below the poverty line who are simply trying to survive might not be able to pay children's school fees or contribute financially in any way, never sending items to contribute to the enrichment of the learning environment or even sending hungry and neglected children to school. Socially excluded parents might suffer from low self-esteem and, therefore, may not want to participate in activities or decision-making at the school.

### **3.4 ECD CENTRE AS MICROSYSTEM OF THE PRACTITIONER AND CHILD**

The practitioners' experiences are mostly created in the ECD centre. The quality of the centre as physical workspace either frustrates the practitioners in their work and influences the development of the children negatively, or creates a positive space where they and the children can flourish. Other aspects regarding their work include their own education, support in their work through funding and specialist involvement as well as through parent involvement in the centre and their children's learning.

Biersteker and Dawes (2008: 195) declare that access to ECD education is not enough in itself – quality services are equally essential. Childcare researchers hold the view that there is a positive relationship between high-quality childcare and

virtually every aspect of child development (yielding substantial long-term educational, social, and economic benefits) and that, furthermore, low-quality childcare is associated with poorer outcomes or may even be detrimental to child development and future prospects (Keys, Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, Vandell, Li, Ruzek & Howes, 2013: 1172; Biersteker & Dawes, 2008: 195; NICHD Early Child Care Network, 2006: 99; Barnett, 2004: 2; Friendly & Lero, 2002: 6; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000: i; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000: 313).

In spite of childcare researchers' optimistic view of the long-term effects of high-quality childcare, fade-out effects of many programmes were also observed (Hill, Gormley & Adelstein, 2015: 62; Duncan & Magnuson 2013: 110). At the same time, a number of programmes showed lasting positive effects (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013: 118). Duncan and Magnuson (2013: 120) explain that preschool programmes may impact some other aspects of child development in addition to cognitive outcomes. They identify reduced criminal activity, improved educational attainment, and higher earnings as lasting effects on children's later lives (ibid.). Also, Hill et al. (2015: 61) refer to the positive socio-emotional effects of quality ECD programmes, which are important not only in school children's lives but also later in life when they have to make behaviour choices. Quality seems to be the determining factor regarding the effect of ECD programmes on young children's development.

### **3.4.1 Quality**

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development conducted a large-scale longitudinal study of the effects of early childcare arrangements on children's development (NICHD Early Child Care Network, 2006: 99). In its analysis, the study found that childcare quality was significantly associated with most developmental outcomes, including cognitive and social development as well as peer interactions at the ages 24 months, 36 months, and 54 months (NICHD Early Child Care Network, 2006: 108 & 111). These findings are also supported by Shonkoff and Phillips (2000: 313). The irony is that children whose families have the least resources are the most likely to use ECD programmes that have the lowest capacity to respond to their needs; this when they

are often those who most need a quality ECD programme and would benefit from such a programme (Azzi-Lessing, 2010; Jensen, 2009: 11; Sparling, Ramey & Ramey, 2007: 117). Azzi-Lessing (2010) feels that vulnerable children are doubly burdened – they need a quality programme with extra support, while they cannot even afford a quality programme, let alone extra support.

Vandell and Wolfe (2000: 3) recognise the following dimensions of quality in an ECD centre – process quality, structural features, caregiver characteristics, and health and safety indicators of quality. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000: 314) refer, instead, to child-caregiver relationship and community and policy context, together with the structural characteristics, as important variables regarding the quality of childcare. In addition, Urban, Vandebroek, Van Laere, Lazzari and Peeters (2012: 510) do not consider child-caregiver interactions as the only important dimensions of quality; they include all interactions between the different role players (practitioners, colleagues, parents, children, and the local community) in the ECD set-up as important. Other dimensions of quality identified by these researchers (*ibid.*) include the experience of belonging and involvement for children, parents and practitioners, as well as systems of evaluation to improve quality, as indicative of the quality of the centre.

Johnson et al. (2008: 87) define structural quality as the conditions of the childcare setting that can be objectively determined. These include practitioner-child ratio, condition of the facility, teacher qualifications and training, staff turnover and staff wages. These structural components all contribute to the practitioners' ability to create safe and developmentally appropriate environments to support children's development.

Process quality, meanwhile, refers to the actual experiences of and interactions between children and caregivers. These include language and cognitive experiences and motor and creative activities (Johnson et al., 2008: 87). However, the different components of quality are interrelated, influencing each other. For example, optimal structural quality facilitates better process conditions. At the same time structural aspects of caregiving as well as process components have immediate and lasting effects on children's cognitive and emotional development (Johnson et al., 2008: 88).

For instance, the child's ability to build a trusting relationship with a caregiver is hampered when the child frequently has to bond with a new caregiver due to staff turnover.

#### **3.4.1.1 Staff Turnover**

Several international studies have indicated that staff turnover in early childhood centres is considerably higher than that in other care-based workplaces (Jovanovich, 2013: 528). Vandell and Wolfe (2000: vii), and Barnett (2004: 3) regard low wages in the childcare field as the possible reason why childcare staff are often not well-trained. Poor pay and below-average employment benefits make it difficult to recruit and employ well-trained professional educators. In addition, poor compensation contributes to higher staff turnover. ECD centres in lower-income areas would find it even more difficult to compete with centres in higher-income areas in terms of salaries and benefits offered to staff. Whereas Jovanovich (2013: 540) does not regard poor pay as the main reason for high staff turnover, Urban et al. (2012: 519) believe that decent pay reduces turnover. However, both Jovanovich (2013: 540) and Urban and colleagues (2012: 519) regard the need for recognition of professional inputs as important. Support in professional development is also identified by Jovanovich (2013: 539) and Urban et al. (2012: 519) as an important incentive that results in high levels of professionalism.

#### **3.4.1.2 Practitioners' Education**

Practitioners with more formal education specialising in early childhood education tend to be more positive, sensitive and responsive, and are less punitive and authoritarian towards the children in their care. They usually offer children richer language experiences and involve them in more stimulating but, at the same time, age-appropriate activities and materials (Barnett, 2004: 5; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000: 14). Urban et al. (2012: 521) emphasise not only initial professional education but also comprehensive long-term in-service professional development.

It is evident that better educated caregivers are especially important for children-at-risk. Azzi-Lessing (2010) comments that it is already difficult to work with children who have a host of problems but becomes even more challenging when the practitioner does not have professional insight into the causes of the problems or the know-how to address these problems. In other words, disadvantaged children have less access to high-quality caregiving, though they may benefit from it most (Jensen, 2009: 11) as practitioner education and experience may moderate the effects of poverty on children's developmental outcomes and later school success (McWayne, Cheung, Wright & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012: 874; Barnett, 2004: 5).

#### **3.4.1.3 Programme**

Azzi-Lessing (2010) indicates that there are increasing demands on practitioners to present a more academically orientated programme, to emphasise early academic skills, and to evaluate the mastery of these skills. She further points out that the main aim of many programmes for disadvantaged children is to narrow the gap between their academic skills and those of their wealthier peers. This tendency is further fuelled by funders who need proof of the cost-effectiveness of programmes. Considering the view of Gordon and Browne (2011: 41) that the social and cultural contexts of children are dimensions of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), the emphasis on academic readiness often does not support DAP in ECD programmes for poor children.

#### **3.4.1.4 Group size and practitioner-child ratio**

Research has demonstrated that the needs of children in an ECD centre vary, in terms of structural elements, according to their age group. Where group size and practitioner-child ratio are of particular importance to infants, the qualifications of their practitioner are more significant for pre-school children (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008: 199; Johnson et al., 2008: 87). Yet, a study by McWayne et al. (2012: 866) used practitioner-child ratio of pre-school children as a measure of classroom quality. The study's findings indicated that, as practitioner-child ratio increased (more children per practitioner), children's general knowledge decreased (McWayne et al., 2012: 873).

The amount of personal interaction between child and adult is directly related to this ratio (Hearron & Hildebrand, 2013: 143).

#### **3.4.1.5 Health and safety standards**

The health and safety standards that are maintained in an ECD centre are also an indicator of the quality of the service. More hygienic practices by staff and children are associated with fewer respiratory and infectious illnesses (Vandell & Wolfe, 2000: 17). Davis, Godfrey and Rankin (2013: 1542) posit that children in childcare have a higher risk of injury compared to children who are cared for by their parents. Moreover, this association appears to be stronger amongst children whose parents have less than high school education. Davis et al. (2013: 1545) speculate that parent income may mediate the relation between centre quality and parent education. Parents with higher income can afford better childcare facilities, which, in turn, can afford more and better-qualified staff to supervise, better equipment, and maintenance of equipment and the centre in general.

Supervision of children plays a role in unintentional injury in childcare. Elements thereof include the proximity of the supervisor, supervisor attention paid to the children, and continuity of monitoring of the children. The extent to which a practitioner is able to apply these aspects of supervision may play a role in the likelihood of an injury (Davis et al., 2013: 1546).

In addition, the physical environment influences the chances of an injury. Child injuries occur less when playgrounds are safe and offer more space per child; equipment, furniture and material are age-appropriate and in good condition; and potentially dangerous objects are safely stored (Davis et al., 2013: 1546; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000: 17). Nevertheless, these safety aspects may be influenced by practitioner training, experience, abilities and number of children being cared for, which, in turn, is often influenced by the financial position of the centre (Davis et al., 2013: 1546).

#### **3.4.1.6 Funding**

Quality (whether process quality, structural quality, or quality in terms of health and safety) is dependent on the availability of funding. ECD centres need funding to cover day-to-day operational costs, for infrastructure building and maintenance, for staff development and support, and to monitor quality. Quality suffers when fees are low or fee payment is poor, which is often the case in poor communities (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008: 199).

A study of teachers in poor communities in Southern Ethiopia revealed several challenges those teachers have to deal with due to financial constraints. These include poor material resources – for example, insufficient instructional media. They are also in need of human resources and well-developed infrastructure – for example, classrooms are small and in substandard condition (Abdo & Semela, 2010: 79-80). Although this study was done on the challenges of primary school teachers in poor communities in Ethiopia specifically, it can be assumed that the ECD practitioner in any poor community will be faced with the same challenges in terms of financial constraints. This is even more relevant given that the ECD centre might not receive any government subsidy to maintain the centre.

Although subsidies are available to children attending registered non-profit ECD centres in South Africa, these subsidies often do not reach the poorest young children as they do not have access to registered centres (Berry, Biersteker, Dawes, Lake & Smith, 2013: 38). To make matters worse, many of these unregistered ECD centres in poor communities do not have the funding to upgrade their infrastructure in order to qualify for a subsidy at the Department of Social Development (Berry et al., 2013: 39). Even more discouraging is the fact that, as pointed out by Berry et al. (2013: 38), there is no legal obligation for the funding of ECD.

#### **3.4.1.7 Lack of support**

Azzi-Lessing (2010) posits that early care and education programmes that serve high numbers of vulnerable children, often require professionals with the expertise to

respond to parents' concerns, assess families' needs, and work directly with children – in small groups, or individually – to address the effects of trauma and other mental issues. Being geographically far from other ECD centres and practitioners, and due to financial constraints, the practitioner in the marginalised community may not have ready access to training, resources and involvement from the broader community. She, therefore, may lack the support that she desperately needs to educate and care for children-at-risk, children who need more support than their more privileged peers to ameliorate deficits. Although Berry et al. (2013: 40) acknowledge that it is hard to bring together different complex interventions delivered by various agents, they appeal for an integrated effective ECD system for children most in need.

Both the practitioner and the child tend to experience exclusion due to poverty and demography. Friendly and Lero (2002: 2) believe that social inclusion is not only about addressing shortcomings in a corrective approach but also about ensuring that opportunities are not missed. Both practitioner and child may miss opportunities due to exclusion.

The lack of quality regarding all aspects of the ECD centre probably has an effect on the practitioner's job satisfaction. Not only does she have to educate children whose development is compromised due to lower quality ECD education but she also has to work daily in less favourable conditions not being properly trained and equipped for the job.

#### **3.4.1.8 *Parent involvement***

A significant body of research – such as that of Share and Kerrins (2013), Fiese, Eckert and Spagnola (2006), and Zellman and Perlman (2006) – has indicated that a positive and strong relationship between school and family improves children's learning and plays a role in addressing barriers to learning. The cooperation between school and home even plays a protecting role for children from high-risk circumstances as it serves as a "safety net" (Fiese et al., 2006: 401). Unfortunately, findings reported in a large body of literature on parents' involvement focus mainly on primary and secondary school settings (Share, Kerrins & Greene, 2011: 24; Zellman

& Perlman, 2006: 523). Share and Kerrins (2013), however, are among a small number of researchers who have focused their research on parental involvement in childcare centres – specifically, five ECD centres, mostly in poor areas of Dublin, Ireland.

There is also no universal agreement on what parental involvement is or the forms that it can take (Share et al., 2011: 22; Share & Kerrins, 2013: 356). However, overall research has shown that parental involvement has an impact on educational outcomes, and that this finding is also relevant in ECD settings (Share et al., 2011: 25; Lee & Bowen, 2006: 194; Fiese et al., 2006: 401).

At the same time, the practitioners themselves may be a stumbling block in the way of the establishment of parent involvement. Zellman and Perlman (2006: 522) ask whether ECD practitioners who work long hours for little pay and who have little formal training in child development can be expected to provide guidance that parents will value. In their research, Share and Kerrins (2013: 365) furthermore identified practitioners who believed that their literacy skills were not good enough for them to write reports to be sent to parents. Practitioners also pointed out that the compilation of a portfolio or printing pictures has a cost implication (ibid: 368). All of these obstacles might be especially relevant for the practitioner who also suffers from the economic and related woes of life in a poor community. Yet, parent involvement has a mediatory effect on the practitioner's work through its impact on the child's learning and development.

Zellman and Perlman (2006: 526) believe that parent involvement is a way to integrate the child's home and childcare experiences. Similarly, Lee and Bowen (2006: 196) regard parent involvement as the connection between the child's microsystems (home and school), thus representing the child's mesosystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979). This connection also contributes to the coherence in the values, behaviours and attitudes of school and home. For example, parents tend to begin to model the practitioner's behaviour by using positive disciplinary practices. This, in turn, is likely to improve relationships between parents and their children (Zellman & Perlman, 2006: 526).

Zellman and Perlman (*ibid.*) believe that parents who spend even limited time in the centre communicating informally with the practitioner often obtain valuable information about their child's day. They can then adapt their responses to the child accordingly – for example, the child who did not nap or eat during the day can be made to do so in the evening. The child also observes the parent spending time in the childcare setting, merging the two microsystems in his or her mind.

The quality of childcare has been shown to benefit from high levels of parent-practitioner communication (Zellman & Perlman, 2006: 526). Parents are then informed about the curriculum and what can be expected of a child at a certain age. Parents consequently tend to increase attention to promoting the child's school education at home, while practitioners tend to focus more on aspects relating to the child's home life, such as improving self-confidence (Fiese et al., 2006: 401). However, it is also possible that parents, who enrol their children in higher quality centres, where all aspects of the child's development receive attention, are also inclined to spend more time on academic activities at home and are thus informed about child development issues.

For children raised in poverty, all strategies – including parental involvement in early schooling – should be employed to help them overcome their challenges. This benefit is demonstrated in a case study of children from disadvantaged backgrounds who attended a structured pre-school in Salinas, California. Staff felt that parent involvement and participation were fundamental to success as it demonstrated parents' commitment to their children (Slaby et al., 2005: 52).

The irony is that poor parents or parents with lower education levels tend to exhibit less parent involvement, which may be a significant disadvantage to their children (Lee & Bowen, 2009: 210; Share & Kerrins, 2013: 367). The reason may be that they feel less confident communicating with practitioners, owing to a lack of knowledge of the school system and a lack of familiarity with educational jargon (Lee & Bowen 2009: 198), or they may be too busy with work commitments to get involved (Share & Kerrins, 2013: 367). Parents' attitudes or beliefs may also hamper involvement. Practitioners involved in the research of Share and Kerrins (2013: 367) indicated that

some parents believed it was the role of the practitioner to teach their children and parents only needed to know about problems. In addition, Jensen (2009: 10-11) states that poor children are often absent and that poor attendance often indicates parents' negative attitudes towards school as they did poorly themselves in school. As Jensen (2009: 10) asserts, "school can help turn children's lives around, but only if the children show up". Furthermore, research findings indicate that economically disadvantaged parents are less optimistic about their children's education, which might also contribute to the lower levels of involvement of these parents (Lee & Bowen, 2009: 211).

### **3.5 EXPERIENCES OF THE PRACTITIONER REGARDING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AS MICROSYSTEM**

Financial constraints often force low-income families to live in impoverished communities (Ryan et al., 2006: 332; Jensen, 2009: 8). The physical environment of the practitioner and the children in her class – whether in the home or outside the home (the neighbourhood where they reside) – is typically that of want and deprivation.

#### **3.5.1 Home environment**

The Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME), developed by Caldwell and Bradley (1984), is commonly used to assess home environment quality by assessing the type and frequency of interactions and learning experiences that parents provide for their children (Ryan et al., 2006: 331; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000: 293). The assessment includes the number of books, puzzles and other educational toys available in the house. It also measures the quality of the physical condition of the house – for example, whether the house is cramped, dirty, cluttered or chaotic. Other aspects of household chaos influencing children's development include noise, crowding, and family members moving into and out of the household (Brown et al., 2013: 444; Martin, Razza & Brooks-Gunn, 2012: 1247; Ryan et al., 2006: 331; Evans, 2006: 433). Ryan et al. (2006: 331) refer to a high correlation between these HOME scores and developmental outcomes, including health (malnutrition and growth

stunting) and academic outcomes (poor school performance and lower IQ scores). Shonkoff and Phillips (2000: 293) ascribe the difference that exists between the HOME scores of high-income and low-income households to the fact that several HOME items depend on the household having a greater income.

Parenting practices (such as routines and structures), as aspects of the home environment, also play a role in children's development (Ryan et al., 2006: 331-332). These include, for example, regular mealtimes and bedtime (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 326), as well as set homework times (Dupere, Leventhal, Crusnoe & Dion, 2010: 1229).

Not only their home environment but also their neighbourhood has an influence on children's developmental outcomes. Furthermore, home and neighbourhood quality are usually closely related and the two contexts often work collectively to disrupt children's optimal development. What happens in one context mediates the effects of the other context; role players here include parents, peers, family and school (Ryan et al., 2006: 332). Evidence from a number of studies showed that a positive relation between children's cognitive test scores and neighbourhood SES was partially mediated by the quality of the home (Dupere et al., 2010: 1229; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 325).

The practitioner working with children from a deprived and non-stimulating home and neighbourhood has to handle challenges that the children might experience because of their background. Furthermore, because she lives in the same circumstances, her life is also affected by these circumstances.

### **3.5.2 Neighbourhood**

Stressors, due to financial hardship, in the community as microsystem generally have a direct influence on families and undermine children's healthy development (Coley, Lynch & Kull, 2015: 94). The practitioner (and her family) living in the settlement is also influenced by the neighbourhood conditions of the settlement, and its effects on the children in her class. The links between neighbourhood poverty and the socio-

emotional and cognitive development of children have been studied in a long history of social science research (McCoy, Connors, Yoshikawa & Friedman-Krauss, 2015: 151; Coley, Lynch & Kull, 2015: 94; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 309). Direct influences on children's well-being often experienced in poor neighbourhoods have been identified as greater traffic volumes, less green spaces, crime, danger and violence, disorder, pollution, and noise (Dupere et al., 2010: 1229; Jensen, 2009: 8; Dawes, 2003: 12).

These stressors may also have an indirect influence on children as they may impact on parents' mental and physical health and well-being. Parental psychological distress, in turn, tend to have an influence on parenting behaviours (Coley et al., 2015: 102; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 321). Martin et al. (2012: 921) report higher levels of parent depression due to neighbourhood violence, which, in turn, increases the risk of child maltreatment. By contrast, when parents have resources available to provide their children with learning experiences inside and outside the home, and the neighbourhood is stable and safe, parents' emotional well-being is enhanced. This then contributes to positive parenting (Dupere et al., 2010: 1229). Some of the potential mechanisms through which neighbourhoods have been found to affect children are discussed below.

### **3.5.2.1 Institutional resources**

The extent to which services are available and affordable, as well as the quality thereof, can support or impede child development. Jensen (2009: 8) posits that low-income neighbourhoods are likely to have lower-quality services compared to more well-off neighbourhoods. These services include medical, educational, recreational, and municipal services and activities (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 322).

- **Learning facilities:** In neighbourhoods where there are educational facilities such as libraries, museums and bookstores, parents are supported in the cognitive stimulation of their children (McCoy, Connors, Morris, Yoshikawa & Friedman-Krauss, 2015: 151; Dupere et al., 2010: 1229). In an impoverished neighbourhood or settlement, however, parents and practitioners will not have

such facilities and resources readily available to enrich their interactions with the children.

- **Social and recreational facilities:** Low levels of physical activity are often the cause of obesity and a number of chronic conditions (Ferguson, Lamb, Wang, Ogilvie & Ellaway, 2013: 10). Sadly, the poor, who already suffer disproportionately from health problems, do not always have easy access to recreational and sports facilities – such as parks, open spaces, or safe streets where people can go for a walk – or formal recreational facilities like swimming pools and tennis courts (Ferguson et al., 2013: 1). A lack of these resources not only discourages a physically active lifestyle among adults but also leaves parents and practitioners with less means to promote children’s physical and socio-emotional well-being.
- **Childcare:** Dupere et al. (2010: 1241) have found that children raised in lower SES neighbourhoods often attend lower quality childcare than those raised in higher SES neighbourhoods. Their research (ibid.) suggests that the difference in vocabulary and reading scores of children from lower SES backgrounds compared to those of their peers from higher SES backgrounds can often be explained on the basis of their attendance of lower-quality childcare facilities. Furthermore, Dawes (2003: 13) posits that community characteristics influence the well-being of the children’s caregivers. Caregivers’ capacity to support children emotionally can be compromised by community stressors. This statement is valid for both parents and practitioners working and residing in low SES neighbourhoods. The practitioner, being part of the neighbourhood, experiences all the strains and stresses of the neighbourhood, which may also impact on her physical and emotional well-being.
- **Medical services:** Neighbourhood conditions play a role in its residents’ health outcomes and this begins even before birth (Nkansah-Amankrah & Twumasie-Ankrah, 2013: 158). In their research on the impact of neighbourhood poverty on infants’ health, Nkansah-Amankrah & Twumasie-Ankrah (ibid.) found that income inequality frequently leads to low birth weight in babies. They explain that there is a strong connection between income inequality across neighbourhoods and less investment in health care and other facilities needed

for improved community and individual health (ibid: 170). Not only the availability but also the cost of health care has an impact on the health of poor communities (Engle & Black, 2008: 248). While the residents from poor backgrounds get sick more often compared to residents from wealthier backgrounds (Murray & Marks, 2008: 340), they generally have less access to affordable quality health care.

### **3.5.3 Health and safety**

Higher rates of child injury due to unsafe home environments were found in poor neighbourhoods (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 325-326). Additionally, the outside environment might pose a risk to these children's health and safety. Threats include neglect and danger in the form of, for example, dilapidated buildings and physical deterioration, garbage in the streets, air pollution near industrialised areas, higher traffic volumes, less playground safety, and higher crime and neighbourhood violence rates (Jensen, 2009: 8; Dawes, 2003: 14). Neighbourhood violence also has a mediating effect on child maltreatment through parent depression. (Martin et al., 2012: 921). Therefore, children not only witness violence in the neighbourhood but may also experience it as victim in the home.

However, social support from family or neighbours during pregnancy and thereafter has been associated with reduced maternal depression and, therefore, more positive parenting (Martin et al., 2012: 934; Bronfenbrenner, 1986a: 730). Sampson (2004: 109) has found that neighbourhood poverty and lack of home ownership serves as a precursor to less neighbourhood collective efficacy. The term "neighbourhood collective efficacy" refers to the social connections among community members based on mutual trust, shared values, and shared expectations for action-taking by community members for communal benefit and protection (Sampson, 2004: 108; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000: 326).

Similarly, the practitioner, as resident of the settlement, is subject to poor environmental conditions, which may influence her (and her family's) physical and emotional well-being. These conditions can further disadvantage her teaching, since

she does not have access to support facilities and has to work in less safe conditions. The children in her care are disadvantaged not only by their physical environment but also by their parents' negative parenting. To summarise, the microsystems of both practitioner and children do not support optimal teaching, learning and development.

### **3.6 CHALLENGES POSED BY THE MACROSYSTEM**

In his publication, *Armbankes*, Bottomley (2012) situates the position of the poor white in a historical context. He explains how whites benefitted from the previous political dispensation. Yet, those whites who did not manage to rise from poverty were forgotten and ignored in public discourse (Bottomley, 2012: 147). They are deservedly regarded as shameful and lazy by the middle classes (Bottomley, 2012: 172). This biased view regarding poor whites was already evident in the first half of the twentieth century when they were regarded as immoral, criminal, lazy and of inferior character by the more affluent section of the population (Bottomley, 2012: 84-93). Even more tragic is the fact that the present government regard the poor as undeserving, dependent on the handouts of the state, and failing to help themselves (Terreblanche, 2014: 137). In spite of this negative sentiment towards poor whites, extensive welfare services were in place in the past to serve them. With the change in political dispensation in 1994, however, the new government stopped this extensive support in favour of a broader support for all the poor in the country. Although this is a more righteous dispensation, it led to the viewpoint that the poor whites are not entitled to social support. For instance, in its report to President Jacob Zuma, *Solidarity Helping Hand* (2010: 2) stated that food coupons given to whites were stopped because public servants felt it was racist to help hungry white people. Greyling Bezuidenhout, an organiser of the Mine Workers Union, expresses the sentiment that people are suffering from old government policies they did not actively support, and no one seems to care (Swarns, 2000). The social workers withdrew from the areas of white impoverishment and, with them, the systems that were in place to uplift these people, also went. Bottomley (2012: 161) declares that the poor whites were left to their own devices.

Poor white people are not only constrained by a lack of skills but also by the policy of affirmative action, which is most strongly enforced at the lower skills levels (Pharoah, 2008: 7). According to Terreblanche (2014: 15), the present government often used affirmative action unfairly to solve the black unemployment problem by transforming the public sector precipitately from an Afrikaans-dominated sector to an African-dominated sector. The poor and unemployed white individual, living in a marginalised community, experiences the socio-political climate of South-Africa as discriminatory and exclusionist. Changing this situation by investing in marginalised predominantly white settlements seems politically incorrect – against the background of millions of impoverished blacks, the poor whites' plight seems insignificant (Sampson, 2010).

Swarns (2000) uses the Kempton Christian Action Settlement as an example of a place of residence for the poor white that fell into disrepair because few businesses wanted to invest publicly in a whites-only venture. In addition, Pharoah (2008: 8) posits that poor white communities are very poorly represented, if at all, on the databases of stakeholders such as the government support infrastructure. White people living in impoverished marginalised communities experience their position as hopeless because of their skin colour (ibid.). They live in shelters and squatter huts in backyards and go begging on street corners during the day (Potgieter, 2009: 2). However, their predicament is more complex than mere job loss as a result of affirmative action. Mosoetsa (2011: 8-16) explains that significant job loss was the result of limited economic growth after the fall of Apartheid. Furthermore, production methods became more capital intensive and less labour intensive (Terreblanche, 2014: 139). Slow economic growth does not allow for sufficient job creation for all job seekers – black and white. Without work, the impoverished are typically dependent on charity and donations to survive.

Donations, however, are a contentious issue. In his research, Bottomley (2012: 180) found that donations seldom reach all the residents they are intended to benefit. Those who receive the donations do not share it among the residents but take all of it. Donations are also sold to purchase alcohol. Mallon and Stevens (2012: 59) maintain that the best anti-poverty programme is a jobs programme but the impoverished who find employment need support to stay employed. These authors

refer to research findings indicating that the unemployed who found work started off with full-time employment but could not manage to stay employed for a reasonable time (ibid: 65). “Barriers to work” (ibid: 66) either prevent these people from entering the job market or cause them to leave the job market prematurely.

The community of the practitioner generally experiences feelings of hopelessness caused by the perception that the socio-political dispensation will not support it. The children in her care grow up in homes where parents have no hope for the future and are affected by their parents’ mental health. Sampson (2010) sums up their state of mind: “[although] many appear capable of work, they are knocked out by apathy”. The practitioner may feel that she does not get the necessary financial and social support for the centre to function properly. The centre is not entitled to a social grant from the Department of Social Development as it is not registered, since the centre does not comply with the minimum standards required for registration. In addition, the community cannot support the centre financially in order to comply with these standards. Living on the fringes of society, the practitioner is not part of the broader ECD family which could provide moral support, guidance and advice. She also cannot rely on outside support since social institutions and even churches focus only on black poverty, according to Potgieter (2009: 10).

### **3.7 CHALLENGES POSED BY THE CHRONOSYSTEM**

Although widespread poverty was common among Afrikaners in the first half of the twentieth century, the electoral victory of the National Party in 1948 changed their destiny with the introduction of Apartheid (Bottomley, 2012: 99). State-owned industries – for example, the railways, the postal services, the police, and army – became job-creation schemes for whites (O’Reilly, 2010; Bottomley, 2012: 104). Today, however, with the new political dispensation in South Africa, the safety net for unskilled white workers is gone (O’Reilly, 2010). In fact, it was replaced by affirmative action, a system believed by Terreblanche (2014: 99) to be driven too hard in the public and semi-public sectors. Many of these white workers believed that they were guaranteed of a permanent job and did not need a qualification, which left them vulnerable to retrenchment (Hutton, 2006).

Another condition that has led to job loss and impoverishment since 2007, according to Solidarity Helping Hand (2008: 7), is the economic recession and decline in the economy. More and more small businesses have closed down or gone bankrupt, leaving families without incomes. Severance packages were used injudiciously and people were gradually left with nothing (Solidarity Helping Hand, 2008: 7).

Bottomley (2012: 180) also found that informal settlement residents are faced with another condition of future insecurity, namely, eviction. As these families often settle illegally on a vacant plot, they are not informed about decisions taken regarding the occupied land. Therefore, they do not have any bargaining powers and have an uncertain future (Bottomley, 2012: 180). In conclusion, the previous political dispensation took care of those whites who later became the poor whites of the new South Africa, not preparing them for the new political dispensation in which they have to plan for the future and provide for themselves as the state will no longer fulfil this function.

The practitioner works with families and children ill-prepared for the new South Africa and overcome by adversity from which they cannot easily escape. As a member of this community, the practitioner is probably in the same hopeless situation – unqualified and stuck in a situation and job he/she otherwise would not have chosen.

### **3.8 SUMMARY**

The literature review was conducted based on the understanding that the effect of poverty on young children and their families, as well as on the practitioner and her work environment, creates and colours the practitioner's work experiences. Immediate and more remote contextual influences on the child influence the practitioner's experience of the child. The immediate spheres of influence on the child (the various microsystems of the child) include the family and the ECD centre, as well as the nature or lack of interaction between family and ECD centre. The physical environment (the home environment and neighbourhood) is also part of the microsystem significant to the child. The child, however, also has an effect on the

environment, which, in turn, reacts to the child (a reciprocal process) and affects the child.

The macrosystem has an exceptionally strong effect on the fate of impoverished white people. Being poor, these people do not have the financial power to escape from unpleasant circumstances partly determined by politics and laws. The children of these parents, being dependent on them, cannot evade the dire conditions, often created by the macrosystem, experienced by their parents. They furthermore do not have the political or financial power to have an impact on the macrosystem. They come from a dispensation that did not prepare them to thrive in a different macrosystem.

Political and socio-economic changes that took place over the last 21 years left them helpless. Their children are part of this hopeless and bleak scenario. The ECD practitioner, as part of the community, is confronted with similar challenges in and is faced with a sad existence and a bleak future. The practitioner works with the children of the camp on a daily basis and has to handle all their problems but is neither professionally nor financially equipped for the task.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a literature review identifying the challenges and experiences of practitioners in ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised communities was undertaken. The literature review was theoretically framed by the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These ecological systems (the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono-systems) were used to identify and organise the characteristics, as identified in the literature, of the child and the environment that might create challenges for a practitioner in an impoverished area. The broad aim of this study is to understand and discuss the experiences of practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities. The specific aim of this chapter is to describe the research design and methods, including data collection and analysis procedures, strategies for trustworthiness, and ethical considerations that guided this investigation.

#### 4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIMS

The following research questions guided this inquiry:

***Main Research Question:***

What are the experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities?

***Sub-Questions:***

- 1        What are the experiences of practitioners regarding children-at-risk coming from problematic home environments?

- 2 What are the experiences of the practitioners regarding the perceptions and characteristics of the parents of children-at-risk that could pose challenges to the practitioners in performing their task professionally?
- 3 How do practitioners' personal issues affect the quality of education and care they offer?
4. What are the experiences of practitioners regarding their respective contexts that could pose challenges in terms of the quality and safety of education and care?

A marginalised, impoverished community, being on the fringes of society, is often not noticed by society. At the level of practice, the intent of this study is, therefore, to create awareness about and empathy for the plight of those caring for the young children in such marginalised communities. At the level of theory, this study is a systematic description of the experiences of ECD practitioners working in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities. This environment is often hostile to quality education and care. The study is based on empirical evidence collected in the field and through in-depth interviews with the participants.

#### **4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

I employed qualitative research in order to understand the social context, complexities and multi-faceted nature of the experiences of the participants in this inquiry, framed within a social constructivist paradigm. Appropriate for this inquiry is the social constructivist paradigm because it is concerned with the individuals' understanding of the world in which they live and work – an understanding formed through interaction with others (Creswell, 2013: 24-25). This type of research relies as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation (Creswell, 2013: 25), thereby acknowledging that the reality of their experiences can only be fully known by them (Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 310).

### 4.3.1 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

As “experience” is a central component of the research question: “What are the experiences of practitioners in ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities?” I chose narrative inquiry based on Dewey’s (1938) notion of experience as research methodology. According to Dewey’s ontological assumption, “experience” creates social reality and all inquiry follows from this ontological assumption (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 38). However, Dewey’s ontology is not transcendental but transactional (Clandinin 2013: 14). This implies that experience is created, played out, and expressed in social, cultural, domestic and institutional experiences that are storied in living and telling.

The narrative inquirer studies individual experience by observing and listening as well as by living alongside her research participants in order to write and interpret texts (Clandinin, 2013: 18). Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013: 580) refer to a relational ontology in this manner. According to Caine et al. (2013: 583), relational ontology precedes narrative inquiry research as the connection between participant and researcher begins long before the first research contact. This initial connection lies in the researcher’s life story, which “holds, incubates, and clarifies or even extends the puzzles and research interests of the narrative inquirer” (Caine et al., 2013: 583).

Butler-Kisber (2010: 7) suggests that ontology and epistemology coalesce in Dewey’s pragmatist perspective as one can only know what one does or experiences, and what is known at a particular time is the equivalent of truth. Inquiry is not conducted to generate an exclusively truthful representation of a reality independent of the knower but to generate a new relationship between a person and his or her life or world. Clandinin (2013: 14–15) quotes the words of Dewey, indicating that this new relationship:

*[Makes] possible a new way of dealing with them, and thus eventually creates a new kind of experienced object, not more real than those which preceded but more significant, and less overwhelming and oppressive.*

The narrative inquirer describes the experiences of the person's life, world or community, which allows the person to look at and understand these experiences in a more conscious way and from a different vantage point, which may lead to growth and insight (Josselson, 2007: 553). She (ibid: 546) explains that, when the participant feels safe with the researcher, the participant becomes less defensive and may articulate sensitive and shameful matters. A sensitive response from the researcher may result in participants finding their own experiences less disturbing (ibid: 547).

According to Clandinin (2013: 16), the ontology of experience has several key features. Fundamental to narrative inquiry is that narrative inquirers work with and from a relational ontology in narrative inquiry; the inquirer does not study experience as a phenomenon from a distance but intentionally comes into relation with the participant. The inquirer is not an objective inquirer but a relational inquirer who is part of the storied landscapes being studied. Narrative inquirers think narratively about their participants but also about their own experiences and those experiences that become visible as they live alongside their participants (in the context where their lives meet). Since the stories lived and told are co-composed by the participant and the inquirer (Clandinin, 2013: 23-24), narrative inquiry is, therefore, a relational inquiry.

Knowledge generation is temporal and continuous as one experience grows out of another and leads to further experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 2). Inquiry is always within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then become part of future experience. Ordinary everyday experience is valued but is always more than the researcher can know and fully represent in her writings. The researcher's representation involves discriminating emphasis of the experience, no matter how authentically she tries to depict the experience. However, the challenge is to use knowledge in ethical ways to enhance human experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 40-42).

The social dimension of inquiry is a third ontological matter. Narrative inquirers explore the stories people tell. These stories are the reflections of social realities, not the realities themselves – a confluence of social influences on a person's inner life,

and on the person's environment, as well as the person's unique personal history (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 41).

#### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

For the purpose of this study, the term "design", as used by Fouché and Schurink (2011: 308), is employed to refer to the chosen strategy of inquiry. Since narrative inquiry is the study of the way in which humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990: 2), I employed a narrative inquiry design to investigate the experiences of ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities.

Elliot (2005: 4) calls narrative inquiry a "device which facilitates empathy", as it allows the participants to express their feelings and to indicate which elements of their experiences are most significant. As I have never worked and lived in the circumstances of the participants, narrative inquiry allowed me to see the world through their eyes during the course of this study. It also became clear to me that the voices of the participants have not been heard. Discussing the roots of narrative inquiry, Butler-Kisber (2010: 63) explains that liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s used narrative to bring silenced voices to the forefront.

Similarly, this study gave ECD practitioners working in impoverished and marginalised communities the opportunity to speak about their experiences and their needs. Outsiders (church groups, charity organisations, and individuals) supporting the ECD centres generally based their support on what they believed the needs of the centres to be. This study identified the challenges of the practitioners as they experienced them, in order to make support more relevant to their actual challenges and needs.

##### **4.4.1 Narrative inquiry**

Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 2) posit that a "narrative" can be either a phenomenon or a method of research. They go on to explain that people lead lives and tell stories

about those lives (the phenomenon), while narrative researchers collect these stories and write narratives on the stories (the methodological response) (ibid.). In spite of the real differences in the ontological, epistemological and ideological viewpoints of the different narrative inquirers (Caine et al., 2013: 575), the one constant aspect of narrative inquiry is that narrative inquirers study “experience” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 37). Not only is the lived experience, as a source of important knowledge and understanding, respected in narrative inquiry but the cultural, historical, social and institutional narratives within which individual experiences are shaped and constituted are also investigated (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 42). In this study, I explored the narratives defined by the socio-political context of the “white squatter camp” within the broader South African context, although the practitioners’ experience is both the start and the end point of this study. Appropriate for this inquiry is the explanation given by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007: 42) of the relationship between the individual narrative and social narratives in narrative inquiry:

*Narrative inquirers study an individual's experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others.*

Through story, people’s experiences of the world are interpreted, understood, related, and made personally meaningful; through story, people make sense of their existence (Caine et al., 2013: 577; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006: 375). At the same time, the story we tell is even more than that. Caine et al. (2013:579) quote Andrews (2007) who contends that “we become who we are through telling stories about our lives.”

The participants (Thea and Rina) shared their stories with me through interviews and conversations, as well as photographs, documents and artefacts that they shared with me. This study was a collaborative effort between the two participants and me. The study was conducted over the periods of one and two years, respectively, with Rina and Thea. The study was conducted in the participants’ respective ECD centres, homes, and communities. Research took place while participants were teaching (in the classroom) and during in-depth interviews, as well as whilst they interacted with the children and their colleagues. Transcribed interviews were given back to the

practitioners to allow them to verify and discuss my interpretations, insights and conclusions.

From a Deweyan view, experience is more than that which can be represented in a book or statement. Every representation involves a selective emphasis of experience and is consequently not simple or self-evident. Dewey, therefore, suggests that the purpose of the inquiry should be stated, so that the relevance of the selection may be verified (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 375). Furthermore, the narrative inquirer has to respect the fact that some experiences will never be told; people also tell their stories via what they choose to withhold (Caine et al., 2013: 578). The focus of participants' experiences shifted as their circumstances changed. With time, Thea became overwhelmed by her challenges (to the extent that she lost her job), while Rina's experiences turned positive when her classroom was enlarged, painted and decorated by a new volunteer who started to support her.

The first defining feature of experience is the social dimension thereof and connects with Dewey's notion of interaction (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 69). For Dewey (1938), experience is not only individual but also social. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 2) explain that people are individuals and should be understood as such but, at the same time, the individual, with her unique personal conditions, is always in a social context with social conditions, in relation with others. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 50) refer to the feelings, hopes, desires, moral dispositions, and aesthetic reactions of the individual when they speak about "personal feelings".

By "social conditions", Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 50) mean the individual's existential conditions – everything that forms their context – for example, the environment, the people and other factors and forces in their lives. In relation to this study, the different social contexts of the two practitioners affected their experiences in their work. However, their individual characteristics and circumstances also affected the way in which they experienced these circumstances.

The second defining feature of experience that Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 2) draw on is that of "temporality", which connects with Dewey's notion of "continuity" –

experiences grow out of earlier experiences and lead to further experiences. Experiences have a past, present and future. These experiences are then described as they unfold through time (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 40). The implication of the notion of continuity is that the researcher does not seek for something that ends once identified; the inquiry is an act within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then become part of future experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 41). When I visited Rina to see the improved classroom, she announced that she felt it was time to get a qualification.

The third defining feature of experience is that of place or a sequence of places, which connects with Dewey's notion of "situation". "Place" refers to the specific concrete and physically bounded area in which the inquiry takes place (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 70; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 50). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007: 70) indicate that the qualities of place and the impact of place on "lived experience" and "told experience" is crucial. As the narrative proceeds temporally, place may also change with time, as in the case of Thea when she moved to a new classroom, which she did not share with other groups or practitioners; a classroom she decorated and of which she was proud.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) used this set of defining features to create a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative space. The three dimensions of this metaphorical space are: the personal and social (interaction) along a first dimension; the past, present and future (continuity) along a second dimension; and place along a third dimension. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 50) explain that any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters, they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry, and they occur in specific places or sequences of places.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 50) further identify four directions in any inquiry – inward (internal conditions such as emotions, hopes and dreams); outward (external circumstances such as the social environment), and backward and forward (towards past, present and future).

In Chapter 5 I demonstrate how place as well as different social relationships and internal conditions (for example emotions) over time impacted differently on the experiences of Rina and Thea, as storied by them. Clandinin (2006: 47) describes how the narrative inquirer works within the three-dimensional space with participants as she frames the research question; selects sites and participants; collects, writes and analyses field texts; and negotiates and writes research texts, with the acknowledgement that interpretations of events can always be otherwise. This means that the participant interprets events from a subjective stance, affected by her personality, emotions and history. The way in which the researcher perceives and interprets the story of the participant is in turn also affected by her own subjectivity (personality, emotions and history).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 31) posit that:

*[The] attitude in a narrative perspective is one of doing “one’s best” under circumstances, knowing all the while that other possibilities, other interpretations, other ways of explaining things are possible.*

This study does not, in any way, claim to be certain that it interprets the voices of the participants correctly. Mazzei (2009: 46) explains that voice happens not only in spoken utterances but also when opinion is not audibly voiced; displeasure, discomfort and disagreement are also expressed through silence. She cautions researchers not to be so self-assured in the assumption that they can know their participants’ voices or that they can trust their voiced speech to provide meaning and truths (Mazzei, 2009: 47). This study listened and observed sensitively to understand what the participants were trying to communicate, accepting the “certainty of uncertainty” (Mazzei, 2009: 45). I also acknowledge that, by actively listening, I became a co-participant in the recounting of the narrative (Elliot, 2005: 10). The participants could have told a different story, if the researcher were someone else. I was aware that the stories I heard were constructed but accepted the stories “as told” (Kramp, 2004: 121), not questioning their validity.

## **4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this section, I discuss the research methodology as it pertains to population and sampling, description of participants, the researcher as instrument, reflexivity of the researcher, and data collection and analysis. While conducting this narrative inquiry, I used multiple methods of data collection, including narrative interviews, non-participant observation, conversations, document sourcing, artefacts and photographs. This enabled me to compile richly descriptive field texts of the two participants' experiences.

### **4.5.1 The population and sampling**

A small purposeful sample of practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white settlements was selected as I identified them as information-rich cases who are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon (Strydom & Delpont, 2011: 391; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 400). , My sample size was limited by factors such as the size of the population, availability of information-rich cases, narrative interview as a major data collection technique, and available time and resources (Strydom & Delpont, 2011: 391; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 404). Creswell (2013: 155) indicates that an individual may be chosen for study simply because she is available.

As an outsider, I found it extremely daunting to gain access to these settlements. As these communities are wary of outsiders, a "friend" of the settlement had to introduce me to the manager/owner of each settlement before I was accepted. In order to gain access to these communities, I approached two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) specialising in providing aid to impoverished and marginalised white people. These two organisations used to have access to two of the sites I had selected. However, due to disputes between the organisations and the communities in question, access was later denied.

I also contacted Organisation H, a prominent organisation supporting and advocating the plight of poor whites. However, Organisation H did not have access to a

community with an ECD centre. Some of these communities were also suspicious of Organisation H. Furthermore, I experienced negativity from some organisations towards others. It seemed as if they regarded each other as oppositional forces.

Finding information-rich key informants who could participate for the duration of the research project proved to be another very difficult task. After numerous false starts with candidates who joined the research project only to drop out after a month or two, Organisation D introduced me to two practitioners who participated in the project for an extended period. However, one left the settlement before I had collected enough data. Organisation B then introduced me to an ECD centre with a practitioner willing to participate in the research project. The original participant was then asked to resign from the ECD centre by the volunteer supporting the centre. She left the settlement before the termination of the research project. Fortunately, I had collected ample data and she was always willing to verify transcripts and researcher observations afterwards. Her insights were invaluable and it was unfortunate that I could not spend more time in the field observing her work. While the last participant only joined the research project a year later, I felt that her contribution was highly significant. As a resident of the settlement, she understood the culture and was faced with the same adversities as the other residents. In the end, I was able to collect enough data from both participants – through recorded interviews, conversations, observations, photographs, and artefacts – to warrant a thick description.

Gilbert Ryle (1971: 482), who first introduced the term “thick description”, uses the metaphor of a many-layered sandwich to explain this notion. The bottom slice (the thin description) is the raw empirical data – the obvious part of an observation without any deeper meaning or significance. However, behind the simple actions, the thin description, are meanings, intentions, consequences and motives. The thin description is thickened by the interpretation of what the person is trying to accomplish – by a description of the meaning conveyed by her action. These processes of creating meaning are guided by background information and other empirical evidence rendered by a variety of methods, based on a theoretical framework that structures the study (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 6; Geertz, 1973: 6-7, 9-10; Ryle, 1971: 480-496).

#### 4.5.2 Description of the participants

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 43) offer the following remarks with regard to formalistic inquiry:

*[In] formalistic inquiry, people, if they are identified at all, are looked at as exemplars of a form – of an idea, a theory, a social category. In narrative inquiry people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories.*

Although I have indicated that Rina was a “typical” ECD practitioner in an impoverished and marginalised predominantly white community, she did not represent a category in this study. Rather, she was viewed as an embodiment of the experience of having a house and a life outside the “camp”, losing everything, and finding no employment again, with the only option of moving to a “squatter camp” – a life story that resonates with many of the residents of similar settlements. Thea, meanwhile, has an unusual story as she actually *chose* to move to an impoverished settlement. She is a woman with a BSc degree who resigned from a paid job and moved from an apartment to a wooden hut to work with the children in the settlement. When she was asked by the volunteer to resign, she indicated that the woman had stolen her calling (“*[Sy] het my roeping gesteel*”).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 44-45) warn against preconceived ideas, stereotypes and formal categories – for example, gender, culture, race or class. It is the person, rather than the formal category, that is important. Nevertheless, they admit that a person is a member of a race, class and gender and may have varying degrees of power in any situation (ibid.). Although a narrative inquirer has to recognise these truths, the researcher has to adhere to a different research agenda. This means that the researcher does not look at a participant as a personification of a category but as a unique individual with her own, unique story.

Although I did not have much choice in terms of the selection of the ECD practitioners, the two participants were information-rich cases. Both had been living and working

for an extended period in an impoverished and marginalised predominantly white settlement. Both indicated that they would continue doing this work once they had left the settlement. Neither of the two had any formal training as ECD practitioners but both indicated their wish to know more about early childhood development and be trained therein.

Thea, a single woman in her mid-forties with a BSc degree, had been working as an ECD practitioner and head of the centre for two-and-a-half years until she was asked to resign by the volunteer who supported the centre. She also lived on the settlement in a wooden hut (Wendy house). The settlement is located on a farm, on the outskirts of a city, where residents live in wooden huts. The residents were people who moved to the settlement when they either lost their jobs and became homeless or came from other similar settlements. The owner organises work for them at a nearby business but they earn minimal wages and depend on donations for food.

A principal/owner of an ECD centre and also a volunteer at Organisation D supported the centre in the settlement through donations of toys and educational material and guidance to staff. The ECD centre was a built room with a veranda where children could eat and do art. All ages (from babies to the age of 6) shared the same room until, after two years, a Wendy house was given to Thea to accommodate the older children.

Rina, a married woman in her late thirties with four children, had been a practitioner at the ECD centre for four years at the time of the study. She used to work as human resources officer at a city council until she resigned to raise her children. Later, when her husband lost his job as a bus driver and they were evicted from their house, a welfare organisation stepped in and referred them to this settlement.

Rina's settlement was on a large piece of land in the centre (not on the outskirts, as is usually the case with informal settlements) of a big town in Gauteng. The settlement used to be a caravan park with big shady trees and jungle gyms, the remnants of which were still visible. Interestingly, the classrooms of the ECD centre were generally attractive and well-maintained, with a sandpit, climbing apparatus, and tricycles for

outside play. This centre could just as well have been in any other community. A volunteer from the town came in daily to teach the older children (four- to five-year-olds) in the settlement, whereas Rina taught the younger children (two- to three-year-olds) in a pre-fabricated classroom

#### **4.5.3 The researcher as instrument**

Narrative inquirers do not work in a three-dimensional space only with their participants; they also work with themselves. The researcher's own story shapes her and influences her research interests. She brings her own lived and told stories to the research (Caine et al., 2013: 583; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 61-62).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 62) deem it impossible or, otherwise, self-deceptive for the researcher not to be present in the research or to pretend to be present as a perfect, idealised self. The researcher is not a mechanical, infallible instrument. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 94) explain that the researcher selects the moment to turn on the recorder and chooses the questions to be asked. The researcher encourages certain participant responses by responding with her responses or asking questions that seem related to the moment, thus shifting attention in new and even unsettling directions (Caine et al., 2013: 578). The researcher's body language may encourage the participant to respond with more or less detail or may change the response. An interview is limited by time and, when the researcher encourages discussion and response on one point, other points may be left uncovered or less developed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 94). Furthermore, the researcher does not receive stories passively but adds filters and bends stories in different ways (Caine et al., 2013: 582). Therefore, Clandinin (2013: 81) refers to narrative inquiry as relational research, since it is about "people in relation studying with people in relation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 189).

Doucet (2008: 83) refers to the multiple relationships that constitute our knowledge construction processes. Researchers construct knowledge from within three sets of relationships – relations with oneself (and one's past); the research participants and one's readers and the epistemological communities (ibid: 73). The first relation is that

of the researcher with herself and her past (that is, memories or experiences from her past). The researcher's memories and imaginings are interwoven into the inquiry (Clandinin, 2013: 82). Clandinin (ibid.), therefore, recommends that the researcher should always begin with autobiographical narrative inquiry; thus, "we make visible the events that shaped our understandings and our emotional, moral, and spiritual responses to these events" (ibid: 83), as current research interests are deeply embedded in past experiences (Doucet, 2008: 77).

However, over time, different memories and different versions of ourselves can emerge – reflexivity must include the passage of time. Relational knowing is thus also framed in the three-dimensional inquiry space as defined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and the narrative inquirer lives in the three-dimensional inquiry space alongside and in relation with the participants. The researcher's story, which she brings to the inquiry, has been altered and changed over time (temporal).

Her story shapes how she understands and tells the stories of the participants (Downey & Clandinin, 2010: 387), as well as how she interacts with the participants – the questions she asks, the responses she gives, what she focuses on. All of this contributes to how the participant responds (the social and personal). The researcher's story happened in a place then and how she experiences the place of the participants now affects her knowing/understanding of the situation. However, "situation" in narrative inquiry is understood as part of many other situations, situated within developing life (Downey & Clandinin, 2010: 391).

Doucet (2008: 75) regards the personal or political inspirations that bring us to our research topics as the most important issues to reflect on when we consider the relationship between our research projects and ourselves. Caine et al. (2013: 583) suggest that the connection between researcher and participant starts long before the first research contact and the researcher's story orientates her to the inquiry (Caine et al., 2013: 580). I therefore include my autobiographical narrative inquiry:

As a teenager in the seventies, I was painfully aware of the severe famine that hit Africa. I was always agonising over the unfairness of life for children born in poverty,

a debilitating condition they neither chose nor deserved. During my school years, I admired and befriended children from less affluent backgrounds who worked hard in school and were conscientious. During those years, the desperately poor white was hidden from the public eye.

During my student years, I was introduced to the philosophy of Paulo Freire (1970) as described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I realised that the poor are highly disempowered and, therefore, cannot escape their misery. I only enrolled for a degree in education during my early thirties, when I realised that education is a powerful mechanism of empowerment.

In preparation for the study, I read the publications of an NGO active in promoting the plight of the impoverished white person. Consequently, I looked at the situation in informal white settlements through the perspective of the NGO. Only after I had spent time with the participants in the settlements did the black-and-white picture of affirmative action and an unfair political dispensation in a democratic South Africa, as painted by the NGO, started to appear grey to me. I began to see disempowerment and not any particular political dispensation as the biggest obstacle towards financial independence and a life of self-respect. I started to look at the charity bestowed on these people as “false generosity” (Freire, 2009: 44).

Furthermore, the researcher as instrument cannot be emotionally uninvolved and detached. Butler-Kisber (2010: 69) states that, for an interview to contain rich and detailed accounts of life experience there should be a trusting relationship between researcher and participant. According to Riessman (2008: 24), the specific wording of a question during an interview is less important than the interviewer’s emotional attentiveness and engagement and the degree of reciprocity in the conversation. Cognisant of my position of power – firstly, as a researcher and, secondly, as a member of a different socio-economic group to that of the participants – I tried to reduce the distance between myself and the participants by accepting them as equals in the research process.

It seems that the issue of positionality is especially a concern where the participant is socio-economically disadvantaged in relation to the researcher. Research is contextual by nature (Smith & Narayan, 2012: 195) and the notion of positionality indicates that knowledge and voice are always produced within a specific time and space as well as from a particular social power base (Barker, 2004: 155). Where research involves the poor and marginalised, the researcher-participant relationship is unbalanced in terms of power (Smith & Narayan, 2012: 195). Therefore, the researcher's position of privilege can inhibit or even harm the disadvantaged (Mellor et al., 2014: 136) or impose the truths or ideologies of the researcher on the participants (Smith & Narayan, 2012: 197).

Traditionally, the researcher's position is described as either inside or outside of the culture she is studying (Weiner-Levy & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012: 1153). However, various scholars indicate that these positions are fluid, not necessarily in opposition, and do not always correlate with either affinity or distance (Moore, 2012: 11; Weiner-Levy & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012: 1163; Smith & Narayan, 2012: 197). The distance between a researcher and her participant can either lead to appreciation of or opposition toward the "other", which can affect the accuracy of data collection (Smith & Narayan, 2012: 196). This distance can be minimised by class- or cultural-matching (Smith & Narayan, 2012: 196; Mellor et al., 2014: 135). Good rapport, acceptance, trust and openness can be established, which are conducive to faithful conversations, between members of the same group (Mellor et al., 2014: 135; Smith & Narayan, 2012: 196). Yet, the intimate knowledge the local researcher has of her community also involves certain ethical and methodological dilemmas (Moore, 2012: 11) – for example, the question of how to establish adequate distance to examine the community of which she is a part (Weiner-Levi & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012: 1153). This intimate knowledge might lead to the assumption, on the part of both the researcher and the participant, that they know each other's lives completely, causing them to expect certain responses (Mellor et al., 2014: 138; Weiner-Levy & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012: 1153).

Furthermore, being an insider does not guarantee automatic entrance or trust, especially since the researchers are usually based outside their communities and

have obtained qualifications elsewhere (Weiner-Levi & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012: 164). I was an outsider to the world of the two participants but used my positionality to gain their trust. I assured them that I had no experience of working in an impoverished and marginalised community and fully relied on their stories. I therefore could not disagree with or criticise what they were telling me and accepted their versions of events. Interaction between researchers and participants are influenced not only by the researcher's positionality but also by other processes and experiences. Factors such as empathy, knowledge, understanding the participant's inner world, respect, and the researcher's capacity for reflexivity and her skilful use of life experiences to build rapport all play a role in the success of the research (Mellor et al., 2014: 147; Smith & Narayan, 2012: 196; Weiner-Levi & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012: 1154).

Mellor et al. (2014: 135) argue that class-matching does not necessarily ensure similar life experiences. As I had been an ECD practitioner and a principal, I could relate to the experiences of Thea and Rina regarding their work. Weiner-Levy and Abu Rabia Queder (2012: 1163) indicate that an outsider may unexpectedly be regarded as an insider in terms of specific aspects of the participants' work. For that reason, Smith and Narayan (2012: 198) feel that most researchers occupy a "third space" between insider and outsider. This space grants access for the researcher to deep knowledge of the experience being studied, even if the researcher does not share the experience.

I developed long-term relations with the participants and tried to let them feel relaxed and in control, leaving them to decide where and when they wanted to be interviewed. Mellor et al. (2014: 145) explain that the success of the research may be compromised if participants feel aggrieved and uncomfortable. In my study, the two participants shared their life stories, including sensitive issues, with me. Not all aspects of their stories were directly related to the research question but hearing them gave me an understanding of the practitioners' environments, which influenced their experiences in both the ECD centre and also in the settlement.

#### 4.5.4 Reflexivity of the researcher

Elliot (2005: 153) defines reflexivity as a heightened awareness of the self in the social world. This refers to the researcher acknowledging and reflecting on the critical role played by her personal and political understandings and autobiography in her relation to the research participants and in the creation and interpretation of research results (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998: 121). Mauthner and Doucet (2003: 414) further believe that the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as institutional and practical influences, shape the research process. Butler-Kisber (2010: 19) recommends that the researcher should rigorously account for the perspectives and beliefs that she brings to the research process and indicate why she holds certain beliefs. By being explicit about her personal stance in relation to the participants and her role in the creation and interpretation of data, the researcher can avoid the pitfall of presenting personal ideas based on subjective emotionality as data (Peshkin, 1991: 293-294).

Working from a social constructivist paradigm, I recognise that my concept of the child-in-poverty (also the practitioner-in-poverty) is socially constructed. Media coverage of the fate of the poor white living in a squatter camp without social support from official channels also informed my view of these impoverished marginalised communities. The unfair disadvantage of the young child living in poverty (as well as that of the child's teacher) was the motivation behind this study. I therefore entered the field with an attitude of appreciation and admiration towards child and practitioner doing their best in an unsupportive and often cruel environment. During the narrative interviews that I conducted with the participants, this view was strengthened as I was deeply impressed by the care and love showed by the participants toward the children in their care.

I regarded these people's circumstances in the context of the larger socio-economic reality of oppression in South Africa, as discussed by Paulo Freire (2009: 55):

*Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one*

*of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human.*

Only after field visits and non-participant observation could I step back and compose a field text with a less romantic image of the phenomenon under study in mind. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 82) indicate that this movement between “falling in love” with one’s participant and “cool observation” is possible through field texts. I realise that my view of support offered by volunteers as “false generosity” was not shared by the practitioners. Whereas I regarded the stream of volunteers as a hindrance to the children’s optimal development and the practitioners’ empowerment, the practitioners regarded this involvement as help to them, making their tasks easier. I further felt that support should focus on assisting the practitioners to improve their qualifications, thereby making the volunteers’ involvement with the children redundant. This viewpoint regarding the professional status of ECD practitioners was influenced by my post-graduate qualification in ECD and as an activist for the rights of young children to be cared for and educated by well-trained professionals. I was therefore frustrated with volunteers who felt that professionally qualified practitioners are “often not good” (“*dikwels nie goed nie*”) and that the volunteers themselves (also not ECD-trained) can train a 17-year old with a Grade 9 qualification to be a good practitioner.

#### **4.5.5 Data collection**

While conducting this narrative inquiry, I used multiple methods of data collection, including narrative interviews, non-participant observation, conversations, document sourcing, artefacts and photographs. This enabled me to compile richly descriptive field texts of the two participants, who are the main units of analysis. I undertook a qualitative pilot study to collect background information about the settlements, the ECD centres, and the practitioners, so as to refine data collection plans. This pilot study was informal and involved the different non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and aid organisations active in marginalised, impoverished white settlements

as well as candidates who could possibly participate in the study. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine whether the relevant data could be obtained from the practitioners at the ECD centres of the settlements served by these organisations and to anticipate problems that might arise during the actual interviews and field visits. Since this work involved socially sensitive communities, I had to establish relationships with the practitioners and the communities during the pilot study and obtain permission to conduct the research in the community. I was briefed on the culture of the community by the volunteers involved in the communities to enable me to establish a trusting relationship with the practitioners and others involved in the ECD centre (Creswell, 2013: 165; Strydom & Delport, 2011: 394-395).

#### **4.5.5.1 *Narrative interviews***

I chose narrative interview as method to create field texts to elicit rich and detailed accounts of the participants' experiences in their work. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000: 61) describe the narrative interview as a qualitative research method that is a form of unstructured in-depth interview. According to Hollway and Jefferson (2008: 302), the interviewee in a narrative interview is a storyteller, rather than a respondent – the agenda is open for the participant to determine and can develop and change, depending on the participant's experience. The story that is told is constructed on the participant's own terms, rather than being "a neutral account of pre-existing reality", and interview schedules determining what should be talked about which are set up by the interviewer (Zinn, 2004: 8). Clandinin & Connelly (2000: 111) suggest that, by asking the participant to tell her own story in her own way, the participant's intentions are paramount.

I asked the participants the following question: "Tell me about the challenges and experiences regarding your work". Although I asked for a response, the participants owned the response and subsequent narrative. My question was an invitation to each participant to construct a narrative detailing the particulars of her experiences in a specific place (her settlement) within a specific social community (the parents, children and other residents of the community). Over a period of time, the participants talked about what they did prior to moving to the settlement, the challenges and

experiences that they used to have, their current challenges and experiences, and their future plans. It may be considered important to note that their experiences changed during the period of time that passed between subsequent interviews.

My interviews were conversational in style, without interview schedules, and I recorded them electronically. The informality of these conversations allowed great personal freedom and a broad choice of topics for the participants. The practitioners not only spoke about the challenges that they encountered in their work but shared their excitement about the progress of the children in their care, their love for these children, and the enjoyment that they derived from their work. They shared their personal stories, concerns and dreams with me.

Although narrative interviewing is characterised by the limited use of questions, the interviewee tells the story with gentle supportive direction to help maintain momentum and to complete the narrative (Gillham, 2005: 49). Gillham (ibid.) concludes that speakers who do not get feedback may doubt themselves or feel that what they are saying is not significant. Consequently, I actively listened and supported the flow of the interview without adding my own ideas or intentionally influencing what was being said. I used conversational techniques such as the following:

- Asking to expand:
  - *“Hoekom sê jy die ouers wil nie?”* (“Why do you say parents don’t want to?”)
- Asking for clarity:
  - *“Ondersteun hy julle?”* (“Does he support you?”)
- Active listening
  - *“Ja, ja.”* (“Yes, yes.”)
  - *“O, okay.”*
  - *“Mmm.”*
  - Laughing

- Supportive comments:
  - “*Ja, dit is baie moeilik.*” (“Yes, it is very difficult.”)
- Confirmation:
  - “*O, die ma is dood, sê jy?*” (“Oh, the mother died, you say?”)

#### **4.5.5.2 Non-participant observation**

I further engaged in non-participant observation to collect field texts. Creswell (2013: 167) describes the non-participant observer as observing and compiling field notes from a distance, with no direct involvement with the activity or people. Yet, the researcher is not in the field as a “disembodied recorder” of another’s experience; she also experiences the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 81).

During the interviews, I “fell in love with the participants” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 81), as they told their stories of hardship and also as they shared their enthusiasm for their work, love for the children, and understanding of the children’s needs. Stepping back and observing the participants, the larger landscape, and my own story enabled me to look more objectively at the phenomenon under study.

Creswell (2013: 167) warns against deception by the people being observed. I felt that they did not want to deceive me, as they seemed to believe that what they were doing was very positive and would impress me. This process by which people control or manage the impression others form of them is called “impression management” (DuBrin, 2011: 1; Koslowski & Pindek, 2011: 280; Berreman, 2007: 137). The primary goal of impression management is to project a particular identity that will increase the likelihood of being respected and liked by others (DuBrin, 2011: 1).

When speaking about the impression management possibly attempted by the two participants, one has to keep in mind how the participants’ concepts of a successful practitioner were developed. Both being non-qualified practitioners, their ideas were based on the popular concept of “well-behaved” children, performing formal tasks that

were taught successfully by the practitioner (rote counting and colouring within the lines of a picture). Their ideas were also influenced by the volunteers supporting them (young children sitting still for extended periods, while the practitioner or volunteer is talking or reading, and completing adult-directed activities successfully). The participants had a particular definition of themselves that they wished to convey – that of a competent practitioner teaching children what they should know – and of ideal children who are quiet and well-behaved, absorbing what they are taught. Berreman (2007: 145) indicates that this task is especially difficult when the cultural gap between the participants and the audience (the researcher) is substantial:

*Then the impression that a given action will convey cannot always be predicted; audience reaction is hard to read and performance significance is hard to judge.*

As I did not discuss my stance on effective teaching practice in a pre-school setting, the participants assumed that I shared the views of the volunteers supporting them and, in fact, those of the public in general. Rina used the negative sub-category “blaming” (Koslowsky & Pindek, 2011: 284) as an impression management strategy, referring to the laziness of Petro, her 17-year old assistant. She also indicated that Cindy, the volunteer teaching at her centre, used to be nice but that she had changed and now made her feel nauseated. I told her about an NGO helping practitioners in impoverished communities by guiding them in classroom practice. She then suggested that Petro was the one needing guidance.

Thea used the positive sub-category “apologising” (Koslowsky & Pindek, 2011: 284) as an impression management strategy. She apologised that the children in her class were wild and ill-disciplined. I commented that I was impressed by the fact that there was an informal atmosphere in the class and that she allowed the children to be spontaneous rather than to control them with an iron fist. She then responded that the children in the volunteer centre were much more disciplined. She also apologised about the children’s art not being up to standard, saying that a practitioner from the volunteer centre told her that her children’s drawings were on the standard of a child two years younger.

My written field notes comprised of a running commentary on what I observed. I moved with the participants to maintain continuous visual contact but observed from the side line, not coming too close as to interfere with actions, unduly attract the participants' attention or create the feeling that the participants' were being evaluated. Although Bernard (2013:362) warns that adults may be bothered by the presence of the observer, I believe that my being there was in fact a positive experience for myself and the two participants, contributing to a more open and honest relationship between us. Bernard (2013:317) explains: "Presence builds trust. Trust lowers reactivity."

Bernard (2013:366) lists the advantages of recording observations orally as being less tedious than writing and this kind of recording allows researchers to focus their eyes on what is going on. Furthermore it avoids the limitation of a check list and allows the researcher to get information about context as well as about the behaviour being observed. However, the trade-off according to Bernard (ibid.) is that this kind of data has to be coded.

Nevertheless, I preferred written field notes as I believed the participants would experience it less invasive and more natural. As this is a narrative study, I composed the field notes with attention to temporality, sociality and place as recommended by Clandinin (2013: 47). I scribbled down as much detail regarding these three dimensions as possible and typed the notes up immediately after I had left the field, supplementing my notes with photographs and other documents. I was cognisant of the fact that the field notes were partial and of the role I played in composing the field notes. For example, I chose what to focus on during my observations. Field notes were then coded together with all the other field texts.

#### **4.5.5.3 *Photographs, documents and artefacts***

Emission (2011: 236) regards photographs as a "means of preserving, storing or representing information", comparable to, for example, code-sheets, tape recordings of verbal interactions or responses to interview schedules. It is thus one of the numerous ways in which qualitative researchers seek to capture data to analyse and investigate afterwards. Also Howard S. Becker, one of the pioneers in Visual

Sociology, regards visual images as important tools to be used by qualitative researchers. Visual images (including films, photographs, drawings, cartoons, documents, plans, policies and other artefacts) were traditionally not perceived as data (Becker cited in Krause, 2012: 9). Nevertheless, Clandinin (2013: 46) advises: "It is important as researchers to stay awake to the multiple ways to tell and live experiences."

Photographs are especially relevant as far as physical space is concerned. Stimson (in Emission, 2011: 238) noted that the question of place and space had been virtually ignored in most qualitative research to such an extent that even when referring to participant observation the focus was on listening, rather than looking. From a narrative inquiry perspective "place" is even of bigger relevance, since all field texts (including visual material) should be composed with temporality, sociality as well as place in mind (Clandinin, 2013: 47). I therefore included photographs of the classrooms, playgrounds and settlements in my research. Since I imagined the residents might be sensitive about the public display of their impoverished settlement, I was hesitant to take photographs of the settlement, although I did take photographs of the classrooms and the playgrounds as the participants displayed pride in their classrooms. In cases where I took photographs on location which may portray the ugly face of the settlements, I treated these as raw data to be used in analysis, but not to be published.

At the same time, photographs should be supported by words to render them meaningful. Emmison (2011: 235) refers to the research of Rose where she used photographic material and treated these photographs as objects with a "social life". Yet Rose had to rely on interviews and not only the photographs to arrive at her findings. Similarly Prosser (in Krase, 2012: 9) speaks of the use of images together with words to enhance our understanding of the human condition.

In this narrative study I also found it the other way round – the images contributed to my understanding of the participants' narratives and added another dimension to these narratives. The participants' relationship to the photographs added to the co-construction of their stories. An example was Rina's eagerness to have her Christmas

tree and renovated classroom photographed. Her enthusiasm communicated the pride she took not only in the appearance of these spaces, but also her ability to beautify her environment (in her sense of agency). This is even more significant given that Rina had never invited me into her house until the Christmas tree was erected. She also requested me to take photographs of the classroom only after the renovations had been done.

Clandinin (2013: 46) distinguishes between memory box photographs and intentionally taken recent photographs. I found both categories meaningful in terms of my interpretation of their stories. Thea handed me hundreds of photographs she had taken before I had entered the field. When she expressed her sorrow regarding the young boy that had passed away, she referred to all the photographs she took of him as proof of the special bond between the two of them. I also regarded the photograph of the child burnt by a cigarette as an indication of her eagerness to pursue this matter and have proof of the incident.

Thea was very excited about her teaching and she clearly read a lot on ECD matters. Yet she did not have the professional vocabulary to verbalise her approach. However, from the hundreds of photographs she took of the children's activities, I could see that her focus was on the holistic development of the young child participating in play-based age-appropriate activities.

Another example of visual images that added to my understanding of Thea's experiences was the drawings made by the children in her care. Thea felt inadequate after the volunteer supporting her commented that the children's drawings were not up to standard. Only after seeing the drawings did I realise that they were beautiful and age-appropriate and the guidance was based on ignorance. The evaluation tasks prepared by the volunteer and given to the children to complete once again confirmed that the guidance was inappropriate, an observation Thea also made.

A checklist prepared by a volunteer to ensure that Rina covered all the activities with the children was also handed to me. Rina took the checklist from the wall and indicated that I did not have to return the list. The volunteer later commented that the

practitioners were not interested in her guidance and that she had to lower the standards she had set for them.

#### **4.5.6 Data analysis**

Once I had concluded the data collection, my main challenge was to reduce the extensive data to a manageable size. I therefore organised, reduced and described data according to the individual research participants (Schwandt, 2007: 7). I started off by getting to know the field texts well – reading and rereading transcripts and field notes, studying documents and photographs and identifying categories – what Butler-Kisber (2010: 30) calls the “coarse grain phase”. During the pre-coding phase, I circled, highlighted and bolded “codable moments” that caught my attention (Saldaña, 2013: 105).

During this exploratory coding cycle, I used mostly in vivo codes – the verbatim words of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 371), thereby getting at the insider/emic perspectives. I was cognisant of the fact that codes were not fixed or unchanging labels and therefore, the labelling process was dynamic (Schwandt, 2007: 33) during this phase and right through all the coding cycles. Analytic memo writing supported me in the process as I documented my reflections on the coding process, coding choices, possible themes and concepts (Saldaña, 2013: 105). As a “reality check”, I kept going back to the people I interviewed and observed and talked to them about my analytic reflections and the codes, categories and themes I had identified (Saldaña, 2013: 206). I also talked to an expert on poverty about my research and data analysis.

I then started with more focused coding. From the 32 coding methods discussed by Saldaña (2013), I used seven. I used emotion codes as I noticed that the participants experienced their challenges emotionally. I labelled the emotions based on what was expressed by the participants as well as what I understood about the participants (Saldaña, 2013: 105). I used values coding because the participants expressed their values, attitudes and beliefs (Saldaña, 2013: 110), often comparing their values with those of others. I realised that the participants’ experiences were rife with conflict –

not just with other practitioners and the volunteers supporting them but also within themselves. Mutually exclusive divisions were found right through the interviews. I therefore applied versus coding. Butler-Kisber (2010: 30) indicates that analysis is based on what the researcher brings with her to the inquiry: “her own subjectivity will influence what she pays attention to and selects out of what she is hearing, seeing and recording, and how the field texts are constructed”. In my own research, this became evident as I focused on the stream of volunteers arriving at Rina’s centre, doing activities with the children while Rina sat on the side lines. This was, for me, a strong indication of disempowerment, while another researcher might have regarded the volunteers’ involvement as helpful and supportive. Descriptive codes, words or short phrases that summarise the basic topic of the data (Saldaña, 2013: 88), were applied to photographs, artefacts and documents, and field notes. I also used sub-coding.

I constructed categories from the initial codes by comparing, sorting, rearranging and combing codes to identify the most suitable label to develop a list of broader categories. Categories were combined into larger and more general themes, which represented broad units of information based on the connections among the categories (Butler-Kisber, 2010: 31; Creswell, 2013: 185). Four themes were identified, which became the major components of my research study and write-up. I then retold the stories of the two participants in the three-dimensional narrative space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), with reference to the identified themes. Although the narrative interviews conducted with the participants were the main field texts used in writing the research text, the research text was informed by other field texts (conversations, photographs, observation notes, and documents given to me by the participants). The practitioners’ experiences were interpreted with reference to the identified themes. I finally classified the participants’ responses, in terms of their experiences, according to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theoretical framework.

#### **4.6 ETHICAL MEASURES**

I obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University of South Africa prior to data collection (see Annexure A). Josselson (2007: 538) indicates that choice in

terms of what to include is also an ethical matter. As my participants were vulnerable and disclosed sensitive information, I dealt with ethical matters over the entire inquiry process. In this regard, Josselson (2007: 538) prefers to talk about an “ethical attitude” toward narrative research.

#### **4.6.1 Ethical measures employed in the study**

Ethical measures used in this study include informed consent; avoidance of harm; assurance of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity; and access to field and research texts, as well as relational ethics.

##### **4.6.1.1 *Informed consent***

Elliot (2005: 140-141) explains the complexity of informed consent in narrative inquiry: People do not merely consent to “give away” their data; personal narratives also deal with own life experiences and personal identities. The way in which a researcher interprets and analyses the participants’ narratives may also impact on them. Participants may perceive an element of dishonesty if they believed the purpose of the inquiry was to gather facts, while the analysis focused on other aspects, such as the structure of the narratives. Josselson (2007: 539), therefore, distinguishes between an “explicit contract” and an “implicit contract”.

I entered into an explicit contract with the participants by indicating aspects such as who the researcher was, what the research was about, who would benefit from this study, voluntary participation, and that the interviews would be recorded. Participants were also allowed to specify any information that they did not want to be published (Josselson, 2007: 544). The participants were asked for suggestions to improve the research procedures and I shared my belief with them that only they understood their experiences and challenges and that, therefore, I could not bring my own ideas to the research project or criticise what they were describing as their experiences (Mouton, 2009: 244). I also obtained informed consent from the owners/managers of the settlement – informing them what the study was about and from which institution I came.

The implicit contract implies the development of the individual and a personal, intimate relationship between the participant and researcher. I therefore tried to be emphatic, non-judgmental, emotionally responsive, concerned, and appreciative of the work and devotion of the participants because, as Josselson (2007: 539) indicates, “[the] greater the degree of rapport and trust, the greater the degree of self-revealing”.

I emphasised accurate and complete information, as recommended by Strydom (2011: 117), so that the participants could make informed decisions about their possible participation. However, Josselson (2007: 540) doubts that the researcher can fully inform a participant at the outset of what he or she is consenting to, since much that takes place is unforeseeable.

#### **4.6.1.2 *Avoidance of harm***

Sensitive information provided a background against which I understood the participants and their work. However, I felt that it was not crucial for the research goals and made a commitment towards the participants that this information would not be included in any written material or shared with any other person, even in anonymous form. During the study, I was on the lookout for participants’ vulnerabilities and possible consequences of their revelations of which they might not have been aware (Josselson, 2007: 541).

#### **4.6.1.3 *Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity***

Although the anonymity and privacy of participants is a key ethical principle, Elliot (2005: 142) indicates that, once a combination of attributes and experiences is ascribed to a particular case in a research report, it can be very difficult to ensure that the case does not become recognisable. Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality where research is informed by narrative inquiry proves especially difficult as cases have to be understood holistically and personal histories are frequently part of the research report.

Therefore, I told the participants that I would do all that was humanly possible to keep material confidential (Josselson, 2007: 542). All participants, as well as other persons mentioned in the study, were given pseudonyms and the locations of the sites were not revealed. All other proper names were also changed. I tried to discuss the participants, their viewpoints and their settings with respect and sensitivity without compromising on honesty, as recommended by Berg (2009: 90). Anonymity can also be problematic when participants want to be recognised for the work that they do (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 175). I therefore informed the participants that, even if they would like their identity to be known, this could not happen. The participants could then decide whether they still wanted to be part of the inquiry.

#### **4.6.1.4 Access to field and research texts**

Each participant received typed, uncensored copies of all her interviews to reflect on whether she said what she actually meant and whether she wanted to add to what she said based on insights she had developed. The participants further received a summary of the research text to keep and have access to the whole research study, should they want to read it in its entirety. Although I explained to the participants that the transcripts would be rewritten in a research text and only the relevant information would be coded and organised into a research report, I still feared that the participants would experience a sense of exposure in seeing their private and personal information on paper.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 135) explain that the working relationship might be altered when the research document is shared with the participant as she might find it hurtful and the researcher might lose access to a research site, or the friendship between the researcher and the participant lost. I therefore cautioned the participants that my interest was about the topic for which I made use of their stories and material but that they were unlikely to find a faithful presentation of themselves as that were not the purpose of the study (Josselson, 2007: 549). I indicated to the participants, at the end of the field visits, that what I was going to write, might not feel to them if it was fully about them, as I was going to highlight certain dominant themes related to the research topic (Josselson, 2007: 152).

#### **4.6.1.5 Relational ethics**

When Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 78) state that inquirers are working toward intimacy of relationship, it implies an ethical responsibility toward the participant beyond the mere legal rights of the participants. Ethical understandings in narrative inquiry also include relational responsibilities between researchers and participants – from the formulation of the research questions to publishing the final research results (Clandinin, 2013: 198). When I decided on the research question or “research puzzle”, as Clandinin (2013: 198) calls it, (“What are the experiences of ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities?”) I realised that the practitioners’ voices should be heard. Outsiders, although they may have a more objective view, cannot decide what the challenges are that the practitioners face.

The practitioners’ opinions should be honoured. In their conversation with Clandinin and Murphy (2007: 646-647), psychologist and writer, Amia Lieblich explained that, when we listen to a person’s life story or observe his or her everyday life with respect, our interest and concern legitimise and empower the person, rendering narrative inquiry as an “extremely positive enterprise”. I followed Lieblich’s advice to Clandinin and Murphy (2007: 647) by adopting an attitude of emphatic listening, not being judgemental and suspending my disbelief (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007: 647). However, at times, this was easier said than done. In order to get a deeper understanding of challenges faced by practitioners, I also engaged the volunteers supporting the practitioners in a discussion about the challenges faced by the practitioners. I came to the conclusion that, since volunteers did not understand the issues experienced by the practitioners, their support was not effective. At the same time, the volunteers also complained about the work ethic of the participants, which made me sceptical of the participants’ narratives.

Clandinin (2013: 205) suggests that, since the voice of the participant is the most influential in the final research texts, the researcher should firstly care for the research participant. I then decided to listen only to the stories of the participants. The first participant, Thea, was a rich source of information. As both insider (living in the

settlement) and outsider (coming from the outside and choosing to work in the settlement), she had a profound understanding of the challenges of the ECD centre. Rina, the second participant, as an insider, was more likely to be representative of most practitioners working in impoverished and marginalised communities. I felt that I did no harm – I listened empathically, treated the participants with respect, and handled sensitive issues with care. I complied with the ethical requirements of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. However, I felt that I needed to do more. I had to think deeply about what I gave back to the participants. I did not want to offer them practical help and support in terms of their daily challenges during the research project. I felt that this would compromise my position as non-participant observer. Interference in the form of aid would also alter their stories about their challenges. I explained to the participants that practical help would contaminate my research and it seemed that they accepted that I was not going to work alongside them and support them in their struggles. I donated a lot of material and toys to Rina's centre but I felt afterwards that I had only contributed to the clutter in which the centre was drowning. Volunteers delivered loads of donations every time I visited Rina's centre. It was clear that volunteers believed that donations were going to solve the problems not only of the centre but also of the settlement.

Lieblich further explained to Clandinin and Murphy (2007: 648) that the researcher gives something back to the participants “by really making their life a lesson to teach others”. Thea echoed the same sentiment when she talked about a new centre starting up in another informal settlement. The same volunteer supporting Thea was going to support the practitioner at the new centre. Thea indicated that it was going to be easier for this practitioner. She then went on to explain that they (Thea and the volunteer) had learnt from experience how to handle staff. Therefore, this practitioner was going to have an advantage as the volunteer now knows better how to handle issues at a centre in an informal settlement. When Thea thanked me during a telephonic conversation for caring, not only for her but also for the other participant whom she had never met, I realised that, by listening to their stories, I was validating not only their work but also their existence. During a previous conversation, Thea indicated that this research was like a miracle: “You connected people who have never met each other” (“Dit is soos ‘n wonderwerk. Jy bring mense bymekaar wat

mekaar nog nooit ontmoet het nie”). I tried to give them a sense of purpose by emphasising their central role in the research study.

#### **4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS, CREDIBILITY AND CONFIRMABILITY**

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 179) indicate that the truthfulness of a narrative study remains a sticky issue as the distinction between fact and fiction, and trustworthiness and credibility remain central issues. Researchers have to persuade the audiences that they did not simply make up stories they claim to have collected; they followed a methodological path guided by ethical considerations and theory to story their findings (Riessman, 2008: 186). Riessman (2008: 184) distinguishes between two levels of trustworthiness – the story told by the research participant and the trustworthiness of the analysis, or the story told by the researcher.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) coined the term “trustworthiness” and proposed four criteria to establish the trustworthiness or quality of a qualitative research study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. My study sought to address the criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) in the following ways:

- I spent extensive time in the field, where I built a relationship of trust with each of the participants and persistently observed the participants and the context (Creswell, 2013: 250; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 420; Butler-Kisber, 2010: 14; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 331; Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 301).
- I used multiple forms of field texts and data collection strategies (interviews, conversations, non-participant observations, photographs, and documents) to create “thick descriptions”. As noted by Schwandt (2007: 296), “thick descriptions” are not simply masses of relevant detail. Instead, thick description is the interpretive characteristic of description that makes it thick. I began interpreting my participants’ responses by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions and strategies that characterised a particular response. Although the stories of the participants collected during in-depth interviews were my primary focus, I also listened to the perspectives of volunteers supporting

the participants (Creswell, 2013: 250; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 331; Butler-Kisber, 2010: 14).

- I clarified possible bias from the outset of the study (Creswell, 2013: 251; Butler-Kisber, 2010: 14). Pinnegar and Daines (2007: 29) indicate that the choice of the topic of the study – the facts of choice, curiosity and interest – already connect the researcher in a non-neutral way to what is being studied. My empathy with the young child growing up in poverty and my passion for the teaching and care of all young children dictated my choice of topic and also created potential bias. Since I am a proponent of play-based, informal and developmentally appropriate learning and teaching of the young child, I needed to remain cognisant that this should not bias my study in any way, as the teaching I observed was mostly formal and not developmentally appropriate. I was disturbed by the fact that some volunteers did not respect the professional status of ECD practitioners. I was also upset by the influence of the volunteers on the practices of the practitioners (for example, advice to smack children when they were “naughty”). I had to detach myself emotionally to be able to maintain a close and trusting relationship with the participants and a professional stance towards the volunteers. I protected myself (and the practitioners and volunteers) by announcing that I could, in no way, become involved in the ECD centre and their teaching by expressing my opinion, offering advice, or helping them practically in their work for the duration of my study.
- My use of narrative inquiry as research method also contributed to the trustworthiness of the study, with its focus on the experiences of the participants and how they gave meaning to these experiences. The participants’ voices were prominent throughout the study (Butler-Kisber, 2010: 13), with their own vocabularies and conceptual framework used to describe their experiences and selected the aspects on which to focus (Elliot, 2005: 24). Elliot (2005: 24) also identifies the question of whether narratives are produced specifically for the researcher to be an important issue in terms of trustworthiness. Maynes, Pierce and Laslett (2008: 98) refer to the fact that knowledge is always produced from a specific social location and always aimed towards a specific audience or audiences.

- I tried to minimise my influence on the participants by being a silent, albeit interested, listener. I indicated that I had no knowledge of their experiences and could, therefore, not question or criticise what they said. Because my participants were kept anonymous, the possibility of their being recognised by any audience was mostly eliminated. The participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to help other practitioners in similar circumstances who could learn from their experiences. The perceived audience was thus defined as other similar practitioners. One participant indicated that she would love to see what others in similar circumstances had to say.

AND

- Interviews were digitally recorded to represent what was said with greater accuracy (Riessman, 2008: 191). These recordings were typed up before analysis and handed to the participants who were requested to review transcripts to ensure that the meanings they communicated were correctly captured. I also used peer reviews and peer debriefings to establish credibility.

#### **4.8 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the research approach, design and methods that I employed in the study were described. Data collection and analysis procedures that were used were also described. The ethical considerations throughout the study as well as strategies that ensure trustworthiness were discussed. The research data gained from the empirical investigation are analysed, interpreted and presented in the following chapters. In the next chapter, I re-story the personal accounts of the two participants with the focus on their experiences as ECD practitioners in impoverished communities. The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is used to structure the narratives of the participants.

# CHAPTER 5

## PRACTITIONER NARRATIVES OF THEIR EXPERIENCES IN WHITE INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to answer the research question regarding the experiences of ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised communities, I analysed Rina and Thea's stories using the concept of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, as propounded by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). This space comprises personal and social (or interaction) along the first dimension, place (or situation) along the second dimension, and present, past and future (or continuity) along the third dimension. Clandinin and Connelly (ibid.) further identify four directions in narrative inquiry – inward, outward, backward and forward. The “outward” dimension represents the environment (or existential conditions). In addition, the “inward” dimension represents feelings, hopes, and moral outlook (internal conditions). The “backward” and “forward” dimensions represent the present, past and future, that is, temporality. Graphically, the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative space can be depicted as follows:

**Table 1: The Three-Dimensional Narrative Space**

Interaction		Continuity			Situation
Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	Place
Look for inward conditions – feelings.	Look for outward conditions – environment.	Look backward to remembered stories.	Look at current experience relating to actions.	Look forward to implied and possible experiences.	Look at context, time and place situated in physical landscape boundaries.

The questions that were asked, stories that were told, and observations that were made were all prepared and organised within this space. The experiences of the

participants were connected to past experiences and pointed towards future hopes and possibilities. The social and physical environments of the participants informed their experiences.

Each participant brought her own personality and background to these experiences. Therefore, each participant's experiences were unique to her. Personal experiences were coloured by personal temperament, history, hopes and dreams, emotions and moral stance. This was despite the fact that both participants lived and worked in an impoverished and marginalised predominantly white community. My own personality and background also influenced the way I perceived the experiences as told by the participants and how I made observations.

A further development that complicated the research was the drastic change in Thea's circumstances. When she started her work, she was excited and inspired, responding to a calling, but she left the settlement disillusioned, bitter and physically ill. I wish I could have spent more time with her observing her work and her life in the settlement as well as learning from her insights about the settlement but this was not to be.

My own research story resonated with Thea's changing circumstances. My research had to be adapted many times as potential participants moved in and out of the research. Practical matters further contributed to changes in the original research focus. With difficulty, I gained access to potential research sites through NGOs, with whom I first had to establish a trusting relationship. I gained the trust of the potential participants by treading carefully and with sensitivity – only to be disappointed when they withdrew either from the study or the settlement. Some of the potential participants found better work outside of the settlement. The husband of one of the potential participants told his wife not to participate in the research project. I found this attitude surprising as training was offered to the participants as part of the original research project. The NGO (who introduced me to the participant) later discovered that the husband was involved in criminal activities. It can be assumed that he probably did not want me on the premises because of his illegal activities. Another participant who was already participating for months decided that her former

occupation, that of prostitution, was more lucrative than that of an ECD practitioner. Because of the instability of the lives of informal settlement residents, I assumed that NGOs find it difficult to create a meaningful long-term impact other than providing merely temporary help and hand-outs.

## **5.2 THE SETTING**

Both participants worked and lived in settlements that can be described as informal settlements. These settlements consist mostly of unemployed residents or poorly paid workers who cannot afford to live somewhere else. Settlements originally identified by NGOs as possible sites for my study were on the outskirts of the city, far from facilities such as bus routes or clinics. These settlements have usually mushroomed on vacant sites offered by do-gooders to homeless people. In some cases, residents have to pay rent to the owners of the settlements.

Rina's settlement is different in that it used to be a caravan park in a big town. Therefore, this settlement cannot be described as "geographically marginalised". However, the absence of easy access to transport (for example, being in the close proximity of bus routes) and the social marginalisation of the community create the feeling of exclusion. For example, when Rina wanted to attend a parents' evening at her child's school, she had to ask for transport.

Some of the settlements I visited as potential sites had well-equipped and functioning ECD centres, others did not have an ECD centre at all. Some of the communities were interested in setting up such centres. Other communities preferred to use a wooden hut that could have served as a centre to rather accommodate yet another homeless family. In Thea's centre, the settlement owner charged the volunteer supporting the centre for the use of the wooden hut. This was because he lost income on a hut that could have been rented out instead.

### **5.3 A STORY OF WORKING IN A THREE-DIMENSIONAL NARRATIVE SPACE WITH THEA**

In order to narratively understand Thea's experiences, I interpreted her story within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

#### **5.3.1 Background of the settlement**

The settlement was started by Deon, the leader of a breakaway religious group. This community accepted people with social problems such as alcohol and drug dependencies. Families lived in 200 wooden huts (Wendy houses) and single men lived in a few caravans. A group of church followers also lived in the settlement. Except for the church followers, the rest of the community were either unemployed or earned such small salaries that they could not afford housing. The police also referred people living on the streets to this settlement.

The ECD centre was started at the settlement by Mia, the owner/principal of another ECD centre. She offered support in terms of staff appointments, dismissals and guidance to staff and parents. Mia's staff visited the centre in the settlement periodically to offer support and help.

#### **5.3.2 Past, present and future as dimension**

Thea's story is not a narrative of objective experiences. The way she looked at and experienced her life and work at the settlement was coloured and influenced by her unique personality and history. Thea is a woman with a B.Sc. degree, majoring in psychology and physiology, who used to work as a bus driver and part-time assistant at a chiropractic practice. As a participant, she had me very excited since I felt that an educated woman with some years of experience could add invaluable insights regarding the experiences of practitioners working in informal settlements. As she shared with me some of the experiences she had as a bus driver, I realised that her former work prepared her for a less refined social environment. The lifestyle and vocabulary of the residents of an informal settlement might have offended other

outsiders who had never been exposed to it. She arrived at the settlement believing that God had hand-picked her to make a difference in the lives of these unfortunate children. In 2004, she felt that she was called to work in an informal settlement. She explained:

*Ek dink as dit nie was dat ek gevoel het ek is geroep hiervoor nie, dan sou ek dalk al opgegee het. Dan sou ek nie geweet het, maar... omdat ek in 2004 gevoel het ek is geroep en gedink het maar dit kan nie wees nie, daar is nie so plek nie, dit kan nie wees nie en toe weer geroep voel, toe besef maar daar is goed soos plakkerskampe, toe besef ek maar ek het nie geweet daarvan nie, so dit moes van God af gekom het.*

(I think if it was not that I felt I was called for this, I would have given up. Then I would not have known, but... because in 2004 I felt I was called and thought but it cannot be, there is no such place and felt again that I was called, then I realised that there are places such as squatter camps, then I realised that I did not know about it, so it had to come from God.)

Initially Thea, together with Mia and the representative of Organisation D had big plans for the centre. Thea indicated that they were planning for stability, experience and progress. In addition, Mia planned to start a new ECD centre at another informal settlement. Mia and Organisation D even considered buying Thea a car to visit the other centres they planned on opening.

I was often delightfully surprised by Thea's sophisticated understanding of the needs of the children in these specific circumstances. I did not encounter this level of insight from her mentor, Mia. I even doubt whether many qualified educators would have understood the situation as well as Thea did. The fact that Thea could relate to the residents and befriended them as peers also contributed to her "inside" knowledge. Over the past few years, I have talked to numerous NGOs working in similar settlements and observed their work with a critical eye. I always felt that an essential

element of understanding was missing. I personally believe that the intuitive knowledge and understanding that Thea brought to the settlement and the first-hand experience she gained there were priceless.

She then became very ill and was eventually asked to leave the settlement. Thea's failure to achieve her mission left her feeling bitter, sad and disillusioned with God and her fellow man. I conducted her last interview after the resignation. For the first time, a connection between Thea's past and her situation at the settlement became evident.

*Thea: Dis dieselfde paadjie wat ek 'n paar jaar terug geloop het, my suster-hulle wat alkoholiste was; haar kinders was my lewe gewees en ek moes dit agter los, dis nie my kinders nie. Hulle wou die polisie op my sit, toe moes ek maar uitgaan.*

*Interviewer: Hoekom wou hulle die polisie op jou sit?*

*Thea: Omdat hulle bang was ek vat hulle kinders weg. Hulle het hulle maatjies op my gesit. Ek moes maar net die Paarl los en weggaan. Dis nogal dieselfde. Soos ek sê ek het twee en 'n half jaar hierdie kleuterskool grootgemaak. En nou moet ek dit vir iemand gee wat niks omgee nie.*

(Thea: It is the same route that I walked a few years back with my sister, they were alcoholics; her children were my life and I had to leave them behind, they were not my children. They wanted to put the police on me, then I had to leave.

*Interviewer: Why did they want to put the police on you?*

*Thea: Because they were scared that I was going to take their children away. They put their pals on me. I just had to leave the Paarl and go away. This is the same. As I said for two and a half years I have raised this pre-school and now I have to give it to someone who doesn't care a bit.)*

After resigning, Thea very reluctantly moved in with her father and stepmother, who live in a security village on a private farm where I visited Thea a few times. She felt that her father was always criticising her and running her down. Consequently, she had a very bad relationship with him and, therefore, it was extremely difficult for her to be dependent on him. Furthermore, her religious beliefs differed from those of her family. She indicated that her family did not support her decision to go to the settlement and had no contact with her while she was there.

I felt like a bull in a china shop whenever I visited Thea at her father's house. Any suggestions I made in terms of her future were brushed aside. She found her present situation unbearable but could not imagine a future. It seemed that the experiences and exceptional insights that she gained while working at the settlement were an exercise in futility. The conclusion of Thea's story left me with a sense of sadness and loss. However, somehow I still believe that Thea's uniqueness could be put to use somewhere.

### **5.3.3 Place as dimension**

I had visited Thea before – first to be introduced to her by the volunteer of the NGO that supported the centre and afterwards to familiarise myself with Thea and the settlement. Only when I started paying field visits to Thea, observing her while working and visiting her in her wooden hut, did I get to know the impact of physical space on Thea's experiences. Only then did I realise how misleading first impressions could be.

My first impression of the settlement was that of an oasis of peace and harmony. The field notes of 26 April (Field notes Thea – 26 April; p 82 of 170 on CD in back cover to dissertation) paint a picture of my first impressions of Thea's settlement. When I first entered the settlement early one morning, the sprinklers were on, irrigating lush green gardens. Little wooden huts next to winding footpaths basking in the sun, created a peaceful atmosphere. Some of the huts are extended with shade netting and some have little gardens in front of them. A black rabbit was running around and chickens were scratching between the houses. A wooden bench next to a dam,

complete with ducks floating on the water, offers a quiet spot to unwind. The owner was busy loading bales of hay with a tractor, with one gardener mowing the lawn and another raking leaves, completing this picture of pastoral tranquillity. Children played on jungle gyms, on swings, and in a sand pit in an unfenced park next to the dam. Paved pathways winding through the park were used as bicycle tracks by the children. However, Thea's experience of the settlement was totally different.

### **5.3.3.1 Experiences concerning place**

Thea found this apparent haven of peace to be a nightmarish place of potential danger to children. She also felt that the conditions at the settlement made her ill.

#### **a. *Dis 'n nagmerrie***

(It is a nightmare)

Firstly, Thea explained that the children could drown at any time, playing in an open area next to a dam. Throughout the day, the practitioners were running after the children, making sure they were still all accounted for. Secondly, children could get burnt in the kitchen or at the donkey boiler. Thirdly, there was the road used by big trucks that transported tar as well as the trucks of the builders building on the settlement.

The fact that the toddlers were busy with potty training made matters worse. When a practitioner had to help a toddler on the potty, some unguarded toddlers could run off. Not having sufficient amenities posed more problems as toilets were quite far from the playground.

Originally, a lack of classrooms meant that all the age groups had to be in one classroom. Trying to provide for the needs of the different age groups was difficult. This was especially so because Thea was overly conscientious in terms of the stimulation of every child in her care. She felt that she could not always give the younger ones their fair share of attention when she could not cope. The situation later

changed when Thea got a separate classroom for the older group when three Wendy houses were joined into one big room.

Thea's classroom was colourful, busy and untidy. Yet, it did not bother me. It seemed that the clutter was a sign of Thea collecting material to offer children a rich variety of art supplies and experiences. A lot of toys were lying around – dolls, building blocks, plastic animals and cars – offering children many opportunities for fantasy games. I felt that the untidy classroom was a sign that playing and free expression were more important than the appearance of the classroom. Thea also decorated the classroom with hanging strands of colourful plastic netting from the trusses.

My field notes describe a spacious room, organised into different play areas where the children kept the toys more or less in the designated areas. Thea gave me hundreds of photographs of children actively participating in a variety of age-appropriate activities, clearly proud of all the stimulation she offered the children.

Thea never invited me to her Wendy house except during the time when she was sick and could not receive me somewhere else. Only then did I visit her in her small three-by-three-metre dark wooden room, which also served as a clothes cupboard and a kitchen. At first, I thought the room did not have a window as we sat on her bed talking with the door open. Quaint little wooden houses were indeed cold, dark and unhealthy holes.

**b. *Ek word doodsiek***

(I become very ill)

My field notes describe Thea's room as small, dark and crowded. Yet Thea explained that her room was transformed into a beautiful lantern from the outside when light shone through the holes at night but the wind blowing through the holes at night made Thea ill. A loose roof allowed a rat to come in and destroy her backpack.

Little houses on top of each other did not allow for much privacy. Her neighbour's constant smoking caused her to sneeze and, during winter, the donkey boiler's smoke

affected her lungs. Therefore, she planned to move from the settlement before winter. She also had to walk some distance to go to the toilet or shower and she explained how this affected her.

*Dan's jy net warm, dan moet jy uitgaan om 'n draai te loop. Dan is jy van vooraf inmekaargeknyp. Dit is asof jou spiere net nie wil ontspan nie.*

(You're just warm and then you've to go outside to use the toilet. Then you are once again cramped into a spasm. It is as if your muscles just don't want to relax.)

The children at the settlement were even more exposed during winter, being at the mercy of their parents to provide protection against the cold. One family had their children sleeping on the veranda of the Wendy house, covered only with wood and plastic sheets. Thea felt that the children slept virtually outside for the larger part of the winter. The other alternative was to have the children sleeping in the same room as their parents. The fact that parents and children slept together in one room with no division between them was a source of grave concern to both Mia and Thea.

#### **5.3.4 Personal and social as dimension**

Working with Thea was interesting and fascinating but often frustrating and confusing. I came to know her as highly motivated, hardworking and dedicated to her task, but complex and intense as well – supportive towards others but also suspicious and unforgiving.

##### **5.3.4.1 Personal and social experiences**

Thea's narrative was rife with contradictions. In retrospect, it seems that her emotional condition determined how she experienced her relationships with others as well as with herself.

**a.        *Los my uit***  
(Leave me alone)

She loved the children in her care deeply, showering them with hugs and kisses but kept a distance from colleagues and made no secret of the fact that she could not stand physical contact.

At the same time, she was very sensitive regarding rejection. When a medical doctor asked Thea to write reports on children who might need psychological counselling, Thea refused. She knew the parents would know that she wrote the reports and then the parents would reject her. Her response was that she does not have a pill for rejection. Thea's need for acceptance resulted in her not wanting to write reports on possible child abuse and possibly stopping the abusive practices. If she wrote these reports, she probably would have been expelled from the community, terminating the positive work she did with the children. It seemed that past experiences of rejection and the fear thereof was a thread that ran through Thea's life.

The intensity with which she conducted her life extended to her sense of duty. Because of this, she took full responsibility for the centre, including the safety of the grounds of the settlement. She contacted a sponsor to pay for fencing off the playground – only to be snubbed by the owner of the settlement. She took care of the children far beyond the call of duty.

The day before Thea was asked to resign, I observed her changing the babies' nappies despite the fact that only the pre-school group was her responsibility and she was on the verge of losing her job. She also tried to give children arriving late the same stimulation and activities as those to which the others had been exposed.

*Ek moet uit my pad uit gaan en myself dood maak om in te haal.  
En dit is nie so produktief nie, want as die ander buite speel wil  
hulle ook buite speel. Dan kan ek nie die een-tot-een doen nie,  
want dan kan hulle nie konsentreer nie.*

(I have to go out of my way and kill myself to catch up. And it is not that productive, because when the others play outside, they also want to play outside. Then I cannot do the one-on-one [activities], because they cannot concentrate.)

**b. *Ek hardloop***  
(I am running)

Frantically, Thea tried to juggle all her responsibilities. In addition to being a practitioner, she was also responsible for the aftercare. Her duties included seeing that the homework of the school children was done and trying to help them to pass their grades. These children used to play outside, not doing homework, before Thea took over.

*En op die oomblik maak ek dit net-net nie. Ek hardloop. Ek begin by Willem, dan is dit ek kyk dat hy al sy huiswerk [doen?]. Sy ma help hom met sy huiswerk, maar sy het dit nie altyd daarbo nie. Dan maak ek die foute reg. Dan hardloop ek na die twee kleintjies toe, hulle sit aan die kant. Dan gaan ek na Riaan toe en gee vir hom 'n werkjie wat ek hom nou-nou oor gaan vra en dan help ek die tweetjies. Maar die tweetjies het nou gevorder hoor. Aan die begin moes ek heeltyd daar sit. Nou sê ek: "Mm, daar's die woorde dis wat dit beteken, maak sinne daarmee." Dan kom hulle vir my vra of dit reg is, ek maak gou die spelfoute reg, wys vir hulle hoekom dit verkeerd is dan stuur ek hulle nou terug. Kort-kort gaan kyk ek of hulle roep my die groot kinders. So ons het eintlik nog iemand daar nodig. Party dae maak jy dit met gemak en ander dae is dit net te erg.*

(At this stage I just-just don't make it. I run. I start with Willem and see to it that he [does] his homework. His mother helps him with his homework, but she does not always have it up there. Then I correct his mistakes. Then I run to the two little ones, they sit on

the side. Then I go to Riaan to give him a task which soon I will ask him about; then I help the two little ones. But the little ones have made a lot of progress! In the beginning I had to sit there the whole time. Now I say: "Mm, these are the words and this is their meaning, make sentences with them". Then they come and ask me if it is correct and then I will quickly correct their spelling mistakes, show them why it is incorrect and then I send them back. Every now and then I go and see or the big children call me. So we actually need another person. Some days I make it with ease and on other days it is just too hectic.)

Thea spoke about cleaning after hours when there were no children. She also cleaned over weekends, getting up at five o'clock in the mornings and going to sleep at 10 o'clock at night. Once a month, she unpacked all the toys to clean and organise them. She washed dishes and cleaned tables between her teaching activities when she did not have a cleaner. It was expected of Thea to give the children worksheets to complete, which she copied late at night by hand.

She demonstrated how she managed to feed all the babies and toddlers in her care when she had to work alone. She lined them all up under a tree and then "ran them through" ("*ek het almal deurgehardloop*"). Afterwards, the children were put in their cots with their bottles to give her time to clean the tables. She then changed their nappies. She allowed herself 10 minutes to feed everybody and 15 minutes to change their nappies. I could sense that burnout was looming.

**c.        *Die moegheid***  
(The exhaustion)

Thea referred to her exhaustion and ill-health during the first interview. It seemed that sickness and fatigue became her constant companions. Being tired she was impatient with parents' laziness and ignorance. At the end of her first year at the settlement, she was exhausted and threatened to resign. Mia and Hannah (volunteer from the NGO supporting the centre) thought of her threat as mere end-of-the-year tiredness.

Thea felt misunderstood by Mia and Hannah for not realising that she was overburdened and overworked. In the end, Thea gave up, indicating that she would have fought for her job if she was healthy.

**d.        *Dan is ek die shit stirrer***

(Then I'm the shit stirrer)

Thea's sense of duty often landed her in trouble as she actively tried to change everything that was wrong. She corrected parents and colleagues when she felt that they were wrong. She acted when she felt that either the food was not enough or that the food was not suitable for the children. Therefore, she was branded as a troublemaker by the kitchen staff.

She took it upon herself to talk to a group of men at the settlement who slurred a teenage girl – only to be mocked by them. She, however, felt that she would see to it that the girl did not get a bad reputation if she did not deserve it. She said that the men had no right to make such disgusting comments about a 14-year-old girl.

Thea had no trouble expressing her opinions in extreme terms. She made no secret of the fact that her loyalty was to the children and not to the adults at the settlement. During my last interview with her, she was adamant that Mia was not there for the sake of the children, but rather, to boast on her web page about her charity work. She was disgusted with the practitioner taking over from her as principal and believed that this practitioner would shout at the children, smoke in front of them, and talk to them in a loathsome manner. She confessed that she behaved unpleasantly towards parents who ignored their children crying and coughing all night. When she reported to Mia that a child had been burnt with a cigarette by a practitioner, she threatened that she was going to write a report about the incident so that Mia could not claim ignorance. The next day, Thea was fired and told that she did not need to come back.

Her priorities were clearly indicated: "*Kinders is als en grootmense is niks*" (Children are everything and adults are nothing) and she believed the situation at the settlement to be the opposite: "*Nee, op hierdie stadium, is grootmense alles en kinders niks*"

(No, at this stage, adults are everything and children nothing). She advised the decision makers (the owner, Mia and Hannah from the NGO supporting the ECD centre – Organisation D) to stop using the ECD centre to uplift adults:

*Hannah, Deon en Mia moet ophou om vir my hierdie storie [te vertel] van dat hulle grootmense wil 'uplift' in die kleuterskool. Hulle moet nou kies tussen die grootmense en die kinders.*

(Hannah, Deon and Mia should stop this story that they want to uplift grown-ups in the pre-school. They should choose between the grown-ups and the children).

Although she complained about a lack of energy at the end of the year, paying attention to the children was still of paramount importance to her. She described piles of dirty dishes and staff who deliberately tried to upset her as obstacles that should be ignored in order to focus on the children. The impact of poverty on all aspects of the residents' lives created challenges for Thea in her work. In addition, it caused her personal distress to see the suffering of people with whom she associated so closely.

**e. *Dit is eintlik hartseer***

(It is actually sad)

Thea talked about socioeconomic woes such as teenage pregnancy, child neglect, instability, infant mortality, and prenatal complications, as well as social exclusion. She often referred to circumstances at the settlement as "sad" ("*hartseer*"). The socioeconomic circumstances of a schoolgirl with a child who gave up her schooling, a blind mother who did not know that her young child was sitting outside, wet and cold, and the general fact that the outside world did not know about the existence of poor whites all upset her. She spoke about the suffering and sadness of people living in informal settlements. She mentioned how sad it was that there was no stability in the ECD centre. There was also the issue of practitioners not devoted to the work, not interested in training and not staying.

She cried with a colleague who had complications with her pregnancy and the looming possibility of having to terminate the pregnancy. She felt it was her responsibility to support the colleague and pull her through. In the first interview, Thea remembered the hardship Mia went through to keep the ECD centre going. Personally, she was deeply saddened by the fact that she had to leave the settlement.

Thea also experienced deep sorrow as a one-and-a-half-year-old boy that she was taking care of became sick and suddenly died. When I phoned her (telephonic conversation 30 April; p 89 of 170 on CD in back cover to dissertation) she at first could not speak to me as she was overcome with grief. She had a soft spot for this boy and referred to all the photographs she took of him. Although originally an outsider, Thea chose to work in the settlement. She identified with the hardship and the pain of the residents as well as the humiliation of living in such conditions. She regarded herself as one of them. She explained how she felt when outsiders came on a Sunday afternoon drive to “observe” them.

**f. *Dan voel jy amper soos ‘n dier in die dieretuin wat besigtig word***  
(Then you almost feel like an animal in the zoo that is being observed)

*Ja, dit is nie lekker nie. Ek dink baie aan daai woorde as die mense so kom en dan dink jy: “Ek wonder of hulle weet hoe lyk hulle?” Hierdie ryk, ‘lanie’ mense en dan kom hulle vir hulle Sondagmiddag-uitstappie en dan ry hulle nou deur die kamp. En dis: “Jislaaik, weet jy hoe lyk jy uit ons point of view.” Dit lyk nie lekker nie, jy weet. Dan voel jy amper soos ‘n dier in die dieretuin wat besigtig word. So ja, maar... As mens net altyd dink hulle wil help, maar ek dink dit is nuuskierigheid, ja.*

(Yes, it is not nice. I often think about those words when the people come and then you think: “I wonder if they know what they look like?” These rich, fancy people and then they come for their Sunday afternoon outing and then they drive through our camp. And its “Gee, do you know what you look like from our point of

view?" It is not nice, you know. Then you almost feel like an animal in the zoo that is being observed. So yes, but... If one always thinks that they want to help, but I think it is curiosity, yes.)

Forrester (in Angélil and Siress, 2012: 61) explains this situation as the poor being foreigners in their own country, living in a totally different physical and social reality.

**g. .... *dis ook nog stres wat 'n mens daar het***

(... it is also additional stress that one experiences there)

The social problems in the settlement caused Thea undue stress, which exacerbated her ill-health. She referred to a young girl who feared that she was pregnant. During later interviews, Thea often indicated that she experienced severe stomach cramps when she talked about her experiences at the settlement.

However, Thea not only experienced sadness and stress at the settlement; she also derived pleasure and a sense of purpose from her work there. She often referred to her troubled relation with her family, being the outsider, the black sheep. Her yearning to belong, have a family, and love and be loved was satisfied by her working with the children.

**h. *Dit is amazing lekker***

(It is amazingly enjoyable)

Thea's deep affection for the children was evident in all the interviews and conversations we had and the hundreds of photographs she took of them – from the babies to the school-going children. She took photographs of the children laughing, crying and fighting. She took photographs of sleeping, eating, playing and dirty children. Other photographs showed children involved in free play, sand play, bicycle riding, swinging, and climbing on jungle gyms, as well as adult-guided activities. There were photographs of Grade 1 children dressed in school uniforms, children oblivious to the camera, and others posing for the camera. Some photographs were funny but others were beautiful, with artistic merit. Going through the photographs, I

saw that the children were exposed to a rich variety of experiences and activities and were being stimulated in all domains of development.

*i.           **Wow! Dit was die moeite werd!***  
(Wow! It was worth my while!)

She found absolute fulfilment in her work. She regarded the theft of a few valuables (a watch and an expensive ring) from her Wendy house to be a small price to pay to be able to work at the settlement. She believed that, even if the children in her care moved from the settlement, something positive of what they learnt would stay with them. Her work gave her a sense of purpose – children who otherwise would have spent the whole day doing nothing now learnt something. She recalled the emotions she experienced when a girl suddenly showed an understanding of numerical addition the day before she moved away with her parents.

*Ek sit daar en ek sê: “Wow! Dit was die moeite werd!” Dit was die lekkerste afskeidsgeskenk wat ek kon kry was om te sien sy het dit darem ingeneem. Dit vertel vir my darem die manier hoe ek onderwys gee kan iemand darem dit [be]gryp en vir een van my kinders om dit te doen is amazing.*

(I am sitting there, saying: “Wow! This was worth my while!” This was the best farewell present I could get to see that she understood it. It tells me that my way of teaching can help somebody to grasp it and for one of my children to do that is amazing.)

Thea’s decisions were directed by her faith. She came to the settlement because she believed that God called her to work in an informal settlement in 2004. During the last interview after she was asked to leave the settlement, she lamented:

*Mens vra vir die Here, “Hoekom ek?” en Hy antwoord jou. [Long pause] Jy begin net goed sien. Hy antwoord jou nie, maar jy begin*

*goed sien. Aau OK, dit het ek nooit raakgesien nie, dit het ek nooit raakgesien nie. Ja wat.*

(One asks the Lord, “Why me?” and He answers you. [Long pause]  
You begin to see things. He does not answer you but you begin to see things. Aw, OK, I have never seen this or that. Oh well).

Even after she had left the settlement and was dismally unhappy, she still trusted that God would provide relief – although, at the same time, she did not understand why God had forsaken her – and that she had served a purpose at the settlement.

*j.           **So, elke keer as ek leer, is daar nuwe hoop***  
(So, every time that I learn, there is new hope)

Thea was always hungry to know more, read more, and learn more from others' experiences. Learning was an incentive for her to stay on in the settlement. She quoted people, saying that they thought she would have given up but, because she was learning so much, she stayed.

She constantly referred to books that she had read, educational programmes she had listened to over the radio, and the shared experiences of others. She told me about a mathematics programme from the 1970s that she successfully used in her class. She quoted study guides from UNISA that she had read. She expressed her opinion about Melody de Jager's programme, Mind Moves, which she felt might benefit the children in her group. She mentioned a programme by Hettie Brittz for parents that she felt was not suitable for the parents of the settlement. She spoke about educational books she bought and keenly accepted a second-hand ECD handbook that I gave her.

- k. .... *Stadig maar seker, begin ek verstaan wie die kind is***  
(... Slowly but surely, I begin to understand who the child is)

Although not a qualified ECD practitioner, Thea showed remarkable insight into ECD teaching. Early in the research, she mentioned that she had always bonded easily with children but this became more difficult since she had to use formal teaching methods in the centre. She knew intuitively that this was not the right way to teach young children although, under Mia's guidance, she was expected to do so. Thea voiced her feelings more openly at a later stage. When I paid a field visit to her centre, we walked past two young sisters not attending the centre, pushing each other on a go-cart. She remarked: "*Om te dink hierdie kinders leer meer as die kinders in my klas*" (To think that these children learn more than the children in my class). Thea understood the importance of ECD teaching and that the learning process is more important than the end product – children should explore and grasp concepts.

She discussed parents' poor understanding:

*Die ouers hoor hier en daar dit is wat hulle moet kan doen as hulle skool-toe gaan, so al waaroor hulle gepla is, kan die kind touspring, kan die kind nommers onthou, en hulle verstaan nie dat dit 'n proses is om hulle daar te kry nie en dit gaan nie of hulle die eindproduk haal nie. Ek meen dit is vir ons almal belangrik. Op die ou einde is dit dat jy moet sorg dat die boustene tot daarso so ver as moontlik gebou kan word en nie net "O okay, hy kan sy foonnommer memoriseer", maar hy verstaan nie wat getalle is nie. Hulle verstaan nie daai konsepte nie.*

(Parents are told here and there what children should be able to do when they go to school, so their only concern is whether the child can skip with a skipping rope, or if the child can remember numbers, and they don't understand that it is a process to get them there, and it is not about them reaching the final product. I mean it is important to all of us. In the end you have to see that the building

blocks can be built as far as possible and not only “Oh okay, he can memorise his telephone number” but he does not understand what numbers are. They do not understand those concepts.)

Thea not only understood children in general but also the specific developmental needs of the children in her care. She felt that the children of the settlement should be taught that actions have consequences. She was of the opinion that, in order to convey this message, the practitioners should not renege on decisions about consequences. Given that these children grew up in families where consequences were not often considered, this seemed an important life skill to teach the children from the settlement. Although discipline was highly valued, she understood that discipline should be adapted for a mentally challenged child, especially at the beginning of the year, when the child is still new in the class.

She had the insight that school readiness was not the most important objective in these children’s lives and that the focus should be on emotional rather than academic readiness. Thea’s understanding is supported by Jensen (2009: 15), who posits that the emotional development of children from impoverished backgrounds is typically compromised by adverse conditions since infancy, which lead to poor school performance and behaviour problems. Focusing on healthy emotional development should be a priority before tending to academic skills, which are important for school readiness.

Thea came to realise that an ECD practitioner should have a lot of skills. She had a sophisticated understanding of young children’s learning – children should actively solve problems themselves but adult guidance is also important – whether with puzzle building or movement activities.

She described a boy from a seriously deprived background who was too scared to balance and walk on tyres. She held him by the waist until he had the self-confidence to walk on his own. She ascribed his original lack of ability to the fact that he did not have a pre-school background. At other times, she challenged and pushed children who had the ability to perform.

Thea displayed a deeper understanding of child behavioural patterns. She discussed a young girl throwing tantrums, believing that this was not the way any child wanted to behave and that the girl also did not enjoy it. Although she was politically conservative, I found her more progressive viewpoint in terms of the needs of young children exciting. When she started working at the centre, she planned to bring a young man to work in the centre as she felt that the children needed a male figure in their lives. This was because only two of the children at the centre had a father at home. Allowing male practitioners to work with children is often not considered appropriate in South Africa, not even by educated practitioners and academics. She identified a young man who would have been an excellent practitioner in the centre but, before she could approach him, he left the settlement. Thea explained the dilemma that the settlement had to face. Quality people with ambition did not stay for long. On the one hand, it was unfortunate that living in the settlement was not part of their future plans; on the other hand, it was fortunate that they had moved on to a better life.

Thea really wanted to understand the children in her care. She described how she discovered a child's personality:

*Maar hoe meer ek na die situasie kyk, hoe stadig maar seker, dit is nie impulsiewe "Aha! Nou het ek dit" nie maar, stadig maar seker, begin ek verstaan wie die kind is, wat sy persoonlikheid is, hoekom hy optree soos hy optree.*

(But the more I look at the situation; it is not an impulsive "Aha! Now I have it" but, slowly but surely, I begin to understand who the child is, what his personality is like, why he acts the way he acts.)

**I. So dit is maar hoe jy sukkel met ouers**

(So this is how you battle with parents)

Thea mentioned caring parents who wanted the best for their children even though they did not have the financial means. However, the parents of the settlement often

were not equipped to be effective parents. They either lacked an understanding of their children's abilities and did not tend to their children's needs or did not have the mental capacity to stimulate their children's cognitive development.

Parents were irresponsible in terms of their children's school attendance, thereby setting a bad example for their children. Residents were also impulsive, leaving the settlement when the owner of the settlement expected them to work or when they were angry with somebody. They then ended up begging on the streets.

**m.        *Druggy***  
(Druggy)

Thea was concerned about two brothers who were fed medication to keep them quiet and calm, as she believed that they had already become addicted to the medication and kept asking for it. The boys were very passive and physically underdeveloped. The parents indicated that they were worried that their children would be removed by the welfare since it had happened before. Thea could not understand how parents could feed their children drugs. Thea came to the conclusion that the father could not handle the children, therefore the mother kept the children drugged. This is yet another example of Thea's astute ability to interpret events.

Thea also told me about a caregiver asking for guidance in terms of stimulating three siblings of whom she was taking care. All three had challenges as the mother used heroin while pregnant with them. Despite the fact that most children were not exposed to this extreme maltreatment, many children in the settlement were subject to various forms of neglect. Thea believed that the mothers were more interested in men than in taking care of their children.

**n.        *Daai ma's is net met die mans besig***  
(Those mothers are only busy with the men)

Some children in Thea's care came from an informal settlement where the residents did not have water to wash. She remembered how bad these children smelled when

they came to school. The settlement had closed down because of criminal activities in the settlement. Although these residents were offered housing at Thea's settlement, most of them preferred to stay where they could make money even if their activities were illegal.

Thea spoke about all the children who came to school dirty to be washed at the centre as the mothers apparently spent their time socialising and their money on alcohol and cigarettes. Thea described the situation with the dirty children as a “depression” (“*depressie*”) that had descended on them. In addition, she had to potty-train older children as their parents did not bother to do it. Parents were also not prepared or, sometimes, lacked the intellectual capacity to help their children with their homework when Thea asked them to do so. Some parents did not bother to fetch lunch for their children from the kitchen and these children then stayed hungry. Meanwhile, parents could not always provide for their children as the settlement depended on donations to buy food.

**o. *Kos is maar 'n probleem***  
(Food is indeed a problem)

During her first interview, Thea explained that all the cattle, rabbits and chickens had been slaughtered and eaten and the settlement did not have any food at that stage. Two-hundred people had to be fed three times a day. Thea calculated that it cost the settlement a few thousand rand per meal.

The quality of the food being served to the children was suspect at times. During one of my field visits, the children were served a strange looking and smelling black substance on rice. The children did not eat much and Thea neither expected them to eat nor encouraged them to eat. She did not comment much on the food except to say that the children ate well on days when good food was served (Field notes 26 April; p 82 of 170 on CD in back cover to dissertation).

- p.        *My pa en ma het die hele nag baklei***  
(My mother and father fought the whole night)

Thea asked one of the boys who performed poorly at school and was doomed to fail to study in the evenings as he was daydreaming in the after-care class, not doing anything. He responded that he was tired as his parents were fighting the whole night but added that he was already used to it. Thea felt strongly that the boy's passivity was a clear indication that he was upset and, indeed, unable to get "used to it".

Parents' problematic circumstances determine their emotions and behaviour, which, in turn, affects their children's behaviour. Thea commented that, when parents were aggressive at home, children came to school upset, crying, and attacking others. Meanwhile, children's behaviour became positive when the parents' aggressive behaviour changed. Thea found it very upsetting to hear parents swearing at their children when she walked past their houses on her way to the toilet.

Since these children were victims of many negative influences in their lives, their development is and has been seriously hampered. Thea clearly understood their challenges, especially when compared to the children in Mia's centre. Yet, she was excited and positive about their achievements and potential. Thea intuitively did what Jensen (2009) recommends in his book, *Teaching with Poverty in Mind: What being Poor does to Kids' Brains and what School can do about It*. Thea was proud of children who did well and beat the odds (ibid: 62); she looked at the children in her care as possibilities and not problems (ibid: 65).

- q.        *Maar daai kind is so skerp, so skerp!***  
(But that child is so sharp, so sharp!)

Although passionate and enthusiastic about her task, Thea was realistic about the abilities of the children and felt that school readiness should not be an objective of her centre. This was because children never stayed for long in the centre before their parents moved on to another settlement. She also sensed that only a few children in

her aftercare were going to pass their grades at the end of the year. Yet, she was always excited about the children making progress.

She never mentioned the words “challenged” or “lacking in ability”, even when children could not perform. When they did master a task, it gave her a tremendous sense of satisfaction and felt that this was an indication of her good work: “*Dit vertel my die manier hoe ek onderwys gee kan iemand darem gryp*” (It tells me that the way I teach can at least be grasped by someone). She further believed that at least something she had taught them would stay with the children, even if their parents moved away from the settlement. Unknowingly she adopted the maxim of Jensen (2009: 63): “Kids can change, and [I] can make it happen”.

**r.           As hulle net bietjie kan bly**  
(If only they could stay a while)

The number of children passing in and out of the centre was a constant irritation as it had an impact on Thea’s objectives as she could not plan for the long term. One of her biggest disappointments was the concert that she was practising for with the children in the centre for two months as a surprise for Mia’s birthday. On the day of the concert, she was stuck with almost no children left in the centre.

Practitioners coming and going was another problem. She felt that people who cared for children should stay for a period of time to be trained. Therefore, she was shocked when Mia suggested that practitioners should only work for three months at a time at the centre, after which time they would be redeployed elsewhere in the settlement. Together with unpredictability, dependence was another prominent theme in Thea’s narrative. The settlement did not have a budget for food as it depended on inconsistent donations. Both unpredictability and dependence left the residents, including Thea, disempowered.

**s.        *Jy moet wag vir donasies***  
(You have to wait for donations)

People were dependent on promises and promises were often broken. Mia and the NGO supporting the centre promised to send Thea on a course, which did not materialise as no sponsor was found. Even food for the residents of the settlement depended on donations. The owner promised to build a classroom for Thea's group, which never happened. Mia then rented a room from the owner to give Thea her own classroom. The mere survival of the centre depended on donations; if Mia withdrew from the centre, it would have to close down.

Thea's position in the centre and her residence in the settlement also depended on Mia's support. When Mia rejected Thea, she had to leave the centre and the settlement. Thea received R200 per week for her work in the centre but not when she was off sick.

Thea was disempowered by the fact that she was uninformed and without authority. For example, she did not know what course was planned for her by Mia and Organisation D. Although she was appointed as principal of the centre, she had no say in the appointment of staff there. One of the main issues that led to Thea's dismissal was the fact that Mia did not trust her as principal. Mia also did not accept Thea's version of the situation at the centre but rather listened to the other practitioners' versions of events:

*En as jy, as jy 'n skoolhoof het, moet jy daai skoolhoof se woord  
kan vat bo al die gemors-stories.*

(And if you, if you have a principal, you should accept the  
principal's word to the other rubbish stories.)

Not only Thea but also the parents and the residents were at the mercy of the whims of the management of the settlement. When the mother of the child with the cigarette burn reported the matter to the owner, the owner responded by telling her to pack her

bags and leave if she was not happy with his settlement. Thea also felt that she could not discuss the issue with the owner as he already indicated that she was bad for his school. Parents, who were not happy with the situation in the centre once Thea had left, could not afford to take their children elsewhere. Thea believed that those parents would calm down and accept the status quo. The residents, however, did not empower themselves in order to be able to eventually leave the settlement.

**t. *Grootmense wat daar is wil nie verder nie***

(Grown-ups that are there do not want to go further)

Thea remembered an advertisement, posted in the kitchen, for free training as electricians, mechanics and fitters for residents; but no one was interested. She quoted another example of a woman who had completed a third course already. This woman kept a job for two months after she had completed a course, only to move on to the next course presented to uplift people and equip them with skills to work. She then concluded that the adults in the settlement did not want to make progress in life. Thea referred to a resident with mental illness who came from Denmark Specialist Psychiatric Hospital. She talked about a woman whose husband committed a murder after he had caught his wife cheating on him numerous times. On the surface, it seemed that residents were stuck in their own hopeless situations due to circumstances, their own apathy, and social woes such as mental illness and criminality.

However, under the surface, these apparently disempowered people created a power base from which they secured better conditions for themselves. It seems to have been a matter of the survival of the fittest. The residents brought their own dynamics, which were not understood by outsiders, to the settlement.

**u. *En hulle run die plaas; hulle run die plaas***

(And they run the farm; they run the farm)

Thea believed that a clique was established among the residents to control activities in the settlement. This allowed the clique's members certain privileges, which other

community members could not enjoy. If a resident was working in an area where a member of the clique wanted to be, this resident was pushed out by other members of the clique. Thea used the example of the “clothes cupboard” (storage space for donated clothes), where members of the clique worked. They had access to donated clothes first and could pick the best. The ECD centre was another favourite workplace, since donations were often made to the centre. The boyfriend of one of the practitioners in the centre, who belonged to the clique, had the task of fetching donations. According to Thea, the members of the clique always had meat and cake to eat, as they had first access to the donations. None of the other residents had access to such luxuries.

v. ***Dis hartseer, maar dis verby. Dis verby***  
(It's sad but it's over. It's over)

Thea's physical condition was intertwined with her emotional condition. When I visited her after she had been fired, she started to bend over from pain, indicating that talking about what had happened upset her. During the last recorded interview, she suffered from stomach cramps and had difficulty swallowing. She expressed a severe sense of loss when she was fired. Afterwards, whenever I asked her to look at the pictures or read my notes, she said that it caused her pain. She did not want to stay on in the settlement and work in another position as it would be too painful to see the children every day and not work with them.

#### **5.3.4.2 Experiences concerning support**

Although Thea befriended the residents and was originally very positive about Mia (seeing her as a mother figure), she eventually had serious clashes with her colleagues and Mia. It seemed that social relations in the community were complex and intricate. This could have been a result of different personalities moulded by problematic circumstances in which people had to fight for survival. Hence, they did not learn more sophisticated social skills.

**a. *Daar het nog elke keer 'n bom gebars***

(A bomb has exploded every time)

Thea's colleagues were a source of annoyance as she felt that they were lazy and could not cope with the work. Their unsophisticated behaviour – their fawning, name calling, mental problems, gossiping, and failure to take responsibility – irritated her. She often used the analogy of a bomb exploding to describe the volatile relationship between her and the other practitioners. She also said that she left issues unattended in order to avoid such explosions.

Cleaning staff in the centre preferred to be involved with the children – leaving Thea to do the cleaning. She also talked about staff inciting parents against her and about the accusations of parents. It seemed that camp politics was a complex minefield to navigate. She was highly suspicious of the volunteers who supported her at the settlement. She even, at one point, mentioned that she was worried that I was a spy for Mia. She referred to “informants” that Mia supposedly had at the centre. She also suspected other staff of hiding the fruit that was meant for her group. Thea felt that she had stagnated because of staff problems and, thus, could not move forward.

Thea had firm ideas and high standards that might have contributed to these clashes. She preferred to work alone, admitting to her own stubbornness against working with lazy people and people with bad attitudes. However, she set high standards for herself as well, indicating that she was hard on herself.

Thea complained more and more about the ill-treatment of children by her colleagues in the centre. The practitioners in this centre suffer from the same social problems and emotional distress as the parents of the children in their care. The ECD centre is, therefore, not a safe haven for children to escape to for a few hours every day, away from the harsh conditions at home.

Children were shouted down and sworn at by practitioners. Some parents complained that their children's ears were being pulled. Toddlers who still needed to be fed were left to eat on their own and their plates were removed while they were still eating. Practitioners reprimanded and shouted at crying children without responding to their

needs, handling them with the utmost insensitivity. Children then reacted to this harsh treatment by soiling themselves. A culmination of the ill-treatment of the children was the burn on a child's face by a practitioner's cigarette. Thea's efforts to report the matter led to her dismissal. In spite of this sad ending to Thea and Mia's relationship, Thea had benefitted and learnt from Mia.

**b. *Ek sal dit nie maak sonder Mia nie***

(I won't make it without Mia)

Thea respected the knowledge, insight and advice that Mia could offer her and the parents of the centre's children. In addition, Mia helped the parents financially by paying children's school enrolment fees and transport fees. She helped in practical matters as well, for example arranging for a child to go to a school for learners with special needs. Mia could identify children's challenges and gave Thea advice on how to handle parents. Thea valued Mia's experience as well as that of the staff at Mia's centre, indicating that she was "stealing" from their experience.

**c. *Sy bederf ons***

(She spoils us)

During the early interviews, Thea repeatedly said that Mia was spoiling the practitioners, buying clothes and treats for them, and taking them on holiday. In the end, Thea regarded all this spoiling as negative. She felt that money should be spent on training and not on holidays and treats.

**d. *... en die ander mense is jaloers daarop***

(... and the other people are jealous of it)

Other members of the community became jealous of all the spoiling of the practitioners in the centre. Kitchen staff started to treat them badly when they served them food.

#### **5.3.4.3 Camp leadership experiences**

The well-being of Thea and the centre was totally dependent on the goodwill of camp leadership. At the same time, the centre was a priority because it was a main source of income for the community. Thea gave the reason for this situation: “...*mense se harte word altyd sag as hulle ‘n klomp kinders bymekaar sien*” (...people’s hearts always become weak when they see a group of children together).

The owner benefitted from the centre through donations and also charged Mia R1 300 per month to rent a wooden hut that was used as Thea’s classroom. However, Thea’s efforts to make the playground safer were rejected. In terms of crucial issues, Thea had to accept what was offered. She felt strongly that the school children should get sandwiches to take to school, a request that was ignored by the owner.

The owner had absolute authority and evicted residents who annoyed him in any way. Parents also feared that their children’s misbehaviour might result in their eviction from the settlement. The owner invited homeless people to the settlement, offering them housing, and these people had to accept whatever conditions were put to them. During my last visit to Thea (after she had left the settlement), she once again indicated that, for the owner, it was all about the money he received from donations. She also felt that she was discouraged by Mia to write reports about children who needed counselling as requested by a medical doctor to enable the doctor to arrange counselling because these reports would have been a stain on Oom Deon’s settlement (which might have had an impact on donations). This was probably also the reason why he was not willing to investigate the matter of the burnt child despite the mother reporting the matter.

#### **5.3.4.4 Experiences regarding outside response**

Thea believed that people had ulterior motives for being involved with the community:

**a. Janet was net daar vir die eer**

(Janet was there only for the honour)

Thea believed that Mia was involved in the centre to show off her charity work. Therefore, she also did not want anything negative about the settlement or the treatment of the children in the community made public as this would lead to children being removed by the welfare and the centre closing down. She remembered a young woman, Janet, who came from outside to work at the centre for five months in order to boast at her church that she worked in a “squatter camp”.

**b. Ek dink nie Mia besef hoe groot invloed het dit op hulle nie**

(I don't think Mia realises what a big influence it has on them)

Nevertheless, some people were sincere in the support that they offered. Services offered (for example, the medical doctor who visited the settlement once a month and the donations and courses presented) were all well intended. However, outsiders did not always understand the intricate social complexities of the community. Thea considered the parent guidance courses presented by an outsider to be unsuitable for the residents – the course was not practical enough and parents did not understand the material. Furthermore, questions that parents asked (for example, about discipline) were not answered. Parents were told rather to watch a DVD after they had completed the course, which they were not interested in doing. Parents also never received their attendance certificates as promised by the presenter.

Even the medical doctor did not understand the situation regarding these parents. Parents were not protected against possible prosecution should reports be written about their children. Donors, too, did not know that their donations often led to conflict among residents. Residents were jealous of those who received gifts and aspired to be in positions where they received or collected donations in order to choose the best donations first. In order to be Mia's right-hand woman and to be spoilt by her, practitioners regularly fought, slandered one another, and fawned over Mia.

- c. ***As hy kan insien dit is nie uplifting nie***  
(If he could see that it is not uplifting)

Thea was of the opinion that the centre was used to uplift people at the expense of the children. She strongly felt that downtrodden people of 60 years of age could not work with the children. The best people were taken to clean the office of the settlement and the poorest workers were sent to be practitioners. These included the people who could not work in the garden and did not get along with the kitchen staff.

- d. ***... hoor hier, leer hier, kyk wat aangaan, maar moenie die kinders wegvat nie***  
(... listen here, learn here, see what is happening but do not remove the children)

Thea's solution in terms of staff was to bring in a social worker or young people who were trained as child evangelists to work in the centre. However, she feared that the children might be removed from their parents if a social worker became involved. Therefore, she recommended that the social worker first observe to develop perspective on a very complex situation before acting.

## **5.4 A STORY OF WORKING IN A THREE-DIMENSIONAL NARRATIVE SPACE WITH RINA**

In order to narratively understand Rina's experiences, I interpreted her story within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

### **5.4.1 Background of the settlement**

Rina's settlement could be described as a true informal settlement – a piece of land occupied by homeless people who set up make-shift housing. Therefore, this camp was often used in the media as an example of a predominantly white squatter camp. The settlement was originally a municipal caravan park where people paid R600 per month to stay. Then the homeless moved in – those who lost their jobs, people fleeing

from the law, and people too sick or unqualified to work. This area was a green spot of open ground under trees with ablution facilities and nobody had to pay to stay there. They set up housing with wood and corrugated iron, and in caravans and tents. According to the residents, anyone could erect a dwelling as long as they did not dig out a foundation. Some residents were quite creative in the construction of their houses and even double storeys were erected. Those with generators could generate electricity for their houses and donkey boilers heated water for residential use.

Jungle gyms and swings (remnants of the caravan park) were available to the children in the community, as were areas under the trees where they could play sport but outsiders still came for picnics or braais over weekends. The area was always littered when visitors left. However, the residents had to tolerate these visitors as they had no claim on the land. The municipality used to mow the lawns of the settlement as well as the picnic area used by day visitors. They also used to fix the plumbing problems of the ablution blocks. When they stopped to service the area of the settlement and only continued to mow the lawn of the picnic area, residents took responsibility for mowing the lawn.

The number of the residents in the settlement fluctuated between 300 and 600. Hein was the self-appointed camp manager, managing the distribution of donations and the general discipline in the camp, with the help of a secretary whom he appointed. Organising all the donations that arrived regularly was a serious responsibility. Furthermore, the secretary had the responsibility to collect R10 per month from each adult to buy cleaning agents for the ablution blocks and organised the roster for the adults to clean the ablution blocks. The frequent visits of radio stations, newspapers and television crews – locally as well as internationally – had to be coordinated as well.

#### **5.4.2 Past, present and future as dimension**

The first chapter of Rina's story was about a woman with matric living with her husband and four children in a suburb in Johannesburg. She worked as a public relations officer for a city council but resigned to be a full-time mother, only to be

divorced by her husband shortly thereafter. She then remarried a man, formerly employed by Eskom, who worked as a bus driver with a Code 10 driver's licence. Misfortune struck again when her second husband lost his job. The family could not afford the rent of their house and was evicted. This was not the future that Rina had imagined for herself and her family. These bleak prospects left her crying for days. At the time, the situation in the settlement was quite chaotic since, with 600 residents, the settlement was totally overcrowded, with the average number of residents at any one time ranging between 300 and 350.

Although Rina's husband could not find permanent work, he earned a small salary helping at the local primary school to get children safely over the road. Rina had been working at the ECD centre for four-and-a-half years, earning a salary of R250 per month. She also received a grant for her children. Her daughter, who went to a school for children with learning difficulties, received a larger grant.

During the last recorded interview, Rina's husband was very excited. A relative had sponsored him the money to start a business washing the cars of the teachers at the local primary school. When I saw him again, he indicated that the car-washing business was doing well and he was going to be introduced to the owners of a few factories to offer his services to wash the delivery trucks of these businesses. Rina enjoyed her work with the children and indicated a few times that she was ready to receive formal training. When the possibility came up for her husband to expand his business, Rina felt that she would rather do the administration of the business than being an ECD practitioner. She would also then not need training in ECD. Unfortunately, however, this prospect did not materialise. On the contrary, the business closed down as it was not profitable.

Rina told me about residents who worked outside the settlement but preferred to stay in the settlement. When asked the reason for them staying, Rina was quite hesitant to respond and hinted: "*Verstaan jy wat ek sê? Nice to [pause] to stay here. Betaal niks nie. Net R10 'n maand.*" (Do you understand what I am saying? Nice to [pause] to stay here. Pay nothing. Only R10 a month.) In contrast, Rina herself indicated from

the first interview that she wanted a house of her own as this implied a better life for her children.

*'n Vrou droom mos maar altyd om haar eie huis te hê, om 'n beter lewe vir haar kinders te hê. Dit is nie hulle skuld dat 'n mens hier is nie en ek wil nie hê dit moet hulle skuld wees nie. Dit is my en my man se skuld. Ek voel baie skuldig dat ons hier moet bly en dat hulle so moet grootword. 'n Vrou se droom is haar eie huis. My huisie is lekker, maar jy weet om krag te hê, elektrisiteit en maklike geriewe te hê vir my en my kinders. My kinders is my lewe. Ons is al deur diepe waters. As hier net kan krag wees, verstaan jy, sal dit baie beter wees.*

(A woman always dreams about having her own house, to have a better life for her children. It is not their fault that one is here, and I don't want it to be their fault. It is my husband's and my fault. I feel very guilty that we have to stay here and that they have to grow up like this. A woman's dream is her own house. My house is nice but you know to have electricity, electricity and easy conveniences for me and my children. My children are my life. We have been through deep waters. If only there could be electricity here, do you understand, then it would be much better.)

Sooner than Rina expected, the dream of owning her own house became a reality due to a twist in fate. The municipality served eviction orders to the residents. All residents had to leave the settlement by the end of that year. The municipality planned to upgrade the caravan park to a luxurious holiday resort. Rina and her family decided to use the money they received from the Road Accident Fund after their youngest son was injured in an accident to buy a house. Rina, together with the volunteers who supported the ECD centre, were planning to transfer all of the centre's material and apparatus to another informal settlement to start an ECD centre there.

The other residents split into two groups. The one group decided to move to another established informal settlement. The camp manager bought a piece of land and the second group decided to move with him. Here, they could once again erect their makeshift housing. Rina feared that the two groups were heading for a serious clash and did not ask any of the former residents about their future plans. She felt that it was better to know as little as possible about the comings and goings of the other residents. It seemed that the social thread that had tied the residents together as “one big family” was busy unravelling.

#### **5.4.3 Place as dimension**

The settlement was at the bottom of a large open area of mowed grass, fringed with pine trees. Cement picnic tables under the oak trees, built-in braais (mostly broken), and a jungle gym were all scattered over the area. As this was a municipal area, sheep, cattle and goats belonging to nearby residents were allowed to graze there, creating an atmosphere of peace and quiet. Only once I got closer to the housing area did I see litter being blown against the fence of the ECD centre.

Strange-smelling smoke – presumably the result of the burning of different materials – issued from various dwellings and hung over the settlement. From time to time, I observed men and boys pulling logs of wood to make fires in drums. My field notes describe puddles of soapy stagnant water that could be seen all over the settlement on laundry days. The whole settlement’s laundry was washed at a central point with one lady in charge of the laundry, shouting out commands at her helpers. The shouting, together with rock music coming from the houses, created a noisy, busy environment.

Children going to or coming from the centre had to cross a busy road winding through the settlement. The children had to jump over puddles of water on their way to the toilet or back to their houses after school. (Many parents did not fetch their children from the centre.) This made it a relatively unsafe environment for the young children.

The ECD centre was a fenced-in area with swings, slides, two jungle gyms, a sand pit and a bicycle track. The “lawn” of the centre was really only tufts of wild grass. Although the centre’s play apparatus needed a lick of paint, the young children in this community had enough opportunities to play and develop physically. The sandpit, which was stocked with enough sandpit toys, was under a roof to provide shade whilst the children were playing. The centre also had a number of bicycles and prams for use on the bicycle track.

The older children’s classroom was a spacious carpeted wooden room – well equipped and overflowing with toys, books and posters. A crate of donated educational and construction toys and puzzles was also stored in the classroom. A donation of newly crocheted colourful blankets was delivered to the class, only to be followed by a delivery of brand new fleece blankets a few weeks later.

The classroom for the younger group (Rina’s classroom) had been enlarged, painted yellow, and decorated by a group of volunteers. Beautiful photographs of the children (taken by a volunteer) as well as the children’s art adorned the walls. The furniture consisted of a book case, three plastic child-sized tables with 12 chairs, and a white board on which the practitioner could write. Although the classroom had a mat in it, the children always sat at the tables for all of the activities they had to complete.

Looking at the colourful photographs of the girls’ playroom (a big dolls’ house), I felt that this centre was like any other centre. It invited children to play and get involved in fantasy games. All the details created a warm child-friendly atmosphere. This included sunlight pouring through the window, brightly painted child-sized furniture, toy crates overflowing with soft toys, against a warm yellow background and even a mat to sit on and play. There were so many toys that they were also displayed on the child-sized chairs where the children were supposed to sit. Bags bulging with soft toys had just arrived at the centre when I was paying a field visit. The boys’ playroom (mainly for building blocks) was painted light blue and equipped with mats for the children to sit on whilst building with big plastic blocks.

Initially, I was not invited into Rina's house. However, when I paid her a visit just after Christmas, she was eager to invite me in. A big Christmas tree, covered with beautiful high-quality decorations, reaching to the roof was in the corner of the small living room. She indicated that they had collected these decorations over the years. I took photographs of the tree and commented that it was probably the most beautiful tree in the settlement, which Rina proudly confirmed. She then showed me the rest of her dark house with almost no windows or ventilation. Her husband built the living-room area and bathroom with corrugated iron; the rest of the house was comprised of tents that had been added to expand the house. Her mother and a friend lived in a caravan opening into the kitchen. At that stage, 13 people were living in the "house".

Rina had a row of two flowering rose bushes and other flowering plants in front of her house. She proudly explained that she sprayed her roses with soapy water to keep the insects away and watered the plants with water from the kitchen and bathroom since no proper irrigation system was in place. At the side of the house, vegetables were planted inside old tyres.

#### **5.4.3.1 Experiences concerning place**

In general, Rina did not mention anything negative about the settlement, as if she did not notice any littering, pollution or neglect.

##### **a. He takes the money of the school but doesn't fix anything at the school**

When I first visited Rina, her classroom was very small (three-by-three metres) and she was highly upset about the lack of space. Plans were already in place to enlarge the classroom. After the wall between two small rooms had been removed, the classroom was renovated by a group of volunteers. Rina actively took part in this venture. Obviously very proud, she asked me to take photographs of her classroom only once everything was in place. She even suggested that the other practitioner, a volunteer, might be jealous of her beautiful classroom.

Although the outside as well as the inside play areas were well-equipped, the playground also had problems. The volunteer, Cindy (who worked as the practitioner with the older group) spoke of a broken gate that fell on and injured a child. Several weeks earlier, she had asked the camp manager to fix the gate but he still had not done so. She commented that Hein, the self-appointed camp manager, took the money of the centre but did not fix anything at the centre.

**b. *As hier net kan krag wees***

(If only there were electricity here)

Although Rina's family had a generator to generate electricity, petrol was expensive and the family could not always afford it. Living without electricity was the worst aspect of her life in the settlement – reason enough to leave the settlement. However, Rina's family made the most of life there. Her husband built a bathroom onto their house with a donkey boiler heating their water. Other families had to carry hot water from the communal bathroom to their houses, often burning themselves while carrying the water.

#### **5.4.4 Personal and social as dimension**

In spite of her difficult circumstances, Rina always took control and made plans to improve her situation and always stayed hopeful.

##### **5.4.4.1 Personal and social experiences**

Rina enjoyed her work and found a sense of purpose in it.

**a. *My kinders is my lewe***

(My children are my life)

Her youngest daughter failed her grade and her other daughter was in a school for learners with special needs. Both her sons were in a school for learners with learning difficulties. Her youngest son was involved in an accident a few years earlier and

sustained minor head injuries. Road Accident Fund compensation for diminished capacity only came through years later. Rina's love for her children was evident and her plans and decisions revolved around them. She openly expressed her guilt feelings about her children having to grow up in the settlement. Her biggest dream was a better life for them. She also expressed her love for the children in her care.

**b. ... ek is oneindig lief vir hierdie kindertjies**

(... I have endless love for these children)

*Ek is oneindig lief vir hierdie kinders. Dan dink mens jy gaan dit maar los, maar dan dink jy maar wat gaan van hulle word? Ek is baie lief vir hulle.*

(I have endless love for these children. Then you think that you are going to stop but then you wonder what is going to happen to them? I love them very much.)

Rina openly demonstrated her affection for the children in her care – tickling them, carrying them, kissing them, comforting ones who cried, and assuring them of her love and adoration. She sensed that the children in the settlement needed attention and support but that, most of all, they needed love, as they did not always receive it at home. When I asked her about her small salary, she indicated that she did not work for the money but for the children.

**c. En jy ken hulle ins and outs**

(And you know their ins and outs)

Rina felt that she understood the children's problems and how to handle them in order to calm the children down. She had been at the centre for some years and knew most of the children and their needs. They had a comfortable relationship with Rina and they talked to her openly about what happened at their homes. She experienced that children who suffered at home were aggressive at school. She felt great empathy with them and indicated that she calmed down aggressive children by talking to and

playing with them. I observed children playing socially with almost no conflict amongst them.

**d. *En wat doen ek? Ek's mos slim***

(And what do I do? I'm smart)

Although Rina lived and worked in a very disempowering environment, she was always busy making plans and taking actions to improve her conditions or to handle a problem. When the manager fired Cindy, the volunteer working as the practitioner of the older group, Rina repeatedly said that she did not know what to do as she could not handle both groups. She then came up with a practical solution. She was going to clean and organise the centre and asked me to come and help her with the organising. Her next plan of action was to tell the manager that she was going to close the centre until after the school holidays to give her time to find new staff.

Hein then decided to allow Cindy to return. Rina worked out a scheme that she was going to discuss with Cindy to allow her more time with the children by freeing her from routine tasks such as doing the dishes. She believed that Cindy would accept her proposal.

With a twinkle in her eye, she told me that she keeps the presents donated to her own children at the end of the year until Christmas day.

*En wat ek doen? Ek's mos slim – hou al hulle presente en, op Kersdag, dan maak hulle dit oop. Want wat is Kersdag sonder 'n presentjie of iets? Verstaan jy? Dan hou hulle al hulle goed en dan maak hulle ál hulle presente oop.*

(And what I do? I'm smart – keep all their presents and, on Christmas day, then they open it. Because what is a Christmas without a little present or something? Do you understand? Then they keep all their things and then they open all their presents.)

Rina was proud of the plans her family made to have a comfortable life. They organised a bathroom, enlarged their house, and bought a gas stove for cooking. Her children were grateful that they had a mother who cared for and looked well after them.

- e. ***Net daai klein bietjie waardering is wat jy nodig het***  
(Just that small bit of appreciation is what you need)

Also, the children in the centre appreciated Rina, which gave her a sense of purpose. She remembered the letter she received from two little girls telling her that they loved her. These small gestures were, for her, an indication of appreciation. When, during the school holidays, children asked her when the centre was going to open again (as they wanted to go back to school), she felt valued. She proudly quoted parents who said that they were not going to bring their children back to the centre if she was no longer working there.

- f. ***Dit is rêrig... dit is so interessant***  
(It's really... it's so interesting)

Rina was enthusiastic about her classroom and teaching and proudly shared her ideas on the decorating of the class. When I asked if I could come for a field visit, she suggested that I come on a Thursday when she was alone with the children, without a volunteer, in her class. I could then observe her in action as she taught the children.

Rina was highly enthusiastic about a workshop for the parents of the settlement, which taught them how to handle their children according to their temperaments. She was also very positive about the presenter and indicated that she would attend again if she had the opportunity. The fact that she received an attendance certificate and meals all contributed to a highly positive experience. Rina felt that the parents needed guidance, as some children in the settlement were maltreated and neglected, but only a few parents attended.

- g.        *Maar, joe! Ek het daai kind jammer gekry daai dag***  
(But, wow! I felt sorry for that child that day)

The neglect and abuse of the children upset Rina deeply as she was emotionally involved with the children and cared for them. She was highly upset about an incident in which a parent came to the centre to hit a child who had brought a cell phone to the centre. Rina was sure that welfare services would have removed the child if they had seen the beating. Yet, she did not intervene or talk to the mother but tried to solve the problem by looking for the phone. Afterwards, Rina encouraged the abused girl to wear long sleeves to hide the marks on her arms.

Rina indicated that the difference between children that were well taken care of and neglected children was obvious. During field visits in the middle of the winter, I saw dirty-faced children running around barefoot or in socks early on icy mornings. Rina also faced other sad situations encountered in impoverished communities.

- h.        *Daai stuk kan ek nie hanteer nie***  
(That part I cannot handle)

Rina had to deal emotionally with a situation in which a mother handed three of her four children to the welfare as she could no longer take care of them. For Rina, it was traumatic when one of the siblings, a toddler, clung to her, crying, when the welfare workers came to fetch her. Rina interpreted this as a plea to help her and not to give her to the welfare workers. The baby sister of this little girl also passed away later. Being a mother herself, Rina empathised with the mother of these children. As she was particularly fond of the little girl, she experienced a personal loss. As this community was close-knit, residents shared in each other's sorrow and losses.

- i.        *Een big happy family***  
(One big happy family)

Rina socialised well with the other residents. She felt that they were one big family supporting each other and she called this support "amazing". A strong sense of

cohesion existed among the residents and they stood together when there was trouble. She explained how all the attendees at a parent workshop presented in Afrikaans joined in to explain and translate proceedings to an Indian mother who did not speak Afrikaans.

She remembered an incident in which a young man was chased from the settlement by the other male residents after he had beaten his girlfriend. She also talked about support given to families in the event of their losing loved ones. Rina did not only encounter parents who neglected their children; she also had contact with very good parents. I observed a friendly relationship between her and the parents and grandparents arriving with their children at the centre. In spite of the hardship of the settlement, Rina felt that she was part of the community and appreciated by the children and their parents. She believed that God had sent her and her family to the settlement for a reason.

**j. Die Here werk so met ons**

(The Lord works this way with us)

As in the case of Thea, Rina's faith determined her fate and the Bible provided her and her family with answers regarding their life and future. "*Maar, andersins, alles is in die Here se hande, ek glo*" (But, otherwise, everything is in the Lord's hands, I believe). The day Rina and her family had to move to the settlement, her eldest son was at a Christian camp where he received a T-shirt with a Bible verse printed on it. For Rina, this was a sign that God had a plan for them and was intentionally sending them to the settlement. When she felt desperate and did not have answers, she turned to God, indicating that God would not forsake her.

*Maar... my gebede sal verhoor word. Ek glo daaraan... By God is niks onmoontlik nie, Hy sal vir my die uitweg wys.*

(But... my prayers will be answered. I believe that... With God nothing is impossible, He will show me the way).

However, although Rina believed that her God-given purpose was to live in the settlement so that she could work at the ECD centre, she also became despondent and tired.

**k. *Ek is regtig moedeloos, die Vader weet***

(I feel really despondent, the Lord knows)

Rina felt very downhearted when the manager told Cindy not to come back to the settlement. She did not know how to cope alone and was also dependent on Cindy to organise donations and pay for her internet access. It seemed that she also depended on Cindy to get a sponsor for her son's rugby tour.

During another field visit, Rina indicated that she was very tired and was going to hand the keys of the centre back to Hein. This reminded me of Thea, who also indicated exhaustion and, as in the case of Thea, it was an emotional kind of weariness. She complained about the unfair treatment she received from the manager.

During a follow-up interview, it emerged that the problem seemed to have been resolved. Rina accepted that all jobs have difficulties and that one cannot get a job without problems.

**l. *Ek sal dit waardeer as ek kan opleiding kry***

(I shall appreciate it if I can get training)

After her classroom had been renovated, Rina was very positive about her work and said that she would welcome training with open arms. However, later on, she indicated that she would rather work for her husband once his business had been established. The fact that training had been offered to her a few times but never materialised might have influenced this decision. Nevertheless, she had a keen interest in knowing more about the education of children and was very positive about the workshop at the settlement. As the course was more geared towards younger

children, Rina asked the presenter for a follow-up workshop for parents of teenagers as one of her sons was already a teenager

**m. ... Moenie my insleep nie; dit het niks met my te doen nie**

(... Don't involve me; it has nothing to do with me)

Although Rina came across as a gentle woman, she could also stand her ground, as she did, for example, when Hein expected her to inform Cindy about her dismissal. She indicated her focus: "*Ek is lief vir die kinders and that's it.*" (I love the children and that's it.) Rina openly showed her disapproval when Cindy expected her group to play in the rain. She expressed her disgust with a pastor visiting the settlement, saying that he was on the sly telling tattletales. When Hein expected her to also take care of the aftercare, she refused.

**n. Nou, wanneer het Zian gesê kom hy weer hiernatoe?**

(Now, when did Zian say that he is coming here again?)

Rina's total dependence on volunteers to support her family's needs became clear. She talked about the predicament she was in as Cindy was not available anymore to help her in terms of sponsorships. She then asked me if I had heard from Zian, another volunteer from outside supporting the settlement. Although she made no direct link between Cindy and Zian, she was probably looking for another option in terms of support.

#### **5.4.4.2 Experiences concerning support**

My field notes paint the ECD centre as a hive of activity, with volunteers, donors, and deliveries of donations coming and going all the time. Both Rina and Cindy expressed their appreciation for the support of the volunteers, calling the volunteers "a blessing". None of the volunteers were ECD practitioners. However, one of the volunteers with a Master's degree in Linguistics owned an ECD centre. She offered to train Rina's assistant Petro, a young girl of 17 with Grade-nine-level education. During a subsequent visit, Petro indicated that the volunteer treated her to a meal in a

restaurant but did not take her to her centre to observe other practitioners as promised.

Rina enjoyed the encouragement they received from the volunteers – from compliments and a personal friendship with one of the volunteers to financial support. Volunteers arranged to fix anything broken at the centre and install amenities like a basin with water for washing the school's dishes. Expectations of and orders from the volunteers, however, were less welcome. Both Rina and Petro became highly upset when volunteers complained about dirty eating tables or unhygienic face cloths.

**a. *It is a very difficult environment – different and the laziness***

Whereas Cindy came in daily to work as the practitioner for the older group, the other volunteers only had supportive roles. Cindy seemed to play a pivotal role in organising donations, the parent workshop, and psychotherapy for one of the children. She gave Rina advice on how to handle parents, sponsored her internet access, and arranged for a donation for Rina as a small salary. She further took responsibility for the safety of the playground and general organisation of the centre, dealing with outsiders who used a small room of the centre as storage. She also brought a worker in to clean the centre's furniture.

Being a practitioner in the settlement herself, she understood the children, their parents, and practitioners of the settlement. For Cindy, it was difficult to teach a child who was unhappy and depressed as she did not know what had happened the night before. Some children had emotional issues that could not be dealt with. Parents were ignorant about how to deal with their children's problems but did not have the financial means or resources to get help.

Cindy felt that the parents needed ongoing support and help and not only a single workshop. She experienced her colleagues (Rina and Petro) as lazy and unmotivated and identified the theft of money by a resident who used to work at the centre previously as a hazard. She realised that she had to lower her expectations for her colleagues and called their attitude "borderline laziness".

**b. *Ek weet hoe dit werk; ek weet wat om te doen***

(I know how it works; I know what to do)

Rina indicated that, while she and Cindy worked well together, Cindy was not always fair to the children. She further felt that Cindy gave some residents preferential treatment. To me, as an outsider it was difficult to understand why Cindy was told by the manager not to return to the centre. It seemed that Cindy organised a donation of several old television sets to the settlement and promised one to a resident. Apparently, this upset the sensitive balance in the community as this was seen as preferential treatment. Rina felt that both Hein and Cindy were wrong and that she understood the complexities of the camp politics after four years in the community. “*Ek weet hoe dit werk; ek weet wat om te doen*” (I know how it works; I know what to do).

**c. *Oegg... wase mense kry jy om hier te werk?***

(Gee... what kind of people will you get to work here?)

It seemed that using residents from the community to work in the centre was a problem. Rina sensed that she could not find a suitable replacement for Cindy among the residents when Cindy was asked to leave. She also felt that her assistant, Petro had a bad attitude and that she had to do Petro’s work. During a later visit after I had finished the research at the settlement, I heard that Petro had left the centre.

**d. *Dié wat nie luister nie gaan nie chips kry nie***

(Those who do not listen are not going to get chips)

Volunteers came in clusters of three or four – different groups for the different days of the week. A qualified teacher from a private primary school took the children to her school on Fridays to do movement activities on the rugby field. The activities were age-appropriate and lots of encouragement was given to the children. Another volunteer came on a Wednesday to present a music lesson – also an appropriate lesson in which the children actively participated and from which they benefitted.

A whole group of volunteers (none of whom were qualified ECD practitioners) were actively involved in feeding children and reading to them. One organised the delivery of food for lunch every day. Another volunteer was a social worker who indicated that she only helped at the centre doing perceptual work with the two-to-three-year-olds. She explained that they taught the children the circle shape and colour red for two weeks and the following two weeks they taught the children the square shape and the colour blue.

After this perceptual activity, the young children had to watch a DVD about Moses and the Ten Commandments from the volunteer's laptop. She warned the children that if they did not listen, she would not give them chips. Although the children did not walk around, they were restless, talking to each other and not really watching the DVD. This was an example of well-meaning volunteers who did not have specialised training in ECD. Hence, the children were not offered age-appropriate activities and disciplinary measures were also inappropriate.

#### **5.4.4.3 Camp leadership experiences**

The self-appointed camp manager had absolute authority over the camp, especially in terms of donations being delivered. He furthermore decided who was hired, who was fired, and who had to do which jobs at the camp.

- a. *Maar ek sal hulle nooit in die steek laat nie***  
(But I shall never let them down)

Rina complained that Hein, the camp manager, caused her extreme distress when he asked Cindy to leave. However, she then added that, in spite of this, she was totally loyal to Hein and his wife as they had given her and her family a roof over their heads when they were down and out.

Hein also decided which donations to receive and which to reject. I was told by Hein himself and others how he chased a group of bikers who had arrived with donations

off the premises. The bikers started lecturing to the residents about the fact that the residents should work and Hein felt that this was humiliating the residents.

**b. *Die kinders kom altyd eerste***

(The children always come first)

Rina gave an elaborate explanation on how much Hein and his wife loved the children of the community. They justified their position by claiming that they were managing the community for the sake of the children and not for the adults. Rina was adamant that Hein would not tolerate any molestation of children in the community. Hein and his wife clearly understood that the ECD centre and the children in the community were a source of income for the settlement.

**c. *Drie dae agtermekaar wat ek uitgevloek word – onnodig***

(Three days in a row, I was sworn at – unnecessarily)

Hein was the undisputed head of the settlement, regardless of how he got this position. He had the authority to hire and fire, and to reprimand, swear and shout at residents. Rina reported how Hein verbally abused her for three days about a situation that was none of her doing. My field notes describe Rina as tired and despondent. She felt that she was always the scapegoat when there was trouble.

#### **5.4.4.4 *Experiences regarding outside response***

The total dependence of this settlement on donations was evident. Looking past the want in the settlement, the other most obvious feature of the settlement was the abundant amount of donations being delivered at the centre, from where it was distributed.

**a. Oe, ons kry te veel**  
(Oh boy, we get too much)

Various organisations, groups and individuals delivered a wide variety of goods – including food, clothes, toys, blankets and old television sets – to the settlement. The donors included a well-known auditors firm, the Johannesburg Mini City Council, the Feed-a-Child organisation, a group of bikers, well-known singers, a pharmaceutical company, a pharmacy, and various church groups. Rina actually indicated that they received too much and that the visits could be overwhelming. On special days, such as on Christmas and Mandela Day, donations were copious. During the month of October, a well-known auditors firm asked the children of the community to make a wish list of what they wanted for Christmas and the children really did receive what they requested.

The centre could provide for most of the children's nutritional needs during the school day. Rina felt at ease that the children went home after lunch well fed and they also received a vitamin pill daily. Children received treats such as cupcakes, sweets, biscuits, hot chocolate, and Coca-Cola. Sometimes, these treats were given at the expense of healthy food – for example, at snack time during a school day or before breakfast. However, in spite of the fact that the settlement received an abundant amount of donations, donations were also unreliable.

**b. ... sy kan nie kos maak as daar niks inkom nie**  
(... she cannot cook if no food comes in)

Rina spoke about meals prepared by the camp manager's wife and her helpers for the residents from donated meat and vegetables. She revealed that the meals could not be prepared if no ingredients were donated. She quoted promises of bread and food that were not honoured. The commitments made to Rina in terms of training were another example of broken promises.

Furthermore, Rina's husband believed he was going to be offered a big contract washing trucks at a nearby factory. Rina even started planning to resign from her job

at the centre to do the administration of her husband's business. Once again, nothing came of these prospects.

**c. *Ja, so werk dit maar – aan en af***

(Yes, that's the way it works – on and off)

Rina had no say in many aspects of her life. In resignation, Rina accepted this insecurity. Rina and her colleagues had to accept visitors and donors to the centre whenever they paid a visit, which was sometimes very disruptive. With Mandela Day approaching, Rina indicated that, for a whole week, people were going to visit the centre. She foresaw a hectic time but concluded that they would survive it. In spite of the abundant amount of donations that the residents received, they also experienced tough times when their needs were not met. The residents never knew what they were going to receive. They understood that the do-gooders delivered whatever they had received from other donors. Rina indicated that the residents really appreciated whatever they received, never asking for anything else.

## **5.5 TWO DIFFERENT WOMEN AND TWO DIFFERENT LIVES – A COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE**

Thea and Rina came from two very different backgrounds. On the one hand, Thea was an unmarried graduate in her early forties who chose to work in an impoverished marginalised community. She believed that her work was a calling from God. On the other hand, Rina was a married woman with four children and a matric certificate. Rina did not land in the settlement out of her own choice but, rather, because of misfortune. Although she protested to life in the settlement in the beginning, she learnt to accept her fate. However, she still wished to move out of the settlement and live in a house. Her biggest concern was regarding the impact on her children of growing up in the settlement. She felt that it was not her children's fault, but that of her and her husband, that they landed up in the settlement. Rina also believed God had a purpose with her working in the ECD centre. She assumed that they were still in the settlement because they had not, as yet, served their God-given purpose.

Not just their diverse backgrounds but also their different temperaments created the unique ways in which Thea and Rina experienced their lives and work in the settlement. The centre gave Thea a purpose in life and essentially became “the child” she never had. She talked about “raising the centre for two years” and then she had to give the centre away to someone who did not care for it. This sense of loss was especially painful to Thea as she had a similar experience a few years earlier with her sister’s children when she had to leave them. Thea also called these children “her life”, which she had to leave behind. She took her position as principal seriously, trying to gain professional knowledge and regretting not having experience. She was serious and intense not only about her work but also in her personal relations with others.

She often talked about the bad relationship she had with all members of her family when I visited her after she had left the settlement. She was quite outspoken about the character and lifestyle of the residents and the colleagues with whom she did not agree. She clearly indicated that she wanted to be left alone and that her colleagues should focus on their work and not seek her favour. She also admitted her own stubbornness. When her relationship with Mia turned sour, she accused Mia of many wrongs. These vices included Mia making the wrong decisions, not having any standards, and discriminating against and not trusting her. She believed that Mia’s involvement with the centre was based on ulterior motives. Moreover, she was suspicious of her colleagues, believing them to be informants for Mia. Her aggression towards others was often expressed in crude language.

Rina had a close relationship with the members of the community, likening it to a family. She felt that the residents would be very unhappy if she would move from the settlement one day. While she was highly upset when the manager treated her badly, she also declared her absolute loyalty to him and his wife. Afterwards, she expressed her belief that, in any work situation, one would encounter problems and she therefore accepted what had happened. She emphasised that the manager and his wife were very good to the children of the community.

Rina was very positive about the involvement of the volunteers. Although I hinted that she could do the same activities with the children if she had received training, she was adamant that the volunteers should stay involved in the centre.

Thea, by contrast, had sound theoretical knowledge about ECD education. She not only studied psychology during her undergraduate years but also read extensively on all matters relating to ECD. Thus, she sensed that the formal activities presented to the children were not developmentally appropriate and this left her highly frustrated. She indicated that she found playing with the children much more satisfying and that the children also preferred free play.

Both Thea and Rina deeply loved the children they worked with and were affectionate towards them. Stimulating the children in their care was also important to both of them. Thea and Rina were sensitive to the needs of the children and the unique challenges of children growing up in these settlements. Both of them indicated the need to learn more and know more about their work. They believed that they made a difference in the children's lives, while the work gave them a sense of purpose. Hence, they thrived on the recognition they receive from the children as well as their parents. Neither Thea nor Rina received much in terms of remuneration but neither ever expressed the need for a bigger salary.

## **5.6 SUMMARY**

The experiences of Thea and Rina, the two practitioners working in two different impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities, were discussed in Chapter 5. Although their experiences were rife with challenges, they also found satisfaction and a sense of purpose in their work. Their love for the children in their care was evident and they enjoyed their work. Nonetheless, challenges in their personal lives in the settlement had an impact on their work. Thea lost her work as practitioner and head of the centre. Rina dreamed of leaving the settlement for a better life outside for herself and her children.

In Chapter 6, I analyse the data obtained from, (firstly) the interviews with the two participants, (secondly) field notes made during field visits, and (thirdly) photographs and other artefacts. I also substantiate, refute and/or add to my findings by invoking relevant literature. I identify the main themes that I have constructed from the coded data and then frame these dominant themes within Ecological Systems Theory.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 5, the experiences of the participants, Thea and Rina, were interpreted and organised within the three-dimensional narrative space, as propounded by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). In order to analyse and discuss the participants' experiences, I identified and constructed the dominant themes from interviews with the practitioners regarding their experiences. These themes were based upon an iterative coding process using eclectic coding, as defined by Saldaña (2013: 262). Of the 32 coding methods discussed by Saldaña (2013), seven were used to code interviews and conversations with participants, field notes made during field visits, and photographs of the sites, activities and artefacts related to the practitioners' experiences. These coding methods include versus coding, sub-coding, descriptive coding, in vivo coding, values coding, emotion coding, and process coding. I clustered 147 codes into 13 categories, which were then reorganised into four themes. The themes comprised (firstly) the practitioners' social and personal experiences, (secondly) their experiences regarding place, (thirdly) their experiences with camp leadership, and (fourthly) their experiences about the role of support infrastructure.

Based on the Clandinin and Connelly analysis, I theorised these four themes, framed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The four themes correlate closely with the three-dimensional narrative space. The themes of the practitioners' experiences in the social and personal spheres, regarding camp leadership, and of the role of support infrastructure all correlate with the social and personal dimension. The theme of experiences regarding place corresponds with place as a dimension. Furthermore, all these experiences discussed in the four themes took place within a time frame – they originated in the past and had an impact on the practitioners' futures, which corresponds with time as a dimension in the three-dimensional narrative space.

I invoked the literature relevant to the experiences of the practitioners to support, add to or refute my findings. The practitioners' discussions of their experiences dealt mainly with their daily work with the children and their relationships with colleagues and volunteers involved at the centre. They also talked about the support they received from these volunteers and the joys and struggles in their personal lives. Their lives and work played out in distinctive communities, rendering the study context-specific. Therefore, the findings of this inquiry may only be transferred to similar contexts and do not have generalizable qualities. In fact, if my research were to be repeated in other impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities or at another time in the participants' lives, different themes may have emerged. In addition, Ecological Systems Theory provided a useful theoretical framework for understanding how experiences were shaped, not only by the immediate environments but also by more indirect influences. To this end, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory offers a suitable lens through which to theorise the four themes.

## **6.2 ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK**

Bronfenbrenner depicts the individual's ecological environment in terms of a set of interrelated system levels (the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-systems) in his classic work, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (1979). He added the chronosystem because events that influence people's development and experiences take place within a historical context and sequence (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: 83).

### **6.2.1 The Microsystem**

Bronfenbrenner (1979: 22) defines the microsystem as:

*[A] pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced over time by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics.*

The setting, according to this theory, is the place – for example, the home or ECD centre in which people are closely involved in direct reciprocal interaction (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983: 380). Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (ibid.) further identify the activities, roles, interpersonal relations and material characteristics as building blocks of the microsystem. These building blocks or elements of the microsystem closely correlate with the social and personal dimension as well as with place as a dimension of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

If one links the ecological systems paradigm with the emerging themes of this study, it becomes evident that various microsystems were at play in Rina and Thea's experiences. These include the young children with whom the two practitioners worked on a daily basis; their colleagues, with whom they also interacted on a daily basis; the volunteers who established and maintained the centres and who also worked as either practitioners or assisted the practitioners in their work; the camp manager/owner who was, in effect, the employer who determined the practitioners' workloads and could dismiss them; and the practitioners' families (or lack thereof), who motivated them to stay (in Thea's case) or move to better conditions (in Rina's case).

### **6.2.2 The Mesosystem**

The mesosystem includes the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person; for example, events at home can influence a child's learning at school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25).

A link can be made between the mesosystem and the emerging themes. One can identify several mesosystems– for example, the relationships between volunteers and camp leadership; the relationships between the volunteers and the children; the connections between the participants' families and the volunteers; the links between camp leadership and the volunteers; the links between camp leadership and the children at the centre; and the connections between children and other practitioners (the participants' colleagues) – that had an influence on the participants' experiences.

### **6.2.3 The Exosystem**

The exosystem includes the linkages and processes that take place between two or more settings, including at least one setting that does not contain the developing person. However, processes in this setting have an indirect influence on processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 1645).

The exosystem of the practitioner becomes visible when one considers the effect of parents on their children. Children come to school with a host of problems often caused by circumstances at home. The parents' influence on the practitioners, albeit indirect, was thus evident.

The links between the volunteers and the sponsors/donors also had an influence on the practitioners' work as the ECD centre was fully dependent on donations to keep its doors open. The relationship between the camp leader and the sponsors/donors was another indirect influence on the practitioners as the camp leader had the authority to accept or reject and decide how to distribute donations.

### **6.2.4 The Macrosystem**

The macrosystem, as the overarching ring of the ecological environment, is comprised of the belief systems, customs, lifestyles, hazards, life-course options, and material resources of a particular culture or sub-culture that have an influence on the nature of interaction within all the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 1645; Lerner, 2005: xiv). With reference to this study, the macrosystem comprised of the deprived lifestyle of the residents suffering from the social woes that usually accompany poverty, as indicated in poverty literature. This, in turn, typically had an influence on the residents' parenting skills, which affected the development of their children. The participant practitioners and their colleagues as well as the camp leaders were also subject to economic hardship, which affected their health and emotional well-being. Finding work was difficult for the residents due to there being fewer employment opportunities than job seekers and also as a result of affirmative

action policies. Within this framework, the volunteers found sponsors and donors who were sympathetic to the plight of the poor white person and supported the children, centre, and community members. Both participants were religious, believing that their work was a calling.

### **6.2.5 The Chronosystem**

In 1984, Bronfenbrenner (1986a: 292) coined the term “chronosystem” to examine the influence of change over time on a person’s development. This notion takes into account changes that take place in both the person and his or her environment – for example, changes in socioeconomic status, family structure, or place of residence. These life transitions can be normative (for example, entering school) or non-normative (for example, becoming disabled) (Bronfenbrenner, 1986b: 292; Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 1646). The chronosystem correlates with temporality as the third dimension in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

Both Thea and Rina lived other lives before moving to their respective settlements. Their pasts influenced how they conducted their work and how they related to the other residents. Eventually, both had to move out of the settlements. Whilst Rina kept on working as a practitioner in an informal settlement, Thea became too sick to work, which she blamed on the stress she experienced at the settlement.

Although Ecological Systems Theory describes the influence of the above-mentioned contexts on human development, this theory also acknowledges that the developing person is not a passive recipient of contextual influences. Indeed, this theory regards people as agents, actively contributing to their own development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: 121). For example, personal characteristics have an influence on the person’s response to her environment. Bronfenbrenner uses the example of the pleasant infant eliciting positive emotions and affection from its caregivers – a response which, in turn, facilitates positive emotional development in the infant. Bronfenbrenner contrasts this with the experiences of the difficult infant, which may discourage positive interaction with the caregiver. In summary, the individual, as an active agent with his or her genetically determined capacity and personality selects, creates and

reconstructs the environment in which he or she develops. However, this is only possible to the extent that the individual is allowed and enabled by the environment to do so. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner (ibid: 144) declares that “there is no one without the other”. Rina and Thea’s unique characteristics and backgrounds contributed to their different experiences. Whereas Thea stayed an outsider who had serious clashes with her colleagues and the volunteers supporting the centre, Rina regarded the residents as one big family. Thea had a professional approach to her work, focusing on developing the whole child (including their academic skills), whereas Rina on the other hand focused mostly on caregiving.

In Figure 3 overleaf, Ecological Systems Theory is depicted graphically to illustrate the proximal as well as distal influences on the experiences of the practitioners who were participants in this study.

### **6.3 THE FOUR DOMINANT THEMES**

The four dominant themes that emerged during the study include social and personal experiences, experiences concerning place, experiences with camp leadership, and experiences concerning support infrastructure. These four themes are unpacked below and then framed within Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory.

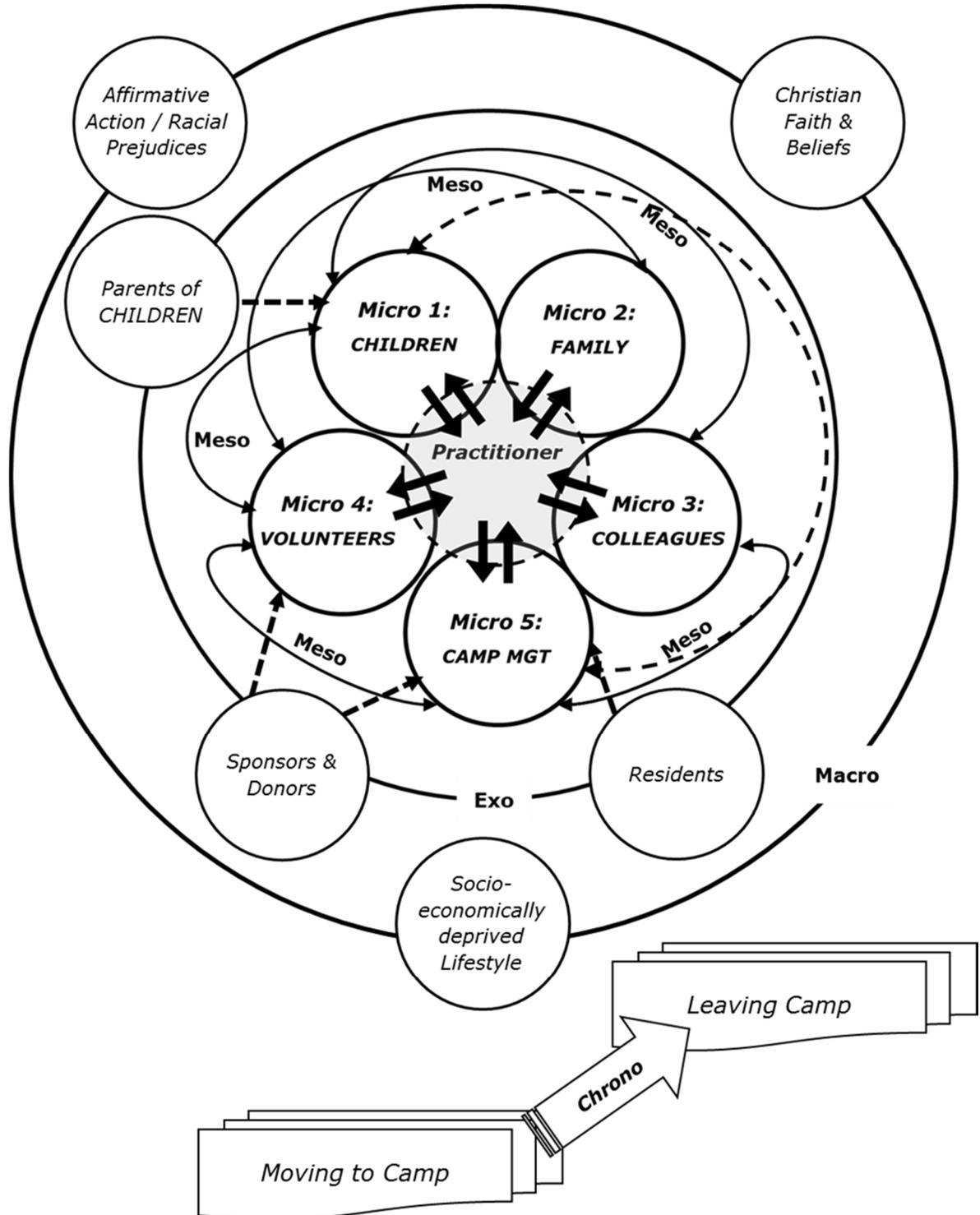
#### **6.3.1 Social and personal experiences**

The two settlements where Thea and Rina worked were different but also, in many ways, similar. Both communities consisted of impoverished white\* people who were pushed to the fringes of society due to socioeconomic misfortune. These residents generally did not have the financial or emotional capacity and social support to start afresh and create a more dignified existence for themselves and their families. Housing in both settlements was substandard and not conducive to healthy family life and the optimal development of children. Poverty and the accompanying sense of hopelessness typically had an effect on parents’ capacity for positive parenting. This,

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\* The majority in Rina’s community and everybody in Thea’s community.

in turn, had an effect on the well-being of the children in the community. As a result, infant morbidity and mortality were part of the residents' lives.



**Figure 3: The Findings of this Study contextualised in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Knafo, 2016)**

Thea and Rina remembered the deaths of a baby and a toddler at their respective settlements. From all the photographs Thea took of the little boy, who passed away, it was clear that she was particularly fond of him. Whenever I paid a field visit to Rina's ECD centre, parents dropping off their children told me about the arrival of new-born babies as well as about babies being hospitalised.

Despite these similarities, however, the experiences of Thea and Rina regarding their work and their respective settlements were very different. Thea, an educated woman (although not in early childhood development), came from outside the settlement and chose to work in this community. Therefore, she viewed the community more objectively and with a certain professional insight. However, her judgement was tainted at times probably due to her own emotional struggles and problematic background.

Rina, who previously held a good administrative position at a local service provider, arrived at the settlement when her husband lost his job. During my visits to Rina's settlement, I observed (and describe in my field notes) many of the social woes usually associated with people in poverty. I also read numerous local and international newspaper reports about this settlement, as it was regarded as a typical example of a white informal settlement. The misery of these unfortunate people was richly described and visually demonstrated with photographs of distressed people and neglected children. Yet, Rina had neither the professional knowledge nor the objectivity to properly perceive these unfavourable conditions and issues regarding the residents and their children. Still, she desperately wanted to move away from this negative physical environment.

#### **6.3.1.1 *Child maltreatment***

Child maltreatment is defined by the World Health Organisation and the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect as including all forms of physical and emotional abuse or ill-treatment and sexual abuse and/or commercial or other forms of exploitation of children as well as neglect – all of which result in actual or potential harm to the child's health and well-being (Butchart, Harvey, Mian & Fürniss,

2006: 9). Both Thea and Rina worked in environments where they experienced maltreatment (including neglect and abuse) of children. Although child abuse and harsh parenting behaviour is found in families from all socioeconomic backgrounds, most reported cases of abuse come from families where poverty and unemployment are issues (Henschel, de Bruin & Möhler, 2014: 825; Klein, 2011: 302; Aron, McCrowell, Moon, Yamano, Roark, Simmons, Tatanashvili & Drake, 2010: 170;). Other risk factors for the occurrence of child abuse are maternal depression, domestic violence, and parental drug abuse. These risk factors are often concomitant with poverty (Henschel et al., 2014: 825; Klein, 2011: 302; Jensen, 2009: 24-25; Conger & Conger, 2008: 64; Mustard, 2007: 46; Ryan et al., 2006: 329; Stanton-Chapman et al., 2004: 227; Shore, 1997: 48). Moreover, social context plays a role in maltreatment as social isolation is a frequent characteristic of families with maltreated children (Martin et al., 2012: 921.)

However, social support has a moderating effect on parent depression, thereby reducing child maltreatment (Martin et al., 2012: 934). The report, *Gesigte van Afrikanerarmoede* (Solidarity Helping Hand, 2010: 6), quotes a social worker who suspected that many children in white informal settlements are regularly raped, molested and physically abused, or sexually abused as a source of income with no access to social support.

It seems that the cumbersome burden of caring for younger children further contributes to their abuse, as a higher rate of child abuse was reported for the age group zero to four compared to the age group four to 17 (Klein, 2011: 301). Thea observed that the stress of caring for demanding young children – and their father's reaction to these demands – were probably the reason why the mother of two young boys in Thea's centre dosed her children with pain medication to keep them quiet and sleeping so as not to trigger their father's anger by crying.

In other words, the different contexts within the ecological system of the child all contain risk factors for child maltreatment, as confirmed by both the World Health Organisation and the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (Butchart et al., 2006: 13). These include the individual characteristics of children and

parents (for example, age, sex and temperament) as well as the relationship between parents and children, the community (such as the neighbourhood, the school or ECD centre); and societal factors as macrosystem (for example, social norms that encourage harsh physical punishment of children, economic disadvantage, and the absence of social welfare safety nets).

Nevertheless, Thea and Rina responded differently to maltreatment. Although Rina found the severe beating of a child by the mother very upsetting, she neither reported the case nor spoke to the parent about it. She merely observed that, if welfare authorities had been present, the child would have been removed. Thea also did not want to take action when asked by a medical doctor to write reports about children who might need counselling (children exhibiting problematic behaviour due to maltreatment) as it could lead to parents rejecting her. Still, when she observed blatant child abuse when a child was burnt by a practitioner's cigarette, Thea was desperate to take action. She took photographs of the wound and wanted to write a report on the incident but the camp's office refused to print the report. Thea received no support from either camp management or the volunteers supporting the centre in this regard. In fact, she lost her job due to her eagerness to report the incident.

Klein (2011: 308) suggests that ECD centres have a surveillance role, as they are mandated to report suspected abuse and neglect. Indeed, in South Africa, anyone – for example, practitioners – responsible for the well-being and care of children are legally bound to report suspected child abuse, according to The Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005).

However, the centres where Thea and Rina worked were either oblivious to this legal responsibility or, more likely, preferred to ignore it. The threat of welfare officials removing children once abuse or neglect had been reported was always hovering over the community. Thea explained that camp management and Mia, the volunteer, did not want her to write reports about the children's well-being as this might lead to children being removed and the community then forfeiting donations made to the centre.

Thea understood the complexities of life in an impoverished settlement. Although she suggested that a social worker could be trained to work in the centre, she felt that this could only cause problems, as the social worker would want to remove the children from this community. The fear of having their children removed made parents resort to unacceptable practices – also the reason the mother gave Mia as to why she was drugging her children. The mother wanted to calm the children down so that they would not anger the father, who would respond with aggression. Thea recommended that a social worker involved with the community should first observe and develop an understanding of the situation before acting. Parents' fear of losing their children to the welfare was also experienced by grandparents in the research done by Maarman (2009: 327). These grandparents raised their grandchildren once the parents had died of AIDS. As some of these children did not have birth certificates, grandparents were hesitant to apply for the certificates as they feared that welfare services might find them unfit to look after the children and then place the children in a state orphanage. This also had a negative effect on the children's well-being as they did not receive the child grants to which they were entitled. Rina did not demonstrate a similar sophisticated understanding of the situation. However, she was highly compassionate towards the mother who had her children removed by welfare services: "*Jy weet hoe moet daai ma voel; Jy is self 'n ma met jou eie kinders*" (You know how that mother must have felt; you are also a mother with children of your own). Still, the problem of child abuse in these communities cannot be ignored.

Jensen (2009: 25), a prominent researcher on educational neuroscience, explains the effect of abuse on the developing brain's ability to remember as well as the effect thereof on the socio-emotional development of the child. Henschel et al. (2014: 825) also indicate that child abuse alters the functioning of the limbic system, which, in turn, has an effect on impulse control and motor, cognitive, language and psychosocial skills. Furthermore, child abuse frequently has the tendency to repeat itself in generations to come – what Henschel et al. (2014: 825) refer to as the "intergenerational cycle of child abuse".

Therefore, it is imperative to address this social woe decisively through, for example, the services of an ECD centre. Klein (2011: 301) suggests that an ECD centre in the

community can offer parents relief from the difficult task of caring full-time for a young child. Thea understood this function of an ECD centre. Therefore, she suggested that, since many mothers in the community were depressed, the owner should reconsider his suggestion that mothers should look after their own children without the assistance of the centre.

Klein (2011: 301) further believes that children's socio-emotional and cognitive skills are developed at school and that children, therefore, exhibit less challenging behaviours at home. The love and affection that both Rina and Thea expressed towards the children most probably had a positive impact on the children in their care. During my field visits (as described in my field notes, in CD in back cover to dissertation) I observed pre-school children of different age-groups in both settings playing harmoniously together with minimum conflict amongst them. It would seem that the children had, indeed, learnt socio-emotional skills, as suggested by Klein.

Both ECD centres also supported the parents in various other ways. When a child had serious emotional problems, Cindy (the volunteer) made arrangements and sourced funding for the child to visit a therapist. Where children were neglected, the practitioners and volunteers supported their parents by, for example, bathing dirty children. Thea used to get up at night to medicate a coughing child when the parents ignored their sick child. Thea encouraged parents to fetch lunch for their children when she noticed that they did not feed them. She complained to camp management that the food prepared in the kitchen was not suitable for young children. Thea also potty-trained older children when the parents did not fulfil this responsibility. At Rina's centre, Cindy used to fetch a cooked lunch for the children of the community.

Children were maltreated not only by their parents but also at the hands of some practitioners at Thea's centre. Except for the incident of the child being burnt, Thea further complained about practitioners shouting and swearing at children. She complained about insensitive and unresponsive caregiving – practitioners not responding to the needs of crying toddlers, practitioners removing the plates of children while they were still busy eating. *"Hulle vra nie: 'wil jy nog hê?' Hulle is nie gepla oor daai sensitiwiteit: 'is hier iemand wat nog ietsie wil eet?'"* (They don't ask

‘do you want some more?’ They are not bothered about that sensitivity: ‘is there anyone here who wants to eat a bit more?’).

The low level of responsiveness of these practitioners towards children’s cues is identified by Landry et al. (2014: 527) as a common problem in ECD centres serving children from impoverished backgrounds. Parents complained that children who were previously fully potty-trained had responded to the insensitive and abusive caregiving of the practitioners who replaced Thea by soiling and wetting themselves.

In comparison, all the practitioners and volunteers at Rina’s centre were caring and loving towards the children. Yet, Rina sometimes complained about Cindy’s insensitive treatment of the children. Well-meaning volunteers often presented age-inappropriate activities and offered inappropriate guidance. Quality experiences were thus compromised by unskilled practitioners and volunteers. This supports the view of Landry et al. (2014: 527) that children from impoverished backgrounds spend many hours in low-quality childcare. The irony of this situation is that it is those very children who are growing up in poverty who need the best childcare to promote their development, as they receive limited stimulation at home due to a lack of resources and parental shortcomings (Landry et al., 2014: 527). The importance of a quality programme offered to children in poverty is underscored by research findings indicating that poor children benefit even more from quality care than their more affluent peers (Bennett et al., 2012: 31; Hopkin, Stokes & Wilkinson, 2009: 102; Jacob & Ludwig, 2009: 59). The Children’s Institute report *Situation Analysis of Children of South Africa* (2009: 52) emphasises the importance of the qualifications of ECD practitioners for the delivery of high-quality education and care. Unfortunately, Bray and Brandt (2007: 1) express their concern about the quality of childcare in South Africa, especially the care available to poor children, which places a question mark over the qualifications of ECD practitioners.

### **6.3.1.2 Malnutrition**

Children in the settlements investigated by this study also suffered from hunger and food insecurity. Thea mentioned that the children were always hungry in the

afternoons because the settlement's kitchen did not send them anything to eat during break at school and parents did not always fetch lunch from the kitchen for them. Although the ECD centre received snacks during snack time, Thea often felt that these snacks were not suitable for the children. She was saddened by the fact that two boys who had transferred from another settlement always cried when they saw food because they used to go hungry where they came from.

Food shortages and an irregular supply of food were big problems at the two settlements. At one stage, all the livestock at Thea's settlement had been eaten by the residents and all that management could do was to wait for donations to arrive. This meant that it was not possible to work on a budget, as donations were delivered at irregular intervals. Rina also referred to the erratic delivery of food donations and broken promises regarding a bread donation. Rina explained the situation:

*Jy kry kos, maar jy't daai dae wat jy rerig [niks kos het nie], wat die einde van die maand is of wat ookal. Dan is dit maar bietjie tough. Maar andersins is ons reg.*

(You receive food but you have those days when you really [have no food], when it is the end of the month or whatever. Then it is a bit tough. But otherwise we are fine.)

Neither Thea nor Rina ever complained about the quality of the food served to the children. Rina actually indicated that the food was of good quality, although I had my reservations. I was therefore relieved when Cindy, the volunteer at Rina's centre told the children that they were going to receive only fruit during snack time in future and not biscuits or soft drinks anymore. In my field notes I described how the children in Thea's class refused to eat a strange substance and Thea then removed the untouched plates without a fuss. She did, however, comment that the children usually ate well when the food was tasty. The unpredictable delivery of food donations as well as the quality of food the children received was cause for concern. Thea and Rina's experiences of food insecurity are confirmed by Wight et al. (2014: 12), who has found an association between poverty and food insecurity. Nonetheless Wight et

al. (ibid.) does not refer to the quality of food to which children have access. However, I observed large volumes of starch and fast food, with little protein and nutritional value, being given to children. I also wrote in my field notes about unappetising food being served to children in both Rina and Thea's centres. A convincing body of research (Jensen, 2009: 49 & 97) has proposed that nutrition plays a major role in various aspects of children's cognitive development, including IQ, memory and cognition, as well as behaviour and mood. Jensen (2009: 97) also points out that the problem is not so much the quantity of food that children from poor backgrounds receive but its quality. Further research should be done on children's access not only to food in general but also to high-quality nutritious food.

### **6.3.1.3 Parental neglect**

In both communities, parental neglect seems to have been a more common problem than physical or sexual abuse. My field notes on Rina's settlement painted a picture of unkempt, unwashed and barefoot children running around outside early on a winter's morning. Thea complained about foul-smelling children and a toddler who used to arrive at school with sour milk in his bottle. This supports the statistics quoted by Hearn (2011: 715) that indicates that neglect is the prevailing form of maltreatment. Rina was adamant that no sexual molestation of a child would be tolerated in her community. However, the NGO representative who introduced me to Rina and her community believes that the residents do not understand what molestation entails and regard only rape as molestation. Thea talked about the molestation of a child in her community but said it was covered up because the owner did not want to lose the perpetrator's monthly rent.

Thea explained that the children were neglected because their mothers spent their time and money on parties and socialising with men. De Witt's (2009: 327) definition of neglect, as "a caregiver's indifference to the child's basic needs", supports Thea's explanation of why mothers neglect their children. However, Hearn (2011: 715) argues that parents' potential to provide nurturing care can be impeded by poverty, and this then contributes to neglect. Factors associated with neglect and less positive parenting include substance abuse, mental illness, impaired coping skills, domestic

violence, low education levels, depressive symptoms, and low social support. Poverty, in turn, plays a key role in all of these factors contributing to neglect (Azzi-Lessing, 2010; Jensen, 2009: 9; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 56). Hearn (2011: 717) further suggests that parents in poverty are demoralised and have lost a sense of hope and control over their lives, which then increases the risk of neglect. Hearn's article (ibid.) is based on the premise that both poverty and neglect are complicated concepts and that the connection between these concepts is complex as well. This complex relationship has not as yet been researched in sufficient depth to allow for the establishment of effective interventions. The broader context affects the parent's ability to parent successfully and plays a role in abuse and neglect. De Witt (2009: 328) suggests that the child's ecological context – the microsystem (person factors), the exosystem (societal factors) and the macrosystem (factors about the broader culture) – should all be considered in order to address the problem of maltreatment. In other words, parental characteristics, which are often culturally influenced, play a fundamental role in the way parents treat their children.

Rina and Thea observed and talked about the above-mentioned parental characteristics, which hamper effective parenting in their respective communities. Thea better understood how these conditions affected the children. She was shocked, at times, by the parents' lack of basic knowledge and skills, realising that the parents did not have the intellectual capacity to help their children with their school work. She also noticed that the children's understanding and development were affected by their parents' lack of knowledge. Thea's insight that parents' intellectual capacity plays a role in their children's cognitive development is attested to by research done by Schady (2011: 2305-2306), Naudeau et al. (2011: 31) and the World Bank (2010: 12). These researchers found that the level of parents' education correlates positively with children's cognitive development. Because of her concern about all the children growing up without a father figure in their homes, Thea planned to appoint a young man as a practitioner in the ECD centre. In the two communities, single-parent families were the result of divorce, unmarried mothers, spousal deaths, and fathers in jail. A large body of research has shown that children growing up in single-parent households fare worse academically, socially and in terms of conduct and psychological adjustment than children growing up in households where parents are

happily married and live together (Roy & Raver, 2014: 392; Waldfogel et al., 2010: 87). Both Thea and Rina talked about social ills such as domestic violence, extra-marital affairs and murders, children being removed by the welfare, teenage pregnancies and molestation. For example, Petro, the seventeen-year-old assistant at the ECD centre, was the complainant in a molestation court case against the manager of a settlement where she used to live. Drug abuse was another problem in this community and Thea asked for guidance in terms of three siblings affected by their mother's heroin use during pregnancy. Rina and Thea's experiences regarding social and emotional problems and domestic violence within the families in their communities are substantiated by a wealth of poverty research (for example, Azzi-Lessing, 2010; Solidarity Helping Hand, 2010: 10; Jensen, 2009: 8-9, 24).

Moreover, parents' impulsive behaviour further contributed to their misery as they left the settlement on the spur of the moment, at the slightest provocation, only to end up begging on the streets. Another source of annoyance to Thea was the parents' irresponsibility in terms of their children's school attendance. She felt that they set a bad example for their children. She complained about children arriving at the centre at any time of the day or not at all. She explained that the children dictated to their parents when they wanted to come to school. "*Jou emosies en jou tantrums is belangriker as skoolroetine*" (Your emotions and your tantrums are more important than the school's routine).

She often spoke about the fluctuating number of children in her class, as families arrived at the settlement, only to leave again after a few months. Families not only left voluntarily but also were asked to leave the settlement when they could not afford to pay rent. This fear of eviction was always hovering over parents' heads – when their children were naughty or when they complained about a condition or some happening at the settlement. Family instability and chaos, as Thea experienced, are often associated with families from financially poor backgrounds (McCoy & Raver, 2014: 131; Porter & Edwards, 2014: 112; Brown et al., 2013: 444; Martin et al., 2012: 1247).

Rina, meanwhile, never complained about irregular school attendance or any aspect of family instability, although I observed children arriving or leaving at any time of the day. Furthermore, the programme, as presented by Rina and the volunteers who presented activities to the children, was unstructured. My field notes describe children participating when they felt like it and those who did not want to participate playing on the playground. In addition, during lunch time, I did not observe any handwashing routine – some children sat at tables to eat, others left with their parents with food in their hands. At one stage, Cindy, the volunteer practitioner, announced halfway through a meal that the children should say grace. Children seemed confused what to do as some of them were at that time running around with food in hand while others had already finished eating. I also observed a two-year-old leaving the premises alone, crossing the road that runs through the settlement. Landry et al. (2014: 528) confirm that unpredictable routines are a problem in many ECD centres serving the poor. Rina did not experience the mobility of families and unpredictability of school attendance as a problem, whereas Thea felt that it had a negative impact on her teaching, as well as on the children's development and progress.

#### **6.3.1.4 High mobility**

Thea's observation that the high mobility of parents had a negative effect on their children is supported by a large body of research that documented the harmful effects of household instability on children's behavioural, social and cognitive outcomes (Porter & Edwards, 2014: 112; Roy et al., 2014: 1894; McCoy & Raver, 2014: 131; Brown et al., 2013: 443; Martin et al., 2012: 1247; Jensen, 2009: 8 & 27;). In this regard, Thea referred to children in her group who could not perform age-appropriate tasks like counting, basic calculations, colour identification and balance activities because, even though they came from other informal settlements where they also attended pre-schools, there was no continuity in their learning.

Fortunately, she had an intuitive understanding to scaffold children's learning and, when they did master a task, she was beaming with pride. For instance, a five-year-old who spent only a few months in Thea's class suddenly understood basic maths concepts after months of struggling to grasp these concepts. Thea explained: "Sy kyk

so en sy kry daai 'Aha moment'." (She looked around and then she had that "Aha moment"). Although fully aware of the negative impact of residential mobility on children, she believed that she had made a difference in the development of their abilities: "*Dit moet êrens in sy lewe tog positief bly. Al gaan sy pa-hulle trek en hy val weer terug. Êrens het hy bietjie gevorder en dit bly daar.*" (It will stay positive somewhere in his life. Even if his father moves again and he regresses. Somewhere, he made a bit of progress and it will stay with him.)

Thea also spoke about the disruption caused to the group when children arrived at school late as well as by the coming and going of children as parents left the settlement. With reference to this tendency, Rumberger (in Porter & Edwards, 2014: 112) refers to the "chaos factor". This implies that a high level of school mobility among poor children affects not only the "mobile" children but also the other children in the group, as well as the teacher. For example, Thea remembered the concert for which her group had been practising for two months until their rendition of the material was excellent. On the day of the actual concert, however, she was left with almost no children. She said:

*Maar ja, toe het ek net weer besef jy kan nie eers 'n konsertjie deurvoer nie, want jy oefen vir twee maande aanmekaar vir 'n konsertjie en 'n week voor die tyd sit jy sonder kinders.*

(But yes, then I realised once again one cannot even carry through a concert, because you practise for two months non-stop for a concert and a week before the time you are stuck with no children)

In addition, Thea experienced high levels of frustration as she prepared a file for each child in her group for the following year. However, by that time most of the children had left the settlement and new ones, for whom she had to prepare new files, arrived. Another negative consequence of high mobility, as pointed out by Bray and Brandt (2007: 5), is that of disrupted caregiver-child relationships. Although Bray and Brandt (ibid.) focus on the relationship between the child and the primary caregiver, the practitioners in these two communities had close, supportive and loving relationships

with the children in their care. Rina rightly said that they gave the children love, which the children sometimes were not getting from their parents. The practitioners were thus sometimes emotionally closer to the children than their parents. This stable child-caregiver relationship contributed to the children's social, emotional and physical well-being (Bray & Brandt, 2007: 5).

Therefore, Thea and Mia tried, in various ways, to minimise the negative influence of school and household mobility on the development of the children in their care. These included plans to implement the same curriculum in the different ECD centres in the informal settlements in the area to ensure some continuity in the children's learning experience as parents tend to move from settlement to settlement. Unfortunately, this incentive also did not materialise. In fact, the last time I saw the representative from the NGO Organisation D who supported the centre with Mia, I was informed that the owner had asked all outside involvement to withdraw from the settlement as the settlement had indicated that it could run the centre itself according to its residents' religious principles. So Mia no longer has an influence on even the one centre she once served.

Thea also sensed that high mobility had a negative influence on school readiness. Her view is supported by the findings of a number of studies suggesting a direct relationship between household chaos and aspects of children's self-regulation, which, in turn, plays an important role in school readiness (McCoy & Raver, 2014; Brown et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2012). Inhibitory control is defined as the ability to suppress automatic impulses and responses in favour of alternative, less salient responses to achieve a goal – for example, delayed gratification (Brown et al., 2013: 443; Martin et al., 2012: 1252). Inhibitory control develops rapidly before formal school entry and plays a role in the young child's approach to cognitive tasks, mathematics and literacy skills, emotion regulation, and social functioning (Brown et al., 2013: 443). Brown et al. (2013: 445) explain the effect of stress due to chaos and household instability on inhibitory control through the impact on children's allostatic load – what Jensen (2009: 26) describes as “carryover” stress. This implies that the child's brain does not return to a baseline of homeostasis but becomes either hyper-responsive or hypo-responsive. McCoy and Raver (2014: 132) posit that stress due

to unsafe or unpredictable environments results in less neural activity in those brain regions responsible for self-regulation. For example, Thea described the “non-regulated” behaviour of one of the children in her group:

*Chrystal is soos 'n wilde perd, jy weet. Sy hoor jou nie, want sy is so besig om te survive. Sy is net besig, as sy iets begin dan gaan sy aan. Sy hoor nie “stop” of “wag 'n bietjie” of what nie. Sy's like adrenalienjunkies. Dis like... She just [tries] to survive.*

(Chrystal is like a wild horse, you know. She does not hear you, because she is too busy trying to survive. She is just busy, when she starts something, then she continues. She doesn't hear “stop” or “wait a bit” or what. She is like an adrenaline junky. It's like... She is so busy just trying to survive.)

Additionally, school mobility had a negative effect on Thea's teaching, the goals she had for the children, and (ultimately) her job satisfaction. Therefore, she suggested that she and Mia should consult experts to identify objectives in terms of her teaching as school readiness could not be an objective. She understood school readiness to mean academic readiness. Hence, she believed that they should change their objectives in terms of the children to avoid becoming demoralised. Their centre should be different from other centres. She sensed that these children's biggest problem in terms of school readiness was the instability and unpredictability of their lives. Therefore, her most important task was to give the children in their care structure, routine, discipline and food. She also felt strongly that children should understand that their behaviour has consequences and that practitioners should apply these consequences consistently. Research has indicated that a lack of family routines, often associated with chaotic households, has an effect on children's self-regulatory skills important for school readiness (Martin et al., 2012: 1248).

Not only high but also less mobility of families could be indicative of socioeconomic problems. For example, the residents at another settlement where conditions were appalling refused the offer to move to much better conditions at Thea's settlement.

They preferred to stay at their settlement to continue their criminal activities. Rina referred to working residents who could move out but preferred to stay in their miserable conditions in the settlement in order not to pay for housing. Increased mobility, meanwhile, was sometimes indicative of people with higher ambitions and resources. Thea explained the situation:

*Dit is altyd jammer as jy sulke gehalte mense kry, dan hou hulle nie lank daar nie. Hulle wil êrens kom en dit is nie daar nie. Dit is ongelukkig nie hulle ideaal nie. Gelukkig ook aan die een kant.*

(It is always a pity when you get such quality people, then they don't last long there. They want to get somewhere in life, and it is not there. It is unfortunately not their ideal but, on the other hand, it is fortunate.)

In other words, people with more ambition move to better conditions when they get the opportunity. Rina, in particular, was desperate to move out. She remembered how she cried when they first came to the settlement as she did not want to stay there at all. Yet, she and her family could not afford to move and so stayed there for six years until the settlement was closed down by the municipality and then moved to a house. This tendency, as described by both Thea and Rina, also emerged in research done by McCoy and Raver (2014: 143). They found higher levels of mobility among low-income families who were better educated and financially better-off. The higher levels of mobility are thus associated with more positive conditions – for example, having the financial means to move to a better neighbourhood.

Although they were not qualified practitioners, both Rina and Thea understood that, due to their negative circumstances, children raised in poverty come to school with a host of problems (Jensen, 2009; Azzi-Lessing, 2010; Ryan et al. 2006; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). For instance, they experienced that children merely copied the aggressive treatment meted out to them at home at school. Thea and Rina's experience is confirmed by various researchers (Conger & Conger, 2008: 68; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 62). However, Rina believed that problematic parents and

problematic children had a mutually negative effect on each other. Rina's view is supported by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998: 996), who describe this mutual influence and dynamic relationship between child (developing person) and parent (environment). The child's characteristics are the product of development and are also, indirectly, a contributor to development.

Cindy also mentioned children who were unhappy, tearful and depressed. Rina and Thea understood that emotional wellness, as well as intellectual and social development, play a crucial role in children's academic success. Thea explained:

*En elke kind het nou maar sy emosionele hangups dat jy nou eers 'n ruk sukkel. Jy sien al klaar op watter kinders word daar gepik en dis dieselfde kinders wat jy nie mee gewerk kry nie.*

(And every child has his emotional hang ups so that you battle for a while at the beginning. You can identify which children are picked on and those are the same children that you cannot work with.)

She, too, reckoned that only two or three of the ten children in her aftercare group were going to pass their school grade at the end of the year. Rina's own four children struggled academically and experienced school failure; three of the four had to go to schools for children with learning difficulties. Experiences similar to those Thea and Rina regarding the impact of economic hardship on children's cognitive development are well-documented in the literature (Naudeau et al., 2011: 35-36; World Bank Report, 2010). Yet, neither Rina nor Thea ever regarded the children's lack of intellectual capacity as the reason for their school failure but always referred to their setbacks in life and emotional stumbling blocks. Similarly, Egeland, Carlson and Sroufe (1993) as quoted in Shore (1997: 48), regard children's limitations as a result of the drawbacks they have encountered in their lives – not inherent factors and traits. In contrast, in her 2014 article 'Why should we focus on health inequalities in the foetus and early childhood?' Ritchie argues that maternal socioeconomic disadvantage also affects the foetus, which contributes to compromised development.

### 6.3.1.5 Practitioner traits

Thea and Rina openly demonstrated their love for the children in their care. My field notes talk about the two practitioners hugging, kissing, carrying, tickling and playfully wrestling with the children in their care. Page (2011: 312), however, indicates that loving children in a professional context is not often discussed and words such as dignity and respect are rather used. This implies that the topic is taboo and that practitioners, furthermore, fear action by child protection authorities when they demonstrate their love for the children in a physical way. Nevertheless, Thea openly declared: “*Dan soen ek die babatjies as ek hulle doeke gaan ruil. Dan soen ek hulle en vry hulle op.*” (Then I kiss the babies when I change their nappies. Then I kiss them and cuddle them). Giving love and attention to the children was clearly a priority for both the practitioners. Although Thea did not like any physical contact in her private life, she took her professional responsibility seriously and stepped out of her “own personal frame of reference and into that of others” (Noddings, as quoted by Page, 2011: 312). Thea further indicated that she felt they were busy struggling with less important issues for the past ten months, instead of giving children love, attention and education. Yos (2012: 56) supports Thea and Rina’s view that a loving atmosphere in the classroom should be a priority:

*We need to purposefully create loving places – with the same amount of forethought and care that we devote to designing other instructional strategies – for all children and especially for children who do not experience love often enough.*

This viewpoint was corroborated by Rina, who indicated that the children in her care only needed love and attention – especially love, as they did not receive it at home. Rina’s insight is echoed by Heckman (2013: 34), who believes that the quality of parenting, and not poverty or parental education, is the determining factor in children’s development. Thea and Rina explained how the children came to them, asking for hugs and kisses, even after hours. Children need a loving atmosphere to flourish and develop holistically (Yos, 2012; Page 2011). The children in both Thea and Rina’s classes responded with love and appreciation towards their practitioners.

The two practitioners experienced the reciprocal nature of care or the “circle of care” (Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin & Vanderlee, 2013: 12), which gave them a sense of purpose.

Rina explained: “*Net daai klein bietjie waardering is wat jy nodig het*” (Just that little bit of appreciation is what you need). Thea and Rina intuitively understood that this was especially important for children from poor backgrounds where parenting styles are often harsh (Ryan et al., 2006: 329; Conger & Conger, 2008: 66; Yeung et al., 2002: 1862; Jensen, 2009: 24). Therefore, the children in Rina and Thea’s centres enjoyed coming to school. This was clear at Rina’s centre, as children waved goodbye to their parents at the gate, running into the classroom. Also, during school holidays, they used to come to Rina’s house, asking her to open the school. The children, furthermore, had a trusting relationship with Rina, confiding in her about happenings at home and coming to her when they did not feel well. Beaming with pride, Rina told me that the parents of the children in her class indicated that, if she was to leave the settlement, they would stop sending their children to school. Also, in Thea’s community, mothers talked about children who could not wait to come to school in the mornings.

This kind of commitment to creating a positive space where the children want to be is crucial for the well-being of the community’s children. High-quality programmes (such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study and Michigan School Readiness Program) have proved to impact positively on the cognitive development of children – especially those from impoverished backgrounds (Schweinhart, 2007: 87).

However, when young children spend more time in childcare centres, their social development is somewhat compromised. Spending time in childcare has been linked to higher levels of cortisol – what Jensen (2009: 25) calls the “stress hormone” – which has been associated with problem behaviour in early childhood. Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that such effects on children’s stress physiology caused by spending time in childcare are reversed in the case of children from impoverished backgrounds. Childcare may have a protective function against the negative effects of high-risk home environments on their development (Berry, Willoughby, Garrett-

Peters, Vernon-Feagans, Bratsch-Hines, Mills-Koonce, Blair, Ursache & Granger, 2014).

Thea was also fully present in her teaching. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006: 265) define presence as:

*[A] state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step.*

Thea had the ability to focus on each child as an individual, understanding their individual needs. Therefore, she felt guilty about the toddlers when she had to take care of the older and younger groups in one class. As younger children need more individual attention, she felt that she neglected them when she could not cope. At the same time, she understood how to scaffold children's learning, when to withdraw and allow children to find solutions themselves, and when to push children to a higher level of achievement. Thus, Thea seemed to be a teacher who gave children "exactly what [they] needed, neither more nor less, exactly when [they] needed it" (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006: 267). Likewise she contextualised children's abilities and the impact she had on their development. She understood that they did not have the same opportunities in life as other children and had setbacks that affected their achievements. Still, she never set a limit on their potential:

*Ons het nou op 'n punt gekom wat ons besef het hierdie kinders gaan nie skoolgereed wees nie, ons kan maar net ons beste gee. Daar is te veel emosionele struikelblokke wat ons nie kan oorkom nie, maar mens kan. Maar op hierdie stadium sover het ons nog nie.*

(We have come to that point where we've realised that these children are not going to be school ready, we can only give our

best. There are too many emotional stumbling blocks which we cannot overcome, although one can, but at this stage we haven't as yet.)

Thea's understanding of the effects of poverty on school readiness is supported by Mistry et al. (2010: 445), who found that poverty influences school readiness through family and social risk. Thea gave her best by reading a lot about educating the young child and kept applying her knowledge and insight to her work. As she was unmarried and without children, she regarded the ECD centre as her "child to raise". Both Thea and Rina clearly enjoyed their work. Thea laughed at the antics of the toddlers and enjoyed playing with the children, declaring: "*Dis amazing lekker.*" (It is amazingly enjoyable). She always responded with undiluted excitement when one of the children succeeded in an activity. Neither Thea nor Rina focused on the children's challenges and they only talked about their positive experiences. Although the challenges of the practitioners in their work were the original focus of my study, I had no choice but to change my topic to rather focus on all of their experiences – negative as well as positive.

#### **6.3.1.6 Parent traits**

Despite Rina and Thea's best efforts, children's achievements were still jeopardised by less effective parenting. Research often quotes depression as a possible explanation for poor parenting (Martin et al., 2012: 922; Jensen, 2009: 17; Duncan, Magnuson, Kalil & Ziol-Guest, 2012: 91). Thea understood this and therefore believed that the ECD centre was essential to support depressed mothers. Richter (cited in Meth, 2013: 541) explains that some mothers are psychologically overcome by adversity when they do not have sufficient material and social resources. This leads to dysfunctional caregiving that, in turn, has an impact on their children's social and psychological development.

Thea also spoke about a mother who had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital and started working as an assistant at the centre on discharge. Various studies indicate that the poor are disproportionately affected by mental health problems (Caron,

2012: 411; Funk, Drew & Knapp, 2012: 166). Poverty exposes people to risk factors that may lead to either the development of new mental disorders or the aggravation of existing mental disorders. These risk factors include higher levels of permanent financial stress, stressful life events for example job loss or divorce, exposure to adverse living conditions, substance abuse, and violence (Caron, 2012: 412-413; Funk et al., 2012: 172; Roy & Raver, 2014: 392). However, mental disorders also contribute to poverty. Funk et al. (2012: 166) quote statistics that show that people with mental disorders are four times more likely to be either unemployed or only part-time employed.

At the time, this assistant could not cope with the cleaning job that was assigned to her, as she could not afford her medication at the time. She therefore feared that the owner would expel her from the settlement if she could not work. Funk et al. (2012: 172) posit that the poor are often unable to afford treatment or have to spend large portions of their small incomes on treatment. Before receiving treatment, the assistant was aggressive – swearing at and fighting with others. Thea remembered being called “mad” and accused of having a “split personality” by the assistant – all labels her children gave her. Funk et al. (2012: 173) suggest that stigma and discrimination add to the challenges with which a person with mental illness has to deal. Once she received her medication, she announced that she was better and could then work as a practitioner.

On the other, positive end of the scale, though, Rina and Thea also experienced parents who loved and cared for their children. In spite of poverty's damaging effect on children's development, many children in disadvantaged circumstances seem to develop well. Positive parenting has been found to play a key role in mediating the negative consequences of growing up in poverty (Kiernan & Mensah, 2011: 317). Aspects of positive parenting, as identified by Kiernan and Mensah (2011: 318), include cognitive stimulation, encouraging play and learning, secure and warm relations, responsiveness, physical nurturance, establishing appropriate boundaries, and maintaining positive discipline. Examples of positive parenting were also visible at the centres of Thea and Rina. My field notes refer to a proud mother at Rina's

centre asking her daughters to sing to Rina and me; while a parent at Thea's centre demonstrated her involvement by decorating the class for my visit.

Some parents in Thea's centre were also interested in the curriculum of the centre and had specific ideas about what the content of the Grade R curriculum should include. Parents heard from different sources what their children should be able to do to be school ready. This included memorising their phone numbers and skipping with a skipping rope. These parental expectations were a problem as Thea felt that the parents did not understand that it was a gradual process to get children ready for formal schooling. Memorising phone numbers was senseless if the child did not have a basic number concept. Parents further cared about their children's emotional well-being at school. When parents felt that their children were maltreated by the practitioners who took over when Thea left, they planned to send their children to the Grade R class of the local primary school, although they could not afford the school fees. This is consistent with previous research (Forry, Simkin, Wheeler & Bock, 2013), which found that low-income parents value high-quality ECD programmes but have to consider cost and convenience in their choice of a suitable centre for their children, due to financial constraints. Poverty and disadvantage, indeed, hinder positive parenting, as resources are scarce (Kiernan & Mensah, 2011: 329). In spite of the parents' poor parenting skills, Rina was visibly fond of the members of the community.

Rina experienced a strong sense of cohesion amongst the members of the community, describing them as "one big family". The residents supported one another in tough times – for example, when there was a death in the settlement. Another example was when Rina invited Petro to come and work at the centre when she heard that Petro was molested as a young child. Rina believed that the work would help her forget about the trauma she had experienced. Also, when Petro was hit by her boyfriend, all the men of the community joined in to protect her and chase him from the settlement.

Both Thea and Rina believed that their work in the ECD centres was a divine calling. Rina described the care and friendship among the residents as "amazing". It seems that, in the face of socioeconomic hardship and deprivation, these people depended

on each other for survival. Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013: 18) describe similar relations of reciprocity amongst street children in Accra. They quote Scheper-Hughes, who calls these social relations “tactics of resilience” (ibid.).

Thea, by contrast, was an outsider, never really one of the “settlement family”, but then Thea also did not experience herself as part of her biological family. She was a loner who became angry when she felt that a colleague was overly friendly and indicated that she could not stand physical contact. Yet, amongst the children she was loving and affectionate. Thea did not understand the camp politics. She explained:

*Jy kan nie sê wat jy wil nie. Dis like oeee! Jy weet nooit wanner jy in 'n put val nie. Jy sê wat jy dink en dan is almal kwaad vir jou.*

(You cannot say what you want. It is like oeee! You never know when you are falling in a hole. You say what you think and then everybody is angry with you.)

Rina, however, understood the social intricacies of her community. As an outsider, I could not understand the reason for the trouble when I arrived at the settlement and was told that Cindy (the volunteer practitioner) had been fired. Apparently, Cindy arranged for a donation of old television sets and then gave one of the sets to another resident. It seemed that Hein did not allow anyone else, except himself, to hand out any donations. In reaction to Cindy’s “firing” by Hein, Rina declared: “*Al twee is verkeerd. Ek ken al Hein, ek is al vier jaar in die kamp. Ek weet hoe dit werk, ek weet wat om te doen*” (They are both wrong. I know Hein, I’ve already been in the camp for four years. I know how it works, I know what to do).

### **6.3.2 Experiences concerning place**

Rina and Thea both lived in small, uncomfortable makeshift dwellings. The difference was that Thea chose to live in these conditions, whereas misfortune forced Rina and her family to move to the settlement. Neither of them complained about their

respective dwellings; in fact, Rina announced: “*My huisie is lekker*” (My little house is nice). She elaborated that her house is in fact big with a caravan and a tent added onto it. Nonetheless, Rina felt guilty towards her children for raising them in such undignified circumstances. She indicated that her children also wanted to move.

### **6.3.2.1 Poor-quality housing**

After two years of visiting and befriending Rina, I was finally invited into her house. I entered a dark place, as the tents and makeshift rooms did not let much light in. The different sections of the house were chaotic, with all the family’s belongings stacked up all over the house as they did not have cupboards for storage. Her house was filled with broken furniture and equipment donated by the rich who found a convenient dumping ground for the unusable excesses in their lives. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000: 325) list lightning, safety, space allocation, and cleanliness as attributes that may have an influence on the quality of the home environment. At the time of my visit, 13 people lived in Rina’s house – relatives with nowhere else to go. However, Rina’s household composition changed as these people moved out. Rina’s mother, who was an integral part of the family and contributed to the household as she had been working at a pharmacy from time to time, also moved out. I never entered any other houses at the settlement and Rina never referred to chaos or crowding either in her household or in other households at the settlement.

However, she remembered how overcrowded the settlement was when they had just moved in. “*Hierdie plek was vol, vol, vol. Ons het daarbo ingetrek. Daar by die pad se kant. Die plek was vol, daar was oor die 600 mense*” (This place was full, full, full. We moved in up there. There at the road. This place was full; there were more than 600 people here). The settlement usually housed between 300 and 350 people. Rina found these conditions very upsetting and she cried for days as she did not want to stay there with her family. Rina never talked about the noise at the settlement or the littering of the area, also left by visitors to the park over the weekend. The dogs at the settlement (and there were many of them) also contributed to the mess by tearing open black bags looking for food. She did not mention the puddles of stagnant water

or the smoke from all the fires of the different households. However, to me, as an outsider, their physical environment seemed unhealthy and unpleasant.

Although Thea did not complain about her Wendy house, she indicated that the house did not offer protection against the elements and she became very sick during her stay there. This was exacerbated by the smoke of the donkey boiler during winter. Like Rina, she did not mention crowded or chaotic households. Nevertheless, she was concerned about the fact that families had to live in a single room that did not allow for privacy or personal space, leaving parents and children frustrated. Thea and Mia felt that this was an unhealthy situation.

Concerns like these were also expressed by parents from an informal settlement in a study done by Meth (2013). These parents were worried about the early sexualisation of their children as they felt that the children could observe their parents' sexual activities (Meth, 2013: 547). Ward (2007: 84), indeed, indicates that crowding increase the likelihood of sexual abuse or the transmission of diseases.

Poor housing quality as well as household chaos (including noise, crowding, clutter, lack of cleanliness, and family members moving in and out of the household) have an influence on children's developmental outcomes (Brown et al., 2013: 444; Martin et al., 2012: 1247; Ryan et al., 2006: 331; Evans, 2006: 433). Although Rina seemed oblivious to these risk factors, they were all present in her own household. I wondered what impact it had on her children's academic performance, given that Rina was a woman with a matric certificate, yet all her children struggled academically.

Low housing quality also affects the occupants' health and they are more often sick and absent (Evans, 2006: 434). Thea spoke about sick children in the community but also experienced the impact of low-quality housing on her health. Her ill-health eventually played a role in her dismissal. She explains: "*Ek wonder net as ek gesondheid gehad het, hoe sou ek gefight het vir hierdie job*" (I just wonder if I had health, how I would have fought for this job).

Household chaos further affects children indirectly through disrupted and negative parenting (Brown et al., 2013: 444). Parents in chaotic households demonstrate less warmth towards their children and engage in harsher discipline (Martin et al., 2012: 1248). Thea spoke about a father standing outside their one-roomed house, throwing stones on the roof, shouting and swearing, while his child was inside crying. The father had nowhere to escape from a crying child.

### **6.3.2.2 Classroom quality**

Thea and Rina were satisfied to live in small, low-quality houses but understood that their classrooms should be spacious and well-equipped to optimally support the children's development. Rina was highly upset about the size of her classroom before it was enlarged. Evans (2006: 429) indicates that the number of persons per room is a critical index of crowding that has an impact on the well-being of the people in the room. Rina indicated that 11 young children in a room of three-by-three metres in size was not acceptable at all. Thea also indicated that it was difficult to cope without enough space, since all ages were in one classroom. The youngest children in the class were then disadvantaged. Hearn and Hildebrand (2013: 143) explain Thea's frustration. They refer to the importance of practitioner-child ratio as an indication of how much attention can be given to one child without depriving another.

Both practitioners decorated their classrooms beautifully and proudly showed it to me. Thea's classroom was well arranged into different play areas and children helped with the cleaning of the classroom. A number of children had to help daily with dish washing, using ice-cream tubs as individual sinks to enable them to sit on the floor and work. Rina's classroom was two play rooms and a classroom where adult guided activities were done. These three rooms were colourful and decorated with care, totally different from her house. My concern was that the meticulously arranged and decorated room would be a hindrance to children's free play when Cindy, the volunteer teacher announced when seeing the dolls' house: "It looks so nice but how long is it going to stay like this". A boy was told by one of the many volunteers assisting at Rina's centre not to enter the dolls' house as it was not a place for boys.

Thea, on the other hand, was seemingly oblivious to gender differences in terms of toys and activities. Among the hundreds of photographs she took of the children in her group, I saw boys carrying a doll in a carrycot, tying a naked Barbie doll's hair, playing with miniature doll's house furniture. I saw photographs of girls and boys building together with blocks, and boys sleeping on pink mattresses and girls on blue mattresses. Thea also planned to appoint a young man as ECD practitioner at the centre. Her idea is supported by Noddings (2001: 33) who argues for a universal caregiver model where both men and women are prepared for the role of caregiving. I was quite surprised by this progressive idea as I experienced Thea as fairly conservative in terms of religion and politics. I was wondering whether the fact that Thea had never been married and in a traditional gender role of mother and wife had made her more inclined to gender equity. Gender equity is a value supported internationally by education systems (Griffiths, 2013: 36). Yet, pre-school play is often gendered – the two sexes prefer different play areas and toys from each other.

Another example is where pre-schools reinforce gender patterns by expressing expectations of the different sexes that are gender specific (Änggård, 2011: 6). Blaise and Taylor (2012: 89) indicate that strategies, for example to have men and women in roles usually not associated with their gender or encouraging boys and girls to play with toys associated with the other gender, are usually not successful. However, I did not feel that Thea was consciously using strategies to resist gender stereotyping. Instead it seemed to me that Thea's agenda was to give these children what they needed in their specific context.

She explained that she wanted a male practitioner in the centre as most children did not have a father at home and needed a father figure in their lives. I heard about domestic violence in Thea's community, about a father encouraging his two pre-school children to hit their mother and about drinking and drug abuse by parents.

Rina, meanwhile, was highly loyal to her community and seldom spoke of their social woes. Yet, I heard about Petro, the young assistant at the centre, being beaten by her boyfriend. I also heard about the severe beating of a pre-school child by her mother. I feel that children who experienced such trauma in their homes, their

immediate sphere of influence, should be encouraged to deal with their experiences through fantasy play.

By allowing boys and girls in the dolls' house, adults can observe children's play and give them support and feedback to help them make sense of their experiences and the feelings it provokes (Brown & Freeman, 2001: 268). Educators agree that play has an important function to help children understand and deal with their experiences (Brown & Freeman, 2001: 269); including experiences of violence they are exposed to (Levin, 2003: 60). Consequently play has a therapeutic value as it serves as a catharsis to a traumatised child. This happens during fantasy play when children create an imaginary system to explain their world by giving meaning and structure to their experience (Brown & Freeman, 2001: 267). Fantasy play also allows children who feel vulnerable and helpless to have a sense of power in a safe way (Levin, 2003: 60). By limiting children's play activities, teachers may rob children of the opportunity to gain control over difficult circumstances (Brown & Freeman, 2001: 267).

### **6.3.2.3 Safety**

The physical safety of the children at both settlements was another concern to me. Thea also realised that the playground of the centre was not safe for children – an open dam on one side, a busy road with trucks on the other side and a donkey boiler on the third side. Therefore, she kept running after children to count them. The children at Rina's settlement were exposed to unsafe conditions as well, as they had to cross the only road running through the settlement to get to school. Some of them came to school and returned home all by themselves, without the assistance of any grown-ups. Cindy, the volunteer working as a practitioner at Rina's centre, remembered when a broken gate fell on a child. Although the broken gate was reported to the camp manager, nothing had been done about it.

Cindy complained that the manager took the financial donations earmarked for the centre but did nothing for the centre. Jensen (2009: 41) posits that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are often subjected to health and safety concerns,

including greater pedestrian risks. Van der Merwe and Dawes (2007: 135) indicate that pedestrian injuries are the leading transport-related cause of death for children from ages five to nine (the age when children are generally more mobile and walk to school). However, the children at the two settlements in this study were much younger when they were exposed to potential traffic dangers. At their age they were cognitively less capable of crossing a busy road safely.

Van der Merwe and Dawes (2007: 135) further identify burns and thermal injuries as another leading cause of unintentional injury during childhood. Similarly, at the two settlements, children could get burnt. Rina spoke about residents burning themselves when carrying hot water to their dwellings. Thea also feared that children could get burnt at the donkey boiler next to the centre's playground. The fact that children could drown in the open dam was another serious concern for Thea.

Van der Merwe and Dawes (2007: 135) indicate that adult supervision reduces the risk of childhood injuries dramatically. However, the children at the two settlements were also exposed to the same dangers after hours as these dangers were part of their neighbourhood. The only difference was that no ECD practitioner was available then to supervise the children. Thea and Rina already indicated that some parents were not too concerned about their children. Thea's effort to have the playground fenced was rejected by the owner and nothing came of the request by Cindy (the volunteer at Rina's centre) to have the broken gate fixed. Not only had the immediate environment (the microsystem) of the children compromised their safety but also more remote or indirect influences (the owner or manager) in both settlements had a negative impact on their safety.

#### **6.3.2.4 *The environment in the settlements***

The two settlements looked completely different. In spite of the dangers lurking at Thea's settlement, the settlement was well tended to. Residents had to work in the gardens – raking, sweeping and mowing the lawns. Irrigation kept the gardens green. Rina's settlement on the other hand, was defaced by scavenging dogs as well as the

litter of visitors to the picnic area of the camp over weekends. Whereas Thea's settlement was privately owned, Rina's settlement was a vacant area where any homeless person could squat. The self-appointed manager kept some order amongst the residents and was also spokesperson for the residents.

At the same time, his position allowed him prime access to donations made to the residents. Even though both settlements had a number of risks in terms of physical safety, neither Rina nor Thea mentioned that they felt unsafe due to crime. However, Thea mentioned that her expensive ring and her watch were stolen from her Wendy house as it was easy to break open the lock of her house. Therefore, she was worried that the laptop of the centre that she kept in her house could also be stolen. Housebreaking seemed not to have been the biggest problem in terms of stealing at the settlement but, rather, residents taking goods not belonging to them, for example borrowing things never to return it. Another resident collected money for the centre, only to take it for her own use. Yet, in spite of the many negative aspects of the settlements, children were also supported in their development – the young children in the ECD centres and school children in aftercare centres.

#### **6.3.2.5 Aftercare facilities**

The lack of a place to study is one of the risk factors to which school-going children in crowded homes are exposed (Evans, 2006: 432). Yet, when a place to study and do homework is organised for these children, they are cognitively less disadvantaged (Evans, 2006: 433). Both centres had well-organised aftercare facilities. Thea was intellectually well-equipped to assist the children in their homework and fulfilled this role with the same commitment as that of ECD practitioner. Nevertheless, she found the double responsibility burdensome and indicated that some days she could not cope with all the responsibilities. A young man working in the office of the settlement also assisted the children with their assignments by printing material for them. At Rina's centre a young man with a Grade 10 qualification took responsibility for the aftercare when I first started to visit their settlement. He indicated that he did not receive any compensation but, nevertheless, was dedicated to his task. Furthermore, he planned outings to interesting places for the children and arranged a donation of

calculators for the high school children. The book corner of the aftercare centre was well stocked with donations of books, magazines and encyclopaedias. Unfortunately, he was “fired” by the camp manager. Rina was given the responsibility of managing the aftercare for some time until a volunteer from outside the camp took over.

### **6.3.3 Experiences with camp leadership**

The experiences of Thea and Rina are shared by many practitioners working in centres in economically disadvantaged communities. Yet, their experiences are also unique as the settlements where they worked and lived were structured along very specific social and economic lines depending on the particular background and conditions in each settlement.

#### **6.3.3.1 Owner at Thea’s settlement**

Thea’s settlement was established on a privately-owned farm. Although the owner provided the residents with “luxuries” such as Wendy houses (wooden huts) and electricity, he had absolute authority to do as he pleased. For instance, he decided who could stay on his farm and who was not welcome there. Thea remembered how the owner came down on Mia when she arranged for another ECD centre to visit the settlement’s centre as some black children came along. Moreover, when residents complained about any aspect of their lives in the settlement, they were expelled from the settlement. Therefore, the residents always feared that either they or their children might do something that offended the owner. Thea remembered a mother who complained about her young daughter being molested by a resident. Nothing happened to the man as Thea believed that the owner did not want to give up on this man’s rent. Another case was that of a mother of a child who was allegedly burnt by a practitioner’s cigarette, and who reported the incident to Oom Deon, who responded by saying that if she was not happy in his settlement, she could pack her bags and leave.

Thea, by contrast, felt very strongly that any maltreatment of children should be reported. She warned the mother of the molested child that should she not report the

incident, she would be an accomplice. Still Thea was loyal to the owner and indicated that the residents did not realise how privileged they were as the owner had high standards and provided them with food and hot water. Residents at least did not have to take to the streets to beg. The last time I saw the representative of Organisation D (who arranged the involvement of Mia and Thea at the centre); she told me that her organisation and Mia were no longer involved at the settlement, because the owner of the settlement wanted to run his own settlement.

Although Thea appreciated Oom Deon's support to the homeless, she was also highly critical of his motives for allowing the ECD centre at the settlement. Early in the research she indicated that, in spite of Oom Deon being against the existence of the centre as it compromised his faith, the centre brought in money for the settlement. Firstly, it allowed for parents to work and then they could pay rent. Secondly, the centre also brought in money via donations. It was thus understandable that the owner did not want outside involvement by a social worker to look after the children's well-being. Thea explained that such an involvement would have exposed the ill-treatment of children by their parents and would have stained the reputation of his settlement. The centre might then have had to close down as a result. Thea felt that it was all about the money he received via donations to the centre and not because he cared for the children.

It further bothered her that the loyalty of the owner, Mia and Hannah, the representative of Organisation D, was with the grown-ups and not the children. Once again the centre was used, this time to employ the downtrodden but to the detriment of the children since these people were not necessarily suitable to work with children.

### **6.3.3.2 *Manager/shack lord at Rina's settlement***

Rina's settlement was, by comparison, a typical informal settlement, not owned by anyone but one of "those settlements of the urban poor that have developed through unauthorised occupation of land" (Huchzermeyer & Karam, 2006: 3). Although the settlement did not have an owner, it was managed by a self-appointed leader or "shack lord" (Breuckner, 2013: 561). Hein, the shack lord, negotiated for seven years

with local authorities to stop the eviction of the residents and the subsequent closing-down of the settlement but without success.

Where the municipality originally did not offer the evicted residents any alternative location or housing, Hein managed with the professional assistance of a lawyer to fight the planned evictions in court, until alternative housing was eventually offered – corrugated huts on the outskirts of a township (Van der Merwe, 2014b: 2).

Rina's loyalty did not allow her to question the motives of Hein. She explained her unwavering support since he gave her family a roof over their heads. She further believed that Hein and his wife sincerely loved the children and their loyalty was with the children.

### **6.3.3.3 Authority of camp leadership**

Both Oom Deon, the owner, and Hein, the camp leader, had absolute authority in their respective settlements, also with respect to the running of the ECD centre. They decided whom to dismiss and whom to appoint as practitioner, decisions based on personal agendas and vendettas. These decisions caused both Rina and Thea severe stress but they could not do anything about it. Both Hein and Oom Deon were totally ignorant of the demands of an ECD practitioner's work and of the required skills and experience portfolio for a successful practitioner. Accordingly, disempowerment was a dominant theme in Rina and Thea's relationships not only with the leaders of their respective settlements but also with the volunteers and supporters of the ECD centres. Both Thea and Rina had false accusations hurled against them by their respective community leaders but could not defend themselves.

Promises made to Thea and Rina, only to be broken, were also highly disempowering. Thea felt that it would have been better if no promises had ever been made. A case in point was the classroom being promised to Thea – either by closing the veranda or erecting another Wendy to separate the different age groups. Thea expressed her frustration: "*Ja, ons kan nie, ons kan nie, dit is soos 'n blokkasie en jy voel jy kan nie vorentoe beweeg nie*" (Yes, we cannot, we cannot, it is like a blockage

and you feel you cannot move forward). Thea indeed did get a separate classroom for her group at a later stage for which Mia had to pay R1 300 per month as rent to Oom Deon. Her eagerness to take action when she felt that the children's well-being was compromised in some way or another was always frustrated. When she arranged for donors to fence the playground of the centre to keep children safe, her initiative was rejected. Furthermore, she tried to negotiate with the owner's wife for lunch boxes for the school children but nothing came of it.

Thea and Rina also received additional responsibilities that they felt they could not handle but could also not refuse. Rina expressed her exasperation: "*Ek weet nie. Ek sal nie alles alleen kan doen nie. Ek alleen... dis ónmoontlik. Rerig onmoontlik*" (I don't know. I won't be able to do everything alone. I alone... it's impossible. Really impossible). However, at the same time, the residents depended on the guidance of the camp leadership in their daily living. For example, Oom Deon made a rule that the residents had to bath daily. As Hein was not an owner but one of the downtrodden homeless, he was always ready to protect the dignity of the residents.

When I first visited the settlement, I was subtly warned by Hein to treat the residents with dignity when he told me about the visit of a group of bikers arriving with food donations who insulted the residents. Hein then spilled the donated food on the ground and asked them to leave, explaining that he would rather let the residents go hungry than to have their dignity trampled on. When the residents received eviction orders, Hein looked for and negotiated alternative shelter. The residents were offered residency on the farm of a right-wing celebrity but when one of the white residents with his black partner of 17 years was refused, Hein decided that they would not accept the offer (Van der Merwe, 2014a: 1). Interestingly when Hein lost his position of governance when the camp was closed down, his wife took over as spokesperson for the community.

#### **6.3.4 Experiences concerning support infrastructure**

The existence of both ECD centres and their contribution to the well-being of the children depended fully on the involvement and support of volunteers from outside

the settlement. These included the buildings at Rina's centre that were donated and erected by a church group. All renovations, including the instalment of a sink with water connections, were done by volunteers. The centre was originally run only by volunteers from outside until Hein asked Rina to come and work as practitioner. Thea's centre was also started by the volunteer Mia, who converted a garage into an ECD centre and rented a big Wendy house from the owner to use as Grade R-classroom and also as an aftercare centre.

#### **6.3.4.1 Dependency**

Not only the centres but, in fact, also all the residents depended fully on the support of and donations from outsiders for survival. This includes the school tours and sports activities of Rina's children. Therefore, Rina was highly distraught and desperate when the camp manager instructed Cindy (who had arranged these sponsors) to leave the settlement. This dependency robbed the community of its dignity, freedom, control and choice. For example, donors had free access to the settlements, arriving at the centre at any time, disrupting the daily programme, yet the practitioners had no say in the matter.

Food used to be the prime need and focus of both settlements. This became clear when a prospective volunteer enquired about the needs of the residents, the secretary of Hein, the leader at Rina's settlement, answered: "*Kos, kos, kos*" (Food, food, food.) When asked if work was not a need, she responded that it had not occurred to her. Thea explained that her settlement could not budget for food, as they depended fully on food donations and monetary donations to buy food. Nevertheless, Mallon and Stevens (2012) maintain that the best anti-poverty programme is a jobs programme. Thea's response was that the residents were not interested in working. She explained:

*Toe ek net daar gekom het, twee jaar terug, was daar 'n groot bord in die kombuis, het daar gestaan, hulle kan jou oplei vir 'n motorwerktuigkundige, 'n elektrisiën, 'n fitter, jooe, en nie een van*

*die mans wou gaan nie. Dit was gratis. Grootmense wat daar is wil nie verder nie. Daar is minimum... as daar is.*

(When I just came there [to the settlement] two years back, there was a big notice in the kitchen, saying that they can train you as a mechanic, an electrician, a fitter, joe, and not one of the men wanted to go. It was for free. Grown-ups there [at the settlement] do not want to progress. There are very few [who want to progress], if any...)

Rina also referred to residents who indeed had a work but preferred not to move from the settlement, since they had free housing, a mind-set she did not agree with.

Yet, Mallon and Stevens (2012) expound on why the situation of joblessness amongst the poor is not a simplistic matter of people who prefer to be stuck in the status quo. They list a number of personal and structural barriers that lead to job loss or may render a person unemployable (ibid: 66). These include a lack of basic skills and learning disabilities, a lack of workplace values such as punctuality and conscientiousness as well as physical or mental health problems, domestic violence, a lack of reliable and affordable childcare and housing instability. Mallon and Stevens (2012: 68) propose that these challenges should first be resolved before sustainable employment will be possible. Their viewpoint explains the behaviour of a resident at Thea's settlement who had completed a third course to equip her for work. Once she started working, she resigned after a few months, only to follow another sponsored course. Thea felt strongly that the efforts of the NGOs as well as that of Mia to uplift the residents were futile. It seems that donations were not always what the residents needed.

Outsiders wanted to spoil the residents with luxuries such as snacks, sweets and junk food they assumed the residents could not afford. I observed the Mini City Council of Johannesburg arriving with loads of cupcakes, sweets and hot chocolate for the children of the Rina's community. I observed the snacks during snack time to be Coke and biscuits, the volunteers handing out crisps before breakfast and a lunch of half a

hotdog as a complete meal. Rina indicated that they received an abundance of sweets especially during Christmas time.

By comparison the situation at Thea's settlement was different. Her settlement also received snacks, sweets and cakes but the donations were controlled by a group of residents, who kept the best for themselves. Thea spoke about the kitchen staff keeping yoghurt for them to eat instead of giving it to the children of the community.

Nevertheless, outside involvement and donations probably contributed to the residents' health and well-being. The impact of a food assistance programme (specifically the Special Supplemental Nutrition Programme for Women, Infants and Children or WIC) was investigated by Sparks (2010). This programme included food and nutrition counselling as well as health screenings and referrals for low-income pregnant and post-partum mothers, infants and pre-school children (Sparks, 2010: 47). She compared families who qualified for and participated in the WIC programme with those who did not participate (that is, low-income and nutritionally at-risk families who did not use the benefits of the WIC programme). Sparks (2010: 60-61) found that the programme had a protective effect on a variety of health outcomes for mothers and infants as well as on certain child outcomes. She comes to the conclusion that all poor families could benefit from such a programme (ibid: 62).

#### **6.3.4.2 *Medical support***

My field notes describe each child at Rina's centre receiving a vitamin pill after breakfast, donated by a local pharmacy. At Thea's settlement a medical doctor and nursing sister visited the settlement once a month on a Saturday where residents could come for medical check-ups and screenings at the ECD centre. Cindy arranged for psychotherapy for a child at a cost of R2 000 but it did not have the desired effect on the child as it was discontinued prematurely. The role of an ECD centre to provide support services to parents, as was done by the practitioners and volunteers at the two settlements, is emphasised by Peterson, Mayer, Summers and Luze (2010: 509).

Children growing up in poverty are at a greater risk for developmental delays; therefore, service providers (in this case the practitioners and volunteers) should be vigilant about identifying indicators of possible disabilities and ensure that these families receive the support they need to help them raise healthy and competent children (Peterson et al., 2010: 510). However, a complicating factor at the two settlements was the fear of parents and management for welfare intervention. Thea understood this fear well and commented:

*Dan kan jy 'n maatskaplike werkster oplei, maar jy gaan probleme hê, want sy gaan al daai kinders wil wegvat. Jy sal haar moet rustig hou. Jy sal 'n goeie skoolhoof moet hê wat haar kan kalm hou en vir haar sê "hoor hier, leer hier, kyk wat aangaan, maar moet nie die kinders wegvat nie. Jy weet dat sy eers moet perspektief kry.*

(Then you can train a social worker but you are going to have problems, because she would want to remove all these children. You'll have to keep her calm and tell her: "Listen, first study and see what is happening here but do not remove the children." You know, in order for her to first develop perspective [regarding the situation].)

Furthermore, parents were not always realistic about their children's challenges. The fact that the check-up or screening by the visiting doctor was voluntary, contributed to children's risks not being identified. Peterson et al. (2010: 515) explain that parents' report of indicators of delays do not always correspond with the reports of professionals who use assessment procedures to identify a delay. At Thea centre a mother denied her child's challenges when she was confronted by Thea about age-appropriate activities that her child could not do. Thea felt that the mother did not understand that her child did not have the ability to do these activities as her response was always that he simply had to do it. However, the children's developmental challenges were not caused by a lack of toys or play apparatus.

### **6.3.4.3 Donations**

My field notes refer to a number of deliveries of bags and boxes of toys at Rina's settlement. I witnessed one such delivery while on a field visit. Toys were beautifully exhibited in the centre and children also received toys to take home. However, I did not see any grown-up, whether a practitioner or volunteer, using toys or children's play as a learning opportunity. Children played on their own with no adult involvement.

Nevertheless, in order for play to positively influence children's development certain conditions are imperative as explained by Nwokah, Hsu and Gulker (2013: 212): "Play embedded in caring and responsive relationships proves critical to a child's healthy development, especially when a child is developmentally challenged." Nwokah et al. (2013: 187) further emphasise the role of play in children's cognitive, social, emotional and language development.

Different types of play have an impact on brain development. At the same time Nwokah et al. (2013: 188) mention that children do not need commercial toys but can adapt and use hand-made or natural items from their environment to play. Thus play is crucial for children who have environmental challenges like poverty that may interfere with their development. Poverty should under no circumstance hinder play opportunities.

Nonetheless, poverty may interfere with or prevent opportunities for children to play (Nwokah et al., 2013: 188), for example where practitioners and caregivers keep toys from children in order to keep the toys in an immaculate condition – an observation made by a professional working with ECD practitioners in impoverished areas (Watson-van Tonder, 2014: personal interview). Therefore, I was alarmed by Cindy's concern that the playroom will not look as nice once children start playing in it. Although the practitioners, including Cindy, deeply loved the children, they did not have the expertise to guide the children and plan activities and the environment according to best practices.

#### **6.3.4.4 Unqualified volunteers and practitioners**

The training promised to Thea did not materialise but she understood the value of training. Therefore, she felt that Mia's priorities regarding her staff were highly skewed as she spent money on eats, clothes and holidays for the practitioners and not on training. Rina also did not get the training she was promised, although she was very keen for it especially after her classroom was renovated. It seems that her more attractive working environment added to her sense of professional pride. It was clearly not a priority for the volunteers and organisations supporting the two ECD centres to have qualified practitioners working with the children.

None of the volunteers working in Rina's centre had an ECD qualification. I felt that the social worker who came in once a week to present activities to the younger group could add value and make a difference in the children's lives as a social worker, not as an ECD practitioner. The activities she presented were not developmentally appropriate at all. My field notes describe young children being bored and restless who were consequently inappropriately disciplined. Both Mia and Cindy that is the two volunteers working respectively as advisor and practitioner in the two settlements, used to work as ECD practitioners. Nevertheless I was concerned about the quality of their work and insight regarding children's development. When Mia advised Thea to spank undisciplined children hard, I had serious doubts about her professional knowledge.

Corporal punishment is not only pedagogically inappropriate (MacKenzie, Nicklas, Waldfogel & Brooks-Gunn, 2012: 3) but a punishable offence by law (The Children's Act – Act 38 of 2005). The fact that Mia did not want to act when a child was allegedly burnt by the cigarette of a practitioner was another example that maltreatment of children was acceptable. Jensen (2009: 24) regards abuse as a major stressor in the lives of children growing up in poverty as lower income parents tend to be harsher in their disciplinary measures. A stressor such as abuse has an impact on the developing brain and can reduce the child's ability to learn and remember. The ECD centre should therefore be a safe haven for children who are possibly already stressed by a hostile home environment. With time Thea also started questioning

Mia's teaching strategies, as she became better informed about the principles and strategies involved in shaping the education of the young child.

She developed an insight and understanding of best practices regarding early childhood education. From the beginning she was highly frustrated about the formal activities she was expected to present. She felt she could not bond with the children doing these activities and she realised with time that the methodology Mia taught her was actually not appropriate. At a later stage Thea commented that the two pre-school sisters not attending her class learned more by playing with each other than the children in her class who were doing formal activities. Thea remembered when Mia brought a girl from her church to teach in the Grade R class for a few months: "*Standerd ses, toe kies Mia dat sy die voorskoolse klas doen en sy weet ek het 'n graad*" ([She had] standard six and then Mia chose her to handle the pre-school class while she [Mia] knows that I have a degree).

A volunteer at Rina's centre told me that she owned an ECD centre for many years and could train a person like Petro (a young girl with a Grade nine qualification) to be a successful ECD practitioner. It seems that none of the outsiders involved in the organisation and support of the ECD centres regarded the work of the practitioners as professional, requiring a certain level of expertise. Working in private, unregulated and unregistered ECD centres, no academic qualifications were required of the practitioners and volunteers and nobody checked on the credentials of anyone involved in the two centres. The volunteers, by supporting the centres and the practitioners financially, automatically claimed positions of authority over the practitioners. The ultimate authority was in the hands of the owner at Thea's settlement and the manager/shack lord at Rina's settlement. This situation created the possibility for unprofessionalism and unethical practices being the accepted norm. As parents did not pay for the ECD services, they also could neither make any demands nor lodge any complaints.

A number of international scholars (Osgood, 2010: 121) have debated what professionalism should look like in the ECD sector. Harwood et al. (2013: 5) postulate that the definitions of professionalism are influenced by values and policies. The ECD

sector, being a highly gendered employment sector, is deemed as lacking professionalism as it is concerned with caring and nurturance (Osgood, 2010: 121). Furthermore, a split system model is used in South Africa where care provision (for children under four years of age) is separate from education provision (for children above the age of four). Qualifications, policies and professional status are also divided along this division. This in turn has an influence on the professional status of the two sectors, as the care sector has a lower status than the education sector (Harwood et al., 2013: 6). Yet, Osgood (2010: 121) argues that central to the professionalism of ECD education is the affective nature or care part thereof. At Rina's centre children above the age of four were enrolled at the local primary school to attend a Grade R class through sponsorships. At Thea's centre parents could not afford to send their children to the Grade R class of the primary school and, therefore, Thea was responsible for the Grade R group. However, this situation will change as soon as Grade R attendance becomes compulsory for children the year before school. Thea's centre will then also only focus on pre-Grade R children. Both centres were thus perceived to be low status places of work.

#### **6.3.4.5 Professional status and behaviour of practitioners**

The complete lack of status that characterised the position of Thea and Rina was confirmed by their respective contexts – living in an informal impoverished settlement, working in a sector that is low-status according to the dominant discourse and also working in that part of the ECD sector (the pre-Grade R sector) regarded as less professional by the sector itself. For example, Lam (2014) refers to the low social status of teaching in general and ECD teaching specifically as reason why very few men choose to work in this sector. In spite of the low professional status of ECD practitioners, the quality and competence of practitioners working with pre-school children are regarded as the most important determinant of the quality of the ECD programme and subsequent child outcomes (Aguilar-Crandall & Sutterby, 2011: 158). This is of even greater importance for children growing up in poverty in order to close the achievement gap with their more affluent peers (Roberts, Frye, Love & Van Thiel, 2011: 92; Azzi-Lessing, 2010). The demands on ECD practitioners serving low-income families are high and the responsibilities of practitioners of small

children are also substantial. The irony is that centres serving families from impoverished backgrounds are often those with the lowest capacity to meet the needs of these children and their families (Azzi-Lessing, 2010).

Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities of ECD practitioners are vast and varied according to Harwood et al. (2013: 5). Thea confirmed this observation when she declared that she had never realised that an ECD practitioner should have so many skills – working with parents and their ignorance but also with different children to ensure optimal development as not all teaching strategies are successful for all children. She called this learning curve “amazing” and an “eye-opener”. Thea verbalised her “presence” in her teaching. Presence is defined by Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006: 265) as “a state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional, and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step.” Thea explained how she arrived at the best next step:

*Dit is amazing om te sien maar dit werk nie met 'n kind nie, maar elke oggend as iets nie werk nie, na twee, drie oggende dan word jy wakker “aha, dis wat ek gaan doen”.*

(It is amazing to see that something [a strategy] is not working for a child but every morning when something is not working, after two, three mornings when you wake up you have this aha moment, “this is what I am going to do”.)

Rina, on the other hand, described her role less confidently and in singular terms:

*Die kinders is vir my meer belangrik. Dat hulle geleerdheid kry en... OK, dis nie geleerdheid nie! Maar dis die básiese goed om te knip en sulke goed. En weet hulle moet stilsit by 'n tafel en hulle werkies doen.*

(The children are more important to me. That they get an education. OK, it's not an education! But it is the basic things, such as to cut and such things. And to know that they have to sit still at a table and do their tasks.)

She also talked about a girl that should have been in a Grade R class. Since they could not secure a sponsorship for the girl, they tried to help her to become school-ready. Rina explained that she and the volunteers did what they assumed teachers do in Grade R to give the girl an advantage. I then realised that neither the volunteers nor Rina had the necessary expertise. This lack of critical skills regarding child development and developmentally-appropriate practice by both Rina and the volunteers is supported by research done by Roberts et al. (2011). The researchers (ibid: 94) found that the participants, teacher assistants who were women mostly from the low socioeconomic status neighbourhood of the school and with no tertiary qualification, lacked the critical knowledge of early childhood development and early education that is essential for quality teaching.

Although the volunteers at Rina's centre sincerely wanted to make a positive contribution to the lives of disadvantaged children, they had no idea about the essential qualities, attributes and knowledge a professional practitioner should have. Therefore, Rina's training and further education was not a priority.

Thea, on the contrary, showed insight regarding the learning process and commented on the value of work-integrated learning. She explained:

*Die lekkerte daarvan is jy leer vandag iets, more pas jy dit toe. Jy lees vandag iets, more pas jy dit toe. Dan het jy 'n dubbele laag. Dan kan jy nog inligting daarop sit. Anders het jy net bakstene of net sement. Nou het jy bakstene en sement waarmee jy kan bou.*

(The nice thing about it is that you learn something today, tomorrow you can apply it. Then you have a double layer. Then

you can add more information to it. Otherwise you only have bricks or cement. Now you have bricks and cement to build with.)

Thea often used the metaphor of building to explain the learning-teaching process: "*Hoe meer jy leer van onderwys, hoe meer besef jy elke ou bousteentjie wat jy daar sit, is die moeite werd*" (The more you learn about education, the more you realise that every building block you add, is worth your while). She believed that the foundation she was laying as well as the building process was more important than the end product, while she felt that the parents focused too much on the end product.

Thea was confident about her abilities and own professionalism. Osgood's (2010: 121) definition of professionalism includes specialist knowledge, qualifications, high work standards and high levels of autonomy and self-regulation. During the interviews and conversations I had with Thea she referred to all these aspects. She read a lot of academic books on ECD, and was always eager to know more and to confer with ECD specialists. When she felt that Mia did not regard her abilities high enough, she referred to her B.Sc. degree in psychology and physiology. She often talked about her high work standards that caused friction with other staff as she used to redo their cleaning work. She also confronted them about their standards during meetings, which led to "explosions". Thea often referred to "*n bom wat bars*" (a bomb exploding) when she talked about the volatility of her colleagues and the residents' emotions.

Rina, on the other hand, was highly upset with a volunteer's expectations regarding the hygiene of the centre. She felt that the volunteer only dished out orders and expected them to work too hard. Afterwards Cindy explained to me that she had to lower the expectations she had for the practitioners and that she could not manage to motivate them.

Although Thea prided herself on her diligence, she also understood that neatness was not the highest priority in the education of the young child. After she had left, Mia accused Thea that her standards were lower than that of the practitioners who took over from her. Thea responded: "*Sy vertel nou vir my my standarde was laer as*

*hulle s'n gewees, volgens 'n skoonmaakdiens, ja*" (She now tells me that my standards were lower than theirs, according to a cleaning service, yes [my standards were lower]). She then referred to the new practitioner folding sheets while ignoring a crying baby. She indicated that she used to clean the centre over the weekends and after hours as children needed her undivided attention during the day. She regarded the fact, after she had left, that cleaning was done during school hours as a sign of a lowering educational standards and she indicated that she found this unnerving. Thea believed she deserved respect and trust from Mia that she unfortunately did not receive. Mia only visited the centre once or twice a week for a short visit and Thea had to take full ownership and responsibility of the centre. She emphasised that Mia should have accepted her version of incidents and acted on her complaints as she was the principal.

Osgood (2010: 121) points out that externally prescribed standards can serve to limit and control, rather than empower ECD practitioners. Thea, however, did not judge herself against an external set of criteria, for example the neatness of her classroom, worksheets completed or children successfully performing a set of skills, which she understood did not demonstrate fundamental understanding, for example the memorising of telephone numbers while they do not have a conceptual understanding of numbers yet.

Thea never doubted her own professionalism. Ortlipp, Arthur and Woodrow (2011: 56) describe professional identity as how members of a profession define themselves, while Court, Merav and Ornan (2009: 208) regard teachers' professional identity as a complex, multi-dimensional, and dynamic system that develops over time as teachers interact with their environments. Whereas Thea initially depended on Mia's advice and admired her experience, she became increasingly self-confident as she experienced a sense of accomplishment through the children's successes. Court et al. (2009: 208) regard role perception as part of teachers' identity.

The multiplicity of her role never seemed to be a problem for Thea. She seamlessly interwove caregiving and more educational activities. For example, a dirty nose was discreetly wiped while she was busy with a group discussion with the children. Thea

took responsibility not only for her group but also for the needs of the babies and toddlers.

My field notes describe Thea feeding babies, changing their nappies and administering medication – not waiting for the caregivers of the younger group to perform these sometimes highly unpleasant tasks. She explained how she used the nappy changing routine to cuddle and give babies individual attention. She indicated that she enjoyed working with pre-school children where the focus is more on caregiving as well as the aftercare where the focus was on academic work. Furthermore, she was not only concerned about the older children's schoolwork but also about their well-being.

She also cared for colleagues and residents at the settlement and actively supported them with their social problems, for example a 14-year old girl who feared that she was pregnant, a colleague who had an imminent miscarriage. Thea's care for and concern about others is supported by Osgood's (2010) research with 24 ECD practitioners. Osgood (2010: 126) found that ECD practitioners also cared for the parents of the children, the wider community and their colleagues. Therefore, she talks about "professionalism from within" as practitioners invest emotionally and personally in their work (*ibid.*). The ECD practitioner is committed to an "ethic of care" as she performs a labour of emotional involvement (*ibid.*). Thea clearly adhered to this "ethic of care" when she got up at night to take care of a sick child when his parents could not bother, and when she changed a dirty nappy after-hours as the child was wandering around. In addition, she baby-sat for parents after hours at no cost. Thea was thus prepared to help and support far beyond the call of duty.

Oplatka and Stundi (2011) refer to these behaviours of Thea as "organisational citizenship behaviours". Oplatka and Stundi (2011: 223-224) define organisational citizen behaviours as those behaviours and gestures that are not part of the employee's formal job description, cannot be enforced and are unrewarded but promote the welfare and effective functioning of the organisation, the group or the individual related to the organisation. Employee characteristics associated with organisational citizenship behaviours include a belief in hard work, job satisfaction,

perception of fairness, commitment to the organisation and indifference towards rewards. Another view of organisational citizenship behaviours is that these behaviours will only be maintained if employees believe that such behaviours will be rewarded by the employers or managers (Oplatka & Stundi, 2011: 225). Thea received minimal financial compensation for her work but believed her work was a calling.

Yet, Thea was looking for recognition and indicated that she was deeply hurt as her contribution had not been recognised in spite of her exceptional pedagogical insight. She felt that her opinion was ignored, she was not believed and her position as principal was not honoured. She doubted Mia's decisions and experienced high levels of conflict with colleagues. For example, she indicated that she was not prepared to work with child abusers who belong to a clique on the farm. Oplatka and Stundi (2011: 225) refer to organisational factors such as task feedback, group cohesion and the quality of the relationship between the employee and her supervisor all to be positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviours. Thea's need to be valued is supported by the research of Oplatka and Stundi (2011: 232) who found that the supervisor's support and appreciation together with autonomy in their work encouraged organisational citizenship behaviours among pre-school teachers in Israel.

Whereas Thea took the educational component of her task seriously, Rina (and her assistant Petro) focused mainly on the caring component of ECD, especially the physical care of the children. However, this was an important component of their work. The professional response to dirty and neglected children, running around barefoot early on a winter's morning, was to take care of their physical needs. My field notes describe dirty faces being cleaned with the same face cloth in the same bucket of cold water. Similarly, all dirty hands got a spurt of liquid soap to be washed in the same water. Each child got a blob of aqueous cream to rub into chapped hands, a sprinkle of baby powder on the chest and during winter a rub of Vicks under the nose, although I do not think that the baby powder and the Vicks served much of a purpose. This malpractice of using the same water for all the children was especially unacceptable where children's immune systems were already weakened because of

neglect and poor nutrition. Yet, a clean face and hands, a blob of aqueous cream and a sprinkle of powder communicated to the children that they were cherished, they were important enough to be taken care of. “Most human beings, it seems, want care from people who love them, not from paid strangers” (Noddings, 2001: 32).

Rina’s love and care for the children did not go unnoticed. She thrived on the appreciation of the children and their parents. Yet, neither the volunteers nor camp leadership held her contribution in high regard. During field visits I never once saw Rina really presenting any educational activities as hordes of volunteers entered the centre to present what they believed were educational activities. These volunteers were unintentionally barricading Rina from active involvement with the children in her care. Thus, she could not get to know their challenges, needs and capabilities and, therefore, she could not support each child in his or her development.

She could not create a “presence” in her classroom, as defined by Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006), where relationships and affective as well as cognitive interactions could be established to construct genuine learning experiences (Rodgers and Raider-Roth, 2006: 266). Not only the volunteers but also Rina did not trust her own capabilities. This played a role in her hesitation to present educational activities. Ortlipp et al. (2011: 56) posit that teacher identity is a major factor in how a teacher teaches and her professional development. My suggestion that she could also present a music lesson like the volunteers did, was brushed aside. I explained that once she had training, she would be able to present all the activities that are part of a young child’s learning experience. In this regard Ceylan, Biçakçi, Gürsoy and Aral (2009) emphasise the importance of a teacher’s self-esteem and found a positive correlation between professional self-esteem and well-developed empathy skills. Professional self-esteem plays a role in the practitioner’s job satisfaction and her ability to understand the experiences of the children and establish effective communication with the children in her care (Ceylan et al., 2009: 679).

Thea, by contrast, applied what she had observed from other practitioners and what she had read and studied. Moreover, she trusted her own professional abilities and the successes she experienced validated her work. She also reflected on the

teaching-learning that took place in her class and tried to develop a professional understanding of the children: “*Ek het die boeke gelees en kort-kort dink jy aan die kinders, wie val nou in watter kategorie en what, what, what, what. Ek het nou weer gedink en gedink en gedink*” (I read the books and every now and then I thought of the children, who falls in which category and what, what, what, what. I have been thinking, and thinking and thinking yet again). She also studied each child to understand how the individual child functions. Although the respective volunteers at each settlement did not plan for much practitioner training, they did in each case arrange for a workshop to improve the parenting skills of the residents.

#### **6.3.4.6 Inappropriate support**

A prominent NGO presented the same two-day workshop at both settlements. A social worker presented the workshop to Rina’s community where she attended as a parent. Although ten mothers started on the first day, only Rina and one other mother returned the next day. Rina explained: “*Soos hulle sê, jy kan die perd tot by die krip lei, maar jy kan hom nie maak drink nie...*” (As they say, you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink...). Nonetheless, Rina felt that the course enabled her to understand her children better.

She furthermore indicated that she would have liked to attend a workshop focusing on the handling of teenagers. She was especially impressed with the Christian ethos of the presenter, the attendance certificate she received as well as the breakfast and lunch she received on both days. The presenter treated them with dignity – laughing with them and talking to them. However, the residents were not interested in the workshop.

Thea, meanwhile, was not impressed with the course material as she felt that the workshop was not practical and interesting enough. It seems that some parents did not understand the content as they kept asking questions relating to the content that the presenter could not answer, for example on discipline. The presenter referred them to the DVD that accompanied the workshop but they were not interested in

watching it. It seems that this programme was not suitable for the residents of an impoverished informal settlement.

Yet, various international parenting programmes report successful support to parents in terms of positive parenting and reducing child behaviour problems (Leung, Tsang & Dean, 2011: 551). A number of programmes were also specifically designed to support parents in poverty – for example, the Pride in Parenting (PIP) intervention (Katz, Jarrett, El-Mohandes, Schneider, McNeely-Johnson & Kiely, 2011), the Hands-On Parent Empowerment (HOPE) programme (Leung, Tsang, Dean & Chow, 2009; Leung et al., 2011) and Parenting Through Change and the Family Care Curriculum (Perlman, Gewirtz, Cowan, Haskett & Stokes, 2012). Financial hardship causes parental stress that may have an influence on parents' ability to support the development of their children, to focus on their needs and to provide a nurturing home environment. Parental stress may also contribute to harsh parenting.

This, in turn, may lead to children experiencing emotional and behavioural problems and impaired development (Burns, Haynes, Bayer, Shetty, Mendoza, Fregoso, Strong & Arellano, 2013: 124; Jensen, 2009: 24; Conger & Conger, 2008: 66); a process demonstrated by the Family Stress Model (Conger, Conger, Elder, Lorenz, Simons & Whitbeck, 1992). Interventions such as parent training or parent support can break the pathway that link these risk factors to childhood problems and problems later in life and is a much more cost-effective strategy than treating serious problems later in the child's life (Leung et al., 2011: 549). These problems include learning difficulties, behavioural problems, poor peer relations, parent or sibling abuse and psychiatric disorders (Sanders, Prior & Ralph, 2009: 5).

All the quoted programmes reported successes in terms of changing dysfunctional parenting styles, including less parental stress and improved parent-child relations; whereas children demonstrated better academic performance as well as less behaviour problems. However, each of the different available parenting programmes indicate certain pre-conditions for success.

The developers of the various parenting programmes identified a number of principles to ensure the effectiveness of their programmes. Firstly the programme should be

theory-driven and comprehensive using a variety of training techniques (Leung et al., 2011: 550). Active participation is important, for example through role play (Perlman et al., 2012: 405). The programme should consider the family and social context to ensure its socio-cultural relevance (Leung et al., 2011: 550; Leung et al., 2009: 23), for example the use of culturally appropriate materials (Katz et al., 2011:S77).

Poor and homeless parents are a heterogeneous group with divergent needs, therefore their specific needs should be addressed, for example mental health problems or single parent families. Perlman et al. (2012: 406) contend that “a one-size-fits-all approach to parenting programs would be inappropriate”. An adequately flexible programme allows the presenter to adapt the programme to specific needs of the group (Perlman et al., 2012: 406). For example, the Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P) consists of five different levels of intervention to accommodate the different levels of support parents may need (Sanders et al., 2009: 5). Katz et al. (2011: S77) found a combination of home visiting and group-based interventions to be the most effective. The home-based component of the PIP (Pride in Parenting) intervention responded to the mothers’ individual needs. Furthermore, the various programmes home in on different aspects of child development for which parents might need guidance.

Many programmes focus on only one aspect in terms of parent guidance, for example the Positive Parenting Programme that concentrates only on enhancing parenting competence to improve children’s behaviour (Sanders et al., 2009). Then there are programmes, such as the Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) programme, which focus on the development of academic skills to prepare children for school. This may include language and mathematics (Leung et al., 2009: 23). Leung et al. (2011:550), however, recommend that parenting programmes should include as many risk and protective factors as possible. The HOPE programme concentrates on learning competence and well-being of pre-school children by enhancing parenting skills to support pre-school children’s learning. These children then start school equipped with the necessary skills and confidence to be successful in school.

The second component of the HOPE programme is the behaviour management component where parents are equipped with strategies to manage their children's behaviour and control their own emotions (Leung et al., 2009: 25). Not only the content but also the duration of the various programmes may differ.

Leung et al. (2011: 550) recommend the necessary dosage and duration of the programme so that it can be impactful. Parenting through Change is a 14-week programme of 90 minutes per week (Perlman, 2012: 405), the HIPPY programme is an extended three-year programme (Leung et al., 2009: 24), while the HOPE programme is a nine-month programme (Leung et al., 2009: 25) whereas Burns et al. (2013: 125) designed a six-session programme for homeless families. The PIP intervention comprised of 32 home visits and 16 group sessions (Katz et al. 2011:S78).

Successful programmes were also developed in close collaboration with the recipients of these programmes. For example, Burns et al. (2013: 125) consulted with the residents and the staff of the shelters where the mothers reside at whom the programme was aimed. The development of the HOPE programme was informed by research evidence, a needs assessment and by community engagement (Leung et al., 2009: 21). Before the PIP intervention was presented, mothers were asked a number of questions for the developers of the intervention to gain a better understanding of their attitudes regarding health risks and care as well as child rearing and perceived social support (Katz, 2011: S77). Yet, retention of participants could be a problem. Katz et al. (2011: S78) reported a 41% attrition of participants despite a number of specific strategies to reduce attrition. Perlman et al. (2012: 406), on the contrary, reported a high retention rate where nine of the ten mothers who enrolled completed the programme. The Family Care Curriculum programme also reported a high retention rate and presenters felt that a programme of six weeks allowed parents to complete the programme (Perlman et al., 2012: 406). The conditions in the workshops as presented at the two settlements were quite different from those in these programmes.

The workshop presented at the two settlements was based on the book by Hettie Brittz (2008) *Kweek Kinders met Karakter* (Cultivate Children with Character), adapted to be used in a workshop. Although a number of educated parents from a middle-class background indicated that they found the book helpful to better understand their children, it seems that the family and social context of the typical resident of an impoverished informal settlement was not considered when the NGO decided to present this workshop. The writer talks about issues and objects typically unknown to the residents – her happy close-knit family, her computer and tumble dryer, in a vernacular foreign to the residents.

The purpose of the workshop (and the book) is to help parents understand the temperament of their children using the metaphor of trees to identify different temperamental types. As the parents seemed not to understand either the content or the context of the material, they were not interested to gain more information after the workshop had ended. The material was obviously more suited for a person like Rina, with a matric, who had lived in a house and had once been in a good job. Of the other nine mothers at Rina's settlement who attended the first day of the workshop, only one returned with Rina the next day to complete the workshop – 80% attrition despite two meals and an attendance certificate offered as incentives.

Compared to the various programmes as discussed above, the two-day workshop was too short and did not allow time in between to give parents time to practise newly acquired skills. Generally, the specific concerns of a majority of the parents were not addressed by the course presenter during the presentation at Thea's settlement and no needs assessment was done prior to the workshop. Both Thea and Rina described children being beaten, sworn at, neglected and going hungry. When Thea told me about the workshop, she suggested that a social worker should rather support the parents. She explained this recommendation by referring to the situation where a child coughed at night throughout the winter. The child used to wet himself and the parents could not bother to take care of a cold and crying child. Therefore, Thea declared: "*Ja, ek dink nie jy kweek kinders met karakter van Hettie Brittz se goeie kursus nie*" (Yes, I don't think you cultivate children with character from Hettie Brittz's

good course.). It seems that neither the needs of the parents in the respective settlements nor those of their children were addressed during these workshops.

Considering the hierarchy of human needs as defined by Maslow (1987) children's physiological needs (the need for food and shelter) should first be satisfied. Once the physiological needs are met, children's need for safety and security should be addressed. Maslow (1987: 18) lists a number of conditions related to the safety needs including security, protection, stability and freedom from fear, anxiety and chaos as well as the need for structure and limits. From the interviews with Rina and Thea it was clear that the children's basic needs were often not met. Maslow (1987: 20) contends that only when the physiological and safety needs are fairly well satisfied, the need for love, affection and belonging emerge. Then only when these needs are gratified, the need for self-esteem and respect by others will emerge (ibid: 21). The workshop was offered to the parents to help them understand their children better in order for children to feel loved, appreciated and respected.

This, in turn, would enable the child to actualise his or her potential. However, it was an exercise in futility. This well-meaning action of the volunteers turned out mostly of little value due to the lack of insight and understanding regarding the needs of residents and their understanding of issues. This was a tendency prevalent in all aspects of outside involvement and support in the settlements.

#### **6.3.4.7 Support disturbing the social balance**

It seems that outside involvement, whether from NGOs or individuals was based on a unidimensional view of poverty as lack of income and material goods. It was obvious that this viewpoint permeated the thinking of the residents when the secretary at Rina's settlement who had the task of dealing with the donors indicated that their only need was food, food, food. Maarman (2009: 320) reveals another central want in the existence of the poor – the lack of entitlement, opportunities, power and control. The residents responded to this lack by using the donations to gain power, control and entitlement, by organising themselves into a "clique". This clique controlled the different work areas where donations were made to the community. The ECD centre

was one of these much sought after work areas. Thea indicated that the ECD centre played a major role in eliciting the sympathy of outsiders, who subsequently responded with donations made mainly to the centre. Mia further contributed to the popularity of a position in the centre by treating the workers in the centre on holidays and snacks. Thea explained:

*Die ander probleem is Mia, almal wil gatkruip by haar, almal wil haar regterhand wees, en almal wil in die kleuterskool bederf word. So almal baklei, en naamskending is een van die maniere om jou daar uit te kry, die pos te kry, so. Ek dink nie Mia besef hoe groot invloed het dit op hulle nie.*

(The other problem is Mia, everyone wants to toady to her, everyone wants to be her right-hand woman, and everybody wants to be spoiled in the pre-school. So everybody is fighting and defamation is one of the ways to get a person out of there in order to get the position for oneself. I don't think Mia realises what big influence this has on them.)

Rina did not mention similar experiences in her community. However, the episode where the camp manager wanted to fire Cindy since she gave one of the television sets from the donation she organised to one of the residents sounded suspect. I assume that the camp manager wanted to take the best of the donated televisions or had some or other plan with it. Consequently Cindy was not allowed to give a set away. Rina, the only resident working as a practitioner had first access to the donations delivered to the centre before any other resident and, therefore, did not have an issue with anyone else.

Outside involvement disturbed the fine social balance at these communities because volunteers and NGOs did not understand the politics of the community. Yet, outside involvement, especially at the two centres, also served an important function. The centres not only served as delivery and distribution points for donations but also had ties with outside organisations and resources through the volunteers. Small, Jacobs

and Massengill (2008: 387) suggest that the inability to access resources, for example health care, education, childcare and information about jobs, is one of the many factors that have a negative effect on the well-being of the poor. Maarman (2009: 321) argues that well-being is related to a person's ability to function – the person has effective opportunities to enable him or her to take action. Maarman (2009: 320) refers to capabilities poverty as “a lack of the resources people need in order to do or to be ‘things of value’”. Different theories explain the mechanism through which neighbourhood poverty affects the access to resources.

According to social isolation theory, neighbourhood poverty disconnects the community from social networks (Small et al., 2008: 387). On the other hand, de-institutionalisation theory contends that poor neighbourhoods are without the capital or leadership to support strong local organisations and, therefore, residents have difficulty locating these resources (Small et al. 2008: 387). Nevertheless, a local organisation such as the ECD centre gives access to services through their organisational ties while offering a direct service to the community (Small et al., 2008: 388). Small et al. (2008: 390) regard the local organisation not as a closed system whose actors strive towards a single goal but as a set of actors with multiple objectives, being prompted by economic, social, internal and external motivations. Therefore, the actors develop vertical ties with outside resources to distribute within the community. This was particularly the case regarding the volunteers' involvement at both centres.

Since the two settlements did not have other venues where donations could be delivered and distributed, the centres served this purpose. Thea further indicated that the public are more sympathetic towards children and donate more willingly when children are involved. This seems to be an international trend. Mallon and Stevens (2012: 56) posit that although poor and unemployed adults are held personally responsible for their failure, most Americans are moved by child poverty and are willing to spend considerable resources on child poverty as children are not to be blamed for their dismal situation. The centres were also used to offer services to the residents. For example, Thea's centre was used as clinic by a doctor once a month.

During one of my field visits, representatives from a pharmaceutical company arrived at Rina's centre to inquire how they could assist the residents.

A local pharmacy donated vitamin supplements for the children to the centre and the volunteers arranged for counselling for one of the children. Volunteers found jobs for Rina's husband and other residents and when the settlement closed down, they also found Rina a job as practitioner at another centre. The volunteers further arranged sponsorships for the children's school activities. At Thea's centre Mia arranged for a child to be evaluated and placed in a school for learners with special needs and arranged for a teenage mother to go back to school. At the same time Thea felt that the centre was used to uplift people who were down and out at the expense of the children by employing them at the centre. However, Thea often doubted the motives of the volunteers and her colleagues who worked with her as practitioners in the centre.

#### **6.3.4.8 *Motives for volunteer involvement***

Thea doubted that Mia was involved at the centre for the sake of the children. She based this assumption on Mia's decisions that Thea felt was to the detriment of the children, for example to employ new practitioners every three months. Thea also believed that the woman who came from outside to work in the centre, took on the job only to boast at her church that she was working in a squatter camp. Thea complained that the best workers were appointed in the owner's office, while those who did not get along with the kitchen staff or could not work in the garden were sent to the centre to work as practitioners. She felt that those who chose to work in the centre had ulterior motives and, therefore, did not stay for long, describing their lack of commitment as sad ("*hartseer*"). Thea understood the key components of quality ECD as identified by Ortlipp et al. (2011: 56) – staff continuity, qualifications, commitment, beliefs and practices. Unfortunately the support system of the centre did not have the same professional understanding.

Like the volunteers at Thea's centre, Rina also wanted to use the centre to uplift residents. For example, she appointed Petro as she wanted to support her

emotionally as Petro was the complainant in a sexual abuse court case at the time. Yet, she complained about Petro's attitude and laziness. Thus the ECD centres that in reality needed specialised support and intervention to counteract all the risk factors affecting the children, received the lowest capacity workers from the community. Public perception of the work of an ECD practitioner as play rather than teaching (Ortlipp et al., 2011: 56) probably played a significant role in the choice of worker to appoint as practitioner.

Both Thea and Rina, although they had completely different life stories, ambitions, qualifications and insights, made a positive impact on the lives of children growing up in highly unfavourable circumstances. Yet, they did not receive the necessary support and recognition from those involved in the existence of the centre. Their contributions to the well-being of the children as well as their personal professional satisfaction were therefore diminished. Although Thea doubted the motives of those supporting the centre, I believe that these supporters merely lacked insight, which can be attributed to ignorance regarding the professional responsibilities of ECD practitioners. They also did not understand the vital role the ECD centre could play in the development of children, especially those whose development are compromised by deleterious circumstances. However, this perceived ignorance has to be understood in the context of the universal disregard of the work done by ECD practitioners.

#### **6.4 DOMINANT THEMES CONSTRUCTED FROM THE STUDY FRAMED IN BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY**

The four themes as developed, described and discussed in this chapter are organised within the broader framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in Table 1 below. This table describes the relationship between the dominant themes identified in the narratives of the participants and Bronfenbrenner's theoretical paradigm.

**Table 2: Relationship between the Emerging Themes and Bronfenbrenner’s Theoretical Paradigm**

<b>Thematic structure VVVV</b>	<b>Bronfenbrenner structure&gt;&gt;</b>	<b>Microsystem</b>	<b>Mesosystem</b>	<b>Exosystem</b>	<b>Macrosystem</b>	<b>Chronosystem</b>
<p><b>Theme 1: Social and personal experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child maltreatment;</li> <li>• Malnutrition;</li> <li>• Parental neglect;</li> <li>• High mobility;</li> <li>• Practitioner traits;</li> <li>• Parent traits.</li> </ul>	<p>Children come to school with problems – cognitive, emotional, not school ready due to setbacks in life.</p> <p>Practitioners loving towards children; children respond with appreciation; giving practitioners a sense of purpose.</p> <p>Thea’s understanding of ECD teaching contributed to her children being successful in activities.</p> <p>Not having children of her own or close contact with her family, the ECD centre became Thea’s child to “raise”.</p>	<p>Should practitioner report the abuse/ maltreatment, parents can lose their children to the welfare.</p> <p>Practitioner supporting parents – washing children, medicating children, arranging for therapy (child’s mesosystem – parents and child’s practitioner).</p> <p>Colleagues’ maltreatment of children affected the children – children soiling, wetting themselves (practitioner’s mesosystem).</p>	<p>Parents aggressive at home – children aggressive at school.</p> <p>Children abused neglected, maltreated, hungry and malnourished, due to maternal depression, single parent families, domestic violence, and drug abuse by parents.</p> <p>Irregular food donations – children go hungry.</p> <p>Parents lacking knowledge and skills; therefore cannot help their children with homework.</p> <p>Family mobility and high instability – children arriving late and/or new children in the group disrupt the group.</p> <p>Children’s learning compromised when children often change schools; also impacting the practitioner’s goals and teaching.</p> <p>Positive parenting; parents interested in the curriculum but without</p>	<p>Welfare not involved, therefore children have no access to social support.</p> <p>Parents receive little social support.</p> <p>Residents prefer a settlement where crime is tolerated – crime pays more.</p> <p>Working residents do not move from the settlement as they cannot afford housing outside.</p> <p>Some parents and colleagues suffer from mental health problems due to financial stress; affordable medical treatment not readily available.</p> <p>Socioeconomic hardship leading to residents caring for each other.</p> <p>Intricate camp politics not understood by outsiders (volunteers, Thea, myself).</p>		

Thematic structure V V V V	Bronfenbrenner structure>>	Microsystem	Mesosystem	Exosystem	Macrosystem	Chronosystem
			understanding what young children should learn.			
<p><b>Theme 2: Experiences concerning place</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor quality housing;</li> <li>• Classroom quality;</li> <li>• Safety;</li> <li>• The environment in the settlements;</li> <li>• Aftercare facilities.</li> </ul>	<p>Rina believed the living conditions for her family were undignified; she wanted to move to offer her family a better life.</p> <p>Church donated prefabricated buildings, wooden hut to serve as classrooms.</p> <p>Volunteers helping with enlarging and decorating Rina's classroom.</p> <p>Volunteer at Thea's settlement paying rent monthly for a wooden hut to serve as classroom.</p>	<p>Volunteer lack of knowledge influencing the quality of the children's learning.</p>	<p>Low quality housing influencing child development.</p> <p>Volunteers arranging for toy and equipment donations from sponsors and donors.</p>	<p>No housing available for the homeless, therefore the homeless occupied land and erected makeshift housing.</p>	<p>Thea moved from a job and comfortable living conditions to an inconvenient makeshift dwelling (affecting her health) and an unpaid job by choice.</p> <p>Thea was asked to leave the settlement, and went back to her family, thereby abandoning her calling.</p> <p>Rina and her family were forced to move from a house to uncomfortable living conditions without electricity.</p> <p>Rina and her family had to move once again as all the residents were evicted by the local authority.</p> <p>The family bought a house and Rina started working as a practitioner in another impoverished settlement.</p>	

Thematic structure V V V V	Bronfenbrenner structure>>	Microsystem	Mesosystem	Exosystem	Macrosystem	Chronosystem
<p><b>Theme 3: Experiences with camp leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner at Thea's settlement;</li> <li>• Manager/shack lord at Rina's settlement;</li> <li>• Authority of camp leadership.</li> </ul>	<p>Camp leadership at both centres overtaxed practitioners by also assigning aftercare responsibilities to them. Both practitioners were loyal and appreciative towards camp leadership. Authority of owner at Thea's centre – residents could be expelled when the owner did not agree with the residents; owner did not act against residents' criminal behaviour if he benefitted financially from them.</p> <p>Authority of camp leadership over the ECD centre/ aftercare facility – hiring and firing workers. Promises made by camp leadership to practitioners were often broken, leaving practitioners frustrated.</p> <p>Camp leadership setting rules and giving guidance to the residents, protecting the dignity of the residents.</p>	<p>Camp leadership at both settlements instructed the volunteer/s who ran and sponsored the centre to leave.</p>	<p>Camp leadership supported the centre as indirect source of income – donors were more willing to donate when they saw the children attending the ECD centre.</p> <p>Camp leadership decided what to do with donations delivered at the centre.</p> <p>Camp leadership used the centre to uplift grown-ups by employing them as practitioners.</p>	<p>Camp leadership negotiating with local authority on behalf of residents – ultimately did not have the authority to prevent closing down of settlement.</p>		

<p><b>Theme 4: Experiences concerning support infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependency;</li> <li>• Medical support;</li> <li>• Donations;</li> <li>• Unqualified volunteers and practitioners;</li> <li>• Professional status and behaviour of practitioners;</li> <li>• Inappropriate support;</li> <li>• Support disturbing the social balance;</li> <li>• Motives for volunteer involvement.</li> </ul>	<p>Fully dependent on the support and donations from volunteers.</p> <p>Volunteers and practitioners unqualified – do not know how to utilise donated play material to advance children’s development; offering activities not developmentally appropriate.</p> <p>Volunteers promising training to practitioners that never materialised.</p> <p>Volunteer guidance frustrating Thea as she knew it was not appropriate for the children.</p> <p>Thea responded to the children with professionalism and care. Thea focused on professional development - reading up on ECD-related issues; she was also planning to consult with ECD specialists.</p> <p>Lack of training for her colleagues frustrated Thea. Thea valued the experience of the volunteers who worked as practitioners.</p>	<p>Volunteer at Thea’s centre spoiling the ECD staff, causing friction with other residents; disturbing the social harmony as other residents also wanted to work in the centre.</p> <p>Thea’s colleagues using negative and aggressive tactics to gain the favour of the volunteer.</p> <p>Lowest qualified residents appointed by camp leadership as practitioners at the centre.</p>	<p>Volunteers arranged donations and support from donors – food donations irregular and of poor quality.</p> <p>Donations causing conflict as a group of residents controlled the distribution of donations. Support through medical care as well as donated food and vitamin supplements contributed to the well-being of children and residents.</p> <p>Inappropriate parent guidance workshop organised by volunteers – parents not interested.</p> <p>Rina appreciating dignified treatment of camp residents by workshop presenter.</p> <p>Volunteers’ ties with outside organisations for example places of work, medical services and sponsors of specific projects that could benefit residents.</p> <p>Many residents wanting to work in the centre to benefit from these gifts.</p>	<p>Culture of donating to the underprivileged by celebrities, individuals, creating dependency and no sense of agency.</p> <p>Low social status – living in an informal, impoverished settlement.</p> <p>Globally low professional status for ECD practitioners.</p> <p>The general view of poverty as lack of material goods – influencing outside involvement and residents’ view of their needs.</p>	
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Thematic structure V V V V	Bronfenbrenner structure>>	Microsystem	Mesosystem	Exosystem	Macrosystem	Chronosystem
<p><b>Theme 4: Experiences concerning support infrastructure (continued)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependency;</li> <li>• Medical support;</li> <li>• Donations;</li> <li>• Unqualified volunteers and practitioners;</li> <li>• Professional status and behaviour of practitioners;</li> <li>• Inappropriate support;</li> <li>• Support disturbing the social balance;</li> <li>• Motives for volunteer involvement.</li> </ul>	<p>Thea was frustrated by the low work standards of her colleagues – friction between Thea and her colleagues, regarding some of her colleagues as child abusers.</p> <p>Rina upset about the work expectations of volunteer.</p> <p>Thea taking responsibility of all the children in the community.</p> <p>Rina taking care of the physical needs of the children, while Thea also focused on educational development.</p> <p>Rina’s professional contribution not appreciated by volunteers nor understood by her.</p> <p>Thea confident about her own abilities and professionalism.</p>					

## 6.5 SUMMARY

In Chapter 6, I have identified and constructed the four main themes that emerged from the narrated experiences of the two participants and analysed and discussed these themes with reference to the relevant literature. The discussions were also influenced by my observations during field discussions. Thea and Rina lived and worked in impoverished and marginalised communities and experienced the social woes – such as child abuse and neglect, single parenthood, parental depression, teenage pregnancies, mental illness and domestic violence, poorly educated parents and school drop-outs, as well as child mortalities – described in poverty literature. Yet, their responses to these experiences differed, given their different backgrounds, levels of education, personalities, motives for involvement at the centres, and positions in the communities. Where Thea wanted to report child abuse, Rina was a disempowered silent witness. Rina accepted the residents unconditionally and experienced her community as close-knit; Thea criticised the residents' impulsivity and irresponsibility and remained an outsider. The residents' instability was especially a concern as it had an impact on Thea's work. She could not achieve what she planned for the children and realised that she should rather create conditions of stability, such as routines and consistency, as this was lacking in their lives and affected their development.

Both practitioners also experienced positive parenting – parents looking well after their children, taking pride in their children's abilities and interested in the curriculum, who wanted the best education for their children but could not afford anything other than what the settlements offered. Children enjoyed coming to school, where Thea and Rina demonstrated their love, care and appreciation for them. Parents and children, in turn, appreciated the two practitioners and this gave them a sense of purpose and they derived much fulfilment from their work. Thea was finely attuned to the needs of the children and reflected on her teaching and the specific needs of the children created by their context. She therefore felt that the input of experts was necessary to identify appropriate objectives in terms of the children.

Although they never complained about their houses, both lived in homes not conducive to health and well-being. In fact, Thea became very sick, as her wooden hut did not offer her adequate protection against the elements. The ECD centres and the

playgrounds, on the contrary, were attractive and well-equipped thanks to the donations and input of the volunteers and the pride the practitioners took in their classrooms. The ECD centres also served as aftercare centres for the school-going children of the respective settlements as these children had neither the workspace nor the help of a knowledgeable adult at home.

Yet, the physical safety of the classrooms and playgrounds was a concern. Although Thea was highly stressed about the safety of the children, the owner at Thea's settlement, the manager ("shack lord") at Rina's settlement, and even the volunteers did not understand which safety measures should be in place where young children are involved.

Both the owner and the manager at the respective settlements claimed absolute authority. They had the power to expel anyone from the settlement - even volunteers and donors. Therefore, these centres were ultimately under their control and the volunteers and practitioners had to abide by their rules. After Thea had left, both the volunteer Mia and the NGO supporting the centre were asked to leave as they did not run the centre according to the owner's religious beliefs. Yet, the two practitioners appreciated the help the owner and the manager at the two settlements offered the homeless. However, their support of the ECD centres was suspect, as these centres were a big source of income as do-gooders are always willing to donate freely where children's well-being is at stake. It was not clear whether the well-being of the children was really the prime concern of the owner and manager respectively. Nevertheless, the volunteers at the two centres were sincerely concerned about the well-being of the children. Both centres were fully dependent on the support of the volunteers. Yet, this involvement kept the practitioners dependent. At Rina's centre, volunteers not qualified in ECD presented inappropriate activities, leaving Rina to watch children play outside. Salaries paid to the two practitioners were minimal and the training promised to them was not a priority and never materialised. Although Thea conscientiously and with insight read and studied about the education of the young child, her input was never considered.

The residents fully depended on food donations that arrived irregularly. Yet, the quality and the nutritious value of the food were not always up to standard. Copious amounts

of toys and various deliveries of blankets arrived at the centre and for children to take home but no donation was made in consultation with the practitioners or residents. Furthermore, a workshop was organised for the residents to support their parenting skills. As no parent or practitioner was consulted to determine the capacity and needs of the parents, the workshop seemed inappropriate for most parents' needs; therefore, parents lost interest. The actions of the volunteers and donors were not aimed at empowerment and independence but residents gratefully accepted whatever was handed to them. Rina explains: "*Dis nie van jy moet dít of jy moet dít bring. Mense waardeer wat hulle bring, rêrig*" (It is not a matter of you have to bring this or that. People appreciate whatever they bring, really). Both practitioners touched the lives of the children in their care but their impact could have been significantly more if donations and support were aimed at empowering them to be professional independent educators.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of the research on the experiences of practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities are pulled together in this concluding chapter. Firstly, I provide a synthesis of the previous chapters together with conclusions reached based on the literature and my empirical research. Secondly, I reflect on my research design, methodology and possible limitations of the study. I also make some recommendations based on my findings. Finally, I conclude this chapter by offering suggestions for further research.

#### 7.2 SUMMARY

The main question that guided this study was:

*What are the experiences of practitioners in ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities?*

From this question, a set of sub-questions was constructed during the emerging inquiry:

- i. What are the experiences of practitioners regarding children-at-risk coming from problematic home environments?
- ii. What are the experiences of the practitioners regarding the perceptions and characteristics of the parents of children-at-risk that could pose challenges to the practitioners in performing their task professionally?
- iii. How do practitioners' personal issues affect the quality of education and care they offer?
- iv. What are the experiences of practitioners regarding their respective contexts that could pose challenges in terms of the quality and safety of education and care?

Four dominant themes emanated from my empirical research. These themes were also informed by literature relevant to the study. At the same time, the study was framed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, as it became evident that the entire context of the poor – including both immediate and remote influences – plays a role in their experiences (as discussed in Chapter 2). The four themes are the practitioners' social and personal experiences, their experiences concerning place, their experiences with camp leadership and their experiences concerning support infrastructure.

The practitioners' experiences were constituted within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), with the themes corresponding to the three dimensions of this narrative inquiry space. The practitioners' personal and social experiences, their experiences with camp leadership, and those with support infrastructure all corresponded with the personal and social dimension; their experiences concerning place corresponded with place as dimension; and their narratives always included a history of where they came from, their experiences at the time, and their future plans, which corresponded with the dimension of temporality. In Chapter 5, I demonstrated how each participant's unique experiences are created within the narrative inquiry space. This led to a profound understanding of their experiences, which allowed for the analysis thereof in order to construct the main themes in Chapter 6. A scoping literature review (Chapter 3) provided general background regarding the contexts of practitioners (and the children in their care) from impoverished backgrounds. Additionally, literature with a specific focus on the issues that emerged during the empirical research was also invoked in Chapter 6. To follow is a discussion of the main themes emanating from the research. This section concludes with a discussion of the pattern identified from the main themes from which the main findings of the inquiry were drawn.

### **7.2.1 Social and personal experience**

The two participants experienced their lives and work against the backdrop of an impoverished and marginalised community. This implied that they were each part of a community that was socially and economically on the periphery of the hub of development activities and decision-making processes (Executive Secretariat of the

Africa Forum, 2010: 5). Marginalisation frequently contributed to a sense of hopelessness, since the prospect of escape from poverty seemed very slim. Thea explained: “*Grootmense wat daar is wil nie verder nie*” (These grown-ups do not want to go on). The parents’ despair often led to diminished positive parenting, which, in turn, had an influence on children’s developmental outcomes (a process described by the Family Stress Model of Conger and Elder [1994]).

Both participants were exposed to social ills, such as child abuse and neglect but did not seem to understand how to handle these and neither did the volunteers at the respective centres. In fact, Thea believed that Mia, the volunteer, and the owner of the settlement preferred to ignore alleged abuse so as not to compromise their position at the settlement or forfeit donations. Both participants also complained about their colleagues’ low level of responsiveness towards the children, a worry often associated with staff of ECD centres in poor communities (Landry et al., 2014: 527). The threat of the welfare removing children was always hovering over the settlement. It also played a role in the actions of parents to cover up the abuse. The report, *Gesigte van Afrikanerarmoede* (2010: 6) refers to a social worker’s observation that most children in white informal settlements are likely to be raped, molested and physically abused, with no access to social support. Therefore, Thea felt that a social worker – while probably the best person to run the centre – might, at the same time, also be a threat to the community. When Thea eventually decided to act against alleged abuse by a colleague, she was asked to leave the settlement.

Thea is an educated woman, an outsider who chose to move to the community to work as practitioner in the ECD centre. She felt comfortable to talk about parent characteristics and social problems of the community (see Section 6.3.1.6). These problems are often associated with poverty and contribute to child neglect and abuse (Azzi-Lessing, 2010; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997: 56). Rina, meanwhile, was a member of the community, which she described as “one big family”, and she never referred to any of its negative aspects. Although the total development of poor children is compromised by poverty (see Section 3.2), Thea and Rina never focused on the children’s challenges but were always excited about their achievements. Thea derived a personal sense of accomplishment from the children’s progress, as she experienced it as the fruit of her good work. Children and parents at the respective centres

responded positively and with gratitude to Thea and Rina. This gave them a sense of purpose in their work and, for Thea, in her personal life as well. Both understood the importance of creating a loving atmosphere and demonstrated their affection for the children. Rina believed that the children of the community needed love more than anything else, since they did not always receive it at home, a viewpoint shared by Yos (2012: 56). Yet, both participants also observed examples of positive parenting in their communities, in spite of an environment that does not support these parents.

Thea and Rina both expressed the desire to be trained as practitioners as training was promised to both of them but never materialised. Thea had a degree in psychology and also read extensively on the education and care of young children. She therefore developed insight and an informed understanding of best practices in ECD. She realised that the unique characteristics of the families her centre served dictated different objectives for her teaching in terms of these families' children. For this reason and also as a form of motivation, she suggested that the practitioners receive guidance from experts. By the same token, she understood that the guidance she received from Mia was ill-informed and could actually harm children's optimal development.

Their distinctive backgrounds and unique personalities influenced the ways in which Rina and Thea interpreted the experiences in their work and life in an impoverished and marginalised community. As an outsider, Thea did not understand the complexities of her community, which sometimes created conflict with others. Rina, by contrast, indicated that she had insight into the social functioning of her community and knew how to avoid trouble.

Thea felt personally called by God to work in an informal settlement, which added to her commitment to and diligence in her work, and she was dedicated to stay. With Thea not having children of her own or a close relationship with her family, the centre became her child to raise: "... *ek het twee-en-'n-half jaar hierdie kleuterskool grootgemaak*" (I have been raising this preschool for two-and-a-half years). Although she did not have an ECD qualification, her background in psychology and her intellectual orientation towards her work equipped her well to do her work.

Rina also did not have an ECD qualification but, with a National Senior Certificate, she was still the most qualified person in her community. Although Rina believed that God's

purpose for her was to work as practitioner in the centre, she wanted to move from the settlement to give her children a more dignified life.

High mobility among low-income families not only has a negative influence on children's development (see Section 6.3.1.4) but also on staff turnover in the ECD centre, a situation Thea described as sad. Thea pointed out the dilemma that, fortunately, people with ambition are sometimes able to leave the settlement but, unfortunately, the centre then loses staff of high quality. Eventually, all the members of Rina's community had to move when they received eviction orders. This community occupied a piece of land illegally, as common in the case of informal settlements (Huchzemeyer & Karam, 2006: 3), and, therefore, had no claim to the land.

### **7.2.2 Experiences concerning place**

Although they never complained, both participants had poor-quality housing, which contributed to Thea's ill health. The fact that her house did not have electricity was enough reason for Rina to consider moving from the settlement. Poor-quality housing further affected the well-being of the children and their families, not only physically but also in terms of disruptive parenting (see Section 6.3.2.1). However, for Rina as well as Thea, it was important to have spacious and well-equipped classrooms – a valuable insight in light of the children's poor housing conditions.

With time, the volunteers at Rina's centre enlarged, renovated and decorated her classroom. Mia rented a big Wendy house from the owner to serve as a classroom, which Thea then decorated and organised into different play areas. Both centres were well-equipped with donations – to the extent that it was overwhelming in Rina's centre.

The fact that both centres also served as aftercare facilities (see Section 6.3.2.5) was an added service to the community. The two practitioners also had the educational capacity to assist the schoolchildren with their homework. Evans (2006: 433) believes that providing a place to study assists in supporting poor children to be less cognitively disadvantaged. At the same time, safety was a concern at both centres, even more so at Thea's. Thea recognised all the safety risks (see Section 6.3.2.3) and these risks turned her work into a nightmare ("*Dis 'n nagmerrie*"), as she felt responsible for the

children's safety. Any effort to safeguard the centre was thwarted by the owner. Also, the manager at Rina's settlement did not seem concerned about any safety hazards but only about the money the centre brought in, according to Cindy, the volunteer.

### **7.2.3 Experiences with camp leadership**

As Thea's settlement was managed by the owner, he had absolute authority to determine the rules of the community, including the ECD centre. He decided, for example, on aspects such as where the ECD centre should be located and whether the playground should be fenced in or not. While he seemed to care for the homeless, his interest in the centre was suspect. Originally, he indicated that the establishment of an ECD centre was against his religious beliefs, since the mothers themselves should look after their children. Yet, he soon realised that the centre was a lucrative source of income through donations. It made visible the settlement's children as well as the "good work" done by the settlement for them. Therefore, by establishing an ECD centre, he created a steady source of income for the settlement, since donors preferred to donate to causes where children were involved.

Additionally, the ECD centre itself was a direct source of income, since Mia had to pay rent for the Wendy house that Thea used as classroom. Not long after Thea left, the owner asked Mia and Organisation D to withdraw from the centre, as he wanted to take full control to run the centre according to his beliefs. Rina's settlement, meanwhile, was managed by the self-appointed manager/shack lord of the community. He claimed the authority to hire and fire the staff of the centre as he deemed fit. He also controlled the donations that arrived at the centre and nobody dared to make any decisions without him in this regard. He even controlled financial donations, which apparently were not used for their intended purpose – the upkeep of the centre.

Both Thea and Rina were under the supreme command of the owner/manager of their respective settlements, who over-burdened them and, at times, showed utter disrespect toward them. At the same time, both participants were surprisingly loyal towards Oom Deon and Hein, believing that they took care of people who had nowhere else to go (including Rina and her family). These communities depended on the guidance of camp management in their daily living and to protect their interests as

when, for example, Rina's settlement received eviction orders (see Section 6.3.3.2). This loyalty towards Oom Deon and Hein demonstrates the ambivalence in the role of shack lord, as described by Breukner (2013: 562), as either benefitting from the residents or the benefactor of the residents.

#### **7.2.4 Experiences concerning support infrastructure**

Dependency, as a dominant theme, emanated from the narratives of both Rina and Thea, with the two communities fully dependent on donations for their survival (see Section 6.3.4.1). It seems that dependency then became a lifestyle for the community and residents stopped considering any alternatives. Therefore, Thea came to the conclusion that the adults in her settlement had no ambition to move on. Yet, Mallon and Stevens (2012:66) explain that the situation regarding the poor is much more complex than only joblessness. They also lack crucial skills and support to be successful in life. However, the situation in the two communities did not require residents to acquire these skills or to develop support networks.

Another injustice to the communities was that they had to accept, with gratitude, whatever was given to them, regardless of the quality of the donations or their needs. The community was, indeed, never consulted in terms of their needs and never knew what was being delivered and when the delivery would happen. Rina indicated that because of this uncertainty they could never plan ahead (see Section 5.4.4.4, sub-section b).

The parent guidance workshop, organised by the volunteers at both settlements, is another example of misguided charity as the needs of the parents, the recipients of the workshop, were negated (see Section 6.3.4.6). Several successful parent programmes suggest that the needs of the group should be considered and that the programme should be developed in collaboration with the recipients (Burns et al., 2013: 125; Leung et al., 2009: 21).

The daily excessive involvement of volunteers in Rina's centre was another disempowering action, reducing Rina to a passive observer, watching children during free play. Thea, meanwhile, felt that Mia's absence was disempowering. She visited

the centre only once a week, relying on the other practitioners' version of events to make decisions, instead of trusting Thea and allowing her to make all decisions concerning the centre.

At the same time, the volunteers (not ECD trained) believed that they had enough expertise to educate the children in Rina's centre. Although Thea taught her own group, she had enough insight to realise that Mia's expectations and guidance were inappropriate, which not only frustrated her but could even harm the children. Unfortunately, training (of Rina, Thea or anyone else working with the children) was never a priority, adding to their disempowerment. Yet, the quality and competence of practitioners, especially those in centres serving impoverished communities, are emphasised by various scholars (Aguilar-Crandall & Sutterby 2011: 158; Roberts et al., 2011: 92).

Not understanding the complexity of settlement politics, volunteer involvement further disturbed the fine social balance in the communities. Cindy almost lost her position as volunteer practitioner and the man running the aftercare was "fired" by Hein, all because Cindy gave this man one of the many old television sets donated to the settlement. Although Cindy organised the donation, she did not know that it was the prerogative of the camp manager to hand out donations. In Thea's settlement, a position in the centre was a favourite workplace, as donations were made to the centre, which led to fighting among women for this position. As Mia spoiled the staff in the centre, everyone wanted to be favoured by her, which led to fighting, fawning and slandering among the women in the centre. Thea argued that Mia did not realise the power of her influence on the residents.

Be that as it may, these communities depended on outside support for survival. Small et al. (2008: 387) refer to the disconnecting effect of neighbourhood poverty on social networks due to social isolation (or marginalisation). Small et al. (2008: 388) suggest that the ECD centre can give access to resources, such as healthcare and information on jobs, through its ties with outside organisations and social networks. In these communities, the volunteers served as the ties to services, resources and support.

### **7.2.5 The pattern in the findings**

This inquiry was based on the narratives of two ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities – communities similar but also different in many respects. The immediate environment, their work, and their communities' characteristics, as well as more remote influences (for example, the eviction orders served by the municipality on Rina's settlement) determined their experiences. Their interpretations of these experiences were further motivated by personal histories and unique personalities. In order to deliver a study with some significance, I tried to make sense of the participants' narratives in light of all the influences that shaped their experiences (as well as my own subjective interpretation of their narratives). This daunting task often left me confused. A number of times, just as I felt that I understood a participant's stance, she moved to another position and contradicted herself. The situations of both participants also changed when they moved from their respective settlements. Loyalty to the volunteers, the community, and owner/manager then disappeared. Yet, I believe that, from all the loose ends, uncertainties and contradictions that comprised their experiences, a pattern can be constructed from which certain useful recommendations regarding ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities can be made. This pattern included negative conditions, such as disempowerment but also hope and positivity.

Disempowerment was a recurrent theme right through the narratives. In Chapter 1 (see Section 1.2), I demonstrated that marginalisation is a central outcome of poverty. Angéilil and Siress (2012: 60) explain that the physical space of the poor isolates them, thereby diminishing their chances of benefitting from central economic activities. In this regard, Mallon and Stevens (2012: 66) indicate that transport problems experienced by the poor act as a "barrier to work". Without transport, Rina even struggled to attend a parents' evening at her child's school. The residents' dependency had a paralysing effect on their sense of agency, as they always had to wait for the goodwill of others. Thea openly expressed her frustration at not being able to progress due to broken promises. Both Rina and Thea were keen on training but sponsors had to be found first, which never happened. The absolute authority of the manager and owner in the respective communities also did not allow for much initiative or assertiveness, as initiative was thwarted and residents feared eviction, should they annoy the

owner/manager in any way (see Section 6.3.3.3). This feeling of disempowerment seemed to have permeated the soul of the community. Thea explained that, although training in a trade was offered to the residents, nobody was interested as they did not want to progress in life. In this regard, Mallon and Stevens (2012: 66) speak about personal traits as barriers that render a person unemployable.

Uncertainty was another prominent feature of the lives of these people. Their lives were characterised by high mobility, which is known to have a harmful effect on children's development (McCoy & Raver, 2014: 131; Porter & Edwards, 2014: 112). Thea observed the impact thereof not only on the children but also on her teaching and job satisfaction as well as the goals she set for the children (see Section 6.3.1.4). The residents could not plan their own lives and were left waiting for others to determine their fates. Hein negotiated for seven years to stop the eviction of Rina's community. When the writing was on the wall, he was the one to decide where the community should move. Rina and Thea had no say in any decisions regarding the centre and were at the mercy of what others decided. Although Thea was paid a "salary" of R200 per week, this amount was handed to her randomly and she indicated that she was too proud to ask.

In spite of these difficulties, all the role players in the centre brought their specific gifts to a complex and often hostile situation. Both Oom Deon and Hein not only benefitted from the centres in their respective communities but were also the benefactors of their communities and centres – the two functions described by Breukner (2013: 562). They both realised the value of the centres as sources of income and, therefore, looked after the centres and the children. Mallon and Stevens (2012: 56) explain that, since it is not poor children but their parents who are to blame for their predicaments, people are willing to contribute considerably to support children, an observation Thea made about her settlement as well.

In spite of Thea's reservations about volunteer involvement (see Section 6.3.4.8), I saw a great deal of goodwill and caring from volunteers towards the children as well as the practitioners. However, without professional guidance, this goodwill was often, at best misplaced, and did not enable the practitioners to make meaningful and permanent differences in the children's lives. Their involvement also did not support the

practitioners to each develop to their full potential. At worst, volunteers' goodwill communicated a message of incompetence to the two practitioners, as they were not allowed to take ownership, make decisions or even, in Rina's case, actively teach. Nevertheless, these two women found immense fulfilment in their work and explicitly demonstrated and expressed their love for the children in their care. They were devoted to their work since they believed it to be a calling from God (see Section 6.3.1.5). Both practitioners have the potential to activate growth in the children and to support them to develop optimally but they need to be supported in this task.

### **7.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

To answer the research question, "What are the experiences of practitioners in ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities?" I used a qualitative research approach. This approach was the obvious choice since my focus was on understanding the meaning the participants ascribed to their work in an ECD centre in these settlements (Creswell, 2014: 4). Furthermore, I encouraged the participants to tell their stories by assuring them that they are the experts regarding their experiences as practitioners in ECD centres in impoverished communities. I therefore could not criticise or question what they said but simply recorded it.

The social constructivist paradigm suited my study as I sought to understand the experiences of the participants by making sense of the meaning they assigned to the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2014: 8). I believe the views and experiences of these practitioners have to be listened to first. From this, an understanding of what best practices comprise, in terms of the education and care of young children from impoverished and marginalised communities, can develop. I also believe that, by focusing on the experiences of the two practitioners, I created "spaces so these voices can be heard" (Butler-Kisber, 2010: 5), where participants could express their feelings and decide on the elements of their experience they regarded as more significant (Elliot, 2005: 4). The perceptions and voices of the participants were an integral part of the inquiry, predisposing the investigation to narrative inquiry as research design. At the same time, I realised that the participants' experiences had to be understood within context – including the socio-cultural, political and spatial contexts. In order to structure these contextual influences, I used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

(1979, 1986). Also in this respect, narrative inquiry was suitable for the research design, since narrative inquirers admit that multiple contexts are always present in human experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 45). Clandinin and Rosiek (ibid.) note that narrative inquiry embraces the contextual nature of human experience instead of trying to control these influences. As a person's experiences are shaped in relation to the self and others, in a physical space or series of places and over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 54), I conducted the inquiry in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

However, choosing narrative inquiry as research design also entailed a trade-off. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007: 46) explain: "What narrative inquirers gain in the proximity to ordinary lived experience and the scope of their considerations, they, at times, sacrifice in certainty". Therefore, I acknowledge that other possibilities, explanations or interpretations are possible. For this reason, Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 179) remind us that the truthfulness of a narrative study remains a contentious issue. Consequently, I endeavoured to ensure trustworthiness on both levels as distinguished by Riessman (2008: 184) – the story the participant told, and the story I told, that is, the analysis (see Section 4.7).

I further tried to address specific threats to trustworthiness – for example, the withholding of truths – which I encountered during the course of the study. Mazzei (2009: 47) as well as Caine et al. (2013: 47) alert the narrative inquirer to the fact that some experiences will never be shared and that truth can also lie in what is *not* said. At times, I was confronted with uncomfortable silences, awkward remarks, or vehement denials. I "heard" their vulnerabilities communicated in unspoken messages. I responded by respecting their right to protect themselves by not revealing hurtful truths. At the same time, I had to consider how not to compromise the truthfulness of my study if I did not include these truths. Therefore, I built these messages into generalisations and I believe this knowledge, although not recognisable, was accounted for. I transcribed digitally recorded interviews, which allowed me to listen and listen again for nuances, tone of voice, and meaningful silences. It also allowed me to remember visual cues – body language, facial expressions, and the place in which the interview was conducted.

In line with the social constructivist paradigm, the narrative interviews were based on a broad and general question that allowed the participants the freedom to construct their own meaning regarding their work and life in the community (Creswell, 2014: 8). With this as my point of departure, I asked the participants to tell me about their experiences regarding their work as practitioners in ECD centres in their communities. At the same time, I recognised that my own story also shaped the study. It played a role in my research interests, the research question I formulated, and my selection of research sites and choice of research methodology. My story shaped my relationships with the participants as well as my interpretations of their narratives.

Therefore, I included my biography in the study. I created “thick descriptions” by using multiple forms of field texts and data-collection strategies, which included interviews, conversations, non-participant observations, photographs, and documents (see Section 4.7). For example, the set of photographs that Thea took of a child who was allegedly burnt by a cigarette was a vital part of her story. It spoke to child abuse in this community and Thea’s willingness to take action (which was, once again, frustrated). It demonstrated that abuse was covered up in this community, even by the volunteer who was supposed to be informed as she was a principal at and owner of an ECD centre. It led Thea to believe that children were not a priority in this community and that the owner and Mia’s involvement was based on ulterior motives. The photographs Thea produced as evidence of abuse also contributed to her dismissal. Artefacts further added to the participants’ narratives. The beautiful age-appropriate drawings – unscripted creations by young children who were not “trained” to draw – that Thea handed me are examples of such artefacts. However, she was concerned because a practitioner from Mia’s centre said that, judging from their drawings, the children’s development was compromised. The message of uninformed guidance from volunteers was conveyed through the drawings and the subsequent judgement of these drawings by a volunteer.

#### **7.4 POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Various studies have been conducted regarding ECD centres in informal predominantly black settlements, such as The Project Preparation Trust of KZN (2014), Dawes et al. (2012), Van der Vyver (2012), and Ebrahim et al. (2011). Nevertheless,

after a comprehensive literature search dating back to 1994, I could not find any existing research on impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities (informal settlements). I found that the popular view, as portrayed in the media, regarding these settlements was mainly based on assumptions. The common belief exists that poor whites have been forsaken by official support structures (Kruger, 2010: 10; Pharoah, 2008: 1). Yet, I found abundant evidence of support in terms of donations and volunteer involvement in the respective centres. In fact, volunteer support turned out to be a dominant theme throughout the study. However, as I have demonstrated (see Section 7.2.4), this support often stood in the way of validating the work of Thea and Rina and was often misplaced. Therefore, I believe that this study can make a modest contribution towards gaining a better understanding not only of the needs of these ECD centres but also of the nature of effective support to impoverished and marginalised predominantly white settlements. Furthermore, the experiences of the practitioners might resonate with those of their colleagues in similar communities – not only in predominantly white communities but also in other impoverished and marginalised communities elsewhere.

Lastly, I believe that this study demonstrated the value of narrative inquiry when researching communities whose input is generally not considered in matters of concern to them. Elliot (2005: 4) calls narrative inquiry a “device which facilitates empathy” as it allows participants to express their feelings. I believe it also allows a more authentic picture to emerge as it is based on the viewpoints and insights of those concerned.

## **7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitations of this inquiry are determined by the characteristics of narrative inquiry as a research design, the methodology I used, and my role as a researcher, all of which are discussed in Chapter 4. Butler-Kisber (2010: 5) and Clandinin (2013: 52) agree that narrative inquiry does not allow for generalisation because of the small number of participants, the contextualised nature of the research, and the incomplete and uncertain quality of the knowledge produced from a narrative inquiry. Therefore, Butler-Kisber (2010: 15) suggests that the focus should rather be on how people’s experiences in one situation resonates of those of people in another situation to either

confirm their experiences or lead to new understandings of their experiences. She (ibid.) refers to this quality as “particularisability”.

As I limited my empirical research to only two impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities in Gauteng, the study was highly context specific. Other sites might have yielded different results. If other volunteers (or volunteer organisations) had been involved to support these two communities, the nature of volunteer involvement might have been totally different. Furthermore, as this was a narrative inquiry, my interpretations were shaped based on the narratives of the participants. My two participants were practitioners with a high level of potential, which had an influence on my conclusions and recommendations. I might have come up with different conclusions if my study had been based on the narratives of other participants. A different methodology might also have rendered different results. Lastly, my own lived and told stories played a role in how I understood and told the stories of the participants as well (Downey & Clandinin, 2010: 387).

## **7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This narrative inquiry facilitated the identification of four themes representing the salient aspects of the practitioners’ experiences – these are personal and social experiences, experiences concerning place, experiences with camp leadership, and experiences concerning support infrastructure. I believe that support infrastructure, as a dominant influence in the work of the practitioners and the functioning of the ECD centre, can serve as a catalyst for change. However, all the other aspects of the participants’ experiences should be considered to render support meaningful and effective. The unregulated nature of the informal settlement environment does not lend itself to regulation by policy. Nevertheless, the development of a blueprint for best practices regarding support for ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised communities can serve as guideline for the development of a policy for NGOs or groups working in this sector.

While the context of impoverished and marginalised predominantly white settlements is highly complex and multi-faceted, the entire context should be taken into account when any kind of involvement is considered. This would include, among other things,

the role of the owners/shack lords as these people, in the social order of the informal settlement community, have the authority and the power to ultimately decide on any commitment to and involvement in the community. However, this falls outside the scope of this study. The implication of this study for theory is that best practices, in an environment that is often hostile to positive involvement, should first be identified. Thea's recommendation, in this regard, is relevant. Those involved in the centre (who understand the conditions of the community), together with experts (who understand best practices in ECD), should identify goals and objectives tailor made for this environment (see Section 6.3.1.4).

This proposal is, in fact, valid for all support to the community. The needs of the community, as well as practices to encourage independence and growth should be considered. This is also a meaningful principle in terms of support and guidance to parents in the form of, for example, parent guidance workshops that should reflect parents' needs and capacity. In addition, when parents become partners in the design of a parent guidance course, the programme will be based on their needs and understanding and the value of their inputs will be publicly recognised. Several programmes for parents in poverty have proved to be successful when developed in collaboration with the recipients and the community (Burns, 2013: 125; Katz, 2011: S77; Leung et al., 2009: 21). Hopefully, parents' personal involvement in the design of the programme will encourage participation.

Thea made more recommendations that have practical implications in terms of support, including the services of a social worker. This was especially meaningful since both Thea and Rina referred to the overwhelming emotional burden of their work (see Section 5.3.4.1, sub-section e and 5.4.4.1, sub-section h). Azzi-Lessing (2010) endorses Thea's suggestion that practitioners need support in terms of the overwhelming demands of children and parents in poverty. At the same time, Thea indicated a possible complication as the instinctive reaction of a social worker would be to remove children. In fact, Klein (2011: 308) emphasises the surveillance role of the ECD centre to report abuse and neglect. However, in this highly problematic community, such actions will close the door on supportive involvement. The dismissal of Thea when she planned to take action against abuse serves as an example.

Therefore, Thea suggested that the social worker should first observe, in order to develop an understanding of this highly idiosyncratic community, before she acts.

It appears that the complex challenges of impoverished and marginalised white communities need more informed and professional involvement than was offered at the time by the volunteers. Such professional involvement will make a meaningful difference in the quality of ECD services offered in these communities, through the support offered to not only the practitioners but also the parents. Although Rina and Thea were appointed as practitioners, volunteer presence negatively affected, disempowered and denied them the opportunity to develop professionally and become independent. Yet, the quality and skills of practitioners working with poor children are emphasised in poverty literature (Aguilar-Crandall & Sutterby, 2011: 158; Roberts et al., 2011: 92). Training will equip the practitioners to present developmentally appropriate activities to the children and empower them with the authority to run the centres and make decisions. They should then guide the volunteers in terms of the help, support and donations they need from them (rather than, as is currently the case, the other way around). Volunteer involvement should then also be coordinated. Children, especially in Rina's centre, could not develop a meaningful relationship with one caring adult as there was a constant flow of volunteers presenting different activities. Thus, there was also no continuity in the children's experiences, especially as the volunteers were not trained ECD practitioners. Finding the right candidates from the community who can be trained to fulfil all these functions is also important.

The employment of practitioners from the community serves a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it offers employment and skills development opportunities to unemployed women. Secondly, members of the community understand the complex politics and needs of their communities and they can bring this understanding to bear on their work in ECD centres.

However, the primary purpose of employing community members should be to benefit the children. Only candidates who have the intellectual and emotional capacity to care for and educate young children, especially children who are often challenged in many ways, should be appointed. Finding these candidates in the community might be

difficult, a concern also expressed by Rina. However, when the right candidates – people such as Rina and Thea – are found, they should be cherished and supported.

## **7.7 POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

I concede that this study presented a picture of a highly complex community with some seemingly insurmountable challenges. It seems that this investigation has raised more questions than answers. Yet, I believe that a systemic analysis of the multiplicity of challenges faced by these communities can identify a number of issues to be investigated. Although various aspects of early childhood development in predominantly black informal settlements have been researched by, among others, The Project Preparation Trust of KZN (2014), Dawes et al. (2012), Van der Vyver (2012) and Ebrahim et al. (2011), little empirical research has been done on early childhood development in predominantly white informal settlements. Practitioner education has been shown to moderate the effects of poverty on children's developmental outcomes (McWayne et al., 2012: 874). Therefore, research regarding the various aspects of practitioner training should be considered. These may include, *inter alia*, the suitability of various training programmes for this community, the effect of practitioner training on the development of the children or the functioning of the community, and the dynamics of volunteer involvement in the centre. Another area for possible future study relates to support to the ECD practitioner, as recommended by Azzi-Lessing (2010). This may include the services of a social worker for both the practitioner and the parents. Such support may include the development of a parent guidance programme based on guidelines for the development of effective programmes (see Section 6.3.4.6).

## **7.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This study has informed us that ECD practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities are confronted daily with situations that need specialised knowledge to handle. Yet, they are disempowered not only by a lack of skills but also by misguided support. At the same time, this support is essential to the survival of these communities, especially since the communities find themselves disconnected from public support systems.

Outside support (such as that provided by NGOs and churches) is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the ECD centres in the communities and plays a major role in the running of the centres. The two practitioners, who were the focus of this study, were major role players in the respective ECD centres but their experience was never acknowledged or their input considered in any decision making. I believe that this narrative inquiry allowed the participants to voice not only their challenges and needs but also their insights and understanding of their work. Although I do not claim to have found a quick fix regarding the challenges of ECD centres in predominantly white informal settlements, I trust that I have contributed to the debate on best practices regarding support to ECD centres in impoverished and marginalised communities.

I hope that this study validated the work of the practitioners, who are doing their best in very difficult and often discouraging conditions. Lastly, I hope that I succeeded in demonstrating my respect for their work, their dedication, and their love for the children in their care, all of which I observed during our journey together.

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**ANNEXURE A  
RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**



**Research Ethics Clearance Certificate**

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**T Knafo [4992334]**

for a M Ed study entitled

**Experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in  
impovertised and marginalised predominantly white communities**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa  
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two  
years from the date of issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KP Dzvimbod".

Prof KP Dzvimbod  
Executive Dean : CEDU

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Claassens".

Dr M Claassens  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)  
[mcdtc@netactive.co.za](mailto:mcdtc@netactive.co.za)

Reference number: 2014 SEPTEMBER //MC

12 SEPTEMBER 2014

**ANNEXURE B**  
**LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN STUDY (ENGLISH)**

19 Die Hoewes  
276 Von Willigh Avenue  
Lyttelton  
0157

Date:

To: The Manager  
From: Tilana Knafo  
(012) 6672747  
0842606700

**LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION**

My name is Ms. Tilana Knafo and I am a student registered at the University of South Africa for my studies ("Experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities"). My supervisors are Prof. P Marais (maraip@unisa.ac.za) and Prof. B Smit (smitb@unisa.ac.za). I hereby request permission to conduct my research in your community. The research will comprise mainly of interactions with the practitioners in the ECD centre.

Participation in this study involves three interviews providing information about the experiences of the ECD practitioner in the early childhood development centre in your community and also how she handles challenges she encounters in her work. Each of the interviews will take approximately 40 minutes to one hour, will be conducted in Afrikaans and will be electronically recorded. Interviews will be transcribed and a copy of the transcription will be given to the practitioner, to allow her to correlate whether what has been recorded is actually what she meant.

I also ask permission to observe the daily programme of the ECD practitioner, to in this manner get to experience all activities that she does with the children during the week and to observe her experiences first-hand. The research will take about one year to complete. Although the ECD practitioner in the ECD centre is the primary participant in this study, the input of other staff in the centre may also be requested.

The anticipated benefits of participation are the opportunity to discuss the perceptions of and experiences about the work of the ECD practitioner. The experiences of practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities have not been studied much in the past. Therefore the experiences and insights of the ECD practitioner in your early childhood centre will contribute significantly to support other practitioners in similar communities. The insights of the ECD practitioner can also be an indication to donors and volunteers about the needs and challenges of practitioners in similar circumstances to render better services.

Your settlement/community was selected to participate in this research study because the practitioner in your ECD centre is an experienced practitioner in an ECD centre in an impoverished and marginalised predominantly white community.

The information gathered during the study will remain confidential and only I will have access to the information. The name of the community and its location as well as the names of the participants will never be revealed in any publication.

A summary of the findings will be given to you after completion of the study and you will also have access to the full research report.

The University of South Africa (UNISA) guides the ethical approval process and may be contacted (see contact details below) in connection with research related problems.

Prof Brigitte Smit  
Department of Educational Leadership and Management  
College of Education  
UNISA  
082-411-8847  
smitb@unisa.ac.za

**PERMISSION**

I have read the information on this page and questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. I understand that participation in this study will not lead to any material or financial gain.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns.

-----  
Manager: Community  
  
Date:  
-----

-----  
Researcher: T Knafo  
  
Date:  
-----

**ANNEXURE C**  
**LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN STUDY (AFRIKAANS)**

Die Hoewes 19  
Von Willighlaan 276  
Lyttelton  
0157

Datum:

Aan: Die Bestuurder

Van: Tilana Knafo  
(012) 6672747  
0842606700

**VERSOEK OM DEELNAME**

My naam is Me Tilana Knafo en ek is 'n Meestergraadstudent geregistreer aan die Universiteit van Suid Afrika vir my studies ("Experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities"). My studieleiers is Prof. P Marais (maraip@unisa.ac.za) en Prof. B Smit (smitb@unisa.ac.za). Hiermee vra ek u toestemming om my navorsing in u gemeenskap uit te voer. Die navorsing sal hoofsaaklik bestaan uit interaksie met die praktisyns in die kleuterskool.

Deelname behels dat die praktisyn in die kleuterskool in julle gemeenskap drie onderhoude toestaan waarin sy inligting verskaf omtrent haar ervarings in haar werk as praktisyn en ook hoe sy probleme wat sy in haar werk teëkom, hanteer. Elk van die onderhoude sal ongeveer 40 minute tot 'n uur duur, sal in Afrikaans gevoer word en sal elektronies opgeneem word. Onderhoude sal getranskribeer word en 'n kopie van die transkripsie sal aan die praktisyn gegee word sodat sy kan korreleer of dit wat aangeteken is, inderdaad 'n akkurate weergawe is van wat sy bedoel het.

Ek vra ook toestemming om die aanbieding van die dagprogram in die kleuterskool waar te neem om sodoende die verskillende aktiwiteite wat gedurende die week aangebied word, te ervaar en die praktisyn in die kleuterskool se uitdagings eerstehands te kan waarneem. Die navorsing sal ongeveer 'n jaar duur om te voltooi. Hoewel die kleuterskool-praktisyn die primêre deelnemer aan hierdie studie is, mag die insette van ander personeel in die kleuterskool ook gevra word.

Die voordele van deelname is dat dit aan die kleuterskool-praktisyn die geleentheid bied om haar gevoelens en ervarings omtrent haar werk en haar ervarings te bespreek. Die ervarings van praktisyns in kleuterskole in arm, gemarginaliseerde oorwegend blanke gemeenskappe is nog nie veel in die verlede ondersoek nie. Daarom kan die ervarings en insigte van die praktisyn in julle kleuterskool 'n belangrike bydrae lewer om ander praktisyns in soortgelyke gemeenskappe te ondersteun. Haar insigte kan ook vir donateurs en vrywilligers 'n aanduiding gee van die behoeftes en uitdagings van praktisyns in sodanige omstandighede om hulpverlening meer doeltreffend te maak.

Inligting versamel gedurende hierdie studie is vertroulik en slegs ek sal toegang daartoe hê. Die naam van die nedersetting, die ligging van die nedersetting asook die name van die deelnemers sal nooit openbaar gemaak word nie.

'n Opsomming van die bevindinge sal aan jou gegee word met voltooiing van die studie en jy sal ook toegang tot die volledige navorsingstudie hê.

Die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika (UNISA) lei die etiese goedkeuringsproses en kan gekontak word in verband met navorsingsverwante vrae.

Prof Brigitte Smit  
Department of Educational Leadership and Management  
College of Education  
UNISA  
082-411-8847  
smitb@unisa.ac.za

### **TOESTEMMING**

Ek het die inligting in hierdie brief gelees en my vrae is bevredigend beantwoord. Ek doen geensins afstand van my wetlike regte deur die ondertekening van hierdie vorm nie. Ek verstaan dat deelname aan hierdie studie nie enige finansiële of materiële vergoeding behels nie.

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Bestuurder: Gemeenskap

-----  
Navorser: T Knafo

Datum:

Datum:  
-----

**ANNEXURE D  
INFORMED CONSENT (ENGLISH)**

**LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT**

Date:

Study conducted by: Tilana Knafo

(012) 667-2747

(084) 260-6700

**EXPERIENCES OF PRACTITIONERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN  
IMPOVERISHED AND MARGINALISED PREDOMINANTLY WHITE COMMUNITIES**

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in this study.

Participation in this study involves three interviews providing information about your experiences in your work as ECD practitioner and also how you handle challenges experienced in your work. Each of the interviews will take approximately 40 minutes to one hour, will be conducted in Afrikaans and will be electronically recorded. Interviews will be transcribed and a copy of the transcription will be given to you, to allow you to correlate whether what has been recorded is actually what you meant.

I also ask permission to observe your daily programme, to in this manner get to experience all activities that you do with the children during the week and to observe your experiences first-hand. The research will take about one year to complete. Although you are the primary participant in this study, the input of other staff in the ECD centre may also be requested.

The anticipated benefits of participation are the opportunity to discuss your perceptions and experiences about your work. The experiences of practitioners in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities have not been studied much in the past. Therefore your experience and insight will contribute significantly to support other practitioners in similar communities. Your insights can also be an indication to donors and volunteers about the needs and problems of practitioners in similar circumstances to render better services.

You were selected to participate in this research study because you are an experienced practitioner in an ECD centre in an impoverished and marginalised community.

No overt risks or discomforts are anticipated from your participation in this study. Potential discomforts include possible emotional feelings of sadness when you talk about your problems and experiences in your work.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The information gathered during the study will remain confidential and only I will have access to the information. The name of the community and its location as well as the names of the participants will never be revealed in any publication.

A summary of the findings will be given to you after completion of the study and you will also have access to the full research report.

The University of South Africa (UNISA) guides the ethical approval process and may be contacted (see contact details below) in connection with research related problems.

Prof Brigitte Smit

Department of Educational Leadership and Management  
College of Education  
UNISA  
082-411-8847  
smitb@unisa.ac.za

**PERMISSION**

I have read the information on this page and questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. I understand that my participation in this study will not lead to any material or financial gain.

-----	-----
Participant	Researcher: T Knafo
Date:	Date:
-----	-----

**ANNEXURE E**  
**INFORMED CONSENT (AFRIKAANS)**

**BRIEF VAN INGELIGTE TOESTEMMING**

Datum:

Studie uitgevoer deur: Tilana Knafo

(012) 667-2747

(084) 260-6700

**DIE ERVARINGS VAN PRAKTISYNS IN KLEUTERSKOLE IN ARM EN GEMARGINALISEERDE OORWEGEND WIT GEMEENSKAPPE**

Die volgende inligting word verskaf om jou te help in jou besluit om deel te neem aan hierdie studie.

Deelname behels dat jy drie onderhoude toestaan waarin jy inligting verskaf omtrent hoe jy die ervarings in jou werksomgewing beleef en ook hoe jy jou probleme hanteer. Elk van die onderhoude sal ongeveer 40 minute tot 'n uur duur, sal in Afrikaans gevoer word en sal elektronies opgeneem word. Onderhoude sal getranskribeer word en 'n kopie van die transkripsie sal aan jou gegee word sodat jy kan korreleer of dit wat aangeteken is, inderdaad 'n akkurate weergawe is van wat jy bedoel het.

Ek vra ook toestemming om die aanbieding van die dagprogram waar te neem om sodoende die verskillende aktiwiteite wat gedurende die week aangebied word, te ervaar en jou ervarings eerstehands te kan waarneem. Die navorsing sal ongeveer 'n jaar duur om te voltooi. Hoewel jy die primêre deelnemer aan hierdie studie is, mag die insette van ander personeel in jou kleuterskool ook gevra word.

Die voordele van deelname is dat dit jou die geleentheid bied om jou gevoelens en ervarings omtrent jou werk te bespreek. Die ervarings van praktisyns in kleuterskole in arm, gemarginaliseerde oorwegend blanke gemeenskappe is nog nie veel in die verlede ondersoek nie. Daarom kan jou ervarings en insigte 'n belangrike bydrae lewer om ander praktisyns in soortgelyke gemeenskappe te ondersteun. Jou insigte kan ook vir donateurs en vrywilligers 'n aanduiding gee van die behoeftes en probleme van praktisyns in sodanige omstandighede om hulpverlening meer doeltreffend te maak.

Jy is gekies om deel te neem aan hierdie studie omdat jy 'n ervare praktisyn in 'n arm en gemarginaliseerde oorwegend blanke gemeenskap is.

Geen ooglopende risiko of ongemak word vir jou voorsien as gevolg van jou deelname aan hierdie studie nie. Potensiële risiko of ongemak kan emosionele gevoelens van hartseer wees as jy praat oor jou probleme en ervarings in jou werk.

Deelname aan die studie is vrywillig en jy mag op enige stadium gedurende die studie onttrek sonder enige benadeling.

Inligting versamel gedurende hierdie studie is vertroulik en slegs ek sal toegang daartoe hê. Die naam van die nedersetting, die ligging van die nedersetting asook die name van die deelnemers sal nooit openbaar gemaak word nie.

'n Opsomming van die bevindinge sal aan jou gegee word met voltooiing van die studie en jy sal ook toegang tot die volledige navorsingstudie hê.

Die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika (UNISA) lei die etiese goedkeuringsproses en kan gekontak word in verband met navorsingsverwante vrae.

Prof Brigitte Smit  
Department of Educational Leadership and Management  
College of Education  
UNISA  
082-411-8847  
smitb@unisa.ac.za

**TOESTEMMING**

Ek het die inligting in hierdie brief gelees en my vrae is bevredigend beantwoord. Ek doen geensins afstand van my wetlike regte deur die ondertekening van hierdie vorm nie. Ek verstaan dat my deelname aan hierdie studie nie enige finansiële of materiële vergoeding behels nie.

-----  
Deelnemer

-----  
Navorsers: T Knafo

Datum:

Datum:

-----

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**ANNEXURE F  
CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY LANGUAGE EDITOR**



**ANNEXURE G**  
**SELECTION OF CODING EXAMPLES**

The unabridged Coding Document is included on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of the dissertation.

The abridged version included here contains only the various codes, and one page of coding (or photographs) for each of the field visits, sets of field notes, or photo records.



**Experiences of practitioners in early childhood development centres in impoverished and marginalised predominantly white communities**

by

**TILANA KNAFO**

Dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION: SOCIO-EDUCATION

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Supervisor: Professor P. Marais

Co-Supervisor: Professor B. Smit

December 2015

## ANNEXURE G: SELECTION OF CODING EXAMPLES

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** *(of the unabridged version of this document, which is included on a compact disc, which can be found in a sleeve inside the back cover of the dissertation)*

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## CODING OF PARTICIPANTS' DATA

### *Codes used in analysing the data of the participants*

	CODES		Sub codes
01	Financial gains vs. faith		
02	Moral dilemma		
03	Benefitting financially from children and centre		
04	Personal challenges	04a 04b 04c 04d 04e 04f 04g 04h 04i 04j 04k 04l 04m 04n	Own children's problems Job loss in the settlement Response to personal challenges Dependency Stuck due to finances Not finding work Taking action Financial predicament Camp conditions affecting health Stress affecting health No support from family Differing religious beliefs Poor health Personal needs not met

	CODES		Sub codes
05	Wanting to improve and grow		
06	Previous good life		
07	Wanting to gain experience		
08	Difficult working circumstances		
09	Lack of understanding		
10	"Dit is hartseer"		
11	Plans to expand		
12	Rejection of initiatives		
13	Lack of support		
14	Taking action vs Action rejected	14a	Support Staff
14	Taking action vs Action rejected	14b	Camp Leadership
15	Unsafe conditions		
16	Negative towards place		
17	Lack of water		

	CODES		Sub codes
18	Children's behaviour	18a 18b 18c 18d 18e 18f 18g 18h 18i 18j 18k 18l 18m 18n 18o 18p	Problematic behaviour Tantrums Disobedient Abusing medication Always sleeping Playing together Active participation Aggressive behaviour Changing behaviour Inappropriate sexual behaviour Not studying Disciplined Helpful Lacking hygienic & disciplined practices Fantasy games Undisciplined
19	Volunteer support	19a 19b 19c 19d 19e 19f 19g 19h	Moral support Personal friendship Advice Know-how Supporting residents financially Parental guidance Lack of knowledge Decorating classroom

	CODES		Sub codes
19	Volunteer support (continued)	19i 19j 19k 19l 19m 19n 19o 19p 19q 19r 19s 19t 19u 19v 19w 19x	Giving insight Inappropriate activities Lack of insight Ulterior motives Arranging assistance Handling conflict Practical help Supporting residents emotionally Supporting practitioner emotionally Appreciation Active involvement Expectations for practitioners Appreciated Insight Taking responsibility Supporting practitioner financially
20	Lacking amenities	20a	Power unaffordable
21	Practitioner emotions	21a 21b 21c 21d 21e 21f	Enjoying work Enjoyment children Personal enjoyment Uncertainty Not coping Lacking energy

	CODES		Sub codes
21	Practitioner emotions (continued)	21g 21h 21i 21j 21k 21l 21m 21n 21o 21p 21q 21r 21s 21t 21u 21v 21w 21x 21y 21z	Disempowered Anger Frustration Hurt Déjà vu Sense of loss Feeling guilty Upset Despondent Wanting to resign Misunderstood Suspicious Eager to divulge Hoping for change Wanting to return Depending on support Scapegoat Stress affecting health Proud of children Grieving
22	Lack of space		
23	Broken promises		

	CODES		Sub codes
24	Overcrowded		
25	Children suffering	25a 25b 25c 25d 25e 25f	Children removed by welfare Children dying Hungry Orphaned Neglected Cold
26	Dependent on welfare		
27	Not knowing		
28	Promises by camp leadership		
29	Parents behaviour	29a 29b 29c 29d 29e 29f 29g 29h 29i 29j 29k 29l	Irresponsible Bad example Child abuse Depression Caring Uninvolved Dependency Caring vs. Neglecting Uninterested Ignoring guidance Poor parental skills Not disciplining children

	CODES		Sub codes
29	Parents behaviour	29m 29n 29o 29p 29q 29r 29s 29t 29u 29v 29w 29x 29y 29z 29aa 29ab 29ac 29ad 29ae 29af	Not molesting Not caring Supporting practitioner Teenage parenting Good parenting Strange ideas Aggression Lack of understanding Changing behaviour Relaxed Involved with men Partying Spending money on alcohol & cigarettes Initiative Drug abuse Swearing at their children Lazy Child neglect Proud of children Ignorant
30	Problematic personal circumstances	30a 30b 30c 30d 30e	Social living conditions Problematic relationships School drop-out Marital discord No financial resources available

	CODES		Sub codes
31	Knowing the children		
32	Appreciating hard work		
33	Practitioner positive personal characteristics	33a 33b 33c 33d 33e 33f 33g 33h 33i 33j 33k 33l 33m 33n 33o 33p 33q 33r 33s	Caring Appreciative Loving towards children Patience Enthusiasm Avoiding trouble Considerate Trusting Adapting Persisting Sensitive Loyalty Realistic Sharing knowledge Wanting to learn Playful towards children Supportive Grateful Accepting volunteer guidance
34	Practitioner's negative personal characteristics	34a 34b 34c	Stubborn Stumbling morally Rude to parents

	CODES		Sub codes
34	Practitioner's negative personal characteristics	34d	Rejecting volunteer guidance
35	Relationship with practitioner	35a 35b 35c 35d	Love Attachment Trust Comfortable
36	Being firm		
37	Insight		
38	Involved		
39	Financial gains vs children's interests		
40	Future plans		
41	Colleagues positive characteristics	41a 41b 41c 41d 41e	Experience Effective Actively involved with children Care well for children Insight
42	Colleagues negative characteristics	42a 42b 42c 42d	Bad treatment of children Laziness Not coping with work Name calling

	CODES		Sub codes
42	Colleagues negative characteristics	42e 42f 42g 42h 42i 42j 42k 42l 42m 42n 42o 42p 42q 42r 42s 42t 42u 42v	Not taking responsibility Cleaning staff Ulterior motives Troublemaking Establishing a clique Selfish Bad attitude Helpless Fawning Irresponsible Mental problems Gossiping Swearing at children Child abuse Inappropriate activities Stealing Swearing at parents Rejecting authority
43	Stimulating children		
44	Stable personal life		
45	Responsibility towards children	45a	Taking responsibility

	CODES		Sub codes
46	Taking control		
47	Aspirations		
48	Valuing discipline		
49	Financial difficulties		
50	Unemployed		
51	High standards		
52	Strong feelings about standards		
53	Planning		
54	Constant changing		
55	Training being promised		
56	Children sick		
57	Parents' fears		
58	Love for children		
58	Love for children		

	CODES		Sub codes
59	"een big family"	59a	Caring for each other
		59b	Standing together
60	Priorities		
60	Priorities		
60	Priorities		
60	Priorities	60a	Children not grown ups
61	Children's needs	61a	Children's need for attention
		61b	Children's need for love
62	Love for own children	62a	Protective
63	Children's abilities	63a	Lacking abilities
		63b	Making progress
		63c	Having abilities
		63d	Age-appropriate art development
		63e	Not school-ready
64	Sense of purpose		

	CODES		Sub codes
65	Support		
66	Preferring status quo		
67	"Ek hardloop."		
68	Donations	68a	Dependent on donations
		68b	Donations precarious
		68c	Abundant donations
		68d	Daily food donation
		68e	Unhealthy food donations
69	69 Social problems	69a	Single parenthood
		69b	Sexual abuse
		69c	Drug trafficking
70	70 Social problems causing stress		
71	71 Preferential treatment		
72	72 Authority of Camp leadership		
73	73 "Ons kry maar bietjie hel"		

	CODES		Sub codes
74	74Loyalty to practitioner		
75	75Littering		
76	76Support from inside		
77	77Residents' behaviour	77a	Residents' response on preferential treatment
		77b	Stealing
		77c	Working on settlement
		77d	Scolding
		77e	Tattling
		77f	Impulsive
		77g	Unhygienic
		77h	Verbally abusive
		77i	Mean
78	Complications with pregnancy		
79	Easy work		
80	"Kos is maar 'n probleem."		

	CODES		Sub codes
81	Receiving good food		
82	Criminality	82a	Sexual abuse
		82b	Drug trafficking
		82c	Theft
83	Dependency on God		
84	Assertive		
85	Proud of own children		
86	Coping strategy		
87	Improving parental skills		
88	Benefitting from course		
89	89 Allowing people to grow		
90	90 Christianity important		
91	91 Dignified treatment		
92	92 Lessons learnt		
93	93 Parental guidance		

	CODES		Sub codes
94	94 Noisy		
95	95 Trying vs Not succeeding		
96	96 Proud of work		
97	97 Children's emotions		97a Aggression 97b Shy 97c Excitement 97d Loving 97e Calm 97f Stumbling blocks 97g Merely surviving 97h Unhappy and depressed
98	98 Professional development		
99	99 Appreciating camp management		
100	100 Strict with own children		
101	101 Own children grateful		
102	102 Using centre for other purposes		
102	102 Using centre for other purposes		
103	103 Positive relationship		

	CODES		Sub codes
104	104 Positive relationship with camp management		
105	105 Outsider lack of insight		
106	106 Outsider curiosity		
107	107 Outsider ignorance		
108	108 Children enjoying school		
109	109 Overinvolvement		
110	110 Staying for free		
111	111 Camp management support		
112	112 Camp politics		
113	113 Outsider view of settlement		
114	114 Camp management response to outsider view		
115	115 Interdependence		
116	116 Negative relationship		
117	117 Professional involvement		

	CODES		Sub codes
118	118 Volunteer characteristics		118a Loving the children 118b Knowing the children
119	119 Exposing vs covering up		
120	120 Negative involvement		
121	121 Disloyalty		
122	122 Lack of commitment		
123	123 Tranquility		
124	124 Benefitting from donations		
125	125 Power of cliques		
126	126 Initiative		126a Decorating classroom
127	127 Valuing training		127a Wants training
128	128 Confidence in own capacity		
129	ECD centre	129a 129b 129c 129d	Spacious Well-equipped inside Decorated Well-equipped outside play area

	CODES		Sub codes
130	Caregivers' effect on children		
131	Lowest quality workers for the centre		
132	Working hard		
133	Caring vs Not caring		
134	Professional knowledge	134a 134b 134c	Age-appropriate art activities Lack of knowledge Inappropriate activities
135	Poorest workers for centre vs Best workers somewhere else		
136	Removing children vs Supporting		
137	Outsider lack of commitment	137a	Support not sustained
138	Cleaning up		
139	Unhealthy conditions		
140	Outsider influence on residents		
141	Battling with parents.		

	CODES		Sub codes
142	Experience	142a 142b 142c 142d	Gaining experience Valuing experience Enjoying experience Lacking experience
143	Prefers working with children		
144	Parents'abilities		
145	Divine calling		
146	Divine purpose		
147	Makeshift housing	147a 147b 147c	Small Dark Poor protection

## ***Thea's Data***

### **Thea – First Interview**

#### **Location of Interview**

The house of the volunteer supporting the ECD centre (Mia)

#### **Categories**

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Place

Outside response

Unpredictability

Children's needs

Children's abilities

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

#### **Emerging Themes**

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for this interview covers 28 pages, of which only the first page is shown here. The full verbatim text of this interview is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<p><b>Jy het in die vorige onderhoud gesê Oom Deon is nie vir die skool nie.</b>  01 Aan die een kant is hy (vir die skool) want dan kan die ouers werk.  02 (Long silence and then a sigh).  01 Maar dit is teen hulle geloof. 3 Dit is ook maar moeilik, want hulle het ook maar prentjies van die skool om geld vir F. (the settlement) self in te samel. 68 Maar nou ja. Die kleuterskool bring indirek vir hulle geld van buite of in, want mense se harte word altyd sag as hulle 'n klomp kinders bymekaar sien. 02 Dit is ongelukkig so.</p>	01 Financial gains vs faith 03 Benefitting financially from children and centre 68 Donations 02 Moral dilemma	Camp leadership    Outside response Practitioner emotional response	C) CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES D) EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT A) SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
<p><b>Sê vir my die toekoms van die kleuterskool?</b></p>			
<p>04 Very long silence</p>	04 Uncertainty	Practitioner emotional response	A) SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
<p>04 Ek het nie 'n clue nie. 5 Volgens my en Mia en D. (Organisation D.) wil ons elke jaar verbeter die skool, wil ons vastigheid kry, sodat ons die einde van die jaar 'n konsert kan hou (dis nou volgende jaar), dat ons verskillende klasse kan kry. Volgens ons wil 6 ons vorentoe gaan en 7 ook ondervinding kry. 4 Maar Oom Deon, ek weet nie. Solank as die vrouens daar moet werk, moet hy tog 'n kleuterskool hê. Behalwe as hulle beurte maak en die dag kyk die die vrou na die kinders en what, what. Maar dit gaan moeilikheid afgee. .</p>	04 Uncertainty 05 Wanting to improve and grow 05 Wanting to improve and grow, 07 Wanting to gain experience	Practitioner emotional response Practitioner professional response	

## Thea – Second Interview

### Location of Interview

The house of the volunteer supporting the ECD centre (Mia)

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Place

Outside response

Unpredictability

Children's needs

Children's abilities

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

### Emerging Themes

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for this interview covers 14 pages, of which only the first page is shown here. The full verbatim text of this interview is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<p><b>Jy het vertel julle gaan Sakhabula toe?</b></p>			
<p>Ja, ons gaan eers Donderdag. Ons sou Dinsdag gegaan het, maar toe het die vrou die papiere weggooi.<sup>19</sup> Ek was so ongelukkig, want <sup>19m</sup> Mia het so veel moeite gedoen om al daai vorms te kry en toe gooi die vrou dit nou weg. <sup>63a</sup> Hulle gaan hom Dinsdag hof toe vat en kyk of hulle hom kan inkry daar, by Meerhof. Meerhof is 'n skool vir spesiale onderwys. So daar is sielkundiges. Een van die susters wat eenkeer 'n maand by ons kom saam met die dokter, sy werk by Meerhof as 'n suster. Meerhof is anderkant Jasmyn. Nou gaan ons Donderdag nou eers Settlement S. toe.</p>	<p><sup>19m</sup> Arranging assistance</p> <p><sup>63a</sup> Lacking abilities</p>	<p>Support Infrastructure</p> <p>Children's abilities</p>	<p>D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT</p> <p>A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>
<p><b>Watse plek is Settlement S.?</b></p>			
<p>Ek weet nie hoe dit daar lyk. Is dit meer 'n mission of is dit meer 'n plakkerskamp whatever nie, informele settlement. <sup>11</sup> En dan gaan sy nog 'n skooltjie daar begin. Daar's blykbaar 'n onderwyser met ondervinding. <sup>33e</sup> Dit is fantasties. <sup>33d</sup> Ons het van ons skool se speelgoed vir haar geskenk. Nou gaan ons dit vat vir haar. Ons kan seker nie als vat nie, maar ek hoop ons kan als saamvat. Nou gaan ons Donderdag soontoe. <sup>33e</sup> Ek is eintlik baie opgewonde. Ek gaan nie permanent soontoe nie, ek gaan net vir die dag.</p>	<p><sup>11</sup> Plans to expand</p> <p><sup>33e</sup> Enthusiasm</p> <p><sup>33d</sup> Supportive</p>	<p>Practitioner Professional responses</p> <p>Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	
<p>Maar die skooltjie is nog nie begin nie? <sup>21d</sup> Ek weet nie hoe ver is hy nie, ek het nie 'n clue nie (laughing). So ja, maar sy sê hulle het niks. <sup>33e</sup> Ek is baie opgewonde.</p>	<p><sup>21d</sup> Uncertainty</p> <p><sup>33e</sup> Enthusiasm</p>	<p>Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	
<p><b>Ek moet einlik nog 'n plek kry. Ek het gedink ek moet 3 plekke hê. Ek het al eenkeer met Susan by die karavaan-park gepraat. Ek moet haar nou weer bel. Ek hoop sy is nog daar, want sy het ook gepraat sy gaan dalk weg.</b></p>			
<p>Eishhh, weet jy (sighing). <sup>54</sup> Die mense daar ook, hulle kom en gaan <sup>10</sup> Dit is hartseer. Dit is die gróóte probleem. <sup>54</sup> Jy kan baie mense oplei as hulle hart net daar wil bly. Dan kan jy enigeen oplei. Ek bedoel, as hulle net daar land dan vertel hulle jou al klaar...Maar ag. Ek jok seker. Lag. <sup>42g</sup> Daai mense het ook bybedoings hoekom hulle in die kleuterskool land. <sup>10</sup> So dit is eintlik hartseer. <sup>54</sup> As hulle net bietjie kan bly, dat 'n mens hulle kan oplei en dat mens nog net iemand het wat in roetine kan kom en dit. Jy wil nie weet hoeveel personeel het ons al gehad, ek was heel geskok vanoggend toe jy praat. Janet? Manda? Ek het al vergeet hulle het daar gewerk, daar was al soveel ander mense.</p>	<p><sup>54</sup> Constant changing</p> <p><sup>10</sup> "Dit is hartseer."</p> <p><sup>54</sup> Constant changing</p> <p><sup>42g</sup> Utterior motives</p> <p><sup>10</sup> "Dit is hartseer."</p> <p><sup>54</sup> Constant changing</p>	<p>Practitioner Emotional Responses</p> <p>Support Infrastructure</p> <p>Unpredictability</p>	<p>D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT</p>

## Thea – Third Interview

### Location of Interview

Coffee shop near Thea's settlement

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Place

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

### Emerging Themes

A.SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)

B.EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)

C.CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)

D.EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for this interview covers 12 pages, of which only the first page is shown here. The full verbatim text of this interview is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
Ek het gedink oor wat jy die laaste tyd met my gepraat het –jy moet vir my sê of ek reg is - daar is baie sosiale probleme op die plaas soos die kind se molestering en dan wil hulle nie buite-betrokkenheid hê , want hulle wil nie hê dit moet uitkom nie en dat hulle dit gaan toesmeer. Jy het gesê vir jou is dit baie ontstellend, want hulle smeer dit toe. En jy voel as 'n mens dit toesmeer is jy aandadig.			
04j Dit vat aan jou gesondheid veral as jy siek is, nè. As jy siek is johhh, en iemand gee jou net 'n vuil kyk, johh, die pyne en goed wat jy voel, dan besef jy ....As jy siek is dan voel jy wat dit aan jou liggaam doen, want dan voel jy dit. Soos nou wat ek siek was johhh,...	04j Stress affecting health	Experiences in private life	A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
Toe het jy gesê die mense wat met die kinders werk se moraliteit is nie vir jou aanvaarbaar nie soos as jy rook en vloek voor die kinders.			
34b Ja, en 'n mens val ook partymaal. Soos in die begin sou ek dit nooit, maar nou die dag het ek voor 'n kind gevloek, jy weet, dan voel jy jeee...(laughing).	34b Stumbling morally	Practitioner Emotional Responses	
Hierdie studie gaan mos oor jou probleme en hoe jy dit hanteer.			
Jy kan nie... 14 Ek kan Solidariteit se maatskaplike werkster bel, maar ek gaan nie, Ek gaan soos 'n pawpaw lyk, want hulle gaan dit als op my draai. Soos Mia nou die dag met die bakleiers. Sy praat lelik met ouers. O, ek het jou gehoor, jy praat leliker. Maar sy weet nie... Dit is nie 'n logiese statement nie, dit is nie (laughing) ja...	14 Taking action vs Action rejected	Practitioner Professional responses Support Infrastructure	A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT
Jy gaan nêrens kom nie, 14 dit is hoekom ek 'n verslag wou skryf, maar ek kon dit nie print nie, die een ou se printer wou nie, dis 'n automatic, ag hy't vir 'n uur gelaai, maar hy wou nie print nie. Die kantoor wou nie vir my print nie.	14 Taking action vs Action rejected	Practitioner Professional responses Support Infrastructure	A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT

## Thea – Field Notes

### Location

Thea's settlement

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

### Emerging Themes

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for the field notes for the 4 Thea interviews covers 10 pages, of which only the first page of each field note is shown here. The full verbatim text of these field notes is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
<p><b>Thea – Field Notes – 20 December</b></p>		<p>I visited Thea only to hand her the transcripts of the last interview.</p>	
<p>08 Thea however used the opportunity to talk to me about the challenges she experienced at the time. 21n She was very upset, 21f she was very tired, indicated that she can't continue and that 21p she was going to resign. The volunteer from the NGO supporting the centre heard this from the principal/volunteer supporting Thea's centre. 19k She then phoned Thea and asked her if her exhaustion was not merely end-of-the-year exhaustion. 21q Thea felt that she was totally misunderstood. The settlement also expected her to work during the December school holiday.</p>	<p>08 Difficult working circumstances 21n Upset  21f Lacking energy  21p Wanting to resign  19k Lack of insight  21q Misunderstood</p>	<p>Practitioner Emotional Responses  Support Infrastructure  Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	<p>A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)  D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)</p>
<p>37 She went on to explain that she could always bond with children, but because she had to do formal work with the children, she could not bond. 132 She also said that she did not have a photocopier and therefore had to work till late at night to copy worksheets by hand. 51 She then indicated that Mia's centre maintains a very high standard and that her centre did not have the same high standard. 63a Her children cannot count up to hundred. 37 She announced that formal work was not suitable for her children and 21 that formal work left her highly frustrated.</p>	<p>37 Insight  132 Working hard  51 High standards  63a Lacking abilities  37 Insight  21 Frustration</p>	<p>Practitioner Professional responses  Children  Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
Field notes Thea – 26 April			
<p>123As I entered the settlement at 8h00 the sprinklers were on, irrigating lush green gardens creating a peaceful atmosphere, little wooden huts next to a winding path, basking in the sun. Some of the huts are extended with shade netting and some have little gardens in front of them. 123A black rabbit was running around and chickens were scratching between the houses. 77cWhen we later walked to the outside play area, the owner was on a tractor, busy picking up bales of hay. A garden worker was busy mowing the lawn and a woman was busy raking leaves. 97dThe children ran up to Oom Deon, giving him a hug. 123This was a picture of pastoral tranquillity.</p>	<p>123Tranquility 123Tranquility 77cWorking on settlement 97dLoving</p>	<p>Place Behaviour of residents Children</p>	<p>B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>
<p>129aThea's classroom, three wooden huts joined together, is far from the other classrooms or the outside play area. 96She indicated that she came in early the morning to tidy the classroom; a neighbour brought a bottle with flowers in, all for my visit. 03Mia, the volunteer, pays R1300 to rent the classroom from camp leadership. 19uShe also pays Thea about R800 per month, R200 randomly during the month. Thea indicated that she did not pay her when she was off sick.</p>	<p>129aSpacious 96Proud of work 03Benefitting financially from children and centre 19uSupporting practitioner financially</p>	<p>Place Practitioner Professional responses Camp leadership Support Infrastructure</p>	<p>C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT</p>

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
Thea – Field Notes – 1 May			
I went to Thea to collect progress reports; 96she proudly offered me her camera with photos of the children and activities she used to present to the children.	96Proud of work	Practitioner Professional responses	
147aI visited her in her room - a small 3x3 dark wooden house, divided by a curtain behind which she hanged her clothes. She also had a small set of drawers in her room and a small table with a bowl for washing dishes. 147bAt first I thought the house did not have a window as we sat on her bed talking with the door open. 147cShe indicated that her wooden room was full of holes, visible when she goes to the outside toilet at night when the light is on in her house. She also said that her roof was loose and that a rat came into her room destroying her back pack.	147aSmall 147bDark 147cPoor protection	Place	B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE
35dWhile talking two boys walked in – the one boy was in Thea’s class and the other one an older sibling. 43She showed them the naartjie I gave her and asked them what colour it was. 35dAs the two walked out the older one took the naartjie without Thea saying anything. I then went after the boys to rescue Thea’s fruit.	35dComfortable 43Stimulating children	Children Practitioner Professional responses	A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
She told me about a lady asking help with 3 siblings (all three in primary school) she is looking after. 29aaThe mother was using heroin while pregnant with them. I commented that the parents need parental guidance from an expert from outside.	29aaDrug abuse	Parent Responses	

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
<b>Thea – Field Notes – 4 August</b>			
I visited Thea today to give her the transcript of the last interview. She is staying currently with her elderly father and stepmother in a small middle class townhouse in a settlement on a private farm, 25km. from the city.			
04l She indicated that her parents went to church but she never goes with them to church. 04l During the conversation it became clear that her religious belief system differs from that of her family and that she finds it difficult to live with her father. She also told me that her family was very upset when she moved to the settlement to work as an ECD practitioner and did not contact her during this time.	04l Differing religious beliefs 04l Differing religious beliefs 04k No support from family	Experiences in private life	
04m Thea was still sick, bloated from cortisone. Although she told me to wear walking shoes as she planned a hike up a hill, she indicated that because she went for a walk the previous day, she was not well enough to go for a walk again.	04m Poor health	Experiences in private life	
21s Thea was once again very eager to talk. As we walked in she offered me a cup of tea and switched the kettle on, at the end of our conversation, I reminded her to make the tea.	21s Eager to divulge	Practitioner Emotional Responses	

## Thea – Telephonic Conversations

### Location of Interview

The house of the volunteer supporting the ECD centre (Mia)

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Place

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

### Emerging Themes

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding of the 2 Thea telephone conversations covers 2 pages, which are shown unabridged here.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<p><b>20 April</b></p>			
<p>I phoned Thea to arrange to pay a field visit. She was quite hesitant when I asked her, I sensed that something was wrong when she kept dead quiet. 08She then announced that a bomb was going to explode. She explained that every time in a meeting when she made a general comment about something the staff did wrong and what were the general mistakes they made a bomb exploded. She went on to explain that sooner or later a bomb explodes, so it doesn't help (to talk about mistakes they make?).</p>	<p>08Difficult working circumstances</p> <p>02Moral dilemma</p>		
<p>Only when I indicated that I was not going to look at her teaching with a critical eye, I was only going to observe the challenges she identified in context, she indicated that I could come.</p>			
<p>42rShe talked about a staff member that burned a child with a cigarette 14and that she tried to discuss the incident with Mia. She repeatedly indicated that Mia should have accepted her word, and that the centre was not about the children.</p>	<p>42rChild abuse</p> <p>14Taking action vs Action rejected</p>		
<p>She also said that the mother of the child went to the owner of the settlement about the incident. 13The owner indicated that if the mother was not happy in the settlement, she should pack her bags and leave.</p>	<p>13Lack of support</p>		

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<p>30 April</p>			
<p>21z When Thea answered the phone, she could not speak to me as she had just heard that a one and a half year old child of whom she was very fond, had died the previous night. 21s She later phoned me back as she really wanted to talk to me.</p>	<p>21z Grieving 25b Children dying 21s Eager to divulge</p>		
<p>She indicated that she had been fired and started to cry as she said she had to say good bye to the children. She then started to talk about Mara – the woman who substituted for Thea while she was off sick. 130 Parents indicated that their children started to wet themselves since Mara took over in Thea’s class. Parents complained that the children’s ears were being pulled.</p>	<p>04b Job loss in the settlement 21l Sense of loss 130 Caregivers’ effect on children</p>		
<p>I asked her if she could not speak to Oom Deon about what was happening. 09 She responded that he said she was bad for his school. I asked her if she would stay on if she was not working in the centre. She answered that emotionally it would be too difficult for her to see the children every day and not being able to work with them. 21x She said that because of stress the glands in her feet became swollen.</p>	<p>09 Lack of understanding 21x Stress affecting health</p>		
<p>I then arranged to go and see her on 1 May.</p>			

## Thea – Photographs as visual support

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Place

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

### Emerging Themes

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The photograph set for Thea covers 10 pages, of which only the first and the last pages are shown here. The full unabridged version of the photograph record is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
	<p>123Tranquility 08Difficult working circumstances 15Unsafe conditions</p>	<p>Place Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	<p>B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>
	<p>123Tranquility 147Makeshift housing</p>	<p>Place</p>	<p>B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE</p>

	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<p>Five year old</p> 	<p>63d Age-appropriate art development</p>	<p>Children's abilities</p>	
	<p>42r Child abuse 119 Exposing vs covering up</p>	<p>Support Infrastructure Practitioner Professional responses Support Infrastructure</p>	<p>D) EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT A) SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>



## ***Rina's Data***

### **Rina – First Interview**

#### **Location of Interview**

ECD centre at Rina's settlement

#### **Categories**

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Place

Experiences in private life

#### **Emerging Themes**

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for this interview with Rina covers 11 pages, of which only the first two pages are shown here. The full unabridged version of the coding for this interview is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
<p>Ek sal later weer die getikte weergawe vir jou sal gee om te dink oor jou antwoorde, dit help jou ook om tot insigte te kom.</p>			
<p>Ek het vir jou gesê waarom gaan dit – oor watter probleme het julle en ook hoe hanteer julle dit. Mens self maak mos maar planne met jou probleme en die ding is ander mense kan dan leer van julle. Hoe het daai vrou in daai groot dorp dit hanteer. Mense wat betrokke wil raak kan dan sien wat is julle probleme. Dit is hoe my studie werk – ek gaan glad nie inkom en sê: Hoor hier Rina, ek dink hierdie is nie reg nie of ek dink jy het te min van dit nie. Dit is jôú skool, so my stem is glad nie in die studie nie, dit is net jou stem.</p>			
<p>Jy het gesê jy raak partykeer moedeloos?</p>			
<p>Ja, in die begin, soos laas jaar, 'n kind is hartseer, 38jy raak baie betrokke by die kinders. 58Ek is oneindig lief vir hierdie kinders. Dan dink mens jy gaan dit maar los, 45maar dan dink jy maar wat gaan van hulle word. 58Ek is baie lief vir hulle. 64En elke ding wat hulle na jou toe kom. Dan sê hulle Tannie ek voel nie lekker nie. 29fVan die ma's stel nie, nee, ek sal nie sê stel nie belang nie, maar hulle is baie....no care. 64En soos byvoorbeeld Vrydag, toe het twee dogtertjies my dag gemaak. Hulle het vir my 'n briefie gebring wat sê: Dankie wat Tannie vir ons doen, ons is lief vir Tannie, geniet Tannie se naweek, met so gesiggie geteken. En dis sulke klein dingetjies wat my raak, wat jy raaksien. Dan dink ek maar hulle</p>	<p>38Involved 58Love for children 45Responsibility towards children 64Sense of purpose 29fUninvolved  64Sense of purpose</p>	<p>Practitioner Professional responses Practitioner Emotional Responses Parent Responses</p>	<p>A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
<p>waardeer wat jy vir hulle doen. Net daai klein bietjie waardering is wat jy nodig het.</p>			
<p>64 Word dit waardeer? Of is dit net die skool is nou maar daar om my kind te vat. Net daai klein waardering, dis baie wat tel.</p>	<p>64 Sense of purpose</p>	<p>Practitioner Professional responses</p>	
<p><b>Is daar Gr R kinders in die skool?</b></p>			
<p>68a Ons het drie kinders wat beurse gekry het. Die dogtertjie het bietjie laat ingekom, toe het die sponsors klaar betaal. En nou soek ons vir haar een. 45 Nou doen ons maar wat ons dink hulle doen in Graad 0 om haar bietjie 'n voorsprong te gee. Maar ons soek rerig iemand om haar te help. Maar sy vorder darem goed. 63a Sy is bietjie, ek sal nie sê stadig nie. 18b Daar het dingetjies in haar lewe gebeur wat ek dink haar bietjie terughou. 63b Maar sy vorder nou goed. 76 Daar is Peter wat haar elke middag help. 63b Maar sy doen goed. Sy vorder goed.</p>	<p>68a Dependent on donations 45 Responsibility towards children 63a Lack of abilities 18b Children's circumstances 76 Support from</p>	<p>Outside response Practitioner Professional responses Children Socio-economic circumstances Support Infrastructure</p>	<p>A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES  D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT</p>
<p><b>Jy het gesê jy raak partykeer bietjie moedeloos?</b></p>			
<p>Maar nou is ek reg. Die kinders vorder en alles gaan nou net reg. Ja.</p>	<p>63b Making progress</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>

## Rina – Second Interview

### Location of Interview

ECD centre at Rina's settlement

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

Place

### Emerging Themes

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for this interview with Rina covers 8 pages, of which only the first two pages are shown here. The full unabridged version of the coding for this interview is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
Jy moet nou dubbel diens doen. Cindy wat gehelp het in kleuterskool is uit.			
Die goed is containers?			
Dis die stationery. In daai container maak ons pap in die oggend. Daar is die speelkamertjie, bietjie kleiner, 2 tot 3 jaar se klassie en daar is die poppehuisie vir die groter meisies. 22Dit is klein, van daar tot hieso, so klein, 11maar ons gaan dit deurbreek. 22Dit is baie klein. Dit is baie, baie klein. Hierdie klassie, dit is almal dieselfde grootte. Ek kan nie 11 kleintjies in so klein kamertjie hê nie, Dis onmoontlik.	22Lack of space 11Plans to expand 22Lack of space	Place	B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE
Hoeveel juffrouens is hier?			
54Dis net ek en sy, maar nou is dit net ek. 22Kyk hoe klein is dit.	54Constant changing 22Lack of space	Unpredictability Place	A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE
46Hulle moet dit skoonmaak more. Weet jy wat gaan ek doen, ek gaan more kom en die goed wat stukkend is uitgooi. Kyk soos daai goed, ek gaan dit uitgooi. Ek speel oop kaarte, wat ek sê kan jy maar....glo of wat ook al. 99Maar ek sal hulle	46Taking control 33Loyalty 99Appreciating camp management 33Loyalty	Practitioner Professional responses	A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<p>nooit in die steek laat nie. Verstaan. 33b Soos ek sê hulle het my blyplek gegee en 33 lek sal hulle nie in die steek laat nie.</p>		<p>Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	
<p>Daar is 3 sulke kamertjies. Daai een het ons gemaak vir die kleintjies se speelkamer. Hierdie een het ons die scooters ingesit, Maar bedags bring ons die scooters uit. 22 Dan is dit die klassie, maar dit is ...baie,baie klein. Dit is 3 by 3! Ja, dis 3 by 3. Dit is báaie báaie klein. Dit is nie so vir 'n klas nie. Ek sal dit nooit doen nie.</p>	<p>22 Lack of space</p>	<p>Place</p>	<p>B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE</p>
<p><b>Ek sal vir jou containers bring.</b></p>			
<p>46 Asseblief, dat ek net die goed kan uitsort en in plek sit. As jy in die vakansie net een dag kom en ons alles hier skoonmaak en reg het vir die volgende kwartaal. 48 En nog 'n ding, hulle weet as hulle klaar gespeel het, moet hulle dit bêre in daai ding. 11 Nou het ons gedink om daai een deur te breek, Om een gróót plek te maak.</p>	<p>46 Taking control 48 Valuing discipline 11 Plans to expand</p>	<p>Practitioner Professional responses Place</p>	<p>A. SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE</p>
<p>En die een is ons stationery ene, en daai ene maak ons pap in die oggende. Ons kry die pap van die stoep af, of ons kry soos cornflakes en goeters en dan maak ons dit daar.</p>			

## Rina – Third Interview

### Location of Interview

ECD centre at Rina's settlement

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

Place

### Emerging Themes

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for this interview with Rina covers 24 pages, of which only the first two pages are shown here. The full unabridged version of the coding for this interview is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
Is dit die goed alles vir Mandeladag?			
68Mmmm Dit is sponsors wat hier gekom het, dit is goed wat oorgebly het, het hulle gelos. Ons kry baie goeters.	68Donations	Outside response	A) SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
Ek sien, ek sien. Wat dit betref lyk my julle het genoeg goed.			
68bJa, maar daar kom nie élke keer nie.	68bDonations precarious	Outside response	
So dit kom wisselvallig?			
68Daar kom nou volgende naweek weer mense wat goeters bring. So ek weet nie wat gaan daar kom nie.	68Donations		
So dit maak dit vir julle moeilik, want dit kom en dan kom dit nie en jy weet nie wanneer dit kom nie?			
68bJa, so werk dit maar. Aan en af.	68bDonations precarious	Outside response	

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	MEMO'S	EMERGING THEMES
68bJa, soos die mense, hulle werk ook maar met sponsors van buite af, of hulle nou goed gaan kry of nie om te bring.	68bDonations precarious	Outside response	
Wat bring hulle?			
68Daai dag het hulle hierdie goed gebring vir die hele kamp kos gegee en braaivleis gehou.	68Donations	Outside response	
Wie is dit?			
68O, jinne ek ken nie die mense nie. Daai bokse daar kom van Johannesburg mini council af. Hulle het vir al die kinders komberse gebring, dié komberse. Die dikkes. Elkeen het 'n pakkie sweets bygekry.	68Donations	Outside response	A) SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
Maar julle kry baie sweets lyk my?			
68Oe, ons kry te veel. En met Kerstyd oe, baie, baie, baie	68Donations	Outside response	

## Rina – Field Notes

### Location of Interaction

The settlement where Rina lives and works.

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Place

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

### Emerging Themes

- E. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- F. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- G. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- H. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The coding for the field notes for the 6 Rina interviews covers 19 pages, of which only the first page of each field note is shown here. The full verbatim text of these field notes is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<b>RINA – Field Notes – 6 May</b>			
I paid a visit to Rina to give her toys and material for her class. 33eShe was very excited – 19hthe wall between the two small rooms has been broken down and painted a pretty yellow by a volunteer.	33eEnthusiasm  19hDecorating classroom	Practitioner Emotional Responses Support Infrastructure	A) SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES D) EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT
19mThis volunteer, a parent from a nearby private school, is co-ordinating the whole volunteer involvement of a group of parents from the school. 19hThe volunteer not only painted the classroom for Rina, but also the children's size furniture; 19oShe also bakes cakes for the children in the centre on their birthdays.	19mArranging assistance 19hDecorating classroom 19oPractical help	Support Infrastructure	
126Rina shared her plans with me how she planned to decorate the classroom. 127aand that she told the camp manager that she was now ready to get a qualification. 96She was obviously very proud of what was happening.	126Initiative 127aWants training 96Proud of work	Practitioner Professional responses	A) SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
96When I asked her if I could take photographs of the classroom, she requested that the photographs are taken after she had decorated her classroom. She also requested that I come as non-participant observer on a Thursday to her class as this is the only day that no volunteer comes to the centre and Rina can be involved with her children. 128She wanted me to experience her in action with her children.	96Proud of work  128Confidence in own capacity	Practitioner Professional responses	

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<b>RINA – Field Notes – 14 May</b>			
I arrive at Rina's centre at 9h00 as the centre only opens then.			
19r She announces that another volunteer who was visiting them, was raving about them, saying they are just wonderful (ons is net wonderlik).	19r Appreciation	Support Infrastructure	D) EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT
By 9h30 the volunteer Rhonda is on her way. 19 The volunteer tells me that she obtained a Masters degree in Linguistics in the 1980's. She indicates that she has had an ECD centre for many years and could train people like Petro (the seventeen year old girl helping Rina in the centre) successfully to be ECD practitioner.	19 Volunteer support	Support Infrastructure	
The volunteer teacher teaching the older group arrives as 9h45.			
42c Petro calls the younger group (2 to 3 years old) into the classroom (Rina's class). Seven children sit around their tables while she stands in front of the class reading them a story. During the next lesson children have to point to different body parts, clapping to three and counting to three follows. The children are shown different plastic blocks, identifying the colours. While all this teaching is happening, children are reminded to be quiet "Ek wil niemand hoor nie".	41c Actively involved with children	Support Infrastructure	

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<p>Field notes RINA – 24 May</p>			
<p>19s At 9h00 a sport teacher from a private school nearby arrives to take the children to her school for movement activities. 19o She transports the children in her minibus to the school. On the way she gives me her opinion of the challenges people working with these children face. 29f She mentions lack of parent involvement, 63a their fine and gross motor development, problems with focusing on the task at hand.</p>	<p>19s Active involvement 19o Practical help 29f Uninvolved 63a Lacking abilities</p>	<p>Support Infrastructure Parent Responses Children</p>	<p>D) EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT</p>
<p>19s When we arrive she runs with the children on the rugby field to warm up. The younger ones scatter all over the rugby field, not staying with the teacher, some of them climb the stairs of the pavilion.</p>	<p>19s Active involvement</p>	<p>Support Infrastructure</p>	<p>D) EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT</p>
<p>19s The next activity is to run zigzag around cones. She runs with each child taking his hand. They are then warned to sit still. "As julle stilsit, kry julle chippies. Jy gaan nie chippies kry nie!"</p>	<p>19s Active involvement 19k Lack of insight</p>	<p>Support Infrastructure</p>	
<p>The next activity is to jump over cones. The young ones find the concept of feet together difficult. Some of them don't understand the concept at all. The teacher lifts them over the cones and gives each one praise regardless how well they did. She says "laat ons een keer, twee keer klap" to each child.</p>			

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<b>RINA – Field Notes – 30 May</b>			
I arrive at 9h10 as Rina is busy unlocking the centre. There are children around Rina and a few parents also enter.			
<p>21n Rina is very upset. 21o "Ek is moeg. Ek is moeg. 21p Ek gaan die sleutels teruggee. 21w As daar moeilikheid is, word dit op my uitgehaal." Apparently the food the previous day was not enough and Rina was blamed. 21x "My hoofpyn kom terug, ek het gister so migraine gehad. 21w Om elke keer op my af te gaan en ek was nie by daai meeting nie. Drie dae agtermekaar wat ek uitgevloek word, onnodig. Drie dae."</p>	<p>21n Upset 21o Despondent 21p Wanting to resign 21w Scapegoat 21x Stress affecting health</p>	<p>Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	<p>A) SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>
<p>Cindy arrives at 9h20. Petro is busy dishing up porridge for the children. 19s Rina and Cindy go to sort out some or other problems with a church group that has arrived at the camp and is busy loading chairs on a bakkie. Apparently they want to ask the church group if they can use the room from where they have removed the chairs as a play room for the children.</p>	<p>19s Active involvement</p>	<p>Support Infrastructure</p>	<p>D) EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT</p>
<p>The volunteer arrives at 9h30. 19q She asks Rina what is wrong. 21w "Alles is my skuld. Die groot kinders wil groot borde kos hê, die ouers het gekla." 19s Rina, Petro and the volunteer are all feeding the children - Maltabella, sugar and full cream milk. 21n Rina goes to sit down, upset, 21o despondent.</p>	<p>19q Supporting practitioner emotionally 21w Scapegoat 19s Active involvement 21n Upset 21o Despondent</p>	<p>Support Infrastructure Practitioner Emotional Responses</p>	<p>A) SOCIAL &amp; PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<b>RINA – Field Notes – 5 June</b>			
As I enter the camp at 9h15 sheep, cattle and goats are running over the road winding through the camp to graze on the grass of the camp. The atmosphere is one of peace and quiet.			
19o At the centre a man in an overall is busy washing the chairs of the centre. Cindy informs me that she has organised the worker as the chairs and centre are very dirty. A plumber from a plumbing company is busy installing a basin and tap. This was organised by a volunteer.	19o Practical help	Support Infrastructure	
An odd smell of something burning in the camp is hanging in the air.			
25e Barefoot children are running around till Cindy calls them for breakfast. 19s Cindy announces that from now on only fruit will be served during snack time, no more biscuits and sweets.	25e Neglected 19s Insight	Socio-economic circumstances Support Infrastructure	
68c Two volunteers arrive with bags of children's clothes, Cindy also takes two bags of clothes from her car.	68c Abundant donations	Outside response	
42e Two toddlers are not eating their porridge and Petro removes their plates without saying a word. 45a Rina is busy feeding a child. Bikes are taken from the storeroom for children to ride on.	42e Not taking responsibility 45a Taking responsibility	Support Infrastructure Practitioner Professional responses	

TRANSCRIPTION	CODES	CATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
<b>RINA – Field Notes – 10 June</b>			
<p>I arrive at 9h15. Smoke is hanging over the camp of different materials being burned coming from different shacks. 25e <b>Although it is midwinter, some children are running on their socks.</b> A five-year old is standing at the fence, crying, wanting to go out. 68c <b>A woman and a man from a pharmaceutical company arrive to come and inquire what they can donate to the centre.</b></p>	<p>25e <b>Neglected</b> 68c <b>Abundant donations</b></p>	<p><b>Socio-economic circumstances</b> <b>Outside response</b></p>	
<p>Rina leaves for her house to go and boil water for the porridge. The crying boy's father fetches him. 25e <b>Another five-year old girl with a dirty face is also crying. She is wearing only a long-sleeved dirty white t-shirt.</b></p>	<p>25e <b>Neglected</b></p>	<p><b>Socio-economic circumstances</b></p>	
<p>Rina serves the children porridge with a strawberry taste mixed with boiling water. 68d <b>She tells me the feed-a-child organisation donated the porridge on the day Robbie Wessels sang at the camp.</b></p>	<p>68d <b>Daily food donations</b></p>	<p><b>Outside response</b></p>	
<p>The crying girl is now hanging on the gate and does not want to come and eat. Rina threatens her "Ek gaan jou ma roep." 29c <b>(Rina and Petro told me earlier that the mother beat her severely with a belt when she took a cell phone to school. They indicated that the child had bruises on her arm and had to wear a long sleeve to hide the bruises. They said that if the welfare saw the beating, they would have removed the child.)</b></p>	<p>29c <b>Child abuse</b></p>	<p><b>Parent Responses</b></p>	

## Rina – Photographs as visual support

### Location of

The settlement where Rina lives and works.

### Categories

Practitioner Professional responses

Practitioner Emotional Responses

Socio-economic circumstances

Children

Parent Responses

Support Infrastructure

Place

Outside response

Unpredictability

Behaviour of residents

Camp leadership

Promises

Experiences in private life

### Emerging Themes

- A. SOCIAL & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's social and personal experiences)
- B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE (Practitioner's experience about place)
- C. CAMP LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES (Practitioner's experience with camp leadership)
- D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT (Practitioner's experience about the role of support infrastructure)

The photograph set for Rina covers 4 pages, of which only the first and the last pages are shown here. The full unabridged version of the photograph record is included in the unabridged copy of the coding document on a compact disc in a sleeve inside the back cover of this dissertation.

Photographs taken at Rina's settlement

	<b>CODES</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>EMERGING THEMES</b>
	129b Well equipped inside	Place	B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE
	129c Decorated 19h Decorating classroom	Place Support Infrastructure	B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT
	19s Active involvement	Support Infrastructure	D. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING SUPPORT

	<p>75 Littering</p>	<p>Place</p>	<p>B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE</p>
	<p>75 Littering 123 Tranquility</p>	<p>Place</p>	<p>B. EXPERIENCES CONCERNING PLACE</p>