

“WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?” OBJECTS OF SIGNIFICANCE IN RESIDENTIAL
PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG PERSONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Declaration

I declare that this report is my own work. It is a dissertation of limited scope presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M. Tech: Child and Youth Care at the University of South Africa. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

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ABSTRACT

Many young persons live under difficult circumstances. Factors including HIV/AIDS pandemic, exacerbate the need to place young persons into alternative placements. The new and the unknown can be frightening but carrying a faithful transitional object establishes therapeutic bridge between the old and known and the new and unknown.

This study sought to explore South African child and youth care workers' awareness of young persons' objects of significance in residential care settings. The rationale was that with greater awareness, important objects may become a more useful option for the promotion of young persons' well-being.

The research confirmed that South African child and youth care workers are aware of the existence and importance of significant objects. It further revealed that young persons possess different objects of significance to which workers need to pay careful attention.

Key terms:

Young persons; Child and youth care worker; Residential care programme; Awareness; Well-being; Developmental work; Therapeutic work; Transition; Possessions; Significance; Transitional objects.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Raj (10) used to stay with his ill mother in a shack. She was very poor but managed to knit him a jersey. Due to her illness, she could not knit any more and the jersey got older and older. When Raj came into a residential care setting, he decided to bring with him these “old pieces of wool”. Upon arrival, the first thing the child and youth care worker did was to bath him, and give him a new, warm jersey – a caring gesture indeed. A few minutes later, she was appalled to find Raj in a deep and peaceful sleep, wearing the same old jersey again. She became so angry that she decided to take away the jersey and threw it in the dustbin. A few months later, she was surprised to find that same old jersey – hidden in Raj’s drawer.

It is apparent that Raj valued the jersey knitted by his mother more than the new one given to him by the child and youth care worker. However, the jersey’s value clearly was not apparent to this person. The fact that Raj went to the trouble of finding and hiding the old jersey suggests that, unbeknown to the child and youth care worker, it had some significance to him. The child and youth care worker failed to recognise that significance. Winnicott cited by Gaddini (1978:115) believes that what matters “is not the object’s reality, as it can be seen from the outside, but the way the child represents it internally”.

Raj was fortunate in that he was able to salvage his jersey from the dustbin. How many young persons in residential child and youth care programmes continue to have their significant objects taken and thrown away? Are child and youth care workers aware of the significance of these items that might be serving as transitional objects for the young persons? Thinking of some of these items as “transitional objects” is one way to help understand their possible significance to young people. While all objects of significance may not be transitional objects,

the literature on transitional objects offers us some insight into the possible importance of personal possessions for young people in care.

Fulcher (2005) describes the value of the transitional object as a comfort and reassurance for young persons across the divides of life. In describing some transitional objects for some young persons, Deri (1978:51) mentions that at first it may be the thumb or the fist, later a piece of soft material found near the crib, even later a soft stuffed animal and, finally, any toy which can fulfil the function of a good transitional object. Transitional objects come in different forms.

Many young persons live under difficult circumstances as a result of factors such as poverty, neglect, abuse, abandonment and orphanhood. The current HIV/AIDS pandemic is likely to exacerbate the need to put more young persons into alternative placements. According to Statistics South Africa (2006), the percentage of children who were double orphans increased from about 1.4 percent in 1995 to about 2.7 percent in 2005. Placements in alternative places will happen despite the fact that the importance and significance of family life is well known to many helping professionals. Irrespective of where the young persons are going to be cared for and irrespective of the kind of care and support they receive, memories of their families will always remain with them. In acknowledgement of the importance of family life, Fewster (2003:83) contests that “you can take the child out of the family but you can never take the family out of the child”. Young persons need to be supported when dealing with these precious, sometimes painful, memories.

Circumstances such as the ones mentioned above will result in some young persons no longer living with their families, either temporarily or permanently, and therefore they will need to be removed, often involuntarily (Charles & Charles, 2003:111) to the new environments. The new, the unknown, in itself can be frightening for the small child (and to many adults); but carrying the faithful transitional object establishes a bridge between the old and known and the new

and unknown. It helps to develop a feeling of familiarity within the unfamiliar (Deri, 1978:52).

Although the removal may be in the best interests of the young person, it may not necessarily be experienced and perceived as such by them. It is against this background that Garfat (1998:25) warns that we must concern ourselves not only with how people in general might experience the processes we have created for them but also with how each individual makes meaning of them. Rapid technological and social changes have led to profound changes in reality perception (Rose, 1978:347). Therefore, removal needs to be handled with great sensitivity. This sensitivity can be demonstrated if we continue to remember that, essentially, transitional relatedness and transitional phenomena provide bridging functions between poor reality contact and more meaningful and vital contact with reality (Fowler, 1999:220).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the story of Raj is simply an illustration of what might happen, it is not far-fetched. It is something that can and does happen in reality. Fowler (1999:220) shares an incident where a patient's object was ripped away and left the patient with the following terrible memories:

I had a soft, pink pig...like a teddy bear but fatter and cute. I slept with it every night in my crib. One night someone came in and stole it, because I woke the next morning and it was gone. I loved that pig and it was ripped away from me ... I was crushed.

Patin (2002) notes that we grow up needing transitional objects in order to get through difficult periods of our lives. The researcher tends to agree with this statement as even many adults he spoke to mentioned having something that they hold on to in the form of a transitional object. For example, the researcher had a colleague who often carried a uniquely knitted jacket when she goes out of

her hometown. She mentioned to the researcher that this jacket was knitted for her by her late grandmother. She further mentioned that she usually takes it along even if she is not going to use it, as it gives her a sense of security.

Fulcher (2004) mentions that when it comes to leaving care or moving on to another care environment or life space, transitional objects and “my belongings” take on real significance for young persons. Yet young persons who are forced to leave their homes due to difficult circumstances to go and live with others often find themselves not having much say in terms of the belongings they can keep. The ‘insensitive act’ of not allowing young persons to keep their objects may not be intentional but often comes as a result of a lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding about these objects. Some adults even go to the extent of forcing the young persons to get rid of these objects of significance, as a result causing them more hurt. Fulcher (2005) states that whether called ‘blankey’ or ‘raggy’; whether a special doll or well-used soft toy, such transitional objects help children transition from one state of being to another. Although these objects may seem insignificant to others, they are of considerable importance to the owner.

In affirming the value of transitional objects, Winnicott (1957:189) cautions that it is distressing for children not only when their transitional object is lost, as happens sometimes by accident, but also, for example, when some parent with a lack of understanding of its real significance gives it away to another baby. Garfat and McElwee (2004:78) concur that in the absence of full understanding of a situation, our interventions may be not only useless but actually harmful. Maier (1987:20-21) cautions against stripping individuals of their transitional objects as they enter new group living situations.

Some residential care programmes are very prescriptive about what belongings young persons may bring into care. Fulcher (2004) alludes to this by noting that young persons’ belongings may be viewed with suspicion. Some of the

transitional objects may fall into a category of those items that are not allowed into a residential care programme. In some cases, even if the objects are allowed in, the young persons are not allowed to keep these objects with them all the time – sometimes for safety reasons. This tendency is well captured by Deri (1978:50), who reported a patient as saying: “They never gave me things I wanted when I really wanted them. By the time I got it, it didn’t matter to me anymore”. If objects of importance are stored away, they will not serve their purpose of promoting a sense of well-being and safety.

Given that at the time of admission into residential care programmes young persons may still be anxious and therefore still dealing with a lot of uncertainty, they may not have the courage, the skill or the awareness to inform adults about their need to keep their transitional objects with them on a daily basis. The question is whether child and youth care workers pay attention to the meaning of objects and belongings, as well as the unique role they play for the young persons with whom they work. Without such attention and awareness, the child and youth care worker is likely not to be therapeutically supportive to the young person. As previously mentioned, while all significant possessions may not be ‘transitional objects’ in the formal sense, their value to the young person may be immense, and for the purposes of this study, objects of significance and importance that the young persons brought with them into care were considered as transitional objects. Child and youth care workers need to be sensitive in dealing with the young persons’ objects and belongings from the first day. Small insensitive acts of neglect may ruin future developmental and therapeutic relationships forever.

Therefore, the research question is: *To what extent are child and youth care workers aware of the existence and the importance of “objects” in relation to transition?*

1.3 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 The aims of the study

This study seeks to explore South African (SA) child and youth care workers' awareness of young persons' important objects and their significance in residential care practice. VanderVen (2003:135) notes that "once something is named and comes into public awareness, it then becomes an option". With greater awareness, important objects may become a more useful option for the promotion of young persons' well-being in child and youth care programmes. Child and youth care workers may help young persons to stay connected with important others and events in spite of the distance that separates them physically (Motsei, 2004:21).

1.3.2 The objectives of the study

Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. explore whether or not SA child and youth care workers are aware of the existence and importance of transitional objects.
2. identify what SA child and youth care workers regard as transitional objects for the young persons with whom they work.
3. explore what therapeutic significance SA child and youth care workers place on the objects they identify amongst the young persons with whom they work.

1.3.3 Key theoretical questions

To reach the aims and objectives of this study the following questions need to be answered:

- Are child and youth care workers aware of the existence of objects of significance?

- What kind of objects do child and youth care workers regard as being significant to young persons?
- Of these objects, which ones do child and youth care workers consider being transitional objects?
- What is the therapeutic value of objects of significance and transitional objects?

1.4 LITERATURE OF THE STUDY AND KEY CONCEPTS

1.4.1 Literature of the study

In this study, the researcher has consulted a variety of sources for literature review purposes. Journal articles, books, legislative documents, and internet are among sources that have been consulted as part of literature review.

1.4.2 Definition of key concepts

The following key concepts will be defined here: Objects of significance, Residential care programme, and Child and youth care worker.

1.4.2.1 Objects of significance

Some of the objects may be significant to the young persons even if they do not have transitional value. Significance means importance or noteworthiness (The Concise Dictionary of current English, 1982:983). In the absence of a formal definition, in this study objects of significance will refer to any object that is of value to the young person even if it does not serve a transitional purpose.

1.4.2.2 Residential care programme

Anglin (2002:5) defines a residential care programme as services that cover the spectrum of “24-hour care” resources, from staffed homes for small groups of children to large congregate institutions such as residential schools and orphanages, but excluding foster care provided in families’ own homes. The researcher focused on such institutions that accommodate young persons at risk on a 24-hourly basis. The residential care programme in this context is used synonymously to child and youth care centres. Section 191 (1) of the South African Children’s Bill (2003) defines child and youth care centre as a facility for the provision of residential care to more than six children outside of the child’s family environment. Secure care facilities, places of safety and children’s homes are some of the examples of such programmes. This study took place in children’s homes.

1.4.2.3 Child and youth care worker

In acknowledgement of how difficult it can be to define the term “child and youth care worker”, as a result of many titles used in the field, Garfat and McElwee (2003:3), who identified more than 50 such titles, opt for a broad definition. They define child and youth care workers as “those people who work with troubled (well, sometimes, not) young people who sometimes live in group care (but not always), and/or in the care of the system (well, most often anyway)”.

Maier (1987:12) describes child and youth care workers as the designated primary caregivers, the direct care workers who carry full obligation for and personal involvement in providing “caring care”. For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted Maier’s (1987:187) definition of child care workers as “those persons who provide a major portion of round-the-clock care, supervision, and resources for children or youth in a group-life situation, whether for day care or residential care”.

1.5 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The researcher chose qualitative methodology for this research. He particularly used interviews to collect data. Payne and Payne (2004:129) describe interviewing as data collection in face-to-face settings, using oral question-and-answer format which either employs the same questions in a systematic and structured way for all respondents, or allows respondents to talk about issues in less directed but discursive manner.

1.5.1 Qualitative methodology

In this study, the researcher wanted to establish the child and youth care workers' awareness of the existence of transitional objects. He also wanted to establish the child and youth care workers' understanding in terms of the significance of such objects. Hence, he found qualitative method to be the most suitable method for this study. Qualitative methods explicitly identify a person's understanding of the situation as something to be discovered rather than assumed (Ezzy, 2002:45).

1.5.2 Target population and sampling

The kind of selections or sampling made has crucial implications for generalization, especially with the confidence we have in those generalizations (Williams, 2003:73). The researcher was clear that only child and youth care workers in non-governmental organisations would be the target population for this study. These child and youth care workers should have had at least one year of direct work with young persons or basic qualification in child and youth care work. No other categories of child and youth care staff were interviewed as this study was meant to focus on child and youth care workers.

1.5.3 Data collection method

Swift (1996:161) suggests that the first task at the data-processing stage will be to bring order to the raw data by, perhaps, working out an appropriate filing system for the various records that will allow ready access when needed. The researcher wrote down some notes himself during the interviews and also used a tape recorder as a back up mechanism. He kept these notes and recorder in a safe place in order to access them for analysis purposes.

1.5.4 Data analysis

The 'preparation stage' of an analysis involves devising a good form in which to reproduce the data so that they (a) provide a fair summary of what has been studied and (b) can be analysed readily to answer the researcher's question (Swift, 1996:162). The researcher went through the written notes that he took during the interviews, compared the interviews notes from different groups and analyzed them to establish any emerging themes. He also listened to the recorded conversations and transcribed them in order to compare such recordings with the written notes. The researcher then identified some themes.

1.5.5. Validity and trustworthiness

Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research (Bryman, 2001:30). After the researcher has transcribed the data and identified some themes, he took the transcribed data back to all participants to validate if what he had captured was indeed what they had said during interviews. This was done to enable them to verify that what the researcher claims to have seen or heard was not a figment of an overactive imagination (Jones, 1996:19). Participants were allowed to make some changes or clarify some of the points they have made. Indeed some participants did make

some changes. The researcher validated this data in order to reach valid conclusions.

1.5.6 Ethical considerations

Most unethical behaviour in research results from a lack of awareness and pressure on the researcher to take shortcuts (Neuman, 2000:90). The researcher tried not to fall into any of these traps by acquainting himself with the ethics of conducting research. He implemented some of research ethics practices. One example is that the researcher first obtained permission from the managers of the residential care programmes to conduct interviews in their facilities. Another example is that prior to the commencement of the interviews, the researcher informed the participants that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they were free to discontinue at any point should they wish to do so. The researcher made participants sign written consent and also guaranteed them confidentiality with regards to their identity, the identity of their organisations as well as the identity of the young persons they work with. All these measures were taken to ensure that the researcher does not harm the participants as well as ensuring the respect for each participant's privacy (Jones, 1996:33).

1.6 THE IMPORTANCE/SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There was a time in the history of child and youth care work when child and youth care workers were seen as 'child minders'. Maier (1987:191) reminds us that "the ancestors of today's child care workers were the matrons of the orphanages and almshouses of the nineteenth century, who served as overseers of the children's moral training". Allsopp (2005:6) reckons that it is this "care", a concept so crucial to the professional work of child and youth care worker, which was seen to be a basic non-professional task. The concept of child minding suggested that any person could work with young persons at risk.

Over the years this perception was gradually eradicated as child and youth care work became more professionalised. For example, child and youth care workers began to be involved in developmental work. To support this notion of developmental work, Magnuson (2003: xxii - xxiii) states that all child and youth care work aims to promote growth and change. Maier (1987:15) echoes the same sentiments by stating that caring work means helping to meet an individual's developmental requirements. He further adds that child and youth care work demands that the practitioner be able to *observe* and to verify what the residents are doing. The awareness of the possession of important objects will strengthen the notion that child and care workers are approaching their work with a particular developmental and therapeutic sensitivity.

The focus of child and youth care work has since moved towards therapeutic work to promote healing and well-being. Garfat (1998:76) states that professional child and youth care has always identified itself as a therapeutic interaction dependent on the quality of the relationship between youth and child and youth care worker. He further states that child and youth care uses daily life events for therapeutic purposes as they occur (Garfat, 2003:12). This notion is of significance as the use of transitional objects occurs within the young persons' arena of daily living. As the young persons live their lives, they might have the need to use their transitional objects. It is therefore important that child and youth care workers take notice of (observe) everything, including the existence and use of objects that promote the well-being of young persons.

The significance of this study is that child and youth care workers will be more sensitised to the therapeutic significance of objects. It must be stated that child and youth care workers are not therapists but their work *is* genuinely therapeutic, as contested by Garfat and McElwee (2004:9). In supporting the power of life-space work, Hector (2005:25) also contests that when we allow the splitting to take place, by saying "speak to your therapist on Monday", we miss the opportunity of "being and staying" with the child. Thus, the theoretical perspective

brought about by this study will feed into a practical, alternative way of looking at actual events (Eisikovits, 1991:279) that involve objects of significance. Encouraging the use of such objects will become one aspect of working therapeutically with young persons. Young persons themselves may increasingly begin to use these objects for their own healing and well-being, as Muensterberger (1978:12) contends that the dread of separateness is thus partially cushioned by allowing for the use of objects.

Child and youth care workers will begin to think carefully about young persons' belongings, as Fulcher (2004) cautions that we do not stop to think how belongings may be important to a young person's sense of who they are. It is the researcher's hope that once the knowledge of transitional objects is disseminated, many child and youth care workers may begin to stop and reflect on what is going on when they notice or suspect the existence of such objects.

The use of transitional objects is an inexpensive method that works with what is already there. It is about observing and attending to that which is special to young persons – of all ages. As Winnicott (1957:188) notes, the observation of such objects is also not complicated; parents need not be psychologists in order to get a great deal of profit from watching, and perhaps recording, a line of development of attachments to transitional objects. The same benefits can undoubtedly accrue to child and youth care workers. Maier (1987:20) states that “effective care workers utilize this awareness and urge youngsters and previous caregivers to be sure to bring along objects, however worn and tattered they might be”. This is what the study hopes to achieve: for child and youth care workers to get to the point where they can speak about and encourage the young persons in their care to use their objects in whatever way that seems appropriate and important – in order to benefit from such objects.

Deri (1978:50) concurs with the importance of this knowledge by stating that knowledge of the nature of real objects is needed not only for the sake of the

reality principle per se, but also for creative action, which requires knowledge and respect for the real nature of the raw material.

This study was restricted in scope to the child and youth care workers' awareness and knowledge of the existence of transitional objects. The study further aims at enquiring from the participants as to whether they receive any encouragement from their agency or employing organisations to take matters pertaining to transitional objects into consideration.

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study was for the researcher to interview child and youth care workers in non-governmental institutions in Gauteng, South Africa. The researcher did not intend to conduct this study in other provinces of South Africa, mainly due to financial and logistical constraints. The researcher anticipated long procedures in terms of trying to obtain consent to conduct this study in governmental institutions. These procedures would have delayed the researcher to complete the study within the scheduled time frame. It was neither the researcher's intention to interview other categories of staff, such as administration staff within the residential care programmes. Young persons in those institutions were also not part of the target population to be interviewed.

1.8 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE RESEARCH

The first problem was obtaining permission on time to conduct this research from the programme managers. Some programme managers tended to be preoccupied with their programmes priorities and therefore did not respond to the researcher's request on time. This has obviously caused delays. The researcher had to make telephonic follow-ups to ensure that permission is granted. The researcher would have preferred to have received a written consent prior to the

commencement of interviews but in some instances, only telephonic consent was given and written consent collected on the day of the interviews.

Another problem was the fact that interviews took place in the participants' work places. Minor delays occurred as some participants had to address immediate matters either prior to or during interviews. The researcher has had to be patient with such interruptions as they were minor.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the responsibilities of the researcher is to ensure that sufficient information is presented to allow the reader to assess the work presented by the researcher (Shipman, 1981: xii). Upon reflection of the research process, the researcher identified some limitations in this study. The points that follow would hopefully enable the reader the opportunity to read with some of these limitations in mind.

1.9.1 Interview questions asked

The researcher chose qualitative method for this research. According to this method, participants are expected to be given much freedom to express their views and understanding concerning the topic. If you want an answer, ask a question (Shipman, 1981:89). The researcher has prepared a list of questions which he intended to pose to all participants. Upon scrutinizing some of the questions the researcher asked, the researcher got to the realization that some questions are closed questions in nature. Questions such as "Do you think these things are important or significant? Do you encourage them to hold on to these things? Does your organisation encourage you to encourage the young people bring items of significance, especially during admission? Do you have your own transitional objects?" could easily be answered with "yes" or "no" and therefore not allow in-depth interviewing. These types of questions may require the

researcher to probe for clarification. Probing may be regarded as the interviewer's intervention and such intervention may influence the respondent (Bryman, 2001:118). Although the participants elaborated when answering most of these questions, the nature of the questions are closed question and therefore there may be an argument that the methodology used is not purely qualitative.

1.9.2 Selection of participants

Unless method of sampling is spelled out, skepticism is advisable (Shipman, 1981:60). In his proposal and methodology, the researcher clearly stipulated one year of direct child and youth care work and the possession of BQCC as the criteria for the selection of the participants. During the actual interviews, the researcher allowed a participant who worked directly with young persons for only four months and was not in possession of BQCC. In other words, this participant did not meet the stipulated selection criteria. The question may be asked about the extent to which this particular participant's contribution may have influenced the data collected. The researcher needs was careful not to exclude this particular participant who had already been selected by the gatekeeper on the last minute. He feared that this move could have unsettled other participants.

Another factor is that the research took place in the non-governmental residential settings. There are a number of young persons being cared for in governmental settings such as places of safety and secure care centres. Usually young persons who are placed in these settings are cared for by a number of child and youth care workers who work in shifts. It would have been interesting to find out about the experiences and awareness of such child and youth care workers as well.

1.9.3 Location of interviews and composition of participants

Interviews took place in the participants' work places. A questions such as "Does your organisation encourage you to encourage the young people bring items of significance, especially during admission?" may have put some participants in awkward positions. Considering that interviews were conducted in groups, some participants may have felt obliged to answer in such a way that they did not put their organisation in a bad light. Shipman (1981:94) warns that where questions are asked, there may be pressure to give answers within a particular context. This may be true in instances where some participants found themselves participating with their immediate seniors present.

In some cases, some participants may have been too "domineering" during the interviews. This may have been as a result of their familiarity with the topic or their seniority within the group. In such instances, the views expressed may have been mainly of one or few participants' instead of all participants. During the interviews, the researcher tried his level best to draw all participants into the discussion.

1.9.4 Language used during interviews

The researcher prepared interview questions and also conducted the actual interviews in English. Some participants may have felt uncomfortable expressing themselves in English. People are wary of admitting ignorance of an issue (Shipman, 1981:92). The fact that interviews took place in groups, some participants may also have been afraid of being perceived as "less educated" if they did not communicate in English. Although the researcher indicated to the participants that they were free to express themselves in any language of their choice other than English if they so wished, the majority of participants responded in English most of the time. This may have been their desire to "please" the researcher as well as be on par with their colleagues. The

researcher noted that the majority of participants in this research did not use English as their first language. This medium of communication may have restricted some of the participants to express their experiences clearly and freely. However, one participant took the liberty to express himself in his own language even if he was fluent in English. The researcher included excerpt of such conversation during the data analysis. He also included an English translation of that excerpt.

1.9.5 Data collection and analysis method

In the application to get consent from the organisations, the researcher mentioned that he would be working with the focus group. Focus groups typically emphasize a specific theme or topic that is explored in depth, whereas group interviews often span very widely (Bryman, 2001:336). The researcher's mention of focus group instead of group interviewing could have been misleading.

The researcher was recording as well as writing some notes during the cause of interviews. This may have resulted in the loss of some information. Shipman (1981: 168) conceded that the most common bias in interpreting evidence comes from the selection for discussion of only such data as fits the hypothesis. However, to the researcher's knowledge, not much relevant information has been lost. During data analysis, the researcher did not allow his research supervisor to play the role of an independent coder.

1.10 OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This research report consists of five chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction and background chapter includes the background information that let to the researcher to undertake this research. It covers research question, the problem statement, the rational of the research as well as

the aim and objectives of the research. It also provides brief information about literature review and key concepts. The research methodology, demarcation of the study, problems encountered in the research and an overview of what the study was about are also included in this chapter.

Chapter Two: Literature review and key concepts chapter covers the definitions of key concepts. It also presents a thorough literature pertaining to transitional objects in general. This is the literature that the researcher gathered from the internet, books, journals and other relevant sources. Lastly, it presents transitional objects literature as they apply to the child and youth care field.

Chapter Three: Research methodology and design explains the researcher's choice of research method and justification for such a choice. The researcher chose qualitative method as he believed it was in line with the nature of the topic. Qualitative methods explicitly identify a person's understanding of the situation as something to be discovered. Since the researcher was interested to find out the child and youth care workers' awareness, understanding and interpretations of objects, quantitative method was chosen as the relevant method for this research. This chapter outlines the process of selecting participants as well.

Chapter Four: In the chapter, **data analysis and findings**, the researcher outlines the processes he followed when analysing data. It includes excerpts transcribed from the tape as well as those that the researcher noted down during interviews. The researcher included only those excerpts that were mostly related to the transitional objects topic. He then grouped those excerpts that seemed to be supporting certain themes together.

Chapter Five: In the **Conclusion and recommendations** chapter, the researcher tried to establish if the study answered the research question. The researcher was convinced that the child and youth care workers were aware of the existence and significance of the objects of significance. The researcher then

came up with some recommendations as to how such objects could be handled for the maximum benefits of the young persons in residential care settings. The researcher also included the summary of his findings and recommendations in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND KEY CONCEPTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Whenever the researcher is embarking on a research project, it is important to consult and review the relevant literature about the topic. At the very least, the researcher will discover what others can contribute to the conceptualisation process (Ruane, 2005:51). Before moving into the literature on transitional objects, the researcher defined the key concepts. The researcher further discussed transitional objects in generic terms and then contextualised it to the child and youth care field.

2.2 TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Apart from the key concepts defined in chapter one, the following concepts will also be defined in order to put their meaning into the perspective of the study:

2.2.1 Young persons

The South African Children's Act, 2005 (Act no. 38 of 2005) defines a person under the age of 18 years as a "child". For the purposes of this study, young person will refer to any person under the age of 18 years. The researcher opted for the term "young person" to avoid confusion and exclusion. There are times when teenagers, for example, seem to feel belittled when referred to as children. There are also times when one speaks of children that the perception is created that teenagers are excluded. The researcher suspects this confusion necessitated the title "child and youth care workers" as opposed to "child care workers" to ensure the inclusion of teenagers.

2.2.2 Awareness

Ricks (1989:34) defines being aware as “a state to act in knowing what is; to be present in that knowing, and taking that presence into action”. This kind of “being” aware or being in a state of awareness allows for the kind of presence in life that perhaps few comprehend, never mind experience. When one is “being” aware there is a multilevel knowing that captures one’s perception of the reality underlying the phenomena, conditions and experiencing of the time. This heightened perceptivity allows for a presence of self that enhances any kind of relationship. It is this kind of awareness, a way to be, not a post hoc analytical cognitive analysis, that is desirable in child and youth care therapeutic relationships.

The definition of awareness is complex but relevant. Awareness in simple terms is “an internal, subjective state of being cognizant or conscious of something” (Reber, 1985:76). It also means alertness. Reber (1985:76) admits that the term has a long history which has been found being used to refer to a wide range of subjective phenomena from simple, primitive detection of very weak stimuli to deep understanding of complex cognitive and effective events.

The researcher is referring to two ‘kinds’ of awareness here – awareness of self, and awareness of ‘other in context’. Ricks (2001) warns that we see the world from our experience of it. She further adds that it is from this experience, and the conclusions we draw from it, that we determine what to do or how to react within the experience. Ricks (2001) maintains that understanding this helps one to understand that one is working with “many selves” on a daily basis and this level of awareness will help child and youth care workers not to project themselves onto others. Ricks (2001) further reckons that having the awareness of how the other is filtered through me heightens my awareness of how others differ from me.

Because child and youth care workers work with young persons in their daily lives, their job requires them to observe in order to establish where the young persons and their families are; not just physically but also emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. The first step towards awareness is, therefore, observation. Just as in child and youth care practice, the necessity of careful observation for research purposes can hardly be overemphasised (Jones, 1996: 15). Child and youth care workers need to learn to observe with the aim of contributing to research.

Child and youth care workers need to be aware of what is going on. Garfat and McElwee (2004:61) term this awareness “noticing”. They reckon that at any given point, whether we are at work, or busy living our personal lives, there are a multitude of things occurring at the same time. Child and youth care workers notice many things about the young persons as they live their lives. Hence, awareness and noticing have become critical skills required in child and youth care work. Manyathi (2005:39) sums this up by stating that as child and youth care workers, “we work by awareness, ability and willingness”.

2.2.3 Well-being

Watson (2004) cites young persons’ comments about mental health and well-being in which they mention that well-being was about safety and how they feel about themselves: self-esteem, feelings of fear, stress and anxiety, the impact of trauma and loss, and experiences of low mood, depression and suicidal thoughts.

According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2005), well-being is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good *for* a person. Well-being is also related to the notion of how well a person's life is going for that person.

Baldwin (1975:813) shares Aristotle's view that well-being is, by universal acknowledgement, the good. Baldwin further notes that it is in their interpretation of well-being that men differ. It is against the background of these differences that the researcher will be conscious of what each participant perceives as transitional objects, as well as how they contribute to the individual young person's well-being. The use of transitional objects is a highly interpretative, subjective phenomenon. It is the user who determines how the object contributes to his/her well-being. It is activity of the soul in accordance with its own proper virtue or excellence, that is, rationality (Baldwin, 1975:813).

2.2.4 Developmental work

Child and youth care workers are concerned with all areas of young persons in terms of their growth and development. Gannon (2001) states two senses in which the word developmental is used in relation to child and youth care. One, which our interventions take into account and are paced by what we know of human development; two, that our interventions themselves have a "life span" along which they must grow and move.

The researcher found the definition of developmental psychology to be in line with child and youth care work. Colman (2006:206) defines developmental psychology as "the branch of psychology concerned with psychological phenomena of all kinds in infants, children, adolescents, adults and old people and all the psychological changes that occurs across the life span". He further mentions that it includes research into the development of perception, cognition, language, skills, moral attitudes and social relationships. Child and youth care work is concerned with all these areas. In simple terms, this means that child and youth care workers should have a developmental map of where children and young people *generally* are at various ages, and then a good assessment of where *particular* youngsters are – physically, intellectually, emotionally – on this

map, so that we are aware of where they fit in with the norms for their age group (Gannon, 2001).

2.2.5 Therapeutic work

According to the Concise Dictionary of current English (1982:1110), therapeutic means “curative and of the healing art”. When we refer to "therapeutic" in child and youth care, we do not necessarily refer to "clinical" intervention, but to that which empowers, brings about developmental growth, healing and wholeness (IMC, 1996:72). Child and youth care workers pay attention to various areas, including relationships and interactions, that promote healing and well-being. The use of objects can also be considered for therapeutic purposes. Hence the definition above is deemed relevant for the purpose of this study.

2.3 TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS

2.3.1 Transition

The Concise Dictionary of current English (1982:1138) states that transition means “passage or change from one place or state or act or set of circumstances to another”. Young persons are likely to find themselves moving from one place to another. Maier (1987:20) states that they need assistance with entering, coping and moving forward into a new situation. This may be regarded as physical transition. They are also likely to find themselves in different states of mind from time to time. Hence Winfield (2002) defines transition as a gradual psychological and emotional process through which individuals and groups reorient themselves so that they can function and find meaning in a changed situation. Winnicott cited by Flarsheim (1978:507) refers to this change as a gradual developmental change.

2.3.2 Possessions

To possess is to become the owner or possessor of thing possessed. It could include property, wealth or subject territory (The Concise Dictionary of current English, 1982:800). Young persons do possess things from their homes. Maier (1998) supported this notion by stating that when people move from one vital situation or home base to another, they tend to take with them an article which is of particular significance to them. This may be an object which has had special pleasurable meaning in an earlier life situation.

2.3.3 Significance

Significance means importance or noteworthiness (The Concise Dictionary of current English, 1982:983). Certain objects that young persons possess are important to them. Child and youth care workers will have to take note of which objects are important. They will also need to pay attention to the developmental and therapeutic significance of such objects.

2.3.4 Transitional objects

Kestenberg and Weinstein (1978:76) mention that transitional objects “are very special possessions, endowed with powers to console and comfort”. They further add that transitional objects differ from all other objects because they contain elements of the past and present and are bridges to the future. Most people think of using transitional objects to make a visible transition – from place to place, from one state to another (like waking to sleeping). Winnicott (1957:182) describes transitional objects as “those objects that young persons use when going to sleep or when apprehensive”. He further suggests that a transitional object could be, for example, “a poem, a story, a book, or a superstitious behaviour”.

Reiter and Bryen (1991:108) state that “possession of one or more personal and favourite objects serves the emotional function of providing security to the client in times of stress or discomfort”.

Winnicott (2000:151) introduced the term “transitional objects”, whereas Reiter and Bryen (1991:108) make reference to “personal and favourite objects”. This distinction suggests that there might be objects that serve to comfort without having the specific qualities of a transitional object. Winnicott cited by Barkin (1978:514) makes the point that not all objects attachments are transitional and states that there are specific criteria concerning the use of the object that define its transitional nature.

Dickes (1978:310) reckons that it is normal for many children to have objects that acquire special importance as a defence against anxiety which is first noted at bedtime. Only when the child is ready to distinguish between percept and concept does the doll turn from indispensable companion into plaything (Muensterberger, 1978:12). In an important sense they no longer have to serve as transitional phenomena. They may turn into favourite and significant possessions.

Fulcher (2005) gives a tangible example of a transitional object when he mentions the teddy bear which accompanies the young child to bed to ease the transition from company to alone-ness, from waking to sleep, from light to dark. For the purpose of this study, a transitional object was restricted to tangible objects such as a teddy bear.

2.4 TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS – THEORY AND RESEARCH

Winnicott’s concept of transitional object has been in existence for sometime now. Flarsheim (1978:505) conceded that “this concept has become familiar that it is already a fundamental part of our thinking”. There seems to be a variety of

objects that can be used as transitional objects. While Winnicott calls the transitional object the first possession and indicates that there may be a series of such objects often in a developmental line of increasing organization and complexity, though he does not provide a methodical delineation (Barklin, 1978:514).

In the discussion of Antony Flew, Flarsheim (1978:506) points out that Flew maintains that not only material objects but activities as well can be classified as transitional. He then reaches the conclusion that the key word becomes not *object* but *transitional*.

Winnicott cited in Barkin (1978:513) explored and explained his observation about transitional objects and transitional phenomena. He also developed theoretical conceptions to apply them, not only to child development, but also to pathology, therapeutic technique and the origin of culture. This suggests that although the concept of transitional objects emerged mainly in Winnicott's work with infants, it is not only restricted to work with young persons. The context of transitional objects is therefore not exclusive to child and youth care work. It can be relevant to other professions and in other settings as well. This includes doing therapeutic work with adults. To support the view that transitional objects can be used with and by adults as well, Kaminer (1978:235-237) shares a story about a session he had with a 27-year-old unmarried woman called Miss B, who had been in analysis for over a year.

Miss B came into treatment because of depression and dissatisfaction with her situation in life. She had only casual involvement with men and felt closely tied to her parents, unable to build an independent life for herself. On Friday session (just before the weekend, which usually was experienced as a painful separation), Miss B announced that she was depressed. She held a small doll with a white cloth body, which she toyed with throughout the session, often clutching it to her breast. She quickly exclaimed, "Look, see, see this little doll. I bought it while shopping for a present for my niece". She further mentioned that it was just like one she had as a child.

But the most fascinating part was how she described its use in detail.

“Oh, I saw it in a store – I was looking for one – it is cute – it sleeps – I take it everywhere with me. I bought it the weekend I didn’t go down to the shore to see my boyfriend (imaginary boyfriend). It stays in a position you put it, you can turn it any way”.

When Kaminer mentioned to Miss B that she made it seem as if it were a baby, Miss B responded, “Well, no, not exactly – it is like a toy – something to make me feel good – less lonely –to stick with me – it is not a pet - I have pets, a dog and a cat – pets you have to take care of – they make demands on you – this doll does what I tell it – I talk to it, it listens and it does not make demands or contradicts me and I don’t have to walk it or feed it when I am not in the mood for it, I just put it away and it just waits for me. I turn it off when I want to.”

Kaminer (1978:237) shared the background that ever since Miss B was an infant, her mother had tried to maintain control of their relationship. The girl was to be compliant, uncomplaining, and unassertive; and her mother would make decisions for her.

Cappolillo cited by Kaminer (1978:241) also describes the analysis of a 26-year-old man.

Though superficially successful and charming, this man demonstrated an inability to form deep or lasting relationships with friends. This need was manifested by preoccupation with words themselves, the couch, the warmth of the room, all to the exclusion of the analyst’s ideas or person. It was only after this pervasive problem had been analyzed that treatment could progress. This patient’s mother had been so intrusive and seductive that separation could not occur. In the analysis, reconstruction showed that the mother continuously inserted herself as a real object into the child’s life whenever he became involved with transitional object.

The backgrounds of the two patients in the stories shared above seem to suggest a strong relationship between their need for transitional objects and what transpired in their early years of upbringing.

Kaminer (1978:242) mentions that “the transitional object can “re-evoked” the lost soothing of symbiotic fusion”. He further states that this soothing function is gradually internalized during normal development. When then the process is impaired, the individual is left without a mental representation for external regulation of the soothing process. For the purposes of this study, transitional object will mainly be contextualised to the child and youth care field.

2.5 TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS IN CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PRACTICE

The main points of this literature review have to do with the importance of transitional objects in relation to well-being. Winnicott cited by Maier (1987:20) advocated the importance of transitional objects when he states that at moments of dislocation and relocation, transitional objects serve as a link between old and new, and tend to assist in making the unfamiliar familiar. Deri (1978:50) also asserts that transitional objects help to develop a feeling of familiarity within the unfamiliar. It is this sense of familiarity that the child and youth care worker should try to help young persons maintain. By so doing, they will be making the young persons’ transitions as smooth as possible.

Winnicott is supported by Maier (1987:57) who mentions that the children’s treasured possessions, often a meaningless, tattered old object to a casual onlooker, may be vital sustenance for its owner. Deri (1978:50) adds that “the good transitional object can also help to enlarge the child’s objectively perceived real world by serving as a trusted companion to hold onto while entering new territories”.

It also seems that it is not difficult to identify the existence of transitional objects. Winnicott (1957:186) reckons that almost anyone caring for young persons can supply examples of the existence and use of transitional objects provided one first of all realises that every detail is important and significant. With careful observation and curiosity, child and youth care workers can pick out those

belongings that serve as transitional objects for young persons. The use of transitional objects is something that may start from an early age in life. Winnicott (2000:150) asserts that it is well known that after only a few months infants of either sex become fond of playing with dolls, and that most mothers allow their infants some special object and expect them to become, as it were, addicted to such object. It is the awareness of this type of addiction that promotes the well-being the researcher hoped to investigate.

Winnicott (2000:151) also suggests that many important things pertaining to transitional objects can be studied, including:

- the nature of the object
- the infant's capacity to recognise the object as 'not- me'
- the place of the object – outside, inside, at the border
- the infant's capacity to create, think up, devise, originate, produce an object
- the initiation of an affectionate type of object relationship

In studying transitional objects, one needs to be cautious about what is perceived as subjective and objective. In acknowledgement of this relationship between the subjective and the objective nature of transitional objects, Winnicott (2000:151) clearly expresses his concern with the first possession, and with the intermediate area between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived. Let us take the example of the small child who is going to sleep over in a strange place. The child might feel that she is not going to sleep well if she does not have her blanket with her. This is a subjective thought as the blankets provided in that strange place might be 'far much better' than hers.

Once in existence, transitional objects are also preferred and kept in different forms. Perhaps some soft object or other type of object has been found and used by the infant, and this becomes what Winnicott (2000:151) calls, a transitional

object. This object goes on being important. The parent gets to know its value and carries it around when travelling. The mother lets it get dirty and even smelly, understanding that by washing it she introduces a break in continuity in the infant's experience, a break that may destroy a meaning and value of the object to the infant (Winnicott, 2000:153). It would seem that the challenge for any adult caregiver, particularly child and youth care workers, is to accept the transitional objects as they are, no matter how difficult this might be. By so doing, they will be careful not to interrupt this most needed sense of continuity.

There seem to be specific times and moments when transitional objects are needed and used by the owners. Patterns set in infancy may persist into childhood, so that, for example, the original object continues to be absolutely necessary at bedtime or at a time of loneliness or when a depressed mood threatens (Winnicott, 2000:153). Child and youth care workers need to take note of these times in order to be appropriately supportive to the young persons.

There are no definite time periods, or life stage, in which one can say with certainty that young persons will have outgrown the need for their transitional objects. Some young persons may need transitional objects throughout their lives. However, over time, the nature of transitional objects may change (Winnicott, 2000:153). Gradually in the life of an infant teddies and dolls and hard toys are acquired. The child and youth care workers need to be continuously on the lookout to establish what new object has been acquired as a transitional object in order to acknowledge, respect and protect such object.

Different people use transitional objects in different ways. For example, Winnicott (2000:153) states that it is important to note that there is a noticeable difference between boys and girls in their use of the original 'not-me' possession. Child and youth care workers need to pay special attention to any forms of differences that exist among different transitional object owners.

Winnicott (2000:153-154) summarises the special qualities of the relationship between the owner and the transitional object as follows:

1. The infant assumes rights over the object, and we agree to this assumption. Nevertheless, some abrogation of omnipotence is a feature from the start.
2. The object is affectionately cuddled as well as excitedly loved and mutilated.
3. It must never change, unless changed by the infant.
4. It must survive instinctual loving, and also hating and, if be a feature, pure aggression.
5. It must seem to the infant to give warmth, or to move, or to have texture, or to do something that seems to show it has validity or reality of its own.
6. It comes from without from our point of view, but not so from the point of view of the baby.

Its fate is to be gradually allowed to be decathected, so that in the course of years it becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo. By this I mean in health the transitional object does not 'go inside' nor does the feeling about it necessarily undergo repression. It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between 'inner psychic reality' and 'the external world as perceived by two persons in common', that is to say, over the whole cultural field.

Winnicott (2000:159) mentions the life span or significance of the transitional objects. He states that we may watch the object becoming decathected. The *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (2007:259) defines 'decathexis' as the "withdrawal of libido from objects in the external world. Just before loss we can sometimes see an exaggeration of the use of the transitional object as part of denial that there is

a threat of its becoming meaningless (Winnicott, 2000:159). From the above dynamic, one can see how difficult it can be for anybody, other than the possessor of the transitional object, to determine the continued significance of the object. The significance should therefore be entirely determined by the owner.

Winnicott (2000:159–161) shares the story of a boy of seven who was brought to the Psychology Department at the Paddington Green Children's Hospital.

This boy was referred by the family doctor because of a series of symptoms indicating a character disorder in the boy. Nearly everything Winnicott did in an interview with the boy was translated by the boy into something associated with a string. Winnicott asked the parents about the boy's preoccupation with string. They mentioned that the boy had become obsessed with everything to do with string, and in fact whenever they went into the room they were liable to find that he had joined together chair and tables; and they might find a cushion, for instance, with a string joining it to the fireplace. They further mentioned that he had recently tied a string round his sister's neck.

Winnicott explained to the mother that this boy was dealing with fear of separation, attempting to deny separation by his use of string, as one would deny separation from a friend by using the telephone. The mother was skeptical. Winnicott suggested that the mother open up the matter with the boy at some convenient time, letting him know what Winnicott had said, and then developing the theme of separation according to the boy's response. At a later interview the mother told Winnicott that a year after she had her first talk with the boy there was a return to playing with string and to joining together objects in the house.

The mother subsequently decided to try out Winnicott's suggestion, and opened a discussion with the boy. The discussion started in this manner "I can see from your playing that you are worried about my going away, but this time I shall only be away for few days, and I am having an operation which is not serious". After this conversation the new phase of playing with string ceased.

From the above mentioned story, one can see that the mother did something that led to a change in the young person's external behaviour. One can only assume that an internal change preceded the change in his external behaviour.

One can further assume that the young person began to experience himself differently as a result of the mother's conscious and different response, which came as a result of the mother's level of awareness. If this mother could facilitate this kind of change, which one hopes was therapeutic in a way, so can the child and youth care workers. But they can only do so if they are aware and convinced about the significance of transitional objects.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The concept of transitional objects has long been in existence. The researcher has no doubt that a lot of literature has been written about this concept. The researcher would therefore not claim that transitional objects are exclusively applicable to child and youth care field. However, the researcher focused on the literature that mainly had relevance to the field of child and youth care. In the next chapter, the researcher will outline in detail the methodology used in this research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will outline the methodology chosen for this research. He will attempt to justify his choice of methodology and give a descriptive explanation of how the organisations and participants were selected as well as the processes followed during data collection. Issues pertaining to the validity and trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations will also be discussed in this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Some research questions lend themselves more naturally to a qualitative approach (Garfat, 1998:30). The nature of the topic in this study dictated the method chosen. Qualitative methods explicitly identify a person's understanding of the situation as something to be discovered rather than assumed (Ezzy, 2002:45). Qualitative research frequently entails the reconstruction of events by asking interviewees to reflect on how a certain series of events unfolded in relation to the current situation (Bryman, 2004). The researcher wanted the interviewees to reflect on their level of awareness and share their experiences of what objects young persons possessed and how they used these objects. Reflection links closely with awareness. Therefore qualitative methodology seemed to the researcher to be the most suitable method in that it allows participants such reflection. It further allowed the researcher to explore those reflections.

3.3 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Ruane (2005:105) refers to sampling as the process whereby we study a “few” in order to learn about the “many”. This may be true for probability sampling; however, Ellis (1994:170) argues that even if one uses a probability sampling method, it is possible that the sample will not end up being representative of the population chosen for study.

The researcher selected four residential care programmes and requested the gatekeepers of those programmes to select a minimum of three and maximum of five participants from each programme. The researcher therefore used non-probability sampling. There are different types of non-probability sampling. Among these types, the researcher selected convenience sampling and quota sampling when identifying the organisations and participants. Baker (1988:157) reckons that non-probability sampling may be used effectively in studies that seek to explore ideas that are still undeveloped. To the researcher’s knowledge, the topic of transitional objects is not fully developed, especially in South Africa. He hoped that the findings from these selected few could shed light on what is transpiring in other residential care programmes. However, the findings could not be generalised to a definable wider population (Baker, 1988:156). This is one of the disadvantages of non-probability sampling.

3.3.1 Identification of organisations

Because of the researcher’s past involvement in child and youth care training, it was easy for him to identify the organisations that would be willing to take part in this research as he had a previous relationship with all four organisations: he had trained some staff members, not necessarily the participants, of these organisations. The researcher had a list of telephone numbers and contact persons for most child and youth care organisations in Gauteng and could easily select the ones he thought would be interested in accommodating him for this

research purpose. This method of sampling may be referred to as convenience sampling. In convenience sampling, it is always better to consider carefully whether the people you plan to use as respondents are likely to comply with your request and give careful consideration to it (Baker, 1988:157). Hence the researcher approached those organisations that were likely to consider his request. The researcher had to be conscious of the background of the organisations to ensure fair representation of gender and race. Shipman (1981:59) maintains that information should be collected from studies of specific groups that are available and, if possible, representative.

3.3.2 Identification of participants

Ruane (2005:43) notes that we must pay careful attention to how study participants are selected for various research projects. In this study participants were identified and selected by the gatekeepers. The gatekeepers were senior staff members in the organisations. The researcher was conscious of the fact that the participants were selected by someone in authority or a position of influence and therefore the participants may not be described as having fully volunteered to participate. In selecting the participants, the gatekeepers used one year of service and/or a basic qualification in child and youth care (BQCC) – a guideline that was stipulated by the researcher. This method of sampling is quota sampling. When using quota sampling, the groups are defined and the sizes specified, and then individuals who fit these descriptions are selected to fill the quotas (Baker, 1988:158).

The reason for choosing a qualification or experience as a selection criteria was to ensure that participants had been exposed to the idea and importance of observation as a child and youth care skill. In his address at a child and youth care conference, Righton (2005) mentioned that intimate knowledge of each child depends upon constant observation and accurate interpretation of our observations.

Barbour and Schostak (2005:42) note that the power structures that contextualise the exchange between interviewer and interviewee need to be taken into account, as they might have an influence on the process of the interview and subsequently the final data itself. The researcher was conscious of the fact that as a child and youth care lecturer at an open and distance learning tertiary institution, some of the participants could have been his students. As far as the researcher could gather, only one of the participants was registered for the qualification for which the researcher was responsible.

The tables below illustrate the profile of the participants interviewed by the researcher:

Table 1: Participants from organisation 1 referred to as CC (for the purpose of distinction)

Gender	Race	Years of service in CYCW	Possess BQCC?
F	B	7 years	Y
F	B	19 years	Y
F	W	4 years	Y

Table 2: Participants from organisation 2 referred to as KK (for the purpose of distinction)

Gender	Race	Years of service in CYCW	Possess BQCC?
F	W	10 years	Y
F	W	8 years	N
F	W	3 years	N
F	W	4 months	N

Table 3: Participants from organisation 3 referred to as JJ (for the purpose of distinction)

Gender	Race	Years of service in CYCW	Possess BQCC?
M	W	9 years	Y
M	B	6 years	Y
F	C	16 years	Y
F	W	19 years	Y

Table 4: Participants from organisation 4 referred to as ZZ (for the purpose of distinction)

Gender	Race	Years of service in CYCW	Possess BQCC?
F	I	7 years	Y
F	B	2 years	N
F	C	13 years	N
F	C	7 years	Y
F	B	2 years	Registered for BQCC during interviews

Race key: B = black, C = coloured, I = Indian, W = white

Although the researcher's initial intention was to interview only those child and youth care workers who possessed the BQCC or one year's experience of direct work with young persons at risk, he found that some of the participants selected did not meet this criterion. Hence, in the tables above, the researcher indicates the extent to which participants met/did not meet the set criteria. Because all the above participants worked directly with young persons on a daily basis, they were well positioned to report their observations of the young persons' daily living and therefore the decision was made to include them.

3.3.3 Location of interviews

All interviews took place within the organisations where participants were employed. It has been suggested that interviewing within organisations might be affected by particular circumstances (Shipman, 1981:98). However, there seemed to be no better location option as some participants indicated that they were only willing to take part in the study when officially on duty. In order to maintain consistency, all interviews were therefore conducted in the participants' work settings.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The research design was an exploratory-descriptive design within which the researcher used semi-structured interviews. According to Poggenpoel (2003:148), in a semi-structured interview, an open-ended question is asked and the interviewer follows up on clues about the specific topic that the participant provides.

Poggenpoel (2003:143) describes the research interview as “a conversation between the researcher and a participant or participants with the specific objective of gathering information about that which is being researched”. She further states that the advantage of interviews is that the researcher uses himself as an instrument for gathering information.

Ruane (2005:147) suggests that it is perhaps our social nature that makes interviews an attractive research option. The researcher's interest in interviews as a method for data collection was influenced by the nature of the field for, in child and youth care work, practitioners prefer to “be with people as they live their lives” (Garfat & McElwee, 2004:11). In describing interviews as a method of data collection, Shipman (1981:95) states that they not only depend on the quality of the questions asked, but also on the awareness of, and control over, the

interaction involved. The researcher believes that all these were in line with a child and youth care approach as articulated by Garfat and McElwee (2004:11).

The researcher had a list of questions to be presented in the interview to ensure that all group respondents experienced a similar interview process. The researcher drafted and used all questions (see Appendix 1) as guidelines for the interview. These questions helped the researcher to stay focused on the specific matter of interest and to open up a topic for deeper meaning (Garfat, 1998:48). The set questions led to more probing questions. The researcher documented the data collection process as accurately and in as much detail as possible (Mouton, 2001:104). He also used a tape recorder to record the conversations, which he later transcribed.

3.5 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In describing the real world of the social researcher, Shipman (1981:41) warns that because the researcher is interested in social relationships, he is liable to have strong views about them, as the motive for research is often to promote change.

For the purposes of this research, the researcher paid specific attention to ensure external validity. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:82) note that external validity is concerned with the question: "Do the results obtained from this particular sample of participants apply to all subjects in the population studied?" To try and ensure the applicability mentioned above, especially within the South African context where there are diverse racial groups, the researcher was fortunate in that the four major racial groups were represented in his study, although the limited number of respondents per group may raise questions regarding representation.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher obtained permission in writing from the heads of all the residential care programmes that participated in this study (see Appendix 2). The element of full information presumes that research participants will be given all the relevant information they will need to make informed choice (Ruane, 2005:21). The researcher met two groups of the participants and briefed them about the details of the research project prior to the commencement of the interviews. During these meetings, the researcher was conscious about how much information to give prior to the actual interviews, as Ruane (2005:21) also asks the following questions: How much information was enough? Will some details actually increase the chance of confusing respondents or biasing results? The content and format of the research was also explained before the actual research.

Owing to time constraints, the researcher only met the other two groups of participants for the first time on the day of the interviews. This was a dilemma for the researcher, as Ruane (2005:22) contests that consent procedures that do not give participants any time to think over or reconsider their decision are really not fully abiding by the informed consent principle. For the latter group, the researcher tried to achieve rapport with the participants prior to the commencement of the interviews by accepting the offer of tea (in two groups) and spending some time having a casual conversation before commencing with the interviews. Bryman (2004) suggests that a relationship that encourages the respondents to want (or at least be prepared) to participate in and persist with the interview needs to be established very quickly.

The researcher guaranteed the participants' confidentiality and anonymity and to give feedback on the results. The participants' right to withdraw from the research was also outlined (Poggenpoel, 2003:146). The researcher obtained written consent from the child and youth care workers interviewed. Williams (2003:166)

strongly maintains that informed consent implies that those being researched not only know that they are being researched, but also that they should also comprehend why. The researcher not only paid attention to William's comment by explaining the purpose of the research to the participants but also obtained their written consent (see Appendix 3).

In brief, at all times the researcher paid attention to the following five core principles which determine ethical conduct by social scientists, as stated by Tolich and Davidson (1999:70): (1) do no harm, (2) voluntary participation, (3) informed consent, (4) avoid deceit and (5) confidentiality or anonymity.

Participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions about the study prior to, during and at the end of the interviews. Ezzy (2002:68) suggests that research participants should be included in all aspects of the research process and it is important to consider how evolving interpretations of the data can be checked with participants. Data collected and analysed was taken back to the participants for verification prior to the finalisation of the report. This was done to avoid any misrepresentation of the participants' views. During the verification sessions, participants were further encouraged to ask questions and change whatever they perceived as not being a full representation of their views. Indeed, the participants made some corrections and provided some clarifications in some instances.

Other than the fact that taking back the data to the participants is a research practice, the researcher was also aware that child and youth care workers tend to view research activities as investigator-oriented (Eisikovits, 1991:277) and therefore was trying to minimise such perceptions. The entire child and youth care field, including practice and research, is supposed to be developmental in nature. The researcher believed that feeding data back to the participants would give them certain insights and therefore possibly contribute to their growth. This

practice would ensure that the research process itself would be a developmental experience for the participants (Eisikovits, 1991:279).

3.7 CONCLUSION

Conducting research requires the researcher to pay particular attention to the methodology as well as how all aspects of that methodology are being applied during the entire research process. Although the researcher did his utmost best to follow the procedures of qualitative method during the research, the researcher cannot claim that no flaws can be detected. In the next chapter, the researcher will analyse some of the data collected during the interviews.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of data analysis is to establish themes that emerged from collected data. The researcher did thoroughly go through the data collected with the view of capturing themes that emerged from this study. In this chapter, the researcher will share the themes that emerged from the interviews conducted. The researcher focused on those themes that related to the research topic and excluded others that may not have been considered relevant.

4.1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Williams (2003:124) notes that data analysis is the “least scary” part of research. The researcher, however, experienced this differently as he was a bit overwhelmed in tackling this part of research. In his opinion; this is the most critical aspect of research. It is in this chapter that the researcher reflects, explores and interprets what has been expressed by the participants. The researcher was put at ease by Williams’s (2003:69) concession that no interpretive analysis will either fully exhaust or provide a fully correct understanding of what was going on.

It is also in this chapter that the researcher explores whether he can trust the findings to apply beyond the study that produced them (Ruane, 2005:33) She further mentions that humans have to interpret findings and in this process of interpretation there is plenty of room for questionable judgment calls and flat-out mistakes. Another consoling factor was that open-ended perception of research allows the social researcher freedom in interpreting data (Shipman, 1981:165).

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:143) caution that when carrying out a research project, it is essential to recognise that observations of any kind can never be expressed without some error. Since the researcher was using interviews as a method of data collection, during analysis he tried to guard against any bias that might have taken place during these interviews or during the process of interpretation. He also guarded against any information that might have been recorded incorrectly. The researcher used a reporting style and cross referenced these accounts with what the literature says about transitional objects and their importance. He further compared the written data with the audio recorded data.

The researcher has further been on the lookout for possible respondent bias that may be as a result of mistrust, fear, conformity or social status pressures (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:145). No such bias was picked up by the researcher. The researcher was also on the lookout for his own bias, as Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:143) caution that, as human beings, researchers can never be completely neutral.

4.2 Explanation of key concept to the participants

Shipman (1981:92) warns that questions can be too technical or complex. The term “transitional object” was not a familiar term to some participants. Uys (2003:125) warns that the degree to which respondents understand the questions that are asked and the degree to which questions are meaningful within their frame of reference have implications for the validity of the research. The researcher therefore spent time explaining the concept of transitional objects to ensure that participants contributed meaningfully to the study. The excerpt below shows how the researcher attempted to ensure this understanding at the beginning stage of the interviews:

LM (Researcher)

Er... let me give you the topic. The topic is about transitional objects and I

don't know what they are called in Afrikaans but I'll explain what they are. Some children, when they come into a children's home, especially after traumatic experiences, after separation with loved ones and so on, they identify and pick up things, and they hold on to those things, because those things become special for them. They hold onto those things and they don't want to lose those things and they use those things to sort of comfort them. And I want to find out, since you have been working with young people, have you come across some young persons who hold onto certain things, it may be...of some sort? That is what transitional objects are. Are you familiar with such things?

To gain the insight into the meaning the participants intended to convey during the interviews, the researcher adopted the four-step procedure as outlined by Gordon (1978). Those steps are as follows:

1. listen critically
2. ask probing questions of the data
3. look for meaningful relationships
4. synthesise and arrive at some sort of solution about the data

The excerpt below is an illustration of how the researcher attended to the activities mentioned above:

1. *Listened critically*

LM Does he keep the key for his room?

KK Any key. If you are going somewhere, he always takes the key and if you come home he will take the key and open the door for you. I think it is for control...

LM So keys for the kombi, keys for the house...

KK Any key. It is not the same key all the time but any key.
He will spot any key. But he is also one of those children, if he comes into this room, he will have a look, but you know ...not clear...he will get it immediately. He knows exactly where to look. He is unbelievable. On the other hand he is very low functioning actually.

2. *Asked probing questions of the data.* The researcher kept on asking probing questions in order to understand and make sense of what the participants were saying:

KK Ja, especially...I also think to bring the small child back... to bring the small child back in them and to comfort, you know...so that they can carry on with their lives.

LM When you say to bring the small child back, what do you mean?

KK The inner child...you know a lot of these children never had a proper childhood. That is why they need a comfort zone, a comfort object, then it must be managed properly.

It was important for the researcher to ask questions to clarify not only the language but the depth of meaning the participants were trying to express.

3. *Looked for meaningful relationships.* In the excerpt below, the researcher was trying to see how the behaviour could be related to the concept of transitional objects.

LM You said some children even take a blanket to school.

KK Ja...my sister's boy used to take a blanket to school as his comfort zone.

4. *Synthesised and arrived at some sort of solution about the data*

CC That little girl that I told you about, that she's got pyjamas, Er... the little girl came to sleep at my house because it was a (religious) holiday. Ja, I mean I think she noticed that she was coming into unfamiliar place and I mean when she came that night, I saw her... I think that night time is the hardest time for any child, or anyone, that's when you feeling down and you feeling that when they feel vulnerable at night. You know when the lights are off, that's when they are trying to think of whatever.

And sometime after the light went dead, they go to fetch it...ja...that's when they feel vulnerable, you know, like an incident where she cannot go home for the weekend, the reason that their parents, ...whatever, er...that is when she holds onto the transitional objects.

From the above excerpt, it is clear that the child and youth care worker regarded the young person bringing pyjamas with her as the most important move that could assist her to settle in that unfamiliar environment. The researcher was at this point convinced that this particular child and youth care worker was aware of the importance of the pyjamas in serving a transitional purpose.

The researcher tried to explore some of the words that were expressed by some of the participants. Mostyn (1985:118) suggests that the words analysed are those that typically came in the form of interviewer's notes of what was said, a transcript of the proceedings and a tape recording.

KK Maybe you can make conversation out of this. You can say it is the insect doing this or you know, you can find out more about that child's emotions and feeling. Even through an art and...laughter...

LM Basically you are saying it might help the young people to talk about their emotion?

The next section, exploration of data, will include some of the words, themes and concepts that were beginning to emerge regularly from the interviews with the participants. These data came from some participants representing all four residential care programmes.

4.3 EXPLORATION OF DATA

With regard to the actual exploration of data, the researcher found himself moving back and forth between audiotapes, transcripts and notes in trying to make sense of the information contained in all of them. Fortunately, the researcher taped the interviews, took notes and transcribed the scripts himself. As the researcher began to immerse himself deeper and deeper in the data (Garfat, 1998:65), the emergence of some themes became evident. Of course there was a great deal of data that was captured that neither related to the importance of objects nor to the concept of transition. Such data have been excluded in this dissertation.

As the researcher examined the data thoroughly and observed the emergence of themes, as in so many qualitative studies he started out to uncover one thing and discovered something else of importance. Some ideas that could serve as recommendations started to emerge and the researcher wrote them down. At first the researcher was uncomfortable with this sequence of events until he came across reassurance that the process of working with data is far from linear (Garfat, 1998:65). One 'works' the data, reading, drawing inferences, re-reading,

modifying the inferences. As a result, the majority of the recommendations contained in Chapter 5 were derived during the analysis of the data. The researcher was focusing on those data that in one way or another related to the importance of objects, as well as those that related to the idea of transition. In so doing, the researcher was trying to isolate the units of relevance to the research question and to set aside others, thus narrowing the focus to data that concerned the question, as Lindsey cited by Garfat (1998:64) has suggested.

The researcher took all the transcripts from the four interview groups and read them carefully. He also listened to the tape recordings to see what objects were mentioned regularly. He then wrote down some of those objects that featured repeatedly in the four interviews. These objects were then categorised into themes.

After further exploration, the researcher came to the conclusion that the objects mentioned during the interviews could be classified into the following categories:

- items not allowed in residential programmes
- teddy bears
- crockery
- childhood items
- clothing
- objects of traditional significance
- memorabilia
- objects passed on directly from loved ones
- objects used in daily living

In the following section, the researcher is not suggesting that everything referred to here has transitional significance. His intention is simply to notice and highlight all objects that may possibly have significance and relevance to the topic of transitional objects.

4.3.1 Items not allowed in residential care programmes

It must be re-stated here that the researcher had a suspicion (bias) that many residential care programmes routinely disallow young persons to bring some items of significance into their programmes. In acknowledging the importance of objects in prison, Freado, Bussell and McCombie(2005) mentions that prisoners are allowed only few possessions, and pictures and letters are highly valued among them. If prisoners could be allowed to bring in their important possessions into prison, why would young persons in residential care programmes not be allowed to bring along some of their valued possessions? This was the main contention that prompted the researcher to carry out this study. The researcher needs to state categorically that during the interviews and subsequently the analysis, his concern was *not* confirmed.

However, there are certain objects that are not allowed in residential care programmes. The excerpt below demonstrates that those objects that are not allowed may not necessarily be of therapeutic significance to the young persons.

LM When young people come, are there things that they are not allowed to bring with?

JJ (cough) the knives and guns...ja...well cell phones they won't have unless...otherwise they will steal those things... but generally...only dangerous weapons.

JJ They get taken from the office before they go down the passage.

LM Okay

We need to bear in mind that in the context of poverty and/or unexpected displacement, some young persons may seem not to have any objects to serve

as transitional objects. It is this group of young persons that we either need to look at carefully to identify their transitional objects or help them create something that can be of significance. Fulcher (2004) notes that young persons often come into care with few belongings and this notion was confirmed by the participants during the interviews.

LM Okay... and are there things that these young people are not allowed to bring into care, especially when they come for the first time?

KK Most of them do not have anything to bring with. Like some of them don't even have a set of clothes.

KK These kids don't have lots of things to bring with them.

LM But things like clothing, bedding...?

JJ No bedding, no...they never got bedding in any case but clothing they only got very little...we change the clothing.

From the interviews, it emerged that some young persons might not necessarily cling to one specific thing all the time. They may cling to different things at different times. The following excerpt is an illustration of such a dynamic whereby different objects might be used at different times:

KK Ja...ja...the other day he had an...not clear... and I said what is in there?...anything but is not the same thing all the time.

4.3.2 Photos as memorabilia

Mayman cited by Fowler (1999:218-219) proposes that early memories are reconstructions that express the person's psychological truths rather than historical facts and, they function as a source of projective material.

Photos were mentioned as the most common form of memorabilia. Photos could be among those belongings that Fulcher (2004) claims offer valuable reminders of bygone times and past relationships. Some of these photos could be serving not merely as memories of bygone times, but also as transitional objects as the excerpts below illustrate how a number of young persons possess photos and are keeping and using them in a particular way:

LM So they still have parents' photos?

ZZ Ja.

LM So the photo is in the cupboard?

ZZ There is a girl who came in very early, she was young. She did not know her parents, and her auntie, relatives gave her photos of the father and mother who are both deceased. She keeps it in the cupboard. Ja... whenever they open they see that photo of their mother and brother who is at home...ja...

LM When he came he was...?

CC 17 and he came into care, he came with his dad's big photos.

LM So he came with photos?

CC He also got picture of his mother. He's got picture of his mother. A lot of kids keep pictures of their parents next to their beds.

LM You said they keep them next to their beds?

CC Ja...and (young person's name mentioned) also got a picture of his parents.

LM And they keep them next to their beds?

CC Ja...Yes!

It seems as if some photos are being used to reconnect the young persons with their past as demonstrated in the excerpt below:

LM Whose photo? How does he use this photo...have you noticed?

JJ ...not clear...and then they must show you...this is when I was young...there is some things that they actually don't forget (cough).

4.3.3 Teddy bears

The possession and use of teddy bears came out strongly during the interviews. Some participants from all four residential care programmes made reference to teddy bears.

KK Ja...for sure, we have a programme you know Teddy Bear Clinic in Jo'burg, once they have been raped or abused or something, they...not clear...so you know those people give each child a teddy bear. To comfort them and things like that. It serves as something of comfort or something like that.

CC They go to the storeroom with the teddy bear and like. And they go in there and they choose a teddy bear, you know, the role of that is that when they are feeling hurt, they say the teddy bear needs the child to look after them. The teddy bear needs a home so we give the teddy bear to stay with the child. They become like their transitional object, then they grab it, when they are feeling sad, they become very...

The word teddy bear was used regularly. What came out clearly was that these teddy bears were being used for comfort purposes. Flew cited by Flarsheim (1978:507) gave an example of a teddy bear and refers to the teddy bear as the “paradigm transitional object” but here the important point remains, it is not the teddy bear that is transitional but rather the meaning of the object to the developing infant.

Below is an excerpt that might suggest that the old teddy bear was not only being used for comfort purposes but possibly as a transitional object.

JJ They have got about fifty teddy bears on their beds. It takes them about half an hour to unpack them and they cling to these teddy bears, you know. If they get another one, you know they would cling to the old one.

4.3.4 Crockery

Crockery is items that we use everyday. We would therefore expect them to be used, washed and put away. In some instances, people share crockery, some to express their love and togetherness. Kydd (2004) expressed such love for the young person who was in their care by stating that “we like him so much, too, that we eat at the same table and use the same crockery and cutlery”. In a residential care programme, and of course in most households as well, it is mostly expected

that whoever is responsible for the chores on any particular day completes all tasks associated with those chores. This includes washing crockery and utensils used by others. However, if items such as crockery are used as transitional objects, it seems that the owner may not allow certain people to handle those items.

In the excerpt below, it would seem the researcher never followed up on the information that the participant wanted to share about some items. It may be that the researcher never viewed them as being relevant under the topic of transitional objects. This was a “bias” on the part of the researcher.

JJ There is a child with a cup and a kettle.

LM So this suit, is that a boy?

The researcher seemed to have been preoccupied with the boy with a suit than the child with a cup and a kettle mentioned by the participant. This kind of oversight is likely to happen in daily interaction with the young persons.

On closer analysis, the researcher came to the realisation that crockery might also be used as a transitional object. This realisation only came when crockery was mentioned by other participants from another group of participants as captured in the excerpt below:

LM Hm...and did you notice what he did with that file?

CC And we went to the file. He said he just wanted those things for the day. And when he went through those things I looked at him carefully. He started with the mug.

LM Alright he started with the mug?

CC Hm...and then there was a file inside, and he took two files, and then after that he...and I asked him what about that cover? He said no I am not taking it.

The excerpts below illustrate that there might be an association between the cup and the deceased mother. The fact that the mother passed away could necessitate the link between the cup and the mother.

LM And the one with a cup?

JJ Mom also passed away.

4.3.5 Childhood items

From the interviews it emerged that some young persons seem to prefer holding onto their childhood objects. This could be as a result of the good or bad childhood experiences they had. Fowler (1999:218) states that early childhood memories are considered psychological reconstructions organised around unconscious object relations that are projected into the structure and content of early memories as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Dummies have also been mentioned by two participants from two different residential care programmes. The excerpts below show how these dummies might be serving as transitional objects:

LM What is the story about the dummy?

JJ There is a child with a dummy. He always had a dummy in his mouth. He is in school already.

LM How old was he when he came in?

JJ He came in at about 4...ja...I don't see the dummy anymore but I can see he still...in his mouth. Since others started teasing him about the dummy, it went somewhere I think.

LM Did anybody ask him about the dummy?

JJ ...not clear...

LM What happened, did he just get rid of the dummy?

JJ I don't know but he didn't carry the dummy anymore and he now has the thumb in the mouth.

ZZ There is a child with baby socks. This child brought in baby socks.

LM What are they doing with baby socks?

ZZ He just keeps it in his room, in his cupboard. To remind him of his parents or something when he was young.

4.3.6 Clothing

Essential to establishing meaningful contacts with children or youth is the worker's recognition and assurance of "private turf" for each youngster, acknowledging the significance of an individual's personal possessions (Maier, 2000), including clothing. Some of the items mentioned by the interviewees were clothing. This clothing is usually kept in a particular way. Even the use of such clothing is usually different from what one would expect.

JJ I have got a child in my cottage, the clothes that she came in with

are from her mom. When we packed them in a cupboard for her, she takes them and hangs them up.

LM Where does she hang them?

JJ In her cupboard because it is something that she can see...and it is all what her mom gave her.

LM So she takes it off, where you hung it?

JJ Ja...and she packs it back in a packet.

Some clothing may have links with childhood memories. If they do, young persons may hold onto such objects for a long period. In the excerpt below this young person held onto his childhood jersey for seven years.

ZZ We have a 15-year-old boy who came in with this grey jersey. It is a special kind of wool jersey. He came with it when he was 8 years old. This thing is so tight and he does not want to give it away. He refuses to give it to the smaller boy.

I said to him no man, this is too small, give it to small boy (name mentioned). He says no, it is his jersey. He keeps it underneath there, he looks so funny but he doesn't care.

LM What does he say when you ask him?

ZZ I say (name mentioned), this jersey is too small for you (laughter)...he won't say nothing. I said you don't want to throw old things away, you like it. Ja...some of the young people wear it or take it to school.

LM So you said they have small things, some children have got small things?

ZZ Hm... and we ask why do you like such small things that you don't want to throw it away?

LM And where do you put it and who puts it in the bag?

ZZ In the morning they put it in the bag so that you cannot see it either. And you hear from the other kids that he did not wear his school uniform but these old clothes. He wears uniform in the morning or otherwise he wears it under the school uniform. Sometimes they do it like, I don't know. Some time they fold it and put it nicely in the bag. So when you check their bags you don't see it (laughter).

ZZ There is a 5 year old who came in with a knitted yellow jersey, as he outgrew the jersey, he did not want to give it to anybody. I said why don't you give it away? He said yes I would give it away but I never saw other boys wearing it.

Finally, it emerged that although these are merely clothes, they are perceived differently by different young persons. Below is an excerpt that illustrates how even siblings viewed their clothing differently:

LM When she said that, how do you respond and how do you feel?

JJ We say it is up to her...it is her stuff...she has got different views from other children. You know her brother doesn't care if the clothes get thrown in the cupboard or whatever but you know she has got her different ideas.

It also emerged that clothes that have been passed on from significant others seem to be very important to the young persons and tend to be used in particular and sometimes strange ways.

JJ Sometimes their parents give them old, outdated clothes...and they like holding onto that but they won't wear it. They say these are the clothes that mommy gave to me.

Although some items, such as clothing, may not have been passed on directly from loved ones, it emerged that they may nevertheless be associated with those loved ones.

JJ I have got one boy. The father has passed away, since then he had the suit that he wore on the funeral and that is also one of the items that he doesn't want to exchange.

LM ...not clear...does he ever wear it?

JJ He doesn't wear it. He just put it in the cupboard.

Clothing as a category of important objects came out clearly.

4.3.7 Objects of traditional significance

Some of the objects mentioned by some of the participants seem to have a clear link with young persons' traditions. Below is an example of an object that may have traditional significance.

LM Er...let's go back to the belt because I did not get everything. So the child had the belt? He was about...?

ZZ There is a child who came in and had a brown traditional belt with medicine. She was small when she came in. The belt was made out of goatskin. She came in and she had this belt. The auntie (relief worker) did not understand and she threw it away. When the African tannie (full-time child and youth care worker) came back later she went to find it and put it on the little girl again.

LM So the relief worker threw it away?

ZZ Ja... so the African auntie came back... and sometime that's why the kids are so naughty because she is fifteen, she is so intelligent, she has got everything but because of that, she...other tannie said she doesn't worry about it.

4.3.8 Objects passed on directly from loved ones

Another theme that emerged was the identification of items that have been passed on directly from loved ones or significant others. Although these objects come in different forms, the common factor is that they have been passed on by significant others and therefore could have transitional significance.

The excerpt below refers to a young person who possessed an item that was passed on by the mother:

LM And where did she get the "dokkie" from?

ZZ She came with the dokkie from her mother.

It would seem that some objects are used to minimise the feeling of aloneness despite the presence of others. The strong desire to have the objects at all times might present a dilemma for the young person, especially if the status of the

object is such that it may raise immediate attention in unsuspecting onlookers. Although the researcher did not enquire about the status of the object mentioned in the excerpt below, he did wonder whether the young person was worried and anxious about what others were likely to think of her object.

CC She said no she does not want to come and she told me that the reason she does not want to come is because she has got a dudu blanket from his mom and she was scared that if she brought it out at night, other kids would mock her. She said she can't go anywhere without it. And I called the girls and we talked about it and as soon as, you know, it was bed time, it was a petticoat. Also it...that kind of feeling, it belonged to her mom.

LM So how did you find out about the reason?

CC We talked about it. I wanted to find out why she did not want to come with. It was such an important aspect of her life that she was prepared not to come away for a weekend because she thought if she came she wasn't gonna be allowed to use it.

LM So how did you find out about that that was the reason?

CC She was open about it. You know when we talked about it I wanted to find out why she did not want to come with us, she said she has got this blanket and that she would be embarrassed to use it in front of other people.

LM Dudu is a blanket? D.u.d.u?

CC It is like a sleeping blanket...(laughter).(noise coming from outside).

LM So she was afraid that if she came...

CC She wouldn't be allowed to use it. Ja... that the kids would see her and mock her (cough).

From the above excerpt, it would seem that the need for one to keep one's object might, in certain circumstances, present an enormous dilemma for the young person.

It also emerged that if the child and youth care worker is aware of the existence and the young person's need to carry transitional objects, s/he might act proactively to minimise and avoid such dilemmas as demonstrated below:

LM So how did you resolve it?

CC I talked about it in the group. I told them that I also have a transitional object. I also can't be without it. The kids I think they also had something, somewhere, something...not clear...She brought along her pyjamas. She held onto it until she fell asleep especially at night sometimes after bath she goes fetch it or when she cannot go home that is when she turns onto her transitional object. She does not wear it at all. She only holds onto it. It is silky.

It further emerged that objects of significance need not always be passed on by biologically related significant others. They may also come from someone with whom the young person felt a sense of connection as illustrated below:

JJ Let's take a bicycle for example...maybe a volunteer gave him something...le ga bicycle e senyegile e nna scrap, e tshwanetse e nne daar. Okay, o bona bicycle yela e leng daar? Kgale e le daar and mong wa yona ga a batle niks ka yona. Bicycle yela, although e kgotlela mona, ke yona ntho ye a e batlang.

Translation:

Let us take a bicycle for example... maybe a volunteer gave him something. Even if the bicycle is broken and is becoming a scrap, it must remain there. Okay. Do you see that bicycle¹ over there? It has been lying there for a while and the owner doesn't want to hear anything about it. Although the bicycle is messing up this place, that is what he wants.

LM How long has that bicycle been staying there?

JJ ...not clear...ena le ma three weeks e le daar. Ga a batle re e ise ko storeroom.

Translation:

...not clear...it has been there for about three weeks. He does not want us to take it to the storeroom.

The manner in which this particular young person is said to have been adamantly prescriptive in terms of how and where the bicycle should be kept raises the suspicion that it might have some emotional significance. Kaminer (1978:241) warns that the child can use the externally provided object as a transitional object; but this will eventually impede individuation.

4.3.9 Objects used in daily living

We need to take note that some objects that are used in people's daily living could also serve as transitional objects. It might be difficult for child and youth care workers to notice such objects as they form part of the objects used in the daily routine. For example, we use keys to lock and unlock our houses on a daily

¹ The researcher could see the bicycle that the participant was referring to.

basis. Chances are that we do not even pay attention to who tends to do the locking and unlocking as this is such a daily routine. But the excerpt below shows how what is regarded as a routine tool raises curiosity:

KK I have got another boy...not clear...I am not sure of his background...he likes keys. He has got an obsession with keys.

LM How old is he?

KK He is fifteen.

LM Hm...

KK But we all know that he is between three and four years old mentally. And that one is a control freak...if he can have the keys, he is in control. He must have been locked up or something. And he can fix anything you know...the more damage he can do, the better for him...if ...he can find it for you. But he has got a big thing with keys. And he likes all kinds of keys, to take control...Any key...

LM Does he keep the key for his room?

KK Any key. If you are going somewhere, he always takes the key and if you come home he will take the key and open the door for you. I think it is for control...

LM So keys for the kombi, keys for the house...

KK Any key. It is not the same key all the time but any key. He will spot any key. But he is also one of those children; if he comes into this room, he will have a look, but you now ...not clear...he will get it

immediately. He knows exactly where to look. He is unbelievable. On the other hand he is very low functioning actually.

4.4 THE USE OF OBJECTS OF IMPORTANCE

In the excerpt below, the participant clearly noticed the circumstances under which the young person used his objects, probably for transitional purposes.

LM So under what circumstances do they use these things? Do you look at when do they actually use these things? When do they put those old clothes in the bag and so on? Are these everyday or are there some days and what is happening in the child's life when they do?

ZZ You see that boy when he is longing for his mother. When he feels like, I don't know, when there is something wrong and when he puts those clothes on he feels like he is close to somebody ...not clear... When they don't want to talk and they are unhappy. Some of them don't know their family; they don't know who they are. Like the little one who came when he was two, and the mother was dead and when he came after school he sat there and another tannie he said the teddy bear was "Mimi"² and she speaks to Mimi and says Mimi is drinking.

This is what another participant from another residential care programme said about the occasions when the young persons use their object:

CC That little girl that I told you about, that she's got pyjamas, er... the

² Participant mentioned the real name of the young person's deceased biological mother. Researcher changed the name to Mimi for confidentiality purposes.

little girl came to sleep at my house because it was a (religious) holiday.

LM Ja...

CC I mean I think she noticed that she was coming into unfamiliar place and I mean when she came that night, I saw her... I think that night time is the hardest time for any child, or anyone, that's when you feeling down and you feeling that when they feel vulnerable at night. You know when the lights are off, that's when they are trying to think of whatever.

And sometime after the light went dead, they go to fetch it...ja...that's when they feel vulnerable, you know, like an incident where she cannot go home for the weekend, the reason that their parents, ...whatever, er...that is when she holds onto the transitional objects.

LM What was she carrying?

CC Pink hat. Yes. She said when she carried that hat, she just think about her mom.

LM Hm...?

CC Ja...

LM How old is the girl?

CC She is 19. You know she just changed her face you know, she said she was upset on weekend because her mom said she must come

on Sunday to take her out, you know I said please go tell (name of child and youth care worker mentioned) and then she went. (Child and youth care worker's name mentioned) phoned to tell her mom that she must phone (name of residential programme).

She went to....ja...yes. She never wears it...ja. She just takes that hat and put it in her room. She just holds it. It just brought her...a little comfort.

4.4.1 Unusual use of objects

From the interviews, another theme that emerged is that some objects are used in unusual ways. We all know pyjamas are used when going to bed, particularly at night. Although different people prefer to use pyjamas in a certain time, say in winter when it is cold, the common factor is that they are worn when going to sleep. However, the excerpt below illustrates the strange use of pyjamas:

LM So this pyjama she doesn't only wear it?

CC She does not wear it at all. She does not wear it.

LM Okay she brought it with her, but she didn't wear it, she played with it?

CC Ja...

LM Until she fell asleep?

CC Ja...

From the above excerpt, it is evident that the pyjamas had a specific role to play. It would seem that their role was to help the young person make the transition into bed with ease.

4.4.2 Misuse or abuse of objects

Much as we may have an idea of the significance and importance of some objects, we need to be aware that certain objects might be misused or abused by the owner as expressed in the excerpt below:

KK I have got a...you know I always got a...in the previous children's home when I was in Pretoria, I had normal children, not even special school ...teachers....that is why I don't like that stuff anymore because they use them as a sex objects. If you found that teddy bear, it was torn between the legs, and they used it to...you know what. So they had sex with the teddy bear so that is why, especially in my house, I don't like..., especially if it is a good thing. But that is what they did with the stuffed animals there...

KK Some of the boys they like to keep...not clear...they set apart. They put the funny stuff inside it and then they play with it.

LM Hm...

KK Some of them like...but others take it apart and play with it.

4.4.3 The pace of using important objects

The pace at which important objects are being used also emerged from the interviews. Some participants suggested that this pace needs to be determined

by the young persons themselves as they seem to know when the right time to use their objects is – as illustrated below:

LM So he gave them to you and he only came back to ask for these things after how long?

CC He came and asked for them after two years...er...am I right? He came here about four years. He came here in 2002 and that would be four years (laughter) with us so he asked them after two years?

Below is another expression that demonstrates the time and pace of the use of important objects:

LM Okay, and do you encourage them to touch and use these things, including the bicycle over there or not?

JJ How do you know whether he is in the mood to touch it today? You have already left this thing with him. He will know when to feel it, when to touch it, when to wear it.

4.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTS

Despite the clear evidence that some of the participants were aware of the existence of important objects, the researcher also attempted to establish child and youth care workers' views about the importance of these objects as they relate to transition. The excerpts below capture some of the views expressed by some of the participants:

LM So the things that you have described, whatever you have described, you spoke about teddy bears, would you say they contribute to these young people feeling better or ...?

- KK Ja...for sure, we have a programme you know teddy bear clinic in Jo'burg,once they have been raped or abused or something, they...not clear... so you know those people give each child a teddy bear. To comfort them and things like that. It serves as something of comfort or something like that.
- LM Alright...now let's think about these things. Do you think that they contribute to the well-being of these young people?
- CC They do because sometime when they feel depressed and then if they can hold onto their transitional objects, or just see it...it makes them feel better.
- LM So just seeing it can actually make the difference?
- CC Ja...hm...because they would tell you the story and thereafter it is like he is there with these people. It is like the little boy we spoke about. He would tell you the stories and thereafter, he would tell you stories about his uncle and his house and, it is real for them...when he is talking about them it just shows that he feels much better.
- LM So he hasn't been with these people but the way he tells the story you feel like he has been with them?
- CC Ja...hm.
- LM So it is like through that thing there is a strong connection.
- CC Hm...you know it is like I cannot be at home with my mom but through this thing is like my mom is here with me. Yesterday she

was like carrying pink hat she was telling me that her mom didn't come on Sunday, to take her out.

LM So, when they hold onto those things, when they touch those things, er... how do they look afterwards? You said when they are in ...situations, when they are stressed. Have you noticed when they are stressed they hold onto these things? After holding onto those things, have you noticed how they look or feel afterwards?

CC I can say, whilst they are holding it,...not clear...kind of allows them to work through their emotions. And, I mean, it will either be that ...er...I mean this other girl that I told you about the camp, you know that is the only way she was gonna feel, ...the feeling. That's the only way they can, when she holds onto it , she feels comfort enough and she lets go.

Some participants expressed not only the ordinary importance of these objects but were able to link the objects to therapeutic significance.

LM You said it is an advantage, you said as long as you use it in moderation, and you have mentioned the word therapy.

KK Even then you can use it for therapy especially that we work with brain damaged children.

KK Like this young boy, if you ask him how you feel, he can't explain his emotion and it is like he turns numb he will just look at you, he won't say a word. You will have to ask him, are you sad? Are you cross with someone? So you have to ask all these questions and even if he doesn't answer you, he I believe that...not therapy in

general...not clear... and you know if you are clinging to something, you can establish what the problem is and ...maybe you can make conversation out of this. You can say is the insect doing this or you know, you can find out more about that child's emotions and feeling. Even through an art and...laughter...

LM Basically you are saying it might help the young people to talk about their emotion?

KK Ja...

It is well known that transitional objects are linked to the inner feelings of the owner. Some of the participants seemed to be aware of this link as expressed in the excerpt below:

LM You said it helps them express their emotion without...?

CC The monkey that is feeling sad, the monkey that wants to see their mom, you know stuff like that. The feelings that the monkeys has, they are not monkeys' they are their own. Psychologist bought them...they have brought them the teddy bears; you know to help them through the grieving process.

LM Who bought the teddy bear?

CC The psychologist. For each of the two kids that their dad died. She walks with that teddy bear to ...associate the teddy bear...(cough).

Some of the participants not only regarded objects as being important but they also expressed the fact that young persons need to be encouraged to use these objects:

LM Okay, now that we are speaking or we have spoken about these things, do you think that they should be encouraged? In other words, do you think that child and youth care workers should be telling the children about these things that are of importance, of significance to them so that they can hold onto them and...?

KK Ja, especially...I also think to bring the small child back... to bring the small child back in them and to comfort, you know...so that they can carry on with their lives.

It emerged that some young persons may need their transitional objects even if the transition itself seems to be insignificant, like from the residential care programme to the school as expressed in the excerpt below:

LM You said some children even take a blanket to school?

KK Ja...my sister's boy used to take a blanket to school as his comfort zone.

LM And where do you put it and who puts it in the bag?

ZZ In the morning they put it in the bag so that you cannot see it either. And you hear from the other kids that he did not wear his school uniform but these old clothes. He wears uniform in the morning or otherwise he wears it under the school uniform. Sometimes they do it like, I don't know. Some time they fold it and put it nicely in the bag. So when you check their bags you don't see it (laughter).

4.6 ORGANISATIONAL AWARENESS OF IMPORTANT OBJECTS

The researcher was fascinated by the principle that it is the whole experience of the community of children and adults which is therapeutic (Ward, Pooley & Worthington, 2004:12). It would therefore be advisable for the entire staff to pay attention to what the organisation does in order to work therapeutically with the young persons. From all the interviews, it became evident that objects did not feature in team discussions as part of therapeutic tools. Even those organisations that used and supported the use of objects for transitional purposes did so either informally, unconsciously or silently.

LM Er...does the organisation like in meetings, encourage, or talk about these things?

KK ...not clear...no

LM Er... let's talk about the organisation. Does it talk about these things? Does the organisation encourage these things? Consciously or formally?

CC You know I don't believe that any one of the organisations would ever.

LM Okay, but it was never like discussed formally?

CC It was never been...sometime we were never aware that we need to talk about these things, I mean like now, we just doing it unconsciously ... sometime even if we are aware of that

CC Can I go back to the question that you asked, about the organisation?

LM Hm...

CC Er...I know with the kids that had been admitted. When they come in with nothing, but I know that the management takes them to the storeroom so that they can choose a teddy bear.

LM They go to the storeroom?

CC They go to the storeroom with the teddy bear and like. And they go in there and they choose a teddy bear, you know, the role of that is that when they are feeling hurt, they say the teddy bear needs the child to look after them. The teddy bear needs a home so we give the teddy bear to stay with the child. They become like their transitional object, then they grab it, when they are feeling sad, they become very... I think that it is not something that is consciously encouraged from the organisation but those things that come from home become important to them.

Probably in these cases, the organisation is not regarding teddies as transitional objects but rather as the mere everyday 'use of comfort items'.

4.7 CONCLUSION

What the researcher has captured in this chapter can in no way be an entire reflection of everything that transpired during the interviews. The researcher tried to include those conversations that made sense to him in relation to the research topic. The fact that the researcher analysed data with the view of establishing themes that could relate to the topic can make analysis a bit biased. The researcher paid attention and tried his best to minimise the level of bias. In the next chapter, the researcher will focus on the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher intends to establish if the aims and objectives of his research have been achieved. The researcher would like to make some concluding remarks about what has transpired during the research as well as about the themes that emerged. From the concluding remarks, the researcher would then move towards making some recommendations. These recommendations are mainly an attempt to address some of the themes and issues that emerged during the research.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE FINDINGS

The researcher believes that it is in this chapter that all the findings must be integrated. His greatest anxiety was whether what he writes in this chapter will tie in completely with the findings or at least what the participants have expressed. It is also in this chapter that the researcher senses that many might be looking for answers – quick, straightforward answers. Jones (1996:9) expresses the bothersome assumption about the idea that problems have only one right answer. It is not the researcher's intention to suggest that what is contained in this chapter is answers. It must be remembered that qualitative inquiry has long been associated with subjectivity (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999:130). Therefore, these are merely recommendations as the heading suggests. Some of these recommendations might 'ring true' in some situations and work for some people, while in other situations they might not ring true and therefore not work for others.

The researcher has found information that he believes to be of significance, and that in essence really is the beauty of qualitative research – because it is an

exploration. The researcher's findings were that there are so many things of importance to young persons to which we need to pay careful attention. The one thing that came out clearly in this research was that South African child and youth care workers *are* aware of the existence and importance of objects. Not all the objects identified by the child and youth care workers are necessarily 'transitional' objects in the classical sense. The researcher could never really know if the objects were truly transitional objects without knowing, and perhaps interviewing, the young persons themselves. But what was clear is that these objects, transitional or simply of importance, serve an important purpose in the lives of the young persons. There was no clear distinction between transitional objects and objects of significance. Participants were able to mention all sorts of objects that are important to the young persons.

Prior to this research, some participants may not have been consciously aware of the importance of such objects and it was as if the researcher had shone a light on the foreground of the phenomenon (Titchen & Hobson, 2005:121). At the end of the interviews, however, participants clearly articulated that important objects do exist and that such objects play a significant role for the well-being of young persons.

By paying attention to the circumstances under which objects are being used and the manner in which these objects are being used, child and youth care workers can determine whether the object has transitional significance. Titchen and Hobson (2005:121) state that people can talk easily about the foreground because they have personal knowledge of it in their heads. Most of the participants did talk about the existence of these objects without any difficulty. The researcher is confident that those participants who took part in the study will begin to pay attention to the young persons' objects and belongings as well as how these are used. Most importantly, the researcher is of the opinion that once the information of this study has been disseminated, even more child and youth care workers will begin to pay attention to how young persons use their

transitional objects. They are also likely to read more about the topic of transitional objects in order to enhance their knowledge about this topic.

Some participants further indicated that how objects of importance are/should be used is up to the young persons. If child and youth care workers are to be helpful in relation to such objects, the least they can do is to be aware of these objects, and sensitively support the young persons when they use or do not use them. The issue is not so much 'Are these transitional objects?' but rather that they are objects of significance for young persons.

The promise of confidentiality is an assurance by the researcher that the information provided by the participants will never be linked to them publicly (Ruane, 2005:25). It is rather sad for the researcher that the nature of research often requires the anonymity of participants. Otherwise he would have liked to see the participants being identified and linked to the research findings that led to the recommendations mentioned below. Participants are contributors of knowledge and therefore need to be acknowledged. The researcher would like to state categorically that he has learnt so much from the participants. Ruane (2005:157) states that the give and take of the focus groups exchange gives the researcher a chance to learn about what people think about the topic at hand. Therefore, if anyone has learnt anything from the foregoing, as the researcher has from this experience, the researcher would like the participants to share the credit.

The researcher would like to urge everyone to keep on looking for more answers without being afraid of making mistakes. Jones (1996:9) warns that if we are afraid of making mistake, we are unlikely to try anything novel. It is through continuous search for knowledge that we can continue to be relevant to those who are receiving our services.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this research experience, contextualised by the researcher's experience as a practitioner, teacher and trainer, he is going to make recommendations which obviously reveal his own biases and interpretations of the information. Palys (1997) asserts that interpretations of data will emerge from the understandings that the researcher brings to the task. Therefore some of the recommendations may not have arisen naturally from the interviews, but are the researcher's interpretation of how to make use of the information revealed in the interviews.

The research did not necessarily 'prove the researcher's point' that child and youth care workers may not be aware of the existence of transitional objects, but, instead, revealed something else of significance – that child and youth care workers are aware that young persons do possess objects of significance, whether of a transitional nature or an important nature, and we need to take cognisance of these.

The recommendations that follow came as a result of what some of the participants had to say. Because they are recommendations, the researcher suggests that readers take only those that make sense to them and might be applicable in their specific contexts. The idea is for child and youth care workers to choose those recommendations that may be applicable to individual young persons in their workplaces. It should be remembered that at the end of it all, it is up to the young persons to decide which interventions they choose to experience as being helpful. The will to health and healing belongs to individuals (Motsei, 2004:116). Each young person is unique and makes meaning of any intervention differently. Meaning-making is the way we all have of making sense of our experiences (Garfat & McElwee, 2004:35).

5.3.1 Time and timing

Some of the participants expressed the view that we will never know the right time at which the young persons will need their objects, be they transitional or of other importance. One has to be immersed in the continuous flow of happenings without control over their timing or sequence (Guttmann, 1991:65-66) in order to hope to understand. Child and youth care workers should rather be constantly on the lookout for emotionally stressful moments when young persons are likely to be most vulnerable. Through careful observation and attention, one might notice young persons turn to their important objects. It is during these moments that child and youth care workers should provide the young person with emotional support. It is not up to the child and youth care worker to decide when the items should be used; the initiative must come from the young person. The child and youth care worker can only join in once the use has begun. Guidance must come from the young person. In this sense, we 'lead through following'. Failure to be guided by the young person would be serving the child and youth care worker's own needs rather than those of the young person.

5.3.2 Consistency of the object

Different objects are significant at different times. Some young persons have had little opportunity to develop a sense of consistency or predictability in even the most simple activities or human relationships (Rosenfeld & Wasserman, 1990:18). They may therefore struggle to develop a sense of consistency with objects as well. Some young persons might have the need to always hold onto something, not necessarily the same thing at all times. If that happens, it is advisable that the child and youth care worker allows it. The child and youth care worker should allow the young person to hold onto whatever they deem important at that particular moment.

Child and youth care workers should not be surprised by the variety of objects that are of importance. Even if they are aware of the existence of other, probably favourite objects of importance, it might not be helpful to *suggest* that the young person turn to that particular object. Let the young person decide and choose which object to use at any given moment. The moment is known and should be experienced by the owner of the object. Any form of prescription as to how these objects should or should not be used and kept should be guarded against.

5.3.3 Unusual use of objects

From the interviews, it emerged that some young persons possessed childhood objects. Child and youth care workers should not be surprised by the existence of such “childish” objects. They should note that a need for a specific object or a behaviour pattern that started at a very early stage may reappear later when deprivation threatens (Winnicott, 2000:153).

It is not enough for child and youth care workers to simply notice the existence of important objects. They also need to pay particular attention to how these objects are being used. Some objects might be used as transitional objects, whilst others might be used for other purposes. Dickes (1978:308) shares the story of a boy who lost his favourite bib named “hoppa”. After the loss of this bib the boy was given a handkerchief by his mother. He took this handkerchief to bed, often pressed against his genitals, saying that in this way it could not be lost. Such an unusual use of an object is likely to prompt irritation in the child and youth care worker, who may urge the child to stop such behaviour.

During the interviews, one participant mentioned that a young person was keeping some clothes in a strange place (participant seemed ashamed to mention the place). If objects serve as transitional objects, they fulfil an emotional role, which is not the usual role that the object might be created for. The principle should be that for as long as the use does not cause anyone any harm, child and

youth care workers should try to be comfortable with how the young person chooses to use that particular object. It should be remembered that the use is for the benefit of the young persons themselves.

Some participants expressed concern that there are instances where young persons seem to use some objects “inappropriately”. Muensterberger (1978:12) warns that young person can use aggression constructively without risking any harm. In such instances, do we really need to find a way of protecting these objects considering that Winnicott (2000:154) maintains that the object can be affectionately cuddled as well as excitedly loved and mutilated? Is it appropriate for the child and youth care worker to attempt to teach the young person how to use such object appropriately? What is appropriate and who determines this appropriateness? To whose benefit is this appropriateness? These questions are research topics by themselves and it was not the researcher’s intention to explore them in this study. He simply highlights them with the hope that others might explore them further.

For those who might feel that important objects need to be managed, they should ask themselves this key question: To what extent will managing these objects impact on their usefulness? The researcher would suggest that child and youth care workers be guided by the principle, *no harm – no need to manage*.

In the same breath, some participants expressed the view that important objects need to be used in moderation. The researcher’s take on the moderation of use would once again be, if it does not cause anyone any harm or inconvenience, then why moderate?

5.3.4 Protect young persons against humiliation and embarrassment

Objects of significance by nature are subjective phenomena. Some people are likely to be surprised by the existence as well as the use of such objects. One

participant mentioned that the young person had difficulty in going to a camp. This young person feared that she would be laughed at if she brought her object along. Child and youth care workers must endeavour to protect young persons who possess and use such objects from being ridiculed by others.

Banning an individual from participation in his or her community is the most extreme form of dehumanisation, short of execution – that is, killing an individual's personhood or reality (Hoover & Milner, 2005). Self-ban (self-exclusion) that results from fear of humiliation generated by the need to possess an object of importance can equally be a killer of an individual's personhood. Even in the absence of any ridicule, some young persons might just feel embarrassed by their objects and therefore not derive the maximum benefit from them. Child and youth care workers can talk proactively about the existence and value of significant objects. This will make young persons feel okay with what they possess. They will also feel comfortable using their objects in the presence of others for the purpose of their well-being.

5.3.5 Conversations arising from photos

Which picture a child decides to display always contains an announcement with emotional content, and having no picture can be a statement as well.

(Weiner, 1991:91)

Photos are important items for many people's memories. They remind them of past or present significant people and/or events. Many young persons at risk have had their past relationships, environments and events interrupted. For them photos are likely to be regarded as the most treasured reconnecting possessions.

Young persons' photos could be used to strike up a conversation between the young person and the child and youth care worker. Whether what is going to be said by the young person in such conversations is real or imagined is not important. Some of the images may actually be an expression of the young

person's desires. What is important is what the young person has to say about his/her own memories as perceived by the young person. The child and youth care worker who engages in such conversations might find himself/herself engaged in "unplanned but critical" therapeutic work. In so doing, they can become "therapists par excellence" (Fewster, 1990:133). Child and youth care workers should not only promote conversations around photos but can also extend such conversations to other aspects of objects, for example, the unusual use of an object.

Some participants mentioned that most young persons do have photos, especially of their parents. When young persons have photos as important objects, child and youth care workers need to talk about these photos – they must not just notice them. They must let the young persons share their stories about those photos. Through the photos, they may get to know the young persons and their families a little better. So much can come out of such conversations that the child and youth care worker may be surprised. Even information that has never been shared with other professionals may come out. Solomon (1978:255) warns that therapeutic failures occur when too much effort is devoted to the origins of content and less to the patient's use of disclosures.

At times, some photos might bring to mind past joys and hurts. If past hurts surface during the conversation, it is hoped that real healing will follow. It is better if the pain comes out than to have it repressed. Child and youth care workers need to be on the lookout for the extent to which photos bring about joy or hurt in the young person. Doesn't true healing come after facing the reality, no matter how painful it might be?

Opting for convenient amnesia in our attempts to heal this wound will have the same effect as covering an abscess with a sticking plaster. Without an incision to drain the wound and the application of a disinfectant, the dis-ease-causing organisms will multiply, spreading the infection beyond the initial locus.

(Motsei, 2004:29).

Garfat and McElwee (2004:4) maintain that relationships are the essence of effective social care (CYC) practice. Conversation around important objects such as photos might strengthen the relationship between the young person and the child and youth care worker who showed courage in opening up such an emotionally charged conversation. Imagine someone showing interest in your photos and talking about something significant to you; one way or another you would feel engaged with that person. Conversations around photos can undoubtedly be meaningful and therapeutic.

5.3.6 Getting stuck with the young persons' belongings

Some participants shared experiences where a young person had asked them to keep their belongings. These young persons only came to collect the belongings after a long period. Some young persons only came for their belongings during disengagement from the residential care programme. If one has to put some items away, one must genuinely ask the young person the following questions: Is there any item that you would like to keep to yourself? If not, then reassure him/her that s/he can come anytime s/he feels in need of any of the items.

It is better just to hang onto the objects until the young person asks for them even though it may take a very long time before the young person asks for his/her belongings. Whoever keeps these belongings needs to be patient. When the time for handing over the items arrives, they must be handed over respectfully. The manner in which the child and youth care worker handles and hands over the young person's belongings could be another way of ensuring continued connection or disconnection between the two.

5.3.7 Strive for a compromise

There is no ethical defence of practice which removes children from a familiar but violent context and places them in an unfamiliar and violent one.

(Michael, 2006)

It has been mentioned during the interviews that some young persons bring dangerous objects or weapons into the programme. Some participants mentioned that they confiscate such objects right away, as residential treatment facilities attempt to create an environment and system that provides for the psychological and physical needs of emotionally disturbed youth through stability, attachments and freedom from fear (Pazaratz, 1998:29). It should be remembered that these young persons might be bringing these “dangerous objects” because of their difficult and sometime rough and violent past, and therefore some of the objects might serve as a genuine form of protection. Manyathi (2005:40) reckons that if life gave her a raw deal, most of the time, she would see the world as the worst place to be. This would include residential care programmes.

For objects that are regarded as dangerous, child and youth care workers need to discuss the issue with the young person and agree about the place, time and methods of using and keeping such objects. This can be done without being confrontational and violent. Siluma (2005:113) maintains that young people’s behaviour often acts as a mirror reflecting adults’ responses to situations. Child and youth care workers need to demonstrate respect for young persons and their objects, including dangerous objects. At the same time, they should genuinely express the concern they might have about such objects. They must try to aim for a win-win situation. The ability to reach such an understanding might set the tone for the way in which the child and youth care worker and the young persons will work together. It may suggest that everything that is going to be done with the young person whilst in the programme is going to be a negotiated arrangement. What better way to begin a relationship?

5.3.8 Be culturally sensitive

Children may have different needs according to their different cultural backgrounds, which will need to be addressed in a culturally sensitive way

(Stormont, 2004:417). Some of the objects the young person brings into the programme might be of cultural significance. The child and youth care worker must remember that objects of cultural significance are likely to be subjectively viewed by the young person. In diverse cultural settings in particular, child and youth care workers should strive for understanding when handling such objects.

South Africa has diverse racial and ethnic groups. As a result there are diverse cultures, traditions and belief systems. Attempts have to be made to understand and embrace these diversities when working with young persons. Understanding alone does not seem to be enough. Child and youth care workers need to go to the extent of allowing or encouraging certain cultural practices, as long as they do not infringe on the rights of other young persons in the programmes. The ultimate aim should be the promotion of the individual young person's well-being. Bruner cited by Garfat (1998:21) notes that human beings and their actions may be the expression of a culture, therefore child and youth care workers need to be sensitive as some behaviours pertaining to possessions might be related purely to the young person's culture.

During the interviews, one participant shared an incident where the young person was wearing a traditional belt with medicine around his waist. The wearing of the traditional belt by the young person is a typical example of a traditional practice. If child and youth care workers suspect that an object might have cultural significance, let them rather ask someone who comes from a cultural background similar to the young person's about the possible significance of such an object instead of throwing the item away. Throwing objects of cultural significance away may be equated to stripping the young person of his/her culture.

5.3.9 Let important objects form part of the agenda

Fulcher (2004) asks the following question: "When was the last time your staff group identified and discussed what 'transitional objects' are in evidence in the

life spaces of the children or young people with whom they work?” This is the question each team needs to keep on asking themselves, not only with regard to transitional objects but to other important objects as well. The whole principle of the multidisciplinary team is reflected in the pulling together of a range of professions and vantage points to enable fully informed discussion and problem solving, and in sending team members out again into their respective practice settings (Cape Technikon, 2000).

From the interviews it emerged that organisations do not identify significant objects as part of their helping tools. Seeing that organisations do not seem to talk formally about objects of importance, child and youth care workers should take the initiative and share some information with fellow team members about their experiences pertaining to the existence and use of such objects. This information may shed crucial light on the subject, especially for other team members such as psychologists. This sharing could contribute to a holistic intervention for the maximum benefit of young persons.

5.3.10 Having “nothing” does not equal insignificance

They walk at night with tattered shoes and silent lips, cracked from the wind and sun.

(Walsh, 2003)

The above statement is a perfect description of the state of many young persons before entering the child and youth care system. During the interviews, it was mentioned that there were young persons who come into care with nothing, or few or old belongings. It is this category of young persons who, in the researcher’s opinion, is at risk of being stripped of their last and only “valuable” possessions.

Children who enter these programmes with ‘nothing’ might have a stronger need to go out with something. In the event of the young person leaving the programme, especially if the child and youth care worker suspects that they

might want to leave with a particular item of significance, the child and youth care worker should quietly ask the young persons if they would like to take something with them. Or perhaps the child and youth care worker could go with them to the place they came from and find something – even a rock or a stick could, in the end, prove valuable. Then the child and youth care worker could try to convince the rest of the team to allow the young person to take such an item. One participant mentioned having done this.

Some young persons have had a troubled past to the extent that they do not want to have anything that is associated with it. A child severely damaged by faulty and destructive relationships may very badly need a period in which his relationships with adult carers can be relatively superficial. This may be merely a transitional need (Righton, 2005). This is the case especially for those who have been moved from one programme to another. These young persons need to be assisted with reconnecting. In order to help them establish some sense of continuity, the child and youth care worker might take the initiative to let the young person take something with them even if s/he did not ask for it. By so doing, the child and youth care worker will be assisting the young person to connect with objects in the hopes that they will later reconnect with people.

5.4 PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, here are the significant recommendations emerging from this study:

- Child and youth care teams should regularly discuss their awareness of the existence of significant objects.
- Teams within child and youth care organisations should make the use of objects of significance a recognised feature of therapeutic programming.
- Child and youth care workers should try to talk about objects of significance with the young persons, individually or in groups.
- Child and youth care workers should allow unusual uses of significant objects as long as they cause no harm.

- Objects of significance may be anything and used at any time, consistently or inconsistently. Therefore child and youth care workers need to protect the young person from humiliation without prescribing how these objects should be used.
- Objects of significance should always be treated with sensitivity and respect.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What age group do you work with?
- Generally speaking, what are the backgrounds of these young persons i.e. what circumstances made them come into your residential care programme?
- Are there things they are not allowed to bring with into you're your care.
- What kind of things are they allowed bringing with?
- Do you notice some young persons holding on to some items they brought with them?
- What things are these?
- When /under what circumstances do they hold on to these things?
- How do they look, feel and what do they do when holding onto these things?
- Do you think these things contribute to them feeling well (well – being)? If so what makes you say so?
- Do you think these things are important or significant?
- Do you encourage them to hold on to these things?

- Does your organisation encourage you to encourage the young people bring items of significance, especially during admission?
- What are your views about the therapeutic significance of these objects?
- What advice, about transitional objects, would you give other child and youth care workers?
- Do you have your own transitional objects?

APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE ORGANISATION

56 The Kemptonian
Casuarina Street
Kempton Park
1619

26 January 2006

The Manager
Emdeni Children's Home
P. O. Box
Kwa-Xuma
1698

PERMISION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR ORGANISATION

Dear (Name to be included),

I am in the process of doing my Masters Degree in Child and Youth Care through UNISA and have to complete a research project.

This study seeks to explore South African (SA) child and youth care workers' awareness of transitional objects and their importance in residential care practice with children and young people.

I request permission to conduct focus groups (3) with Child and Youth Care Workers in your organisation to gather information on this topic. It will involve the first group discussion which will last approximately 2 hours and then a second group for about 1 hour where I will give them feedback on collated data and themes to check the validity and accuracy of the information I have collated.

Dates to meet the focus group will be communicated to you once permission is granted. I intend to meet this group during the month of February 2006 at your organisation. The

feedback group will be held in March 2006 and I will inform you of these dates in due course.

The Child and Youth Care Workers' participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and they may choose not to continue once they have started.

All information will be anonymous. Nothing they say will be directly attributed to them or your organisation – only themes and information about the topic will be shared. No one in the other groups will know what was said by any individual.

As a result of my research, I am hoping to publish my findings in the accredited journal. The findings may also contribute to the training material of child and youth care workers in future.

If you grant me permission to conduct this research in your organisation, please sign this form in duplicate and keep a copy for yourself. Please fax me the signed form to (012) 429 3414 before the 28 February 2006 and I will collect the original when I come to interview the group. You may also write me a formal reply letter.

I would appreciate it if you could identify the child and youth care workers who would be willing to participate in this research. These child and youth care workers must at least be in possession of Basic Qualification in Child Care or have been working in child and youth care field for over a year. Once identified and agreed, please forward me their names so that I can write them individual consent letters.

Yours sincerely,

Lesiba Molepo
073 668 0770

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

56 The Kemptonian
Casuarina Street
Kempton Park
1619

24 February 2006

The child and youth care worker (name to be included)
Emdeni Children's Home
P. O. Box
Kwa-Xuma
1698

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN MY RESEARCH

Dear participant, (name to be included)

I am in the process of doing my Masters Degree in Child and Youth Care through UNISA and have to complete a research project.

This study seeks to explore South African (SA) child and youth care workers' awareness of transitional objects and their importance in residential care practice with children and young people.

I request that you avail yourself as a participant in this research. Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to continue once you have started.

All information will be anonymous. Nothing you say will be directly attributed to you or your organisation – only themes and information about the topic will be shared. No one in the other groups, outside the participating group within your organisation, will know what was said by any individual.

As a result of my research, I am hoping to publish my findings in the accredited journal. The findings may also contribute to the training material of child and youth care workers in future.

I also promise to give you general feedback about my general findings at the end of this research.

If you agree to this request please sign this letter below. Fax it back to me at (012) 429 3414 and make sure that you keep a copy for yourself.

I appreciate your assistance and willingness in advance.

Regards,

Lesiba Molepo

073 668 0770

.....

I (name of participant) agree to participate in the above mentioned research project. I understood and accept the conditions of this research project.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

APPENDIX 4:

WRITTEN VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF DATA COLLECTED AT ONE OF THE RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS ON 4 APRIL 2006 AT 9:00

Time

Although the researcher was there before 9:00, which was the scheduled time for interviews, the actual interviews started at 9:15. Part of the delay was due to the fact that the participants were preparing tea so that they (participants and researcher) could have tea before interview. During tea time, the researcher thanked participants for agreeing to participate in this research. He outlined the purpose and procedure to be followed. Lastly, he asked the participants to complete consent forms before the commencement of the interviews.

Transcripts

Some of the information was captured on the tape recorder. Hence it may not have been captured and reflected here. The researcher was recording as well as writing some notes during the course of interviews. This may have resulted in the loss of some information.

Below are some of the actual conversations that took place:

Researcher (R):

Today we will be talking about transitional objects. Do you perhaps know what these are before we start?

Senior participant (SP):

It is some kind of object that feels nice, smells nice. Something that they are familiar with.

Note: The answer above came from one care worker who seemed to be

senior. The researcher termed this participant (SP) in this transcript. She was ready to get going with the discussion and this may have encouraged others to follow suit.

Participant (P):

It is like a momento – something that you have. It reminds you of somebody as a gift. Just like a gift from mom. It comforts you.

Another participant (AP):

A thing that children bring into residential setting. Like torn clothes. You can't stop the child to wear that.

Note: Although there were four participants in this group, the researcher did not distinguish between what was said by the other two participants in this transcript .

R: What age groups do you work with?

SP: We are registered to admit children from 2. But at the moment we have children between 7 and 19. We may register to admit even younger kids.

R: Generally speaking, what are the backgrounds of these young persons i.e. what circumstances made them come into your residential care programme?

P: These are abandoned children, some of them their parents are unable to take care of them. We only got two kids who are proper orphans. Lots of them their parents are substance abusers or too low functioning to meet their basic needs.

R: Are there things they are not allowed to bring with into you're your care and what kind of things are they allowed bringing with?

SP: They are allowed to bring anything, duvets, TVs to make their rooms nice. We have had people bringing in teddy bears, pyjamas, and photos.

Note: Interviews were taking place in a residential setting that caters for an exclusive race group on the grounds of religion. In the South African context, this group is what we may term "historically advantaged" group. Hence some of the young persons who come into their setting can afford to bring in items such as a TV.

AP: One child brought pyjamas that she got from her mom.

P: In the morning when we take out washing, she puts this pyjamas and the photo of mom and dad under the pillow.

AP: One big boy has got his mom's mug. He rinses it himself and no one can use it. He keeps it safe.

P: I remember when one of our kids' mom passed away, this little boy clung on this jeans. He moved on to adoptive parents. He looked after his jeans. He asked to take the jeans when he left. He specifically asked for mug, pillows that used to be his mom's. Pillows, photos and the diary. He wanted to take everything with him.

R: Any other things there are?

P: A girl (7) has got photos. Her father died recently. There is a letter that was written by her father which she keeps. I think it serves as transitional object.

There is a boy (16). When he came, he came with his dad's big photo.

SP: A lot of kids keep pictures of their parents next to their beds.

R: Any other thing?

P: A boy (18) had cushions from his mom and a photo for his biological father.

R: Do you notice them holding onto these things?

SP: The little girl came to sleep at my place. She brought along her pyjamas. Especially at night, sometimes after bath she goes fetch it. Or when she cannot go home, that's when she turns to pyjamas as transitional object. She does not wear it at all. She only hold onto it. It is silky.

One 11 year old did not want to come to the camp, the reason she did not want to come was that she was afraid that other kids would mock her about her transitional object. She was open about this. She mentioned that she has got a dudu or "sleeping blanket" and thought that she wouldn't be allowed to use it at the camp. I spoke to the girls in the group in front of the girl. I explained that I have my own transitional objects and they were okay with it. Then at night, she brought it, played with it, until she fell asleep.

AP: The three year old boy when he came, he used to ask pictures from the child and youth care worker who kept them. He would look at them and he could talk about them. He knew the family story. One day he was sleeping and I saw this little boy holding onto this picture. I think it is important to see that so many memories can be linked to this one photo that gave him hope. When he is holding it, he would go like deep in thought. It like allows

him to go deep into emotions. Some would play with it until they fall asleep.

P: The first time this child came in here gave me the stuff and asked me to keep them safe somewhere. After at least 18 months, he came to me and said: "Can I have my stuff please?". We went to fetch the stuff in the plastic and gave him. He started with the mug. He then took two files, then CD. I asked him about bed covers. This was after his matric exams. I think he just wanted to keep this stuff safe in case he was to go away.

AP: I think they contribute to the wellbeing of these young people. A lot. Especially when depressed. If they can just see it, it can make them feel better. For example, through the photo, the little boy would tell a story about his relatives as if he has really been with these people. Often it gives them hope. It is like they say "while my mother is not with me, I can be with them". It gives them time out to think and carry on.

Another Example

Yesterday I was carrying a pink hat for the little girl (19). When she started to think of her mom, who did not come, she was upset with her. She went to fetch the hat that her mom bought. She fetched it, then held it. After she spoke to the social worker, she threw it on the floor. Obviously she needed that little bit of comfort.

R: Do you encourage them to hold onto these things?

SP: Me personally I do encourage them. It is very safe, harmless method of self soothing. If you cut off these things, you would rather cut off family preservation.

P: If they want to look at the photos we give them time to do that so that they

can bring back their memories. Who has got the right to erase someone's memory?

AP: Yes we encourage them. Bringing back memories would not be bad if you are observing and it brings them happiness.

R: Does your organization encourage you to encourage the young people bring items of significance, especially during admission?

SP: As far as I am aware, the topic of transitional objects does not come up in meetings as a practice. If it has negative significance, we would talk about it in meetings. But it has never been discussed formally. Sometimes we are aware of the things, we just encourage their use unconsciously but now we realize how important this is.

R: Do you think these things contribute to them feeling well (well-being)? If so, what makes you say so? And do you think these things are important or significant?

SP: I would say they are very important for the children. They help meet the child's needs. Going back to the organization, with the few kids that we have admitted in the organization, we take them to the storeroom and let them choose teddy bears. We tell them the teddy bears need the child to look after them. Based on that, the organization consciously encourage the use of transitional objects. You will see these kids walking around with these "monkeys". It helps them express emotions in the third person.

P: Some of the kid's dad had died. The psychologist gave each of the two kids whose dad died teddy bears.

R: If you had to advise other child and youth care workers about transitional

objects, what would you say?

P: I would say, allow the children as many objects or as many thing as possible. Whatever is important to them. To respect it, to allow them to play with it. These children come to a place that is new to them. It (transitional object) makes them feel safe. Anyone who does not allow that is wrong.

AP: I would make them aware of how important they are. If they see children cling to something, they must know it is their transitional object. Sometimes we tell children to put their transitional objects away. This can be emotionally damaging to them. It (transitional object) is equal to emotional object.

P: I thumb sucking also a transitional object?

Note: This question indicated to the researcher that the participant was really beginning to engage with this topic at a much deeper level.

We have a seven year old who sucks two of her fingers. When she does that, the child and youth care worker tells this little girl whose father died to take fingers out of her mouth. The child and youth care worker's reasoning is that she is going to have ormodantic (**researcher not sure of the spelling or meaning**). Her teeth will be skewed. And my response was so what? At least she will be emotionally secured.

Note: During the middle of the interviews, the manager brought the consent forms that the researcher posted to her for permission to contact interviews.

AP: I would encourage them to just leave the children to carry their transitional object. They must not stop them. It is important to observe that the

transitional object does not become an obsession but an object. It can work as part of the discussion and conversation. The basis for engagement and building trust and relationship with the child.

P: 19 year old always write letters to us as child and youth care workers. During school holidays, when I see letters, I keep them. When I see letters, I think of this young woman the way she talks. **Note: researcher could not figure out how this part of the conversation linked to the topic under discussion.**

R: Do you have transitional objects?

P: I have got my dookie from my mother. When I was 6, I used to carry the doll. I use it (dookie) even today when I go to sleep. My mom is still alive but is far away in another province.

AP: I have a baby shawl (not sure of spelling). It was mine and I used it for all my kids. That shawl is so important to me. My mother used to cover me when I was a kid and I used it for my kids.

AP: I also have a dress. I cannot wear it now but I like it. I wore the dress until it was broken. I still wear it but it does not fit me.

SP: I have got one, my husband has got one too and my baby has got one. I have got a pillow hat I got since I was a baby. My husband also has got a pillow of since he was a baby. But still he will not sleep with any other pillow. Both our pillows have been to /America (everywhere). My husband smells his pillow. He sits for hours holding onto his pillow. I bite mine. People cannot understand what I am finding in this.

Note:

The participants were getting excited sharing about their own transitional objects. In the interest of time, also considering that the main focus was the young persons' objects, the researcher decided to stop interviews at this point. He thanked participants and promised to bring back data for verification after it has been transcribed.

Note: Interviews finished at 11:50