THE ACCOMMODATION OF THE BLACK GRADE NINE LEARNER IN A TRADITIONALLY WHITE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND, CONTEXTUALISATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND ACTUALITY OF THE PROBLEM

*"My teacher is always telling me that she does not see my colour and that she treats all children the same. If she does not see my colour then she does not see **me**"* (Klein, 1993:128).

The learner who made the statement above accepts that his skin colour is undeniably part of his unique personal identity. Skin colour does not denote any particular inherent abilities or deficiencies. However, if this learner had been born and bred in South Africa during the apartheid era, his skin colour would certainly have influenced his early life-world to a greater or lesser degree.

Prior to South Africa`s first fully democratic election in April 1994, skin colour was indeed a powerful determinant of a person's social standing. It determined, amongst other things, the neighbourhood where learners lived, their parents' employment profiles and the quality of the medical care, schooling and recreation available to these learners.

Turning a blind eye to learners' physical characteristics (in this case skin colour), by implication, denies the totality of their being. It implies overlooking different cultural and social realities. Such denial compels learners to cope at school with an environment of quasi-acceptance, often tainted by undercurrents of racism. Epstein (1993:101) states: "...we know that racism and racial prejudice do damage the life chances and life experiences of black people." A school that denies the existence of intercultural and interracial differences and lacks effective accommodation strategies for its learners could thwart the learners' feelings of truly belonging to the school. This could leave them feeling that they are outsiders – an experience that could have a negative

impact on their school careers and future lives. Racism and prejudice appear to be among the most prominent aspects that could affect South African learners every day. This study focuses on the quality of accommodation and accompanying problems experienced by black learners who attend traditionally white schools. To accomplish this broad aim, it was essential to formulate research questions by which to gauge Grade Nine black learners' experiences of and feelings about school.

These research questions were approached from the perspective of educational psychology, a discipline which endeavours to further the total well-being of children within their educational setting or environment. Van Greunen (1993:103) equates the educational setting with an educational ecosystem. Van Niekerk (1982:3) refers to such a system as the "entire panorama of possible educative contents". This system includes educational relationships such as trust, understanding and authority. It also includes educational aims and objectives, educative participation by adults, self-actualising participation by children as well as the physical, social, political, economic and religious components of the educational setting. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997:34), the ecosystemic perspective demonstrates that individuals and groups of people across the social context are linked in dynamic, interactive and interdependent relationships.

In this study, the approach used is holistic, in other words, the study focuses on the whole, rather than just on selected parts (Hornby, 1995:568) of the phenomenon studied. A holistic approach enhances the possibility of providing a global picture of the phenomenon within the limited scope of the study. Educational anthropology, which developed when non-Western groups came into contact with Western education, studies the socio-cultural changes and educational problems which result from such contact (Van Heerden, 1992:12). This discipline employs a holistic approach in order to find explanations for and reach further understanding of a specific phenomenon. Because educational anthropologists favour a holistic approach for socio-cultural research questions similar to those examined in this study, a holistic approach seems to be the best suited to this study also.

The holistic approach used in this study implies that, to understand and assist learners, one must see them against the backdrop of their life-worlds – their family, friends and the society in which they function. The aim is to understand the range, the nature and the impact of the influences in

the life-worlds of these learners on themselves and consequently on the degree to which they experience accommodation at school.

There is a considerable need for research regarding the accommodation of black learners in secondary school. This need emerges clearly from a number of sources (Zafar & Keet, 1999:17-18). According to a front page article in the *Pretoria News* of Friday, 5 March 1999, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) released a report dealing with solutions to racism in South African schools. In the compilation of the report, about ninety high schools were visited across the country. The report claimed that blatant racist, segregationist and discriminatory practices were frequently found. None of the schools in the sample polled by the SAHRC "had any anti-racist programme in place, while the few schools which embraced what they perceived to be multiculturalism, focused on tolerance of other cultures, instead of dealing with racism".

The report showed that some teachers were eager to experiment with anti-racist programmes, but battled to obtain relevant material. One educator repeatedly screened the movie *To Sir With Love* for learners in an attempt to help them to cope with the situation. This film may be helpful, but in itself it is not enough. The film cannot address the South African situation in all its complexity. The commission recommended that in-service education and training in human rights should become compulsory for educators. In order to address the problem of racism in South African schools (a problem which is closely linked to a sense of belonging to and being accommodated at school), **the experiences and needs of the learners concerned should first be identified**.

Much of the literature on black scholars in South Africa tends to create the general impression that assumptions are simply made as to what black learners think, feel, do and experience, projecting knowledge acquired from Western education and school systems (Van Heerden, 1992:14). Such practices must be considered unacceptable. Hence, there is clearly a need for research in this field **to elicit black learners' true feelings and thoughts regarding their schools**.

The South African societal situation is indeed very complex, as the following section indicates.

1.1.1 The composition of South African society

It is well known that South Africa is a microcosm of the world, since all of the world's problems and contradictions can be found in this country (Govender, 1995:132). The composition of South African society is extremely complex. Govender (1995:133) comments on the fact that South African society consists of several societal levels (pre-industrial, modern and post-modern) and maintains that South Africa has to find ways for people on these different levels to share a common future. In addition, Hoopes (1980, referred to in Cushner, McClelland & Safford, 1992:270) discerns three levels of society, describing existing divisions between societal levels. Hoopes's classification can be used effectively to discuss the South African situation. These levels are:

- the local-traditional level;

- the national-modern level; and

- the global-postmodern level.

At the first level, little interaction between groups is required in order to satisfy ordinary requirements. Where interaction does occur, a great deal of conflict, disagreement, apprehension and fear is evident. These responses are associated with tribal groups, extended families and clans, and some small rural villages and towns.

At the second level, bartering, trading and/or negotiation is necessary in order to satisfy group needs. Currency is an important medium of exchange and communication increases. Nation-states have relative autonomy. Most Western societies function at this level.

At the third level, individuals and nations can satisfy their needs only with the help of many others, creating a global society or economy. It appears that the very survival of the planet may, in the very near future, depend on the effective interdependent functioning of governments, economies, technologies and communication systems, as well as the individuals who operate these systems.

South Africa has to face the reality that a large segment of its population lives in Third World circumstances. According to Hoopes's rationale and model of intercultural education, this Third World segment would resort under the local-traditional level and implies physically deprived

living conditions such as shortages of water, nutritious food, sanitation, adequate shelter and health-care services (Atmore, 1993:123; Ferreira, 1991:53).

An awareness of what this "culture of poverty" entails is vital if one is to grasp the complexity and actuality of some learners' home circumstances. Coutts (1992:86) explains what this "culture of poverty" encompasses:

- Often home circumstances are such that it is almost impossible for learners to attend to their studies.

- In many cases, the necessary parental guidance and stimulation is lacking, especially during the critical period from birth to the age of six years. This has a negative influence on the formation of numeracy and language skills.

- The stage from birth to the age of six years is equally critical for the development of empathy with children from other cultures and races, suggesting there is another vital skill which might not be developed. Epstein (1993:93-94) and Cushner *et al.* (1992:263) indicate that children are aware of others' thoughts and feelings from a very early age (perhaps even from their second year). Children begin to understand and construct dominant ideologies at this early stage of their lives. This would be the age during which to introduce anti-racist strategies to ensure a true and lasting effect.

- Previous schooling may have been inadequate, resulting in a narrowing of ability, understanding and experience.

- The parents of these learners and even the learners themselves may have "inflated initial expectations of what open schooling can achieve" with regard to producing "solutions to problems that only society as a whole, and the state in particular, can solve" (Coutts, 1992:86).

The above socio-economic factors are prevalent in a large section of South African society. These factors may seriously affect schooling because they counteract the development of a positive culture of learning.

1.1.2 Preparing for the demands of the twenty-first century

Pretorius (1993:24) argues that "the way in which a society educates its children will co-determine what that particular society will be like in a few years". In order to preserve itself, South African society is obliged to invest in its learners through good quality schooling that will prepare them to cope with the demands of the future. Schooling aimed at the future must consider the fact that the world in general is currently moving into the post-industrial age, with corporations splitting into mini-centres and with work done on home computers at all hours of day and night. Diversity rather than standardisation is becoming the norm. Millman (1995:99) predicts that people's working lives will become more fragmented and discontinuous, and will include periods of unemployment, education and training, as well as part- and full-time work. Personality traits sought after in this post-industrial age include self-discipline, creativity, an ability to carry out a variety of tasks and to work well alone or with others (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:332).

The twenty-first century also brings with it a quest for skills and concepts unheard of and unimagined until recently. According to calculations, 80% of the job opportunities that will be available by the year 2010 do not exist at present (Mittner, 1996:10). Learners therefore have to be prepared to take their place in a culturally diverse society and ultimately to operate as inhabitants of the global village. Pretorius (1990:203) indicates that the complex industrial, urban societies of the future will require highly schooled human resources. South Africa in particular, as a developing country, needs such resources. Society in general cannot afford to carry the failures of education. Govender (1995:142) says: "It is very necessary for us to identify and describe the nature of the global situation of crisis, for this is the context in which the new South Africa is gaining its freedom, and in which it has to solve its problems." Banks (1990:210) maintains that "effective citizens in the twenty-first century must have knowledge, attitudes and skills to compete in a global world economy that is primarily service and knowledge-orientated". Mbigi and Maree (1995:11) argue that if the South African economy is to survive in the face of global competition, it must address its problems by capacity building and adapting its training strategies.

The task of South African education therefore lies in finding ways for learners from pre-industrial, modern and post-modern environments to contribute to and share in a prosperous

future. Most importantly, this implies ensuring access to scientific, technological and other advances of local-postmodern society. Only through such action can an affordable and higher standard of living for the general South African population be ensured.

Achieving this ideal necessitates an investment in human resources -- a concentrated effort to utilise all available brain-power and to aim for academic excellence even at school level. This can only be achieved through the creation of a stabilising and accommodating atmosphere within schools. Such an atmosphere will allow learners to realise their scholastic potential without cultural or social constraints. The researcher takes cognisance of the fact that the very concept of excellence has fallen into disrepute in South Africa, due to the denial of opportunities for black people to excel in the past (Ramphele, 1992:24-25). This issue is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 2.

As the key role player in formal education, the school merits a closer look.

1.1.3   Role of the school

The "handicaps" of black learners at school do not only pertain to material deprivation. It should be remembered that traditionally hailing from a non-technological or non-Western cultural group could also be tantamount to being handicapped within a traditionally white school. Feeling uncomfortable within the school environment can be detrimental to learners' school adjustment. It can eventually interfere with their preparation and hinder adolescent learners' identity development.

Schools, as the rendezvous for youths from various cultural backgrounds and educational contexts, are ideally suited to create an awareness amongst learners of their various educational and underlying emotional needs and render the necessary support and in this way act as agents of change (Siraj-Blatchford, 1995:9,12).

The South African educational system is currently in a state of flux and transition, creating a responsiveness to new and alternative ways of thinking and behaving. The present educational dispensation advocates a multicultural policy, aiming for a non-racial and non-sexist education system. When local-traditional meets national-modern and global-postmodern levels under this dispensation, as is happening in South African education, interests can and do conflict. This is

particularly the case if the infrastructure of the school is inadequate and the teaching staff is underprepared and unqualified to handle this very demanding situation.

The problem is highly complex, particularly when the role demands made on the school are unrealistic, because different societal levels have different expectations. Troyna (1993:25) indicates that there is a "widely held belief that education can compensate for society". Coutts (1992:86) and Cushner *et al.* (1992:158) maintain that schooling has proven its inability to solve deep-seated social problems. Hartshorne (1992:53) states: "Schooling systems cannot solve economic problems, provide employment or reduce social and political inequalities. They must be used for those things they are best equipped to do and not be expected to serve as a general rescue net for all the problems of society that others have not been able to do anything about!" It is of particular concern that this fact appears not to be readily understood or accepted by those from deprived backgrounds. Klein (1993:21) shares the latter concern and says that some ethnic minority parents respect education as the provider of the surest method of self-improvement. If economic prospects remain bleak, schools can become the targets of their learners' anger. Coutts (1992:86) points out that teachers in Great Britain are sometimes regarded as "agents of an uncaring state that is not doing enough for the underprivileged". Ramphele (1992:19) indicates that in South Africa, schools became the targets of anger in the mid-1980s because they failed to address the perceived needs of township residents.

However, it is very important for the South African situation that other research has also shown that despite the size, complexity and political nature of the task, schools **can** challenge the racism that is at work within and beyond the school walls (Gillborn, 1995:2). Hartshorne (1992:53) argues that schooling systems have creative possibilities in this regard, but warns: "... they can become active change agents only with state support and initiatives, backed by broad political will and popular acceptance."

The role demands on the school as an agent of change are complex and varied. The eventual success of any given school is determined largely by the school's internal policy and educational approach. The multicultural and anti-racism approaches to education which are discussed in Sections 1.1.4 and 1.1.5 are particularly important in this context.

1.1.4 Multicultural education

If the concept of multiculturalism is coupled to education, definitions are varied and plentiful, indicating that the concept incorporates a wide variety of complex issues. Multicultural education is not ideologically based and recognises the school as "a complex social system characterized by its diversity" (Squelch, 1993:199). This approach implies the exposure of various cultures without reserve to one another at the basic educational level.

According to Coutts (1992:97), in multicultural education, provision is made for children from different cultural heritages to receive education in the same classrooms. The various cultures are used to enrich the learning experiences of all pupils.

Ferreira (1991:16) cites Smolicz (1982), who explains multiculturalism as an opportunity for individuals to make use of various cultures in their everyday lives in the spheres of language, family life, social manners, ideology, literature and art. This approach does not assume that all individuals are bicultural. It does assume, though, that individuals are generally positively disposed to and participate in a multicultural society according to their abilities and desires.

Epstein (1993:20) quotes the 1981 Rampton Report compiled by the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups: "A 'good' education cannot be based on one culture only, and in Britain where ethnic minorities form a permanent and integral part of the population, we do not believe that education should seek to iron out the differences between cultures, nor attempt to draw everyone into the dominant culture. On the contrary, it will draw upon the experiences of many cultures that make up our society and thus broaden the cultural horizons of every child. That is what we mean by 'multicultural' education."

Zafar (1999:34) maintains that good multiculturalism "allows for a complex, substantive understanding of culture and identity and accepts that individuals are free to make choices with respect to their identities".

Much criticism has been levelled at the multicultural approach, however (Zafar, 1999:34). It appears that a multicultural approach in education can effect superficial changes within schools, as is demonstrated by the following quotes. Rushdie (1991:137) says: "And now there's a new catchword: 'multiculturalism'. In our schools, this means little more than teaching the kids a few

bongo rhythms, how to tie a sari and so forth. In the police training programme, it means telling cadets that black people are so 'culturally different' that they can't help making trouble. Multiculturalism is the latest token gesture . . . and it ought to be exposed, like 'integration' and 'racial harmony', for the sham it is." Klein (1993:65-66) states: "Multicultural education of the 'saris, samosas and steel pan' variety may be worthless or even harmful ... Where multicultural education fails to embrace an anti-racist perspective, however, it invites criticism as tokenist, ... and as not addressing the fundamental issue of inequality of power."

Troyna (1993:26) criticises "the voyeuristic imperatives of multiculturalism in which 'they' rather than 'us' become the subject of scrutiny". He also mentions the iconography of multiculturalism and the accompanying conviction "that in a context of cultural understanding racial conflict would 'be unnecessary and would wither away'". Troyna emphasises that true multicultural education has to go beyond providing only information on the expressive and historical features of ethnic minorities. Zafar (1999:34) says that a multicultural approach operates on the incorrect assumption that all cultures enjoy equal status in society. The very apparent limitations of a purely multicultural approach increase the desirability for other alternatives, such as an anti-racism approach, as discussed below.

1.1.5   An anti-racism approach

Clearly, the nature of racism is multifaceted and extremely complex, and there are no simple approaches (Gillborn, 1995:130).

Solomos and Back's (1994, quoted in Gillborn, 1995:5) conceptualisation of racism states that "racism is not purely an academic matter, it is connected with a wider political culture in any given historical conjuncture".

Gillborn (1995:2) argues that recognising race is a vital component of any attempt to understand education and to challenge racism at schools. He goes on to say: "Race and ethnic identity are complex and changing factors that we must constantly review against the real world experience of teachers and students."

In view of such insights, it may be argued that to merely teach tolerance for other cultures by providing information about their expressive and historical features is not enough. The issue of

racism should be dealt with effectively. This can be achieved through exposing and challenging the power relations associated with race, sex and class in educational strategies. Troyna (1993:26) maintains that the "antiracist paradigm ... centralizes the need to provide the appropriate organizational, pedagogical and curricular context which enables children to scrutinize the manner in which racism rationalizes and helps to maintain injustices and the differential power accorded particular class, ethnic and gender groups in society". Troyna (1993:133) also argues that while multiculturalism is microscopic in that it focuses narrowly and intensely on culture-related issues, especially within ethnic communities, an anti-racism approach targets the identification of oppression in its various forms.

The anti-racism approach is just as heavily criticised for its short-comings as the multiculturalism approach, but it falls beyond the scope of this study to determine which is the most effective approach. Troyna (1993:135) refers to Rattansi's (1992) identification of a need to move beyond both anti-racism and multiculturalism, but could provide no alternative. Troyna suggests that in the absence of clear-cut superior alternative approaches, educationists could ensure that anti-racist education involves more than a mere episodic intervention in learners' lives. It should also be borne in mind that the effectiveness of these approaches is largely determined by the contexts of the schools where they are implemented.

1.1.6   The issue of cultural identity

An obvious way to facilitate change and good cross-cultural interaction would be to start with young pre-schoolers. As has already been pointed out above (Section 1.1.1), Epstein (1993:93-94) believes that children in their second year are already aware of people's thoughts and feelings. She cites Dunn's (1988) findings that children of that age can decentre sufficiently to discuss views on moral and social issues and think about different points of view to some degree, a key element in the construction of an anti-racist understanding. This basic work, however, is not the concern of this study. Instead, the focus is black adolescents who currently attend traditionally white schools. They may find themselves entering an unfamiliar, and for them unaccommodating, scholastic environment.

Although a detailed narration of the socio-political and historico-political aspect of black South African cultures and its effects on all concerned would add a wider perspective on the issue

under discussion, it falls beyond the scope of this study. Instead, using a holistic perspective, the focus is on the identification and description of the influence of cultural, socio-economic and historico-political heritage(s) on learners' educational needs and expectations.

In order to understand the educational and underlying emotional impact of exposure to or an upbringing in a culture of poverty and a black cultural orientation, it is necessary to examine several issues. For this reason, the issues are listed below, not necessarily in order of importance:

- Historical background

   Black education in South Africa has a particularly turbulent socio-political history, resulting in poor standards in teacher training, schooling and a decrease in school enrolment – all of which has created educational backlogs (Le Roux & Gildenhuys, 1994:39; Pacheco, 1996:35; Smit & Le Roux, 1993:32). Inevitably, those who share this history tend to be particularly sensitive with regard to their perceptions and expectations of schools.

- Socio-economic aspects

   A culture of poverty is to be found amongst a large percentage of South Africa's black population, with concomitant material deprivation (Le Roux & Gildenhuys, 1994:43; Pacheco, 1996:112-113).

- Cultural deprivation

   Cultural deprivation is an inevitable consequence of a culture of poverty, with neglect in areas such as personal and language development and education (Le Roux & Gildenhuys, 1994:44; Lemmer, 1993:157-158; Pacheco, 1996:114).

- Work

   Attitudes in non-technological (traditional) communities regarding general behaviour in work-related settings differ from those generally viewed as acceptable in technological societies (Van Heerden, 1992:261-262).

- Time and space

   Technological and non-technological (traditional) societies have different time and spatial orientations (Coutts, 1992:85; Van Heerden, 1992:243-44, 372).

- Language

Language proficiency, particularly in English, is often lacking, or limited, giving rise to the term Limited English Proficiency (LEP) (Lemmer, 1993:131). The learning programme (previously called a syllabus) is often written in a language other than the learner's mother tongue(s) – English is frequently used as the medium of instruction. Often learners are not skilled enough in this second or third language to display Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to the degree that would allow them to master scholastic concepts adequately (Cummins, 1981:23-30; Lemmer, 1993:151-153). Cummins also mentions Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). A combination of Limited English Proficiency and a lack of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills could create barriers when learners try to communicate with teachers and fellow students, thereby creating numerous misunderstandings.

Sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics add further dimensions to the study of language and its effects. Sociolinguistics is a field of research that regards language as "a social or cultural phenomenon: it is a part of society, it is partly shaped by society and in certain circumstances it also itself shapes society" (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:1).

Ethnolinguistics is a closely related field in that it studies language in relation to culture (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:9). This field of study therefore covers not only the linguistic (grammatical) competence of speakers, but also their communicative competence. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:10) refer to Gumperz (1972) who explains that this means that speakers can select from grammatically correct expressions available to them those "forms which appropriately reflect the social norms governing behaviour in specific encounters". In other words, ethnolinguistics highlights the importance of understanding the beliefs and customs of others in order to facilitate effective cross-cultural communication. Coutts (1992:85) mentions such cultural determinants of communication as the undesirability of asking questions or establishing eye-contact and the extent of personal space preferred during conversations. Language is closely linked to culture and the one influences and moulds the other, creating fertile

ground for misunderstandings between people in a multilingual and multicultural society such as that in South Africa.

- Group orientation versus the interests of the individual

  Within black cultures, the interests of the group are regarded as a top priority (Ramphele, 1992:20; Mbigi & Maree, 1995:58), taking precedence over the interests of individuals.

- Rituals, veneration of the ancestors, witchcraft and traditional practitioners

  Belief in the power of witchcraft (Scotch, 1970:248), veneration of the ancestors (Van Heerden, 1992:273-278), the consultation of traditional healers (Van Heerden, 1992:263, 279-280), as well as taking part in rituals, generally play a very important role in black cultures.

- Values

  People come to accept what is "proper" in areas such as religion, economics, aesthetics, political organisation and interpersonal relationships through learning (as part of the socialisation process). Because socialisation differs in different cultures, what is regarded as "proper" also often differs between cultures. Black learners might therefore not understand what the school system expects of them and if, why or how they have to conform (Van Heerden, 1992:216).

- Practical problems

  Black learners often experience demographic problems. Some of the learners live far away from the school and have to rely on unreliable forms of transport (often public transport). This situation causes many misunderstandings, but could also provide a means for learners to manipulate the school rules and discipline (for instance, using a lack of transport repeatedly as an excuse for arriving late at school).

1.2   DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Some key concepts are used repeatedly in this study. As these terms and concepts have very specific meanings in this research, it is necessary to explain their usage in this context.

1.2.1 Accommodation

The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1985:7) defines this term as the "act of accommodating; adjustment; adaptation; **adjustment of differences**; **reconciliation**; anything which supplies a want, ... **willingness to help others**" (researcher's emphases).

In this study, accommodation implies the readiness of a school to fully accept and allow for black learners as individuals with a particular history and very specific emotional and educational needs. This means recognising inherent differences and the need for self-esteem (see Section 1.2.11 for more detail on this term). Pityana (1995:170) refers to Taylor (1992) whose description of the principle of "recognition" captures the meaning of the concept of accommodation as used in the context of this study. He describes "recognition" (in other words, accommodation) as an "acknowledgement of the presence and the humanity of another". Pityana (1995:170) also quotes Cox (1988) as saying that recognition involves an acknowledgement of everyone's "limited part in the whole human story".

1.2.2 Learner

The term "learner" in the context of this thesis refers mainly to black adolescent scholars, who enter the Westernised technological school system from a culturally and possibly socio-economically different background. This study focuses on black Grade Nine learners.

To minimise repetition (he/she, his/her, him/her) in this thesis, there is no gender differentiation. The plural "learners" and the pronouns "they", "their", "them" are therefore used wherever possible to denote both genders, unless essential in the context.

1.2.3 Parent

Throughout the study this term has been used in its broadest sense. It therefore includes not only biological parents, but also legal guardians as well as primary care-givers such as grandparents.

1.2.4 Adolescent

Adolescence is the period between puberty and adulthood, stretching between the ages of 12 and 18 years for females and 13 and 21 years for males (Plug *et al.*, 1989:6). Within the social sciences, it is customary to discern between the various phases of adolescence, namely early,

middle and senior adolescence. As behavioural patterns can vary markedly between these phases, for the purposes of this study, the term "adolescent" refers to the adolescent in the middle adolescent phase, 14 to 17 years.

During this period, adolescents tend to engage in self-definition and discover their sexual, occupational and ideological identities (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997:250). This process is achieved by combining certain aspects of earlier childhood identifications with the acceptance of certain socio-historically influenced systems of values, norms and standards.

Erikson (1971:156-167) emphasises the concept of a "psychosocial moratorium" in the process of identity formation. He views adolescence as a psychosocial moratorium in which society provides a period of grace for adolescents to experiment with different roles and pursue various identities. For the "premature conclusion to this process in which self-definition is attained without exploring different possible identities", he chose the term "identity foreclosure" (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997:251). The latter authors emphasise that Erikson (1963) is one of the few theorists to address the adolescent period of human development. Erikson places particular emphasis on the socio-cultural factors in the process of identity formation. For this reason, a study dealing with South African adolescents should not ignore the influence of socio-cultural factors on adolescent identity development.

Stevens and Lockhat's (1997:253) view that the current political dispensation has a severe impact on black adolescents is important. These learners are expected to define themselves in terms of the most prevalent social norms and values, while many of these were the very norms and values many black people rejected and opposed in the mid-1980s as part of apartheid. Stevens and Lockhat (1997:253) refer to the Eriksonian framework according to which such a double-bind situation could lead to role-confusion rather than identity integration. Also, new role models, economic structures and an emphasis on Western ideologies encourage "an ideological shift from collectivism to individualism. Increasingly apparent, is the emergence of what could be referred to, as a 'Coca-Cola' culture - an embracing of American individualism, competition, individualistic aspirations and general worldview" (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997:253). The latter authors also explain that these shifts among black adolescents serve the purpose of maintaining their material and psychological integrity. Gangsterism, substance abuse, anti-social behaviour and an emerging ethnic separatism are also increasingly gaining ground. These are ways in which

black adolescents either collectively redefine themselves or deal with the double-bind of the present situation in South Africa. It should be realised then that the learners in this study probably experience a more problematic adolescence than usual, due to socio-cultural and political factors.

1.2.5 Culture of learning

A number of elements, namely learners and their personal characteristics, family factors, home environment, school factors and societal factors work together to create an atmosphere conducive (or not) to learning in a school (Pacheco, 1996:5).

1.2.6 Traditionally white school

This term refers to schools in previously white suburbs and traditionally attended by white learners.

1.2.7 Culture

The concept of culture is an extremely complex phenomenon. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:15) quote anthropologist Walter Goodenough's definition of culture: "... the culture of a society consists of the particular knowledge and beliefs that members of a community have which enable them to operate in a manner acceptable to the group, and in any role that the group finds acceptable."

Van Heerden (1992:67-68) regards culture as a set of shared ideas acquired through learning and influenced by experience. This behaviour materialises through social interaction and constitutes a system of knowledge that people could use in a social context to react to their world. She goes on to say that ideas are expressed through behaviour and material goods, whilst behaviour and material goods in turn stimulate new ideas or changes in ideas. It is difficult to discern between new and other (foreign) values and ideas, since, during the process of socio-cultural change, people revise these imported values and make them part of their own. Culture therefore does not possess a "cut-off" point where the indigenous-traditional stops. For this reason, cultural values and ideas in individuals' lives are not limited to the indigenous-traditional aspects of their society.

Ellsworth (1994:41) maintains: "...cultures are not static. Focal events, beliefs, and value systems change over time, and we may expect corresponding changes in the emotional lives of the members of the culture."

1.2.8 Socio-economic classes

Socio-economic classes indicate broadly identifiable social levels and levels of wealth that are shared by groups of people in society. At the lowest level, there is a culture of poverty. In a working class culture, employment is restricted to menial, poorly paid and mostly manual jobs. The more affluent and better educated groups form middle-class culture. Each of these groups has different interests and views issues such as education differently. Generally, not much sympathy or empathy exists between these classes or levels, and, even within each group, rifts and divisions can be found (Coutts, 1992:98).

1.2.9 Specific educational needs

In the literature, various terms are used to refer to learners' needs. The term "special needs" has gathered a great deal of "baggage" (as discussed below). Therefore, in this study, the more neutral term "specific educational needs" is preferred.

Taylor and Costley (1995:21-22) say that the term "special needs" was generally applied in educational circles from as early as 1981 and was readopted in 1993 to avoid references to disability or handicaps. However, the generic term "special needs" still covered the same range of disabilities and deficits. In other words, although labels were laundered, amended and updated, they still served the same purpose. This term can be regarded as an umbrella term which covers an extensive range of negative and ultimately discriminatory labels, in that it conveys differences and separate needs which could in turn imply an "abnormality". This may lead to discriminatory thinking and practice. Taylor and Costley do concede that from time to time everybody requires extra support. The degree to which needs can be managed relates to the support given. These authors suggest replacing the term "special needs" with "individual needs".

Lang (1995:163) argues that special educational needs should be assessed in a reflective way with conclusions based on as much hard data as possible. There is a danger of oversimplifying or stereotyping these needs.

For effective learning to take place, the education system must be able to accommodate a diverse range of needs covering the learner population (South Africa, 1997:xv).

Donald *et al.* (1997:69) point out that, although special needs normally relate to problems within learners, in South African society, such needs can often be created and maintained by external factors. Donald *et al.* (1997: 71-72) distinguish three kinds of special needs, namely:

- Contextual disadvantages and special needs:

  These are primarily external in origin and reflect disadvantaged social and educational contexts, as well as the individual person. Special needs in this case **cannot** be regarded as "exceptionalities" since they are basically differences in familial, educational, socio-economic and political contexts.

- Social and interpersonal problems and special needs:

  These are specific factors that influence these needs. Youth problems relating to violence, alcohol, drug abuse and sexuality are examples of such problems. The factors that influence these needs are both external and internal. Here also, these needs cannot be understood as "exceptionalities".

- Individual disabilities and differences in learning and special needs:

  These are disabilities and difficulties in learning and can be regarded as "exceptionalities".

Troyna (1993:41) indicates that "special needs" can also be identified in the context of anti-racism. These are examples which require "special treatment" through certain refinements to the education system. The implication is that without these concessions, ideals of political and social cohesion, stability and harmony are unlikely to be realised.

Donald (1994:137-138) says that the very idea of a special educational need is relative and not absolute. This allows for the assumption that special educational needs can also be

found among learners who have no intrinsic deficit as assumed under the disability definition but who are in fact structurally "handicapped". Due to both the structural and systemic inadequacies of education in South Africa, these learners have become disadvantaged to the extent that they have real special educational needs. Due to the entrenchment of needs due to environmental factors, it is "suggested that instead of referring to 'special needs' we should refer to barriers to learning and development" (South Africa, 1997:ii).

In this study, the term "specific needs" is used, not to imply that "exceptionalities" are present, but to concede that everybody requires specific support from time to time. As defined above, these needs may relate to contextual disadvantages or to social and interpersonal problems. The term also expresses those needs that these learners experience in terms of their adjustment in the school, and hence their successful accommodation in the school.

1.2.10 Holistic

After considering the various important theories concerning psycho-social discomfort in a child, Van Greunen (1994:85-86) says the conditions under which a crisis can develop in a child can be attributed to environmental, personal and interactional factors. He says that the "child in crisis" should be explained from a holistic viewpoint. This implies that learners experience psycho-social discomfort when a non-supportive socio-educational setting thwarts their innate potential for development and learning. Such an approach demands that learners should be seen in their total context, namely as developing individuals who interact with specific dimensions in a particular environment, for example, socio-economic, historico-political, family, individual and school/cultural.

Gilmour and Soudien (1994:130) indicate that schooling is perceived as a complex process. In order then to account for learners' failure or success, a broader view should be taken of factors such as social and cultural backgrounds and the socio-economic status of the family. In addition, these authors emphasise the importance of giving voices to the learners by considering their own interpretations of such influences and experiences.

Since institutionalised discrimination has adversely affected the lives of black people in South Africa, black learners cannot be regarded as learners in the normal sense without

taking into account their immediate background and family history and the impact of these on these learners' learning environment (Chinkanda, 1994:196).

1.2.11 Self-concept/self-esteem

"Self-esteem" refers to the evaluative aspect of the "self-concept". It refers to an individual's acceptance and approval of his/her characteristics (Plug *et al.*, 1989:317), his/her sense of his/her own worth or capabilities (Stratton & Hayes, 1993:175).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As has already been stated, in South Africa, First World and Third World situations exist side by side, representing different social, economic and political realities – splintered in diversity. The current educational dispensation advocates the exposure of various cultures to one another in the school situation.

From the background given above, it appears that black learners who attend traditionally white suburban schools could experience specific emotional and educational needs due to their different cultural, socio-economic and historico-political backgrounds. These needs have to be identified and taken into account in order for learners to experience a sense of belonging to the school, as well as to be accommodated meaningfully within the education system.

The subject matter of this study requires the situation and life-world of black learners to be examined holistically against the background of black cultural orientations, as well as a problematic educational situation. The problem examined in this study can be formulated using the following questions:

- How does an orientation that is culturally, socio-economically and historico-politically different from that subscribed to in a modern technological society influence black learners' experience(s) of attending a traditionally white but now multicultural school?

- Which specific educational and underlying emotional needs could arise from this orientation?

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- Bearing in mind these educational and underlying emotional needs, how can black learners from a different cultural, socio-economic and historico-political background be accommodated meaningfully and successfully within a modern (Western) technological school culture?

1.4   RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Black Grade Nine learners attending a traditionally white suburban secondary school could find themselves unprepared for the challenge this choice presents and could therefore display specific educational and underlying emotional needs.

In the light of the problem formulation in Section 1.3 above, it can be postulated that Grade Nine black learners in a traditionally white suburban school experience specific educational and underlying emotional needs. These needs stem from a different cultural, socio-economic and historico-political orientation to that regarded as the norm in these schools, as well as a probable educational backlog and different perceptions and expectations of the self, the school and society. These needs require specific accommodation strategies within the school system to aid the emotional and scholastic well-being of these learners. Therefore, these needs require identification.

1.5   RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this study is to identify which educational and underlying emotional needs could arise from the cultural, socio-economic and historico-political orientations of Grade Nine black learners who attend traditionally white schools. These needs encompass those needs which originate from any possible educational backlog, as well as from different perceptions and expectations of the self, the school and society. This information could then be used as the basis for the development of an educationally sound and accountable support structure. The nature of this support structure should be such that disadvantaged learners should not be penalised in any way, but are instead given every opportunity to realise their potential to the full in order to counter any possible educational backlog.

CHAPTER 2

THE CULTURAL AND HOME SITUATION OF BLACK LEARNERS

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the cultural and home situation of black Grade Nine learners who attend traditionally white schools. A large number of these learners hail from non-technological cultural backgrounds. Also, many have been brought up in, or at least exposed to, a culture of poverty at some point in their lives.

In order to render adequate support services within schools, it is necessary to remember that all learners carry the baggage of previous and current formative influences and experiences. Garbers (1980:51) recognises this problem when he states that it is important for educators never to think of children as isolated from their educational situation. Siraj-Blatchford (1995:11) agrees with the work of Vygotsky and Bruner (1960) and Donaldson (1978), who emphasise "the importance of educating the whole child".

Chinkanda (1994:196) is of the opinion that, in the past, the lives of black people in South Africa have been adversely affected by institutionalised discrimination and repressive laws. The researcher is in complete agreement with Chinkanda that black children cannot be treated as learners in the normal sense without considering the immediate background and family history and the impact of these factors on their reaction to the learning milieu. Similar opinions are expressed by Mayeske and Beaton (1975:4) and Hartshorne (1992:53). In order to ensure that black learners' true identities are not denied and that they are not and do not feel discriminated against in school, this research uses a holistic approach to gain a better understanding of the life-world(s) of black learners.

Although the study focuses on urbanised African communities, it is important to take note that these urban communities cannot be viewed as "microcosms of culture". An urbanised African community is not the equivalent of an isolated rural village which may represent an ethnic and linguistic unit of which this village tends to be an intimate part.

Mitchell (1970:257) says that the African peoples have become part of what Furnivall (1948) called a "pluralistic society", what Radcliffe-Brown (1952) termed a "composite society" and what Redfield (1955) called a "compound society". Radcliffe-Brown (1952) defines a "composite society" as a "political and economic structure in which the Europeans even though few in numbers, exercise a dominating influence". At present, there is a new, emerging township culture. Within this new structure different classes are represented, with different languages, customs and modes of life, as well as different sets of ideas and values. It is generally agreed that black communities display "a distinct way of life productive of distinct urban institutions which exert strong pressures on individuals and groups alike to act as urban men" (Gutkind, 1970:183).

This emerging township culture is likely to include tribal traditions and customs. Gutkind (1970:184) mentions the findings of a study by Pauw (1963) on urban born black Africans in East London. Pauw's study showed that traditional values, such as boys' initiation and the giving of *lobola* (marriage goods) were still accorded "emotional" importance, contradicting or at least qualifying an observation by Gluckman (1961, quoted in Gutkind, 1970:183) that "we are dealing with townsmen in towns and not with tribesmen in towns". However, more recently, Letlaka-Rennert *et al.* (1997:237) refer to Cock's (1993) statement that, for instance, the traditional system of *lobola* no longer serves its intended purpose, namely to protect women, but that "the premise of patriarchal control has never changed" and that the continued paying of *lobola* is "testimony to the continued subordination of women".

Mitchell's observation (1970:261) that there is often an integrated cultural system within which quite different belief systems may co-exist and are called into action in different social situations is of particular importance to this study. Peltzer (1993:14) holds a similar view. Such an integrated cultural system implies that members of different traditionally non-Western cultures are able to live in Western industrialised communities, whilst retaining their traditional belief in the efficacy of magic, for instance. This may indicate that they are "unaware" that such beliefs are regarded as incompatible with Western beliefs, or it may imply that their culture is more flexible in assimilating non-traditional beliefs and customs in addition to traditional ideas. According to Mitchell, this indicates that change has not penetrated equally to the different sectors of culture and belief and that the "adoption of a

new set of customs and beliefs in one context does not necessarily imply a corresponding modification of custom and beliefs in another" (Mitchell, 1970:261). Landrine and Klonoff (1996:1-2) have found similar trends in their study on African-American acculturation.

Peltzer (1993:14) uses the term "personhood" to discuss relational and contextual aspects of African personality concepts, which, unlike the Western personality concept, do not separate the individual from the social context and do not emphasise a pronounced self. He distinguishes three types of "personhood" amongst black Africans, namely traditional, transitional and western "personhood". Most rural black people can be regarded as traditional persons, whilst the majority of urban black people can be considered to be transitional. The term "transitional" indicates that the person is in the process of shifting from the traditional to Western culture and may turn back, especially in times of crisis. Mitchell (1970:261), as was mentioned above, has found that different belief systems may co-exist and may be called into action in different social situations. While people's minds are Western-oriented, they may still be psychosocially rooted in traditional culture. The third type, the Western person, is not often found in African cultures.

Landrine and Klonoff (1996:1-2) discuss the concept of acculturation (the extent to which ethnic-cultural minorities participate in the cultural traditions, beliefs, values and practices of their own culture versus those of the "dominant" Western society). On a continuum ranging from "traditional" to "acculturated", Landrine and Klonoff distinguish between traditional people at the one end of the continuum, bicultural people in the middle and highly acculturated people at the other end. Traditional people remain immersed in the beliefs, practices and values of their own culture. Bicultural people have retained the beliefs and practices of their culture of origin, but have also assimilated the beliefs and premises of the dominant Western society, thereby participating in two different cultural traditions simultaneously. The highly acculturated people at the other end of the continuum have either never acquired their own culture's traditions or have rejected these in favour of the beliefs and practices of the dominant culture. Some people could be described as marginal, which means that they have not rejected, nor acquired the beliefs and practices of either their own, or of the dominant culture.

Stevens and Lockhat (1997:253) argue that post-apartheid South Africa has generated greater opportunities for black adolescents. However, the new dispensation "also impacts

on black adolescent identity development in a complex, nuanced and ambiguous manner". There may be a need to develop identities that will allow black adolescents to cope with an ideological shift from collectivism to individualism in the face of new role models, economic structures and the dominance of Western ideologies. New role prescriptions may be experienced as contradictory and confusing – a double-bind situation. This may result in a situation which marginalises and alienates these adolescents from their own social realities. At the same time, they may be left without the necessary support, guidance and coping skills to negotiate their new roles successfully.

Peltzer (1993:16) explains that a traditional person's behaviour is a manifestation of the collective virtues of the family and the group. No intrinsic value exists outside the kinship network. Social status depends upon the group and its norms, values and ideals. When the transitional person has undergone an individuation process which emphasises achievement, competition and a desire to excel, he/she can no longer be regarded as a "group person". During adolescence, transitional persons realise that they are individuals who are responsible for their own destiny and are, in fact, in opposition to others. There is a breakdown in the traditional "clan consciousness", which could result in increased feelings of guilt, "since the responsibility for bad events can no longer be projected so easily onto others".

Following a similar line of argument, Bulhan (1980, cited in Stevens & Lockhat, 1997:254) explains that the process of acculturation often undermines the containing culture of collectivity left over from the 1970's and 1980's. More importantly, it leaves the historically oppressed "experiencing a psychological tension related to [their] straddling different worlds that all become increasingly alien".

In order, then, to understand how the life-worlds of black learners influence their perceptions and expectations of school, as well as their specific educational needs, a short overview of the historico-political background is given and the cultural and home situation of these learners is discussed in this chapter.

2.2 HISTORICO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The legacy of political factors and apartheid on black education in South Africa is well known and well documented. Mokwena (1992:46) says: "The casualties of apartheid education will remain central in the 'new' political dispensation, and cannot be written off as a bad debt." Aspects of the policy of apartheid that the learners in this study have most probably experienced include ineffective educational policies and exposure to political violence.

2.2.1 Ineffective educational policy

There were separate education departments for the different population groups. There were not enough black schools, and those that existed, were poorly equipped. There were not enough trained black teachers. Many black teachers, however dedicated they were, were poorly trained, due to few and poor training facilities for black teachers and the policies of separate training institutions for different population groups. Less money was available per capita to spend on black learners as opposed to white learners.

2.2.2 Exposure to political violence

In the 1980's, black people were regularly exposed to political violence. This happened due to confrontations with the security forces or during demonstrations when schools became sites central to the political struggle. At times, family or family friends were involved in political activities, which periodically resulted in detention without trial.

Since 1990, the pattern of violence has changed. Now it is mainly characterised by violent (often intraracial) attacks on unarmed civilians in townships, informal settlements and on public transport. The threat of violence remains virtually omnipresent and is frequently combined with a lack of clarity as to who the perpetrators are (Dawes, 1994:177-178).

Dawes (1994:177-178) adds that, according to the view held in the Western industrialised world of the ideals of childhood, growing up in a high-risk environment against a backdrop of violence could prejudice optimal psychological development. Rudenberg, Jansen and Fridjhon (1998:112) refer to Gibson (1993), who suggests that children tend to turn their anger inward rather than act it out. This proposition and the results of their study led

Rudenberg *et al.* to hypothesise that proximity to high levels of violence is more likely to lead to depression than to delinquency.

There are, however, factors that could counteract the negative effects of violence. According to Dawes (1994:185), it appears that "a supportive social context gives the child a sense of being contained by the social objects in the outer world and serves to facilitate the child's mastery over inner terror and turmoil". Ramphele (1992:22-23) holds a similar view. Dawes (1994:184) says a resilient primary caretaker is not only a protective factor, but also serves as a role model for coping behaviour and provides a sense of control and certainty. A close individual (not necessarily an adult) who can promote emotional support and can sensitively interpret occurrences reduces the risk of the negative influences of violence on children. Also, a person who allows the child to express his/her reaction in culturally appropriate ways can help the child to cope and to control damage. Ramphele (1992:23) states that the presence of an interested adult, acting as a mentor, can protect against social pathology. The same principle applies to stable family circumstances and home environment, and to the presence of positive societal role models.

Other possible outcomes of exposure to violence during childhood could be that children may be sensitised to such an extent that they may be rendered more vulnerable to future stress. On the other hand, they may become more resilient (though not invulnerable) to the effect of future struggles. A "sleeper" effect could be latent – this means that children appear to be able to cope with crises over the short to medium term, but then the effects of the ordeal show up in adulthood (Dawes, 1994:186).

From the above studies, one can conclude that the outcome in terms of learners' emotional status with regard to their exposure to violence depends largely on the nature and quality of the support systems available to these children. If this support system is lacking in any way, it could mean that learners will not be able to handle stressful situations, or that (in the case of the "sleeper" effect) a "time-bomb" is ticking – and could "explode" at any time. Both possibilities can influence learners' accommodation in school negatively.

2.3   SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS

A culture of poverty – indicating that general needs are being inadequately met – is currently one of South Africa's biggest problems. Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994:31) quote Heyneman (1991) who maintains that 25% of the black population in South Africa live below the proverbial breadline, which is evidence of a culture of poverty. The following statistics highlight the extent of poverty in the black community:

- In 1996, more than 22% of households in South Africa were earning below R500 per month (Sidiropoulos *et al.*, 1997:378).

- In 1996, 31% of African households earned less than R500 per month, compared with 3% of coloured, Indian and white households (Sidiropoulos *et al.*, 1997:378).

- A fifth of coloured, Indian and white households earned more than R9000 per month, compared with fewer than 1% of black households.

- According to the Institute for Development Planning and Research at the University of Port Elizabeth, in 1996, the monthly income of black households on average was R1252 per month, while for a lower middle-income family of five, the household subsistence level in the Pretoria urban area in September 1996 was R1442 per month. (The household subsistence level is defined as an estimate of the income required by an individual household to maintain a minimum level of health and decency in the short term. It is calculated as the lowest retail cost of a budget of necessities of adequate quality, and includes rent, lighting, food, clothing, washing and cleaning materials, transport and fuel.) Pretoria and Brits, which fall within the greater Gauteng area on which the present research was focused, were regarded as two of the three most expensive South African centres in which to live in 1996 (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1997:387-388).

These figures suggest that, for most black learners, total escape from the devastating effects of poverty during their early formative years is highly improbable. Furthermore, social and economic realities are linked and interdependent. It follows then that, since the black community was economically and therefore socially and culturally under strain, the powerful potentially negative influence of these factors on the developing cognition and character of

learners should not be underestimated. Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994:38) agree with Pretorius (1990), Orem (1975) as well as Berger and Berger (1972) that a culture of poverty certainly poses risks for the physical and psychological well-being of black learners.

It must be understood, however, that the effects of low socio-economic status or poverty and deprivation on a child's development is not inevitably negative, according to Richter (1994:43). Richter cites Belsky (1984), who maintains that variables such as social cohesion, family stability and the personal resources of parents lead to a wide variety of outcomes in children, including excellent adjustment and achievement. Ramphele (1992:23) and Chinkanda (1994:191) hold similar views. Richter (1994:43) refers to Ricciuti (1977), who challenges the concept that poor socio-economic homes are homogeneous. Ricciuti maintains that differences found in the intellectual performance and social competence of low socio-economic status children are determined by various factors, including the children's temperaments, parental education, social networks and maternal attitudes.

One could therefore conclude that, depending on the quality and nature of variables operating within children and their life-worlds, highly individual outcomes may be expected amongst learners and these outcomes need not be negative.

This conclusion places some responsibility on the school as a variable to utilise its role to the full to facilitate as many positive individual outcomes as possible. In order to achieve such positive effects, teachers have to be knowledgeable about the needs and aspirations of disadvantaged learners in their classes. Teachers have to know what a culture of poverty entails as well as how it influences learners' educational needs and expectations.

2.3.1   A culture of poverty

The terms "poverty", "middle-class" and "wealthy" are all relative concepts and can best be defined against the background of a specific period, society and social dispensation. For the purposes of this chapter, it must be remembered that the learners under discussion most probably hail from relatively "wealthy" or "middle-class" black families living in townships or suburbs, and cannot be counted amongst the poorest of the poor. However, it is also important to take into account the fact that the early formative years of these Grade Nine learners (the 1980's and early 1990's) coincided with a time and were spent in an

environment where the likelihood of exposure to unfavourable living conditions, if not most of the time, then at least some of the time, cannot be ruled out.

In the light of the context of the early formative years of these learners, it is important to study the experiences shared by members of a culture of poverty. Le Roux and Gildenhuys (1994:38-39) have examined several views on deprivation and consequently classify the experiences of a culture of poverty as follows:

- Material deprivation

  (undernourishment and malnutrition, familial poverty, poor and overcrowded housing);

- Cultural deprivation

  (sensory and language deprivation, educational neglect); and

- Emotional deprivation

  (a lack of personal warmth and affection, divorce, paternal absence, and an autocratic or positional style of child rearing).

Pretorius (1990:208) also classifies deprivation in a similar way.

The above aspects constitute experiences of shared deprivation. Because these can contribute to the development of specific backlogs, which in turn can inhibit scholastic achievement and adjustment, they warrant a more detailed discussion.

2.3.1.1   Material deprivation

Due to their poverty, these parents are incapable of providing their children with adequate housing, food, clothing, medical care, hygiene and relaxation facilities. These deprivations indicate suffering and neglect, which in turn hamper optimal growth and development. The following types of material deprivation can be distinguished:

- Undernourishment and malnutrition

  The syndrome of malnutrition does not exist in isolation. Indeed, it is inseparable from poverty. A variety of economic, social, psychological and medical factors act as co-determinants.

Burgess, Ireland and Hoogenhout (1988:28) indicate that the most common form of malnutrition is known internationally as "Protein Energy Malnutrition". Richter and Griesel (1994:66) also discuss this phenomenon. Protein Energy Malnutrition is caused by a food intake that is deficient in both quantity and quality. Because the kilojoules are so low, the body is forced to burn up protein instead of building up new tissue.

The negative influence of malnutrition on learners' intellectual development and scholastic performance is especially perturbing. Behavioural effects include a reduction in persistence in solving problematic tasks, exploratory behaviour and concentration, coupled with an increase in irritability and fear of unfamiliar situations (Richter & Griesel, 1994:78). Barrett (1987, cited in Richter & Griesel, 1994:79) states that early malnutrition affects social and emotional development, attention, social responses and emotional adjustment adversely. In addition, the human body's immunity system is weakened, leaving the body defenceless against diseases and illnesses; physical growth is stunted (Richter & Griesel, 1994:74).

Burt's (1958) view (in Le Roux & Gildenhuys, 1994:42) that quite often children suffer from inappropriate rather than insufficient food is particularly pertinent. From this, one could deduce that malnutrition can often be caused by well-meaning, but misinformed parents or caregivers who lack adequate nurturing skills. Children's choice of food may also be constrained by cultural factors (Bennett, Sohal & Wale, 1995:146). This means that learners do not have to be amongst the poorest of the poor to suffer from nutritional imbalances and related effects, a finding especially relevant with regard to this study. Bennett et al. (1995:146) warn that messages from school in a Westernised environment about food and diet may conflict with learners' home backgrounds (see Section 3.2.2). This may have unhappy consequences when learners take these messages to their parents, and some even ask their overweight parents not to attend school events.

The need for adult education with regard to nutrition becomes very clear. It would appear that only sustained government support for health and social services can counter the effects of malnutrition in financially strained communities, but that education on nutrition may be equally important.

- Familial poverty and poor and overcrowded housing

Two main types of family are found within the black community, namely nuclear and extended families. Modernisation and urbanisation have, in many cases, caused the disintegration of traditional family life, particularly the extended family. However, nuclear families do not necessarily fit the Western definition of such a family, since members of the kin network often continue to fulfil a very significant role within such a unit (Chinkanda, 1994:174). Chinkanda (1994:174) explains that marriage is still a matter between two families rather than a matter concerning the marriage partners only. Gutkind (1970:183) reports similar findings. Parents of both marriage partners may also play a dominant role in various aspects of the couple's life.

A normal household may be shared by an extended family if the urban dwelling is big enough. A survival technique employed by black families is to have loose boundaries, where as many relatives (individuals) as possible are accommodated within the extended family (Chinkanda, 1994:181; Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:20). Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:22), Peltzer (1993:16) and Van Heerden (1992:37) point out that the concepts "father", "mother", "brother" and "sister" include more people when used in an African language than is usually understood when these concepts are used by Westerners.

The repeal of influx laws in 1986 led to many black people's moving into urban areas (Chinkanda, 1994:179). Because extended families often remain together, it is not uncommon to find up to 15 people sharing a two-bedroomed house. This practice causes overcrowding and accommodation problems.

Disadvantaged neighbourhoods are normally characterised by dilapidated living units, noise, alcoholism, licentiousness and similar evils (Le Roux & Gildenhuys, 1994:43; Pretorius, 1990:207). Dawes and Donald (1994b:5) also pinpoint political violence as a problem which is compounded by child sexual abuse as well as criminal, domestic and sexual violence, especially in the poorer areas of South Africa. It is obvious that these deprived surroundings are not conducive to the creation of opportunities for intellectual stimulation and development.

Homes are overcrowded and offer virtually no life space, with family members missing out on the opportunity to really live together as a family (Van Greunen, 1993:91). There is often very little space for doing homework (Coutts, 1992:86; Pretorius, 1990:208; Swart-Kruger, 1994:215), and the privacy an adolescent sometimes craves is virtually non-existent.

Chinkanda (1994:180) indicates that children are exposed to parental sexuality at an early age, as well as to many evils against which they should be protected. Pretorius (1990:207) holds a similar view. Such exposure is not generally found and is a taboo which is not sanctioned in Western culture and could predispose these learners to an unhealthy preoccupation with sex, which may complicate accommodation at school.

Chinkanda (1994:180) is convinced that space limitations cause these children to spend too much time outside the home. This could inhibit normal interaction between parents and children. Consequently, the communication gap could widen, and thereby rob learners of much-needed emotional support and positive identification figures. Also, it could increase the chances that learners will become involved with gangs and gang activities, which in turn could provide the springboard for involvement in crime. Mokwena (1992:41) says gangs provide an alternative home for marginalised youngsters.

Garbers (1980:51-53) argues that milieu-disadvantaged learners are caught up in the consequences of their educational milieu. These then perpetuate themselves in a so-called poverty spiral, offering very little chance of escape.

2.3.1.2   Cultural deprivation

Cultural deprivation refers to the fact that learners are not given the necessary sensory, language and educational stimulation needed to prepare them for the demands of the school situation (Van Heerden, 1992:353). Aspects of cultural deprivation such as sensory deprivation, educational neglect and language deprivation are discussed briefly below.

- Sensory deprivation

To benefit from technology (a right which is imbedded in effective education) learners must be equipped to profit from these benefits (Le Roux & Gildenhuys, 1994:39). The parents of culturally impoverished children cannot provide such technology. Books, computers, educational toys and excursions are in short supply (Van Heerden, 1992:208). A shortage of funds therefore presents a very real handicap and results in a spiral of sensory and intellectual deprivation that spans generations. These parents are generally not enlightened with regard to the concept of providing intellectual stimulation (Garbers, 1980:16-17,49,102; Van Heerden, 1992:196,208). Therefore, when money does become available, it is often spent on luxury items in order to compensate for the low income and deprived milieu (Pretorius, 1990:207). Such items do not necessarily contribute to the cultural enrichment of family members.

- Educational neglect

The public school system has replaced the way education was handled in traditional African societies, namely informal teaching and initiation schools (Chinkanda, 1994:190). Traditional African education focused on collective ceremonies, rituals, story tellers, dancing and music as well as facilitation by an outsider, such as a soothsayer and sangoma (Mbigi & Maree, 1995:110).

The public school system is different in that the family must now play a very important role in the education of learners by providing support and stimulation at home. Macbeth (1993:27) argues that schools alone cannot educate learners or solve social problems. The family, however it is defined, remains the main source of care, protection, nourishment, belonging **and education** for learners.

A love for books and reading is closely related to an orientation imbedded during childhood. This stimulation appears to be lacking in the general black population, leading to inadequate intellectual (reading) stimulation (Van Heerden, 1992:196). This might be due to the fact that within black suburban communities, information is generally distributed informally by word-of-mouth at public transport terminals, via

women's groups, burial societies, cultural clubs, shebeens and at "gigs" (Bekker & Lategan, 1988:66), instead of via newspapers and other reading matter. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:20) emphasise the strong oral history of the Xhosa tradition compared to the shorter recorded (written) history.

Parents as the legal guardians of their children also need to take an active interest in their recreational activities, controlling or eliminating behavioural excesses where they are observed (Chinkanda, 1994:192). Also, if there is a lack of parental involvement in encouraging schoolwork, this could indeed hamper learners' scholastic progress, especially if this occurred during the learners' early formative years. Unfortunately, many black parents are themselves illiterate or poorly educated and can therefore not support or actively participate in their children's education (Chinkanda, 1994:190; Van Heerden, 1992:194,215).

- Language deprivation

South Africa is a multi-lingual country where eleven languages have now been granted official status (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:1,9,14). In South Africa, Afrikaans and English were, for a long time, the only two official languages. The other languages spoken by the majority of the population were granted a lower status.

Klein (1993:124) states: "Language is a significant part of our identity – if someone devalues our language, they devalue us." This statement implies that language is closely interwoven with self-concept. Since language is the medium through which culture, norms and values are transmitted, it follows that, just as the languages of the majority of South Africans was devalued, the corresponding cultures were also regarded as inferior for a long time (Chinkanda, 1994:193). The implications of this linguistic and cultural marginalisation are many and complex, culminating in the 1976 uprising against white domination in South Africa, which started as a protest action against the language policy in schools (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:9).

2.3.1.3   Emotional deprivation

Parents from impoverished environments are often not child-oriented. Verbal communication with their children appears inadequate, resulting in a lack of a sense of being loved, personal warmth, being cherished and intimacy (Pretorius 1990:209; Van Heerden, 1992:193). Disadvantaged learners' basic needs, in terms of the hierarchy of human needs set out by Maslow, are often not adequately met. Pretorius (1990:212) refers to this hierarchy of needs and shows how it could influence learners. Physical needs, the need for safety, social needs, I-needs and the need for self-actualisation are discussed below.

- Physical needs

   Due to poverty, deprivation and neglect, the physical needs (which constitute the most basic needs on Maslow's hierarchy) of milieu-disadvantaged learners are not adequately met. For this reason, such learners cannot be optimally motivated to learn.

- Need for safety

   Beckmann (1994:247) agrees with Dreyer's (1980) opinion that during a transitional phase between cultures, children are often at risk, since there are unaccustomed standards of behaviour, moral standards and ways of living that rob "them of certain assurances". Industrialisation compounds this effect by leading to uncertainty about what is right and what is wrong. Due to the emotional deprivation, unpredictability, chaos and a sense of threat in the environment, learners do not feel safe and they experience fear. Smit and Le Roux (1993:32) quote Barkhuizen (1990) as saying that each day millions of South African children have to cope with poverty and violence. Atmore (1993:121-122) describes the conditions of squalor and deprivation.

   Young women and girls are particularly at risk, since they can be abducted and raped, or are liable to experience other forms of violence in a male-dominated society (Mokwena, 1992:43-44). In this regard, Beckmann (1994:237-8) mentions Kotze's (1990) belief that incest is "prevalent in a society in which the authoritative

relationships between parents and children and men and women are unequal, and where this imbalance is regarded as normal".

The constant experience of fear could block learners' cognitive orientation towards learning. Also, a sense of curiosity (an essential element in effective learning) only develops once learners experience a sense of security and competence through their relations with their families (Chinkanda, 1994:191). The concept of safe schools, referring to institutions that guarantee physical and mental safety, provides for this need (see Section 6.8.1).

- Social needs

Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds could easily experience rejection and contempt at school, and feel that they do not belong there, due to their backlogs and failures. At school, they could also feel like social misfits and are often not motivated to learn. Should their need for group acceptance not be met, this creates the potential for them to be drawn into a life of crime.

Mokwena (1992:41) indicates that gang activities may provide emotional support and material benefits to youths, therefore such activities present youths with the means of obtaining power, status and a sense of belonging. When these learners enter the senior school phase, they could have thwarted social ambitions, which would not necessarily fit in with the ethos of the school.

- I-needs

The self-concept of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds is extremely poor. They do not receive recognition or approval and have no status or prestige. Their I-needs are thwarted. This in turn creates feelings of inferiority which prevents them from achieving more and improving their behaviour (Pretorius, 1990:212).

Chinkanda (1994:182) believes that having to teach their children self-respect and respect for their elders places black parents in a dilemma, since they themselves are demeaned by society. Ramphele (1992:23-24) holds a similar view to Chinkanda; he states that children who grew up with messages that black culture, education,

religion and other institutions are inferior tend to develop a poor self-concept. This negative stereotyping then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Chinkanda, 1994:184-185,192). Such an orientation can very easily be carried over from parents to learners and thence into the school situation.

- Need for self-actualisation

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs identifies self-actualisation as the "highest" developmental need of humans. If basic needs remain unfulfilled, this "higher" need cannot be met by disadvantaged learners (Pretorius, 1990:212). The implication is that such learners are not able to fulfil "higher" ambitions, since they remain caught up in a quest to satisfy their basic needs. Group pressure to conform to set norms could provide another hindrance to self-actualisation (see also Section 3.5.3.3 for a more detailed discussion of this issue). Chinkanda (1994:193) maintains that parents from oppressed communities tend to suppress intellectual growth as well as assertiveness in their children, since it is regarded as safer not to be outspoken or to stand out in a group. Coutts (1992:85) also argues that in some traditional societies, girls are expected to be compliant and non-assertive. This can lead to problematic classroom behaviour if female learners lack initiative, are unresponsive or non-assertive or do not ask questions.

The concept of the "*madoda* score" which results from such an orientation is a matter of great concern (Ramphele, 1992:24-25). Ramphele explains that, due to the denial of opportunities to excel in the past, the concept of excellence has fallen into disrepute. Students have come to aim at the "*madoda* score" (50%), at merely passing their courses. Those who dare to excel sometimes meet with pressure, since excellence seems "out of line". This attitude leads some students to conceal their (good) test and examination results for fear of censure. Such practices lead to the legitimisation and entrenchment of mediocrity.

South Africa needs all the brain power it has available to promote quality living for its people in the context of the global community. It is clear then that an orientation such as that mentioned above can influence the scholastic performance of learners negatively, with dire long-term consequences for this country.

2.3.2   Child-rearing style

The choice of child-rearing style is important in that it sets the emotional tone in the home, thus creating an environment which could either enhance or stunt personality growth. Pretorius (1993:10) distinguishes between three child-rearing styles, namely:

- the personal child-rearing style – a sophisticated child-rearing style which is person-directed (indicating a direction at the well-being of the child as a person), democratic and flexible;

- the positional child-rearing style – a "primitive" child-rearing style which is position-directed (indicating a direction at the positions of the father, mother, teacher and child), autocratic, rigid and inflexible; and

- the permissive child-rearing style – an over-indulgent, non-punitive, excessively accepting and flexible approach.

The child-rearing style generally used by milieu-disadvantaged families is the positional style (Pretorius, 1990:209; Smit & Le Roux, 1993:35). Chinkanda (1994:183-184) cites Pinderhughes (1982), who advocates that, to counteract the erosion of their authority and parental role, milieu-disadvantaged parents could

- adopt an authoritative and inflexible attitude;

- treat children harshly in order to toughen them in an attempt to prepare them for coping with the powerlessness of the victim of the system;

- simply ignore the situation and leave the children to cope with their shortcomings as best they can; or

- explain the complexities of the victim system with its accompanying sense of powerlessness.

Richter (1994:40) indicates that a decrease in the expression of love and affection, a tendency to give commands without explanation, a tendency to use corporal punishment more often and a decrease in verbal praise and encouragement is typical of the positional

child-rearing style. Richter (1994:39) quotes Hess (1970), who argues that working-class parental behaviour is not due to the fact that mothers prefer punishment as a control strategy or that they do not wish to perform adequately as mothers. Instead, it is due to the fact that they "lack alternatives in their own exchanges with the institutions of the community ... and they are poorly motivated to seek other techniques because there is little reason to expect [a] reward".

Married women in particular have too many burdens to carry. Consequently, their children become the victims of their mothers' excessive work burden since the increased workload may make mothers more irritable and hostile towards their children (Le Vine, 1970:176). Van Heerden (1992:239) and Pretorius (1990:207) argue that many women provide the main economic support for their families, maintaining more than one job simultaneously.

Consequently, traditional mother-infant interactions, which included prolonged breast-feeding, holding and fondling, carrying on the back and sleeping close together, all of which help to develop kinesthetic empathy, are minimised (Peltzer, 1993:17). In the transitional person, bodily forms of expression have been reduced due to formal education, changes in child-rearing practices and an economy that has shifted from subsistence to market production (Peltzer, 1993:17).

Unfortunately, quality westernised child-care facilities are not readily available to these parents. In the traditional system of education and imitation of respected persons, black children learned how to behave towards others. In this process, children became capable of transferring their mothers' power to satisfy all their needs to other authorities (Peltzer, 1993:15). Sadly, the disintegration of the extended family system eliminates this as a quality child-care option. Consequently, black children are often poorly cared for (Smit & Le Roux, 1993:38). When one considers the following, the picture looks very bleak indeed: Richter (1994:40) concurs with Fried's (1982) conclusion that poverty and hardship could cause endemic chronic stress. This could ultimately result in pervasive low-level depression. Endemic stress could give rise to feelings of resignation, helplessness, despair and a decline in self-esteem. Poverty could therefore affect child-rearing negatively by diminishing the adult's capacity for consistent and supportive child-centred parenting (Ramphele, 1992:23).

2.3.2.1 Paternal absence

Generally black groups in South Africa can be described as being patriarchal or as having a traditional ideal of male domination in the husband-wife relationship (Mokwena, 1992:43-45). Letlaka-Rennert *et al.* (1997:236) cite various authors who concluded that black women were the single most oppressed group in South Africa, since they were discriminated against in terms of both their race and their gender.

When the previous South African government deliberately fostered a pattern of migrant labour, which required black men to leave home to work in the cities, returning home only occasionally, this caused many young adult males to be absent from their families. Chinkanda (1994:190-191) identifies this as a problem, since absenteeism by fathers creates disciplinary problems. The traditional role of mothers is that of the subservient parent. Moreover, Chinkanda (1994:191) says that mothers are expected to take the lead in the upbringing and education of their children, but that "the dichotomy is that they often lack the authority to do so, since their role in the community has traditionally been that of the inferior parent". Richter (1994:37-38) concurs with Wagner, Schubert and Schubert (1985) who maintain that single mothers often stress obedience in their children. Richter (1994:37-38) also refers to Segal (1985) who indicates that single mothers tend to enforce discipline through corporal punishment. She cites Gelles (1992), who found that single mothers are significantly at risk to abuse children, particularly if the family is poor.

Although emancipation from their traditionally subordinate role is possible, because they become working women in the city, single mothers still struggle to maintain discipline in their households. Research showed that the mother often acts as a go-between the father and children since her relationship with the children is often more intimate (Van Heerden, 1992:191-192). It was also found that in the absence of fathers (especially where sons were concerned) either paternal or maternal uncles played an important role if they lived in the vicinity. This again highlights the importance and functioning of the extended family (see also Section 2.3.1.1 above).

The absence of both parents also results in problems for effective parenting. While the absence of one parent as a migrant worker puts a heavy strain on the family, the absence of both parents traumatises both parents and children (Smit & Le Roux, 1993:38). An

important influence on parental absence would be the demographic realities parents have to cope with. Even urban parents usually travel long distances to and from work, leaving home very early and returning late, which in turn has a severely detrimental and limiting effect on parental contact with their children. This leaves children to their own devices or in the care of members of the extended family. Alternatively, especially due to the demise of the extended family, other child-care arrangements (often of poor quality) have to be made (Smit & Le Roux, 1993:38).

The prolonged absence of parents working far from home deprives adolescents of positive role models and leads to communication problems between parents and children (Monyemorathwe, 1992:9). Chinkanda (1994:180) claims that children who grow up in poor circumstances are bound to develop negative character traits. He says that they cannot develop a sense of trust, or relate positively to authority, since there is often no-one to teach them appropriate societal values.

2.4   A CULTURE OF LEARNING

A culture of learning is a prerequisite for scholastic progress. It is generally accepted that the culture of learning in many of the former Department of Education and Training schools was not of a high standard. Mbigi and Maree (1995:52) mention the poor quality of Bantu Education. This caused

- early school dropout;

- an anti-academic attitude;

- low morale among teachers and pupils;

- a loss of teaching time; and

- poor results.

Pacheco (1996:57) describes a culture of learning as the disposition towards learning and the atmosphere of diligence or industry that develop in a school as a result of a combination of the personal characteristics of pupils, certain elements in the family, elements in the school and elements in the community. This description makes it clear that there is more

than one force at work – creating a cumulative outcome resulting in a positive or negative culture of learning.

Pacheco (1996:51) favours a systemic theoretical analysis of the culture of learning, since such an analysis provides a holistic view of the phenomenon, as well as the interrelatedness of the various systems concerned. Four systems that determine the nature of a culture of learning can be discerned, namely a personal, home, school and society system (Pacheco, 1996:51). Pacheco bases her view on the belief that learning is determined by intrinsic as well as extrinsic variables. The former refers to the personal characteristics of learners, namely cognitive, affective and physical factors, whilst the latter refers to family, school and societal factors.

Features that inhibit a culture of learning can be grouped as pupil, family and school factors (Pacheco, 1996:Abstract).

2.4.1   Features of pupils

These features include:

- irregular school attendance and lack of punctuality;

- inadequate language code and therefore limited capacity for expression;

- inadequate study methods;

- an inferior knowledge base or frame of reference;

- the absence of a work ethic;

- an unconcerned attitude towards learning; and

- a lack of motivation and discipline.

2.4.2   Features of families

Family features that inhibit a culture of learning include:

- disintegrated families;

- a lack of parental involvement;

- illiterate parents; and

- inadequate facilities in the home.

2.4.3 Features of schools

In the school itself, a culture of learning may collapse due to:

- disorder and a lack of discipline;

- an ineffectively functioning principal;

- an inadequate culture of teaching/instruction;

- the wasting of time; and

- over-occupation and inadequate facilities.

From the above it is clear that adequate exposure to a culture of learning is vital for emotional stability and optimal psychological development, both prerequisites for scholastic success in the secondary school.

2.5 SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

Ramphele (1992:20-23) explains that black people have not been mere hapless victims of society, but have developed survival strategies which in turn have definite implications for the process of transformation. A number of the most important strategies are discussed below.

2.5.1 Ubuntu

According to Mbigi and Maree (1995:7-8), material poverty has forced disadvantaged or marginalised groups the world over to survive on collective unity or solidarity and consciousness, with the resultant downplaying of individualism. The philosophy of Ubuntu is a direct outcome of such collective unity or solidarity. In fact, Mbigi and Maree value it so highly that they attribute the birth of the new South African nation to the emancipating spirit of Ubuntu.

The essential belief of Ubuntu is that "a man can only be a man through others" (Mbigi & Maree, 1995:2). Key values are the following:

- group solidarity;

- conformity;

- compassion;

- respect;

- human dignity; and

- collective unity.

Prized behavioural patterns include sacrifice, suffering, conformity on survival or group issues and patriotism – in short, individual conformity and loyalty to the group on all survival issues such as liberation, strikes, mass action and rent boycotts. Mbigi and Maree (1995:58) add: "...failure to do so will meet harsh punitive measures such as evening 'Dunlop treatment' or 'necklacing', burning of houses and assassination."

Mbigi and Maree (1995:120-122) describe a number of principles according to which villages function:

- Regular discussion forums, called "*indabas*" in Zulu, "*dane*" in Shona and "*khotlas*" in Tswana, are held. They have open agendas.

- Rituals and ceremonies characterise the celebration of achievements and the sharing of misfortunes.

- In the African tribal village, order and stability is maintained through respect for position, authority and expertise.

- Mutual trust, respect and care are important for the existence of the village.

- Villages share a common agenda and uphold a bond of collective unity. This concept opposes competition and division in society. Should competition be necessary, solidarity should be emphasised, not through speeches, but through rituals.

- In traditional African villages, it is assumed that there are no final solutions to problems. Discussions about issues are therefore important, but only serve as a means to come up with an acceptable, but not final, solution.

2.5.2 Economy of affection

An "economy of affection" has developed as an "African way of life" which involves solidarity action with extended family members, peers, comrades, homeboys, political and other groups (Ramphele, 1992:20-21). By applying this principle, the main economy has been subsidised, providing care for the needy, the aged, infirm and orphaned (Van Heerden, 1992:237-238). The income-earning members of these solidarity groups have large dependency ratios, requiring huge sacrifices. This leads to self-denial and the delegitimisation of the importance of the individual (Van Heerden, 1992:256).

The survival of the group is therefore regarded as a top priority, with resulting constraints for the individual's development and freedom of choice.

2.5.3 Crime

Ramphele (1992:21) says that crime may be regarded as a resource to balance family and personal budgets.

To protect against failure and disappointment and to fit the constraining physical, economic and intellectual environment, expectations of the self and others are lowered. This causes lowered self-esteem and a loss of respect for human dignity. Short-term gains are maximised at the expense of long-term goals, and ends and means can become confused, with crime as a means of survival becoming a way of life.

- The "shebeen culture" has become entrenched.

- Pilfering of organisational resources is regarded as a permissible part of a survival culture.

- Stealing is regarded as a form of redistribution.

- Respect for the law has diminished due to legislative practices in the past. Normal behaviour was criminalised – for example, the criminalisation of family life and the right to seek employment (as occurred under the pass laws).

This could influence learners' views of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and crime. Accordingly, the act of stealing, contrary to the view held in Western society, might be regarded as a form of redistribution (Ramphele, 1992:21). At school this could prove to be a particularly troublesome and sensitive issue.

2.5.4   Victim image

Another survival strategy is that of cultivating the image of "the victim", which has developed and "creates and exacerbates a culture of entitlement amongst those seeing themselves as victims" (Ramphele, 1992:22). This image is encouraged by an industry which has emerged in some parts of the world and depends on the perpetuation of the victim-image of black people for its survival. Some black people feel that as groups they are entitled to redress, since they have been deliberately impoverished.

The negative aspect connected to individual entitlement is that it can demoralise those on the receiving end, since to plead victimisation and demand special treatment, unless matched by determination of the individual to take responsibility for his/her own success, would prove futile (Ramphele, 1992:22; Mbigi & Maree, 1995:13). Ramphele (1992:22) warns that the danger inherent in this orientation of entitlement is that it could lead to society instead of the individuals themselves being viewed as the agent of change (compare Mbigi & Maree, 1995:13,22).

This could orient learners differently towards their school career – sending them there with great expectations of what they could achieve, whilst they view their own personal input as minimal.

2.6   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter has given rise to the following research questions:

- How do learners feel regarding personal input?

- Are the learners in favour of corporal punishment?

- How important is group interest as opposed to individual interest to these learners?

- In what manner are conflicts mostly resolved?