

On and off the streets: children moving between institutional care and survival on the streets.

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Dedication

To my father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. B. Mtonga for not giving up with the struggle of sending me to school even when we had so little to live on. Your sacrifice has eventually paid off.

To my uncle Professor Isaac Khozozo Phiri and my aunt Arlene Hamusunse Phiri who have always believed in me and made me reach this far in my education by taking care of all my educational costs during my time at the University of Zambia. Without them, it would have not been possible for me to reach this far in my education.

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Abstract

The new social studies of childhood advocate for children to be viewed and approached as social actors who are competent participants on matters affecting them. It further suggests that childhood should be viewed as a social construct; it takes note of differences and variations in childhoods that need to be taken into account when coming up with programs and interventions for children. To researchers, this calls for a shift from doing research “on” children to doing research “with” children. It is these notions of new social studies of childhood that have guided my study.

My thesis explores factors that prompt street children to escape institutional care in preference for the streets, and challenges they encounter on the streets and how they manage to survive regardless of the challenges they are exposed to. Gender differences in the way street life affects boys and girls are highlighted.

The study employed qualitative research methods namely, semi-structured interviews; participant observation, focus group discussions. The total number of participants in this study was 20, 10 boys and 10 girls. 5 girls were living on the streets and the other 5 were living under institutional care but previously they had lived on the street. Accordingly, 5 boys were living on the streets and the other 5 were living under institutional care but previously they had lived on the streets.

The study realizes that street children defy the widely held idea of vulnerability and dependence arising from the conviction that a “proper” childhood involves being nurtured by parents within a home and secluded from the dangers of the adult world. However, through their social network, seen as social capital, and by employing their agency, street children are able to develop survival mechanisms that sustain their lives in the absence of parents. Based on the accounts from girls, the study documents that cultural norms and gender stereotypes put girls at a disadvantage as they have limited survival mechanism and they are generally more vulnerable than boys. Knowledge based on street childrens’ perspectives and reflections about their lives is crucial as a resource for developing interventions.

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List of Acronyms

AIDS.....	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ACZ.....	Action for Children-Zambia
FGD.....	Focus Group Discussion
FOH.....	Fountain of Hope
GRZ.....	Government Republic of Zambia
HIV.....	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MCDSS.....	Ministry of community development social services
MSYCD.....	Ministry of sport and youth child development
NCP.....	National child policy
NGO.....	Nongovernmental organisation
OVC.....	Orphans and vulnerable child
SAPs.....	Structural Adjustment Programs
TB.....	Tuberculosis
STD.....	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UNICEF.....	United Nations Childrens Fund
UNCRC.....	United nations conventions on the rights of a child
ZDHS.....	Zambia demographic and healthy survey
ZNS.....	Zambia National Service

Chapter One: Introduction

The phenomenon of street children has become a common feature of the urban landscape in most cities especially third world cities, they are the shadowy presence that fill the background of daily life, doing odd jobs, scavenging for food, begging and stealing (www.unicri.it). The phenomenon of street children is not new and it is also not restricted to specific geographical areas. Connolly, (1990) pointed out that street children were part of the “urban landscape” during the time of industrialization and urbanization in post-war Europe. Currently, millions of children throughout the world live on the streets and are among the most underprivileged and some of them have been victims of abuse and violence even before taking to the street and struggle to survive under difficult and often exploitative conditions. (Scanlon 1998) Children are forced to go to the streets to survive under difficult circumstances due to a variety of reasons among them are poverty and other societal inequalities. Despite the variations in the leading causes to the emergence and development of the problem of street children at the global level, street children in Lusaka show many similarities to street children worldwide (Karabanow and Clement 2004, UN 2007). The Situation Analysis on Street children in Zambia states that among the various interrelated factors leading to the existence of the problem of street children in Zambia, Poverty, family breakdown, child abuse and neglect, are among the leading causes. (Lemba, 1999)

In responding to the problem of street children, the government, and other stakeholders have sought to intervene through the “rehabilitative approach, which seeks to relocate children in residential institutions. It is estimated that there are about 4, 592 institutionalized children in Zambia undergoing rehabilitation (UNICEF 2007). The Zambian Government has also been leading in intervening on the problem of street children by established Zambia National Service (ZNS) skills training program for street children which houses children moved from the streets and eventually training them in various skills. Regardless of the many efforts being carried out, children that have been taken away from the street, escape from alternative care and go back on the streets. In this thesis, I will aim at exploring reasons why street children who are put in institutions run away and go back to the streets, I will also explore their survival strategies stressing on the gender variations.

1.1 Definition And Categorization Of Street Children

Defining who street children are has been the topic of considerable, repetitive debate regardless of being a focus of attention for international organizations of all types since the United Nations International Year of the Child in 1979 (Ennew, 2003) Street children's life experiences and circumstances on the streets are different and as such, there is need to avoid simple generalizations and definitions. This misunderstanding is also pointed out by Aptekar (1988), he states that inasmuch as the term street children is applied to many children who have a variety of different circumstances and characteristics, the term erroneously tends to group them in one single mass of children who share similar characteristics and fails to account for their societal or individual differences. Consistent with Aptekar's study, I clearly realized that the simple application of the term street children, blurs some of the children found on the street doing the same things street children do, looking poorly groomed and dressed in dirty and rugged clothes, who at the end of the day return home and have loving families. Hutz and Koller (2007) have noted that children who look like drifters are found on the streets of most large cities in developing countries. "They wear shabby, dirty clothing and can be seen begging, performing menial chores, working, or just wandering apparently without a purpose. They share an appearance of abandonment that may lead researchers to single them out as street children".

It is therefore important that one challenges the simple definition of street children because they are not a homogeneous group (Ansell, 2005; Panter-Brick, 2003; Ennew, 2003). Although these children look similar, they have different family characteristics, life histories, and prognoses. In recognition of this, researchers and scholars have attempted to divide street children into subgroups that differ on key characteristics. There are many ways to classify street children but the broadest categorizations divide children into two groups (Ennew, 2003): children of the streets and children in the streets.

Children on the streets, refers to those children who spend most of their time in the streets and often times they work or beg to earn a livelihood. These children have a connection with their homes; they mainly come to the streets during the day and go back home at dusk. A few of the children in this category attend school on a part time basis and a majority of them maintain some continuing relationship with their families

(Muchinni, 1994 and Lalor 1999). Due to high poverty levels at home, these children go on the streets to work so that they can contribute to the economy at home. Abuse by parents and lack of social services are other reasons that compel these children to go on the street (Abebe 2008). Many of these children send some of money they earn to their families. In some studies, such children have reported that their parents might not allow them to come home until they have managed to accumulate a specified amount of money (Lusk, 1989) these children feel obliged to beg and work on the street as a way of contributing to their household economies (Abebe 2008).

“Children of the streets”, are those for whom the streets have become a home, they spend all of their time working and begging on the street. They work; play, sleep and some of them grow up on the streets. Joe L.P and colleagues (1999) emphasize that one of the main characteristic of children of the street is that they live alone on the street, without proper shelter, they have lost contact with their families and, they have no parental protection. The children are fully responsible for their own lives and they are much smaller in number. (Aptekar, 1988) Some of the children in this category support themselves by begging or through prostitution (Lemba, 2002).

What is important to note from the above definitions and categorizations of street children is that they are not a homogeneous group, they are on the street due to different circumstances and as we will see later in this thesis, they are members of smaller subgroups or subcultures. (Aptekar 1988, Anarfi, 1997)

In any social research, it is important to have a clear definition and understanding of the participants involved. In my case, having a clear definition of who a street child is was necessary in order to separate between my target participants (children of the street) and the rest of street children. The clear definitions of who street children are, helped me identify and focus my study as well as know which children to involve in my study.

1.2 Street Children: Children Out Of Place?

The view that the public has on street children is that they are out of place. Being out of place or 'in the wrong place' is based on ideological beliefs that certain behaviors are suitable for particular spatial contexts, this is whether it is at home, in the street, or at work (Valentine, 1996). The city and its streets are some of the places considered

wrong places for children. Children are supposed to spend their time playing or be in school; however, this does not seem to be the case with street children. Street children by definition are prominently located in urban public spaces, and for them, the streets are a place of work, entertainment, and for some, it is their home (James et al, 1998). For street children, the city is a complex moral, political, and economic place, which they appropriate and define themselves as children on the street (Young 2003). Arguably, to street children, the street is not a wrong place for them to be.

Giddens (1984) in Young (2003) notes that societal rules and resources influence the kind of behaviors suitable for a particular spatial context. Power relations associated with these rules, and their spatial entanglements, in turn, constrain behavior since people and groups use power in different ways and across space. It is when individuals and groups contradict each other socially and spatially that resentment comes to light, resulting in transgression and resistance, which as a result brings about spatial exclusion and marginalization. Barrett and Young (2002) note that the street child population is particularly an interesting facet of multiple childhoods and they are marginalized because they are creating their own spaces within an inherent adult domain, which is the city. This clearly point out that the “space” that street children create in the city contradicts with what adults appropriate the city for. This spatial misappropriation of the city by street children is amongst the main causes of resentment that adult and authorities have towards street children. Due to this public resentment towards street children, even the Zambian government has come up with an intolerant attitude towards street children. For example, near the traffic lights at Manda Hill shopping mall in Lusaka, a big poster mounted by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services warns the public not to give money or food to street children, euphemistically referred to as “street kids.” According to the poster, giving money or food to the street kids only causes them to remain on the street. Such messages do not favor the existence of street children and makes the general public more unsympathetic and hostile towards street children. Because of their marginalization, children’s use of public spaces in Lusaka is fluid. Sleeping, working and recreational places are highly insecure and children change these places to keep out of sight in order to protect themselves from harassment and intimidation from the public and the police.

Even though all children on the street share the common experience of social exclusion and marginality, it is important to point out that girls on the streets receive stronger resentment than boys, this is because traditionally girls are kept at home to carry out domestic duties and for their own protection while boys are encouraged to go out of the home for recreation and playing. (I will elaborate more on the situation of girls when in the sub chapter below)

1.3 Street Children: A gender perspective

Gender is an important organizer of many aspects of human life and development. In most cultures, different roles and behaviors have historically been considered appropriate for males and females. According to Hutz & Forster, (1996) in Koller, et al (2000), women and girls are traditionally kept close to home because of child-care and family responsibilities and for their own protection, whereas men and boys are encouraged to go out of the home for recreation and to earn a living. As a result of this separation of the masculine and feminine spheres, in many cultures street girls appear to be more “out of place” than street boys. The presence of girls on the streets therefore violates cultural norms for female behavior, it is suggested that female street children are more likely to be from dysfunctional families and exhibit more psychological distress than their male peers (Aptekar 1994). With this in mind, it can be said that the presence of boys on the street is a survival strategy for poor families who allow their male children to go in the street, which is an “appropriate” male environment. At the same time, the presence of girls on the street is thought to reflect family dysfunction that has led to a breakdown in the socialization process. Thus, although boys and girls may share some characteristics of being “on the street” they are not viewed the same, girls are at higher risk of negative outcomes than boys.

The activities that children engage in on the streets are also divided by gender, Aptekar (1988), documents that playing rough on the street, being dirty, wearing ragged clothes or experimenting with drugs are all socially acceptable actions for boys,. The same actions for the girls are signs that they are spoiling their purity making them undesirable as women. Rosemberg (1996) has also observed a difference in the activities of male and female street children, with males playing and working more than females, and females begging more than males. Some studies have shown that girls are less likely to go hungry than boys, and more likely to have

someone who would protect them, help them if they were hurt, and give them a place to sleep (Silva et al 2000)

In an effort to expand the knowledge base about how girls and boys fare on the streets, the current study examined gender differences in street children's ability to meet an array of basic daily needs. This thesis will verify and compare some of the findings documented in studies done elsewhere and see if gender influences the survival of street children in Lusaka.

1.4 Intervention strategies for street children

In recent years, a smaller body of analyses has highlighted the characteristics of street culture, most often signaling the deviant and delinquent nature of street children. These studies have also highlighted the myriad of human service organizations working with street youth but little exists in terms of systematic analyses of street youth interventions (Karabanow and Clement, 2004). Interventions for street children are hampered by a weak understanding of the phenomenon of street children and their families of origin. In order to formulate successful intervention strategies aimed at alleviating challenges faced by street children in any given society, it is very important to have knowledge about the background, characteristics, causes and extent of the problem., as well as the needs of the children and knowledge about them on the streets. It is also important to know the dynamics surrounding the community in which the problem occurs (Aptekar, 1988).

Due to a combination of factors and the transient nature of street children, their interventions are uniquely different from those aimed at helping other vulnerable children, this is partly because street children are not located within a family unit. In other words, this means that the framework followed when intervening in street children issues is different from the one used when dealing with other categories of children. Carizosa and Poertner (1992) in Karabanow and Clement, (2004) state that the framework of understanding the philosophy underpinning service provision for street children point out among others the rehabilitation, correctional and institutional approaches. The correctional approach views street children as a matter that is supposed to be handled by juvenile justice organizations. Interventions under this approach mean temporarily removing children from the streets, this strategy does not deal with the problem that led them go to the streets (Aswell 2005).

In other parts of the world, governments and NGOs have used the outreach approach to deal with the problem of street children. The guiding principle of the approach is to provide educational, counseling and advocacy services to children in a street setting (Lusk 1989, Aswell 2005). This approach is not very common in Zambia and the government discourages organizations and people from helping children on the streets stating that such actions make children resist leaving the streets. Where this approach is used, it is used with the purpose of creating a relationship with the children and eventually moving them into an institution.

The rehabilitation, model is among the most used interventions for street children in Zambia. This perspective holds that street children are not delinquents as much as they are victims of poverty, child abuse and neglect, and unstable living conditions. Because street children are seen as having been harmed by their environment, hundreds of church and voluntary services have been organized to rehabilitate or help them (Lusk 1989, Aswell 2005). This approach is more compassionate than the correctional approach. Because street children are seen as having been harmed by their environment, intervention seeks to rehabilitate and protect the children.

The final method used to intervene in the problem of street children is the preventive approach, which attempts to address the fundamental and underlying problem of childhood poverty, this approach views all children as being at risk as potential street children. The approach focuses on addressing precipitating factors within at-risk populations (Lusk, 1989). This approach has been used at a small scale in Zambia and its effectiveness has not been evaluated. I will go in details and specifics of this approach in chapter two national child policies and programs run by the government of Zambia.

Having familiarized myself with the programs for street children in Zambia, through literature and my key informants, I noted that several organizations including the government, embrace rehabilitation and correctional approaches when dealing with street children. For instance the situation analysis on street children in Zambia describes intervention programs on street. It describes them as ‘programs that support street children with the aim of taking them away from the street and put them in appropriate rehabilitation and education, and eventually reintegrating them into families or appropriate foster families’. From this view, it is also important to note

that intervention programs for street children are driven by the western conceptualization of childhood which sees “good childhood” as childhood spent at home, in schools and characterized with play not working and begging on the street (Evans, 2006). Equally important to note about the approaches used to intervene in the problem of street children mentioned above, is that they all institutionalize the children. They aim at removing the children from the streets and then rehabilitate the child there after reintegrate the child in a home.

1.5 Resisting institutional care

Regardless of the interventions targeting street children that I mentioned above and the marginalization and harassment that they face when they are on the streets, street children have proved to like the streets so much that even when placed in an institution or shelter, they time and again escape and go back on the streets. Even in ZNS street children rehabilitation program a number of children that were taken off from the streets for skills training have run away and returned to the streets. According to ZNS Chiwoko Camp Commanding Officer, John Mwanza, in 2007 and 2008 the camp received a total of 453 youth from the street to train in various skills, 93 ran away and returned to the street (Zambian Daily mail, 2009). Children repeatedly escape institutional care regardless of most of them being located in isolated places outside the city where they have been strategically located so that children are not lured to return to the streets.

My research is interested in investigating reasons why some street children escape institutional care. I will also be finding out how others manage to survive on the streets where life is much undesirable compared to life under institutional care. I'm hopeful that by understanding their survival and factors key to their resilience, with the use of the Sociology of Childhood research methods and approaches, which exclusively and fully depended on the children as key participants and informants, my study will come up answers to my research questions.

Even though this study is an academic exercise, involving a small number of participants, the findings could provide some insights on the problems that street children are facing in Zambia and contribute to the available knowledge on street children. There is very little research that has been done on street children in Zambia and much of the literature concerning street youth has focused on reasons and causes

for street embarking not what causes them leave the institutions they are placed in and go back on the streets. However there is a recent study by Phiri (2009) (see the following sub chapter when I look at the significance of this study) that is more extensive than most studies done in Zambia. Phiri's study incorporates childrens viewpoints of street life and has some commonalities with my study, consequently I will time-to-time refer to it.

To get a clear picture of how children move from home to the institutions and/or back home or the street, bellow is a diagram to illustrate their movements.

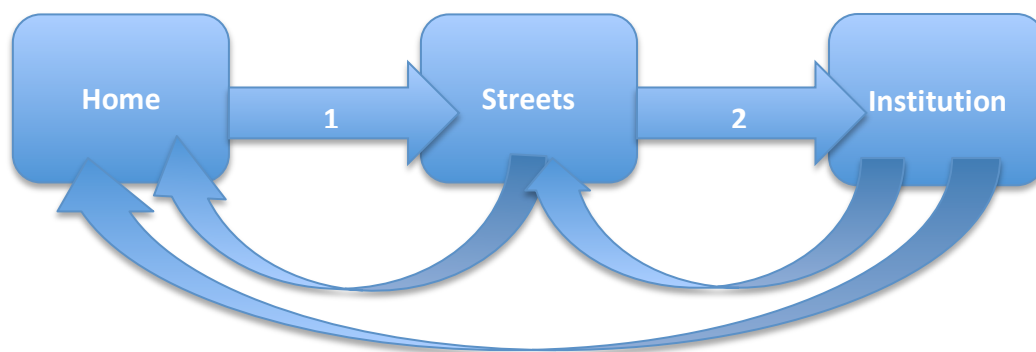


Figure 1: Diagrammatic illustration of the movements of street children

Figure 1 shows a typical movement of street children from home, to the streets and where they go after leaving an institution. When children get to the streets, there are some children who return home and there those whom institutions take in. For those who end up in the institutions, some of them get rehabilitated and are reintegrated with their parents or guardians. However, others escape and return on the street due to various factors that will be looked at in details in chapter five.

1.6 Research Questions And Objectives

The aim of the research was to explore reasons why street children put under institutional care run away and go back to the streets and also explore how street children survive on the street highlighting gender differences where they exist.

The research project will have the following objectives:

- 1) Explore factors leading children to go on the streets and run away from institutional care.
- 2) Explore and understand social capital and networks as support systems among streets children.
- 3) Explore survival mechanisms employed by each gender to cope with adversities.

In line with these objectives, the following research questions guided my research.

- 1) What are the children's reasons for moving back onto the streets?
- 2) What factors lead institutionalized children escape and go back to the streets?
- 3) What role do social networks play in the lives of street children and how significant are they to their survival?
- 4) Which gender (male or female) exercises agency more on the street?
- 5) What factors contribute to the children's resilience on the street?

1.7 Significance of the study

After working with street children in Lusaka, I became curious as to why street children escaped institutional care that I perceive to be better than the street and returned to the street. After gaining knowledge in Childhood Studies, I decided to endeavor to explore street children's experiences and activities on the streets and highlight gender differences in the way they cope with challenges and reasons that prompt them to escape institutional care in preference for the streets. A similar study was carried out by Phiri (2009) in Lusaka in which he aimed at getting knowledge about street children's experiences on the streets and within institutional care. In his study, Phiri's objectives were to get knowledge on children's experiences on everyday life on the streets, explore children's perceptions in the way people look at them and get children's perceptions and views of government/NGO's interventions. And like my study, one of Phiri's objectives was to get knowledge on children's experiences of everyday life on the streets. In his findings, Phiri concluded that 'street children have diverse childhoods and factors like poverty, abuse and so forth in their homes where they come from have implications on interventions. He further concluded that their experiences on the streets such as social networks, friendship, survival

strategies, street economics and interaction with other public members all have implications on interventions. Because of a limited number of in-depth studies on street children done in Zambia and because of some similarities between Phiri's study and mine, I will time to time compare my findings with his.

Even if there are similarities between my study and Phiri's, my study is unique in the sense that it highlights gender difference in the experiences of children. Unlike Phiri's study, which gives boys and girls a holistic analysis, my study analyses gender differences in what makes boys and girls move to the streets and the survival strategies that each gender employs. There are a few studies on street girls, they have almost been neglected by researchers and, as a result, is absent from literature compared to street boys. Various explanations have been put forward to explain this discrepancy, in terms of numbers. Some studies attribute the higher proportion of boys among street children to socio-cultural factors and family circumstances. The differences between street boys and street girls are not only in terms of numbers and activities, but also in terms of their needs and problems. I therefore hope that my study will shed some light on the gender discrepancy among street children and also look at differences in street life gender experiences.

With the Social Studies of childhood approach to understanding children, viewing street children as competent social actors who are able to inform research and interventions that are meant for them, I hope to make a contribution to a pool of knowledge that would improve practices and interventions for street children. I also hope that organizations use institutionalization as an intervention for street children and policy makers who formulate, design and policies for children would learn from this study and other studies that would build on my research.

Chapter Two: Zambia country profile

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe some characteristics and the physical features of Zambia, the country in which the research was carried out. Additionally, I will look at the poverty and HIV/AIDS prevalence levels and how they affect children. I will also look at policy frameworks related to street children.

2.1 Geographical location of Zambia

Zambia is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa located in the tropical belt of South Central Africa and covering 752,614 square kilometers. It is a landlocked country surrounded by the Democratic Republic of Congo, United Republic of Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Angola as shown in the map below. Formerly colonised by Britain, Zambia gained its independence on 24th of October 1964.



Figure 2: Map of Zambia showing provinces and neighboring countries

Source: <http://www.zambia-mining.com/country.html>

Administratively, Zambia is divided into nine provinces, namely: Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Luapula, Lusaka, Northern, North-Western, Southern and Western provinces. Copperbelt and Northern Western provinces are the key mining provinces and are rich in copper and cobalt. The provinces are subdivided into a total of seventy-two (72) districts. Lusaka is the capital city of Zambia and seat of government. The

government comprises of the Central and Local governments. A major social characteristic of Zambia is that it is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. There are 7 major languages in Zambia and 73 dialects.

2.2 Demography

Zambia It is a sparsely populated country. The 2010 census population indicates that the country's population is at thirteen million forty six thousand five hundred and eight with the population growth of about 3%, a large percentage of this population are children and youths. The 1991 Priority Survey indicates that approximately 45% of the population of Zambia was less than the age of 15 years of age. The 2000 Census of Population and Housing estimated that 4.5 million of the then 10 million plus population was below the age of 18 years. Similarly, the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS, 2001-2002) indicates that persons below the age of 19 years constitute 57% of the whole national population. Forty two percent of the population lives in urban areas, which are mostly along the line of rail, this makes Zambia one of the highly urbanized countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

2.3 Economy

In 1991, Zambia held the first democratic multi-party elections. This saw transitioning of power from Zambia first president, Kenneth Kaunda to the new administration led by Fredrick Chiluba (1991-2001). By November 1991, the Chiluba Government was committed to new economic reforms with the view of revitalizing the collapsing economy through liberalization. Zambia therefore adopted an open, private sector-led economy with least government control.

The Zambian economy is largely dependent on copper and cobalt mining. Copper, which is the country's main source of revenue, accounts for about 80 percent of the country's export earnings. In the previous years, there had been unfavorable copper prices and this has had a negative effect on the country's export earnings. This therefore means that the country's balance of payment has also largely depended on the performance of the mining industry. Despite the additional foreign exchange earnings from non-traditional exports, Zambia still pays more to the outside world than it earns from its exports; hence the poor balance of payments performance. To address this problem, like most governments in Africa, in 1991 the Zambian government adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), with the intention

of stabilizing the economy. The focus SAP was liberalization and privatization of state owned companies and a cut on agricultural subsidies. These policies led to high levels of formal sector unemployment and worsened the poverty levels in the country and left a lot of people unemployed (CSO, 2008).

Structurally, Zambia's economy has changed little in spite of the measures that were implemented as outlined in the preceding paragraph. Consistent high economic growth has been elusive. Over the period 1980 to 1990, the country's economic growth was the second lowest in Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) after Mozambique. Over the period 1990 to 1999, it has the least average annual growth rate in the SADC region at one percent. That was also below the Sub-Saharan Africa rate of 1.4 percent. However, between 1994 and 2002, real GDP growth showed an increase from 2.2 percent in 1999 to 3.6 percent in 2000 and 4.9 percent in 2001, before declining to 3.0 in 2002. (Source: Zambia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002-2004) By 2002 approximately 73 percent of Zambians were living under one dollar a day and were classified as poor (ZDHS, 2002) Currently, people in the urban areas seek formal employment or pursue micro-scale business and trading while in the rural areas, the vast majority of people live on small scale agriculture.

Zambia's economy has weathered the effects of the global economic crisis and a subsequent fall in world copper prices. Currently, copper prices have nearly returned to more stable, profit-yielding levels and the country is attracting huge investments in mining, agriculture, construction and manufacturing industries. The country's economy is growing at a rate of about 7% annually; more jobs are being created, infrastructure development increased, more roads, school and hospitals have been constructed and the World Bank has recently classified Zambia as a lower middle income country. However, regardless of these positive developments, poverty remains high in the country with many households struggling to meet daily necessities and access basic services.

2.4 Child affairs and the institutional framework

Although government does not have the capacity and enough resources to be effective in the provision of services of street children and children in general, it is uniquely positioned to provide a conducive working environment to assist children and street children. There are two key ministries involved in the welfare of street children in

Zambia: the ministry of Community development and Social Services and the Ministry of Sports, youths and Child Development.

In the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, the department of Social Welfare is responsible to responding to the problems of street children, the department provides technical and other forms of support to NGOs that implement programs and activities aimed at preventing and reducing the number of children moving to the streets. The department also gives financial and technical support, and legislative and policy guidance to street children's centres, children's homes and other organizations providing care for children in difficult circumstances. The department also provides guidance and grants to NGOs, Faith based organizations and individuals permitted to operate children's shelters.

The ministry of Sports, Youths and Child Development has a department of Child Development which is responsible for providing policy framework that facilitates, promotes, coordinates and monitors all child, youth and sports development programs. The aim of the ministry is to uplift the standards of the target children and this also includes street children. The department of Child Development plays a major role in the implementation of the NCP through collaboration with NGOs, UNICEF and other stakeholders concerned with the plight of children in the country (MSYCD, and MCDSS 2004, p. 71-72)

Besides the roles that government plays in trying to better the welfare of children and street children in particular, NGOs such as ACZ and church groups play a crucial role in solving the problem of street children throughout the country. Most of such organizations work on a micro level providing basic needs and counseling to children with the aim of rehabilitating and reintegrating them back with their families or their next of keen.

2.5 Child policies in Zambia

Although at present the welfare of children in Zambia is guaranteed in the national constitution and other child related policies and legislation, their situation remains unfavorable. Most of the children in Zambia suffer from various socio-economic problems that have a negative impact on their development and growth. In an effort to secure a better future for children, the government of Zambia, with other stakeholders has established frameworks with guidelines for interventions to address the situation

of children. The Zambian government, through the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) has embarked on a law reform process to comprehensively review various pieces of child related legislation in order to harmonize them and to bring them in line with the general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). After ratifying to the UNCRC in 1991, Zambia formulated its first National Child Policy (NCP) in 1994. The NCP has been drawn to guide and direct appropriate interventions for child survival, development and protection. In 1994, the government through the MCDSS embarked on the process of reviewing the NCP to incorporate emerging issues affecting the welfare of children such as the increasing household poverty, child labour, child trafficking, HIV and AIDS, child survival, development and protection.

Though there has been an increase in rhetoric about the need to respond to the situation of street children, and while there are policies for youths and children in general, Zambia currently does not have a specific policy on street children, there are no policies that have been developed to specially look at the welfare of street children¹. As a result of this, street children are only considered as add-ons in the discourse of orphans and vulnerable children in Zambia. Lack of policy for street children only worsens and contributes to the marginalization of street children and contributes to their vulnerability.

The 1996 Situation Analysis of Children in Zambia and the 2004 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) described a worsening situation and estimated the 'population of street children to have increased rapidly to 75,000 since the first Situation Analysis undertaken in 1991. A Profile of Street Children in Zambia undertaken by the Ministry of Community development and Social services in 2006 revealed that 'in spite of many government commitments to serving the Zambian child, street children has been technically left out of the National Child Policy because apart from looking at OVC in general, the policy does not provide any

¹ However, there is a National Child Policy that aims to "improve the standards of living in general and the quality of life for the Zambian child in particular" (Strobbe et al 2010)

² This is from an article called "Bleak outlook for Zambia's Street Kids" by Galoo, Zalloo (2004) published in Mail and Guardian online edition. <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2004-12-29-bleak->

targeted consideration for the special situation of street children. This has adversely affected implementation and enforcement of street children-specific interventions, even by those institutions trying to respond directly to this problem.

2.6 Street children in Zambia

Amid recent positive economic growth in Zambia, with the economy growing at about 7% annually, the benefits have not trickled down to the majority of Zambians. There is still widespread poverty, large-scale unemployment and the impact of HIV and AIDS is widespread, the number of street children in Zambia has substantially increased. The problem of street children is not a relatively new phenomenon, street children have been in existence since the postcolonial era, however it is only in the late 1980's to early 1990's, when the problem became more visible and widespread. Ever since then, the growing number of street children has been visible in most of Zambia's urban centres.

Recent studies estimate that there are 13,500 street children in Zambia of which 15% are girls. Approximately 25% of children seen on the streets during the day are sleeping on the streets at night; these qualify to be categorized as "children of the street". Proportionally, the ratio for girls is less in both categories of "children on the street" and "children of the streets" (MCDSS and MSYCD 2007).

There have been contrasting figures on the exact number of children who are on the streets in Zambia. Before the 2007 study by Ministry of Community Development and Social Services and Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development Some policy documents such as the situation analysis on street children indicated that there were 75,000 in Zambia (Lungwagwa and Macwangi, 1996). In 1994, UNICEF put the figures at around 60,000 children living on the streets and by 1996 they estimated that there were more than 75,000 to 80,000 children living in the major cities of Zambia². However, a much more recent study commissioned by the MCDSS and MSYCD found no evidence of these estimates and revised estimates based on this study places the numbers of street children in Zambia between 8,000 and 13,500.

² This is from an article called "Bleak outlook for Zambia's Street Kids" by Galoo, Zalloo (2004) published in Mail and Guardian online edition. <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2004-12-29-bleak-outlook-for-zambias-street-kids>. Visited on 20.03.2011

The high number of street children in Zambia is attributed to a nexus of factors, prominent among them are poverty, large-scale unemployment and the HIV/AIDS. Neo-liberal policies and other structural adjustments policies (SAPS) are also among the factors attributed as the cause of street children in Zambia. These policies led to privatization of state owned companies and this led to mass unemployment and evidently worsened the poverty levels in the country, which resulted to the mass exodus of children to the streets in a quest to earn money to contribute to the income at home. In this regard, street children are viewed as one of the problem caused by poverty.

With poverty levels at an estimate of 70% of households in Zambia, (ZDHS, 2002) several children have been subjected to injustices such as child labour, child neglect, child prostitution, sex abuse, trafficking, early pregnancies and marriages and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infections (NCP, 2006, p.6).

Another factor that has led to an influx of street children in Zambia is HIV/AIDS. Coupled by high poverty levels, HIV/AIDS has made the issue of street children even worse. With HIV/AIDS infection rates at about 17% and an estimated 4 million plus children in Zambia, more than 1 million children have been orphaned and most of them due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (NCP, 2006, p. 7). Due to a poorly funded government run social welfare scheme, the needs of several children and orphans are hardly met and this has greatly contributed to children frequenting the streets to earn a livelihood.

2.7 Poverty, HIV/AIDS and children

The impact of AIDS has gone far beyond the household and community level. All areas of the public sector and the economy have been weakened, and national development has been stifled. As Zambia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper acknowledges, "the epidemic is as much likely to affect economic growth as it is affected by it"³ Studies indicate that HIV/AIDS prevalence is most high in persons around the ages of 15- 49 years age group. This evidently means that the disease is

³ This is according to AVERT is an international HIV and AIDS charity from their profile on HIV/AIDS in Zambia. <http://www.avert.org/aids-zambia.htm>

taking away the economically valuable and productive age group, who are supposed to contribute to the development of the country. Because AIDS claims the lives of people at an age when most already have young children, AIDS has orphaned a lot of children. Many children are now raised by their extended families and some are even left on their own in child-headed households.

Through its impacts on the labour force and households, AIDS has played a significant role in the reversal of human development in Zambia. This has negatively affected the economy, which, in turn, has made it more difficult for the country to respond to the crisis. Government income also declines, as tax revenues fall and government is pressured to increase spending to deal with the expanding HIV epidemic.

AIDS has not spared the state of affairs of children in Zambia; the adverse social impact of economic restructuring and the HIV and AIDS pandemic have worsened the circumstances for children. According to the national Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP, 2008), 120,000 children are estimated to be infected with HIV. However, being HIV infected is not the only way that HIV and AIDS affect children. In 2009 there were 690,000 AIDS orphans in the country and AIDS orphans made up half of all orphans in the country. These children are extremely vulnerable, according to the NCP, many of the “AIDS orphans” suffer severe deprivation, quit school, do not access any training, are victims of different forms of abuse, exploitation and risk HIV infection more than other children. This is especially the case among street children and children from child-headed households who account for an estimated 1-2 percent (about 20,000) of all households in the country.

Chapter Three: Theoretical perspectives.

3.0 Introduction

This research was based on specific theoretical perspectives that were deemed important and related to the research topic. The perspectives adopted in this study were helpful in guiding the methodology, questions pursued, and findings of the study. In stressing the importance of theory to research, Kvale (1996) observes that ‘developing of a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the phenomena to be explored, establishes the base to which new knowledge will be added and incorporated’. Therefore, establishing a theoretical stance in research informs the methodology and provides a context for the research process that is grounded with a criterion that is logical. Having had knowledge of the theoretical perspectives outlined in the subsequent paragraphs helped me notice and understand certain aspects of the research, which I would have otherwise overlooked had I not been guided by any theoretical knowledge.

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the concepts and theoretical perspectives from the new social studies of childhood, which have influenced and guided my empirical study. In addition I will apply the concept of resilience and survival strategies and social capital that I find highly relevant for my analysis of street children.

3.1 Social studies of childhood

The theoretical stance held by the new social studies of childhood prominently influenced this research. This relatively new theoretical perspective in childhood research is in response to a lack of research on children and childhood as part of a social and material context. Previously, there was a tendency to ignore children and childhood; children were only being studied indirectly through sub disciplinary areas such as the family or education dominated by socialization theory, children were seen as human becomings rather than human beings, who through the process of socialization would be shaped into fully human adult beings. Therefore, the previous dominant frameworks of child research viewed children as incompetent and incomplete, as ‘adults in the making rather than children in the state of being the forces of socialization, child development, the family, the school, received greater

attention with 'little or no time' being given to children themselves (James et al. 1998).

This comparative absence of children from the research agenda was increasingly being challenged by researchers interested in children as competent beings in their own right and in the ways in which childhood is socially constructed by adult society in different ways in different times and places. From the 1990s, the New Sociology of childhood has viewed childhood as being socially constructed and hence giving prominence to the view of children as social actors, and not incomplete beings learning to become adults but also drawing attention to the historical, geographical and social differences of childhood and the moral, cultural and political contexts of assumptions about children (Ansell, 2005) With the tenets of the New Social Studies of childhood in mind, my research approached all informants in their own right and as social actors defined by the context and society in which they lived.

I will therefore, in detail, look at some of core tenets of the New Sociology of Childhood.

3.3 Gender perspective

“Whilst it is commonplace to talk about children as if they are a homogeneous group who share a whole range of common characteristics, paradoxically it is also the case that distinguishing between boy children and girl children is a key feature of everyday social practices in most society” (James and James 2008, p65)

This distinction between male and female serves as a basic organizing principle for every human culture and this makes gender as an important organizer of many aspects of human life and development⁴ (James and James, 2008). To get a clear understanding of what gender is and the part it plays in everyday life, I will use a perspective advanced by West and Zimmerman (1987) which sees gender as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction. In essence, gender is not a set of traits that exist in individuals; rather it is something people do in their social interactions. The authors say that to have a full understanding of what is involved in

⁴ Unlike sex, gender roles and gender displays both focus on behavioral aspects of being a woman or a man as opposed, for example, to biological differences between the two. (West and Zimmerman 1987,p127)

the asserting of gender as an important guiding principle rooted in all aspects day-to-day interactions, one needs to acknowledge and distinguish three empirically overlapping concepts. These concepts are sex, sex category and gender. 'Sex is a determination made by applying socially agreed upon biological criteria that classify a person as either females or males. Sex category is realized through the application of sex criteria, it also acts as a proxy for categorization based on sex in day-to-day life and therefore it is established and sustained by the socially required identificatory displays that proclaim one's membership in one or the other category that is male or female⁵. The activities of managing situated conducts in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category'. The argument that West and Zimmerman are putting forward is that although sex categorization depends on the commonsense categorization, however, owing to the fact that people are categorized into either male or female sex category automatically insofar as certain traits dispute that categorization, gender encompasses far more complex set of recipes for activities that must be modified according to different situations. This makes gender so important that any type of social interactions and activities are potentially subject to "doing gender" that is, making one's actions accountable in terms of their suitability to sex category. In other words "Doing gender" is much about adjusting one's behavior to make it match with social expectations for one's sex. This process of being accountable to be consistent with one sex category is what West and Zimmerman terms as "resources" for doing gender.

The point the authors arrive at is that by doing gender, we reinforce the notion of "essential difference between females and males". Henceforth, gendered activities are not expressions of natural gender differences but they acts of the production of these differences. The viewing of gender differences as natural and essential plays an important part in maintaining the status quo of subordination of women to men.

Street children are not an exception when it comes to 'doing gender'. They 'do gender' in reference to behaving or thinking in a way that society considers feminine for females and masculine if one is male. As I will show in my analysis and discussion chapters, there are certain activities and survival strategies that boys are

⁵West and Zimmerman say that it is important to note that it is possible to claim membership in a sex category even if one lacks the required traits based on biological sex.

engage in which girls do not do because they fear being seen as acting outside their sex category. This has had an impact on how street boys and girls meet their needs and survive. I will also show that in Zambian culture, like in most of the world's cultures, 'women and girls have become accountable to gender by being close to home because of child-care and family obligations and for their own protection and safety, while men and boys account by going out of the home. As a result of this separation of the masculine and feminine spheres, street girls appear to be more 'out of place' than street boys when they are on the streets and have less survival undertakings compared to boys' (Koller et al 2000, p1432) Because of the gender differences between boys and girls on the streets, it is important that when referring to "street children" gender differences and distinctions between boys and girls are made because failure to do so blurs it.

3.4 Childhood as socially constructed

In the words of Vygotsky, there is no separation between the individual and the social, for one cannot become an individual without becoming social. Even the most primary aspects of a child's development are social, in that social experience has an active, structuring effect in child development (Wood 1998, in Boyden 2003).

Childhood is not a natural phenomenon and cannot properly be understood as such. The social transformation from child to adult does not follow a direct physical growth; the recognition of children by adults, and vice versa, is not singularly contingent upon physical difference. Through this theoretical perspective, there is avoidance to give a simple universal definition of childhood. Childhood is to be understood as social construct, it makes reference to a social status delineated by boundaries incorporated within the social structure and manifested through a certain typical forms of conduct, all of which are necessary related to a particular cultural setting (Jenks, 1982) In simplicity, Jenks implies that routinizing and naturalizing childhood through the dominant child study theoretical frameworks and indeed commonsense and everyday language, conceals the importance of the society in which children are brought up and 'glosses over the social experience of childhood'.

Prout and James (1990) proponents of the sociology of childhood state that 'when

childhood is understood as a social construct, it offers an interpretative frame for contextualizing the early years of human life. Childhood, as a distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of society'. Childhood therefore cannot be defined without considering the environment in which children live, it is influenced by several dynamics such as the social, economic, political contexts in which the children live. These in turn have created several discourses of childhood⁶. However the Western model and discourse of childhood have been very popular and influential such that it has extended to other environments. The Western model of childhood sees childhood as a time of happiness and innocence, a protected period when children are to be allowed to enjoy their childhood before they face the challenges that adulthood comes with. Ansell (2005) claims that this western model was globalized in the nineteenth century through migration, missionary activity and colonialism. NGOs and international organizations have also played a role in exporting this model to Africa, Asia and Latin America (Ennew 1995 in Ansell, 2005, p. 23). It has also been exported through bilateral and multilateral development projects and international instruments such the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). However, she argues that this model is inadequate in describing the experiences of young people with poor background in developing and developed countries.

In many developing countries, Zambia included, national policies on children are largely influenced by the western model of childhood through relations with western countries who support and finance children's programs and international instruments such as the UNCRC. It is through such channels that global and Western viewpoints and perspectives of childhood have become a universal image and a yardstick of what proper childhood ought to be.

Following the 'imprints' of the Social Studies of Childhood, my research dismisses the universal models of childhood. My study adheres to the social constructionists under the Social Studies of Childhood who assert; 'though we all know what children

⁶ The term discourse is used to mean a self-contained set of interconnected ideas held together by a particular ideology or view of the world. (Woodhead and Montgomery (ed) 2003 p21)

are and what childhood is like, this is not a knowledge that can reliably be drawn on. Such knowledge of the child and its lifeworld depends on the predispositions of a consciousness constituted in relation to our social, political, historical and moral context. Inevitably, the 'socially constructed' child is a local one rather than a global phenomenon and tends to be very particularistic (James et al, 1998). Understanding childhood, as social construct is a perspective that requires that the views of children as 'natural' beings be abandoned (Nilsen, 2008). In the understanding of childhood, it makes reference to social status delineated by boundaries incorporated within the social structure and manifested through certain typical forms of conduct, all of which are essentially related to particular cultural settings (Jenks, 1982)

In the context of my research, different social, political, moral and historical factors determine the kind of childhood that is found in Zambia and this childhood is different from childhood elsewhere and indeed it is different even within Zambia from one society to another. According to James and colleagues (1998) 'different factors within the lived context of the children will define childhood and differentiate it from what childhood may mean in a different context. Consequently, based on this theory, childhood does not exist in a predetermined and identifiable form'. When doing my research, I therefore approached street children as children living a childhood manifesting the prevailing social, political and moral circumstances and values in Zambia.

3.5 Children as social actors

One of the main tenets of the New Social Studies of Childhood is the notion that children should be viewed as social actors with agency. This tenet is a challenge to the traditional focus led by the developmental psychologists and socialization theorists of sociology who have been focusing on the process by which a child becomes an adult of his culture with great emphasis on material or cognitive development and the development of social habits and personality development. These ideologies carry with them conceptions of what a child is supposed to become and prevent socialization practices that might be perceived as hindrances to the transforming of the child into a "human". The process for this development has always been a normative one, based on the implicit understanding of an adult view of social life, his norms and rules for properly going about that life. (Speier, 1976) Under the dominant

theoretical perspective, childhood is understood and receives treatment as a stage, a structural process of becoming, but rarely as a course action or coherent social practice. Here, childhood is recognized as what is yet to become and this means that childhood is spoken as: a becoming (James et al, 1998)

To offset the views of the dominant frameworks of child research, proponents of the new sociology of childhood say that: to break away from the dominant models, in the new perspective, the “child should be conceived of as a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences – in sum, as a social actor (James et al, 1998)

To recognize children as social actors, one needs to also recognize and appreciate their agency. James and Prout (1997) describe childrens agency as the ability to be active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live. James and colleagues (1998) say that to recognize children agency, ‘there is need to conduct studies which foreground their agency in social action: the life worlds of childhood, the daily lived experiences of children, their experiences and understandings, their interactions with each other and with adults of various kinds, their strategies and tactics of action’.

In my study, I recognized street childhood as a way in which children were restructuring their lives that were being impacted by different factor such as poverty, abuse and many other factors that drove them to the streets. By using their agency, children left their homes to come and survive on the street. Their day to day running of affairs, managing their lives and being able to meet their daily needs clearly demonstrates the use of agency by the children. Even if children are seen as “eyesores” to the public, to me, I saw children as normal children successfully using their agency and being resilient in otherwise very difficult circumstances. In my research I therefore did not consider street children as passive “beings” but as active participants capable of exercising agency. The recognition of their agency also made me realize that in the whole research process, all my participants were active participants. This view is noted by Punch (2002) and Christensen (2006) who state that the recognition of children’s social agency and active participation in research changes children’s position within the human and social sciences and leads to awakening of taken-for-granted assumptions found in more conventional approaches to child research by appreciating childrens’ agency, approaching them as main

respondents or informants and treating them as competent commentators and participants on their issues and lives, their standpoints can be documented across a range of issues from their own perspective. My experience with my participant left me with no doubts that children on the streets fully exercise their agency when dealing with all aspects of their lives. I will in this study endeavor to ascertain whether or not there are differences in the way boys and girls apply their agency.

3.6 Social Capital

Social capital is an interdisciplinary concept that joins theoretical and empirical angles of economists, political scientist, sociologists, social anthropologist and social psychologists (Rose 2002 in Asheber 2005). The concept became very prominent in the 1980s in the works of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putman. These scholars have different but related definitions of social capital and most literature indicate that there is no single agreed upon definition of social capital. A particular definition adopted by a study depends on the nature of the study and the discipline guiding the study. However, what Bourdieu, Coleman and Putman agree is that social capital is about how people depend on a group and its members to meet their individual needs and goal and all their “definitions of social capital refer to certain features or dimensions of social structure that promote attainment of the goals of either a person or collective” (Rantalaaho and Teige 2006, p38)

The first dimension of social capital is ‘social networks and sociability, are original dimensions of Bourdieu’s social capital theory. Sociability here is understood as the ability to maintain and use one’s social network as a feature of social capital. The key principle of this dimension is that ‘actors need to recognize their networks as a resource in order for these networks to constitute social capital’ (Rantalaaho and Teije 2006, McDaniel and Nicole. 2004). Sociability is no less a central concept in children’s social capital as well. The second dimension of social capital is ‘trust and reciprocity’. According to McDaniel and Nicole (2004), in order for a member of a social network to gain from the relationship he/she has with the other member and to use them as resources, he/she should be able to trust that network members are providing correct and helpful information and honest support. For example, in the case of this study, street children need to create trustful relations with their friends within their social networks and that is; their friends and other people who assist them. The third and last dimension is the sense of belonging and place attachment. The

sense of belonging refers to an individual feeling of belonging after attaching symbolic meaning to a certain environment, but in this case, it refers to an extent to which individuals feel that they are part of a collective community. That is, be it at home, school, work place and in the case of this study, on the streets or indeed just about anywhere. (McDaniel and Nicole 2004)

Two common features of 'bonding and bridging social capital' characterize these different dimensions of social capital. Bonding social capital is harmony within a homogenous group. (McDaniel and Nicole 2004, Rantalaaho and Teige 2006) In the case of my study, homogenous here means children from the same area in the street, the same age or/and gender group. Bridging social capital is unity across heterogeneous groups, that is unity across street children of different localities, gender, age and other mediating factors (ibid). With the concept of bonding and bridging social capital in mind, I will highlight areas where these two concepts are applicable among my informants, i.e. how does social capital and networks work as support systems among street children. In other words, how does it act as a survival strategy employed by both boys and girls on the streets to cope with adversities.

As seen from the definition and dimensions looked at, central to the concept of social capital is that it is 'not completely reducible to individuals but that its existence requires a social structure i.e. social networks and other dimensions of social capital for individuals to be connected to (Rantalaaho and Teige 2006 p38). Overall, social capital encompasses norms and networks furthermore it facilitates collective actions for the benefits of the members. Individuals create social capital by investing in social relationships they have with others, making social capital a resource that individuals use to improve their life conditions and wellbeing which otherwise would have been difficult to do on their own.

As seen here, social capital is not only applicable to children from families whose parents are major sources of social capital but it is also a survival mechanism that can be employed by children in other settings such as street children who live without parents. The concept of social capital is very applicable to all children in general including street children. However, most of the studies on social capital have failed to include children's perspectives. Data has oftentimes been collected from caregivers or teachers who consequently served as "proxies" for children. Researchers have in most cases disregarded to include children's perceptions of their relationships and their

environment (Morrow 2002 in McDaniel and Nicole 2004). Childhood social capital is mainly viewed and defined in terms of parents' aspirations for their children, and parents' individualistic orientations and involvement, and academic achievement. (McDaniel and Nicole, 2004) Social capital in childhood is therefore understood and viewed in consideration of childrens' interactions with adults, not their social interactions with each other and this makes social capital an asset to children living in intact families (Rantalaaho and Teige 2006, p39). Considering that my participants live on the streets without parents or guardians, I will investigate how children are able to stock social capital and use it to their collective and individual benefits without adults' guidance and support. I will also investigate how social capital is bridged across gender, age and 'territories'. Since my study recognizes the agency of children, social capital in my study will be 'measured' based on the information given by children themselves, and hence their agency will be fully recognized.

3.7 Resilience and survival

To understand the livelihood and survival of street children, I have included the aspect of resilience in this study. The inclusion of resilience is aimed at highlighting the adversities street children face and how they manage to survive in environments and circumstances that are deemed difficult. I'm therefore using the resilience theoretical perspective to understand the survival mechanisms my participants undertook when faced with challenges. Historically, the notion of resilience entered the health sciences from applied physics and engineering referring to the ability of the material to bounce back from stress and resume the original shape or condition. Somewhat later, the term was adopted into psychology for the study of children with mentally ill mothers. Resilience is now used in several fields to understand how people react and cope when face with adversity. It is used exclusively when referring to the maintenance of positive adjustments under challenging life conditions; resilience is therefore the manifestation of positive adaptation despite significant life adversity. (Boyden and Mann 2005, Boyden 2003) Resilience is hence generally understood as positive adaptation in circumstances where difficulties, personal, familial or environmental are extreme that we would expect a person's cognitive or functional abilities to be impaired. It is the maintenance of normal functioning despite an interfering emotionality that a child is going through (Boyden and Cooper 2007, <http://www.barnardos.org.uk>). Responses to adversity are understood and described in

terms exposure to risks and positive adaptation. Risks refer to variables that increase individuals' likelihood of psychopathology or their vulnerability to negative development outcomes (Boyden and Mann 2005). Risk encompasses negative life situations that are known to be associated with adjustment difficulties. In the case of my study, risks that children on the street encounter include factors such as poverty, hunger, abuse, exposure to weather elements etc. Positive adaptation is defined in terms of behaviorally manifested social competence or success at meeting developmental stage risk (Boyden and Mann 2005, Boyden 2003 Fraser, 2004, cited in Hutchison, 2008, McAlpine 2010)

Most societies have their own approaches to the management of adversity and to healing, depending on their concepts of causality in misfortune, of well being, power, personhood and social. These notions tend to structure the way people experience and are affected by environmental stresses (Hinton 2000, Schweder and Bourne 1982, in Boyden 2003). Based on this notion, Boyden stresses that as we are look at children, it is important to note that although their responses may not be the same as adults', their way of responding to adversity always be understood with reference to the social, cultural and moral contexts in which they live. Event though children are considered to be vulnerable, studies indicating the dynamic, interactive nature of child development and highlighting children's coping strategy in adverse settings challenge the assumption that all, or even most, children are helpless in the face of turbulence and strife, children have considerable inner resources as individuals and collectively for coping with different challenges.

There is a general held notion that children exposed to adversity and hardships cannot cope and adjust properly compared to adults. However, this is not always the case, several researchers have found, for example, that a significant proportion of children exposed to difficulties within their families and communities remain resilient although the experience of multiple stressors is likely to have a cumulative effect which ultimately may overwhelm coping capacity. There is evidence that growing up in the context of constant change and contradiction can for some children be a source of strength (Boyden 2003). Street children could be said to be one category of children that adapt with contradictions in their lives. Regardless of being continuously exposed to risk factor such as poverty, the hash conditions on the streets, they operate

outside structures such as the family, the community, the school that promote resilience and teach them how to solve problems, however, they successfully handle challenges in life. Regardless of the absence of these structures, street children demonstrate the ability to meet their basic needs through the achievements of positive adjustments in the face adversity, encapsulating the view that adaptation in a child experiencing new life “trajectories” defies “normative” expectations (Boyden 2003).

A resilience lens helps us to understand how street children and youth adapt to their environment, essentially how they engage in the “active process of increasingly organizing the relationship of the self to the environment” (Kegan, 1982 p45). To do this, I will analyze and discuss survival and coping strategies that children employ in order to survive. The complexity of the stress being faced by street children means that no one coping response may be appropriate, but different strategies over time may be more efficacious (McAlpine 2010).

Chapter Four: Research methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the overall conduct of this study. Addressed in this chapter are several aspects of my study, namely, the research design, primary data sources, research methods used for data collection, data analysis, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, access, gatekeepers, ethical issues, my role as a researcher and challenges and limitations that I faced during my study.

The methodology employed in my study is qualitative and the rationale for using qualitative rather than quantitative research approach is described and justified later within this chapter. Method triangulation was used in this study, this was to allow the methods used to complement one another and provide additional insight to the study. Later, details of data display, analysis and interpretation are presented. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion on ethical issues.

4.1 Researching Children's Perspectives

Researching children's lives and perspectives raises a number of methodological issues to do with consent, access, anonymity and confidentiality. Although these are not unique to children, they do present researchers with specific dilemmas to do with unequal power relationships, mainly age related, that exist between adult researchers and children as participants (Mauthner, 1997)⁷. Power and the position of researchers is a very crucial issues in research with children because if researchers are to have a truly participative arrangement then they must take into account the issue of their position of the researcher (Young 2001). When engaging children in research, researchers have to reflect upon the issue of power and the position of being adults. In my study, I was very much aware of the fact that children viewed me as an adult; they did not talk to me the way they talked to each other and also expected me to help when there was a problem. I therefore tried to address this power imbalance from the onset of my study. When getting consent from the children, I explained to them that I

⁷The challenge for researchers working with children is the disparities in power and status between adults and children. It is important to redress the power imbalance between child participant and adult researcher to enable children to participate on their own terms. If power relations are not addressed, they may prevent children's full participation in the research (Thomas and O'Kane, 2006)

knew nothing about life on the streets and I wanted to learn from them. I therefore at all times tried to put children in-charge of games and other activities we engaged in. I acted ignorant on issues I discussed with the children so that I could empower them and put them in a higher position of teaching me. A good example is during participant observation when one of the boys was teaching me how to play Nsolo (a traditional game); I grew up playing this game and I'm very conversant with it and all its rules but I pretended that I didn't know that game at all. This put the child in-charge of the situation and the boy was keen to teach and explaining the rules. In due course I learnt a few new additional rules that the boys have invented on the streets. This is just one among other approaches that I used to balance and shift power from me to children to deal with the dilemma of power relations. The methods that I used in my research were also designed in such a way that they leveled the "playing field" balanced power relations and the recognized children's agency.

Child-centered approaches to data collection that view children as subjects rather than objects of research help to address dilemmas researchers have when doing research with children (Christensen 2006). Sociologists of childhood studies have strongly argued for the value of researching children in their own right and from their own perspectives and the implementation of this value is by taking children as units of research and focusing the study directly on children and their life conditions, activities, relationships, knowledge and experiences. Proponents of the new Sociology of Childhood encourage that children should be approached as social actors and participants in the social world and also participants in the formation of their own childhood (Alanen 2001). The viewing of children as social actors who participate in the formation of their childhood meant that I had to adopt "child friendly" research methods that would evoke and promote children's participation. In this regard I took a methodological path that elicited children's participation. My research was designed in such a way that I engage with my informants and enabled them to fully participate. The use of qualitative methods and ethnographic methods like semi-structured interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions and drama all promoted dialogue and empowered my informants and at the same time reduce the power relations between my informants and me and hence my informants were active and showed interest in the research process.

Seeking children's perspectives and views in research has also been echoed in the contemporary children's right discourses. Due to the increasing recognition that children have valuable perspectives on and valid insights into their situations and lives, and can offer valid recommendations and suggestions for improvement (ILO, 2006), Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) clearly stipulates that children have a right to be involved in decisions which affect them. "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice". The ethical message this articles of the UNCRC point out to the realization of children as social actors who are supposed to be major informants on issues affecting them in all aspect of life. In line with the above standpoints as measures I took, my informants built trust in me, were engaged, open for dialogue and showed significant commitment to my research.

By appreciating children's agency, approaching them as main respondents or informants and treating them as competent commentators on their issues and lives, their standpoints can be documented across a range of issues.⁸ The inclusion of children as a research partner, rather than objects of enquiry, has shown to review the taken for granted issues about children and childhood (Christensen, 2006). These are in danger of remaining invisible when research relies only on adult accounts. Engaging children in research has shown to have a 'standpoint', from which social life differs from that of the adults' perspective. (Prout 2002)

4.2 Fieldwork sites

During my fieldwork, I had four major sites where I carried out my research, on the streets; I had two major places that I paid much attention to; these are Soweto market and Northmead business area. And off the street, I worked with two institutions that rehabilitate street children and reintegrate them back in their families and these are Action for Children's Salvation home and Fountain of Hope.

⁸ Recognizing children's social agency and active participation in research has changed children's position within the human and social sciences and led to awakening of taken-for- granted assumptions found in more conventional approaches to child research (Punch, 2002: Christensen, 2006)

Soweto is located just within the vicinity of Lusaka's business district in the town centre where most the important institutions and businesses in the country like such as various commercial banks including Zambia's central bank, The Bank of Zambia, super markets, car franchises like Toyota and many more are located. Soweto market is the single largest market in Zambia with stores and trading stands numbering well over 7,200 with estimated daily revenue of US\$123,000 (USAID 2001). The market started as an illegal market with traders wanting to do their business closer to the town centre. In recent years, the Lusaka City Council has however been trying to legitimize the market with the motive of expanding their revenue base through collection of taxies and levies. Opposite to Soweto market, is a much more formal structured Lusaka City Market, which also just like Soweto market, has an assortment of merchandize for sale. The market is frequented by people from Lusaka's low-income communities who cannot afford buying from shopping centres and malls like most of Zambia's middle class. The products traded at Soweto market range from agricultural products to groceries, hardware, wood products, second hand clothes and many more. It has gained prominence as a distribution centre for most of the goods coming into Lusaka especially agricultural commodities from other provinces/towns and also from other countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. During working hours, the market is always congested with customers and traders buying and selling various commodities with very little space for walking.

Soweto market has becomes one of the safe-havens for street children in Lusaka because it is not in the main business area of town where children are despised by the public and chased by the police. On one of my visit to the market, I asked one of my participants the reason why he likes confining himself in and around the market and not the central business area of town and this is what they told me: "you see uncle, some time back my friends and I used to go to Cairo road (One of the main streets in Lusaka) but then the people from Lusaka City council and the police started chasing us and thats how we started coming to this place, here we are not chased because policemen don't usually come here. Sometimes we do go on Cairo road especially at night to pick from the garbage bins, but again if you are unlucky and you run into security guards, they beat you up". From these concerns raised during this conversation, it is evident that conflict and brutality by the police is the reason why

children avoid certain parts of town and prefer those that are considered less important and less patrolled by the police.

One section of the market has restaurants; these are just small rooms, with iron-sheet roofs and with one or two benches where customers sit. People who eat from these restaurants are mainly those that trade in the market. Adjacent to the restaurants, is an open area where most of the waste generated in the market is dumped; it is here where most of the street children are found scavenging through the heaps of waste, begging for leftover foods from the restaurants and or doing works from the restaurants in exchange for food. Because these children are out of sight of the police and government officials, in this “hidden” part of the city, they live freely as they please and this gave me an opportunity to observe the children in an environment and setting where they live without fear.

The other place that I worked from is Northmead, this is a residential along the Great East road (another major highway in Lusaka) Northmead is just a walking distance from the city center. Apart from the supermarket and stores, the Northmead shopping area is very famous for nightclubs, bars and restaurants, because of this; there is a lot of business that goes on in the evenings and at night in Northmead. Due to the hype of activities that happen in the late hours, a high number of street children frequent this area in the evening and at night to beg for money and food from people who come to drink from the bars and nightclubs and those coming to eat from the restaurants.

During the day, you barely find street children in this area. I had on several occasions passed through Northmead during the day and I hardly came across street children and hence toured this place in the evenings. The other reason street children come to Northmead is to come and spend nights in the big drainage tunnels that are found in the area. The tunnels are normally covered but the children have found ways entering the tunnels through the drainage manholes. The reason why children prefer to sleep in the tunnels is because they are warm and when they are in the tunnel, they are hidden from the public and the police are likely to chase them if they slept in the corridors. It was easy for me to work with the boys in Northmead because I had already met some of them at Soweto market and they introduced me to the boys I didn't know.

Action for Children Zambia (ACZ), a non-profit, non-governmental organization was founded in 2005. It is dedicated to addressing the needs of vulnerable and displaced children in Zambia. The primary aim of ACZ is to provide a multi-faceted approach in helping orphans vulnerable youth, especially street children so that they stay healthy and gain the skills and knowledge that will allow them to grow into citizens able to make positive contributions to the development of their country.

ACZ has various programs aimed at street children, one of the programs that I got involved in, is the outreach program. Under this program, outreach officers go to the markets and streets to provide basic medical care for minor injuries, feed the children, play football and other games. The aim of this program is to create and establish a relationship with the children and subsequently knowing them, and eventually helping them get off the streets. We get to know the children. ACZ also has a crisis care program where if a child is seriously sick or injured, they take the child to the hospital to get proper medical care. Under this program, if a child or children are arrested, they feed the children in police cells and work with the police to secure their release. The organization also provides crisis counseling for those new to the streets and work to find safe homes for those that have been raped and beaten. Under the crisis care program, the organization arranges for funerals and proper burials for those who die on the streets due to accidents or illness.

ACZ also runs a home for children, this home is called Salvation Home (SH) Once ACZ establishes a relationship with children on the streets and assess their vulnerability, the children are taken off the streets into Salvation Home where they are provided with drug detoxification, substance abuse counseling, medical care, HIV/AIDS and TB screening and medical treatment for those tested positive. The children then go through extensive behavior change counseling and learn to live in the community again. Family tracing is done and relatives are included in counseling whenever possible. When treatment is finished, integration into the community begins. It is these children at Salvation Home that were once on the street and were being prepared to return to their guardians that I was working with to learn why they had gone to the streets and understand why they used to escape institutions they went to and also to learn about how they survived on the streets.

4.3 The positivist and interpretivism approaches to research

In social sciences, there are two predominant approaches that dominate empirical studies and these are positivism and Interpretivism approaches. These two approaches have historically oriented social research since its inception and have categorized it into either empiricist or humanist research (Hughes, 1990). Denscombe (2002) defines positivism as: An approach to social research that seeks to apply the natural science model of research to investigation of social phenomena and explanations of the social world. On the other hand, Interpretivism is said to be an umbrella term for a variety of approaches that reject some of the views held by the positivism (Denscombe, 2002). Interpretivist perspectives are restricted to a systematic examination of socially meaningful actions through direct observation of people in their natural locations in order to arrive at an understanding of how people preserve, produce and understand their social world. This approach is concerned with how people go about their affairs and how they get things done (Neuman, 2003). This is a research approach therefore that aims at understanding the complex “life world” from the research participants’ own viewpoint and this is the approach that my study took. From the two perspectives, two major research methodologies have emerged: qualitative and quantitative with each of them guided by different theoretical and methodological ideologies.

Quantitative studies are interested in information that can be measured to come up with results and makes generalizations. This method assumes that without measurements of findings, knowledge may lack precision and is vague. In contrast a qualitative study is an empirical research where the data collected by the researcher is not in form of numbers (Fraser et al 2004). A qualitative study is unconvinced about the use of ‘scientific’ methods involving statistical analysis for the study of human beings, suggesting that individuals’ feelings, attitudes or judgments are too complex to be quantified (Verma et al., 1999). This method is concerned with what goes on in social settings with the goal of understanding the social phenomenon. My study used the latter method because information from a qualitative study is more localized and relative to the place where the study is carried out.

4.4 Sampling

Sampling forms an important aspect of research. In any research project, the initial step is to decide whom to study and determine how to obtain a representative sample (Koller and Hutz, 2007). This is why defining who a street child has played a pivotal role in my thesis because it narrowed down my target population to “children of the streets”.

In this study, I used quota sampling. In quota sampling, the number of participants and their characteristics is decided when designing the study (SFH, 2006). Characteristics might include age, institution of residence, gender, duration of stay on the street etc. So, when I went into the field, using quota sampling, I search for the people with characteristic of children of the street until I meet the prescribed quotas of 10 children of the streets and 10 former street children under institutional care. The total number of participants in this study was 20. Half the participants (10) were girls and the other 10 were boys. 5 girls were living on the streets and the other 5 were living under institutional care but previously lived on the street. Accordingly, 5 boys were living on the streets and the other 5 were living under institutional care but previously lived on the streets. Former street children were sampled in this study because they have vast knowledge on street life.

My key informants included government officials from the Ministry of Youth, Sport and child Development and in the Ministry Social Services and Community Development and managers and caretakers from the institution I worked from.

4.5 Gatekeepers

To get my study started, I needed to get access to my informants and to do this, I first had to identify gatekeeper to give me a go-ahead to start working with the children and be introduced to them. Hammersley and Atkinson describe Gatekeepers as those actors with control over key sources and avenues of opportunity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In the case of my study, these are people such as care givers at institutions that look after street children, government officials, outreach workers and even children that have influence over their peers. Knowing and negotiating with gatekeepers is very important as pointed out by Hammersley and Atkinson, (1995)

knowing who has power to open up or block off access, or those considered by others to have authority to grant or refuse access, is an important aspect of sociological knowledge about the setting.

In my study, it proved hard for me to start working with children on my own, my work was only made easier by outreach workers from ACZ, they played a very important role in opening my access to children. They introduced me to children on the street and explained what I was doing. They outreach officers from ACZ were my main sponsors, they introduced me to children and provided access for data. Because these outreach workers had already established a relationship with the children on the street. The importance of gatekeepers can not be over emphasized as I will explain how hard it was for me to work with the children on my own without the help of the people who have known the children for a considerable amount of time.

Apart from adults being gatekeepers, I found that among children themselves, they have among them influential children that I considered gatekeeper and sponsors. These are usually older boys that have been on the street for a considerable duration and they have gained trust and command among their friends, both boys and girls. In my case I had two boys that were always around when I was doing my study, after I became known to the boys, I had not yet established a relationship with the girls and it was these boys and the outreach officers from ACZ who introduced me to the girls on the street.

After the introduction by ACZ officials and the two boys, my quest to get information started through participant observation. I made myself very clear to the children that what I was doing was purely academic work. Some children who expected money after participating in my study dropped out but a good number of them agreed to participate even without being paid. Mostly when street children have participated in some research conducted by some NGOs and government departments, they are paid money or given clothes, shoes, blankets or any other material goods. Because of this they consider research as an economic undertaking. Based on this, it was imperative for me to make it clear to the children that I was not going to pay them for participating in my research. My fear was that if I paid them to participate in my study, they were going to give me wrong responses just for the sake of giving me 'value' for my money. Not paying them therefore meant that only those participants that were willing to voluntarily share their experiences at no cost participated.

4.6 Data collection methods

This study has employed the use of triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of more than one method in one study. The logic behind triangulation is avoiding research results that are generated exclusively on one research method. The assumption is that all methods have weaknesses and an exclusive dependence on a single method could bias or even distort the researcher's work being investigated (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

The use of different methods in my study does not mean that there are weaknesses in my methods. During the design of my study, all the methods were designed and incorporated with equal strength. The reason for using more than one method is because the more the methods contrast one another, the greater the confidence I will have in my research findings. So in the case of this study, I have used participant observation to check on findings from interviews, focus group discussions so that I can pick out the consistencies for my analysis (Bryman, 2001). In social research, the use of a single method of data collection gives rise to dangers of not noticing errors in the findings and it may lead to incorrect findings. On the other hand, if data collected using different methods lead to the same or similar conclusions, we can be a little more confident in our conclusion (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Therefore, the use of a combination of observations, interviews and focus group discussions in my study, will allow me to use different data sources to authenticate and crosscheck my research findings.

4.7 Participant observation

Shulamit (1988) defines Participant-observation as observation of a scene by a researcher who takes part in the activities and events with an intention of getting close to the action and to get a feel for what things mean to the actors. My study kicked off with observations. I first needed to observe children and through my observation, identify places that street children frequented very often and then negotiate my access into the groups of children.

As Judith Ennew et al (2009) puts it, "watching what children actually do and how they do it, provides valuable information throughout any research process. Watching (observation) is a researcher-centered method that is a continuous accompaniment to all other methods" I therefore started my observation in the city centre and business

district of Lusaka and apparent there are very few street children visible. I did my observations at different times so that I could get a representative picture of how children lived on the streets at different times of the day. During my observations before I participated in the activities with the children, I had a problem to distinguish between street children and “normal” children. In some streets, I found children as young as 3 years old but I quickly discovered that these children were in the company of their mothers who were selling along the street. This was a common site in most places of town. Distinguishing between street children and non street children was not easy as I could not tell who was a street child and who was not just by looking.

At this time I had not yet created any relationship with the children and I needed to create a pedagogical relationship that would eventually create an atmosphere of mutual learning and appreciation (Fraser, 2005). I then moved to Soweto market my first four days at Soweto Market, I decided to just sit at one of the restaurants to just watch the children so that I could get acquainted to their day-to-day activities. On an average day, there were about 40 children around and most of them were playing while others were lying on the ground enjoying the sun. Among these children, there were about 8 girls there were present everyday; one of them had a baby while two seemed/appeared to be pregnant. Almost half of the children I found had a bottle, sniffing off what I assumed was sticker. On a daily basis was a group of boys that were scavenging on the heaps of garbage just outside the market. At certain times, I could see children coming in and out of the market with plastics full of trash that they went to throw away at the dumping site and at time they carried containers of water. Some of the children were selling charcoal and the people that were buying this charcoal were the women that were selling in market. I found this entrepreneurial mind of the children on the street very fascinating, as I didn't expect that street children would engage in such a business activity.

On my 5th day of my observations on the street I decided to interact with the children, I found the children to be very selective with whom they interact. When I went at a place where the children usually gather, the moment I got there, a number of children walked away and the few that remained were asking me what I wanted. I introduced myself and explained my study and apparently the children did not believe me. One of the girls told her friends not to talk to me because I could be coming from the police

or the department of Social Welfare, *“don’t talk to him, he could be from the department or Social Welfare or a policeman, don’t to talk to strangers, they will take you away.”* A boy standing a few meters from me started asking me what I was going to do with the information I was going to get. I explained to him that what I was doing was purely an academic exercise and that the information I was collecting was not going to be published or distributed to the members of the public. He then explained the following:

“You see, a lot of people come here and befriend us, then take pictures, videos and other information and yet we don’t know what they do with it. But we know, some people make money out of it. Some people interview us and then put our stories in the newspapers and magazines. And then you see, we are also tired of being interviewed, we do this a lot”.

Most of the children seemed to echo the same sentiments and shortly after, the children scattered and left me alone. I didn’t want to impose myself on them and I then just decided to leave. The picture I got from the children on this day is that they have been over researched to an extent that they have now started resisting research. This experience I had on this day made me realize the extent of the challenge I had to win the trust of these children who didn’t seem interested in neither me nor my study despite my having clearly explained the purpose of the study to them. For me to carry out my study, I realized that I needed to be very creative and patient with the children for them to consent participation in my study.

The following morning, I decided to go back on the street and I met one of the influential boys that I meet at the market the previous day. I again explained to him that I wanted to spend some time with them on the street to learn from them. The previous day, I noticed that this boy was respected by most of the boys and they listened and obeyed most of the things he said. I was hoping that this boy would introduce me to his friends and they would probably accept me. When we got to the market, he explained to his friends about my mission but still there were some pocket of resistance from the children. On this day, most of the boys were playing football with a ball that they had made out of plastics, when I noticed that football was one of their favorite games, the following day, I decided to buy a new football that I brought with me to the market. This seemed to help; a number of boys came surrounding me

asking if they could play with the ball. I allowed them to play with the ball and asked them if I could also play with them, they allowed me and we kicked off the game. I started the football game with only 7 boys but just within 10 minutes, the group grew to 26 players. At this time, I started feeling accepted by the children, I was able to ask them their names while we were playing football and they told me without hesitating. However, our football game was cut short after the ball was kicked out of the playing area into the market and the boys that went to fetch the ball got the ball and ran away with it. The boys asked me to come back the following day with another ball so that we could play football again, I agreed and the following morning I came back with a new football. The boys came around me; we formed teams and the game kicked off. At this point, the boys still didn't want to talk. When we finished playing, I tried to chat with some boys they started opening up, they started talking but with reservations. I reassured them about what I was doing and told them that I would return for more football games. I also left the ball with them.

The following day, I had a meeting with the Director of Action for Children Zambia (ACZ). She told me that her organization has an outreach program whose members go out on to the streets twice a week and that I was welcome to join them. On their next outreach duty on the streets, I accompanied them to an outreach program on the streets and the children I had previously met were able to recognize me. The outreach workers from ACZ are popular among the children and this made my work easier, the children opened up and they were free to talk to me such that on this day, I had some informal interviews with some of the children. The following day, on my way to ACZ, I passed through Soweto market and the children were happy to see me and were asking when next I would be coming for a football game. From here, things went smoothly, the children allowed me to sit and chat with them during the day and they shared their experiences with me. We played the childrens' favorite traditional game (Nsolo), football and card game. They also took me to one place where they played video games and I played with them. They paid for the games using the money that they made through working or begging on the streets. In as much as the boys allowed me to play games with them, I felt that they did not consider me as one of them, they looked at me as an adult and outsider. I will illustrate this further later in this chapter. Even after realizing that children viewed me as an adult, I observed and participated in the affairs and games of the children without attempting to manage or

influence how events unfolded.

Through my interactions with the boys, I quickly got to know the girls too. One of the boys introduced me to two girls who later introduced me to most of the girls on the streets. As a male researcher, I had reservations when working with the girls on the street. As per *Zambian* tradition, females do not usually mix with males and I thought this would prevent me from effectively working with the girls. However, this was not the case, the girls seemed to be very understanding and more open than I expected. They told me things ranging from sexual exploitation on the street to their previous abuse they experienced whilst at home. Being aware of the wide interaction gap maintained between males and females in most *Zambian* culture, I did not think that the girls would give me as much information as they did.

4.8 Interviews

The interviews were my main method of data collection. The interview technique is usually classified as 'introspective' since it involves respondents reporting on themselves, their views, and their interactions. Interviews are therefore an important method and very useful to elicit factual data from respondents (Fraser et al 2004).

I decided to use the interviews as one of my methods for data collect because of its several advantages and among them are that interviews can be used even to those who may not read and write as questions can be read to them. Another advantage of interviews is as a researcher I could seek clarifications and check on the truthfulness of the response (Fraser et al 2004). Another advantage was that my participants too had an opportunity to ask for clarification when they did not understand the questions and I was able to elaborate further for them to understand.

The preparation for the interview started months before my study commenced, the first thing that I did in preparation for the interview was to come up with an interview guide. My interview guide was divided into 4 areas of focus, i.e. (1) Survival and resilience among street children. (2) Reasons children escape from their homes. (3) Children's perception of institutional care and reasons why the escape. (4) Key informant's views on reasons street children run away. When I got in the field, my next fundamental task was to identify my participants and seek consent.

Under survival and resilience, I was finding out how children make it on the street, my aim was to investigate the positive capacities of street children to deal with adversity on the street where they live without parental care. I was therefore asking children how they managed their lives on the street, I asked them how and where they found food, what they did when they were ill or their friend was ill or injured and what they did when they couldn't find food. Knowing that the children under institutional care have been on the streets before and survived the hardships of street life, similar questions were asked to these children to learn about resilience from their previous experiences on the streets.

To investigate reasons why children run away from institutional care, in my interview guide, I had a set of questions aimed at finding out street children's perceptions on institutional care and Institutionalized (2) Street children's perceptions on institutional care. (3) Institutionalized children's perception of institutional care. The children on the street were asked questions related to reasons why they ran away from institutional care. I asked them how many institutions they have been to, how long they stayed at each institution and what made them leave to go back on the street. Such and other related questions were very important for me to understand why street children move from one centre to another and back and forth from institution to the streets. Cognizant to the fact that the children that are currently in institutions like Salvation Home at ACZ were recently on the streets and have been to other centres, a set of questions were formulated for them to find out if they have lived in other institutions, why they left and also what they thought was done wrong in their current institution of residence and what would prompt them to go back to the streets. If centres do certain things wrong and cause children to run away and go back to the streets, children resident in institutions are therefore valuable informants when investigating children's perception of institutional care.

Another area of focus that my interview guide had was a section consisting of a set of questions targeting key informants that directly or indirectly work with children.

In my study, I managed to have interviews with government officials from the ministries of Community Development and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Child Development. I also had interviews with people that worked from the institutions that I worked from. The people from the government ministries

have important information for my study in terms of policies and programs that are aimed at removing street children from the streets. The government also runs centres like that ZNS camps that rehabilitates former street children and train and empower them with life skills like carpentry, farming, brick laying etc. In the ZNS camps, they also have cases of children running away and going back on the streets. And in some instances, some of the children that finished the ZNS programs have returned to the streets. Not only did I find these government officials as very knowledgeable on reasons why children run away from institution, but also they were involved in government's policy and program formulation that had impacts on street children.

For the people that run centres where I worked from, after interviewing the children, I wanted to understand their side of the story, I wanted to find out what they thought were reasons children returned to the street. I asked what the children go through from being identified on the street, intake process to reintegration to their guardians. I also asked them questions aimed at getting information on the kind of programs they have that keep the children busy.

During all the interviews I conducted, with both children on the streets and institutions, I felt that my participants fully and freely participated in the interviews without feeling judged by me, as I was able to speak the same languages with some of them. I think this would not have been the case if I were a foreign researcher or someone that didn't know the local languages. However, I was always aware of the fact that I had gone to school and doing research while in Norway, painted a picture to the children that I was not very familiar with most things in Zambia. I noticed this from how they wanted to guide me on certain things. So during my study, I seemed to be wearing two 'jackets' of a researcher and a Zambian living a perceived better life in a developed country, always imposed some limitation on my participation with the children. I however thought this perception by children worked to my advantage because it shifted power from me to them.

Permission to record the interview proceedings was sought from individual participants. However, most children on the street refused to have their proceedings recorded and this made me turn to field notes. I took these notes immediately after the interview. Considering that in an interview, a researcher collects only what the participant chooses to tell him or her, other methods such as focus group discussions

helped in checking participants who may lack consistency and told different things at different times.

4.9 Focus group discussion

In Addition to participant observation and interviews, I triangulated my study with focus group discussions (FGDs). The purpose of having focus group discussion was to generate new information, clarify further points of detail, validate information derived through other methods, and build consensus between group members. According to Payne and Payne (2009 p103), focus group discussions are special type of discussion with a narrowly focused topic discussed by group members of equal status who do not know one another. Through the use of focus group discussions, my goal was to get closer to participants' understanding of the topic I was investigating (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Focus groups gave children space to raise issues and allowed for a variety of responses and openness on views that were not be reviewed in individual interviews (Fraser et al 2004). During focus group discussions, my major role was to introduce the topic of discussion and facilitate the interchange among the participants with the main aim of reaching consensus on a topic of discussion (Kvale and Brinkmann 2008). Focus group interviews encouraged participants to share their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and ideas concerning living in institutional homes and on the streets. As the interviewer and moderator I designed script of specific issues and set goals for the type of information I wanted to gather. During the group discussion sessions, I had the job of keeping the discussion on track without inhibiting the flow of ideas from the children. It was also my duty to ensure that all group members contributed to the discussion and insured that one participant or few did not dominate the discussion. The group discussions lasted between one to two hours I moderated the interviews to maintains the group's focus. Focus groups consisted of six-eight people at the same time in one group.

4.10 My role as a researcher

Throughout my study, I thrived at assuming roles that would allow my informants to fully and freely participate in the whole research process. I made it very clear to my informants that I knew nothing about street life and I was spending time with them because they knew more about life on the street than I did and hence I wanted to learn from them. The fact that I was older than all my informants, I noticed that their

expectation was that I would be in charge of the day-to-day activities when I was with them and they constantly consulted with me on most of the things we did together. I however did not take authoritative roles during games or any other activities I did with my participants. The role I played in this research is that which Christensen calls “least adult role” (Christensen, 2004). I at the same time endeavored not to assume the role of a child; I by all means aimed at acting and behaving as just an adult interested in the children’s perspectives.

By assuming these roles, I created an environment where my informants acted freely knowing that I was not going to stop them what they were doing. Because of these roles, my informants became very free with me so much that they treated me as a friend. They became very free that they even started discussing things that they do not discuss with their friend on the street. A good example is a large number of children with Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) who came to me asking me to take them to the clinic⁹. After telling me about their conditions that they were not sharing with their friends, it showed just how much trust my informants eventually had in me. It was important for me maintain the trust I created with my informants and when they told me things they considered confidential, I kept them to myself and made sure that I didn’t bring them up when talking to other informants.

Overall, I endeavored not to be controlling, I treated my informants as competent individual beings who were more knowledgeable about street life than me. However I did not think that my informants portrayed themselves the way I viewed them, they presented themselves as poor, vulnerable and rejected children who needed help. So even if I was playing “least adult role”, my informants still saw me as an adult who would help them when they were in need. This was clear from the amount of requests I used to receive from them requesting me to pay for their medical bills, buy them food, give them money to start a business or buy them cloths. All my informants referred to me as “*uncle Jonnathan*”, I on countless occasions asked them to call me Jonnathan, but they didn’t. One day, when playing football a boy creamed my name,

⁹ There were several boys who approached to me telling me that they had sores on their genitals, which they said was syphilis asking me to take them to the hospital. But because of the overwhelming numbers of children with health problems on the streets and because I feared that taking my informants to the hospitals would influence the findings of my study, I did not take any of my informants to the hospital. I however encouraged them to go to the department of Social Welfare or the police to get letters to use at the hospital to get free medical care.

“Jonnathan, pass the ball!” His friends replied in unison, *“Iwe, izikhala nauleme, suona ati nibakulu aba, zibakakundadiza ngati uli na mabvuto”*. In English this literary translates ‘*you, have respect, can’t you see that he is older, he will not help you when you have problems*’. This was not entirely new to me, in Zambian cultures; you cannot call anyone older than you by first name. You either call them uncle, aunt or add a prefix Ba (in my case Ba Jonnathan or Ba Mtonga) to a name to show respect.

On one particular day, about 12 children among them 3 of my informant were arrested for vandalism and theft. The other children told me to do something to have the children who were in police custody released. I told them there was really nothing I could do but they insisted I should go and negotiate for their release with the police officers. When we got there, the police officers told me that the arrested children needed to pay a minimal fee and someone to sign for their release. I had the money to pay for the children to be freed but because I didn’t want my informant to view me as their “savior”, I instead contacted an organization that provides free legal advocacy and to help the arrested children. To me this just showed me how hard it is to shift and balance power relations during research with children and youth and I came to think that there is no easy solution to this ‘ethical dilemma’. However, the good side of having gained the trust from my informants that they could tell me almost everything and this facilitated my smooth data collection process.

4.11 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis is mostly a process of sorting and re-sorting the data so that trends, links, similarities, gaps and contradictions become clear (Ennew et al, 2009). In analyzing qualitative data, the initial task is to find concepts that help “make sense of what is going on” and these concepts about data analysis start arising during data collection and that marks the beginning of the analysis and this process continues right throughout the study. Distinct from quantitative research, where data analysis starts after data collection, in qualitative studies, like this study, data collection and analysis go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation of the data. Consequently, in my study data analysis started as soon as I started data collection. From the focus group discussions, participant observation and numerous field notes, I started developing tentative answers to my research questions. Patton (2002) holds that as the

researcher continues interacting with the data, the researcher starts making sense out of what people have said by looking for patterns and integrating what different people have said after which they are interpreted.

Semi-structured interviews were one of the data collation methods I employed. I also used digital voice recorders and transcribed the interviews as accurately as possible without changing the words of the participants¹⁰. I reviewed the transcripts and analyzed them to determine major themes. This involved careful reading of the recorded and transcribing material, identification of the main emergent themes and categorization of the data for analysis to data organization. This means that information should be assembled around certain themes related to the research questions. In this study, constructs, themes, and patterns were identified from the interviews, participant observations, focus group discussions and fieldwork notes. This gave me a chance to analyze subjective individual accounts and collective accounts of children experiences on the streets.

In short, my decision on which data was relevant for specific experiences was based on my participant's narratives, and all the methods I used to collect my data. I compared events that my participants experienced collectively with observable characteristics and events that I saw during my participant observations to come up with conclusions that a certain event was typical of everyday life on the streets.

4.12 Ethical matters

Ethical concerns are a very critical component to any social research. Cohen et al. (2000) hold that: Ethical concerns encountered during research can be extremely complex and subtle and can often place researchers in a moral dilemma, which may appear quite irresolvable.

When conducting research there are numerous ethical issues to consider. These aim at protecting those involved in the research some of who may not be able to represent themselves in the event that they are misrepresented. Research ethics were particularly important for my work since I dealt with vulnerable children most of

¹⁰ The objective of transcribing is to characterize on paper as precisely as possible the strings of words articulated (O'Connell, 2004).

them living alone on the streets. When using focus groups, participant observation, structured and semi structured interviews, I considered it very important that research ethical concerns were put into consideration and followed to safeguard the interests and welfare of my informants and to ensure this, before the start of my research, I got informed consent to from all my participants. The information I presented to the children explained: what was going to be happen during research, the sort of questions I was going to be asking and that the child could agree or disagree to take part in the study. I made it clear that children's participation was voluntary and they had the sole rights to pull out their participation at any time if they so wished.

Informed consent is a mechanism for making sure that participants understand what it means to take part in a particular research so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate or not (SFH, 2006).

In the institutions, I acquired consent from the project managers or caregivers who were guardians for the children and the children themselves. For the children on the streets, I got verbal consent from each of them since they do not have guardians. In both groups of children, those on the street and those in institutions, I made sure that children individually gave consent to participate because I viewed them as competent beings capable to make decisions on issues that involves and affects them. I explained in detail what my research was about and what the information would be used for. When I started my research, I was confident that I had clearly explained my study to my participants and that participation was voluntary.

Apart from getting consent from my participants, I made sure that I at the same time assured them that I was going to observe confidentiality. I assured my informants that whatever we discussed was going to be only between us and no one else. I also told them that I was not going to use their names in my thesis or any other publication arising from the study (Ennew et al 2009). I also explained that I would not disclose the information unless I saw that they were in considered to be at risk of significant harm. This gave my informants confidence in the research process and led for frankness to tell me anything they wished to tell me.

Another issues that I was aware of throughout my research was that my informants were among the most vulnerable and marginalized group of children in Zambia and they were susceptible to abuse and exploitation and hence some of them could have at one time or more, gone through emotional trauma or they were at the time of my research, traumatized. I was also cognizant with the fact that my participants could have been orphans going through emotional battles of adjusting to living without parents. Being conscious of these challenges, I made arrangements with one of the trained counselors to intervene and offer therapy if any of my participants became emotional.

Ennew and colleagues (2009) have stressed the possibilities of causing emotional harm and the importance of protecting the participants from harm. They stress that *'Harm can also arise from research methods that cause children to remember distressing experiences or feelings. It is not always possible to guess in advance what might be emotionally or psychologically harmful for someone, else least of all, a child. Arrangements for contacting a counselor or other means of emotional support should be part of the research plan'*. During my research plan, I was aware of such issues and I designed my research in such a way that it didn't contain emotion-evoking questions. I also avoided pushing for responses from my participants if they did not seem to want to talk. I was also quick to change the topic of discussion when I noticed that my participants were becoming emotional when I asked certain questions. For some children, especially those living at ACZ, certain questions about street life seem emotional and I discontinued such question by asking other questions.

4.13 Operational areas

Before having contact with any of the participants in my research, I started with observations, I wanted to identify the places where street children operate from and the kind of activities they engaged in. Most economic activity that street children engage in occurred where there are concentrations of people, such as at markets and this makes Soweto market famous among children because it does not only offer jobs, but food is easily accessed as well. Bars are good places for economic gains; children usually frequent areas of the city where bars and night clubs are located to beg from the people visiting the bars and nightclubs. Street children also steal from drunken members of the public. An area like Northmead presents a lot of opportunities to the

street children because of its busy nightlife. As I previously mentioned, children that rioter the bars and nightclubs are mostly big boys. Based on the information I gathered during observations and interviews I carried out, girls and small boys don't frequent the nightclub and bar areas, this seem to be an activity preferred by big boys. The reason girls and small boy don't visit areas surrounding nightclubs and is purely a safety reason, small boys fear being attacked by big boys while girls fear of being rapped. Streets are also some of the places where street children are found. Small boys and girls are often seen on traffic right and busy road intersections begging for money and food from members of the public and motorists. Begging on road intersections and traffic right is popular with small boys and at times with young girls too. Big boys and girls do not engage in begging (See chapter 1 for more details).

1.14 Challenges and limitations

My study did not go without challenges, I had a number of challenges that impeded or delayed some aspects of my research. The first challenge I faced was at the beginning of my study, it took slightly longer for me to get accepted by the children. My initial attempts to "enter the children's world" was meet by some pockets of resistance from some children who seemed to be very influential and their position of influence seemed to prevent other "weaker" children to participate. I however managed to overcome this problem by being introduced to the streets by outreach workers from one of the institutions I worked with.

The second challenge I faced was at one of the institution that I worked with. In the middle of my research, I discovered that the children were told what to tell me during the interviews. I learnt that in the evenings, the children were gathered and told not to mention certain things to me. The discovery of this situation led me to abandon this site and concentrate on one because I thought this compromised the quality of information the children were giving me and this was against my principle of viewing children as competent human beings who have an independent say free from adults influence on matters affecting them.

Another challenge was with regard the overwhelming expectations from the children. A lot of children thought that I would help them with the problems they were facing on the streets and they were making several requests of things they lacked. I therefore had the job of making it clear to the children that I had not come to solve problems

but to conduct research learn from them. In some instances when I came into contact with sick or injured children whose capacity to work and beg was reduced, but because of my role as a researcher, I could not help. Almost on a daily basis, I had 3 to 4 children with Sexually Transmitted Diseases asking me to take them to the clinic but even when I had the capacity to pay their medical bills, I could not do so because of my role as a researcher. This was a challenge because I had the capacity to help the children but I could not do so.

Related to this was the challenge of being among several deprived children. I have always known that street children face a lot of problems but being on the street with them and seeing them fight for survival and deal with the frustrations of being underserved and poor, was a personal challenge. The children's ways of working together and dealing with problems however made me see and appreciate the children's social agency and their resilience.

Another limitation to my research was not being able to spend nights on the streets, I had initially planned to spend a few nights with the children on the street but the police and other people who work with the children advised me not to do so for my own safety. I was told that a few weeks ago before I started my research, some people were badly beaten by suspected street children and that my intention of sleeping on the streets was risky. I strongly believe that if I spent some nights on the streets, I would have got more insight and a complete picture of the children's life on the street.

Chapter Five: Reasons for migrating to the streets

5.0 Introduction

Before looking at difficulties that street children encounter, it is important to start by looking at what causes children leave their homes and live on the streets. Doing so is vital as it might help to identify discrepancies in the current interventions and consequently help in finding solutions to the problem of street face.

In this chapter, I will present an analysis of children's views on some of the key themes underpinning this study. I will analyze part of their life on the streets by starting with their pilgrimage to the street to their stay in various institutions. Literature and various studies put it clear that there is no single cause for street children, there are several factor at play that push children to the streets; "Several related economic, social, and political factors have been linked with the phenomenon of street children. Land reform, population growth, drought, rural to urban migration, economic recession, unemployment, poverty, and violence have all been implicated" (Scanlon et al p6). I will therefore outline some of the reasons that my participants gave me as reasons for migrating to the streets.

5.1 Break down in family values

When I was growing up, we never used to seen children living on the street. It was unheard of. Extended family members never used to let orphans to go and live on the streets; they took them in and cared for them. But things have changed; the extended family system has completely collapsed in Zambia..
(Extract from an interview I had with Mr. Dennis Banda, a programs officer at MYSCD)

The above view on street children is a views held by most older generations that I talked to find out what they thought was leading children to the streets. There is also a lot of literature on street children and orphans in Zambia indicating that the presence of large numbers of children living on the streets was virtually unheard of prior to the introduction of the current neo-liberal economic policies in Zambia. Just like in most African societies, looking after children in Zambia was previously perceived and understood as a communal responsibility. This meant that the extended family system acted as a safety net for orphaned and vulnerable children and this created an assertion that "there is no such thing as an orphan" (Foster, 2000 in Olivetti et al 2010). In short, a child used to be the responsibility of each individual member of

society and, therefore, children could in no circumstance fend for themselves, parent and guardians and other relatives and community members provided the children's needs¹¹.

Today, things have changed; children have become the responsibility of individual parents and are ignored by the rest of the community due to the breakdown in the family value system (The Post Newspaper, 2010). Mrs. Banda, a program's officer in-charge of street children's affairs at the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services strongly hold this view as a major cause of street children, in the interview I had with her, she states that:

“This problem of street children is very complicated to deal with because it has been caused by the breakdown of the tradition of extended family systems in Zambia and this has been coupled with high poverty levels. People these days prefer to have nuclear families, the extended family system is slowly dying in Zambia and this leaves orphans with no choices but to the streets. This change in community and family values is attributed to economic hardships and the widespread of HIV and AIDS has caused strain on the extended family system that acted as a safety net for the vulnerable members of society”.

Most studied, including Phiri (2009) have attributed the “dying” of the extended family systems as one of the causes of the problem of street children. I however don't agree with the notion that the extended family system is dying in Zambia. In my study, most of my participants made it clear that they moved to the streets because both their parents had died, however, before moving on to the streets, they were taken in by a family member and it was after living with a family member who was either unable to meet their needs or was mistreating them what prompted them to move to the streets. I did not come across cases that I would classify as a result of breakdown of the traditional extended family system values. There were actually some children on the streets that had both their parents alive but were not in school, begged and

¹¹ Related to this, there is an ancient African proverb, which says that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’. The proverb literally means that it takes a community to raise a child and it is best for a child to grow up in a concerned neighborhood that networks and contribute to the upbringing of children. This communal approach in the up-bringing of children is very common and in my view, still exist in Zambian communities and it has acted as a safety net guarding against vulnerability for the orphans and disabled children

spent most of the time on the street.

In my view, extended family members and community members continue to play the role of guardianship to orphaned children but their ability to meet the needs of the children they look after are limited due to current neo-liberal economic policies which have left most people unemployed and poor. However, the burden of the orphans' problem is still being born by the extended family and communities despite high poverty levels in the country but their capacity is limited. In this instance, poverty cannot be attributed to dying family values poor government policies, which have resulted to extreme poverty, which threaten the wellbeing of many households including those where parents are still alive. In my view, poverty limits families' capacity to look after their own children and the situation much more worse for families looking after orphans left behind by their relatives.

It is therefore clear that "the prevailing economic situation, coupled with the high incidence of HIV and AIDS were pushing the majority of young people into a state of vulnerability" (The Post Newspaper 2010, Lemba 2002). Because the family and the extended family provide the most important response to the orphans' problem, all policies, strategies and interventions should focus on strengthening their structure and operations, both as entities in themselves and as part of the community, so that they can adequately discharge their child protection and care roles.

5.2 Poverty and street children

Poverty is one of the major causes of street children. High levels of poverty characterize Zambia, like most African countries, 'poverty is resulting in children being forced to work on the streets to support themselves and their families. It is poverty that is limiting the families' capacity to meet their children needs forcing children to go to the street to fend for themselves. It is rural poverty that is making rural population migrate to urban centers, including children with a hope of a better future. Poverty causes malnutrition resulting in poor health and reduces a family's ability to work thus creating a condition for children to move to the streets' (Kapoka, 2000).

Most of my participant's pilgrimage to the streets was triggered by one or a combination of the about causes of street children that Kapoka has noted in his paper.

In my study, apart from the participants who attributed that coming to the street to abuse at home, the rest were pushed to the street by poverty¹². Ngoza a 15-year-old girl living on the street told me about how she came to the street:

'I came here last year in June, I was in school but then my father stopped working, he couldn't pay for my school. So I stopped going to school and then I started coming to town to look for a cleaning job. I used to clean in the market and take the money I earned to my parents but then the owner of the shop fired me then I started coming to town to beg. I then made friends and later on started spending nights on the street'

This is a good example of how poverty pushes children to the street. Here we have a girl who has been forced out of school because her parents cannot pay for school fees and buy other school requirements. She is then assumes a responsibility of contributing to the household income and later on goes to live on the street permanently.

Mwansa a 16-year-old boy who has been on the streets for almost 5 years is another example of a child who was pushed to the streets by poverty. In a FGD he recalled what made him start coming to the streets: *'My mother used to send me to beg for money and I started coming in town and then made some friends and that is how I started coming to the streets'*.

Makaiko is another good example that can be seen as someone who came to the streets because of poverty as show in the interview I had with him.

Makaiko: *I started coming in town to come and sale roasted groundnuts that my mother used give me to sale and then after some time, she ran out of money and then I started coming here to beg for money.*

Jonnathan: *And where did you take the money you begged?*

¹² Abebe (2008) and Lemba (2002) have also pointed out that poverty is one of the reasons children are forced to go on to the streets, they says that 'due to high poverty levels at home, these children go on the streets to work so that they can contribute to the family's income'

Makaiko: *I took it home to my mother so that she could buy food for my young sister and me.*

Jonnathan. *What was your mother doing? Was she working?*

Makaiko: *No, she used to sale vegetables in a market near home but as I said, she ran out of money and stopped selling vegetables as well.*

Jonnathan: *So do you still take money to your mother?*

Makaiko: *Sometimes I do, you see, now I'm old, I cant beg, people just tell me to find a job or something to do. But when I have money I take some to my mother and sometimes I buy her food.*

Jane is one such child that moved to the street hoping she would be able to find food as shown in a conversation I had with her.

Jane: *My father used to work at Ministry of Health and he used to buy my brother and me everything we wanted and I was in school. But soon after his dearth, my Grandmother came to take me to live with her in Chaisa (A low income community in Lusaka) and that is when things changed. At her house, we never used to have enough food and when I was in grade seven, she could not pay for my examination fees and that is how I stopped school.*

Jonnathan: *Is that when you came to the streets?*

Jane: *Yes, because I had nothing to do at home and we didn't have enough food, I started coming to the streets to beg for money to buy food and I made friends on the streets and that is how I stayed. But if someone paid for my school and provided food for me, I would like to move out of the streets.*

Jane's case is a multifaceted one, not only did poverty lead her to come to the streets but because she become an orphan. It shows how poverty is able to push children to the street when they lose their parents who provided all their needs. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has made things even worse for a lot of children who are left behind with relative who are already struggling to survive due to high poverty levels in the country. They are several such examples in Zambia and world over.

In one of the focus group discussions, all my male participants said that they moved into the streets to cater for themselves and their families because their parents could not meet their basic need and could not afford the cost of putting them in school. One participant:

“We came to the street to look for money and food, that is why we left our homes and came here. What can you do when your parents have nothing and cannot put you in school; you came here in town to fend for yourself and when you make a lot of money, you take some home. Our mothers have been struggling for a long time so we come in town to look for money to try and help them” (16 year old boy from Soweto Market).

There were several other children I interviewed who told me similar stories as to how they came to the streets, earning money through begging or working was the main reason for coming to the street. This is reason enough to imply that these children, at a young age, are bestowed with a responsibility of contributing to the household economy and this challenges the common normative social order of children being recipients.

5.3 Unconducive family environment and abuse

‘Children attempt to deal with confusions, fears, concerns, and conflicts in their daily lives by participating in various routines of their peer cultures’ (Corsaro, 2005).

Some children however did not attribute their being on the street as being poverty related but attributed it to parent-related factors; this was much very common among girls. Most of the children, especially girls mentioned that they ‘ran away from parents’ and due to maltreatment at home. Based on what the children told me during the focus-group discussions it seems that most of the parent-related factors involved broken homes and dysfunctional families. Maria, a 16 year-old girl living on the street told me what prompted her to come to the streets:

“Four years ago, I used to go to school, but then what happened was that my parents got divorced and then shortly after that my mother died and I moved to live with my father under the care of my stepmother. My father and stepmother were not concerned about my life and wellbeing and they never really cared about me. They shouted at me and they made me do a lot of work at home when my stepsister was

treated well. They did not pay my school fees and I was chased from school. So this bad treatment made me feel unloved and then I ran away and come on the streets”

Maria’s case clearly shows that lack of love and bad treatment is the reason she is on the streets; a caring and loving family would have prevented Maria from being a street child. It is not only Maria who came to the streets in such a way, a number of participants told me that after losing a parent; their remaining parents remarried and their stepparents did not want to take over the parenting role and mistreated and abused them. The following dialogue from a FGD with my female participants sheds more light on roles both physical and sexual abuse plays to pushing children on the streets;

Jonnathan: *Why did you leave the centers and come back to the streets*

Participant #3: *I cant tell you uncle, my stepmother used to talk a lot so then I left, she used to talk too much. So stepmother was very talkative and she used to insult me*

Participant #2: *I also had a stepmother, she used to mistreat me and that is how I left and went to the streets and then the people from Galaton Centre took me in and then took me home. The talked to my mother and told her to stop mistreating me but them my stepfather became a problem.*

Jonnathan: *He did not want you to be at home or what? What do you mean that he was a problem?*

Participant #2: *No, it is not that he did not want me to be at home, (keeps quite for a few seconds) He wanted to be sleeping with me, he wanted to be having sex with me, her own child and that is how I left. So that is the reason I don’t want to go back home.*

Participant #1: *Even me, I used to run away to going back in the streets for the similar problem, my grandfather used to have sex with me and that is how I left went on the street and never went back.*

Participant #5: *For me, I left because my stepmother used to abuse me and beat me up. So one day I beat her up with a cooking stick. My stepmother is very stupid, she talks too much and I can’t tolerate that.*

Participant #4: *For me I left because my father die and stepfather used to talk a lot and beat my mother saying I'm keeping you child. So because of this I left and went on the street. So when I go to Centre, they take me back home and the same problem starts again, so the problem is not solved. This why I come back to the streets but I don't like the streets.*

Information from this FGD shows a number of issues that make children move to the street. Standing out from this discussion are bad treatment, physical and sexual abuse that girls face especially from their stepparents. Sexual abuse by male guardians seemed to prompt most of my female participant to take to the streets. This is a uniquely girl problems as I never came across a boy whose told me that run away from home because he was sexually abused.

Harsh parenting style was another factors that some children point out as what made them move to the streets. In most of Zambian cultures, parents are very authoritative and according to Woolfolk (1990) in (Matchinda 1997), “parents who use the authoritarian style do not listen to their children. Such punish their children severely for acting against the norms.”¹³ So it is not surprising to note that children are frequently beaten: for coming home late or for poor performances at school. To escape from the torture of being disciplined some children run away from home and end up on the streets. Tuku is one such example that was driven to the streets by abusive parenting styles, his ordeal was narrated as follows:

“I came to the streets because my parents used to beat me. One day I was playing with my dad's charger for his phone and I broke it, when he discovered that I broke it. He whipped so much that I ran away and met Pule a friend of mine who was already on the streets and followed him. Two days later my parents and the police came to look for me and they took me home but a week later I was beaten again and that is when I ran away and came back here. My mother came to look for me but I went to hide in the market”.

¹³ In most Zambian culture, like what Matchinda (1997) found on a study on Cameroonian street children, for most parents, only punishment and corporal punishment that make children responsible and obedient.

Muma, a female participant was another victim of abusive parenting style: *‘I came on the streets because I got tired of being beaten. My stepmother beats so much that I don’t want to go back, I feel safer in the streets’*. A number of my participants, especially girls mentioned to me that bad relationships with their stepparents made them migrate to the streets.¹⁴

While there are many substantive factors contributing to the existence of street children, increasing mass poverty stands out as a major factor, all other factors that have been pointed out above, are in one way or another poverty related. It is poverty that is breaking up homes and families. It is poverty that makes grown-ups turn children into sources of income. It is poverty, particularly in rural areas, that is making young children move away from their homes. And poverty can be attributed to maltreating of children by caregivers because children might have tempered with items (e.g. phone charger) that require the limited and much need money.

5.4 Deciding to move to the streets.

Every street child has a unique story of how she or he came on the streets and who made the decision for the child to move to the streets. As noted in the sub chapters above, childrens’ introduction to the street is caused by a several factors such as, poverty, abuse, and bad treatment, etc. But the decision to make the street a place of abode seems to be the child’s choice triggered by an adult’s action. For example, Tuku, the boy we looked at earlier in this chapter, made a decision to go on the street after being severely beaten by the father as Tuku states; *“ Two days later my parents and the police came to look for me and they took me home but a week later I was beaten for waking up late and that is when I ran away and came back here. My mother came to look for me but I went to hide in the market.”* Looking at Tutu’s case, it can be said that his decision to move to the street was triggered by physical abuse by the father

¹⁴ One of Zambia’s contemporary musicians, Ballard Zulu sang a song describing how horrible stepmothers are and he described stepmother as witches. When Ballard’s song was released, it was considered as provocative and insulting to stepmothers, it is a widely held notion in Zambian society that stepmothers are mean and mistreat their stepchildren in favor of their biological children. This notion of stepparents not liking their step children seem to be reflected in my study, in my study, it is not only stepmothers that had bad relationships with their parents but stepfathers too.

A small number of participants (most of them boys) made it very clear that their decision to leave home was instigated by their parents who encouraged them to look for work or beg for money to contribute to the income at home. Mwansa a 16 year old boy we looked at earlier in this chapter is one such example whose decision to live on the street was triggered by her mother who used to send him to beg for money as shown from his contribution during a FGD:

Mwansa: My mother used to send me to beg for money and I started coming in town and then made some friends and that is how I started coming to the streets.

Jonnathan: But what made you stay here on the streets?

Mwansa: I stayed because we had nothing at home, sometimes we had no food, on the streets, people would give me food and my friends would share with me.

Sending children to fend for the family is not unusual in most African and Zambian society. In many poor families a child is seen not just as a mouth to be fed but also as another pair of hands to help with production. But after frequent visits to the streets, these children start spending longer times on the streets and in due course they start spending nights on the street and eventually stay. (Anarfi 1997) This is exactly the case with Mwansa.

Two of my participants had different stories on how they moved to the street, they started coming to the streets when they were young with their parents who are traders in the market. While their mothers sold in the market, the boys used to play around the market and they eventually became friends with street children. They were later able to come to the streets without their parents to play with their friend and they finally started spending nights on the streets.

After some days, I managed to track one of the boy's mother who still sales in the market find out the reasons why she brought her son with her to the streets and here is what one of the mothers told me: *“You see, the problem is that I had no one to look after my child at home, But because of poverty, I had to bring him with me. It is not only my son who came to the streets this way, some of these children you see were coming with their parents and eventually started coming on their own and then*

stopped going back to their homes, I know most of these boys. It's a sad thing but what can we do, there is no one to help us"

I found this information very useful to my study and it confirmed that some children are introduced to the streets by their trading mothers who might not afford a baby-sitter or sending their children to a day care as they go about doing their business. Largely, poverty is at the center of children that are introduced to the streets by their parents. If their parent had enough money, they would have put their children in day care centers or hire a baby sitter as they go about their daily business.

Overall, the desire to be free from parent's abusive treatment and poverty push children to a point of making a decision to move to the streets. However, children do not seem to have an idea of the dangers of the streets, they adjust to the challenges on the streets as they live and these challenges influence their behavior and actions and eventually they become 'streetwise', however, some are overwhelmed by the influence of street life in Lusaka.

For most of the girls that went home, the main problem was abuse and mistreatment at home. The girls were open to state that for most of them, their biological mothers had passed away and their fathers had remarried and they were not in good terms with their stepmother. It therefore the abuse and insults from their stepmothers that made them return to the streets. In Zambia, children are increasingly being forced onto the streets by poverty, abuse, abandonment, or as result of being orphaned by AIDS (See Chapter 2) Most of my participants were clearly victims of a combination of factors, namely poverty, abuse and orphans due to AIDS.

Some of the girls on the street pointed out that apart from physical abuse, sexual abuse was the main reason they returned to the street after the finishing their rehabilitation at a centre. The girls told me that guardians abused them and this was why they thought that the streets were better places than at home. During the interviews, one of the girls told me her ordeal, *"It is not that don't want to go home, but after I left the centre and went home, my father wanted to be sleeping with me, he wanted to be having sex with me, her own child and that is why I left"* Another girl in a similar situation explained the following: *"After the people from the centre in Kitwe took me home, my grandfather used to have sex with me, that is why I left and went on*

the street and never went back to any centre because they will take me back home”.

What I got from most girls suggests that the cases of sexual abuse of children take place within the home too, and perpetrators of this abuse are people close to the child who are supposed to protect the child. A similar trend is reflected in Phiri (2009) where a few participants also mentioned being abused by their guardians. Based on this information and accounts from the girls of how they are sexually abused on the street, I argue that girls are in a more complex predicament because escaping their homes due to sexual abuse does not solve their problem because even on the streets, they still remain victims of sexual abuse.

To succeed with rehabilitating street children, especially girls, it is right to say that measures need to be put in place to make sure that orphaned girls are under the care of guardians who would not sexually abuse them. Overall, orphaned children need to be placed in a conducive environment where they are not likely to be abused and all their needs will be met.

5.5 Children's perception of street life

Overall, my participants perceived life on the street as rough and dangerous and they felt hopeless and vulnerable about their situation but they had no other alternatives and choices but to live on the streets. This seemed illogical, the question that came in my mind was: if these children know that living on the streets is risky, then why do they continue living here? And why do they run away from institutional care? As noted above, almost all my participants seemed to know that life on the streets was dangerous as one of the participants in the focus group discussion put it:

“Life is very dangerous and tough here in the streets, we face a lot of problems, our friends have died here in the streets. Life was much better in the centre; we used to be protected us from a lot of dangers that no one protects us from here in town; they also provided us with food and clothes. And they used to treat us when we were sick and they used to tell us the dangers of diseases” (STDS)

To me this is a paradox because this participant, like all my participants ran away from several institutions and when she was reintegrated with her family, she ran away and returns to the streets. The participant is also aware of better life in institutions,

incomprehensively, the participant goes further and points out at some of the positive services that she used to get when she was living in a shelter and currently can not access on the streets.

5.6 Reasons for running away from institutions

All the participants in my study indicated that life on the streets was tough, some of them pointed out that they were better off when they are at an institution than when on the streets. In this section, based on my findings, I will outline and give some details on some of the reasons children decided to leave institutions to go back to the streets.

5.7 The desire to earn money

The desire to earn some money and have the independence of buying what they want is one of the children's motives for going back to the streets. Children spend the money they earn on basic items such as food and clothing and in some cases use it to contribute to the family household income (MCDS 2006); they also use the money they earn to buy alcohol, drugs and inhalants. During my observations, it was common site to see money exchanging hand for sticker among most children. During interviews, I asked one of my participants who has been to five different institutions why he has freed all places he has been to and his response was as follows:

“ I don't know, I was just leaving, I was not badly treated and I used to get most of the things I need, like food and sticker, I needed to have some money to buy what I want”.

This response clearly shows that this participant's reason for escaping institutional care is to earn money on the street and have the freedom of purchasing whatever she could afford, children on the streets usually spend their money on food, clothing drugs, alcohol etc. to some extent, addiction is attributed to their escape from institutional care. I will elaborate more on addiction in later in this chapter.

At this point I should mention that in most institutions including ACZ children are not allowed to have money, the fact that all their basic need are provided, it is assumed that they do not need to have money. It is also feared that if they have money, they

might use it to buy alcohol, inhalants and drugs. But because most of the children had been on the streets for a considerably long time, they are already exposed to handling cash and they find it hard to live without money, the desire to have money and buy what they want, is a cause for some children to escape from institutions and go back on the streets. During a FGD, a good number of both girls and boys attributed the desire to earn money as paramount to their returning to the streets. *“We are already used to having our own money and buying what we want, but when we live in some of the centres, you are not allowed to have money, you have no choice of the cloths you want, they buy them for you or they give you donated clothes, when it comes to food, you eat what has been prepared, but here on the street, I chose the clothes I want to but and we also chose the type of food we want to eat. Like today, my friend and me put our moneys together and we bought Nshima (Zambian staple food) with chicken”*. Said Ruth, a 13-year-old girl who has been to three institutions and to the streets. Here, Ruth is not just talking about the desire to earn money but she has also brought up the choices that they have on the streets when they have money. They can buy the food and clothes they want, a choice, which they don't have under institutional care, where what they eat and wear is decided and provided for by adults.

The economic activities that street children engage in are, begging (most for small boys) cleaning cars (big boys). Boys are also involved in selling plastic bags to people who come to shop in the market. The females, especially older girls, depend on sex as a source of money. During the focus group discussion, almost all the girls mentioned prostitution as their main source of income as one give put it:

“To tell you the truth, here in the streets, if you are girl, there is one assured way of getting money; you have to sleep with the big boys. If you don't have sex with these boys, you will not have money to buy food. So during the day they will give you money and then at night, they expect you to have sex with them”.

As shown early, girls also sell sex for money with other people who are not street children like taxi drivers like the 17 year old Martha who told me that she sometimes has had sex to taxi drivers who in the end paid her and she used the money to buy food and other essentials that she needed. Having sex with other people other that boy on the streets seems to be a common trend among girls because Phiri had similar

accounts from his female informants. The girls however occasionally work and beg but at a small scale compared to male street children.

When children can't find money through begging or trading, they turn to stealing in order for them to have money. During FGD with my male participants, they all admitted that picking pockets in the crowded places was a major source of money. Moyo, a participant in the group discussion had this contribution:

“We all steal from people in the market and the streets, sometimes we get luck, someone can steal as much as K1000, 000 (about US\$200) or steal a nice cell phone and sell it at a good price. Sometimes we attack people who walk alone in the night, especially women, and then get their money and other valuable belongings they might have and sell them to get money”.

In addition to all these ways of making money, most of my participant said that they do other petty jobs as supplementary sources of money.

5.8 Rule and disciplining

Rules and disciplinary style used by certain institutions seem to be one of the reason children run away from some institutions. Some children talked about the harsh disciplines and rules found in the institutions. The children stated that some institutions used beating and corporal punishment as a way of disciplining children that break the rules.

Makaiko, a 14-year-old boy narrates that being kept and staying in an orphanage was the worst thing he did and he regrets having gone there. After spending three years on the streets, Makaiko was taken to an orphanage within Lusaka. Two months later he could not withstand the rules and regulation. *“They control everything you do, they want to know where you are and what you are doing and they make you do things that you don't like, you are always watched and told what to do. And when you break the rules, you are pushed”* says Makaiko; he says he is more free on the streets than being under the authority of an institution. Another participants in one of the focus group discussions explained why he left ZNS camp when I asked him to find out why my participants had run away from the institutions they previously lived in and this is

what he told me:

Jonnathan: *Almost everyone they have been to different centers, why did you leave?*

Participant: *I was taken to ZNS camp in Katete and what made me run were the rules and the beating, once you are there, you have no control over your life, the rules control your life and if you do something against the rules, you are beaten or you will not eat.*

Jonnathan: *What kind of rules did you not like?*

Participant: *a lot, for example we used to wake up early in the morning to go jogging, we were not allowed to have money, we were not allowed to go outside the camp, we were supposed to be in bed by 19 hours and just many other rules that made my life hard.*

Having lived on the street for a long time, where there are no rules and no one to tell them what to do, it seems that children get used to living without adult rules and control and when they are taken to an institution, they constantly break the rules trying to gain control of their lives just like they lived on the streets. Corsaro, (2005) states that children always attempt to gain control over their lives in a number of ways. One of the ways is by resisting and challenging adult rules and authority. In the case of my participants, it seems that when they challenged adult authority and rules they were disciplined and punished for doing so. It came clear to me that one of the reasons most of my participants had escaped from the institutions they had gone to was that they did not like to follow rules and they did not like being disciplined for breaking the rules. Phiri (2009), in his study on street children in Lusaka also came up with similar findings. He concluded " *Tough disciplinary regimes found in the institutions, such as beating the children as a way of instilling discipline in the children for the children to escape and go back on the streets*".

Both boys and girls in my study and Phiri's study did indicate that they resist beatings and other degrading disciplinary measures put in by institutions. This also echoes findings in a study by UNICEF which states that street girls, who, like street boys, were used to independence on the street, reject restrictive, predominantly Christian

institutions and escape once more to the freedom of the street (UNICEF, 1999 in Phiri 2009)

The beating that children get while living in the centers can at time be so bad that children get hurt and some of them take revenge for it like the following instance Tembo, a participant in a FGD described. *"The owner of the center, Kremilo, made a rule that if a boy is drunk or breaks the rules, he must be disciplined by beating. So one day, the caretaker beat up one of the boys when he was drunk and he fainted and when Sinjela, Paul and I noticed this, we took the piece of wood and beat up the caretaker until his leg was broken. By then I was in school at Chibelo and that is how I left and came back to the streets"*. It can therefore be said that restrictive rules and harsh disciplining by care givers in institutions act as push factors that force children to go back on the streets.

Having said this, contrary to the children on the street, children at ACZ did not seem to have problem with rules, none of the participants indicated that they did not like the rules. Some of them actually pointed out to the importance of having rules as one of the participants told me during the interviews: "We need rules, we can not just be doing whatever we want, then that will mean that there will be confusion in the house." Children at ACZ live in a family environment and they carry out duties and follow rules just like an ordinary child in a family would do.

In fighting and conflicts among children themselves is another reason that some children escape and head back to the street. For example Musonda, who has been to several institutions, when asked why he used to run away, he told me the following: *"Fighting with my friends was the reason I used to go back on the streets, I don't like fight, at FoH, the older boys used to beat me, specially at night, it was the same thing at Chisomo Centre but the other reason is that is used to get bored and I missed my friends"*. Musonda case seem not be common in most institutions because even the children at ACZ also mentioned that at times, they fight among each other. Fighting seems to be a factor that 'chases' children who can't fight back or defend themselves. One of the reasons children fight in institutions is because in most cases they came from different 'gang groups' on the street and they see each other as enemies and therefore once placed under one roof, fights are inevitable. During my time at ACZ, it

was common to see children playing as groups based on their area of origin on the street. When I asked one of the boys why he could not play with his friend, he told me that the group that was playing together was from City market and he was from Northmead and he couldn't play with them because usually beat him.

5.9 Drug addiction

Drug use seems to be another reason children run away and go back into the streets. During the focus group discussion, some participants mentioned that they used to run away from the centers to come back in town to sniff 'sticker'. (Sticker is jet fuel, children sniff it to get hallucinated to cope with her and extreme weather) They motioned that it is very hard to withdraw from using sticker. They said they would stay at a centre for just a few days without sticker but later give up the withdraw process. While at ACZ I observe two incidences of boys who had just come from the streets attempting to escape by climbing a brick-wall with an electric wire and could not be get retard by all the securities the institution has to escape because they couldn't withstand the withdraw process. The director at ACZ explained that: *'children that have just come from the streets have a tough time withdrawing from drugs and during their first few days, they show a lot of agitation and attempt to escape at several occasions'*. This clearly shows that the desire to go back on drugs is among the factors that makes children escape from institutional care.

Mark 12-year-old at ACZ, who participated in a FGD told me how he could not stay in institutions because of sticker; *"I left FoH because of money, and sticker, they didn't allow us to sniff sticker. After running away from the centres I went to Z.N.S but it was the same, I still missed sticker"*. This is a clear case of addiction, Mark could not withstand the withdraw process hence the several escapes.

The use of drugs is not only 'a boy activity' on the streets, in a FGD, some girls stated that they ran away from the institutions stated that one of the reasons they came back was because of their addiction to sticker. One of the girls who ran away from a centre told me the following;

"For me, there was nothing wrong with the centre where I was, they kept us well and gave us everything we needed, it was as if we were at home. But after 2 weeks at the

centre, I ran away, I just told the caretaker that I wanted to take a walk and then that is how I came in town and when I got here, the first thing I wanted was sticker, I missed it and I needed it so much”

Children on the street do not only use sticker but they also smoke marijuana and they drink alcohol. During my late evening observations in Soweto market, I saw a number of older girls drinking beer with people who seemingly did not look like street children. This would suggest that not only do girls use the money they earn during to buy food but to buy alcohol too. This would also suggest that the men who were drinking with the girls expected sexual favors from them. When I asked my female participants whether they drank alcohol, most of them denied but mentioned that they knew friends who drank, a situation different with boys who openly drink and smoke cigarettes. Boys admitted that they drink alcohol and smoked as Mwape, currently at ACZ told me during the interview;

Jonnathan: *You talked about doing bad things on the streets, what did you mean?*

Mwape: *things like drinking Chibuku (a cheap local beer) and smoking*

Jonnathan: *so you used to drink beer and smoke?*

Mwape: *Yes, a lot of people do that, we even used to smoke marijuana, and some people had connections and used to buy Marijuana.*

Jonnathan: *Did you drink Chibuku and smoked Marijuana?*

Mwape: *Yes, I did, but I'm telling you this because I stopped. Marijuana is very bad; it is 'stronger' than sticker and more expensive, so I stopped.*

Mwape has escaped from a number of institutions before settling at ACZ because he couldn't quit alcohol and drugs. Withdrawing from the life style and diet to drugs and alcohol could be attributed as one of the factors that lead children to escaping institutional care. To successfully rehabilitate street children, institutional caregivers need to strike a balance between meeting children's needs and helping them cope with the withdraw process.

5.1.0 Institution's proximity to the city centre

Children taken to the institutions located near the city center seem to be more likely to return the streets than those who are in institutions far away from the center. In a FGD, a participant stated that he has been returning to the streets because he has only been to the institutions near the city center and it is easy for him to return and see his friends because he can easily walk back in to town:

'I was at FoH, it is just 15 minutes walk from here, so when I missed my friends or someone was arguing with me, I just walked and came back in the street'.

Several other children that have been to FoH also talked about walking back in to town because the institution is very close to the city centre. A participant in a FGD had this to say:

'Uncle, almost everyone you see here has been to FoH and the centres in Garden Compound but we come back because it is not far from here, one can easily walk back when he misses street life'.

FoH is even in a more compromised position because it also operates as a drop-in center, which means that other children who are not resident at the center can come in for a bath, meal or medical attention and then return to the streets after their need has been met. These children may influence resident children to return to the streets.

Children escaping from institutions near the city centre is not only happening in Lusaka, similarly, Lizi, a 14 year old who has been to several institutions on the Copperbelt and in Lusaka told me a similar story;

'I have only been to centers near town, so it is easy for me to run away and come back to the streets. If I was taken to a center far away from the city, I think I would stay and change to be a better person'.

This information could be suggesting that locating institution a bit far from the city centre could be a deterrent to would be escapees and increase the chances of children to be fully rehabilitated for reintegration. Mwape who is currently at ACZ, which is outside the city told me that he has managed to stay at ACZ for a long time because it

is far from the city and he is not exposed to a lot of temptations that might make he return to the street;

"You see, here where we are, the good thing is that it is far from town, so I don't feel like returning. But when I was at Chisomo, I used to go back in town, because I was bored and I could easily walk to and play with my friends".

As much as setting up institutions near the city might have advantages such as being easily accessed by street children, to some extent, my study would suggest that they are not ideal for the purpose of rehabilitating street children. Children easily escape and return to the streets because they can easily walk back or they are enticed by children resident on the streets who frequent such institutions. Institutions near the city centers maybe more ideal to serve the purposes of a drop-in centers but not a rehabilitation homes.

However, this is also not to say that all children taken to centers far away from town stay until they are rehabilitated. A good example is that of children who were taken to Z.N.S camps, which are located in distant places and far from city centers but they have reappeared on the street due to other factor. It is therefore right to say that children escape institutional care due to a combination of factors and among them is the distance between the institution and the streets.

5.1.1 Lack of activities

ACZ might have successful stories with the children they look after because they keep all the children busy. Most of the children at ACZ attend a nearby Catholic school and those that have just been taken from the streets are put in literacy classes to prepare them for enrollment in formal schools. After school, children are kept busy doing sports, watching TV, playing drums and many other activities. In my view, these activities kept the children busy and not think about the street.

Almost all my participants on the streets indicated that they would love to go back to school and this could suggest that maybe if other institutions that take in street children put them in school, incidences of escape could be reduced. Grace, a 14-year-old girl living on the streets told me that if she were put in school, she would not

return to the streets. *" When they take me to the center, I just sit and do nothing, the only thing they we do at Mutunzi is wait for food and sleep all day and most of the times, they lock the gate"* In Grace's case, boredom and lack of activities at the center she has been to seem to be factor pushing her back to the streets where she can play with her friends. Musonda, the boy we looked at earlier also mentioned that apart from fighting with friends, the other reason he left the center is that he used to get bored and he missed his friends.

However, the success of ACZ based of keeping children busy does not give conclusive evidence that keeping children busy stops them from escaping, to come up with conclusive findings, a much larger number of children in different institutions need to be exposed to the conditions that children at ACZ are exposed to.

With these findings, much reforms and guidelines need to be set for institutions that look after children and street children in particular, if not, the problem will continue to exist. Related to some of my finding, Ansell (2005) has also stated that institutionalization operates some sort of 'social exclusion', depriving children of freedom. The family therefore remains the best option for bring up children, the CRC stresses that the family is the 'natural environment' for bringing children and institutionalization should be the last resort (UN 1989) This is so because certain needs are hard to meet when children are brought up in an institutional setting than in a family. However, with high, poverty levels, HIV/AIDS and over-stressed extended families, it is likely that the number of candidates in institutions will continue to rise and if there are no radical reforms done to the current methods used in institutions, the problem of children escaping and going back to the streets will continue.

Chapter Six: Surviving life on the Street and Its Challenges

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present an analysis of will challenges that street children face on the streets and I will also look at how they overcome these challenges and meet their daily needs. My analysis will have responses from both male and female participants and where there are gender differences on how street children deal with adversities, I will highlight them. Below are challenges that seem to be common among most my participants.

6.1 Verbal and physical abuse

One the problems that was common among my participants, both boys and girls, was violence. As soon children move to the streets, they fall prey to violence and fights; rape and injuries caused by violent incidences become part their everyday life. In my study, it came clear that both boys and girls are victims of violence. Perpetuators of this violence are children themselves, especially older boys, members of the public and the police. Younger children told me that older street children beat them for no apparent reasons especially when they get intoxicated and drunk. After being beaten, the small boys are sometimes robbed of their daily savings, shoes or clothes.

Nick, a teenager living at Salvation home narrates a violent episodes of his life when he was living on the streets: *“When I was young on the streets, life was hard, I used to get beaten for no reason. Someone would just come beat me up, get my money or clothes when I had done nothing wrong. They just beat you for no reasons; it is very dangerous on the streets. Some people are even stubbed or stoned, this is why most boys on the streets have scars and wounds”* Nick’s experiences cannot be disputed, during my observations; signs of violence were very visible on some children on the streets. Most children had wounds and scars, which were as a result of fighting, beatings and being stubbed. During street visits with outreach officers from ACZ on their outreach programs, a number of children were treated for minor injuries and wounds and when asked how the wounds started, most children told me that they got injured during a fight or were hit by an object.

David, a 13-year-old boy currently at ACZ who had burn-marks on his legs and arm narrated to me how other boys on the streets who wanted his money burnt him.

Figure 3: Violence among street children

When I was living on the streets, some big boys came to get money from us, some of my friends gave away their money but me I refuse, I had hidden my money in my shoes. The following night they came back again and they told me that if I was not going to give them money, they were going to beat me up and set me on fire. I thought they were just joking so I refused to give them my money. Two of the boys started beating me and when I fell on the ground, they poured sticker on my clothes and set me on fire and then they ran away.

It took time for my friends to put off the fire and by the time they fire was off, the skin on my legs was burnt. I was in pain all night and the following morning; my friend took me to the clinic at Civic Centre where I was transferred to the university hospital (UTH) I spent almost 2 months in the hospital and when I came out, I didn't want to be on the streets.

The case in figure 3 shows how some children are at greater violence risks while living on the streets. This case also shows that street children are both victims and perpetrators of violence. In this case, it apparently appear that the youngest children are more vulnerable to violence as they are easily beaten by the older children and robbed of the money that they beg.

Members of the public are also perpetrators of violence towards street children. Violence by the public mainly comes as resentment to the presence of street children in particular settings and areas where their presence is not seen as normal. This is something that I observed during my research in Northmead area. It was late in the evening; I was sited at a restaurant when I saw a small street boy walking towards the entrance, before he could reach there, a security guard went to the boy and kicked the boy with his boots on the ankle and the boys ran away limping and the security guard shouted: *'Don't come back here, I will kill you! You don't belong here, you little thief'*. This physical and verbal attack on this particular child by the security guard is a reflection of the general perception the public has on street children, they are seen 'as troublemakers, a nuisance or menace that needs to be taken off the streets' (The Post Newspaper, 2010)

Violence from police is another challenge that street children have to deal with. Many of my participants were always afraid that they might be arrested by the police and beaten up. One of my participants narrates his ordeal in the verbatim below about his perception and experience with the police:

Jonnathan: *You earlier said that the police don't help children on the streets, tell me more about it.*

Mwape: *No one goes to the police, everyone runs away from the police,*

Jonnathan: *why does everyone run away from them?*

Mwape: *They beat; the police beat you even when you haven't done anything wrong.*

Jonnathan: *have you ever been beaten?*

Mwape: (Silence) *Yes, once, but I have friend who have been beaten several time. At night, the police used to follow us where we used to sleep and shout at us for no reasons and sometime beat us because they accused us of stealing from people walking at night. At times they would arrest us because some people report to the police that we steal from them.*

In short, one can conclude that the police perceive street children as a danger to society and treat them very harsh. The time I went to see the children that were in police custody, I tried to find out from the one of the police officers why they arrest and beat children. He told me that street children in Zambia were a threat to the security of the citizen and were a “time bomb” and need to be dealt with before they got out of control. *“Most people are afraid to walk at night because of these children attack them and steal from them. And sometimes breaking into shops to steal, this why were arrest then and discipline them. We don't beat to kill them, we just want to control them ”* said the police officer. To him, the beatings are purely punitive or “correctional” in approach: as he had put it, they are used to “teach the children a lesson”. During my fieldwork, I did not witness police violence towards street children but I was requested by some street children to intervene and facilitate the release of a group of street children, among them, my participants who were arrested for theft and loitering.

6.2 Sexual violence

While less in numbers compared to street boys, girls living on the streets experience most of the same problems as boys and, in addition, are frequently subjected to sexual violence. The information I collected during my study strongly indicated that sexual violence against girls is prevalent on the streets. Sexual exploitation and violence is a fact of life for the girls and it is almost impossible to avoid it because when they sleep, wherever they sleep, it is on the streets. Men and boys can always find them (Strieker, 1996)

The following extract from an interview I had with Jane a 17-year-old gives some information and insights on the prevalence and magnitude of sexual abuse and exploitation on the streets:

Jonnathan: *What do you mean when you say boys and men are difficult?*

Jane: *Ok, it is like this, like in my case, my friends and I used to be forced to have sex at night, a group of big boys would come to the place where we used to sleep in an old bus and rape us.*

Jonnathan: *How often did that used to happen?*

Jane: *I can't remember, but it used to happen a lot and it happens to a lot of girls. Sometimes if you get into an argument with a boy during the day he would say "uzaona lelo usiku, nimbwela kukugwira nakukuliza". (This means, 'You will see tonight, I will come and catch you and then make you cry'). And they would come at night to rape us.*

Jonnathan: *why couldn't you run away?*

Jane: *They used to catch us unaware. And even if we ran, they run faster than us, so they used to catch us. But sometimes we used to run away to the security guards or the police post in Soweto market.*

Jonnathan: *So when you go to the police and the guards, do they chase the boys?*

Jane: *yes they do and if the boys know that you are going towards the police, they stop chasing you. But sometimes the same security guards and the police force us to have sex with them.*

Jonnathan: *even the police and security guard have sex with the girls on the streets?*

Jane: *you don't know that? Yes they do, they do that a lot, especially the security guards. I have never had sex with a policeman but my friends have. But I have had sex with two security guards. One paid me but the other on just force me after having sex with me, he beat me up and told me that he can't pay me because I was a prostitute.*

In this particular case, not only does Jane points out to sexual abuse but also the use of sex as punishment by big boys to girls offending them during the day. Here, sexual violence is used to discipline the girls offending the boys. Jane also talks about sexual abuse emanating from the police and security guards, a phenomenon, which in my view put girls in a predicament because the people who ought to protect them take advantage of their situation and abuse them.

In one of the FGD with the girls sexual exploitation came out common to all my participants. One of the participants voiced out this experience: *“For my friends and me sleeping is hard, it is very difficult to sleep at night, there are a number of boys who come chasing us around so that they can have sex with us. And sometimes some men we even don't know bother us, they want sex, so it hard to sleep.”* Based on this information, it can therefore be said that one other challenge that girls face on the street is sexual violence from their peers and other people like security guards also sexually abuse them. This makes girls on the streets more vulnerable than buys because they face a problem of sexual abuse, which boys do not usually encounter.

6.3 Lack of safe and secure sleeping places.

The operational definition for street children adopted in this thesis is that of “children of the street” these are children that spend their nights on the streets. This also obviously means that these children have no permanent shelter where to sleep and they are faced with seriously challenges of finding a place to sleep.

Based on the FGDs and interviews, sleeping arrangements are among the several challenges that street children have to deal with. Street children are not allowed to sleep on certain streets and areas of the city, such areas are closed guarded throughout the night by security guards and children found in such places, face violence, brutality and abuse. The resistance that brings about spatial exclusion and marginalization during the day is carried over into the night. The following interview dialogue shows how challenging it can be to have a sleep on the streets:

Jonnathan: *Tell me about sleeping, where do you sleep?*

Makaiko: *Sleeping can be tricky, in my case with my friends; we always make sure that we sleep in a hidden place.*

Jonnathan: *What kind of hidden place and why do you have to hide.*

Makaiko: *You see uncles; on the street you just cant go on the corridors of a shop or a bank and sleep. The police and the security guard will beat you up, so you have to hide.*

Jonnathan: *What hidden places do you find safe to sleep in?*

Makaiko: *Here in the Market, it is hidden and very big so the police don't usually come here and when it is very cold, we sleep in the drainage tunnels underground where no one can see you.*

From the interview with Makaiko, it is clear that the social and spatial resentment that the public has towards street children seem not to be a daytime phenomenon only but a night trend as well and this forces children to sleep in hidden place. Due to their mobile nature and the spatial resentment face, sleeping arrangements for street children are undefined, they do not have a permanent sleeping place.

Preference for sleeping places also changes during each season of the year. It follows that most of the children are exposed to the elements of weather and other elements that can harm their health. Significantly, females appear more vulnerable in this respect than males and the situation has serious implications and sexual risks on girls,

as we saw in the previous sub-chapter when Jane explained how boys would chase her and her friend so that they can have sex with them.

My participants also told me that during the warm and dry months of the year, around September and October, it is easy to find a place to sleep because they can sleep just about anywhere where they are not forbidden. But they face a lot of challenges during the cold and rain seasons of the year; during the cold periods of the year (around June, July and August) the street children's concern was lack of blankets to keep them warm as Jane, a old girl currently at ACZ explained to me: *"In June and July, it is very hard to sleep on the streets, it is very cold, and you know us girls cant sleep in the tunnels, so we used cover chitenge (a local fabric), plastics and papers to keep warm. And again when it starts raining, it is hard to find a nice place that is dry. I used to sleep in an incomplete building which has no windows, so when the wind blows, the water used to come inside"*.

However, seen earlier, apart from the having problems with finding a safe and secure place where to sleep, girls in the streets have a more precarious situation, unlike boys, girls endure sexual attacks and sexual violence at night. During my participant observations, Linda a 14-year-old girl told me that: *"At night the boys come where we sleep in the market so that they can have sex with us and when you refuse, they beat you up. Sometimes they just undress you and take all your cloths so that you can be naked in the morning"*.

It is therefore inevitable to say that girls have a much bigger challenge with regard to sleeping. Apart from looking secure sleeping places, they do not get enough sleep because disturbances from boys wanting to have sex. This however does not apply to all the girls on the streets; some have made arrangements with store and warehouse owners to sleep inside the lockable stores and warehouses near Soweto market.

6.4 Health challenges

"Being poor is itself a health hazard; worse, however, is being urban and poor. Much worse is being poor, urban, and a child. But worst of all is being a street child in an urban environment"

This stance regarding the health of the street children provided by De La Barra (1998) in Panter-Bric (1992, p 160) clearly describes the nexus between poverty and health and sums up the magnitude of the health challenges street children go through. In trying to understand resilience in street children, one thing I need to know was how they deal with health challenges. Having worked with street children before I knew that they face a lot of health challenges and I thought it was worth exploring how they deal with such challenges.

Like in most parts of the world, the health condition of street children in Lusaka is generally poor. Many suffer from chronic diseases like TB, malaria; STDs and HIV are also common diseases among street children. Generally, street children live in unclean surroundings, and because of this, they are exposed to dirty and several environmental hazards found in the city. They are also constantly exposed to harsh weather elements such as intense sun, rain and cold.

Although health care is free to all citizens in Zambia, street children do not have easy access to health services, they go through a long process to get documents from the social welfare department or the police. And when they get permits to go to the hospital, the staff metes out hostile treatment to them.

Although I was not interested in making an evaluation of the children's mental health, I could not ignore a number of children that I thought were not in their right state of mind. During participant observation, some children I tried to talk to seem to be delusional, they couldn't speak properly and their responses to my conversations were not related to what I was asking them. It could be that some of these children were drug addicts. However, due to the fact that I had not spent much time with them, I could not tell whether their strange behaviors were caused by drug use or they had mental health problems. The director for ACZ had told me that some of the children on the streets and some at her institution had mental problems, which were reflected in the children's abnormal behaviors. She told me that she takes most of such children to Chainama Hospital, a mental hospital within Lusaka where they are put on psychotropic medication to treat their hypomanic behaviors.

Sores and skin cuts are common among street children, this is as a result of walking in rough places such as dumping sites and other places with sharp items such as broken

bottles, metal pieces and wires. Some children are wounded in fights resulting from competition for basic needs such as food or even money. For example one of the children that I met during the time we were playing football had a deep cut on his face and when I asked how he ended up with a deep cut, he told me that he was hit with a metal bar by one of the older boys.

Most of the children that get wounded on the street do not seek medication for their wounds; they just let them heal naturally. This is because although health care is free to all citizens in Zambia, street children do not have easy access to health services. The process of getting medication for street children is said to be long and tedious as one of the girls who wanted me to take her to the hospital to be treated from what she said was syphilis puts it. *“ Yes, I can go to the clinic but for me to do that, I have to go to the police, get a letter and then go to department of social welfare to fill in some forms and it might take a week for me to eventually go to the clinic. And if I go to the clinic on my own with those papers showing that I’m a from the street, the nurse might even should at me”* It such a long process of getting medication and victimization from medical staff who despise street children. Street children there for depend on free medical services that are offered to them by some NGOs who go on the streets offering free treatment to street children.

Children also depend on one another when they are sick or injured, as we will see when I look at the significance of social networks among street children.

6.5 Resilience: Coping and survival strategies of street children.

One of the main objectives of this study was to explore the mechanisms that street children employ to persevere in the face of stress and adversity. In this sub-chapter, I will be looking at some of the coping mechanisms that street children employ in their lives to deal with challenges and adversities.

To cope with their day-to-day challenges, street children resort to several coping strategies to avert their adversities. These survival strategies include ways they use to make money, acquire food, and other basics needs.

The lifestyle inherent to living on the streets exposes children to a range of harmful situations and hence their survival is often dependent upon engaging in risks to their health and general well-being” (Sherman et al 2005. P114), while on the streets, they

have to battle fiercely to keep alive. Some of them survive by selling whatever they can find. Some even sell themselves, some beg, some steal and so on. In this chapter, I will present coping mechanisms that participants in my study rely on.

6.5.1 Social networking among street children

One important aspect of the children on the streets that I would like to look at is the significance of social networks and the roles they play in the lives street children as survival mechanism and way of dealing with adversity. A personal social network can be defined as ‘all persons and groups, expressed in terms of actual persons, with whom one maintains direct and more or less lasting ties that satisfy the daily requirements of life’ of a given ‘key person’ (Hammer 1978 in Ayuku et al 2004 p110). It is a network of social relationships from which individuals draw support (Bolwijn et al., 1996). “The structure of this collective consists of the other persons (‘network members’) and ties that give shape and substance to the fulfillment of the key person’s (‘focal person’) basic psychosocial needs. This structure can be divided into various ‘plexus groups’ (Pattison 1981 in Ayuku et al 2004, p110).

Studies have shown that street children form social networks and used these networks to meet their need (e.g. Aptekar 1988, Campos et al 1994, Evans 2006) However, street children experience very different social networks and daily activities because they live in an environment of decreased adult presence and intervention, increased importance of the peer group, drug and alcohol abuse, and early onset of sexual activity (Campos et al 1994)

Before I introduced myself to children on the streets, I started my study just by observing street children go about their day-to-day activities and one of the things I noticed was that it was very rare to find a street child alone, they were almost always in pairs or as a group. Much more common to find are children at street intersections at traffic lights were always a group and some approached motorists in pairs and begged not as individuals but as a team. Even when they were just sitting by the roadside passing time or playing games, they were always in pairs. In cases where I found a loner, chances were that I would find other children just within the vicinity and soon the lonely child would go and join others. It is also a common sight to see street children sharing a meal or a drink. To investigate whether this friendship and

cooperation among street children was beyond what ‘meets the eye.’ I needed to learn more from the children through the different research methods employed in this study.

There seem to be a strong social cohesion that existed among street children, which, I think makes friendship among street children the strongest social network and a source of physical and emotional support in times of adversity i.e. sharing basic needs and supporting each other in times of ill health and also protecting one another from violence and other physical hardships. Below is a case of Mwape, and amputee who told me how friends, through social networks were of great help when he was on the streets.

Figure 4: The significance of social networks among street children

Mwape, an 18-year boy living at ACZ; after spending 5 years on the streets he fell off a cargo train, his leg was badly injured and later amputated. After the accident, he went back home for 2 years and went back to the streets.

Mwape narrated his ordeal and how important friends were to him when he was on the street *“When someone is sick, we to helped each other, you can’t survive without friends on the streets. Take an example of me. When I was involved in the accident, I could not walk. It was my friends got papers for me to go to the hospital and they then arranged for transport. When I was in hospital, my friends were like my family, they came to see me several times and brought me fruits and food. When the doctor said he was going to cut my leg, one of the big boys contacted my mother who later came to look after me. Now can you imagine if I did not have friends, I could have died, so it is important to have friends on the street”*. Mwape also told me that when he returned to the street after the accident, it was very hard for him to do things normally with one leg and in most cases he depended on his friends.

Mwape occasionally escapes from ACZ and goes back to the streets and he told me that one of the reasons he goes back in town is to see his friends as he explained to me: *“These people here don’t understand, I don’t run away, I just go to see my friends and then I return. If I ask for permission to go in town, they don’t allow me, so I just go without telling anyone. Those brothers of mine in town did a lot for me; they help me when I had accident, so I just go to see them, we are a’ family”*.

Mwape's experience is a good example of how important and beneficial social networks are to street children. Mwape mentioned that had it not been for his friends who organized for his repatriation to the hospital, he would have died. In my view, his friends also valued the friendship they had with him because they did not just organize for him to go the hospital, but continued visiting him and bought food for him. Even after Mwape has left the streets, the social network that he created whilst on the street still exist as it can be seen that he still returns to the streets to see his friends

During a FGD with the boys, they too acknowledged the significance of social networks and friends on the streets in times of illness as this dialogue from the interview shows:

Jonnathan: *Ok, let me ask you another question, what about when you are sick, what do you do?*

Participant 1: *When you are sick, your friends will help you get paper to go to the hospital or they will take you to FoH.*

Participant 3: *If you are not very sick, friend will but you Panadol (A bland of painkillers)*

Participant 2: *Even when our friends die, we report to the police and we take them to FoH. But they're other people who come to help. We help each other very much; for me when I was very sick, my friends even come to bath me in hospital. We were like a family we are brothers.*

Just like in Mwape's case, these participants in a FGD put emphasis on how friends are helpful when it one is ill. Both cases demonstrate that children on the street relay on each when they are sick and how they help a sick friend throughout the recovery process. This care and concern for one another is also a source of emotional support for the sick. In both cases, there is a reference of being "brothers", it seems that belonging to a social network substituted the children's family on the street.

Social networks for street children do not only come in handy when one is sick, children on the streets help each other in all ranges of challenges. During participant observations, I spoke to two boys that were sharing money finding out what transactions they had done, to my surprised, one boy was just helping a friend who had no money for two consecutive days and this is what he told me: *“He is my friend, he helps me when I have nothing, so I’m just giving him part of my money because he has had no luck of making money”*. When I asked if they share things with other children on the street, the recipient of money responded: *“We do share things like money and food with other children but not with everyone, just our friends. It is good to have friends on the streets because they help you when you need help. We live like brothers here, we are like family and we help each other”*. After talking to these two boys, I realized that street children have a strong social cohesion that existed among friends which is a source support in times of need and adversity.

The significance of social networks for street children exceed across a wide range of issues. Belonging to particular “gang” on the streets is a source of protection and many more advantages¹⁵. What I discovered was that street children have “territories” where they operate. For instance, if a children operating from Soweto market went to Northmead or City market, and if they do, they might be chased or beaten. However, moving in a group reduces chances of being attacked if children went to another territory as one participant in a FGD explained: *“You can’t just go and sleep anywhere, we have areas. People from Mandahill, City Market will not come here in Soweto and those who come are the strong ones and come in groups. So if you are a group, with strong friends, you can go and sleep Northmead or Mandahill and nothing will happen to you”*. This shows how significant and beneficial it is to belong to network of friends on the streets; it is a source of protection.

Social networks are also a source of food when one has no food or money to buy food. During FGD with girls on the street, (this particular FGD was around lunch hours, so to reimburse their working time, I bought them lunch) we went to one on the restaurants in the market to have lunch. After the lunch was saved, the girls went to

¹⁵ A study by Adugna (2006) also came up with findings showing that street children who occupy the same territory interact and support each other on their day-to-day life.

bring their close friends who were not part of the FGD to come and eat with them. The girls told me that they knew that their friends had not eaten anything since morning and they would probably not be able to find enough food to eat for lunch they hence saw it right to share food with them. When I asked one of the girls if they always share food, she told me that when one friend has no food, they share food with her. She also told me that her and her close friends were a “family” they share food and clothes. Again, this shows how important it is for children on the street to be connected to a network of friend, friends are a source of material needs and emotional support.

Those who get in trouble with the police also depend on social networks to be released from police custody. An example is when some of the participants in my study were arrested for alleged vandalism and theft. Their friends were able to contact me to come and talk with the police and possibly pay for their release. Even if I did not pay for the release of the detained children because I did not want to compromise power relations in my study, I was able to contact an organization that provide free legal advocacy to help the arrested children. Unique to this case is the fact it was the children who were not in trouble with the police that took up the initiative to work out a way of having their friends released. To me this shows how social networks can be helpful in the lives of street children and also how street children care and look after one another.

Social networks of street children can also go beyond peer groups and include adults, in my study; some participants talked about shopkeepers and restaurant owners who helped them. Children see such adults as “mother” figures who advise them, and provide them with food. This can be assumed from what one of the female participants in a FGD stated: *“Some of us have people that help us when we have nothing, for me the aunty at the restaurant usually gives me food because I have a baby to look after, she also tells me what to do when the baby is not feeling well. To me she is like a mother”*.

Some of the children, especially girls, have good relations with other adults who allow them to sleep in the warehouses that are fenced and lockable for protection boys and the police.

Based on these findings, it is clear that one of the strengths street youth demonstrate is the ability to form groups that performs many functions that are usually fulfilled by the family. Lewis Aptekar's (1988) account that friendships between street children permit the forging of affective relationships otherwise denied by abusive families, this is somehow evident in this study, it is clear that street children rely on one another for money, food, protection, encouragement and emotional support. Many children expressed genuine affection for their friends. They viewed each other as a family. Friendship for street children is very important in meeting daily needs (Campos et al 1994, Orme and Seipel, 2007).

6.5.2 Finding Food

Finding food is one big challenge that street children face in their everyday lives. Most participants indicated that they at least eat one to two meals per day while a few said they at times stayed without eating. However having said this, my findings show that most of the street children have developed means of finding food. One of the ways children find food is by working at restaurants in Soweto market and in turn get money or food as payment. Jobs children do in restaurant are drawing water and throwing away trash. During a FGD, Bwalya, a 15-year-old boy explained their working arrangement with the restaurant owners: *“One way of finding food is working for the people with restaurants. We go in the restaurants asking for work and we keep that money and when we make enough money, we used that money to buy food. The things we do are throwing away garbage and draw water and then we are given money, if you are doing a lot of work, you can be paid food, they can just give you food as payment”*. These types of jobs are very common among the children based at Soweto market, during my time there, it was very common to see children going in and out of the market with containers of water and also with garbage bins. Because of the several restaurants in Soweto market, the possibilities of finding a job are high and this explains why Soweto market is one of the places favored by most street children. Using their negotiating skills, street children are able to agree with the restaurants owners to work for food or money. This kind of initiative is indicative of the children's agency in dealing and with hunger. The children are able to identify Soweto market as a place where they can find food and work for the people that have the food.

However, not all children work for restaurant owners in the market, some children do other jobs outside the market and use the money they earn to buy food. Washing cars is one of the common income generating activities street children engage in¹⁶. *“Some of us don’t wait until there is a chance to do some works in the market, we do some ‘self employment’ We clean cars and we used that money to buy food”* explained Mofya a 17 year old boy, a participants in the FGD. Boys go to the car parks with buckets of water and ask the owners of the cars to wash cars at a fee. However, unlike working for restaurant owners that is done by both boys and girls, washing cars is most done by big boys, none of my female participants mentioned that they washed cars.

Apart from looking for jobs to earn money for food and other needs, another income generation activity that most street children engage in the selling of different things. Among the common things that street children sell are plastic bags and “sticker” (a substance they sniff). So not only is sticker used to get hallucinated to cope with hunger and forget the challenges that they face on the street, they also resell it to among themselves as seen from the following FDG:

Jonnathan: *what other things do you do to earn money?*

Participant 1: *I make money from selling sticker, (he pulls out a bottle half filled with sticker) I fill this bottle top for 500 kwacha. I buy this full bottle at K10, 000 and I make some good profit and use the money to buy food.*

Participant 2: *‘We buy this bottle at 10,000 Kwacha and then and if you sell it very well, you make around 30 to 35000 Kwacha but there is competition in this business of sticker, a lot of people are selling it’.*

In a focus group discussion with the girls, one of the female participants also said she sells sticker: *‘For me, I sell sticker, when I buy full sticker in this bottle I make about K40, 000 and if I buy half the bottle, I make about 20,000’.* Other girls also indicated that they sometimes engage in the sticker business too but at the time of the interview, they were not.

¹⁶ Boys do car washing and girls do not; there is no girl who indicated that she washed cars in the car parks to earn money. So I would conclude that this is a typical male activity on the street.

Buying and reselling of sticker seems to be a viable business among both boys and girls on the streets. Sticker is squeezed on a piece of cloth that is covered on the nose and mouth to be inhaled. The desired effect a feeling of exhilaration and secondly a hallucinatory experiences (Alemu, 1998).

Most street children believed that the hallucinatory experiences that they get from sniffing sticker/benzene helps them cope with the adversities, they forget their problems, they don't feel hungry and they can face any weather elements as one boy holding a bottle of sticker told me when I asked him what the sticker does to him: *'Sticker makes me sleep well, I don't feel the cold, you don't feel hungry, someone can even beat you when you are sleeping, nothing can happen and you can't feel anything. And also I don't feel hungry when I sniff sticker, so when there is no food, I sniff sticker, everyone sniffs sticker. It makes you forget your problems'*.

Another participant during FGD also stressed the role sticker plays in coping with hunger on the streets: *"Sometimes we sniff sticker and this (showing a bottle of sticker) make us not feel hungry but when the sticker has finished, you will be shaking from hunger and your lips will be dry because of hunger"*

During the interview I had with David from ACZ, he also told me that sticker was one of the coping substances that he used to help him cope with different challenges including hunger: *"Sometimes when there is completely nothing to eat, I just used to sniff sticker and the feeling for hunger would go and I would sleep. But the only problem is that when the sticker finishes, you feel very hungry again and you need to eat"*. Such accounts by my participants are a clear indication that Inhalants like "sticker" provide an easy and quick escape from their challenges including hunger. Results from this study correspond with results from other studies including Phiri's study in Lusaka showing that street children use and abuse inhalants to forget about their harsh environment and to mitigate hunger and other hardships.

However, having said this, it is important remember that based on my study, benzene or sticker is not only used as a 'coping substance' but it is also at the centre of business among street children. They buy and resale it among themselves and use the profits to meet other needs like food and clothing.

6.5.3 Scavenging

Another coping strategy that street children employ is scavenging, street children may survive by scavenging for food in waste bins and rubbish dumps. In Lusaka, it is common to see street children scavenging. Street children prefer to scavenge in the rubbish dumps outside the small restaurants in Soweto market than in the big restaurants and Takeaways in the city centre, this is because the police and security guards constantly chase them from the city centre. A good example is the one I looked at in the previous chapter of a situation where I observed a small street boy being kicked a security guard on the leg and the boys ran away limping leaving the security guard shouted: *'Don't come back here, I will kill you! You don't belong here, you little thief'*. However, regardless of the resistance children face, some of them rely on scavenging.

During my fieldwork at Soweto market, it is was common see street children, especially young boys scavenging through the garbage in the hope of finding something to eat, mostly leftover food or spoiled food thrown away by restaurant owners. On some occasions I observed street children flock towards people making regular trips to the dumping sites to salvage the leftovers.

On a few occasions, I went to the dumping area to see what kind of foods children scavenged. They picked all kinds of foodstuff ranging from fruits to discarded raw meat from the Boucher shops, which they cooked in cans. As bad and deplorable the situation the children were in seemed, they seem to have little or no options but survive through scavenging and some of them seemed content with whatever food they found.

However, unlike in other countries like India or Egypt where children scavenge recyclables such as paper, metal and plastics for resale recycling companies (ILO, 2006), street children in Zambia rarely scavenge for commercial reasons. I had at no time found children scavenging for recyclables, the street children I came across were in search of leftover foods. One important thing I noted however was that scavenging was common among boys. In the interviews, boys admitted of moving around town looking for food. The boys collect an assortment of foodstuff ranging from fruits, bread to meat. The most frequented places for scavenging are dumping places near markets for fluid and leftover foods; garbage bins situated near restraints for leftover

foods and Boucher shops for meat and other meat products. When the children manage find raw meet, they light fires and cook the meet in empty cans.

Based on the information I got from my female participants, scavenging was unpopular among girls. Girls living on the streets admitted of depending their boyfriends for money to buy food. Scavenging not common among girls and most of them told me that it was 'not a normal thing for girls' to be seen looking for food in the rubbish bins as it can be seen from a FGD discussion below:

Jonnathan: *How about picking food and other things from the bins, do you do that?*

Participant 1: *No, we don't do that, scavenging is for boys and some small girls especially those that are new on the street, we don't do that.*

Participant 3: *We cant be going in the bins looking for food, people will think that we are not normal, they will think that we are mad, but for boys, they do that very often.*

Participant 5: *I used to pick food from the bins when I just came in the streets, but now I cant do that, it is embarrassing, it's for boys.*

Jonnathan: *so you don't go to look for food in the bins?*

Participant 1: *No, for me I just think that a girl should not be seen picking for food, that is for boys. But some girls do pick.*

Participant 2: *It is most small girls who go looking for food in the bin, not us.*

Participant 5: *young girls do that.*

This discussion clearly shows that scavenging is a survival technic mostly used by boys and younger girls. Most girls find it not 'normal' for them to be found in dumping sites. This could be because of perceived gender roles and cultural norms that view boys to be more outdoor while girls should be at home or the tendency by girls to relay on sex as a medium of exchange for money or food.

6.5.4 Survival sex

Even some girls run away from their home to escape sexual abuse and come to the streets, however due to the challenges they face on the streets, they have come to

learn to use sex as a survival medium. So even though girl beg and scavenge less, they manage to survive on because they 'sell' sex for money and then use the money to buy food or exchange sex for food with the boys on the street. The following dialogue from a FGD with the girls on the street gives a picture of how they use and trade sex for survival.

Jonnathan: *Tell me the ways you use to find food?*

Participant 4: *Uncle, to tell you the truth, here in the streets, if you are girl, there is one main way of getting money, you have to sleep with the big boys. If you don't have sex with these boys, you will not have money to buy food. So during the day they will give you money and then at night, they expect you to have sex with them.*

Participant 2: *some people even have more than one boyfriend to get enough food but for me I only have only one.*

Jonnathan: *So do they give you food or money?*

Participant 4: *yes, they give us money and then we buy food or clothes*

Jonnathan: *So to get food you beg or have sex with someone, right?*

Participant 3: *When you beg, they don't give you, they expect to have sex with you, and they will tell you that I will come for sex at night. So they use you for what they give you.*

Street girl do not only have sexual intercourse with street boys only but they are other people, not street boys who pays street girls to have sex with them in exchange for money as Jane told me during the interview when I asked her if girls do have sex with the police and security guards.

Jane: *you don't know that? Yes they do, especially the security guards. I have never had sex with a policeman but my friends have. But I have had sex with two security*

guards. One paid me but the other one just forced then he beat me up and told me that he can't pay me because I was a prostitute.

Jonnathan: Have you even had sex with anyone else who is not a street child?

Jane: Yes, I have, a couple of times. There is this taxi driver who used to pick me up and he used to give me money to buy things after having sex

These findings correspond with findings from Phiri (2005) who also found that engaging in “survival sex”, trading sex for food or money is one of the common commodities that girls on the streets in Lusaka have to barter for basic necessities, such as food. In Phiri’s study, the girls further told him that they went into local nightclubs and pubs to wait for men to have sex with them in exchange with money. None of my participants admitted going into nightclubs to look for men who can pay them for sex, however, one evening during my observations, I saw some of my participants drinking beer in a pub near the market with some men who did not look like street children¹⁷. The likelihood of this situation is that the men bought the beers for the girls and in return, they expected sexual favors from the girls. Overall, girls are sexually vulnerable and sexual exploitation by their peers and adults. This again clearly shows that unlike boys, the situation of girls in the streets is even more precarious. Apart from the general hardships of surviving on the streets, many of the girls have to endure sexual attacks and also trading and bartering sex.

6.5.5 Begging for Survival

Begging is another coping mechanism that street children employ to meet their daily needs. In Lusaka, street children are visibly seen begging from motorists on most busy road intersections and traffic lights. According to Abebe (1999), Children engage in begging either full-time or part-time as a way of livelihood or supplementing their income from begging with that from other activities. During the

¹⁷ I did not ask these girls whom they were drinking beer with because they had previously refused that they do not drink beer. The other reason I didn't ask them about this incidence is because this was late in the evening, I did not want to appear as if I was “spying” on them. I felt that if I questioned them about this, the hard-worked-for relationship I built with them was going to be compromised and they would have lost the trust they had in me.

time of my observations, I noted that the children that engaged in begging were most young boys and in some rare instances, I saw girls and they were young too.

The older boys in my study indicated that they did not like begging because people did not give them money and some members of the public usually told them to find jobs to earn money and not beg. David narrates how with age, had stopped begging: *'When I just came in town, when I was young, most of the times I used to beg for food and money, and most people used to give me food or money. But when I became bigger, people stopped giving me money or food and some of them used to tell me to find a job and some would tell me to go home. Some of them would actually shout at me for begging and some would just look at me and not say anything.'*

During a FGD, my participants echoed similar sentiments in regards to begging as one participants told me: *'When we were young, we used to beg a lot and people used to give us money or buy food for us, but at this age, people don't give us money when we beg. So to tell you the truth uncle, we don't beg, begging is for small boys'*

The public's response and reaction to older street children who beg explains why some of them avoid begging, they avoid begging because their chances of success are less. Younger children succeed in begging because they look more vulnerable and attract more sympathy than older children. Peoples reactions to younger street children are influenced by the fact that they are regarded to be "cute" or "adorable" hence people feel compassionate and compelled to give them money or food. However, as they grow older, they no longer attract public sympathy and hence adults stop giving them money or food (Phiri 2009, Aptekar 1984, Abebe, 2005):

The shift in begging, in relation to age, does not only apply to boys. With age, girls too find it difficulty to beg; Martha (17 years old) explained to me why she does not beg anymore:

Jonnathan: *what other way do you used to find money?*

Martha: *None, but when I was much younger, I used to beg and people would give me food.*

Jonnathan: *how about now, they don't give you?*

Martha: *No, they don't give, they say I'm old, I should find something to do. And I'm embarrassed to beg. But when I was young that was ok.*

Jonnathan: *So you think it is not ok to beg at your age?*

Martha: *No, it's not ok, people don't even give me money at this age. And I also just feel embarrassed because I'm older, I look big, and so I can't be seen begging.*

This interview dialogue with Martha also reviews that as street children grow up, members of the public stop giving them alms, just like boys, girls too are told to find something to do. I therefore concluded that both girls and boys beg less as they grow older and incite less public sympathy. Where girls are given handouts, a reciprocation of sexual favors is expected.

Important here is that age is an important factor in begging and its success, giving alms to young street children, rather than to older children, is considered to be more appropriate and is given priority by the general public (Aptekar 1988). Additionally, the other reason older street children find it harder to depend on begging is that when children develop physically and show signs of maturity, members of the public and the police chase them away from public spaces frequented by people therefore they are forced to be in hidden parts of the city less visited by people. Thus, according to Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman (1994), there is a gradual progression from begging to thieving. As children grow older, they are often dehumanized and rejected and this makes successful begging even more difficult. Therefore, as a means of survival they begin to steal.

Chapter seven: Discussion, summary and recommendations

7.0 Introduction

Having analyzed the data in the previous two chapters, in this section I will discuss the findings by referring to some major theoretical perspectives presented in my second chapter. In this chapter I will discuss 'the diversity of childhood' and how it relates to my study while taking note of the social conditions under which my participants live. I will also give a brief account on how 'children's agency' is reflected in street children, how street children apply their agency and how it helps them deal with challenges and adversities. I will also include a discussion of gender differences with regard to how boys and girls on the street exercise and apply their agency when dealing with adversities and challenges in their daily lives. I will further discuss the distinctiveness of street childhood and how street children as agents have reconstructed childhood from the mainstream western view of childhood that is at the centre of childhood discourse in Zambia. Further more, I will discuss how children are able to capitalize on social capital and resilience to sustain themselves and survive on the streets. Thereafter a summary will follow and recommendations will be given.

7.1 Diversity of Childhood

Childhood and children are two very related concepts that have been widely analyzed by scholars who seek to understand and help children. According to Qvortrup (1997 in James and James 2008), as a social structural space, childhood is a constant feature of the structures of all societies, meaning that although children grow up and out of childhood and become adults, childhood as an institution of any society still remains as a space occupied by the generations to come. In this case, childhood becomes the universal feature of all societies. Based on this understanding of childhood, Qvortrup argues that regardless of the cultural variations in the children's experiences the term 'childhoods' rather than 'childhood' should be used. Children are therefore occupiers of a space that is influenced by several factors which makes generalization of childhood problematic. Having said this, it is also important to note that "*Children are by birth attached to childhood as a particular social and symbolic space that is socially and culturally constructed*" (Kjørholt 2004, p.4), consequently, even though 'childhood' is common to all children, it is also fragmented by the diversity of children's everyday lives. Each society treats and separates children from adults in different kinds of ways, making childhood a social construct. (James and James,

2004). The situations that most of my participants and indeed other children in Zambia are facing are different from those that children in other parts of the world are going through, it is influenced by several dynamics such as the social, economic, political contexts and cultural norms prevailing in Zambia.

The concept of childhood that has been presented in my thesis is not a reflection of the universal notion of childhood that prescribes childhood as a period when children are allowed to enjoy their childhood before they face the challenges of adulthood. Most of the informants in my study live outside that universal view of childhood, they are faced with several challenges but still survive with little or no adult support. The western perception of childhood deviates greatly from childhood as it is experienced in developing countries. Nevertheless, the western notion of childhood remains influential and guides the developmental policies and practices used in developing countries like Zambia. Evidently, it also influences most of the interventions for child related programs including those concerning street children. Institutionalization and reintegration is one such intervention that is guided and influenced by the global notion of childhood. Based on my findings from my analysis, I must point out that institutionalization and reintegration, which are a western style of intervention do not take into consideration the social conditions that give rise to the problems that street children face. My opinion in this regard is that it is not compatible and not viable in solving the problems most of my participants face. To illustrate this point with particular reference to the findings of my study, most of the female participants in my study ran away from their caregivers because they were being physically or sexually abused, institutionalizing them only partially gives a relief solution to their problem because institutionalization aims at taking them back to their home where their current situation started. This was echoed by one of the participants in the FGD; *'for me I left because my father died and my stepfather used to talk a lot and beat my mother saying I'm keeping your child. So because of this I left and went on the street. So when I go to Centre, they take me back home and the same problem starts again, so the problem is not solved. This is why I come back to the streets but I don't like the streets.* This clearly shows that institutionalization is not the solution to this participant's problem because it does not solve the problem. Such predicaments are common with many children especially girls who are often sexually abuse by their caregivers. A more tangible solution would be the one that involves the rehabilitation

of the abuser too and not just the victims. Similarly, some children escape poverty from their homes and go on the streets, institutionalizing them and then later send them back to the same home the escaped does not solve their parents or guarding poverty, more needs to be done to deal with poverty otherwise these children will return on the streets. Phiri (2009) had a similar argument, he did not see it right to institutionalize children and later taking them back to the same homes with the same problems they avoided by going on the streets. Based on this, I further argue that institutionalization is in some way intended for the good of the child but it loses its 'track' and objectives by not dealing with the problems at the child home.

Another implication I discovered is that institutionalization only focuses at removing the children from the street without considering the role and effects social networks and social capital plays and has on street children who devote a lot of effort forming and sustaining these aspects of their survival. Breaking these key aspects of their lives through institutionalization does not solve the problem of street children as children return to the streets. We can take an example of Mwape we looked at in Chapter 6.5.1, a case in figure 4. He constantly leaves the institution and goes back on the street to see his friend, even if he is out of the street, he still values his friends on the street for what they did for him as he put it: *Those brothers of mine in town did a lot for me; they help me when I had accident, so I just go to see them, we are a' family''*. With in mind, I would assert that institution need to study and understand children's social network and see how they would capitalize on them to come up with a lasting solution in removing children from the streets. One such way would be taking in all children belong to one network or taking them in pairs of friends.

Equally, the facts that childhood is socially constructed, street children are not an exemption. It is also important to acknowledge that street children are a heterogeneous group and because of their varying circumstances, they each have unique and different problems that led them to the streets. This means that not all street children will benefit from institutionalization or family reintegration. Appropriate interventions for each child would be those that consider the background of each child as well as other contributing factors. Oversight to the individuality of children and local prevailing conditions will not lead to fruitful interventions. The

arguments I am putting forward may sound insignificant but based on my findings; they are key to finding lasting interventions for street children.

Overall, it is important to bear in mind that perceiving childhood as universal phenomenon ignores the diversity of children's experiences. Children in different societies and parts of the world are raised in different ways and with different expectations and yet they thrive, and indeed flourish, in widely contrasting conditions. (Boyden 2003) Based on this, Boyden argues that a universal child protection model such as institutionalization, which is based on only one type of childhood, is not sensitive to cultural and societal differences. Understanding that the culture in which children live shapes the way they are perceived and treated, the way they experience childhood, and the actual competencies they develop is an important departure from traditional policy based on universalist values, in which the process of growing up is conceived of as the same for all children.

7.2 Agency

Having looked at the diversity of childhood, I would also like to discuss one of the important attributes that make street children exceptional, and this is their agency. James and Prout (1997) describe children's agency as the ability to be active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of people around them and the societies in which they live. In general, agency underscores children's capacities to make choices about the things they do and how they express themselves (James and James 1998). Given the long-standing view which has been held by the traditional socialization theories which for a long time have influenced parenting and the upbringing of children, and how these theories have repeatedly positioned children as passive recipients of adult guidance, one might not recognize agency in children and let alone most marginalized groups of children such as street children, and yet they apply it in their everyday lives. Regardless of this general over-sight on children's agency, the reality is that children are capable of applying full agency on matters affecting their lives.

In the case of my participants, a constraint such as poverty, abuse, lack of social services limit their choices and impels them to come up with survival mechanisms and at the same time compelling them to exercise high levels of agency. Most of my participants started employing their agency whilst still at home under the guardianship

of their caregivers. After they identify a problem, which might be poverty or abuse, they use their agency and take a course of action and in this case, they head to the street with the hope of escaping the problem. When children have decided to stay on the streets, they demonstrate an even more complex form of agency. They start living independently and meet their basic needs without any or with very little adult intervention, challenging the widely held notion that children should always be protected, guided and provided for by adults. Children come up with complex social networks and different survival mechanisms from which they draw both material and emotional support. This is very evident throughout my study as children demonstrated their abilities to face and solve different adversities and challenges. Children are able to meet their basic needs through begging, stealing, scavenging, trading sex and so forth. Both boys and girls employ their agency in their everyday lives on the streets. Having said this, I however came to realize that boys exercise more agency than girls. Boys have a wider range of alternatives and options of meeting their basic needs while girls seem to mainly depend on boys for money and food which they acquire from an exchange with sex. This was put clear by one of the girls in a FGD: *Uncle, 'to tell you the truth, here in the streets, if you are girl, there is only one main way of getting money, you have to sleep with the big boys. If you don't have sex with these boys, you will not have money to buy food. So during the day they will give you money and then at night, they expect you to have sex with them.* The reasons girls do not have a wide range of alternatives to meet their needs on the street is due to social norms that perceive certain activities not to be appropriate for girls and on the streets, there are very few activities that are considered suitable for girls. This leaves girls with no choice but to trade sex for food or money. However, as seen in my analysis, this is not to say that girls do not venture in other activities, girls compete favorably with boys in certain activities such as selling sticker and working restaurant owner. For example, in chapter 6.5.2, In a FGD, one said she sold sticker: *'For me, I sell sticker, when I buy full sticker in this bottle I make about K40, 000 and if I buy half the bottle, I make about 20,000'*. And they were other girls who did this business. These are some of the many examples of how children on the street apply their agency and one of them is through social capital and social networks. Social networks are a clear demonstration of street children's agency, through them, children are able actively construct and determine of their own social lives, and the lives of their friends to attain of the goals of either a person or collectively.

Overall, street children have good knowledge of what “normal” childhood ought to be but they are limited by the circumstances they have found themselves in and hence they are continuously reconstructing their own childhood (Phiri, 2009). Being aware that they are living a non-conventional childhood obliges them to find ways bettering their lives by acting differently from what adults expect from children. Based on my findings, this has made street children socialize themselves to a lifestyle compelling them to use high levels of agency to survive. This has a negative impact on interventions such as institutionalization, which as seen from my analysis does not recognize and ignores the use of agency in children. Since children are already used to being independent and using their agency to survive institutionalizing and limiting them with rules only makes them miss the street where they are in full control of their lives and as a consequence, they escape.

6.3 Gender

Based on the work of West Candace and Don Zimmerman (1987), it can be said and assumed that gender is a universal phenomenon but it arises from social interactions and it is a socially organized achievement rather than a natural occurrence. We are at all times ‘doing gender’ and are accountable to it and so are the street children, they organize their behaviors in such a way as to give sense and communicate to others and themselves that they are accountable as gendered persons.

Street children too are held accountable to gender, one would think that because of the precarious situation that both boys and girls are in on the street, they would not be selective on what survival activities to engage in to survive in order to maintain a gender image. But the fact is otherwise different, from my analysis; it became very clear that street children appropriate certain income-generating activities to specific genders. For example, girls do not usually pick and scavenge from the rubbish bins because they perceive such actions as ‘boys activity’. A FGD commentary echoes this impression: *‘we don’t scavenge, it is for boys’ and the other one added ‘We can’t be going in the bins looking for food, people will think that we are not normal, they will think that we are mad, but for boys, they do that very often’*. Girls would not clean cars to earn money because by doing so, they will not be accountable to their gender and sex category. In the Zambian culture, just like in most cultures, women and girls are usually kept close to home to look after younger children, perform household

duties and for their own safety, while men and boys are socialized to go out of the home for pastime and to earn a living which they take home for the whole household, this cultural norm seem to give boys a head-start when face with challenges and they are likely to cope well than girls.

‘Street boys are better prepared to survive because they have been brought up to be independent while street girls are on the streets because they are fleeing a very difficult situation. Their mental health is therefore frequently considerably worse than that of the boys. Many have developed adequate coping strategies, which allow them to function at least as well as their poor counterparts who pass less time in public view. These coping strategies include finding a niche in the economic market, which gives them sufficient income to eat and clothe themselves’ (Aptekar and Heinonen 2003)

The prevailing cultural norm have made ‘female children to believe that they are less capable than males of surviving autonomously, that is, without adults and males (Hansson 2003). The implications of this is that girls continue depending on boys who have a wider range of survival strategies and survival activities including those which girls don’t perceive as being appropriate. Because boys are able to earn more compared to girls who have limited income-generating activities, it implies that boys buy a variety of nutritious foods such as peanuts, bread, bananas and many more and they buy these anytime they have money while girls fate of acquiring such foods are determined by boys (Yemane and Yemane 1998 in Heinonen 2003). Boys are therefore better fed and less like to starve than girls. In addition, early exposure to the “outside world” also helps boys develop social skills with are important to their survival as they can negotiate for jobs, these social skill help boys to be more resilient than girls.

Social expectations and being accountable to their gender also seemed to constrain girls from engaging in activities such as scavenging and as they were concerned about what people would think about them. I therefore argue that ‘looking good’ and ‘normal’ to males and members of the public is of high importance to girls and they do this at the expense of engaging in survival activities such as scavenging. In my

view, keeping up a 'clean image' is important to female street children because many of them are dependent in some ways on male street children and other males for their very survival by trading sex for money or food.

6.4 Social capital and social networking among street children

Studying social capital in children has been challenging because researchers have in most cases neglected to include children's perceptions of their relationships and their environment, and instead simply collect such information from parents or teachers. The challenge is even bigger when researching street children who do not have families because Social capital is in most cases seen as asset of children in intact families as families are obliged to meet the need of children (Rantalaiho and Teije 2006, p39)

The central and key theme of social capital theory is that relationships matter and social networking is a valuable asset that enables people to help one another. Due to the fact that individual street children share the streets with other children facing similar challenges and circumstances, they are each pushed into social interactions with other children and eventually creating bonding social capital, which is symbolized by ties between people in similar situations (ibid). The role that social capital plays in the lives of street children is paramount to their survival, without it, many would be struggling to meet their needs. Children belonging to social networks, acquire hard-to-find necessities such as food, money and clothes through social capital, which they use as a 'communal' tool. Throughout my study, both boys emphasized the significance of social capital and they highlighted how collective efforts and cooperation is key not only to acquiring food and money by those who don't have but also how social groups provide support in times of illness. Bonding of stocks of social capital with similar groups of children, i.e. children operating from the same area of the city, gender and age groups was common among my participants. One of the young boys in Soweto market explained the following when I asked him what things he shared with friends; *"We share things like money and food with other children but not with everyone, just our friends. It is good to have friends on the streets because they help you when you are in need of assistance. We live like brothers here, we are like family and we help each other"*. The boys points out the aspect of sharing but not with everyone, 'just with friends', raising the aspect of

bonding social capital. Overall, the boy appreciates the advantage of having friends who can be helpful in times of need and make life less stressful. My observation is that friends act as a safety-net for those who are in need and this process is reciprocated when the one giving now happens to be in need in future. Important to note from this interview with this particular participant is that he mentions not sharing with everyone but “just with friends”. This entails being based in a particular locality on the street does not mean being close friends with everyone in that place, within the large group, street children form small groups of friends whom they get along and share things with. With this in mind, I would therefore assert that belonging to a particular group on the street does not automatically translate in bonding social capital and it benefits, street children have specific friends that they share with and not all.

Apart from being a source of material things, social capital also allows children to resolve collective problems much more easily; this was clear when the police arrested some of my participants. Through social networks, other children realized that they did not have the capacity to negotiate for the release of their friends and they contacted me so that I could negotiate for the release of their friends. As I did not want to directly get involved in the negotiations with the police, I was compelled to contact an organization that provides free legal services to those who cannot afford a lawyer and they had the children released from police custody. This scenario is a clear demonstration that street children are better off if they cooperate and it further shows to what extent bonding social capital helps resolve the various collective challenges that street children experience. Without the networks created through social capital, the fate of the detained children would have remained unknown.

Apart from bonding social capital, relationships and networks that children create ‘bridging’ social capital which is characterized by sharing and reciprocity among members of a heterogeneous group (Putman 1993 in Kjørholt 2006). Bridging between diverse groups of children with norms of reciprocity among my participant was not very common. The ideal example of bridging social capital would have been a scenario where street children from different localities shared things or worked together towards one goal, this was not the case with my participants, none of them mentioned cooperating with children from another ‘gang’ In fact, there is rivalry between groups of children operating from different areas of the city it can be

concluded from a contribution by one participant in a FGD explained: *“You can’t just go and sleep anywhere, we have areas. People from Mandahill or City Market will not come here in Soweto and those who come are the strong ones and come in groups. So if you are a group, with strong friends, you can go and sleep Northmead or Mandahill and nothing will happen to you”* Not only does this show lack of bridging social capital between heterogeneous groups but it further demonstrates the existence of bridging social capital among homogeneous groups as a source of protection.

There was however some notable form of bridging social capital and this was mainly across gender when I viewed each gender as a heterogeneous group and when boys and girls came together, they formed a homogeneous group. As seen in my analysis, girls do not engage in as much survival activities in comparison to boys, because they have limited opportunities, girls mostly depend on boys who give them money and food, and in reciprocity, they let the boys have sex with them.

Networks that constitute social capital also play a key role in the lives of street children and one aspect when these networks become very useful is when a child is sick, children on the street depend on one another in the time of ill health, which happens a lot considering the environment in which they live. Both girls and boy in my study depended on friends when they were sick for food, medication and acquiring of documents to go to the hospital.

As much as social capital through social networks is key for the survival of street children, I advance an argument that it has a downturn on institutionalization as an intervention. In my view, taking children from the streets breaks the social networks and friendships that children develop during their life course on the street. When in institutions, children miss their friends and support they provided. It is for this reason that some children decide to leave and go back to the streets. Even when children are reintegrated with their families, they are compelled to return to their friends on the streets because of the strong relationships they have with their friends.

6.5 Survival and resilience of street children

Understanding the vulnerability and resilience of all categories of children, including street children is important to designing appropriate interventions as it “presents us with a “central and pervasive” paradox“ with evidence of developmental risk on one

hand and resourcefulness, adaptability and coping on the other” (Donald and Swart-Kruger in Panter-Brick 2003, p164). The protection and support of children confronting adversity has now become one of the central priorities of childhood interventions internationally. The essence of Institutionalization is to remove the child from the streets with the fear that living on the streets has the potential to overwhelm children emotionally and psychologically. This is based on the understanding that children are dependent and of limited competence and that they are almost inevitably overcome by massive environmental adversities associated with living on the streets. Nevertheless, this assumption is not absolutely factual, children in general have substantial capacity to coping with contradiction and fears of permanent psychological damage may be somewhat exaggerated because “Through interaction with their uncertainty and troublesome surroundings, children refine their abilities to imagine, plan, and control” (Diggins 1994, quoted in Boyden 2003). Children exposed to difficulties within their families and communities remain resilient but exposure to multiple stressors is likely to have a cumulative effect, which may overpower their coping capacity. However, in comparison with children living in stressful circumstances such as street children, children living within families are seldom suddenly overcome by a few traumatic experiences, which children living in difficult circumstances can easily cope with. This highlights the idea that growing up in the context of constant change and contradiction can for some children be a source of strength (Boyden 2003). The risks that street life presents to children who have made the street their ‘home’ has also made the children to explore survival mechanisms that allow them to live. For example, one of the major risks that children face on the street is hunger and starvation. Street children are however able to explore their environment (the streets), identify possible sources of food and work out ways of acquiring it. In my study, a good example is how children were able to identify Soweto market as a source of food. Because of the high number of restaurants in the market and other foodstuff sold in the market, children have made Soweto their operation area. Food in the market is however not free and children normally don’t have money, they have therefore, through their agency negotiated with restaurant owners to work for them, either drawing water or through garbage collection in exchange for money or food as Bwalya, a 15-year-old boy explained the typical working arrangement with the restaurant owners: *“One way of finding food is working for the people with restaurants. We go in the restaurants asking for work and*

we save the money that we earn once we have made enough money, we use that money to buy food. The activities we engage in are throwing away garbage and drawing water for which we are given money. If you are doing a lot of work, you can be given food, they can just give you food as payment". As simple as this working arrangement might look, it is an indispensable factor that builds children's resilience. In cases where children do not succeed to find food with one strategy such as working for restaurant owners, they employ multiple coping strategies some of which are unavailable to adults such as scavenging (Boyden 2000 in Ansell 2005, p1960) At times, children even take risks of scavenging in places they are not allowed such restaurants in the business area of the city where they are constantly chased.

Apart from the individual efforts children take to 'bounce back' when they are faced with the risk of hunger, it is imperative to mention that *resilience is also dependent on both individual and group strengths and is influenced by supportive elements in the wider environment (Boyden and Cooper 2000)*. This is the capacity that my participants seemed to possess abundantly; in times of hardship and lack, they brought together both collective and individual strengths and resources in order to survive. This collectiveness in searching for resources is mostly demonstrated through social networks, for instance children that have food willingly share with friends who do not have, the kindness is reciprocated and it is continuously practiced such that it becomes a dependable safety-net among members of a social network.

Children differ in their resilience and in many cases the differences between individual children are broader between boys and girls (Ansell 2005 p196, Boyden 2003). Studies have shown that at least up to the age of puberty, boys may be more likely than girls to be at risk when exposed to a range of stressors (Cairns 1996 in Boyden 2003). This therefore means that to the extent that adopting active survival strategies may protect children, boys are more resilient than girls in many settings including the streets. The reason for this according to Boyden is simply because society offers them more independence, training and more encouragement and opportunities to take active control of their lives. The view by Boyden has been seen throughout my analysis, boys seem to have an upper hand when it comes to overcoming stressors on the street and their ability to do this can be attributed to the fact that they have more prospects of making money, which is a key resource for their survival. This enterprising characteristic that boys have is attributed to the fact that

boys are allowed at an early age to go out of the home while girls are kept at home. This cultural norm has made girls on the streets to depend on boys for survival.

Gender is not the only factor that has an impact on the survival and resilience of street children. Age is particularly another important aspect, age has a significant impact on how children are able to find food and meet other needs, normally, when they are young, begging suffices as their mainstream survival activity, this is so because they easily attract public sympathy and hence begging is the major source of food and other needs by younger street children. As children on the streets grow older, their success rates on begging start to diminish, as members of the general public start showing less sympathy to them. With age, in addition to not succeeding in begging, children also feel ashamed to beg as they are of age to earn a living on their own. Martha raised this view during the interview, *“it’s not ok to beg, people don’t even give me money at this age. And I also just feel embarrassed because I’m older, I look big, and so I can’t be seen begging”*. In response to this, children spiritedly explore other survival means such as working, scavenging, etc. With this in mind, I discovered that when one avenue of acquiring food and other necessities is less profitable, street children explore other means to sustain their lives.

As much as it is right to acknowledge that children on the street face several challenges, their resilience has to some extent proved wrong the common assumption that children's needs are best met in a family setting, which is believed to be a source of stability, support and protection for children than they can independently provide for themselves through their own energy and initiative. There is some validity in many such assumptions; nevertheless, it lacks familiarity with the children's own coping strategies during periods of adversity when the family cannot support them. Such views that consider children as being passive have to a greater degree led to the development of interventions that are culturally inapplicable and fail to acknowledge children’s agency and resilience when faced with adversity.

6.6 Diversity of Childhood and interventions of street children

The childhood that has been appraised in this study, supported by some theoretical perspective, shows that childhood is different from one place to another. The kind of childhood that Zambian children are experiencing is exclusive to them and it is

influenced by social, political, economic conditions and the cultural norms currently prevailing in Zambia. However, the infiltration of the global notion of childhood, exported by bilateral and multilateral development projects and international instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is deluding policy makers and implementers to creating interventions that are inappropriate and out of context to certain categories of children such as street children. This is so because local circumstances and their childhood are not encompassed by the discourse of 'proper childhood' that is based on the western perspective of childhood. This has led some NGOs to seek to employ rather different ideas in their interventions with children in difficult circumstances, building on very different understandings of children and child development. Given the diversity of childhood, the tendency of policy and interventions to decontextualize childhood and treat children universally problematic as it lacks local knowledge which can be key to coming up with sustainable and useful interventions (Boyden 2003)

When coming up with intervention, it would be beneficial to recognize children's agency and include their views and perspectives when formulating interventions

6.7 Summary and conclusion

In concluding my study, I will briefly look at the key themes that this study intended to investigate i.e. challenges street children encounter, survival strategies they use and reasons they escape institutional care.

6.7.1 Challenges of street children

Poverty is the major cause of street children; it limits the families' capacity to meet the needs of children forcing them to live on the streets. However, children's relocation to the streets does not mean living a life without challenges. Once on the streets, Street children face infinite challenges, among them is violence perpetuated by older boys, members of the public and the police. Girls face even major challenges as they do not only face physical violence but also sexual violence emanating from boys on the streets, police/security guards and members of the public. Meeting basic necessities is another major challenge that children on the streets face in their everyday lives. Street children do not have a constant source of material and financial resources; they therefore have to go to great lengths to make sure that they have food. Among the activities they engage in to acquire are working menial jobs, begging, scavenging and stealing. For girls, most of these activities are somehow culturally

inappropriate for them and they hence depend on prostitution as a source of money and food. Not only are they paid by boys on the street for sex but by members of the public too. Children on the streets also face a challenge of finding decent secure sleeping places for sleeping. Most of them sleep outside, exposed to weather elements that might cause health problems. And again, this challenge puts girls in a more precarious situation as they are easily rape and sexually abused for sleeping out in the open. Children on the streets also face health challenges, they have limited access to health services and the procedure of access health services is tedious for them and hence street children prefer buying and taking painkillers whenever they are not feeling well.

Having said all this, it is important to mention and recognize that street children have devised ways on how to deal with most of the challenges they face. A brief look on these survival strategies is presented below.

6.7.2 Survival strategies

Street children use several strategies to survive the difficult conditions of the streets. Based on the findings, it is clear that girls and boys on the streets use different means of acquiring money, food and other necessities, however boys had more diverse means of survival such as washing cars, looking after cars in car parks, selling carrier bags to people in the market, throwing garbage, drawing water etc. while girls largely engaged in prostitution. Girls also seemed to be more mindful about how they looked such that they deemed certain activities as “for boys”. The implication of this is that girl on the streets end up with limited survival strategies.

In this thesis, I also critically analyzed social capital and social networks among my participants. Based on my analysis, it has become clear that at individual level, street children benefit from social capital through an increase in their own social networks and resources vital to their survival. Meeting of their daily needs such as food, security, protection, clothing, etc. is all done through social networks. Social capital and social networks are therefore not only important as a means of meeting individual and collective resources but they are important assets street children use to resilient against the challenges and stresses of street life. Put simply, high social capital, bridging or bonding among street children will result into resilient children because communally, they can easily solve a problem than as individuals.

For children that live under institutional care, the platform to use social capital is limited due to restrictions on activities that they can engage in and the fact that institutions meet most of their needs that require them to employ social capital, their social capital and networks are as not as useful as they are to children living on the streets.

6.7.3 Reasons for escaping institutional care

There are several reasons street children escape institutional care and return on the street. Based on my findings, social networks come out to be one of the factors that influence children to run away from institutions, this is so because while on the street children depend on each other to meet their needs such as food, clothes, etc. they also support each other emotionally and looks after one another when they are sick. When taken away from the streets, this relationship and cohesiveness is disrupted and some children cannot cope without their friends from their networks on the streets. This makes some street children run away and go back to their friends on the streets.

Drug addiction is another factor behind the tendency of running away from institutional care. Some children have become very dependant on drugs and alcohol such that when they are institutionalized, they cannot withstand the withdraw process and eventually they give up, escape and go back on the street to continue using drugs. Apart from drugs, the desire to earn money and buy what they want is also one of the reasons street children prefer the street for the institutions. Under institutional care, all the basic necessities for children are provided and in most cases, they are not allowed to have money. Their previous exposure to money hence makes some children go back on the street and earn money to buy things they want including alcohol and drugs. Strict rules that institutions have can also be hindrances to archiving success in removing street children from the streets. Some of my participants felt very restricted by the rules in institutions and hence returned to the streets where no one constantly told them what to do or restricted them. Because childrens activities institutions are guided my rules and schedules, some children felt bored in institutions. For children that live in institutions with few activities and entertainment to continuously engage them, returning to the streets becomes a better option. Finally, location of an institution can have an influence on the returning to the streets by street children. My findings indicate that children living in institutions close to the city easily walk back the street. In some instance, children on the streets use institutions near the city centre

as drop-in centres; they go there when they have pressing and urgent needs and through their interactions, institutionalized peers are taken aback to their previous street lives and they may run away and go back on the streets.

6.8 Recommendations

Based on the revelations availed by my participants as reasons for escaping institutional care and how they managed to survive on the streets, below I outline some recommendations I deem key and that if taken into consideration, would make interventions more appropriate and reactive to children's needs in Zambia.

Interventions should take into account the individuality of each child. The fact that children have found themselves on the street, does not mean that they have the same backgrounds, they all have different upbringings and circumstances that lead them to the streets as such there is no uniform approach to each of their cases. Interventions programs should therefore invest time in assessing the individual situation of each child in designing and implementing intervention measures. Furthermore, interventions should build upon positive resource skills children have such as social capital and networks.

Interventions should be designed in a gender-sensitive ways. Both boys and girls on the street face several challenges but girls are more vulnerable and in much more precarious circumstances. Girls face extra challenges of sexual abuse and exploitation that do not apply to boys. In addition, girls are more vulnerable on the street compared to boys; this is because of social norms and what is expected of them, preventing them from diversifying their survival means. Girls are also perceived to be much more out of place than boys because they are associated with being at home performing domestic duties. Interventions should therefore be designed to deliberately meet the need of girls first.

Interventions should approach children as active agents and actors. As has been observed in my study on how street children are able to explore and use the environment in which they live (the streets) and survive by creating different survival strategies and social networks that include adults. Their abilities to demonstrate that in time of adversity and when society seems to be providing less, they come together in

mutual and continuous interaction and create social networks and platforms for meeting their needs is evidence enough to consider their agency when designing and formulating interventions. Recognizing children's agency would mean understanding their perspectives and involving them in decision-making. This would require that children be allowed to voice out on things they don't like such as restrictive rules which force children to escape institutions and go back on the streets.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for children on the streets and in institutions

On and off the streets: Reasons why street children escape institutional care and their survival on the streets.

1) Institutionalized children's perception of institutional care

- 1) Where were you before you came here?
- 2) How long were you on the streets?
- 3) How long have you been in this institution?
- 4) How is life here compared to life on the streets?
- 5) Have you stayed at any other institution(s) before you came here?
- 6) How long did you stay there?
- 7) Why did you leave this institution/centre?
- 8) Are there any things that you miss about life on the streets?
- 9) What do you like about this place?
- 10) What don't you like about this place?
- 11) What don't like about this place?
- 12) What changes do you think should be made at this institution to make your stay better?
- 13) How would you describe your friendship with the other children here?
- 14) How do you relate with the staff members that work here

2) Survival strategies (for children out of the street)

- 1) How were you finding your food on the street?
- 2) Which other means and ways were you using to find food
- 3) What were you doing in times when you couldn't find anything to eat
- 4) What did you do when you are sick
- 5) What would you say were worst experience on the streets and how did you over come it?

- 6) What other setbacks do you consider challenging on the street and how you overcome them
- 7) What things were you consider traumatizing and threatening to your life?
- 8) Who helped you when you were faced with a challenging situation?
- 9) Is there a particular problem or challenge that re-occurred to you and how did you handle it.
- 10) When things are very tough on the streets, do you ever go home to your family for help?
- 11) What did you do when you have a problem and you cannot get help
- 12) What other activities did you do and think were very important to your survival?
- 13) What roles did your friends on the street play in your life?

1) Perception of institutional care by children on the streets

- 1) How did you come to the streets?
- 2) How long were you on the streets?
- 3) Have you been to an institution or centre?
- 4) How long have you been in an institution?
- 5) How was life there compared to life on the streets?
- 6) Why did you leave this institution/centre?
- 7) Are there any things that you missed about life on the streets?
- 8) What changes do you think should be made at this institution to make your stay better?
- 9) How would you describe your friendship with friends here on the streets?

3) Survival strategies (for children out of the street)

- 1) How do you find your food on the street?
- 2) Which other means and ways do you use to find food
- 3) What do you do in times when you can't find anything to eat
- 4) What did you do when you are sick
- 5) What would you say are the worst experience you have ever had and how do you overcome them

- 6) What other setbacks do you consider challenging on the street and how do you overcome them
- 7) Who helps you when you were faced with a challenging situation?
- 8) Are there other people who help you?
- 9) Is there a particular problem or challenge that re-occurred to you and how do you handle it.
- 10) What did you do when you have a problem and you cannot get help
- 11) What other activities did you do and think were very important to your survival?
- 12) What roles did your friends on the street play in your life?