CHAPTER TWO
THE CRIMES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

An extremely broad range of crimes is committed against children. It ranges from rape and murder to more subtle cases of physical abuse and denial of love. Four major forms of crimes against children have been identified, as each evolved as a recognised social problem at different times: physical, sexual, psychological and emotional (Mayer, Currie, MacLeod, Gilles & Warden 1992:15). According to them, each of these types of crimes against children can be characterised in terms of active and passive. They indicate that ‘active’ crimes constitute violent acts in a physical, sexual or emotional context that involves the exercise of physical force in order to cause injury or forcibly interfere with the personal freedom of the child. ‘Passive’ abuse, on the other hand, refers to neglect, which does not involve physical force and is therefore only ‘violent’ in the metaphorical sense. It can result in both physical and emotional harm, such as the non-organic failure to thrive of infants (Mayer et al. 1992).

Browne (Mayer et al. 1992:16) notes that it is unlikely that a child will be a victim of only one type of abuse. Sexual and physical abuse both inevitably also entail a degree of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is often the product of threats of physical or sexual abuse, verbal assaults, or aversive treatment such as being locked in a room or withholding food.

The widespread attention that crimes against children receive is a result of the child abuse movements in the 1970`s. This is in contrast with the development of physical child abuse as an international social problem, which has its origin in the battered child syndrome. The topic of sexual child abuse initially received attention in the United States. The issue of sexual child abuse seems to be in the process of replacing the physical abuse of children as an issue in the eyes of the professionals. In some European countries and the United States, the problem of child abuse has led to the establishment of a number of prevention programmes and intervention projects (Frehsee, Horn & Bussman 1996:121).

Within this context, a more legalistic approach has been used in South Africa to deal with crimes against children and the criminal prosecution of child abuse has gained.
at least in theory, increasingly favourable reactions in recent times. In order to
describe and explain these crimes, this chapter will focus on the nature, extent and
explanation of crimes committed against children in general, and specifically on the
indecent assault and rape of children. To begin with, the nature and forms of crimes
against children will be analysed.

2. 2. NATURE AND FORMS OF CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

2.2.1 Physical child abuse

The most common causes of children moralities are physical abuse, often at the
hands of their own parents (Swanson, Chamelin & Territo 1996:400). The clinical
term that is often used to describe physically abused children is the battered child
syndrome. This possibility must be considered if any child exhibits evidence of bone
fractures, sub dermal hematomia, failure to thrive, soft tissue swelling, or skin
bruising and if the child suddenly dies. When the degree and the type of injury do
not correspond with the reasons given for the occurrence of the trauma (Swanson et
al. 1996:400) the possibility of physical child abuse must also be considered.

Forms of physical child abuse

Physical child abuse takes various forms, from minor assaults to flagrant physical
torture. In most cases, their parents cannot explain these injuries. Swanson et al.
(1996:4001) points out that those intentional injuries tend to occur most frequently on
the face, backs, ribs, buttocks, genitals, palms, or sole of the feet.

Burns

Most burn injuries are classified as accidents by the abusers, when abuse is the real
cause. In this regard, Swanson et al. (1996:4001) therefore postulates the following
suspicion index that can be used to determine if abuse may have been the cause of
burn incidents:
Unexplained delays (exceeding two hours) in the treatment
Injuries that appears to be older than when the incidents allegedly occurred
Ambivalence about seeking medical attention
Incompatibility between the account of the injury and the age and developmental
characteristics of the child
The caretaker’s insistence that there were no witnesses to the accident
Someone other than the parent or caretaker brings the child to the emergency room
Burns are blamed on the actions of the sibling or another child
The injured child is excessively withdrawn, submissive, overly polite, or does not react to painful procedures
Isolated burns on the child’s buttocks
History of the event changes often or each parent provides a different story to explain the incident.

According to Swanson et al. (1996), there are two types of burns, wet and dry burns, each with its own set of characteristic that helps to identify whether a wet or dry source of heat caused the damage to the skin. Swanson et al. (1996:4002) indicate that a wet burn is characterised by a splattering effect combined with sloughing and peeling skin. Dry burns have well shaped branding type of margins around the injury, and scabbing begins around the edges of these burns.

Scalding, specifically from hot tap water, is the most frequent cause of accidental injuries among children. The most common abusive scald burns, however, occur when the child is dunked into a container of hot fluid. Swanson and colleagues state that immersion burns occur when the caretaker dips the child’s buttocks into the hot liquid, while holding the child in a flexed position or when a child is forced to sit in a container filled with hot liquid. A child who is involved in an immersion burn incident will go into a state of flexion. The limbs of the child will become tense in reaction to what is happening (Swanson et al. 1996:403). They also state that burnt hands and feet are other types of immersion burns and when these parts of the body are immersed in hot liquid, the resulting injury pattern is known as sock burn or glove burn.

Contact burns

These burns are also known as dry burns, and are caused by devices such as irons, stoves, heaters, grates, radiator pipes, hot plates and curling irons. Cigarettes that are deliberately placed on the child’s body causes the most common contact burns. Deliberate burns cover several areas, including belt lines, hands or feet and will produce small circular burns (Swanson et al. 1996:404).
Bruises

Multiple bruises in various stages may be found on different areas of the body, and often in places other than those where normal childhood injuries usually occur. One must be very suspicious if these injuries appear to have occurred over a period of time, as reflected by the colour changes that bruises typically undergo over time (Saayman 2001:43).

Head injuries

This remains the most frequent cause of fatal child abuse. According to Saayman (2001:45) a wide selection of research projects pertaining to the head injuries that occur among children, with particular reference to physical child abuse, have appeared over the past twenty years in an attempt to scientifically strengthen the basis for the conclusions arrived at when the head injuries of children are assessed.

Saayman indicates that tears of the membranes that surround the brain typically result in subdural haemorrhage, and are the most common cause of abused children’s deaths, usually due to the associated raised intracranial pressure and cerebral injury itself.

Munchausen syndrome by proxy (MSBP)

Increasingly more attention has been paid to the unusual manifestation that occur among adult perpetrators of physical child abuse, termed MSBP. MSBP, referred to as fictitious disorder, is a condition in which adults seek medical treatment for their children for no apparent purpose other than to assume the role of the patient (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1990:60).

The American Psychiatric Association (1994), defines the essential features of MSBP as the “… deliberate production or feeling of physical or psychological signs or symptoms in another person who is under the individual’s care”, motivated by “… a psychological need to assume the sick role by proxy”.

Swanson and co-workers (1996:405), describe MSBP as a form of child abuse in which the abuser fabricates an illness in a child. When the child is taken for medical
care, the parent tells the physician that there is no apparent cause for the illness, knowing that this will most likely result in the hospitalisation of the child for tests or observations. They state that there are both mild and severe cases of MSBP. In mild cases, parents fabricate history of non-existent conditions for the child, for example, some parents contaminate their children's faeces with blood and claim that the children have blood in their stool. In severe cases, parents actually injure their children in order to create symptoms of an illness; suffocation and blood poisoning are typical forms of MSBP (Swanson et al. 1996:406).

2.2.2 Sexual child abuse

The complex, emotive and hidden nature of sexual child abuse makes it a difficult phenomenon to define and quantify. There is a confusing diversity of medical, psychological, legal, sociological and moral positions regarding sexual child abuse (Van Oudenhoven & Wazir 1998:3).

They contend that there is little agreement, even on basic issues such as the range of symptoms and behaviour that can be labelled sexual child abuse. As a result of this, they state that a good definition of sexual child abuse will determine the nature of the statistics that is collected, and provide a tool for the assessment of the extent and prevalence of sexual child abuse, and guide research practices.

Research by Jewell (1999), Bolen (2001), and Mayer et al. (1992) indicate that sensitivity for cultural differences is often mentioned since the culture will determine what type of action or behaviour constitutes sexual child abuse in multicultural societies. Their studies also reveal that the perception as to what constitute sexual abuse is culturally and socially determined, with the result that acts which are considered offensive in one cultural context may be quite normal in another.

Forms of sexual child abuse

Whatever the case, sexual child abuse entails all types of sexual activities, often with escalating intrusiveness. Children may be exposed to indecent acts, pornographic photographs, or unwanted external contact, for example fondling, masturbating an adult, or being used for intercural intercourse. They may be penetrated orally, vaginally or anally (Meadow 1999:35). Within this context, attention will be given to
the following forms of sexual child abuse: rape, incest, indecent assault, and sodomy.

Rape

Rape is legally defined, as sexual intercourse with a woman that is achieved forcibly, and against her will (Meadow 1999:45). He further defines statutory or child rape as sexual intercourse, or sometimes just the presumption of sexual intercourse between partners when one is under a legally specified age of sexual consent. Snyman (1995:424) defines rape as a male who has unlawful and intentional sexual intercourse with a female without her consent. In South Africa, sexual intercourse with a female under the age of 18 years constitutes child rape or statutory rape.

Incest

According to South African law, incest has been defined as intentional sexual intercourse between a male and a female person who are prohibited from marrying each other because they are related, within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, affinity or if there exists an adoptive relationship between them (Snyman 1995:335).

According to this definition, incest with a child will then be an adult male or female who engages a child, be it natural, step, or adoptive in his or her care in any form of sexual act. This definition is comparable to those in America and England. In the United States (Herman 1981:221-259) the statutes vary slightly from state to state, but in essence do not differ from those in South Africa.

Indecent assault

According to South African law, indecent assault consists of unlawfully and intentionally assaulting another person with the object to commit an indecency (Snyman 1995:419). As per this definition, indecent assault of a child will be non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or voyeurism, talking about sexual matters in an erotic manner or showing the child pornographic material.

Sodomy
In South African legal practice, the term sodomy has been employed to describe only a form of unnatural sexual offence, namely, unlawful and intentional relations between two male *per annum*, irrespective of whether or not the passive party has consented to the act (Snyman 1995:340). In this regard sodomy, as a crime against children, refers to sexual intercourse between an adult male and a boy. Snyman (1995:341) indicates that a male person commits sodomy if he unlawfully and intentionally is an active or passive party to anal sexual intercourse with another male person, in circumstances where the latter has not consented to the act.

2.3 INCIDENCE OF CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Most communities regard crimes, especially those committed against children, as a serious social problem that affects the quality of children’s life and the entire society at large. In South Africa, children are subjected to relatively high levels of abuse. The latest figure that is currently available suggests that in 1999, over 19 000 cases of sexual crimes against children were reported (SAPS 2000).

The Child Protection Unit (CPU), of the South African Police Service (SAPS) has investigated more than 35000 crimes committed against children each year, since 1996. The marked increase in the number of cases investigated between January and June 1998 over the previous two years indicate that the reporting of these crimes continue to rise. The type of crime that is the most investigated by the CPU is sexual crimes (rape), with more than 14 723 cases investigated in 1997, followed by 4179 cases of assault and 3902 cases of indecent assault (SAPS, 2000). The following tables show the numbers of reported cases of crimes against children throughout South Africa and the various provincial cases.
Table 2.1 Intercourse with a girl under the prescribed age in South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwazulu-Natal</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Province</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of cases of intercourse with a girl, under the prescribed age that occurred from 1997 to 2000, is indicated in table 2.1. The table also shows the number of cases reported to the police in each province. From the table it is clear that there is a continuous increase in the number of these crimes that are committed in the Gauteng province. In 1997, 48 cases were reported, in 1998, 58 cases, and in 2000, 85 cases were reported in Gauteng. This increase in the reported cases is an indication that actions to explain and prevent this crime in Gauteng are not enough. Hence the goal of this study is to describe, analyse and explain this crime better.

Table 2.2 Rape and attempted rape of children in South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>7,138</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>6,862</td>
<td>6,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>3,864</td>
<td>3,496</td>
<td>3,472</td>
<td>3,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>12,117</td>
<td>11,808</td>
<td>12,132</td>
<td>12,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>8,638</td>
<td>8,525</td>
<td>8,875</td>
<td>9,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>3,111</td>
<td>3,034</td>
<td>3,286</td>
<td>3,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>4,823</td>
<td>4,461</td>
<td>4,572</td>
<td>4,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>1,517</td>
<td>1,438</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>1,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Province</td>
<td>3,693</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>3,912</td>
<td>4,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>6,658</td>
<td>6,204</td>
<td>6,660</td>
<td>6,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>52,159</td>
<td>49,280</td>
<td>51,249</td>
<td>52,860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.2 shows the number of cases of rape and attempted rape that involved children in South Africa that were reported to the police from 1997 to 2000. The provincial figures show an increase in these crimes in Gauteng. From the table it is clear there was a continuous increase of the cases reported, from 12 117 to 12 123 in 1998 and 12 421 in 2000. This table also indicates that efforts to curb this crime are not enough.

The above statistics of crimes committed against children do not necessarily reflect the true figures of these crimes because, most often, theses crimes are not reported (Meek 1999). Research conducted by Meek (1999) indicates that most children are victimised by someone they know, either an acquaintance or family member, and many occur in the child’s home or the home of the offender. These circumstances make it difficult for the child to find someone to report the crime to, therefore sexual crimes often go unnoticed, partly due to the fact that there is no visible injury to alert potential helpers.

Due to the conflicting reports, the social constructionist theory emphasises that reporting crime rates, especially with regard to crimes that have been committed against children, have to be understood and interpreted within the context in which the rate is calculated. This includes the context of the general awareness in the community. For example, Kempe and Helfer (Mayer et al. 1992: 25) state that between 1968 and 1970, an intensive publicity and information campaign regarding the battered child syndrome in New York resulted in a fourfold increase in the number of reports. These types of influencing factors must be borne in mind when any statistics are considered.

This study focuses on sexual crimes against children (rape and indecent assault), and an analysis of the quantitative data provided by the ten indicated police stations in the following tables: 96 cases of rape and indecent assault were reported and processed by the police in 2002.

Table 2.3 Crime accused of
Table 2.3 indicates that out of the 96 cases reported to the police, 76 cases are rape, 79.17 percent, and 20 of the cases are indecent assault which constitutes 20.83 percent of the crimes. In other words more rape cases were reported in 2002 than indecent assault cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Accuse of</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecent assault</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 Status of the case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of case</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accused not found</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 indicates the frequency regarding the status of the case. In this table, out of the 96 cases of rape and indecent assault, 50 cases (52.08%) were withdrawn; in 23 cases (23.96%) the accused were not found and the other ‘missing cases’ were 23 (23.96%).
In the above table 2.5, it is clear that statistical significance exists between the status of the case and ‘the crime accused of’. With regard to the cases of rapes that were reported, 43 were withdrawn and 7 cases of indecent assault were withdrawn. In the cases where the accused was not found, there were 20 cases of rape and 3 cases of indecent assault. Thus, in this study, 50 cases were withdrawn and in 23 cases the accused was not found. The reason for the withdrawal of the 43 cases of rape was because of the nature of the crime and the 20 cases of indecent assault were withdrawn for the same reason and not because of the number of cases.

Therefore, this study indicates that if a rape case is reported, there is a greater probability that the case will be withdrawn, than if it was an indecent assault case. This may be because most of the perpetrators of rape in this study were strangers and not known to the victims, which hampers the investigations. In the literary study, the researcher found that most cases of rape are withdrawn when the perpetrator is
and ties explain these withdrawals.

In the next section, the causes of crimes against children will be highlighted.

2.4 CAUSES OF CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

2.4.1 System approach

The complexities involved in an understanding of the causes of crimes against children, according to Bronfenbrenr’s general System Theory, induce Belsky (Bolen 2001:138) to suggest that four systemic levels have to be considered when conceptualising the problem of child abuse within the ecological context. Belsky’s four main systemic levels are the microsystem, that is the family, the exosystem which is the community within which the individual lives, the ontogenic system, that is the individual, and the macro system, which refers to the believes and values within the culture that contributes to the problem.

Kirlisch (Le Roux 2000:36) divides the causes of child abuse into four main categories, namely: cultural factors; psychological factors with regard to the parents; the pregnancy and postnatal period; and a dysfunctional family. Pretorius (Le Roux 200:37) categorises the main causes of abuse as follows: community factors; parental factors; child factors and cultural factors. Labuschangne (Le Roux 2000:63) also emphasises the role of cultural belief in child abuse. Researchers are thus ad idem that the causes of child abuse can be found in the community itself (Le Roux, 2000:36).

In the discussion that follows, the categories that Belsky (1980) suggests will be used, because it is deemed more applicable to the situation and cultural context of South Africa. Bolen (2001:143) points out that the macrosystem, and secondarily, the exosystem are the most critical factors needed to understand the risks of child abuse. She maintains that the less important risk factors at the level of the family are best conceptualised, since these factors represent the influence of the macrosystem and the exosystem on the family. She also indicates that the least important level is that of the child. Like the family level, factors at the level of the child are best understood in terms of the confluence of the ontogenic factors as they converge with the expectations of the greater society. According to her, these ecological influences then combine in a complex manner which subsequently
interact with the developmental trajectory of the children to explain the risk of abuse (Bolen, 2001).

2.4.2 Macrosystem

Belsky (Bolen 2001:143) believes that the macrosystem is the larger cultural fabric in which the individual, the family and the community are inextricably interwoven. Belsky describes the society’s attitudes towards violence, corporal punishment, and children as one of the most important factors that foster child abuse. Hence, when discussing sexual child abuse, the most important factor may be society’s attitude towards male privileges and sexuality.

Within this same context, Herman (1992:182) suggests that if the prevailing political and economic systems do not value the lives of children, then their victimisation flourish. This indicates that when a problem is as pervasive as that of child abuse, it must be assumed that certain social conditions coalesce to maintain it. It will therefore be absurd to consider the problem of violence in South Africa without considering society’s tolerance of the violence. It is therefore logical to assume that certain societal level conditions foster a culture in which child abuse is allowed to thrive.

Studies by Van der Waal (1996:100) indicate that in some African settlements, violence is an effective social and economic strategy used to compete for scarce resources. The lack of resources, such as education, economic influence and the accepted rights of children result that the use of threats, and physical or symbolic violence are ways to keep social hierarchy in place. Gill (1979:385) and Hurley (1999:96) explain that the social and cultural violence precipitate child abuse within the family. The abused child learns that violence and aggressive behaviour is an acceptable way of life. As a result the abused child becomes an aggressive adult who in turns acts violently towards his or her own children.

A child who is raised in an environment that lacks stimulation is deprived of his or her childhood, according to Helfer (1980:39). In an environment where no stimulation for the child exists and where the child cannot fully realise his or her potential, the danger exists that such a child can be physically abused (Calam & Franchi, 1987:19). The macrosystem focuses on cultural beliefs, values, and dynamics that
may foster child abuse such as: power, oppression, socialisation, generational effects and collective denial.

2.4.3 Exosystem

Belsky, Cicchett and Lynch (Bolen 2001:148) describe exosystem as a group of formal and informal social structures that are available within the immediate community of the child and his or her family. Important causal factors in this regard are the neighbourhood in which the family lives, the schools, the workplace and the availability of needed resources.

Bolen (2001:149), however, points out that the link between the exosystem and child abuse remains elusive. She indicates that no factor at the level of the exosystem has consistently been able to predict a history of child abuse. As a result she states that the following factors may relate to the risk of sexual child abuse: availability of appropriate and safe childcare, educational systems, connectedness, and safety within the community.

It must, however, be noted that the exosystem is not as critical as the macrosystem when determining the risk of abuse, but most likely continues to play an essential role. The most important role is the transmission of cultural values and believes which occur through the institutions at this level, primarily the school and the church. Through their role as the socialisers of children, they may, inadvertently maintain dynamics that allow child abuse to thrive.

Bolen (2001:151), describes the children as another important, but less formal institution that inadvertently increases the risk of child abuse because poverty provides grounds for the unequal access to safety of children in America. She also points out that children and their family’s connectedness to social networks may act as a buffer against child abuse.

Kellerman (1979:5) and Soni (1997:32) identify poor housing and environmental conditions as factors that can precipitate child abuse. In the same vein, Kempe and Kempe (1978:36) also conclude that poor socio-economic conditions can result in child abuse. According to Le Roux (2000:36), these authors are of the opinion that “... the enervating effect of continues poverty and the helpless frustration of social
discrimination undeniable contributes to a long pattern of failure”.

2.4.4 Microsystem

Belsky, Cicchetti and Lynch (Bolen 2001:152) describe the microsystem as the level on which children interact with their families. This level includes family dynamics, parenting styles, psychological resources of the parents and the developmental histories of the parents.

Within this same context, Herman (1992:184) states that, since parents are the natural caretakers of their children they are regarded as the first line of defence against any external threat to their children. If the parents fail to play this role, their children are at risk. He therefore assumes that parents with personality problems can be a threat to their children, since such parents who have low stress tolerance levels and abuse alcohol and drugs can easily abuse their children.

Research conducted by Blackburn (1994:241) indicates that a child’s characteristics may increase the risk of abuse, since it will impose stress on the parent or might lead to parental rejection of the child. Friendrich, Boristain and Blackburn (1994:241) state that abused children show greater incidences of premature, mental retardation, physical handicaps and temperament difficulties. These anomalies allow abusive parents to perceive their children as different.

Low parental intelligence has also been implicated in cases of abuse. Clinicians attribute abuse to the defective control of aggressive impulses, because of emotional deprivation during the childhood of abusers. This depravation often produces frustrated dependency needs, an inability to empathise, and the misunderstanding of the requirements of child rearing. When these mothers are in a stressful situation, they turn to their children for emotional gratification, projecting their aggression on the child when their needs are not met (Van der Hoven 1998:24).

The traditional focus upon the risk factor involved in child abuse have been at the level of the family (microsystem) and the child (ontogenic). In this case, family dysfunctionality (i.e. unhealthy patterns of relating) has received special attention as a risk factor for intrafamilial abuse.
2.4.5 Ontogenic

Belsky (Bolen 2001:155) describes the ontogenic risk factors as factors that are intrinsic to children. Processes such as the children’s negotiation of the various developmental periods, the nature of their internal representational models of themselves and others, their ability to regulate emotions, cope with stress, develop autonomous selves, form effective peer relationships and their successful adaptation to schools are included at this level. Alternatively, the ontogenic level is seen as a process where external factors coalesce internally. In this regard Bolen (2001:155) maintains that children’s attachments are externally mediated by the attachment figure’s representational model. She states that children’s coping mechanisms are partially shaped by external socialisation processes, that this model conceptualises risk factors at the ontogenic level, not as those innate to the child, but as those that mainly develop through external processes.

It must be pointed out that at this level, children’s attachment statuses are probably risk factors and the most important risk factors may be whether the children are available and attractive to potential offenders as well as vulnerable. Insecurely attached children, however, may be at greater risk of abuse, but one must understand that the children’s attachments are directly affected by their parent’s attachments.

2.5 EXPLANATIONS OF CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

2.5.1 Background of theoretical explanations

Since the mid 1970’s, several more sophisticated theories of child abuse have been developed. Those that attempt to clarify why certain individuals may abuse a child includes the sociobiological theories (William & Finkelhor, 1995), feminist theories (Herman, 1990), attachment theories (Alexander 1992; Marschall, Hudson, and Hodkinson 1993), and behavioural theories, including the conditioning theory and social learning theory.
The early views regarding the primary causes of abuse have expanded to move beyond disturbed adults or children to include the more pervasive influences of parent-child relationships, the family environment, socio-economic disadvantages and the cultural sanctioning of violence and corporal punishment.

In their studies, Miller-Perrin and Perrin (1999) note that these theories have been incorporated into multidimensional interactional theories that emphasise the interplay between these various factors. They cite Belsky’s (1994) and Wolfe’s (1991) multiple risk factors that have been implicated in the empirical literature as playing a role in the physical abuse of children.

In the same vein, Justin and Justin (Crosson-Tower 1999:90) suggest that the findings of a variety of studies can be framed in terms of seven models - more complex in and of themselves but to a degree overlapping with each other. These are ... (1) the psycho-dynamic model, (2) the personality or character-trait model, (3) the social learning model, (4) the family structure model (5) the environmental stress model, (6) the social-psychological model and (7) the mental illness model. They conclude that non of these models give an accurate explanation for the causes of abuse, and contend that only a model that approaches the problem from a systemic point of view, can properly represent the interplay of multiple forces that result in abuse.

In an attempt to explain crimes committed against children, Tzeng, Jackson and Karlson (Crosson-Tower 1999:91) identify nine paradigms, each encompassing several theories. These paradigms are: (1) the individual determinants paradigm, which includes several theories concerned with the abnormal characteristics of the perpetrator, (2) the socio-cultural determinant paradigms, covering the social system theory, (3) the individual-environmental interaction paradigms which involve theories that consider the interaction between the abusers and their environment, and (4) the offender typology paradigms, which categorises abusers. Other paradigms include (5) the family system paradigms, which include five theories outlining parental interaction with the abused child, (7) the socio-biological paradigm which emphasises the role that genetic factors play in human behaviour, (8) the learning situational paradigms which apply learning theories to the abuse situations declaring that abusive, violent behaviour is learned and (9) the ecological paradigm, which merges theories that use the variable of the individual, the family, the community and...
all societal and cultural factors to explain the abuse of children.

Crosson-Tower (1999:91) states that when one considers the abundance of theories and several similarities, it is imperative to create three categories, each encompassing several of the above models. She thus proposes the following categories: psychopathological, interactional and the environmental-sociological-cultural theories. The psychopathological theories stress the characteristics of the abuser as the primary cause of the abuse, (psychodynamic, mental-illness, and character-trait theory), whereas the interactional theories view abuse as the result of a dysfunctional system (family structure theory). The environmental-sociological-cultural argue that the primary contributing factors for abuse originate from the immediate environment, society, or culture (social-psychological and psychosocial-system). These categories will be used to explain child abuse for the purposes of this research.

2.5.2 Explanation(s) of physical crimes against children

Psychopathological categories

Individual pathology theory or psycho-dynamic theory

Researchers have allegedly traced the discovery of child abuse to the 1962 publication of the battered child syndrome. Kempe and colleague (1962) argue that child abusers are psychopathic and in need of psychiatric treatment. They suggest that physical child abuse is a rare social problem, which facilitates the assumption that perpetrators are disturbed individuals who must be ‘sick and crazy’. They also postulate that abusers have particular traits that include the lack of ability to trust, low frustration tolerance, immaturity and are often abusers of drugs and alcohol (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:86); (Crosson-Tower 1999:90).

According to Factor and Wolfe, Fontana and Mufson as well as Kranz (Crosson-Tower 1999:92), abusive parents are part of a vicious cycle of parental inadequacy. They believe that the abusive parents also come from battered homes. These parents are characterised by tension and unhappiness. Their inner conflicts are products of their unsatisfactory childhood that manifest themselves in the battering of their own children.
One can therefore assume according to this model that the parent has the potential to abuse, based on his or her rearing, and when faced with a particular child with whom he or she cannot bond adequately, he or she experiences a crises that sets the abusive act in motion.

Another aspect of the psycho-dynamic theory is role reversal - that is when parents expect their children to nurture them and assume parental roles. This need to be parented by one’s own children can be traced to the rejection or unmet needs of the parents in their own family of origin (Crosson-Tower 1999:93). Within this model, Galdston (1974:234) maintains that parents “…speak of the child as if he were an adult with the adult’s capacity for deliberate, purposeful and organised behaviour... The parent then proceeds to spontaneously associate their reaction to the child with personage and experience from their own childhood”. Galdston refers to these parent problems as transference neurosis, or the parents’ rejection of the child is a result of unresolved feelings from childhood, and more appropriately directed towards their own parents. Only a small group of abusive parents meet the criteria for severe psychiatric disorders.

Gills (Crosson-Tower 1999:93) argue for what he calls the psychopathological theory, and states that sociological as well as psychological factors must receive attention in an attempt to explain why parents abuse their children. Abusers often exhibit specific non-psychiatric psychological, behavioural and biological characteristics that distinguish them from non abusers such as anger control problems, depression, parenting difficulties, physiological hyperactivity, and substance abuse.

Character-trait theory

Crosson-Tower (1999:93) describes this model as similar to the psycho-dynamic model since it attributes particular traits to the abusive parents, without consideration for the etiology of those characteristics. She maintains that abusive parents are seen as self-centred, immature, and impulse ridden, but little attention is given to the reasons behind these characteristics.
In a bid to explain physical child abuse within the context of this model, Merrill (Crosson-Tower, 1999:94) proposes four classifications of abusers based on particular characteristics; the first group is ‘Parents who feel hostile towards the world’. The lives of these parents are filled with hostilities and anger that can erupt with the slightest provocation that manifests itself in abuse. The second group of parents are rigid, compulsive, cold, and unbending in their believes. They demand complete obedience and cleanliness from their children and are not at all amenable to compromise. These parents see their children as property, and it is their right to abuse them if they choose. Merrill’s third group of parents is often depressed, moody, and immature, with a sense of competitiveness with their children, especially for the love and attention of their spouse. The last group is fathers who are young and intelligent but somehow disabled, who stay at home while their wives work. As a result, they become frustrated because of their situation and their anger is directed towards their children in the form of rigid discipline.

In another effort to explain character-traits that result in behaviour that causes abuse, Delsordo (Crosson-Tower 1999:93), categorises five types of parenting that may lead to abuse. The first one is;

Mentally ill parents who see their children as part of their delusionary perceptions, some parents describe how they exorcise the devil as they abuse their children. Others believe their children want to harm them and perceive their abuse as self-protection,

...teeming frustration, irresponsibility, and lack of confidence promote abuse by pleasure-seeking parents who feel little or no guilt about their abusive behaviour,

...a non-specific disturbance is a catchall phrase for the parents of battered children who are hospitalised,

...overly severe and rigid discipline, for failing to match up to parental expectations is seen as a cause for abuse. The homes of these parents are spotless, and orders are maintained at all costs.

...misplaced abuse category is the last one. These parents often experience the stress of conception before marriage, or a handicapped child, marital dispute, or an interruption in parent bonding or prolong separation of the child and the subsequent return of a particular child. Unable to cope with their lives, these parents abuse their children.
Some theories focus on the child’s behaviour as an explanation for child abuse. As stated in the literature, certain characteristics of the child places him or her at risk of abuse. Difficult behaviour, young age and physical and mental disabilities are all characteristics of children that are associated with abuse (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:86). They also state that, though it is difficult to determine which of these traits result in abuse, a child’s mental disability may have existed at birth or could be the result of abuse.

Whatever the case, it must be pointed out that physical child abuse is associated with childcare that is more demanding and difficult. Children cannot be held responsible for their victimisation (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:87). In addition, there is considerable evidence that child characteristics alone do not adequately explain the occurrence of physical child abuse (Erikson & Egeland, 1996:15).

Interactional theories

Cerezo and Crittenden (Trickett & Schllenbach 1998:15) indicate that parent-child interaction theories focus on difficult child behaviour, which interact with specific parent behaviour which then lead to abuse. In other words the behaviour of both the parent and the child, rather than either of them, promote violence.

Research by Denham, Renwick, and Holt, Dowdney and Picks (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:87) indicate that punitive parenting is associated with negative behaviour and outcome. In his explanation of physical child abuse, Martin (Crosson-Tower 1999:94) espouses the theory of Kempe and his colleagues but expands the theory somewhat, by suggesting that abusive acts necessitate a certain type of adult, a crisis, and a specific child.

A child, who is seen by everyone else as attractive and valuable, may for some egocentric reason be perceived, by the parent, as abnormal or different. Martin thus maintains that, in the same family, some children are more likely to be abused than their siblings, because of their parents’ perceptions of them. Due to this perception, the child is unable to receive adequate parenting. He points out that most parents develop a balance between their needs and the needs of their infants. Crosson-Tower (1999:94) supports Martin’s findings and states that certain aspects upset this
delicate balance of the parents to properly nurture their child and the parent may be capable of loving behaviour for some time, but at some point the anger and a less than satisfactory relationship manifests itself.

Erickson and Egeland (1996:19), Malinosky-Rummell and Hansen (1993:70) suggest that the difficulties in parent-child relationships develop during the abusers’ child’s infancy, when early attachments between them are formed. They also state that a child may be born with a challenging characteristic, such as a difficult temperament or a physical disability. Such difficulties may create an excessive challenge for a parent and interfere with the development of a secure attachment between the parent and child. This pattern can escalate and result in physical abuse when challenges exceed a parent’s tolerance or capacity threshold. In a similar fashion, Zimrin (1984:40) describes an encounter theory, in which the traits and characteristics of the parents interact with those of the children in such a way that the result is abuse. He points out that a nervous or anxious parent, who is convinced that he or she will not succeed at parenting, may have a colicky, crying baby who does not seem to be comforted. These parents, according to Zimrin, feel unsuccessful and are perhaps angered by this, while the baby feels unable to gain comfort. The crying then escalates and the result may be abuse.

Difficulties during pregnancy, labour, and delivery can have a negative effect on the attachment process (Lynch, 1976:54). Particular changes in the mother’s baby or in her life, and those that she perceive as attributable to her pregnancy or the child’s birth, may hamper her ability to bond. This disruption in attachment can be a precursor of physical abuse. Lynch also mentions that an illness of the infant or mother; changes in the mother’s life and stresses can break the tenuous bond. Lynch also argues that a mismatch of the child and the parent’s expectations can play a significant role in the abuse.

Martin and Tzeng et al. are of the opinion that these difficulties result in frustration, the sense of loss, and the feeling that the perceived failure of the child reflects the parent’s weaknesses which are translated into abusive behaviour (Crosson-Tower 1999:94).
Family-structure theories

The family structure model is largely based on the influence of the family system theory (Crosson-Tower 1999:95). She views family systems as intricate systems that must maintain some degree of balance in order to continue to exist. She also indicates that child abuse is the result of dysfunctional family patterns, such as severe enmeshment (the symbiotic dependence of the family members on each other in the fervent hope that others in the family will meet their unmet needs).

Karpel and Strauss and Tzeng et al (Crosson-Tower 1999:95) state that the family structure identifies two patterns of abusive families; namely, the parentification of children and scapegoating. They say that the parentified child is entrusted with the role of caregiver at an early age. The child is not only expected to act like an adult and take on the task of adulthood, but he or she is expected to nurture the parents. The scapegoated child represents something or someone with whom the family cannot cope. Beset with other problems that they prefer to keep secret, the family offers the scapegoat as the problem, and since they have someone to blame the rest of the family can feel blameless.

Environmental- sociological- cultural theories

Environmental stress theory

This model suggests that environmental stress is largely responsible for child abuse (Gill, 1970 & Farrington 1986). They contend that factors such as poor education, poverty, racism, unemployment and occupational stress weaken the parent’s control and the result is abusive behaviour. Gill attributes abuse to the lower socio-economic level of the society. He insists that the higher the environmental stress, the more significant the rate of abuse is. There is thus a predisposition to violence towards children in a society where such stresses prevail. Farrington states that family violence is based on the fact that families experience a great deal of stress nowadays. Strain theorists support the acknowledgement of the facts that the rates of child abuse are higher in lower income families and unemployed families. The unequal distribution of opportunities, along with the inevitable stressors associated with poverty, provides high levels of frustration in lower income families. When this stress and frustration becomes overwhelming, aggression may be directed towards

As a result of a historic pattern of strain and frustration, some researchers argue that a culture of acceptance of violence has emerged in the lower socio-economic groups. Supporters of the subculture of violence theory maintain that the lower class violence is, to an extent, a cultural norm and a way of life.

Strain and frustration may also explain abuse through, what psychologists refer to as, the frustration-aggression hypothesis. If a person or situation that is associated with aggression does not provide an available target for someone’s aroused aggression, the aggression may be displaced onto an innocent person (Conklin 2001:190). Whatever the case, some critics discount Gill’s theories because they say that these theories only explain abuse in lower socio-economic groups, and that the more affluent can cover up their abusive behaviour (Crosson-Tower 1999:95).

Social - learning theory

Many studies have demonstrated that a significant number of adults who abuse children were themselves abused as children. These adults presumably learned, through experiences with their own parents, that violence is an acceptable method of child rearing. Adults with a history of abuse also missed the opportunity to learn more appropriate and nurturing methods of adult-child interaction. Some studies support the notion that parenting styles are passed on from one generation to the next (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:87).

Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson (1990:134) state that even children who do not experience abuse directly learn violent interpersonal styles. They note that, through witnessing the negative interactions between the significant adult in their lives, children learn maladaptive or violent methods of expressing anger, handle stress, or cope with conflict. Supporting this statement, Gells, Hotaling and Sugerman and Kalmus (Crosson-Tower 1999:88) demonstrate that adults who abuse children are more likely to come from homes that are characterised by considerable marital discord and violence.
This cycle of violence is, however, not a universal law, as most abused children do not become abusive adults. Since not all children who experience physical abuse become physically abusive adults, there must be factors that mediate these intergenerational patterns (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:88).

Social - psychological theory

Crosson-Tower (1999:96) cite Gells (1973) and states that this theory assumes that frustration and stress result from such factors as marital disputes, unemployment, social isolation, unwanted or too many children and difficult or special children which are all contributing factors for to child abuse. She mentions that Gells’ model suggests that parents are predisposed, by virtue of their own individual pathology, to manifest abusive behaviour, and their pathology in turn relates to their faculty socialisation experiences as children. Gells thus maintains that, when an ill equipped parent with particular traits that he or she carries as scars from childhood, is faced with a series of societal and child-produced stresses and this is compounded with a crisis, abuse will be the result. Gells, however, do not consider the symbolic interaction between the abused and the abuser nor family patterns that are generated by and result from the abuse.

2.5.3 Explanation (s) of sexual crimes against children

Various explanations have been suggested to explain the behaviour of those who are sexually attracted to children. These explanations vary in their construction of the phenomenon of the abuse. This section analyses theories that attempt to explain why abusers sexually abuse children. These theories are derived from three disparate disciplines: biology, psychology and sociology. The analyses identifies the contradiction in, and limitation to each theory in order to determine the extent of their explanatory power regarding adult sexual behaviour with children. The validity of developing a different theoretical approach to the problem of children being sexually offended will be discussed and how alternative theoretical models of this phenomenon can be developed.
Gilmartin (1994:80-81) observes that many explanations of sexual child abuse focus predominantly on one of two issues. They either offer a psychological explanation as to why individuals do what they do, or they focus on why sexually abused children and adult survivors react in the ways that they do.

Biologically founded theories

Family pathology

The view that family pathology give rise to sexual child abuse is derived from the family system theory which mentions that, in a dysfunctional family where incest occurs, the abuse can be attributed to sexual problems between the parents. The theory proposes that the function of incest is to keep the family together with the help of the daughter who takes over the wife’s sexual role (Cossin 2001:36). As such, sexual abuse is seen as a symptom of what is wrong in the family, or even a solution to the dysfunction (MacLeod & Saraga 1988:33). The family dysfunction theory states that the family in general, or one of its members contributes to an environment that permits and possibility encourages the sexual victimisation of children.

A number of family theories focus on how the mother’s behaviour contributes, in some way, to her child’s victimisation. Early theories hold mothers responsible for the abuse, by blaming them for poor marital relationships or infrequent marital sex. According to this view, infrequent marital sex increases the husband’s sexual frustration, thus driving him to seek satisfaction elsewhere in the family (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:137).

Other theories view mothers as culpable for the abuse because of their inability to protect the victim from the offender. Mothers may also contribute to their children’s vulnerability by withdrawing from their children or being unavailable to them (Friedrich 1990:95). Mzarek and Bentonim (1981:179) have a typical family system theories approach. They indicate that, within an incestuous family, there is likely to be covert acquiescence by the mother regarding the father-daughter incest, to draw attention away from the dysfunctional relationship between the mother and father and to preserve the stability of the family unit. They consider that the father-daughter dyad is mutually dependent and reinforcing because the incest helps each of them to avoid his or her problem regarding identity and self-esteem. The family
thus share a myth that the sexual relationship between father and daughter is an acceptable and necessary part of family life together (Cossin 2001:36).

This explanation demonstrates how the family system theory is permeated by the belief regarding the role of women and men. Another view is that the family breakdown is a result of the mother who fails to fulfil her nurturing, protective and sexual role and the father, whose sexual and emotional needs are not met by his wife, is forced to turn to his daughter who serves as a surrogate wife.

Other family system theorists focus on the general characteristics of the family as a unit, rather than on individual members, and identify significant levels of dysfunction in the families where children are sexually abused (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:137). Research by Lang, Flor-Henry, and Frenzel, (1990) Pavaza, (1988) Sirles and Frank (1989) indicate that families that maintain child sexual abuse exhibit conflicting relationship, including marital conflict in the home, and spouse abuse. Other research confirm that sexual child abuse families are frequently disorganised, lack cohesion and involvement between members and are deficient with regard to community involvement, and are generally more dysfunctional (Elliot, 1994; Jackson, Calhoun, Amick, Maddever, & Habif, 1990; Madonna, Van Scoyk & Jones 1991; Ray, Jackson & Townsley 1991).

It must be pointed out that the family system theory did not escape criticism for it’s implication that mothers and daughters are active participants by creating conditions in which incest occurs and its treatment of the male offender as a passive protagonist within the family unit (Cossin 2001:37).

Cammart, De Jong and Faller (Cossin 2001:39), report that while a high degree of family dysfunction exists, the hypothesis that the mother’s failure to be sexually available drives the father to seek sexual gratification from their daughter is definitely not supported.

Family system theories predict that mothers of incest victims will not support the sexual abuse of their children, although De Jong does not support this prediction. Studies by Herman (Cossin 2001:40) reveals that family dysfunctionality can not be solely attributed to the sexual unavailability of the mother, since family dysfunction also manifests in the form of habitual violence or alcoholism on the part of the
Sexually coercive behaviour

This explanation of sexual child abuse focuses on the behavioural responses of individuals to chemical that reduce testosterone levels. This theory indicates that biologically driven sexual urges continue to make some contribution to their motivation (Cossin 2001:41). The poorer response of homosexual paedophiles to behavioural treatment suggests that their behaviour is more strongly motivated by biological factors, which can be genetically determined, or be the result of exposure to an environmentally determined variation in the sex hormone levels to which they were exposed in utero (McConaghy 1993:345-326). The explanation which emphasis men’s apparent biological propensity in order to explain coercive male sexual behaviour, creates the risk that one looks for the cause of and the solution to a complex social problem with the individual, and ignore the cultural and structural context in which it occurs.

Feminists’ understanding of rape have embraced cultural and social structure as dynamic and view these as contributing factors. This theory takes an alternative multifaceted view of sexual violence and its origin (Herman 1990:177). The feminist’s analyses of rape challenges the view of biology and psychology that rape is biologically driven and proposes that such behaviour is socially constructed. In support to this position, Scully (1990:47) observes that the absence of rape in some societies provides evidence for the proposition that, while human behaviour, including sexual behaviour, may have biological or psychological components, it is always patterned and expressed in cultural terms. In her study of rape in America, Scully found that rape serves a number of emotional and social functions, none of which can be attributed to the biological urges for sex. Men learn to rape as a result of specific social practices.

Feminists theories address the relationship between power and sexual child abuse even prior to the empirical studies of Scully. Feminists’ work characterised sexual child abuse as a function of patriarchal social structure and male socialisation (Finkelhor 1984:4), and result in male domination and the devaluation of women and children (Gilmartin: 1999:4).
One radical feminist view considers that men sexually abuse children because society gives them the power to do so. Ward (1985:77) considers that the rape of girls by their father is an integral product of our society, since it is based on male supremacist attitudes and organisation, which is reinforced by the fundamental social structure of the family. Ward’s work is, however, based on the belief that most sexual child abuse occurs within the family (Ward 1985:77). This belief is, however, not supported by the general population studies on the prevalence of sexual child abuse, which show that the common form of sexual child abuse experienced by both male and female children is extra-familial abuse. Bell (1993:3) recognises that incest must be understood within the context of a society in which men are able to exercise power over women and children in a sexualised manner.

Although there are limitations to these feminist analyses, it is, nonetheless, recognised that feminist theories represent the starting point for challenging other contemporary theories regarding the reasons behind men’s sexually abuse of children. Examples of these theories that are challenged by the feminists theories are ‘the causation to natural hormonal levels’ (McConaghy 1993:345) and the ‘family system theory of family dysfunction’. The challenge emanates from the fact that in the process of explaining the occurrences of sexual child abuse, it has mainly been feminist analyses which has taken up the challenge of query the sociological question regarding sexual child abuse (Bell 1993:3).

Socio-culturally based theories

Social and cultural factors include the broad context of society and community forces that play an aetiological role in sexual child abuse. Current theories target social attitudes and child pornography (Miller-Perrin & Perrin 1999:138).

Social attitude

Some theorists view sexual child abuse as a problem that stems from the inequality between men and women that has been perpetuated throughout history by the patriarchal social system. Rush (1980:56) extends the boundaries of inequality to include children, by pointing out that traditionally, both women and children have shared the same minority status, and, as a result, have both been subject to sexual abuse by men. Some feminist critiques of the causes of sexual child abuse have...
examined whether gender cultures create the necessary social context in which child abuse occurs. For example, MacLeod and Saraga (1988:41) have argued that masculinity is associated with sexual dominance, since generally boys learn to focus their sexual feelings on submissive objects, and they learn the assertion of their sexual desires and expect them to be served.

Child pornography

Other socio-cultural theories of sexual child abuse implicate the media and their portrayals of children as a factor in sexual child abuse. Child pornography is one type of media that may stimulate sexual interest in children and ranges from photographs to films or video tapes, to magazines and books that depict children in sexually explicit acts (Miller-Perrin and Perrin 1999:138). Research that evaluates the relationship between child pornography produces mixed results, some studies fail to support the hypothesised relationship between abuse and pornography and others find that child molesters use pornography (Murrin and Laws 1990:95).

Social learning

The social learning focuses on the absorption of experiences and reinforcement. It means that acts that are rewarded, or those that go unpunished, become part of the observer’s repertoire of acceptable behaviour (Van der Hoven 1998:26). According to Van der Hoven, a fear exists that children who watch their parents engage in violent outburst towards each other will come to accept this behaviour as permissible. She adds that children who are abused run the risk of thinking that this behaviour is acceptable because their parents act like that. As a result, when these children are adults and form their own intimate relationships, these same acts of violence are likely to be repeated.

The perception therefore is that abused children will grow up to become abusers. There is, however, a great deal of debate as to whether past victimisation can explain sexual abuse. More additional research is needed before any final conclusion regarding the concept of the cycle of abuse can be drawn (Doerner and Lab 1995:150).
2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the crimes that are committed against children were described explained and analysed. Key words were defined and attention was mainly given to physical and sexual crimes against children, especially the indecent assault and rape of children. The various forms of physical crimes such as burns, (wet and contact burns) bruises, head injuries and the most complicated forms of physical child abuse to detect, Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy were discussed. The forms of sexual crimes against children such as rape, indecent assault, sodomy and incest were also discussed.

The nature and incidence of crimes against children in South Africa were analysed in terms of the provincial crime statistics. The various causes of these crimes were also discussed.

The causes of these crimes were discussed in terms of Belsky’s four systemic levels: the macrosystem, the exosystem, the microsystem and the ontogenic system. Finally, the theoretical explanations of these crimes were analysed. The individual pathology theory or the psycho-dynamic theory, the character trait theory, the parent interaction theory, the child behaviour problems, the family structure theory, the environmental stress theory, the social learning theory and the socio-psychological theories were used to explain physical crimes against children. Sexual crimes against children were explained within the framework of the biological and sociological theories.

The complexities regarding an understanding of the causes and explanations of crimes against children, and the limitations associated with the explanatory power of a number of theories were discussed. In an attempt to overcome these limitations some researchers have attempted to integrate the different theories into one cohesive explanation. For example, some theories have been developed in relation to highly specific types of offences with very little recognition of the similarities between the different types of offenders and the possibility that child abusers may have similar motivations, which are independent of the relationship with the child.

In this regard, Finkelhor (1984) developed the first multi-factorial analyses of child sex offences. Finkelhor incorporated both psychological and sociological theories of sexual child abuse into a model designed to explain how men, in the face of the
social proscription against sex with children, overcome their inhibitions and sexually abuse a child (Cossin 2001: 71).

This chapter has established that there is a basis for proposing that a different theoretical approach to understanding child abuse is needed, because of the failure of the available theories to provide answers to the teething questions of child abuse.

The next chapter addresses the task to interrogate the nature, types, characteristic, and explanations of the criminals and the victims of child abuse.