

DEATH IN THE BALANCE - A CONSTRUCTIVIST
INTERPRETATION OF THE IMPACT OF AWAITING
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT ON DEATH ROW PRISONERS

by

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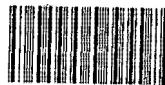
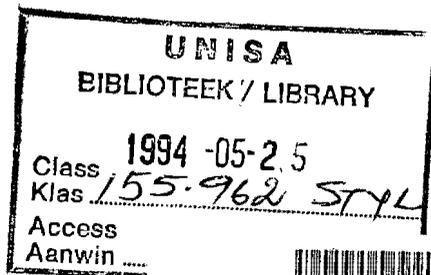
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DEDICATED TO BRIAN.



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SUMMARY

The epistemological framework, 'constructivism', posits the notion that we can only know our own construction of others and the world and not the objective truth about others and the world. Constructivism has been used in this study to describe the psychological experiences of death row inmates.

The research design focused on the experiences of three prisoners currently serving their sentences at Pretoria's Maximum Prison. The use of narrative and its concomitant interpretation was used as a method of co-research as it was viewed to be coterminous with the idea of co-construction, where the experience between this co-researcher and the prisoners could be linked up in a systemic, temporal and thematically consistent way.

Despite the content of the material being subjective and nongeneralisable, it has been attuned to bring forth distinctions that are liable to be heuristic -- this generated an enticing novelty that stimulated this co-researcher.

Readers are wished a similar outcome.

Musée Des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong,
 The Old Masters: how well they understood
 Its human position; how it takes place
 While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking
 dully along;
 How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
 For the miraculous birth, there always must be
 Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
 On a pond at the edge of the wood:
 They never forgot
 That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
 Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
 Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's
 horse
 Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away
 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
 Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
 But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
 As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
 Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
 Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

W.H. Auden (Phythian & Litt,
 1983, p.132)



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Death Sentence

The South African legislature has laid down various kinds of punishment which the South African courts may impose upon persons convicted of an offense. One of these punishments, and the most severe one as cited in the Criminal Procedure Act No 51, Section 277 (1) (a)-(f) of 1977, is the sentence of death, which can only be imposed by a superior court. This act as annotated in the statutes of the Republic of South Africa reads:

(1) "The sentence of death may be passed by a superior court only, and only in the case of a conviction for -

- (a) murder;
- (b) treason committed when the Republic is in a state of war;
- (c) robbery or attempted robbery if the court finds aggravating circumstances to have been present;
- (d) kidnapping;
- (e) child-stealing;
- (f) rape."

The sentence of death is imposed after the presiding judge, conjointly with assessors, has made a finding on the presence or absence of any mitigating factors, and if the presiding judge or court is satisfied that the sentence of death is the proper

sentence. The death sentence cannot however be imposed upon an accused who is under the age of 18 years. Furthermore, section 279 (1) (c) of the same act describes the manner of carrying out the death sentence: "As soon as practicable after a sentence of death has been passed, the judge who passed the sentence shall issue a warrant to the sheriff or his deputy for the execution of the sentence."

Reliable statistical information concerning the incidence of executions in this country is not as easy as the sections in the statute books to come by. The principal source of statistical information is the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Prisons; however since 1976 the reports have omitted information concerning executions. Since then the only official data is that provided in Parliament in response to questions (Statistics, 1989). According to Swart (1989) 994 people were executed in South Africa from 1983 to 1987. The South African Criminal Journal (Statistics, 1989) has also compiled statistics that quantify and illustrate in graphic form the aspects of the death sentence in South Africa. According to them and to Murray (1988) the cumulative total executions for the years 1983 to 1987 amounts to 627. Capital punishment is therefore an active feature of South African Justice and there has been a renewed interest in a range of questions about capital punishment (Johnson, 1981).

Problem Definition

Death in the Balance

The death penalty is an issue that lies in the balance. Its future in the statute books is uncertain. On February 2, 1990. South African State President FW de Klerk

announced that

the Government decided that the death penalty should be limited as an option of sentence to extreme cases, and specifically through broadening judicial discretion in the imposition of sentence and that an automatic right of appeal be granted to those under sentence of death. (Holt, 1990, p.317)

De Klerk added that "all executions have been suspended and no executions will take place until Parliament has taken a final decision on the new proposals." (Holt, 1990, p. 317).

De Klerk's announcement does not abolish the death penalty. Nor does it eliminate the possibility of further politically related executions. In announcing the release of people imprisoned "merely because they were members of banned organisations", de Klerk stated specifically that those "sentenced for other offenses such as murder, terrorism or arson are not affected" and will not be released (Holt, 1990, p.342). For some, such as Holt (1990), de Klerk's statement is encouraging in that international appeals can now be directed to South African judges, asking them to afford complete protection of essential human rights in all capital cases. Multilateral, government-to-government, judge-to-judge and individual appeals can all have an impact. For others, such as Mureinik (1990), the death penalty announcement is regarded as a mere leaf on the olive branch extended by the State President. It has been construed as an intentional gesture of conciliation.

The government's more recent proposals on a charter of fundamental rights on February 2, 1993 have recently been described by Fabricus (1993, p. 32) in the following

terms: "Ramshackle edifice built on quicksand."

Amongst the howls of outrage, one needs to point at the government's explanation that the charter was not intended to be a final proposal, but was rather published in order to serve as a basis for the then coming negotiations.

Section 4 of the charter provided for the protection of life. It stated that persons have the right to life (Fabricus, 1993). It further stipulated that no persons shall be deprived of his or her life intentionally, save in the execution of a death sentence imposed in accordance with section 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The relevant article reads as follows (Fabricus, 1993, p. 34):
TO A LAW."

Indications gleaned from policy statements of the African National Congress, the National Party of South Africa, as well as the Democratic Party tend to lean in the direction of a total abolition of the death penalty. In the meanwhile, the death penalty is left for the attention of a future parliament which is to draft the final Bill of Rights. In the interim, however, it is still to be maintained (Fabricus, 1993).

While opinions and facts of this nature are readily available in the literature, the psychological experiences of persons relegated to death row have not been a major concern. Physical death is only one part of the death penalty. The consequences, however, vibrate throughout the individual and his experiences of the happening, throughout the social structure and include persons in an ever widening circle of impact (Smykla, 1987). The circle begins with the offender and victim and expands to include the families of both the victim and offender, judges, attorneys, fellow inmates and

society to name a few. Yet, the psychological impact of capital punishment has received very little exposure in social science literature. One can only speculate why this is so. It may be that researchers are more concerned with the political and legal issues of capital punishment, as has been highlighted so far. Another possible reason is that the relevant persons, for example families, are shielded from the public and want to protect their privacy. Further, the methodologies of some researchers may be too much guided by the philosophy of the physical and empirical sciences to allow them, as social scientists, to enter the private world of condemned men.

Decker and Kohfeld (1987) used a 48 year time series study (1933 to 1980 inclusive) to analyse the effect of executions and the death penalty on the frequency of homicides in Illinois. The first series of results were presented in a graph depicting the frequencies of executions and homicides per year. The second series of the analysis compared the mean homicide rates for three time periods -- years with executions; years when the death penalty was allowed but no executions were performed; and years in which the death penalty was abolished by the United States Supreme Court. No notable differences in homicide rates were observed during these three eras. Finally, a regression analysis, which included a lag structure and several relevant controls, was performed. The deterrence measure (executions) made no contribution to the variation in homicide rates. The authors concluded that the death penalty had no deterrent effect on homicides in Illinois.

A report on capital punishment compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in Rockvill, USA paid attention to such factors as: summaries of Supreme Court ruling on capital punishment; changes in state laws that took place in 1989; methods of execution; capital offenses; minimum ages for capital punishment in each state;

details about the size of each states's death row; and the pace of executions in the USA since 1930. The report also offered demographic profiles and statistics about the criminal records of the nation's death row inmates (Stewart, 1989).

More recently in South Africa, Smith (1992) studied the attitudes of South Africans toward aspects related to the death penalty. Data was gathered by means of surveys of representative samples of white, coloureds and Indians, of 18 years and older in all urban areas of South Africa. The surveys were conducted by the Opinion Survey Centre of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). To detect any subgroup differences in attitudes, the HSRC analysed the data by means of the Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) multivariate statistical technique. His findings revealed a strong belief in the deterrent effects of the death penalty, as 74% of whites and 63% of coloureds and Indians believed that more crime would be committed if the death penalty were to be abolished in South Africa.

Although research has, up until now, focused mainly on empirical studies and factual reports, such as the ones mentioned above, there are several compelling reasons for investigating the psychological consequences of capital punishment. First, information concerning the psychological impact of this experience is relevant not only to those persons involved in writing and implementing capital sentence but also to correctional personnel and the general public. Legislators, according to Smykla (1987), must fully understand the consequences of their decisions regarding the capital sanction. Correctional personnel need such information because they are responsible for the care of condemned men. The general public whose views influence policy, may also benefit from a more complete description of the capital punishment process.

A second reason to focus on the psychological consequences of capital

punishment is based on the view that all persons included in the capital punishment circle can be seen as victims (Smykla, 1987). If social justice is ever to be achieved, it will be necessary to expand our views about good and evil and to include many more individuals in the examination of victimisation.

Goals

The aim of this dissertation is to focus on and offer an interpretation of the psychological impact of capital punishment on death row inmates. The underlying epistemology of the dissertation is what Atkinson and Heath (1987, p. 7) call "new wave" research. "New wave" theorists argue that even if there is an ontologically real world, we cannot have objective access to it -- all descriptions are shaped by the perspective of the observer. "Old hat" methods are more rigorous and assume that we are able to obtain an accurate and objective view of the world (Atkinson & Heath, 1987, p.7). The studies conducted by Decker and Kohfeld (1987) and Smith (1992) described previously, qualify for the "old hat" way of seeing the world. Constructivism on the other hand, which is "new wave" and the general theoretical position of this study, does not reject the existence of an independently existing external world. Rather, it rejects the notion that we can have direct access to that world through objective observation or analysis (O'Connor & Lubin, 1990).

The study in this dissertation is designed to capture as much of the tapestry of the lives of the condemned men as possible. The design of the research will attempt to conform to the principles of the new epistemology rather than the mechanistic explanation of phenomena, and as such accentuates the active participation of the

researcher in acquiring information. Given this epistemological stance, the onus is on the researcher to relate what she sees, with the understanding that what she relates might not conform to another's perception. It credits the observer with a part in the creation of his or her reality. Von Glasersfeld comments (1978, p. 40):

We thus redefine "knowledge" as pertaining to invariances in the living organism's experience rather than to entities, structures and events in an independently existing world. Correspondingly, we redefine "perception". It is not the reception or duplication of information that is coming in from the outside, but rather the construction of invariances by means of what the organism can assimilate and organize its experience.

The shift to a constructivist epistemology is no small one. It is not a question of merely adjusting a definition or rearranging familiar concepts in a somewhat random fashion. The change involves the demolition of our everyday conception of reality and shakes the very foundation on which 19th century science and most of 20th century psychology has been built.

Chapter 2 is devoted to this theoretical stance and introduces the reader to the history, principles and concepts of a constructivist approach.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTIVIST EPISTEMOLOGY

It is the purpose of this chapter to begin with a description of Newtonian physics and its influence on science, thus introducing the reader to a positivistic, linear epistemology. Constructivist or systemic epistemology will then be introduced in order to highlight the differences between Newtonian and constructivist outlooks. As constructivism is a central notion of the systemic approach (and the approach of this thesis as a whole), it will be described in detail. The ways in which these new ideas affect systems work and the notion of co-construction of reality will be highlighted in the conclusion of the chapter.

Introduction to Newtonian Physics

Newtonian physics, the most influential mode of thinking ever introduced into the field of science, is named after Isaac Newton. Descartes created the conceptual framework for seventeenth-century science, but his view of nature as a "perfect machine, governed by exact mathematical laws, had to remain a vision during his lifetime" (Capra, 1983, p.39). The man who realised the Cartesian dream and completed the Scientific Revolution was Isaac Newton. He developed a complete mathematical formulation of the mechanistic view of nature, and thus accomplished a grand synthesis of the works of Copernicus and Kepler, Bacon, Galileo and Descartes. Newtonian

physics, the crowning achievement of seventeenth-century science, provided a consistent mathematical theory of the world that remained the solid foundation of scientific thought well into the twentieth century (Capra, 1983). It rests on the following three notions:

Reductionism or Atomism

According to Newtonian thinking, in order to understand a phenomenon, it needs to be broken down into its most basic elements, which are simpler and more easily understood than the whole. Furthermore they are often measurable (Schwartzman, 1984), whereas the 'whole' is not. Once the elements and their properties are known, an understanding of the whole phenomenon can be achieved by recombining the elements.

Linear Causality

Elements are viewed as connected to one another through cause and effect. Apples fall from trees because of the action of gravity, which is a property of the earth. Complex phenomena are seen as being made up of long causal trains (Hoffman, 1981).

Neutral Objectivity

The apple falling from the tree is seen as independent of the observer unless the latter shakes the tree. The search for the truth about phenomena should therefore be

such that the search itself does not affect this truth. To arrive at the truth objectivity of observation is necessary (Colapinto, 1979).

When dealing with phenomena, such as those of classical physics, this Newtonian way of thinking is useful (Lynn & Rhue, 1991). Early in this century, though, physicists such as Einstein and Heisenberg showed that the intricacies of quantum physics required a different way of thinking about the world (Capra, 1983). Despite this observation, the natural sciences continued their adherence to a Newtonian way of thinking. The social sciences followed suit -- in order to understand human behaviour it is necessary to reduce it into its basic elements which were seen as interconnected via cause and effect and which were regarded as uninfluenced by the process and contexts of study (Lynn & Rhue, 1991). These elements which were often hypothetical constructs were treated as if they were real and concrete. This process of reification resulted in the wide acceptance of the existence of entities such as the 'ego', the 'unconscious', etcetera (Sarbin & Coe, 1972).

In Haley's (1971) Review of the Family Therapy Field he explains how researchers and therapists, prior to the family therapy movement which took off in the 1950s, focused mainly upon intrapsychic factors within individuals and upon changing those individuals.

The movement toward therapy and research with whole families appeared in the 1950s, but just why a few broke away from the established ideas about "providing patients with insight into his unconscious conflicts" (Haley, 1971, p. 2) is unclear. Moreover, investigators in the 1950s faced a continually *changing* unit of observation. They first shifted from the individual to the dyad. But the dyad proved unsatisfactory, and they moved to the triad. This was the period of emphasis on the nuclear family.

Then, perhaps, with the recognition of the importance of extended kin and the social context of the family, the unit shifted to an even larger ecological network (Hoffman, 1985). Sometimes a therapist noticed that, when his patient did change in individual therapy, there were consequences within the family. This kind of change forced the therapist to think of the social function of psychopathology (Keeney, 1979).

Within each of these steps both researchers and therapists sought an appropriate social model (Haley, 1971). The most consistently popular model was a systems theory derived from cybernetics (Hoffman, 1981). This model could deal with interacting elements responding to one another in a self-corrective way, which is the way family members were seen to behave. Communication terminology began to be part of the language of this field, and family behaviour was analysed for body movement communication as well as for linguistic and verbal behaviour (Haley, 1971).

The first adaptation of a technological model to the field of human behaviour, referred to as first-order cybernetics, used as its referent the world of machines (Hoffman, 1981). Based on developments in computer science and communication engineering, cybernetics is used to describe the general principles of how systems operate. It is chiefly concerned with control mechanisms and their associated communications systems, particularly those which involve feedback of information to the mechanism about its activities (Sluzki, 1983). The description of processes that could be applied to human behaviour were designed to explain how systems maintained and changed their organisation and emphasised control and recursiveness (Hoffman, 1985).

Recursiveness, through negative and positive feedback, was the term used for maintenance and change respectively, that occurred in a system. However, the first-

order cybernetic model did not take into account the observer's part in either facilitating or blocking the self-correction that may have been occurring in the system. It also took, too literally, the notion of a homeostatic machine with a governor. Therefore it was said that a "family needs a symptom" or "a symptom serves a homeostatic function" (Hoffman, 1981, p. 76). To use this kind of language is to assume a dualism between one part of the system and another part. It would be more apt to say that all parts, in an equal and co-ordinate fashion, are engaged in whatever ordering of constancy or change is in question (Dell, 1979). If we saw a homeostatic regulator, this was only something that we, as observers, imposed upon the process.

As increasing fields of scientific enquiry encountered problems, the inadequacies of a Newtonian and first-order way of thinking became clear -- one cannot often understand the whole by means of a synthesis of the parts. Criticism of the Newtonian epistemology of science came from the natural sciences (Capra, 1983; Prigogine, 1984), biology (Maturana, 1975), anthropology (Bateson, 1972, 1979), and various branches of family therapy (Keeney, 1979).

In the physical as well as the behavioural and social sciences prior to the 1970s, an epistemological systemic assumption was that change was only 'meaningful' if it was continuous over a certain range of possibilities. Discontinuous change was, in a way, ignored as an aberration, or alternatively 'smoothed over' by conceptualising change as cyclical, as is homeostasis with its positive and negative feedback loops. This could be termed a developmental model of change (Dell & Goolishian, 1981). The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that all structure invariably degrades toward a point of unstructured equilibrium (Dell & Goolishian, 1981). In contrast to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the Second Law of Systems postulates that cohesion and unification

are accounted for by the tendency of things "to become more and more orderly if they are left to themselves" (Dell & Goolishian, 1981, p. 98), that is, "order through fluctuation" or "order out of chaos" (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, p. 76). This shift indicated that change could be sudden, discontinuous, irreversible and random (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). This was an *evolutionary* model of change rather than the previously posed developmental stepwise model.

In a similar vein, Bateson (1972) began to talk more and more about the dangers of "linear" (Hoffman, 1985, p. 8) or nonholistic thinking and about the epistemological errors implicit in ideas of power, control and change. Keeney, together with Sprenkle, Allman and Dell used Batesonian arguments to question the use of a narrowly pragmatic framework for family therapy. They attacked the concept of homeostasis and their essays in *Family Process* sparked off numerous debates (Allman, 1982; Dell, 1982; Keeney & Sprenkle, 1982). Maturana (1975) offered his contribution by contrasting a control model for living systems (the input-output model of the engineers) with an "autopoietic" (p. 11) model (living systems respected in the dimension of their wholeness rather than as objects to manipulate).

These critical concepts serve as a preliminary discussion to second-order cybernetics and attest to a disillusionment with a Newtonian and first-order outlook. These new concepts, as and when they pertain to this dissertation will be discussed in a subsequent section on second-order cybernetics. The next section, however, is devoted to what is meant by second-order cybernetics and how it differs, rather fundamentally, from the Newtonian perspective.

Introduction to Systemic Epistemology

There are many different systemic approaches. The broad meaning attached to the term "systemic" in this dissertation is in line with what is sometimes called a "second-order cybernetic constructivist perspective", which according to Hoffman "took root in the mid-1980s" (Hoffman, 1981, p. 98).

The first way in which this systemic approach differs from a Newtonian perspective is that it does not reduce any circumstance into elements or parts. Neither does it reify such elements (Lynn & Rhue, 1991). Anxiety, for example, is not seen to occur as a result of excessive instinctual stimulation, which the organism is unable to bind or handle. The concepts of *holism* and *interconnectedness* have replaced reductionism and reification (Bogdan, 1984).

The second difference relates to cause. Behaviours, for example, are not caused by anything. Behaviour constitutes an evolutionary step in the developing of the interdependent network of ideas existing in the system at that time (Hoffman, 1981). The concepts of *co-evolution* and *structural coupling* have replaced linear causality (Maturana, 1975).

The third way in which this systemic approach differs from a Newtonian perspective, is that it links with the well documented untenability of the notion of objectivity (Bateson, 1972; Dell, 1975). Ideas which develop and continually evolve in any situation are seen as being co-constructed -- this means that everybody partakes in the construction of ideas. There is nothing real or objective about the interplay of the participants' idiosyncratic ideas. Hence *constructivism*, rather than the notion of objectivity is taken up in order to make sense of the world (Hoffman, 1985). These

theoretical developments led to "Second Cybernetics", of which constructivism is the notion that posits the idea that all reality is constructed and there is no correct depiction of a "world out there" (Varela, 1979, p. 87). At root, constructivism simply represents a preference for the Kantian model of knowledge over the Lockean model (Efran, Lukens & Lukens, 1988). Locke regarded mental images as basically representations of something outside the organism, while Kant assumed that mental images were wholly creations of the organism, produced as a by-product of its navigation through life (Efran et al., 1988). The images of the objectivist can be thought of as discoveries about the outside world, and the images of the constructivist are more like inventions about what is out there.

It must be emphasised that constructivism is not merely another theory. It embodies a way of thinking that is radically different from, and in many ways irreconcilable with, the Newtonian epistemology of science. This does not imply that it is superior or more 'true' than a Newtonian world view. The search for truth is in itself Newtonian. It simply means that constructivism is another way of thinking about the world. In so doing, some of the very basic assumptions of Newtonian thought are questioned, many of which we have become so accustomed to that we seldom realise that they are assumptions and not facts (Lynn & Rhue, 1991).

Second-order Cybernetic Concepts

As mentioned briefly in the former section, there have been a number of visionary researchers who have embodied a second-order cybernetic approach. They include Von Foerster (1981), Maturana (1975), Varela (1979), Von Glasersfeld (1984). A

number of concepts which were coined by these researchers, carry implications for this dissertation and will now be discussed.

Observing Systems

It was Von Foerster who originated the idea of the observing system. His thesis, derived from research on neural nets, posited that "learning is not a mapping of outside objects into some location in the brain but is a way that the organism computes a stable reality" (Von Foerster, 1981, p.89). His studies showed that neural nets do not encode little pictures of scenes but merely register edges or sharp transitions, not only at sensorial surfaces, but at any level within the brain (Von Foerster, 1981). Von Foerster therefore emphasised the subjective, experiential nature of the reality perceived by the observer, thereby suggesting that the observer could not claim that what he observed was objective. Rather, this model places the observer in a self-referential position that negates claim to objectivity (Keeney, 1983). The implication for this dissertation is that all observations involve self-reference and any description given says as much about the observer or researcher as it says about the subject of description. Maturana (1978) agrees with Von Foerster that anything said is said by an observer. For Maturana "objectivity" (p.105) is always in quotes.

Autopoiesis, Informational Closure and Conversational Domains

Maturana (1975) combined the idea of the observing system with other major concepts in the construction of his theory.

He considered that systems were structure determined in that the behaviour of all composite unities, whether they be living systems or inanimate objects, are fully determined by their structures, that is by the components of the unity and by the relations among those components.

Because of its structure-determined organisation, the system should not be seen as open to new information to which it is not already predisposed. Maturana (1978) linked structural determinism to the informational closure of the system. This led Maturana and Varela (1987) to postulate that living systems are like homeostats where the organisation of the entity is itself the critical variable that has to remain constant. The components may change but the identity of the unit (its organisation) remains the same. They coined the term "autopoiesis" (Hoffman, 1985, p.9) to describe a biological unit, as an information system, which is operationally closed and folds recursively back upon itself.

Structure-determined systems also exist in a medium, which encompasses other structure-determined systems. The mutual influence between the systems can be considered as the fit that exists between them. When the systems interact in a mutually satisfying way, then they are structurally coupled. This fit ensures the survival of the system. When the structural coupling is inadequate the system dies (Dell, 1979).

Taking into account the preceding introduction, it can now be said that the implications of Maturana's (1975) ontological claim is that we live in a structure-determined world.

First, what we know is always a function of the interaction between the operation of our structure-determined bodies and the world out there. In this

environment, the observer is an integral part. The act of observation no longer precludes the observer: "Knowledge implies interaction and we cannot step out of our domain of interactions, which is closed. We live, therefore, in a domain of subject-dependent knowledge and subject-dependent reality" (Maturana, 1978, p. 160).

Secondly, language which is unique to man, aids structural coupling. It allows contact to be generated between disparate systems and the building of what Maturana called a "consensual domain" (Le Roux, 1987, p. 49).

Varela (1979) was somewhat more concerned to find a way to generalise the concept of "autopoiesis" (p.65) to systems representing larger orders of inclusion and he suggests the term "autonomous" (p. 65). It refers to any composite unity formed of elements that may not themselves be autopoietic. He includes groups like the family in this category, and in describing the processes of interaction that define this aggregate, Varela chooses the term "conversational domain " (1979, p. 98). Varela emphasises that the observing system for him always means an observer community, never a single person, since we build up our perceptions of the world through our individual nervous systems and through the linguistic and cultural filters by which we learn (Varela, 1979). From this vantage point, research is not a process where somebody tries to find out the 'truth', but rather a meaning process that has a life of its own -- independent of the individuals involved.

Finally, a structure-determined system functions solely according to its structure and not according to its purpose (Maturana, 1975). Such meaningful interpretations of the operation of a structure-determined system exist only in the domain of descriptions of an observer: "the semantic value of an interaction ... is not a property of the interaction, but a feature of the description that the observer makes by referring to it"

(Maturana, 1975, p. 7).

There are no systemic processes which create, regulate or maintain the system. All behaviour of the system derives directly from the interaction of its structure-determined components. Ideas such as homeostasis, regulation and so on, are merely an observer's description of the functioning of the system. Such descriptions have no explanatory value because they do not refer to any processes which are actually operative within the system: "Control and regulation are not operational phenomena taking place in the actual interactions of the components of a dynamic composite unity; they are descriptions of the course of these interactions, made by an observer" (Maturana, 1975, p. 8).

The question that is inevitable is: How will these ideas affect this researcher's work in this dissertation? The discussion now turns to the way in which these ideas affect systems work and systems research.

The Problem Creates the System

For one thing, the research unit, of which the researcher is a part, looks vastly different than it did previously. The old idea of diagnosing a psychiatric condition was based on the medical procedure of identifying and curing a part of the body. The illness is 'in' some spatially defined, out-there unit (Hoffman, 1985). We can no longer say this. It is only in the heads or nervous systems of everyone who has a part in specifying it. From this perspective depression, for example, is not an entity, but an idea with accompanying qualifying actions by everybody who is involved with the person designated as the problem carrier, including this person himself or herself. The old

epistemology implied that the system created the problem and the new implies that the problem creates the system (Sluzki, 1983). The problem system is thus analogous to the research system.

The new position is supported by Anderson and Goolishian (1988) in their discussion of the problem-oriented system. This system is defined by the fact that there is a problem, and not by the fact that there is consensus around the problem or its solution. On the contrary, each member of the system has his or her objective definition and linguistic reality of the problem -- there may be consensus among some members, but not among all. This type of system is thus an idea. It is a transient system that dissolves once its members believe that there is no longer a problem (Hoffman, 1985). Change is the co-evolution of new meaning and takes place through conversation (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

Human Systems as Linguistic Systems

As a result of early systems theory (1950 to 1960), symptoms were conceptualised as serving a homeostatic function -- the symptom was described as "feedback in a cybernetic loop of mutual causality and circularity" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, p. 372). The symptom, as feedback into the family, for example, was required by the family in order to preserve the family's equilibrium. Symptoms were later defined in terms of what people were doing in the context of ongoing human relations (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). This shift stimulated the development of a new descriptive terminology. In an effort to describe this terminology Anderson and Goolishian will be drawn on mainly, and Keeney (1979), Bateson (1972), Maturana and Varela (1987) will

be referred to, albeit to a lesser degree.

1. Human systems are language-generating systems -- any human system is a linguistic system. The domain of meaning in such a system is referred to as a conversational domain (Maturana, 1975). Language, in turn, refers to the linguistically mediated and contextually relevant meaning that is generated through the medium of words, narratives and other communicative actions. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) point out that we are users of language. We speak, hear and write and use all of the many forms of language as part of the human process of creating and dealing with the realities in which we exist. Maturana and Varela (1987) take the position that every human action takes place in language and that every act in language brings forth a world created with others. In a similar vein, Bateson (1972) held that the mental characteristics of a system are immanent in the system as a whole. The mind (meaning) is not in someone's head, but in interaction. Bateson questioned the concept of an objective reality and the ordinary ways in which we make sense of the world. Bateson called this new way of thinking about ideas as "ecology of minds" or "ecology of ideas" (p. 76).

This conceptualisation of reality, as a multiverse of meanings, moves us away from the concerns about issues of unique truth. Conversation is seen simply as part of a struggle to reach an understanding with those with whom we are in contact.

2. In the light of the above reasoning, research is seen to be a linguistic event in that it involves a mutual search and exploration through dialogue -- a crisscrossing of ideas in which new meanings are continually evolving (Wassenaar, 1986). The relationship between the researcher and individual is defined as nonhierarchical and research cannot attempt to stand outside or above the system, if the research is to have

any clinical utility (Wassenaar, 1986). Through the process of "being in language" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, p.373), we co-create and co-develop the systemic realities around which we have meaning for each other, and through which we continually organise our mutual living and our self-descriptions. All meaning, understanding, interpretation and descriptions of process are inherently negotiable. There are no fixed nor uniquely correct interpretations. All participants bring with them different worlds and they are continually shaping these worlds in the intimacy of being in contact with each other (Maturana & Varela, 1987). If the notions of co-creation and co-evolution are to be espoused in this dissertation, it stands to reason that henceforth the term co-researcher must also be employed. This would imply that the co-researcher has an input into the evolving ecology of ideas and not that she operates scientifically and communicates a particular definition of a situation in an authoritarian manner (Fourie, 1990).

3. The role of the co-researcher, whose expertise is in facilitating a dialogue, is akin to the role of an architect. He or she is therefore a participant-observer and a participant-manager of the conversation according to Anderson and Goolishian (1988):

(a) Participant-observer

The co-researcher is a co-learner, co-operating with and attempting to understand the subject's meaning system. A subject's ideas, stories and narratives are the only tools available for keeping ourselves and our subject flexible to the development of new meaning. Thus, as participant-observer, the co-researcher is not 'meta' to the system. He or she is a member of the system and this position forms as soon as the co-researcher begins talking with any person(s) about a problem.

(b) Participant-Manager of conversation

As a participant-manager, the co-researcher is only "a part of a circular interactive system" (Bateson, 1972, p. 361). The co-researcher does not control the interview, nor is the co-researcher responsible for creating a space in which a conversation can occur. Creating a space for dialogue is the responsibility of all participants in the system (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

The new paradigm described within these pages will provide co-researchers with a set of guidelines as to how they can implement their methods of research. This paradigm will focus on the following notions:

- An observing system includes the co-researcher's own context (Von Foerster, 1981).

- There is no belief in an objective reality. The shift in focus is from behaviours to ideas (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Units, such as 'family', 'prisoners' are seen as definitions in language and have an arbitrary quality -- they can be created, selected and even dissolved (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Constructivism moves beyond a preoccupation with individual and interactional dynamics, into an appreciation of the way life-plans fit together.

- The most advanced co-ordinations of action that develop in a human community are made possible by language. Language is the one essential that such co-ordinations of action cannot do without, and that is why constructivists insist on talking about human lives as being conversations (Efran et al., 1988).

- Expertise in co-research is more akin to that of the storyteller than it is to that of the social engineer. We are experts in the dialogical process and not in social

mechanics (Efran et al., 1988).

Conclusion

Under the old science there was an obligation to choose *one* alternative, based on a judgement as to the absolute truth. Under a constructivist epistemology, the obligation to choose does not exist. The value of such freedom, when describing human behaviour, is immeasurable. It allows for an appreciable increase in alternative options for both the co-researcher and the subjects working in the field of human science.

Research in the field of capital punishment has mainly concentrated on two areas. The initial focus was on the criminal as the pathology bearer and the subsequent focus was on contextual factors within the dynamics of the capital punishment regime.

The investigation now turns to research in order to give the reader an appreciation of the literature in these fields of study as they pertain, or do not pertain, to this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT: LITERATURE REVIEW

Individual-Contextual Research

In chapter 2, the reader was introduced to the constructivist notion that the observing system views research and therapy as an immersion into a larger system that includes the observer, and that research itself becomes a collaborative venture. Constructivism is an attempt to understand and to work with the subject's meaning systems.

In reviewing the literature on capital punishment, the writer noticed that there have been movements, not in the sense of growth, from (a) the boundaries of the individual personality structure, unrelated to the environment to (b) the boundaries of the family and other systems, unrelated to the environment to (c) the boundaries of the context, unrelated to the observer. In the outlook mentioned in (a) researchers sought indications (causes) of problems within the individual. In (b) researchers focused on broader influences, such as the family, the prison or the capital regime for indications of the problem. Finally, in the outlook mentioned in (c) researchers took into account the cultural context. But the researcher, as part of the field being observed, was ignored. O'Connor and Lubin (1990) refer to this kind of research as being in "bits and pieces" (p. 78) as it either ignores the larger contextual interdependencies, in which

behaviour occurs, or bases its understanding solely on the complexity and interdependency of the contextual systems in which it is embedded.

Individual and Family Systems Research

Research in the field of the psychological impact of capital punishment has, in the past, focused on interviews with families of murder victims (Darrow, 1957; Magee, 1983; Radelet, Vandiver & Berado, 1983); on the consequences of the death penalty for attending physicians and psychiatrists (West, 1975); and on the impact of death row on death row inmates. Using repeated psychiatric interviews and psychological examinations with 18 men and one woman on death row in Sing Sing, Bluestone and McGahee (1962) found that when the condemned person was subjected to the stress of death row, he or she exhibited a variety of destructive symptoms, including psychopathy, delusions, obsessions and withdrawal.

Johnson (1981) interviewed 37 death row male prisoners in Alabama to ascertain their perceptions of, and insights into, the experience of death row confinement. His analysis was shaped around three psychological dimensions of the death row environment, as well as their corollary sources of environmental pressures.

The first was powerlessness, which was a response to immobility, isolation and custodial regime. The second was fear. The third was emotional emptiness, which occurred when inmates believed that they were beyond the reach and support of intimate friends and family who had either abandoned or forgotten them. The cumulative experience of the prisoners' personal reactions to death row confinement was described as a 'living death' -- this conveyed the zombie-like, mechanical existence

of an isolated organism, encompassing central psychological symptoms such as powerlessness, fear and emotional emptiness.

More recently researchers, for example Vogelman (1987), Mihalik (1991), Sloth-Nielsen (1989) have focused on the profiles of the people who await execution. Hopelessness, suicide fantasies and trauma were depicted as the predominant feelings of the inmates on death row. The main contention is that living in the death "factory" is a traumatic experience whether or not it results in execution, and while the condemned men are there, they are the living dead (Vogelman, 1987, p. 189). For those who survive, it takes years to recover. With gratitude comes exhaustion, resentment and anger for having had to experience the ordeal. For those who do not survive, their death is lonely (Vogelman, 1987). It is also impersonal (Mihalik, 1991). In the individual's last moments he is surrounded mostly by strangers -- the executioner, other prison officials and possibly even unfamiliar inmates (Sloth-Nielsen, 1989).

Other significant studies include those by Robin (1964), Lofland (1975) and Spierenburg (1984). These researchers discussed the psychological impact of capital punishment on the executioner.

Bowers and Pierce (1980), in their review of the empirical literature on the long-term and short-term impacts of capital punishment, argued that capital punishment brutalises society more than it deters crime. They write:

In summary, studies of the long-term effect and short-term impact of executions give ample indication that executions may have - contrary to prevailing belief - not a deterrent but a brutalizing effect on society by promoting rather than preventing homicides. The earliest research in the

period of public executions, was fully and strongly consistent with such a brutalizing effect. Later studies comparing periods of abolition and retention between and within jurisdictions consistently show lower homicide rates at times and places of abolition, suggesting that the availability and by implication the use of the death penalty stimulates homicide. And, recent studies using econometric modelling and regression estimation techniques have begun to reveal more positive than negative estimates of the effects of execution risk on homicide rate - notwithstanding analytic problems which have tended to bias results in favour of deterrence. (p.467)

Several other researchers (Bedau, 1982; Davis, 1989; Jurow, 1971; Lund, 1989; Mackey, 1974; Smith, 1989; Van Rooyen, 1991) have shown that where the death penalty was a mandatory punishment for a capital offense, the judges, even though theoretically approving of the death penalty, were reluctant to assume the responsibility of deciding whether or not a person should lose his or her life.

The impact of capital offense on offender families has also been narrowly researched. Based on interviews with nine families of murder victims, Magee (1983) recounted for years the daily experiences of the victims' families. His interviews were limited to the impact of the capital trial and sentence on the victims' families, but he did not separate that impact from the impact of the murder. His reports indicate that victims' families are as much affected by the offender's trial and sentence as by the murder of their relative. He reports that the victims' families are ostracised from society, and that they face a conspiracy of silence. Furthermore, they experience

marital problems, high divorce rates, a sense of being abnormal, a sense of injustice engendered by being neglected by the criminal justice system, as well as feelings of continuing rage, bitterness and profound guilt -- all of which have a debilitating effect on the individuals concerned. A description of the psychological impact of capital punishment on the families of offenders is found in a report by Darrow (1957). In a 12 hour summation before the Criminal Court of Cook County in September 1924, Darrow pleaded with the court to consider what the impact of the execution of two teenaged boys, charged with kidnap, ransom and murder, would have on the boys' families. He said: "I ask Your Honor, to save two honorable families from a disgrace that never ends, and which could be of no avail to help any human being that lives." (Darrow, 1957, p.84)

Using interviews with inmates on Florida's death row and their families, Radelet et al., (1983) discovered two aspects of the stress encountered by death row inmate families.

The first is the existence of objective barriers which hamper supportive relationships. The second is a limited capacity to deal with these problems. One denominator common to all families - a low SES - brought about rapid demoralisation and family disorganisation. In some families, poverty led to family disorganisation that may have, directly or indirectly, contributed to the person's crime. For others, the expenses involved in a capital trial quickly exhausted what monetary resources they had. Economic stress often leaves little time for lending support to the inmate and ties may gradually be severed. For those who try to maintain ties, problems with distance between home and prison are compounded when few monetary resources are available for travel.

According to Smykla (1987) the above research focused on a number of variables which the researchers saw as important in the study of the psychological impact of capital punishment. These variables included the degree of impact on various systems, be they the individual, the family, the victim or the capital regime. Although most of the research is fairly recent and broad in its scope, it conforms to the methodology that there is an 'individual', a 'family' and that if we persist in our observations, we can obtain a precise and objective view of that world (Atkinson & Heath, 1987).

Contextual Research

The experience of death row was also viewed as involving more than individual and family factors and focused on the experience of death row in context. Johnson (1976), Doob (1975), Bettelheim (1987) and Hallowell (1990) attempted to explain the death row experience by taking the cultural context into account.

Johnson (1976) noted that prisoners from a Latin background seemed to be particularly susceptible to the problems of confinement. He noted that self-mutilation and attempted suicide were disproportionately prevalent among Latin prisoners. To him the Latin males' difficulty in handling confinement suggested a lack of fit between their family-centred dependency culture and the survival requirements of prison. In addition, Johnson's (1976) research conducted in Scandinavian prisons, suggested to him that Scandinavian convicts are prone to lack a sense of honour associated with criminal activities. They therefore develop an inmate social system that is less cohesive and less antagonistic to staff than that of their Latin American counterparts. Because they lack a supportive peer subculture, they tend to rely on a set of "defenses of the weak"

(Johnson, 1976, p. 5) to establish personal worth. Ethnicity thus proved relevant to Johnson's modes of prison adjustment.

Ghetto socialisation is another cited factor. Hallowell (1990) posits that a ghetto background may give a person an edge in confinement because ghetto and prison life share a number of important characteristics. For one, both settings are peer centred, unpredictable and explicitly attuned to the issue of survival. Both settings reward an image of manliness, namely traits of strength, forbearance and courage. Moreover, in both the ghetto and the prison, survival concerns are reinforced by the presence of social control agents who sometimes pose challenges and threats.

These studies imply that inmates respond to prison life in a manner that reflects their culturally determined world views. Prisoners from a Latin background should therefore experience a disproportionate amount of difficulties in adjusting to prison life. Subgroups defined in terms of such variables as social class, age and criminal career may yield distinctive patterns of prison adjustment (Bettelheim, 1987; Johnson, 1976).

The research cited under Individual Family and Contextual Research is clearly linear in its approach as it aimed at finding an etiology of death row confinement experiences. In the case of living systems, from a constructivist point of view, it is not possible to assign one part a causal influence vis à vis another, or to place in any linear markers. Newtonian descriptions classify an item according to inherent attributes and characteristics whereas recursive descriptions define an item in terms of its relationship with other items. To quote Bateson (1972):

I was utterly fascinated, and still am, with the discovery that when you use language rightly to describe a flowering plant you will say that a leaf is a lateral

organ on a stem which is characterized by having a bud, namely a baby stem, in its axil. So the definitions became: a stem is that which bears leaves, and a leaf is that which has a stem in its angle; and that which is in the angle of the leaf is a baby stem, and so on. (p.75)

Ideas like these have extraordinary implications, not least when applied to the field of research. The researcher can no longer be seen as impacting on subjects through personality, craft or technique. The researcher is not an agent, and the inmates are not subjects. Both are part of a larger field in which researcher, family and any number of other elements act and react upon each other in unpredictable ways -- each action and reaction continually changes the nature of the field in which the elements of this new research system reside. A first-order approach speaks of power and control when describing phenomena or the relations between researcher and subject (O'Connor & Lubin, 1990). Researchers are seen as power brokers, who control the ways in which descriptions are used in the research system. A second-order circular epistemology, on the other hand, forces the researcher to take account of the fact that he or she is inevitably part of a larger field -- an inextricable element of that which he or she attempts to describe (Hoffman, 1981). No such second-order descriptions could be found by this researcher in the field of literature on capital punishment.

As mentioned in chapter 2, the study in this dissertation is designed to move away from causal, unidimensional thinking. This shift proposes that 'objectivity' is erroneous because it assumes a separation of the observer and the observed. The design of the research therefore attempts to conform to the new principles of the new epistemology by looking at descriptions rather than mechanistic explanations of

phenomena. Because the design rejects the dualistic concept of choice between two opposites, and embraces instead the principles of holism, reciprocity and circularity, the researcher is relieved of the onus of discovering any 'truths'. The onus of the researcher is to describe what is seen, with the understanding that what is seen might not conform to another's perception. These descriptions highlight the ecology of ideas that pervaded a group of subjects, three in all, who currently reside on death row in Pretoria's Central Maximum Prison.

The focus now turns to research design and its heuristic application of truth.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research in the behavioural sciences has, in the past, conformed to the scientific epistemology of Newtonian, 19th century thought. This epistemology relied on mechanistic, atomistic and reductionistic research principles (Auerswald, 1987). Furthermore, it was important that research results be quantified and relations be causally linked (Auerswald, 1985). Positivism had thus maintained the existence of facts as sacrosanct units of information, unadulterated by human interests and secured by objectivity (Sarbin, 1986).

This type of research had a basic purpose -- to study the relations among phenomena, where the scientific logic was to bring empirical evidence to bear on conditional statements of the form 'if this, then that'. The major limitation was that it denied the researcher the freedom of description. The need to quantify phenomena and discover the truth about things, denied the researcher any involvement with the system he or she was observing, and its effect on him or her (Sarbin, 1986).

To free himself or herself from these limitations, the researcher needed to make an epistemological shift that was in line with the New Physics. Hence the use of the word co-researcher, which refers to the co-search into the subject at hand. The shift would not be an easy one to make, given that the co-researcher needed to make a conscious choice not to use the principles and language of the old epistemology.

According to Bateson (1958) language fortifies our belief that we talk about 'things', when in essence, we should know that we are talking about relations. Hence, in order to make the jump, the co-researcher needed to use language circumspectly, trying always to remain in line with the new epistemology.

A research design that makes use of a constructivist epistemology is consistent with Poppers's (1959) view which discards certainty and posits that discoveries are guided by theory. Rather than looking at research designs and theory building as a way of taking the descriptions of a co-researcher's observations out of context and piecing them together to form a theoretical map, the reverse is suggested. As Hanson (1958) puts it, a theory is a cluster of conclusions, within a framework, in search of a premise. A research design then becomes a task of examining what we have done to construct a particular reality, within a particular framework. This suggests that all observations construct the phenomena to fit the theoretical system that one believes in. Thus, all descriptions of process and all observations are self-verifying (Keeney & Morris, 1985).

The area of focus in the research design of this dissertation, is on three prisoners, currently serving their sentences on death row at Pretoria's Central Maximum Prison. The method and language of the study had to accommodate process and context, relational reality and social interaction that were patterned through time (Genot, 1985). To speak of the co-evolution of patterns through timespace is to utilise a language that accommodates a constructivist epistemology in that it does not impose such traditional scientific language as 'truth', 'measurement' and 'outcome' (Auerswald, 1987; Wassenaar, 1986).

To validate the epistemology of this dissertation, the use of narrative was employed as a method of research. Geertz (1983), a postmodern anthropologist, offers

the idea that text is our most venturesome analogy if we are to understand our world. He suggests that current maps of interpretation are inadequate to express situations which are all at once "fluid, plural, uncentered and ineradicably untidy" (Geertz, 1983, p. 7), and that we will gain more coherence and representation of things 'as they are' if we use the metaphor of text.

The field at large is increasingly responding to these ideas of text and narrative. White (1990) argues for therapy and research of literary merit. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) change the words "therapy" and "research" to "conversation" (p. 372), which suggests that a postmodern narrative sees the self as a construction of social intercourse. Hoffman (1990) speaks of a "science of lenses" (p. 13) that challenges former modes of scientific reasoning. Steier (in Lenneberg & Miller, 1978) describes the research encounter as a narrative of self-reflexivity and Maturana (in Lenneberg & Miller, 1978) claims that we share a multiverse where objectivity lives in parenthesis. Anderson (1987) and those who have elaborated on the work of the reflecting team, argue that it is necessary for interviewers to avoid all declarative sentences lest they interrupt someone else's story. Sluzki (1983) conceptualises the process of therapy per se as the transformation of story. Finally, new work in feminist family therapy emphasises how therapeutic narratives about gender amplify and challenge existing treatment models (Wynne & McDaniel, 1992). The use of narrative relies on understanding the presented story as well as making room for potential stories that will emerge or be co-created through mutual dialogue (Hoffman, 1990).

The Use of Narrative and its Relation to Constructivism

To validate the epistemology of constructivism and the use of narrative as part of the methodology in this dissertation, it is necessary to spell out what is meant by 'narrative' and to make clear the manner in which it will be employed.

According to Bruner (1986) narrative can refer to a multitude of different processes: to the process of mean/sense-making and to the compilation of a co-constructed story; to the process of an edifying dialogue which refers to the interpersonal encounter within the co-research that aims at mutual understanding; or to the process of citation. In the latter perspective the co-researcher proper transfers texts to new contexts. The metaphor associated with this perspective is that of redefinition. A good example is to be found in family therapy where expressions are placed in a new context, thus changing their meaning completely. Such co-research is thus embedded within an intertextual process that involves a diffusion of meaning (Carr, 1986).

Sarbin (1986) conceptualised the use of narrative as a phenomenon that transcends its usual presence in poetry, linguistics, drama and fiction, where it was once cherished as a literary or folklore speciality. It has since pervaded the fields of ethnomethodology, legal studies and the physical and social sciences -- all of which seek to examine their own modes of communication through the application of techniques such as discourse analysis (Sarbin, 1986).

In this study, narrative is coterminous with a co-constructed story or symbolised account of experiences that have a temporal and contextual dimension (White, 1978).

The co-constructed story has a beginning, middle and an ending. Although these components may not have clearly demarcated boundaries, they are held together by recognisable commentaries of events called interpretations (Sarbin, 1986). Central to the narrative structure or lay-out, are human predicaments or experiences as languaged by the participants or co-researchers and which provide them with an identity as a co-research system and adds to cohesion in that beliefs are shared and values transmitted amongst them (Sarbin, 1986).

A distinction needs to be made between 'narrating something' and 'narrativising something'. According to Hardy (1986) narration takes cognisance of the narrator's presence, mostly concealed in such a way that he or she is seen to take up an impartial point of view in the storytelling. MacIntyre (1987) on the other hand, made clear that narrators, though not instructed to do so, inevitably impose their presence and narrative structure/form on their work and proceed to narrativise it.

The material in the next chapter on research results lends itself to be narrativised. This process refers to the combination of three points of view about the unfolding events: that of the narrator, the prisoners in the study and the "audience, to whom texts are usually delivered" (Hardy, 1986, p.11). In the narratives that follow, these points of view overlap. The audience for example, knows only the 'voice' of the narrating character, but has access to the points of view between participant and teller (co-researcher). Therefore a narrative never occurs in a vacuum. It addresses, amongst other things, the context and the audience/reader and is thus a complex form of discourse, which combines descriptions of separate viewpoints in order to create a meaning (Mink, 1987).

This multiplicity of views is exemplified by post-structuralist thinkers who posit

that all processes in narrative are co-constructed by all the members of a defined group. These thinkers do not voice strong support for a narrative of structure that has clearly demarcated divisions of beginnings and endings, temporality and thematic sequentiality and coherence (Habermas, 1973; Penn & Sheinberg, 1991; Widdershoven, 1984). The conceptual narrativising habit thus serves a specific function in that, as Bruner (1986, p. 54) states, "a life as led is inseparable from a life as shared and retold". Thus the self-questioning aspect of post-structuralist writing and of constructivism attunes itself to the extent to which we create and maintain our understanding of 'reality' and with the use of narrative, the emphasis is on the interrelation of life and narrative (Habermas, 1973; Sarbin, 1986).

In its traditional definition, narrative has been about someone or something, and the narration itself is given a position of sorts and thus reified. However, no matter how hard the post-structural forms of narrative attempt to not tell us about anything, they do emphasise that texts cannot be bound to any one reality as they are indeed determined by their contexts (Sarbin, 1986). It has therefore been the position of this dissertation not to deny any form/structure as the narratives in following chapters are punctuated as one way to view the world, even if they refer to what one should not incorporate.

The narrative structure in this study, which is akin to the notions of beginning, middle and ending (albeit not clearly demarcated), can best be explained in terms of setting, description and interpretation, and resolution (Bruner, 1986; Sarbin, 1986). In this study the setting refers to the timespace (one year), the place/context (Pretoria Maximum Prison) and the participants or co-researchers. The descriptions and interpretation is a combination of this co-researcher's storytelling, which forms links

between the perceptions and constructions of meaning among the co-researchers, and the interpretation of these processes that inevitably reveals the epistemological stance of this co-researcher. The resolution usually refers to the outcome. Outcome here is used similarly to the notion of denouement -- the final expression of co-constructed meaning between participants (Sarbin, 1986).

If the principles of constructivism are accepted, then writing and using a research method/structure for a study have never been about any fixed truth or specific method of organisation. The narratives to follow do nothing more than reform an existing sense of truth. They do not reinvent 'reality' (Bruner, 1986).

Research Method

The Sample

Three male subjects were used as research participants in this study. The prisoners were introduced to the co-researcher through a lawyer for human rights, who explained to them the aim of the co-research. Before they agreed to participate in the study, it was confirmed that they would welcome such a step.

The three male prisoners currently serving out their sentences at Pretoria's Central Prison fulfilled the following requirements:

- they were all willing to share, during visits to them and through letters to the co-researcher, their experiences of life on death row.
- they all possess a general English vocabulary
- they have all lived out life on death row for a period of at least a year, that

is, their sentences have not been commuted.

The race of the offenders covers a spectrum. They include a White, a Coloured and an Indian. This was not intended. The individuals will henceforth be called 'Gerard' (32 years old), 'Rudolph' (30 years old) and 'Mohammed' (35 years old).

Procedure

The format of the collection of data was, as mentioned, in the form of letters written by the prisoners to the co-researcher as well as the co-researcher's process notes of the visits to the prisoners. These visits were ongoing and served to encourage the prisoners to persevere with their refiguration of thought processes and to establish if they were experiencing any current problems with the co-research. The correspondence was based on the contents discussed during the visits. In this way, a correlation and coherence between the contents during the visits and in the letters were maintained. Subjects were invited to explore for themselves the dominant problems and pressures of confinement (if any). In so doing, their unexpurgated perceptions were secured and insight was obtained into their own psychological experiences. Unfortunately, due to prison regulation, no transcripts of the visits are available either to the co-researcher or to the reader. Thus, only a fraction of their experiences can be storied at any one time (White, 1990).

During the visits and in the correspondence certain techniques were employed by the co-researcher as a means of obtaining information. However, no one technique for the sake of technique, was employed. At certain times in the co-construction of experiences, the research system as a whole relabelled or reframed a process, person

or event and together conceptualised a new way of thinking about something or someone. At other times the co-researcher employed reflections, which often 'led' the subjects into a terrain of thought where they construed meanings around certain experiences. What is obvious from these approaches (rather than techniques) is that the co-researcher's presence in the co-research system does not refer to her unilineal influence on the subjects of the study. The co-researcher is always a part of the system and the use of reflections or reframes is employed to facilitate further co-constructions. The co-research system is thus "subject to all the constraints and necessities of the particular part-whole relationship in which it occurs" (O'Connor & Lubin, 1990, p. 32). Consequently, the description that emerges is a double one: that of the prisoners' experiences and that of their joint experiences with this co-researcher. According to Bateson (1972, p. 76) this accomplishes a type of description that he explained as follows:

In order to get from one level of description to another, an act of double description is required, or views from every side of the relationship must be juxtaposed to generate a sense of the relationship as a whole. Double description, is the relationship.

Because of the epistemological approach of this study, it is always important to recreate the shared ecology of ideas through the descriptions of them. In this way a receiving context is established, which allows for the interpretation of the construction of happenings rather than the exact capturing of them (White, 1990).

Method of Interpretation

From a constructivist point of view, life is a process of interpretation through stories (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993). Constructivists, according to Bruner (1986), use narrative rather than a paradigmatic mode of thought. The paradigmatic modes are fundamentally different in that they aim at context-free explanations. Narrative, on the other hand, leads to a form of understanding and interpretation that is contextual and temporal (Sarbin, 1986). The narrative mode of thinking thus weaves in with the life it describes. It is clear however, that the sense of meaning and continuity that is achieved through the storying of experience and interpretation is gained at a price (White, 1990). Narrative and its concomitant understanding of it can never encompass the full richness of our lived experience, for narrative involves a selective process -- we interpret and filter events according to our personal experiences and schemata. Therefore, over time and of necessity, much of lived experience goes unstoried. However, if we accept that stories are full of gaps, these gaps can recruit the imagination of persons. White aptly points out that the evolution of lives is akin to the process of re-authoring -- the process of persons entering into stories, imagining about them, taking them over and making them their own.

To do justice to the constructivist epistemology of this dissertation a framework of interpretation has been used to elucidate for the reader what is meant by co-construction and how it can be interpreted from the texts recorded in the following chapter.

The framework for the interpretation of results has been adapted from Rosenthal's (1989) Reconstruction Model of Life Stories. Rosenthal points out that the use of narrative involves more than description. It entails the recounting of events, which have a temporal dimension. In addition it entails the selection of those events and the imposition of a new structure on those events. Narrative thus entails interpretation, but not a conclusive one, since it can always be re-interpreted.

Rosenthal's (1989) Model of Life Stories has been employed as it fits the epistemology and methodology of this dissertation. Rosenthal explains that narratives/stories cannot be regarded as a series of isolated experiences, laid down in chronological order like strata of sedimentary rock -- individual experiences are always in relation to other people and are always embedded in a coherent and meaningful context. They are furthermore "a part of overall patterns of thematic and temporal relationships that make up the experience of a lifetime" (Rosenthal, 1989, p. 8).

In Rosenthal's (1989) original method, two principles are of fundamental importance in the reconstruction of life stories. These are the principle of a lived-through analysis and the principle of structure of the life stories. In contrast with a logically subsuming classificatory approach, lived-through analysis avoids confronting narrative with pre-defined systems of meaning. Instead it involves describing, interpreting and languaging about the events experienced. These experiences are then narrativised by the co-researcher and finally put into writing. The principle in turn gives the related experiences a systemic, temporal and thematic dimension. Translated into practical terms, Rosenthal's (1989) methodological approach requires a procedure of analysis that takes into account such aspects as the range of possibilities open to the co-researchers in a certain situation, the selections made and the possibilities ignored.

It was on the basis of these theoretical-constructivist considerations that she developed her method, which she applied to her first project (completed in 1984). She conducted numerous interviews with formerly abused adults and their families at the Abused League of Persons Organisation, which held its meetings in a run-down quarter in Opladen, Germany. Her position, within this organisation, was that of a programme therapist. In conducting the actual interviews, Rosenthal followed the method of co-research around the perceptions of abuse amongst those who sought her out. The narrativised accounts of the co-constructed stories and their interpretations were published in their local journal "Dritten Reiches" (Rosenthal, 1989, p. 87). These writings focused on abuse as a problem fixed in reality via physical/sexual damage that was languaged about and over time given a certain semantic value amongst those discussing the topic. Furthermore these writings examined abuse and the use of violence within a wider context -- that of a patriarchal society (Rosenthal, 1989).

In adapting Rosenthal's (1989) method this co-researcher has distinguished between two interrelated levels of analysis:

The Lived-Through Analysis of the Narrated Life Story

The purpose of this level of analysis is the reconstruction of the meaning of experiences in writing. Rosenthal (1989) is particularly concerned with the co-researcher's choice of contextual elements (or narratives). The objective of this step is to expose the reader to what Rosenthal (p. 9) calls "self-reflection" and "turning the mirror inward". It refers to the co-researcher's data presentation and highlights the idea that the narrativised story is an amalgam of the subject's initial experiences as

language, and the co-researcher's ideas around, the co-construction of reality. This step is presented to the reader in the next chapter on research results.

The Structure of Narrated Life Stories

Rosenthal (1989) argues that the narrated life story also represents the co-researcher's overall constructions in which relevant experiences are linked in a temporally and thematically consistent way. This structure presents life history as experiences embedded in a coherent, meaningful context and as part of an overall pattern of thematic and temporal relations. In order not to follow the linear sequence of objective time, the present perspective will consider the following headings under the rubric of structure:

- The co-research system
- The co-research system within systems
- The co-research system in evolution
- The semantic, co-constructed themes and metaphors of the co-research system.

In this way the breakdown of the structure of the narrated events is meant to be seen to take place against the backdrop of a structure of meaning and not against a structure of clear demarcation, which is determined by the material in the next chapter on research results. This structure of meaning is constituted by the interweaving of certain patterns of interpretation with relevant events and experiences. Bruner (1986) argues similarly that an interpretation of a life story does not consist of an atomistic

chain of experiences, whose meaning is created at the moment of articulation. Rather, as in the epistemology of this dissertation, it is a process taking place. This process refers to the structure of meanings and not to the "rigid organisation of results" (Bruner, 1986, p. 51).

Research Results and Interpretation

The research results as they pertain to the first level of analysis will be reported on in two sections, each describing a 'phase' of the co-research. The first phase, which invokes the principle of the involvement of the co-researcher as part of the field of study, introduces the reader to death row from this co-researcher's perspective. The second phase, which reveals that the observer's descriptions are always influenced by his or her ideas about the observed, involves the narratives that this co-researcher has created or narrativised about regarding the co-research systems experiences of death row. It furthermore illustrates that the descriptions contain the interpretation of the observer as well. Co-construction takes account of both description and epistemology (Sarbin, 1986). This co-researcher's process notes of the visits, together with the letters of correspondence have been used for this purpose.

The second level of the analysis is presented in chapter 6 on the "Structure of Meaning in Narrated Life Stories".

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the notion of change from Newtonian epistemology and

research to an epistemology that is in line with New Physics. Furthermore, it served to imply the necessity for a research methodology that would complement this new way of thinking.

Such a methodology proposed the use of narrative, which captures and records events in the timespace of the co-research system. This method was considered as it complements the new epistemology in that it attends to language, meaning and context -- areas that are critical to the understanding of a co-evolutionary ecosystem that creates a multi-faceted description of an experience. This method also suggests that the idea of a researcher being separate from a subject is a false dualism, and it is with liberty and permission that at times, in this research, the concepts 'researcher' and 'subject' are separated.

The first step in the analysis of research results, which has been demarcated for the sake of clarity, now follows.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Narrative constitutes a medium that can be employed for any number of purposes, whether for the blending of facts with imagination or as a heuristic process (Sarbin, 1986). Typically, the persons who are the subjects of these narratives are often excluded from any access to them, even though their futures may be shaped by them. The narratives, however, are a version of a co-constructed reality and are the shared property of all those involved. The use of narratives, in this study, has been substituted for case records.

What follows are four stories. First, this co-researcher's story, which includes her first and lasting impressions of her experience on death row and of her time with the prisoners. Second, the stories of each of the three prisoners, as (re)told and interpreted via explanations from the creative pen of this co-researcher.

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the prisoners' identities. Furthermore, for creative purposes, each research subject chose a title for their particular story, giving each account an added, personal flavour.

The Co-Researcher's Story: 'No Truth for Sale'

The first and most significant impression of death row was the noise. The noise was like the noise of a zoo. The opening and closing of cell doors, the shuffle of feet, faceless voices emanating from cell corridors, loud and clearly audible, some giving orders, some softer and more compliant. After a while, all the noises fused and the disorder and apparent chaos became quite indistinct, disturbed.

In order to gain some composure before her first visit, the co-researcher recalled a poem by Jack Rainsberger, a man convicted of murder in Nevada, Carson City.

AN INTRODUCTION

My name is Man

I have been a wave

running past beaches

built to contain me.

I have stripped the sand,

been absorbed, and sprung free

to become a greater wave.

My name is Man

I have given of myself

to burrow under the surface

and search for that which wanders there.

I have fought the cave, the mountain.

I have sometimes beaten the cave,
the mountain.

My name is Man

I have hung myself
from the tree, and died
before I knew who hung there.

I have been among strangers,
loved them, and taught them
that they need not die from strangeness.

My name is Man

I have tried.

The co-researcher was ready to try, to be among strangers, to co-search for that which wanders there, to fight the cave of her own resistance, to spring free of her own fears, to become a greater wave, to take on the struggle.

Walking into death row reminded the co-researcher that the journey had begun and that the place was inescapable. There was no turning back. Death row was imposing, stark and intimidating. To get there, one has to pass through four locked gates: one marking the entrance to the Pretoria compound, another protecting the prison proper; yet another separating the outsider from the living, working and feeding areas of the general prison and a final gate separating the isolation units, which house the condemned prisoners from the main prison. In the death row the co-researcher felt

deeply embedded in the prison, lodged, figuratively, in its bowels. It was troubling to venture through to the visitors' cubicles, only to find that a glass panel with bars and deep concrete slabs separated prisoner from visitor. Troubling, because it seemed inhumane, as if the ghost of prisoners past and present lay curled there, begging for a little tenderness, imploring some implacable person or force to cuddle them a little .. just this once more. Inhumane, but thankful that there were barriers. Consciously, she feared she would not have been able to summon enough courage to erect them herself. She recalled feeling vulnerable and easily accessible.

She introduced herself as English speaking, from a white, upper class background who lives life comfortably in suburbia. Her feelings of insecurity were reflected in her wavering introduction The lawyer for human rights had said that they were eager to be of assistance in the co-research... that the co-research would entail hard work on their part and on her part... that this would not be the first time the co-researcher had been in contact with criminals.... that they could feel at home with her ... she needed information about their perceptions of death row, about their adjustment there, and about any significant other information, relating to family, friends, fellow inmates etc... this information would be secured in a collaborative way... she would help them through the experiences and they would employ her if she was needed in this area.

Disjointed, clumsy, staccato sentences like these spewed forth. She recalled feeling ill at ease. More ill than ill at ease. Her involvement was nonetheless punctuated as professional.

At first, the men who became research subjects, colleagues of a sort, correspondents, even friends, looked somewhat bloated to the co-researcher in their puny visiting cubicle, pressed in by living continuously in spaces not more substantial

or inviting than attic closets. The setting seemed sombre initially, like a tomb, but this image was misleading. Over time the place became alive. Gone was the initial numbness to be replaced by enthusiasm, joy and deep respect, not only for these supposed heartless men, but also for the warders, often just as shy as the co-researcher about being in such a *strange* meeting place. The aim was to explore life in what the co-researcher later described ironically as the 'mausoleum for the living'.

In turn, the way the prisoners took to the co-researcher, over time, could only be described as welcoming and inviting. Their inclusion of the co-researcher seemed to indicate their voracious need to take care of someone and to show them care and protection, for she felt cared for and protected. The process of inclusion, now mutual, became more marked as the visits proceeded. Needless to say, her own reticence and fears began to dissolve. Not only had the prisoners absorbed the co-researcher, but the co-researcher began to promote the prisoners to anyone who would listen, and frequently, while at home, at university, in social contexts and while driving home from the prison, she felt the need to spare them a thought. The visits had become infectious. Indeed, the irrational thought was to spare them their lives, for the shared experiences were no longer the sole property of the subjects.

The co-researcher felt she was in the stories too, for in the retelling and in the verbalising of their experiences, she too built up imaginary scenes of what it must be like to feel and experience things the way they felt and experienced them. She participated, sighed, laughed and wept with them. The separate units of researcher and subject united and they became a team.

The encounters were sometimes happy, warm, lighthearted and at other times tearful, intense and hostile. A whole, integrated, healthy personality system appears

at times to be a bit symptomatic (eg depressed) and at other times to be symptom free. The co-researcher rationalised that it is pathological to be always symptomatic or always symptom free. Secretly she thanked O'Connor and Lubin (1990) for the ever-present NOW wisdom.

Despite communication obstacles, such as the glass panel and speakers, which prevented direct contact, the co-researcher felt that these men were familiar to her. Indeed, the enmeshment was characterised by a "tight interlocking" (Hoffman, 1981, p.73) of the members and the quality of connectedness, such that the boundary separating the co-researcher from the subjects was frequently invaded in improper ways: one inmate asked the co-researcher to act as his unofficial wife. On those occasions the role of the co-research system had to be frequently and clearly differentiated.

The inclusion of each other from the middle to the end seemed to more in keeping with the systemic notion of "fit" (Hoffman, 1981, p. 87). Fit simply posits that the ecology of ideas, as in the need for stimulation, mutual expression of feelings etcetera, find a complementarity with the co-researcher's needs -- the most important of which was to facilitate the expression of experiences as they were felt.

The co-researcher encountered the prisoners at different points in their prison life. Some had worked through their initial anger and frustration (which were mostly levelled toward themselves and significant others who had long since abandoned them), whereas others had not. One was still hopeful that he might be spared from death, another had resigned himself to his fate.

It appeared that when a family member was taken away from them, the remaining members needed to reorganise the structure of the family. It seemed to

involve dismemberment, meaning that families of the condemned men, at times, acted as if they had already lost someone. It would be logical to assume that these crises then would be most intense in families that had difficulty in reorganising their family structure.

The symptoms displayed by the prisoners, on the other hand, could be seen to be a compromise between staying and leaving. They often shunned their relatives and reported feeling depressed. They were therefore incapacitated to a greater or lesser degree, making the transition to prison life miserable. Sometimes, the prisoner, like the key person in a family high-wire act, displayed incredible strength in holding an entire act together.

The co-researcher's lasting impression of her experience would be that of a 'tell-tale' -- their stories had to be retold.....

'Mohammed': 'I'm the King's Kid'

Mohammed had handsome dark brown eyes. This gave his face a curious, clean, tanned appearance. He seemed light and graceful and though he could not have been called pretty, he was a pleasant person to look at. His smile bid me welcome in those very first moments on death row, but his eyes appeared shadowed, as if his facial features were being commandeered by different parts of his mind, which were in conflict with one another.

"Hi, he said, I'm the King's Kid."

He began telling his story with aplomb. He was ready to share his ideas. This facilitated the development of a process in which a "consensual domain" (Maturana,

1975, p.7) could be established. On that day, the 10 of February 1992, he was going to begin, resolutely, at the beginning:

The trip from my hometown Durban to Pretoria was some 600 kilometres, which was torturing. Six of us were piled up in a small van and chained hand and foot. We were not even permitted to relieve ourselves during the journey. We were shown no mercy and I thought, if animals were being transported, they would have gotten better treatment.

It was clear that the trip was equally harrowing on his mind and his spirit:

Was I so bad that I should go through all this misery and still hang at the end? It was better if I was not born. These thoughts came to haunt me time and time again. Even in death, it seemed, there was no peace.

By the time Mohammed's first letter arrived, dated 18 February 1992, we had already implicitly defined our relationship as a reciprocal one, where Mohammed's thoughts and feelings about death row and about the relationship resulted in sharing on his part, which in turn provoked an ever increasing cycle of "mutual and reciprocal interaction" between us (O'Connor & Lubin, 1990, p.17).

You're a friend, a person to help carry me through a difficult time, when a lot of my friends and family called it the end.

In the following visits and subsequent letters, he took up the theme of arrival at Death's Door. He had entered death row with a grave-yard welcome, for it seemed nobody smiled there:

I was a number and was known by it. I was immediately given the rules of prison life. I would stay in my cell for twenty three hours a day and would only be allowed to speak to anyone from four to eight pm. Since it was well after eight pm and I could hear some men chanting, I enquired about them being allowed to sing. The warder's words were a spine-chilling welcome to reality back then. He said that those men were a privileged few, since they were all going to be hanged at six thirty am the following day. I WAS DOOMED, I thought.

Such were the first impressions of life at Death's Door for Mohammed. Life, for him, was filled with feelings of gloom at the prospect of impending death.

The everyday existence on death row is an adjustment. The manner in which it is done over time is akin to the notion of undergoing changes without a person losing a sense of who he is. In short, change is always only one half of a more encompassing cybernetic complementarity, that is, "stability/change" (Keeney, 1983, p. 151). Any reference to change should therefore be viewed as a shorthand indication of this complementarity:

Living one day at a time begins to make each day easier to live. In the beginning I would lie on my bed, which was so hard, you'd wake up with backache, and day dream. I would dream I owned everything on this earth. The moment I emerged

from dreaming, the more depressed I began to feel. I was lonely all the time. I didn't know what to do with my time. I had no books and no writing material to keep me company. My head was in such a swirl that sleep never effected me. I can't remember sleeping a full hour before waking up. At times, I just hoped they would kill me because I would be better off dead. I tried to kill myself but the cell was built in such a way that it permitted no such thing, so I would pace the floor a thousand times maybe, and still I would come up with nothing but a blank mind. I never really enjoyed my food, but the little I ate was just to fill my stomach up. I WAS SO ALONE THAT ONE DAY I KEPT AN ANT FOR COMPANY AND ENDED UP KILLING IT, JUST TRYING TO KEEP IT IN SIGHT. The grey, dull walls provided no sparkle to life. I got so weak, you could count my ribs. I had constant headaches from tension and my jaws ached from clutching my teeth together. Death row, in the beginning, was an experience that stamped its authority upon my life. I was different now. I was changing, but strangely I still felt that it was still me it was happening to.

The sentence of death, which does not only affect the condemned one, but also those that love him, makes him acutely aware of his connectedness to others.

You must understand that this experience affects a lot people. Your family, friends, the victim's family and so on. Also, a lot of us, certainly me, are angry with ourselves and with our families because you are helpless to help yourself now and after a while your family is no longer there to support you either. I felt shunned, then depressed. I am no use to my family now. How do I keep a family

going from prison? How do you accept this and adjust to your new situation? You know, when my family came to visit the first time, it was such joy seeing faces I knew and loved that the tears, uncalled for, ran down my cheeks. There was so much to tell them, so much to ask, but the words refused to form in my mouth. I was too excited to speak and my emotions were running too wild. Each one took turns to say a few words to me and they all encouraged that things were going to work out just fine. My wife was excited to see me, as I was to see her and my sons were fine and growing up just as handsome as their daddy, she said. I dreaded the time that would come for my family to leave, but it came anyway and I was heartbroken. I ran back to my cell and I couldn't stop crying. I cried for my wife, my sons, my family and for myself. I had lived a rough and tough life growing up, but now I was breaking slowly. This was too much for me. All my aggression was gone and I was getting soft, emotional. Something was happening to me.

Mohammed punctuated yet another change. For the first year on death row he had felt desolate and alone, but one morning he found an English Bible at his door, given to him by a fellow inmate. He describes this discovery as a 'force of positive change' in his life. If as a living organism he was to continue to function as such, he needed to be structurally coupled to the context in which he was now living (the medium), for if the "fit" were wholly insufficient, he would have "disintegrated" and died (Maturana, 1975, p. 17):

After reading the Bible, I got down on my knees and told God I am sorry. I was

alone, desperate, confused and I cried it all out to Him. I asked that I could have peace. After I prayed, I felt a change in my body and mind. Tears started to flow and I just couldn't control myself. The more the tears fell, the more happy I became, and amidst all the tears, I found myself smiling. For the first time, from the day I was born, I felt different, light as if to fly away. I didn't know then, but it was God's peace which passeth all understanding, coming down on me. At last I could settle in.

The irony was that he had been sent to death row to die a 'murderer's death', but instead he found 'life more abundant and eternal' than ever before. The change that he spoke of was unpredictable, not prefixed:

My days on death row became and still are, lively and active. Isn't that curious? The conditions have also improved a great deal. We watch videos now and play soccer and I have found God and you are my wife, only kidding, which has made all the difference. Sharing His word with others is truly a joy. I speak to the hardest guys and they succumb under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I meet all kinds of people, colours or creeds. They are all God's children. I love people freely and more completely. I correspond with more people than I thought possible, and writing has become a sort of ministry.

To understand Mohammed's view requires the recognition that he shifted between feelings of despair, hope, hate, love and so forth. An ecology of emotions that juxtapose many different emotions over time characterised his "balanced emotional life"

(O'Connor & Lubin, 1990, p. 29).

Believe me, life here isn't always great. My wife has left and sometimes I get depressed and feel resentful. I could be out there fighting to get her back. At other times I still have hopes- hopes of being pardoned and when you came to see me, I felt relieved after I had poured out my whole story. It's like I had come to terms with my state of affairs, but I came to terms with it alone, on my own. I still carried it. This way, I feel relieved of it. Now you have it and you can do what you like with it. Actually, I'll carry some and you will too.

Some time after our twelve sessions together, over a period of one year, I again visited Mohammed and asked him to co-create with me a poem or story of the process of our involvement together. This was to serve as a farewell ritual. As Papp (in Lange & Vander Hart, 1983) states in the foreword to *Rituals in Psychotherapy*, it is a human tradition to use rituals to mark the passage from one experiential state to another. It is the meaning of this experience that is significant, rather than the experience per se. The meaning, in our case, was imparted through our collaborative effort, which, when witnessed by you the reader, may become an emotional experience for you as well.

This is our poem:

"FREEDOM"

The little bird flew gracefully down to earth

Wind blowing through his feathers

He was experiencing and enjoying

Beautiful weathers

Little Bird was on a special flight

The sun encouraging him because it

Shone gloriously bright

All he wanted was a little grain

Little realizing that what awaited him

was intense pain

He stooped low and pecked at the grain

With a click, and a snap - there closed the trap

As much as he tried his wings, he couldn't flap

Little bird could have snapped

Thinking about the trapped state he was in

All he knew now was to think about survival

There was food in front of him, a little water

So how about a revival:

A little girl came trotting up to

where the snare had been laid

She was pained to see that it wasn't bare

"Accidentally", she tripped over the trap

Out came the little bird with a mighty flap

He didn't care about the things around him

He soared into the skies, now nobody

could ground him

His ordeal was no big deal

He had the feel of fresh air and blue skies

He could fly to heights unknown.

The little girl, on the other hand,

still bares the scars

of her "accidental" snare....

'Rudolph': 'Life's potent credo: you too shall endure'

Of the three prisoners, Rudolph was the only one who had no family. He grew up on the streets. He was a king whom no one ruled. He wandered where he willed from dawn to dusk, and only condescended to seek shelter at dusk when he became cold or fatigued. His manner bore testimony to a wandering existence, for he took up his story in an impersonal, abstract sort of way, forgetting that he was in intimate contact with another person. He appeared to be "structurally uncoupled" (Colapinto, 1979, p. 427; Efran et al., 1988, p. 32) from the co-researcher and from the wider context:

Okay, it's difficult to put it in words, and what makes it even more difficult is the fact that the feelings of fear stalks you like a shadow. It's like when you get up in the morning and look up, then you find the sky is over you. You go to work and still the sky is over your head. The same as the sky is over your head, so hangs my situation. You know I can laugh

about it, speak about it, joke about it but it doesn't take away the feelings of insecurity, the feelings of not knowing what the future holds for me. I guess people expect details of your crime, your experience. No prisoner will give you that. We have to believe we are innocent even though we have been condemned. It's bad enough to be condemned by a court, but once you have condemned yourself too, you have to leave a little space open where you still believe in a little bit of your innocence. Otherwise you have to kill yourself.

I speak so much that I forget I'm actually talking to you or that I'm here on death row. Tell me, am I trying to escape it all? I guess, I'm only preoccupied. I'm sure next time I'll hear more from you.

In contrast to Mohammed, who had made systematic and factual notes of his experiences, Rudolph's monologues were unplanned and poetic. His written and spoken word waxed lyrically with despair. Frequently he used the pronoun 'we' instead of 'I', for 'I' might have meant even a greater, acute sense of loneliness. To prevent this, he elevated himself above the situation, above the relationship with the co-researcher into a meta-position, a position of commentary:

You know, the circumference of loneliness is the inability to communicate the inexplicableness of grief. When ordinary ways of safety and conventions seem yet a further barrier to expression. Being happily alone is safe. The noises of the world go on gently. People talk, shoes squeak, blinds flap in the breeze. Yet

outside there is an illusion that life is and goes on. Glass rattles, even breaks.

People run upstairs. A telephone rings.

None of these pertain to us.

We recognise them, absorb them, warm to them, but loose them too, as we dwell within ourselves. But loneliness? that is different. Oh Nitsa, loneliness is the limit of our eyes and feelings. Loneliness is where there is no explanation. It is beyond safe horizons. It is the stars, the falling spaces, a void on which we must force dimensions. If we are to survive the endless years, the monotony of nature, its smug satisfaction, of death in life and life in death. A man's true worth cannot be assessed by his bank balance. His true worth lies within himself, his integrity, his attitude toward other people, his moral code, his ability to serve others humbly and yet with grace, his appreciation of clean humour and the ability to understand the heartaches and problems of those less fortunate. When I look at you I see more than you give off. I like being good and honest with you. There I go off again. Sorry for my rudeness. Good morning to you too. Tell me, how are you?

In talking about suffering he identifies feelings, and frames them metaphorically. His use of metaphor is used commonly as an 'as if' construction that allows the interpreter or reader to construct his or her own ideas around the metaphor. They speak of him "in relation to his feelings, and in relation to others" (Sarbin, 1986, p. 71).

You know, one of the most important factors in daily living, especially here on death row, is holding firmly to the life line we know as endurance. There are those times when we are tossed about on a sea of deep emotions. We are lifted up as on a wave which rises only to go down again, or crashes in on you, or whatever. However, there is a raft, a raft of endurance. It is the toughness of one which enables us to cling to that raft and though at this moment for many inside this place and outside, it may seem slender, but it is the support from which the strength and power of endurance grows into something lasting and stable. I've learned if one is searching for something to help us to accept the circumstances which are overwhelming us, and when we feel restless and insecure, then I from experience would say don't struggle, don't fight but feel your way quietly into the sanctuary of peace. Peace is power and this is where endurance takes root. Endurance is strong but calm. It is courage without bitterness. It is fortitude without self pity.

You know as we gradually succeed in raising the standards of our own ability to accept, rather than resent circumstances, we find that new powers begin to unfold, something is being added to us. We get a new feel for things, a lively interest in developing.

When emotions have been stirred, it is very easy to take a step backward as we do. In spite of positive efforts we allow fear, or to a lesser degree, doubt, to creep in. If this is allowed to happen, then the new inspirations begin to waver and we are back to where we started, where fear controls our every move and

word. When one speaks about being 'caged in' and the feelings of hostility which is something I am well acquainted with because of my situation and I can more or less identify with you, but you have willingly come to the cage. It will take time for me to understand that.

Rudolph's primary adaptation to death row seemed primarily in self-verifications. Those who continually see the world in one way are stuck in the "self-verification" of a particular habit of "punctuation" (Keeney, 1983, p.82). In time, this habit was co-evolved in the present research system. It was recursive, for together the journey was framed as an esoteric, poetic journey of language and words:

Ours is not to reason why, but sometimes it is hard to understand a prisoner and his environment, because for him the most depressing aspect is the realisation of being branded a criminal by public and personal opinion:

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
 Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
 Through granites. Yet also there encumbered
 sleepers groaned. (Owen)

Firstly I want you and others to understand that no two people have similar experiences in accepting punishment. It differs in depth, intensity, duration and extent from person to person, but I only know about me. It rangers from intense involvement to complete deadening of the conscience. But the influence on

relatives and dependents also plays a role. They, the family bear the stigma and brunt of an intolerant public.

I have sat here and evaluated the stages since my sentencing and I find that I've been through a lot. I was at first shocked on receiving sentence. I lived in hope of being acquitted. I now feel deprived more so than ever.... of clothes, of any family ever, of occupation and possessions. After a boundless dissolute life with little respect for law and order, I now find myself confined.

Our time together was too short. He had a lot more to impart, he said. The particular patterns and outlooks that Rudolph perceived could be seen as a consequence of his learned habit of punctuation. This is demonstrated by the poetic lens or frame of reference we used in the visits and letters. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the co-research system attended to 'items' on the agenda, such as 'loneliness' and 'metaphors', and not enough to "patterns and evolutionary sequences" (Bateson, 1972, p. 71):

Well, coming straight to the point, you know I've been in prison for a long time and in that time I have witnessed little change. What I've learned is that you have the right to arrange your own life under the blue sky and the hot sun, to get a drink of water, to stretch, to travel. If you want, I'll spell it out.

Do not pursue that which is illusionary. We must live a steady superiority over life and over pain. Don't leave those who still need you because they don't

always have the courage to ask you to stay. Don't be afraid of misfortune and do not yearn after happiness. We've discussed all this. The bitter doesn't last forever and the sweet never fills the cup to overflowing. I still believe that the envy of other devours us most of all. You know that this is something that struck me deep in my heart. I've made many a friend and many an enemy, but wherever possible I tried to make amends.

In our time together, we built many a bridge. Sometimes we constructed that bridge and at other times we looked on from above and gave orders for the construction. The implication of our mutually "self-verifying" encounters was that we saw them as "partial and open to correction" (Keeney, 1983, p. 56). I remember us saying "Perhaps another time, another place we would have done it all quite differently..."

'Gerard': 'Fall, mirror, mirror on the wall'

Gerard wore three rings on his fingers. The three stones were mysterious. One was a faint ruby, another a loud blue stone. The third was a blue-black knuckle-buster.

"Made them myself."

The co-researcher showed him her 'pieces' too. He laughed:

"Okay, I was bragging."

When co-researchers recognise a relevant activity, they can signal it to each other. From the first time, the members of this co-research system, locked in on symptomatic communication, and mirrored/fed it back to each other. In this way, this co-research system encountered their own "absurdity" (Keeney, 1983, p. 169).

"We were trying to outsmart each other."

Our co-constructed account follows. It is us in conversation about our conversations.

'ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A REPORTER AND SHE ASKED MIGHTY PERTINENT QUESTIONS. SHE WAS THOROUGH.'

Nitsa: Could you tell us what was your experience when you were arrested?

Gerard: Well, when I was arrested it was a tremendous shock because I was not anticipating it. That and the trial - it was like my mind and everything had completely gone blank. I didn't think of anything specifically. I thought neither of the future nor of the past. I just saw a life sentence, a death sentence and I can just picture the judge sitting on his bench right now sentencing me.

N: The memory of it all is still very vivid?

G: Right you are. Before I came straight to Central, I was a week in the Durban Prison and you should have seen what that was like.

N: How was it?

G: The initial experience?

N: As you like.

G: First of all when judgement was given I expected to come home, my children were expecting me to come home and I never came home. That was a terrible shock to me and to my family, a tremendous shock.

N: Shock, you say?

G: My first experience inside a prison is the best example. Seeing some of the seedy characters that I was to live with, was traumatic. It was quite frightening to think, my goodness, I have to live with these kinds of people. How am I going to relate to them? Are there going to be people that I'm going to be able to relate to? And I was put in a cell with others. Luckily for me, and I think possibly maybe with the attitude of one of the warders, instead of putting me in a cell with a lot of roughians, I was put in a cell with mature men. Forget about sleep though. I also ate nothing.

N: I suppose that was the initial experience?

G: That was the initial experience. The lowest point in my whole life.

N: What does lowest point mean?

G: I thought about killing myself. I felt like a victim. My wife was now a victim of aloneness. My kids the victims of tears and recriminations and even the poor old judge, a victim of his own judicial system. I'm sure they don't sleep well nights.

N: I think I understand. In effect, you are saying that, inevitably more than just one person suffers.

G: Exactly, and it doesn't get any easier. You come along now and make me see things another way. My wife and I also describe things our way. Suddenly my story becomes more meaningful.

N: Can you explain further?

G: Its like this. On my own I would classify this whole experience as a nightmare. But in a nightmare, you don't have psychologists who help you. That's real. There's no dreaming. On the outside I perhaps would never have met you and I would not have gleaned insights into a different way of viewing things. Now this experience is manageable. Before it was not. Now I can think of alternatives. Before there seemed to be no option.

N: Let me see if I get what you are saying. You're attributing this all to one psychologist?

G: No, not really. She came here and asked me to help her and she helped me too, in a way that I never expected to be helped. You see, even for her thesis now, it doesn't matter if she 'traps' my experiences on death row or not. What matters is that in telling the story, something else has emerged. The relationship, working with, feeling with etc is what deserves the credit. That's it, the relationship deserves the credit.

N: No more questions then?

G: No more questions please and no more answers. No one is looking for the truth. Truth is relative.

N: Thank you.

G: And you too.

Dialogue provides a way of building a double description. As Bateson (1972, p. 7) suggests: "A dialogue is a little knot of that species of connectedness which we call relevance".

Dialogue reveals how people punctuate their world, and only becomes meaningful when shared with others (Keeney, 1983). In compiling a dialogue about dialogues a meta-meta view has been offered here. Tracing a process in terms of evolution as well as in terms of the co-research systems, processes and relationships, provides a meta-level perception of connecting patterns of pattern, process and relationship, and their co-evolution. Levels meta to these process levels are meta to the meta-level. The meta-meta level reveals more of an overall connecting pattern of re-perceptions (Bateson, 1972; Falzer, 1984).

CHAPTER 6

CO-RESEARCH INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION

The Structure of Meaning in Narrated Life Stories

In this dissertation the use of the words 'interpretation' and 'analysis' have not been used in a psychoanalytic sense. The use of psychoanalytic terms would imply the establishment of a context between the psychic origins and the development of the individual and his or her present personality organisation (Sarbin, 1986). This dissertation accepts no such claims. What follows in this chapter is the construction of a "picture of things" (Steele, 1989, p. 7), according to this co-researcher's interpretations, and at base can be seen as a dialogue -- an engagement between: a text of meaning and the co-researcher; a text of meaning and the reader; a text between the co-researcher and the reader.

The Co-Research System

The word 'system' refers here to each person within the co-research and implies that each person is functionally and reciprocally related to every other person. Thus, the behaviour and perceptions of any individual must be understood within the total context formed by the interrelations with other individuals as well as with other elements in the system (O'Connor & Lubin, 1990). The co-research system in this study

can be seen as a system that functioned to maintain its 'homeostasis' as a co-research unit for the duration of the co-research. The relationship typology being reciprocal, was designed to conserve the co-research system as a loyal unit.

The relationship with Mohammed was, over time, akin to a friendship -- a friendship that helped him through difficult times. With Rudolph the relationship resembled two builders, both working steadfastly on a project. With Gerard, the relationship involved brain-storming sessions.

These relationships can be described as morphostatic in that they were synonymous with stability and structural coupling (Hoffman, 1990). By virtue of their organisation and structure, the co-research systems retained their identity as particular autonomous organisations. They could not change, for if they did there would be no "co-research systems" (Maturana, 1975, p. 7). This is not to say, however, that there were no changes within the co-research systems.

The morphostasis of the co-research systems created a need for adaptation that led to morphogenetic moves, such as inverse progressive changes as when the increase in mutual symmetry with Gerard reached a built-in limit around 'bragging' and when a shift toward mutual affection and dialogue took place. Keeney's (1983) notion is that such an oscillation implies an overall stability and that change always takes place under a roof of stability. The co-research system adapts through both change and stability. First by defining itself as a structurally coupled unit and secondly by using the oscillations it experiences to maintain itself.

The Co-Research System within Systems

The co-research system can be seen as a structure-determined system, existing in a medium of other structure-determined systems (Matuarana, 1975). By virtue of the co-research project the co-research system could only accept information that was relevant to its study.

At one level of systemic organisation, the members of the co-research were structurally coupled with each other in a way that made them contributors to this dissertation. The consensual domain for the co-research system included co-constructions, translated into narrative around the death row experience.

At the next level, the co-researcher's nuclear family and the Pretoria Central Maximum Prison can be seen as inherent parts of the systemic organisation.

Both Mohammed and Rudolph are similar in that they both mention their families, friends and dependents. However, they differ in that Mohammed, reports on the improvement of conditions on death row, whereas Rudolph claims that there have been few changes in prison.

Gerard and Mohammed gave favourable descriptions of the wardens, revealing their structural coupling to the prison system. The way that they accommodated this coupling was in the consensual domain between the co-research system where it could be languaged about. This was not the case with Rudolph.

The ideas within the consensual domain reflect as much about the different systems as about the death row experience. An example of this is the warden's statement about the inmates' privilege of being allowed to sing before being hanged. Such a statement may have influenced the way in which Mohammed linked or did not

link with the prison system at the time of his arrival. This example reveals the fit between systems and the co-research system, as well as the fit between the co-researchers themselves.

The Co-Research System in Evolution

The co-research system can only react in a way determined by its structure and organisation. Therefore the reactions within the co-research system cannot be attributed to any causal agents. The changes that occurred could never have been foreseen as they evolved within a particular context, namely Pretoria Maximum Prison.

This project began with the co-researcher approaching a lawyer for human rights to help her obtain subjects (co-researchers) interested in the research. There were eager volunteers and this was a function of an evolutionary process and not due to any pressures placed on the prisoners, either by the lawyer or this co-researcher.

In a similar vein, the co-research system per se had a need to evolve. Initially Mohammed began relating his account to the co-researcher in a factual manner and with aplomb. Later more emotional themes, such as feelings of despair and loneliness, were discussed. Toward the end the co-researchers gave a co-constructed account of how freeing the process of relating to each other had made each one feel.

Rudolph's moves into poetic language introduced negentropy into a hitherto entropic co-research system. The co-research with Mohammed tended toward an ordered account of experiences. Rudolph's randomness introduced a new way of viewing information. Here the co-research system began relating feelings and framing them lyrically and metaphorically. It then moved on to address other issues unrelated to

feelings, such as giving advice and making commentaries.

In Gerard's case the co-research system engaged in a dialectic, which had not been prefixed. It presented yet another way of producing material that had been co-constructed -- dialogue was used as a particular medium.

Over and above the unpredictability of these evolutions, the interpretations of just what the evolution was, can only be reflected by the different subjective views of the co-researchers. These co-researchers could be different members of the co-research proper or different systems involved in one or other way with the co-research. Hence there can be no assessment of the nature of evolution. Evolving systems might even be seen as going from a state of instability to states characterised by relative rigidity to new instabilities. These notions have implications for this co-research, let alone for the co-researchers, who may have experienced temporary relief from anxiety only to become unstable again. This is well illustrated by Mohammed's words: "Believe me, life here isn't always great."

Metaphorical and Thematic use of 'Journeys'

Looking at the outline of interpretation presented thus far, it is possible to construct the thematic 'parameters' of co-research 'journeys' that would serve as another viable interpretation of the co-research system encompassed within other systems in evolution. In order to construct such a journey metaphor, the focus is now on relevant themes surrounding the experiences of death row in the co-research system.

'Mohammed': 'The Journey to Freedom'

The first impression of Mohammed was that of someone expressing indirectly to the co-researcher whatever he was experiencing. This seemed to suggest that he was not 'role free'. He was the 'King's Kid' and had to be joyous about it. There could be, at least initially, no evidence of pain and anguish for it would have meant that he had not fully accepted God in his life to help him make a 'full and spontaneous recovery'.

He was prepared for the account he was to deliver. The consensual domain was established, albeit implicitly, around helping him through the pain and helping him to find ways to avoid it.

His journey began with the theme of 'life of transition'. His life was in transition from the outside world to the world of death row, and the adjustment was tantamount to torture -- due to both the physical act of being transported like an animal and the thoughts that came to haunt him. His account has one believe that any initial encounter is difficult for Mohammed. Using this frame, the co-research system focused on gathering data that would clearly specify what was meant by the term 'initial adjustment'.

The theme 'Arrival at Death's Door' marked the beginning of the reality of being known as a number. Feelings of anonymity, censorship and doom permeated his description on arrival. In general, the co-research system began exposing the social organisation of 'adjustment'. The interaction between warder and prisoner for one, reached a point where Mohammed felt doomed, which in turn diverted the co-researcher interaction away from this feeling and thus calibrated the degree of escalation around the particular feeling of doom, which was too final.

The co-research system then introduced new semantic frames and placed the discussion about death row, and what happens there, in the context of an evaluation between change and stability and not finality. All through his experiences of change, Mohammed continually referred to the stability of his personalty organisation ("it was still me it was happening to"). The multiple references to loneliness, depression and helplessness to serve and provide for his family, activated the co-research system to work on adjustments and on the concept of worry. Worry was framed as an adjustment skill as it contributed to a new sense of awareness. Given that Mohammed was structurally coupled to the context in which he still lives, he had to find a way to either fit, or to disintegrate. A choice was made and a shift to discussions on religion took place.

To co-research system took various jumps via the medium of languaging. It moved from the 'journey to death row', to 'arrival at its door', to 'adjustments to prison life'. During these phases, the central organising distinction was around religion, adjustment and stability. In addition the painful oscillations and changes brought on feelings of depression and abandonment. The pain was 'dealt out' in the consensual domain.

The co-research system in this case ended by constructing multiple semantic and metaphorical frames for the experience of death row, and for the co-research relationship in its poem "Freedom". The two run parallel, for the semantic frames and themes are delivered in a fashion that denoted a complementarity between what was said (that is, the content) and how it was mirrored at another level of experience, namely this particular co-research relationship (process).

'Rudolph': 'Journey of Lyricism'

Rudolph was described in lonely terms -- a wandering, homeless being and structurally uncoupled from the focus of the co-research. Framing Rudolph as impersonal/abstract implied a radically different frame of reference than would be the case if he were simply regarded as 'depressed'. The co-research system did not focus on 'treating this sick individual' but on the co-research system that had a particular way of 'taking care of itself', and of being impersonal.

Rudolph's exposition of death row consisted mainly of monologues, which pertained mainly to fears that he still cannot obliterate -- even now. The co-research system proceeded to spell out the recursive complementarity of how efforts to correct the feelings of loneliness actually stabilised the problem. In spite of these attempts the monologues did not abate. Instead, Rudolph elevated himself above the relationship with the co-researcher, to a position of commentary. In addition he used metaphor and poetry for the same purpose. All the while the co-research system implicitly agreed to bear out the lonely way it had defined itself -- perhaps out of respect for each other -- perhaps out of feelings of helplessness as to how to go about correcting the disconnection.

Throughout the sessions, the co-research system repeatedly used multiple semantic frames to contextualise the problem. When the co-researcher played more of an active role Rudolph appeared to be more willing to discuss the relativity of different people's experiences, his own stages of adjustment and the state of being branded a criminal bearing a public stigma.

With this interpretation in mind, the co-research system seemed to wait for permission to move on toward the end. In the process it evaluated itself as builders

who, at times, worked together and at other times 'looked on from above'. The encounter was mutually self-verifying, in that each saw the other as not giving. The encounter between the co-researchers became 'stuck' but nevertheless the problem was seen as open to correction, in that both felt that it "could've been done differently".

In this evaluation the content of Rudolph's italic speech has been slightly underscored in favour of the communicational frames of reference in the co-research system. The lower-order distinctions of content/relationship is, however, framed by a more encompassing frame of reference, namely that this was a piece of work that would be exposed to those reading this dissertation, and Rudolph guessed that:

People expect details of your crime, your experience. No prisoner will give you that. You have to leave a little space open where you still believe in a little bit of your innocence.

'Gerard': 'The Dialectic Journey'

From the outset, this particular co-research system was able to create 'transforms' of its symptomatic communication. These 'transforms' refer, in this case, to how the members of the co-research system shaped their responses to each other within the context of study. Thus getting to know the other and deciding on a dialogue about death row, for illustrative purposes, was easily achieved.

The dialogue was punctuated as a report, where relevant and succinct questions were posed. The answers were just as short and relevant. By engaging in such a dialogue, both sides of the experience were exposed to the reader. Furthermore it

allowed the members of the co-research system to communicate about constructing their observations according to non-rigid demarcations:

One part of the distinction was the co-research system's notion and consequent questions around Gerard's arrest, initial experiences and how these events affected significant others. In turn Gerard enhanced the notion of double description by exploring the shock he felt when he was arrested and when he wanted to kill himself. These experiences were equated with nightmares.

When the members of this co-research system met, each punctuated the flow of interaction. In combining the views of both members, a sense of a co-research system, that deserved credit for its work, eventually emerged.

Rosenthal (1989) points out that her two level analysis is only one way of interpreting data. She describes other methods that focus on the similarities and dissimilarities of experience and yet another method that aims at drawing distinctions between particular areas of experience. These methods are implicit in her Restructuring Model (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993):

However, she explicitly refers to breaking down the structure of the narrated life stories into various systemic levels (individual, interpersonal etc), and to the reinterpretations of one's research results, hitherto hidden from the conscious access of the biographer (Rosenthal, 1989). In addition Rosenthal is careful to point out that these reinterpretations are not static -- they are only one way of reinterpretation and can be re and reinterpreted.

Conclusion

The narratives in this study are descriptions of what was observed by the co-researcher. It is evident that descriptions from theoretical models, not mentioned in this study, have also been used. However, the constructivist approach allows for a variety of alternative descriptions. There is therefore no attempt to reach any kind of closure. Equally pertinent is the realisation that the readers too, will see many alternate ways of describing the texts. This concluding section is devoted to the context of this study as a whole.

Death Row Experiences in the Context of Capital Punishment

The constructivist epistemology in this dissertation permitted the co-researchers to explore the psychological experiences of death row inmates.

One way of punctuating their experiences within the capital regime would be to attribute more power to the capital regime by virtue of its strength. The responsibility would then not be evenly distributed between the systems involved. Another punctuation would be recursive: one might find a recurrent mutual causal sequence, where each system justifies their actions and thus provokes the very hostilities that justify them. Such a pattern would reflect the responsibility of both systems in the interaction (Hoffman, 1981).

The leaning in this study is aligned to the notion of recursive punctuation. It has specifically attempted to illustrate that physical death is only one part of capital punishment, and that the consequences of being condemned to death affect each

individual differently. Furthermore, a multitude of other systems are affected, such as the families of inmates, and to a different extent the capital punishment suprasystem. It has also been the contention of this study that a problem is not a problem until it has been languaged (Maturana, 1975). In conversation with the prisoners the term 'psychological experiences' expanded to include, inter alia, concepts such as fear, loneliness, shock and rejection. The prisoners not only co-constructed these psychological experiences with this co-researcher but also with significant others, such as their immediate families.

The Co-Research System and its Use of Language

It is evident in this dissertation that this observer entered the prison system by defining and requesting a purpose. Unlike taciturn oriented systems, which view the subject as a black box that can be observed from the outside, the language oriented system in this study brought the co-researcher into the system, prohibiting any disconnection of the researcher-object circuit (Keeney, 1983).

Language is an epistemological knife. Keeney (1983) explains that it not only slices the world into bits and pieces, but that it also provides names for things that do not really exist. The cybernetic epistemology in this study has therefore attempted to draw a pattern of recursion through both sides of a distinction, be it researcher and subject or change and stability. Narrativised stories have therefore been used in this study as a way of building double description. By transferring stories onto paper, contexts are created. Contexts that provide meaning and structure for co-researchers.

In this study what has emerged are stories about stories about stories. The

narrative stories in chapter five reveal how this co-researcher punctuated the world. In general the co-research can be seen as a process of "weaving stories" (Keeney, 1983, p.8). From a cybernetic perspective, when an exchange of stories is structured in terms of feedback, self-correction becomes possible. Szasz (1978) points out that the research can be seen as a conversation and should therefore not be statically reified, and that poetry, narrative and language are the means of exploring psychological experiences.

Limitations of the Study

The nature of the co-research in this study has been largely subjective. Golann (1987) warns against taking the notion of the observing system too far, such that the validity of the research suffers in that what is produced tells more about the observer than the observed.

In this study it was therefore considered important to 'separate' description from explanation, so as to ensure a purer form of description. Golann (1987) points out that if one includes the italic speech of the observed, then one can maximise explanation. Thus it is still possible to see interactions that took place directly from the descriptions

Furthermore, due to the nature of the co-research, this study cannot be replicated. Nor is it generalisable and therefore limited. Indications for further research could be an amalgam of further empirical studies on death row inmates to generate multidimensional descriptions in which the observer is seen as part of the system being observed.

Further research, according to Golann (1987), needs to explore such issues as to whether one can truly speak of co-research, given the numerous and current debates on

the notion of a power differential between researcher and researched (Anderson, 1987; Smykla, 1987; Wynne & McDaniel, 1992). This was not debated in this dissertation.

Despite these limitations, the aim of this dissertation of limited scope was on the creation of descriptions of meaning around a psychological experience and its complexities. It is hoped that the variety of descriptions, in the study, will not only serve to arouse the imagination of the reader, but will also be of use, either directly or indirectly, to correctional personnel who are involved with the care and justice of condemned men.

The death sentence, for now, does lie in the balance, but it is hoped that the psychological experiences of those affected will live on.

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