

COMPLEMENTARITY IN THERAPY

BY

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SUMMARY

In this study **Complementarity in Therapy**, it has been outlined how the construct, cybernetic complementary description or complementarity can be used in therapy to invent an imaginary team for the helper working solo. Complementarity is used to create alternative ideas, simulating the contribution of a team especially in pre-session hypothesising.

A literature study explores the possibilities of complementarity as a cybernetic constructivist construct. Of special significance is the contributions of Varela's formulation of complementarity as trinities, introducing the slash (/) Keeney's emphasis on recursion indicated by circulating arrows and Flemeons emphasis on imbrecation and levels of connection illustrated with different types of lettering.

A case study is described to illustrate how complementarity was applied.

The following key concepts were used: Complementarity, imaginary team and hypothesising.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

Mapping the conceptual framework of the study

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	The intention of the study	1
1.3	Motivation from a subjective perspective	2
1.4	Research approach	6
1.5	The theoretical framework that informed the study	7
1.6.	Aim and objectives of the study	16
1.7	The research question	17
1.8	The research method	17
1.8.1	Selection techniques and data collection	19
1.8.2	Participants, setting and context	20
1.8.3	Researcher's role and potential biases	20
1.8.4	Analysis strategies	20
1.8.5	Units of analysis	21
1.8.6	Limitations of the study	22
1.9	Concepts	22
1.10	The content of the study	23

CHAPTER 2 COMPLEMENTARY DESCRIPTIONS FOR THERAPY

2.1.	Introduction	24
2.2	Complementary description as seen by different theorists	25
2.2.1	Bateson	25
2.2.2	Maturana	26
2.2.3	Varela	26
2.2.4	Keeney	30
2.2.5	Flemons	35
2.2.6	The framework for this study	38
2.3	The Milan approach	40
2.3.1.	Introduction	40
2.3.2	The team	40
2.3.3	Hypothesising	42
2.3.4	Hypothesising and complementarity	44
2.4	Constructing an "imaginary team" by using complementarity	46
2.4.1	The components of the helping situation	46
2.4.1.1	A complementary view of therapy	46
2.4.1.2	A complementary view of the client	47
2.4.1.3	A complementary view of the problem	48
2.4.1.4	A complementary view of the therapeutic system	50
2.4.2	Way of working using complementarity	50
2.4.2.1	Pre-session hypothesising	51
2.4.2.2	In the interviewing process	55
2.5	Conclusion	56

CHAPTER 3 CASE STUDY ILLUSTRATING THE USE OF COMPLEMENTARITY IN THERAPEUTIC HELPING

3.1	Introduction	58
3.2	The client and the presenting problem	59
3.2.1	Information about the client available before the first session	59
3.3	The therapy	60
3.3.1.	Thematic synopsis of the helping process	60
3.3.2	Pre-sessions	63
3.3.2.1	Pre-session: session one	63
3.3.2.2	Pre-session: session two	68
3.4	Illustrating the use of complementarity	70
3.4.1.	Utilisation of pre-session hypothesising and planning	70
3.4.1.1	Distinction one: the client - a single parent family after divorce	70
3.4.1.2	Distinction two: the presenting problem - mothers concern about the children's pain	72
3.4.1.3	Distinction three: the helping system: helper/client	76
3.4.1.4	Distinction four: pain - loss and change	83
3.4.1.5	Distinction five: change request - change/stability.	86
3.5	Discussion of the usefulness of cybernetic complementarity with this case	86
3.6	The relevance of using this way of working	89
3.7	Recommendation	89

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX

CHAPTER 1

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

Mapping the conceptual framework of the study

Daughter: I did an experiment once.

Father: Yes?

Daughter: I wanted to find out if I could think two thoughts at the same time. So I thought "It's summer" and I thought "It's winter" And I tried to think the two thoughts together.

Father: Yes?

Daughter: But I found I wasn't having two thoughts. I was only having one thought about having two thoughts.

Gregory Bateson (1972).

.....

"Cybernetic epistemology proposes that we embrace both sides of any distinction an observer draws... by viewing them as cybernetic complementarities" Keeney (1983:92).

1.1 Introduction

1.2 The intention of the study

In social work and other helping professions, training in therapeutic helping sometimes includes working in a team. The team is available to co-facilitate the helping process by maintaining mobility when the helper experiences a standstill, feels stumped and bereft of ideas (often referred to as being stuck). The team also helps to maintain a consistency in the way of thinking. Once training is completed this possibility of team interaction is very limited and the helper may often yearn for the contributions of a team when experiencing "stuckness" and running the risk of becoming theoretically inconsistent.

Supervision for the solo helper offers the opportunity for anticipation and review of experiences of "stuckness", but this is either before or after the session.

The social worker dealing with difficult situations on her own often feels trapped, taken in by the client's or her own singular perspective, or modes of reasoning that appear to be correct. She seems unable to envisage more than one perspective. She finds she has lost her mobility and is left without any useful alternatives or ways of making useful connection of ideas that could provide the difference necessary for a new idea to evolve. It is as if she is without a lifeline to direct her thinking.

The intention of this study is to explore the possibility and develop a theoretical frame of thinking as a reference to be available for the helper when working alone and during the helping encounter or therapy itself.

1.3 Motivation from a subjective perspective

After two years of therapy training working with a team, the researcher was interested in confronting the above experience of working without a team. In principle the researcher had accepted a non-linear way of thinking that agreed that the living world is interactional and that it is the circularity (or cybernetic nature) of its organisation that makes any living system a unit of interactions which maintains life (Bateson and Maturana in Dell 1985:2 & 5). Any living system is regarded as a organization of connections and to perceive a system is to perceive a pattern that connects.

The researcher valued the contribution of the team highly. The team helped to maintain a non-linear epistemology and develop alternative ideas and ways of "doing" through team discussion. The team was very useful for hypothesising and preparation for therapy. Hypothesising introduced a recursive ideating process, not so much to develop hypotheses to be tested, but

to develop hypotheses about the client and therapeutic system in order to form implementation ideas and interventions. It provided a sensitivity for listening to all the participants, to hear the clients pain and to empathise, and yet retain a mobility by being able to arrive at new ideas. It also facilitated the connecting of ideas, or forming ideas about the coherence of the pattern of social interaction; the way the problem fits. Having had this experience researcher regarded it as important to find a way of improvising a idiosyncratic way of working solo in a non-linear way that could assist in opening up alternatives when experiencing entrapment.

A literature study of therapy as developed by the Milan, post Milan and Milan offshoots disclosed that most references are to teamwork and not about helpers working solo. It is not apparent how that which takes place in the team can be created to help the helper when working solo.

Keeney (1983:20) maintains that there is no end to the variety of distinctions within therapy that one can draw. How to draw them, was the question. Von Glasersfeld (in Watzlawick:1984) had written: "Given the raw material of the experiential world is sufficiently rich, an assimilating consciousness can construct regularities and order even in a chaotic world. The extent to which this will succeed depends far more on the goals and the already constructed starting points than on what might be given in a so-called reality". Rediscovering that Keeney (1983:92), referring to Varela, had said that "cybernetic epistemology proposes that we embrace both side of any distinction an observer draws" ...and that one way was by "viewing them as cybernetic complementarities" seemed to indicate the direction of the search. The assumption that any distinction has another side, another possible distinction, seemed to refer to the alternative perspective(s), that researcher was seeking. Cybernetic complementarity also provided the means of connecting different distinctions and creating alternative perspectives.

The idea of utilising complementarity to assist the solo helper gave rise to a

number of questions:

- * Is it possible to work like a team when working on your own;
- * Is it possible to utilise a single construct, such as complementarity, to partly substitute the contribution of a team;
- * Would "teaming" on one's own not just result in a muddle; and, what guidelines are there for not just muddling?

Each of these questions will now be answered by using material from a study of literature.

- * **Is it possible to work like a team when working on your own?**

Boscolo et al (1987:250) suggest that "Teams of one member can also exist". The helper in the room may go out to communicate with him- or herself and then come back with a comment or an idea, or a helper may come into a session after having consulted with a colleague or group of colleagues and say that they have suggested the following opinion, message, or even letter. Sometimes it must be admitted the consultants are imaginary."

The above suggests that a therapist can make use of other means than a team to help not to become entrapped and maintain a meta position and a mental mobility.

- * **Is it possible to utilise a single construct such as complementarity in therapy when working solo?**

Referring to a context where the question was about different views of family therapy Keeney (1983:147) had written:

"It is important that you decide to believe in a single perspective... By holding on tightly to the tenets of one perspective, you are prepared to discern and

encounter a different perspective. In each such an encounter, your conversation will become the more encompassing side of a cybernetic complementary description."

He continued to explain that in choosing a partial view and holding on to its premises it becomes possible by using imagination to encounter other partial views and then generate the more encompassing perspective, which is not immediately accessible to either side of the dialogue. This would then provide a double view which is a necessity in therapy. He explains that as one holds on to a particular framework (in this case a construct) one acknowledges the framework as incomplete and requiring the self correction of a more encompassing dialogue with a different framework.

The above seems to provide grounds for the possibility of using a single construct such as complementary descriptions to provide a function similar to that of a team providing multiple views as difference with which to engage in a co-evolving process.

* **Is it possible to engage in this type of conversation with oneself, would it not be just a muddle?**

In answer to this question, Keeney replied that it would be possible if one could maintain the appropriate distinctions even though it may at times be a bit crazy (Keeney 1983:148). This is in agreement with Boscolo (1987:250) who maintained that a helper working solo could be his own team. Keeney cautioned that such a conversation with self about hypothesising could very easily be something of a muddle but in writing about a complementary view said that it helps us to avoid being split between the choice of free-associative muddle and technique untempered by wisdom. Citing Bateson he states:

"Rigor alone is paralytic death, but imagination alone is insanity"
(Keeney 1983:94).

and concludes that the aesthetic quest involves a recursive dance between rigour and imagination.

1.4 Research approach

The research approach attempted to match the nature of the research problem posed and the epistemology of the therapy which was non-linear, qualitative and subjective (Keeney & Morris 1985:105; Rademeyer 1989:106; Collins 1991:305).

A qualitative design utilising description and participant observation was used (Mouton and Marais 1990:43) discussing the information which existed (Collins 1991:304). Content analysis of process was done to study the utilization of using cybernetic complementary descriptions in a single case study of brief therapy of two sessions with a single parent family with two children nearly a year after the divorce.

Case study method long in disrepute was regarded as appropriate as the type of research engaged on was about the process of using cybernetic complementarity. Case study is an intensive investigation of a single unit of treatment (Gilgan 1994:371). Sufficient data were available in the form of an audio recording of the sessions and the pre-session notes that would provide detail of the process, particularly focus on what happened, indicate how the intervention worked and what the major actors did. It was possible to describe the practical activities and steps leading to the overall impact of interventions (Rubin and Babbie 1993:391-393; Gilgan 1994:371-375).

Including the following enhances the trustworthiness of qualitative research in family therapy because this content enables the reader to make reasonable judgements about the extent to which the researcher's conclusions are valid and transferable: (1) the theoretical framework that informed the study, (2) the purpose of the study (3) the guiding research question, (4) the research

tradition and/or design employed (5) selection techniques, (6) the participants, setting, context, (7) researchers role and potential biases, (8) data collection and analysis strategies, (9) findings and discussion and interpretation of findings, (10) awareness of the limitations of the research and (11) clarification of concepts (Moon et al. 1990:362; Collins 1991:305-306).

1.5 The theoretical framework that informed the study

Cybernetic complementary descriptions- the core concept of this study is a cybernetic systems and constructivist construct that like the theory underlying qualitative research is recursive, constructive, generative, inductive and subjective and makes use of description and emphasises context, and interrelation (Moon et al. 1990:358; Collins 1991:305).

The theoretical framework of the study will be outlined by explaining those concepts regarded as most relevant for this study.

Epistemology:

Epistemology refers to a branch of science combined with a branch of philosophy. As a science, epistemology refers to the study of how particular organisms or aggregates of organisms know, think and decide, the different "ways of knowing". As a branch of philosophy it refers to the study of the process of knowing, thinking, deciding and doing (Bateson 1979:246).

People have different epistemologies but tend to act as if all share a common epistemology and reality (see Fisher 1991:3). Knowing that people have different epistemologies and that there are different epistemologies available, places a person in a position to make choices which introduces a potential for change. To know that one's own epistemology shapes what one does in helping, and to develop an understanding of another's epistemology and work with that, is useful for a social worker. By knowing one's own epistemology

and exploring other epistemologies helps increase possible alternatives and affectivity (Keeney & Sprenkle 1982:4-6; Fisher 1991:4,13).

Constructivism and cybernetics are ways of knowing in non-linear epistemology.

Cybernetics:

"Cybernetic epistemology proposes that we embrace both sides of any distinction an observer draws" (Keeney 1983:92).

Cybernetics originally refers to understanding the functioning and managing or controlling systems, whether machines, biological, social (individuals, couples, families, groups, communities, industries) by organising the feedback from an objective, outside position (Keeney 1983:375-376; Keeney & Thomas 1986:263; Fourie 1991:6).

Applying the principles of cybernetics to itself provides higher order view of cybernetics, second order cybernetics, which is the perspective of this study. This provides a conceptual framework rich enough to include processes like cognition, dialogue, social interaction and linguistics as well (Keeney 1983:376).

Cybernetic systems are seen as complex layers of connected recursive or circular and circulating processes. This means that observation is not objective and relationship and interaction with the observer and the context must therefore be included as part of in any description that is made of an external phenomenon. How a phenomena is described reflects the observers epistemology and is personal and relational. Description illustrates the selfreferential nature of cybernetics (Keeney 1981:45; 1983:77).

Cybernetic systems have autonomy. Autonomy refers to the observer

dependent observation of the highest order of organisational closure and self reference of a system. This means that a system's boundary is closed for information from the outside and that its organization or identity is maintained from within rather than imposed. Organisational closure involves a network of interconnected feedback loops, feeding on itself. Interaction is not an input into a system but an interaction with its wholeness (Keeney 1983:85). A systems wholeness can be perturbed by what it perceives as information of difference. The goal of any professional helper is to introduce difference into the feedback process that will perturb the disturbed system in an unpredictable way according to its autonomy (Keeney & Thomas 1986:268 & 280).

In second cybernetics change is understood as a complementarity of stability and change. Cybernetic systems are patterns of organisation that maintain stability and achieve change through complementary processes of change and stability (Rateson 1972:381; Keeney 1983:73; Simon et al. 1985:81-82, 156; Keeney & Thomas 1986:266). Keeney and Ross (1992:36) use the term cybernetics to describe the study of the recursive complementarity concerned with the interrelation of stability and change.

Systems usually have multiple feedback loops and layers of feedback that are reciprocally linked. The multiple feedback loops are understood to simultaneously affect, and be affected by, one another. This means that each action or event is seen as simultaneously cause and effect of other actions and events and that none have unidirectional control over the whole. Applied to therapy this means that one person's behaviour in a interaction or relationship does not cause that of another, rather that every member's behaviour influences the others' behaviour and is simultaneously influenced by their behaviour. Simultaneously behaviour and interactions infold on or recycle themselves, causing themselves. In therapeutic helping, the goal of the helper is to perturb the client system towards self correcting behaviour by feeding back into the system information about its behaviour packaged in such a way that it is different enough to evolve changed behaviour (Keeney 1983:8-11,

262-263; Keeney & Thomas 1986:280; Auerswald 1987:337; Hoffman 1990:6).

Each recycling can be distinguished as of a different but connected level or order of recursion. Multiple and recursive levels are also recursively connected. Such higher order feedback process maintains organisation and also provides a way of changing a social organisation (Bateson 1972:243; Keeney 1983:19, 32 & 58-59; Keeney & Thomas 1986:267).

The focus in cybernetics is on pattern, form and organization therefore on feedback loop, the relationship between elements and not the elements themselves.

The contribution of cybernetics lies in the emphasis on complexity and relationship especially connection and the nature of connection.

Constructivism:

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge including the following:

Reality is not objective; it is constructed. An observation is subjective and does not reflect an "objective" or absolute reality. It reflects the meaning and value attributed to it by the observer. People therefore construct different experiential realities in the same situation. There is therefore no "universal reality out there" but a multiverse of experienced realities (Keeney 1983: 376; Efran et al. 1988:33; Lewis 1989:66).

Constructivist thinking emphasises context and meaning. Out of context a particular construction loses meaning; in a new context it means something else. Problems can be seen as ascriptions of meaning arising within a particular context of meaning (Efran et al. 1988:28).

Not any reality can be constructed, with no reference to the external world.

That would be solipsism, not constructivism. The constructed reality has to fit. It has to connect, make sense of or have some consistency or complementarity with other ideas of the constructor or and others. A number of constructions could fit in a situation, as there exist many keys that are different from that possessed by the owner of the lock, yet which will open the lock (Dell 1982:21; Von Glasersfeld 1984:24 & 39; Keeney & Ross 1985:12-13; Efran et al. 1988:29; Atkinson & Heath 1990:9-10; Hoffman 1990:7; Fisher 1991:3-42; Fourie 1991:8).

Fit is an important concept in this study. Fit is the psychological and epistemological experience "as if" "causing" something to happen when a match or coupling takes place. Fit and cause are epistemologically different. Fit is a more general idea that posits that the behaviours occurring in a family system have a general complementarity; causation is an interpretation of fit that regards the observed complementarity to have the form: A causes B. Causation belongs to linear epistemology. Fit refers to the system determining what will happen to it, not the "cause". A fit is transitory, like substances reaching the eutectic temperature for an alloy to form or a message written in the clouds or on the surface of the water. When the fit is made, change takes place and a hypothesis, explanation can not fit again in the same way (Dell 1982:21-24; Keeney 1983:177-178; Dell 1985:9).

When two or more observers agree on their observations, they have co-constructed a particular reality,- a "consensual domain" or complementarity of experiential realities which exist in relation between those sharing the reality (Fisher 1991:16; Fourie 1991:7). A reality, as a hypothesis, persists because of its utility and lack of other alternatives and not because its provable (Efran et al. 1988:28).

Actions are guided by the particular construction construed of something. This applies to the picture a professional helper forms of a particular client as well as of the realities that clients construct. Adaptive and nonadaptive

interactional patterns are guided by specific constructions of reality. These patterns are changeable through interventions that introduce the possibility of alternative perceptions (Von Glasersfeld in Watzlawick 1984:24, 39; Simon et al. 1985:67-69; Keeney & Ross 1985:12-13; Hoffman 1990:7; Fisher 1991:3-42).

Language is important in constructivism. It is also a complex coordination of action. Constructions are shared (that something is a problem) and units of focus and are formed in language. Human lives are seen as being "conversations" an constructivist therapy is seen as a specialised form of conversation -a dialogue- inventing, shaping and reformulating codes for living and living together (Efran et al. 1988:32; Anderson & Goolishian 1988:371-393).

The value of constructivism lies in the possibilities it opens for introducing alternative perceptions of a situation.

Particular concepts from cybernetic and constructivist epistemology that are important in this study are the following.

Distinction:

Drawing a distinction, becoming aware of a difference is the starting point for getting to know anything. It is the creating of a boundary that splits the world into two parts, the "it" and the background that is "not it"; when a part of a whole is differentiated from another part. Knowing is composed of distinctions imposed (Keeney 1982:156; Flemons 1991:1).

Consider a wall with a spot on it or a spot on a wall. Both are possible distinctions. The drawing of a distinction means demarcating one of the above distinctions, the wall or the spot as the "it" and the other as the "not it" or the background. The very act of being able to make a distinction implies that

there are also other potential distinctions. The distinctions, the "it" and the "not it", although separated are also interrelated. The distinction that separates the two sides of a created distinction also joins them (Flemons 1991:31). The wall can be distinguished by the spot on it; and the spot by being the one that is on the wall.

Nothing can be described or known in isolation. Any distinction apart or separated can therefore be regarded as incomplete, only a part of whole that needs another distinction to which it is connected to complete or complement it to form a whole.

This perspective is not representative of the western positivistic approach to knowing that is one of separating to know. When confronted with complexity things are reduced or broken into parts. In the western positivistic approach, knowledge is derived from the activity of quantifying and naming smaller and smaller parts (Fourie 1991:1).

Bateson referred to the activity of punctuating as the same as drawing a distinction (Keeney 1982:156), which can be explained as follows: Any sequence of events can be regarded as a circle consisting of connected parts. To describe the circular sequence of events one can make a distinction of any part with which to start the description. The distinction an observer makes will influence his perception of the sequence of events. Where a person punctuates or draws the distinction to start describing the circle is an indication of what he regards as being of more significance than the rest. Constructivism and recursion make it possible to explain how a specific event or sequence of events can be punctuated and perceived differently by different people or differently by the same person at different times (Fisher 1991:43).

A single description is limited and biased and captures a single perception but cannot "be" what is described because the other possible distinctions are excluded (Andersen 1990:109). Knowing that more distinctions are possible

creates the possibility of perceiving other "not yet" distinguished distinctions and combinations of related distinctions.

Difference:

The basic act of cybernetic epistemology is the creation of difference. Difference perceived, is that which makes it possible to draw a distinction. Bateson (1972:78) explained that it takes at least two somethings to create difference. A something needs a context or comparison to become perceptible. A black spot on a white wall is perceptible because of being different from the white wall. We hear a particular sound when its tone, volume or rhythm differs from all the noise of the context. The two somethings can be a relationship either between two parts or between a part at time 1 and the same part at time 2 (Bateson 1979:102-103). The difference or change between the two parts creates a perception of difference which becomes information. Difference is the perception of the separation and connection between the distinctions of a connected distinction.

The perception of difference is subjective and related to the observer's way of perceiving and giving meaning. It reflects the observer's way of thinking and can be formulated as follows:

Perception / way of thinking

As in perception, any process (interaction, change) is triggered by difference (Bateson 1972:104). Creating something that can be perceived by the perceiver (the client) as different (or meaningful) is therefore essential for facilitating the helping process.

Description:

Description is the setting forth in language of experience so that it can be

shared and known. In the world of experience subjective description and not objective quantification is utilised to know (Keeney 1981:46).

In order to understand a description of experience one needs to know how the description was constructed. The content and the process of description is recursively connected. Knowing the process includes knowing the basic premises or choices made earlier that determine how the distinctions were drawn that underlie the way the experience was constructed and described (Keeney 1983:21-24).

The process of description like the process of cybernetics is one of a spiralling recursion. After an initial description of the concepts one seems to have attributed just enough meaning to the word to start again with the first concept. It is also like thinking about a ball of loosely wound variegated wool of which the beginning and end have been joined. If one were to pull out a little piece, the loop may appear to be mainly of one colour. However if pulled a little longer it would become apparent that the colour of the loop is not uniform. Towards the ends that disappear into the ball the colour is changing. It is impossible to describe the loop by only referring to one colour. The loop cannot be described without reference to the other colours and the whole ball of wool.

Double description:

Double description assumes that distinctions can be structured in terms of pairs and refers to the process of combining information of different perceptions or from different sources, relating them by viewing them simultaneously and giving them a single significance. The aggregate significance is then more than a summation, it is a multiplication or fractionation, or creation of a logical product that is something new which can be "a momentary gleam of enlightenment" (Bateson 1979:99-100).

An example to illustrate double description is that of an image formed from a single centrally placed rear-view-car-mirror of which the information is complemented by additional perspective, depth and understanding obtained from the images from two side rear view mirrors. This creates a new more-dimensional enriched and holistic perception on a new logical or meta level. This means of double or multiple comparison can be a creative manner of search that provides depth and facilitates understanding.

The behaviours of a couple viewed separately can seem like the results of inherent qualities and not as connected to their relationship and pattern of interaction (Keeney 1983:37).

Double description of social interaction provides a means of combining diverse pieces of information as cybernetic complementarities which enables the perceiver to think in term of the recursive relationship between them (Bateson 1979:68; Keeney 1983:92 & 154).

Double description has been the trigger in the development of concepts like cybernetic complementarity, completing distinctions, techniques like an observing and reflecting team, the systemic hypothesis, and positive or alternative connotations (Keeney 1983:154 & 195; Boscolo et al. 1987:107; Andersen 1990:109; Keeney & Ross 1992:32; Jones 1993:11). In research it includes the combining of multiple views to develop a rich multiple view of a phenomenon (Keeney & Ross 1992:32-34).

1.6 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim is to systematically explore the possibility of using complementarity description in therapeutic helping to develop, a mobility, by perceiving alternative distinctions and making connections.

The objectives of the study can be stated as follows:

1. To do a literature study on cybernetic complementary descriptions;
2. to explore the possible utility of implementing cybernetic complementary description in the context of therapeutic helping as it emerges from the literature;
3. to use the theory of cybernetic complementary description to analyze/explain the therapy with a family where cybernetic complementary description was applied with therapeutic intent;
4. to conclude how cybernetic complementarity may facilitate the helping process when working solo as illustrated/described in a case study.

1.7 The research question

Moon et al. (1990:359) suggest that qualitative research questions are usually open ended and generally ask "What's going on here and why?" In this study the question was:

1. How was using cybernetic complementary descriptions useful in the therapeutic context to contribute towards facilitating change by; and
2. How did complementary description assist the solo therapist in ways in which a team can?

1.8 The research method

The research method used in this study is a variant of content analysis and of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology is a qualitative method of data collection which emphasises a subjective approach. It places the researcher a process of being involved in the experience of his respondent from the latter's perspective (Collins 1985:51). The researcher researched her own experience of the therapy. Analysis is the resolution of a complex whole into parts whereby the variables or factors that are relevant to the understanding are identified, scrutinised, and relationships sought and inferences made (Mouton & Marais 1990:103). Pinsof (1988:167) emphasises the sequence in

his description and describes data analysis as "the sequential analysis of interaction" including the "identification of the interaction context in which a given event or series of events occurs". Davis and Reid (1988:298-307) refer to the units of analysis as therapeutic events. The events that are the units of analysis in this study are those interactions in therapy where the therapist made use of cybernetic complementary descriptions.

When content analysis is used the observer is usually totally removed from the context of interaction (Collins 1985:52). The observer in this study was however not removed from the context of interaction as the researcher was also the therapist in the case study. The content analysis was of limited nature as only the interactions illustrating cybernetic complementarities were analyzed.

Pinsof (1988:167) refers to this as small chunk or episode discovery oriented strategy. The objective was to identify episodes containing complementarities and the subsequent episode outcome. The research data included some behaviours and experiences within and outside of the treatment sessions as noted and recorded on audiotape. The interactions were later identified, analyzed and described (Collins 1991:305).

Pinsof (1988:168) explains that episode or small chunk strategies focus on "small-o" outcomes. This is based on the assumption that process-outcome linkages are best discovered in smaller units and are valuable. These small discoveries can be translated directly into practice. They do not tell a therapist how to conduct an entire therapeutic sequence but may provide a useful guide to a specific phase or type of situation in therapy.

Pinsof (1988:162) also explains that the defining of process and outcome are arbitrary and a function of the viewers interest and perspective. The "small-o" outcome indicators were looked for in the immediate outcome following the use of a complementary description or part of a description within the session

and in the status of the family at termination and follow up three months later.

1.8.1 Selection techniques and data collection

As is acceptable, but not preferred in qualitative research, only one available case study was used. Data collection techniques included participant observation, notes and audio recording (Moon et al. 1990:360).

Selection technique

Selection of the case was purposive. The researcher used an available audiotaped example of brief therapy where complementary descriptions were purposely used after researcher had observed that she was using complementarities quite extensively. The findings can therefore not be considered representative of cybernetic systems therapy, but a case illustration of a useful intervention process and connecting it to theory (Wynne 1988:275; Keeney & Silverstein 1983; Keeney & Morris 1985:103; Rubin & Babbie 1993:392).

Data collection

In this study the researcher was both professional helper to the family and subsequently researcher. Participant observation and document analysis were used as data collection techniques. Researcher was also participant observer in the sense that having been the helper, researcher had been participant in the social setting being studied and had observed and experienced the helping process. Researcher's observations and experiences as remembered and rekindled during the data analysis were also data (Pinsof 1988:161). Document analysis consisted of using transcripts of the audiotaped sessions and the children's drawings and notes made on the pre-sessions. The family were subjects of the research in so far as that they had been part of the process that was analyzed as the subject of the research (Moon et al.

1990:361).

1.8.2 Participants, setting and context

In qualitative design research the subjects are referred to as participants (Moon et al. 1990:360). In the study the respondents were the therapist-researcher and the family consisting of a mother and two children who presented for therapy because the mother was concerned about the children after the divorce of the parents eleven months before.

1.8.3 Researcher's role and potential biases

Researcher was also therapist and as participant in the therapy attempted to observe her own and the family's behaviours related to complementary descriptions.

Reason and Rowan (1981:241) argue that reality is a process linked to a researcher's way of thinking which in this study regards reality as being subjective and observer dependent. The researcher accepts that in accordance with cybernetic and constructive epistemology she actively participated in and is responsible for the construction of the observations made (Keeney & Morris 1985:584). Anyone else analysing the data would most likely construct a different reality.

1.8.4 Analysis strategies

Data analysis did not, as is usual in qualitative research, occur throughout the data collection period, but took place after termination of the helping process.

Content analysis is a coding operation of selected social interactions with the aim of establishing trends or principles to make inferences about and inform practice.

Using ideas from other therapy research (Campbell & de Carteret 1984:131-147; Keeney & Morris 1985:103; Keeney & Silverstein 1987; Rogers 1987:452-457; Pinsof 1988:159-174; Davis and Reid 1988:298-306; Moon et al. 1990:362; Keeney & Ross 1992) it was decided to do a analysis of the interactions containing complementary distinctions. This consisted of re-examining how the particular therapeutic reality had been constructed. The following structure for analysis was devised.

1.8.5 Units of analysis

Units of analysis were identified as those actions of the therapist and clusters of interaction between therapist and client containing complementary distinctions. Actions include the pre-session preparatory thinking and notes made, encompassing actions before and during therapy that were of complementary nature; the drawings made during therapy, in and outside of the sessions. An interaction is distinguished as containing at least three elements:

- * a statement or behaviour providing a description of the context in which the complementary distinction took place,
- * a client or helper response containing or referring to a complementary description, and
- * immediate and subsequent that specifically referred to an identifiable responses

In this study the data were analyzed by reading the notes, listening to and partially transcribing of the audiotaped sessions, looking at the children's drawings and then reflecting on and relating the data (Moon et al. 1990:362).

This was done by:

1. Identifying and indicating the content of the complementary

descriptions;

2. Identifying and describing the context in which the complementary descriptions had been used;
3. Identifying and describing the immediate and later outcome or reaction of the family to the communication containing complementary descriptions.

The application of the above research method will be described in the chapter three.

1.8.6 Limitations of the study

The recursiveness and interrelatedness of a non-linear way of thinking makes it difficult to isolate any concept for descriptive purposes as it is simultaneously interrelated to all other non-linear constructs. Keeney (1983:92) writes:

"In a recursive universe, the whole earth may be found in a single living cell."

The limited scope of the research illustrating the use of complementarity as described in a case study of two session therapy does not do justice to the richness of the idea of complementarity as found in the literature.

The case study does however provide a detailed description of how complementarity was used and as such provides a baseline for further research.

1.9 Concepts

The following are concepts used in this study but not included in the description of the theoretical framework that informed the study.

Complementarity:

Complementarity refers to cybernetic complementary distinctions and study describes the cybernetic relation between dualities.

Helper:

refers to a person of a helping profession.

Helping or helping process:

refers to therapeutic helping as participated in by a professionally trained helper.

Slash / :

A slash usually indicates "either" or "or" but in this study it is an indication of simultaneous separation and connection of the distinctions on either side of the slash (Varela 1976:62).

1.10**The content of the study**

This thesis consists of the following:

Chapter 1 maps the conceptual framework, scope of the study, the research method and explanation of concepts.

Chapter 2 contains the literature and theoretical background.

Chapter 3 contains the illustration of the concept

CHAPTER 2

COMPLEMENTARY DESCRIPTIONS FOR THERAPY

2.1 Introduction

Complementarity, whether in physics, mathematics geometry or as a construct in cybernetic thinking, refers to a description containing two distinctions, where the single distinction is inadequate or incomplete and a description using pairs where the one distinction by being connected to the other, completes the description (Allen 1990:232-233). A cybernetic complementary description (also referred to as complementarity) describes the recursive relation between different distinctions as related "wholes and parts", "its and the process leading to it" or apparent "opposites".

The objective of this chapter is to explore the literature for existing knowledge on complementarity to see whether as a construct it has potential for developing alternative distinctions that in a way could resemble team hypothesising in helping when working solo (Boscolo et al. 1987; Burbatti & Formenti 1988, Hoffman 1990:16-23; Jones 1993:30-54).

In this chapter the researcher's perception of the views of different theorists about complementarity is presented in the first section to show the evolutionary nature of the development of ideas on complementarity in the social sciences. In the second section, team hypothesising as developed by Milan is described and used as a framework to assess the possibility of using complementarity to partially act as an imaginary team. The third section describes the researcher's suggested use of the literature on complementarity as a "team" when working solo.

2.2 Complementary description as seen by different theorists

In the social sciences complementarity has been used to refer to patterns of relationship wherein the behaviour and aspirations of individuals and groups differ or fit together in dynamic equilibrium and also as an alternative way of viewing pairs (Keeney 1983:92; Simon et al. 1985:62).

2.2.1 Bateson

Bateson introduced the terms "complementary" and "symmetrical" into the social sciences to describe the pattern of interactions and relationships he perceived among the Iatmul natives of New Guinea. "Complementary" and "symmetrical" were used to name the two classes of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals. Symmetric refers to forms of interaction that are similar but different as in competition and rivalry. The actions of A of a given kind repeatedly stimulate B to action of the same kind and vice versa. Complementary refers to forms of interaction, where the actions of A and B were different but mutually fit together and promote each other. An example of complementary is dominance-submission, and nurturance-dependence. Both these classes of process and differentiation, when restraining factors are absent, are subject to progressive escalation ending in breakdown or new equilibrium. Alternations between complementary and symmetrical forms of interaction are mutually negating or reciprocal (Bateson 1972:117, 207-208, Bateson in Simon et al. 1985:62, 63 & 309).

It was however Bateson's idea of double description "it takes two to know one" that Varela (1976:62) referred to when he wrote "Not one, not two..." and described complementarity.

Simon et al. (1985:63 & 272) have summarised how different authors (Wynne, Jackson, Bowen, Haley, Watzlawick, Beavin, Lederer) used

complementarity. Jackson used complementary and symmetric to classify relationships in marital and family therapy. He substituted Bateson's term reciprocal with "parallel". He also described marital complementarity in terms of benign, non-deceitful collusion, a compensation, something for something, that develops in an ongoing relationship. Wynne contrasted non-mutual complementarity (as in the interchange between customer and salesperson) and mutual complementarity (as in enduring, affectively charged interchanges). He also referred to the mutual complementarity of pseudo-mutual and pseudo-hostile patterns of behaviour as unsuccessful resolution of striving for relatedness and identity. Bowen elaborated on Bateson's idea of reciprocal and in his version of complementarity emphasised "overadequate-inadequate" reciprocal functioning.

2.2.2 Maturana

Maturana uses complementarity to describe the very essence of existence. He uses complementarity to describe the relation or interaction of existence between a unit and its medium in the phenomenon of structural coupling. When there is no structural coupling (complementary interactions) there is no survival, no existence of a system. The more complementary interactions, the richer the couplings and the greater the tendency toward an internal consistency of ideas and processes which lead to being self healing. This echoes Bateson's idea of tautology and the self healing property of a living system (Dell 1985:12 & 13).

2.2.3 Varela

Varela (1976:62) interacted with Bateson's idea of double description that "it takes two to know one" (double description) and suggested that it takes a third component to know one. The recursive relation between the two distinctions must be included. A distinction between two may be closed (or completed) to be seen as one, a trinity or star description. Dualities, a philosophical idea

or perception that poles, pairs, extremes, sides and modes, exist as two distinct entities, that negate each other, could also be connected as trinities, a complementary description. He introduced the idea of using a slash (/) between the two distinctions to indicate this connection. By trinity he meant the ways in which the two sides are related yet remain distinct and regarded as follows:

"trinity" = "the it/ the process leading to it"

where the slash (/) is to be read as "consider both sides of the slash (/)", that is: "consider both the "it" and "the process leading to it." The slash was to be regarded as a compact indication of a way of moving to and fro between both sides of the statement.

This can be summarised as:

Complementarity: it/process leading to it

If in the helping process a couple were to state the problem differently, for instance, as "lack of communication" and "talking too much", "lack of communication" can be regarded as the "it" and placed on the left side of the slash (/). "Talking too much" can be placed on the right side of the slash and regarded as the hypothetical "process leading to it".

Problem: Lack of communication/talks too much

The next step is to consider how the "it", that is "lack of communication" and the "process", "talking too much" could be related. The answer to this question provides a way of bringing forth the recursive nature of the relationship between lack of communication and talking too much and could provide a different perspective on the "problem" (Keeney 1983:92-93).

Varela also presented the following variation of complementarity:

whole/ parts constituting the whole

where the whole is a set of simultaneous interactions of parts which exhibit stability as a whole. The dual elements could then be perceived as becoming effectively complementary, where they mutually specify each other. The duality becomes recedent and the relatedness of the pairs evident at a meta level where they become a cognitive unity, a second order whole. This wholeness is not a synthesis but a relatedness (Varela 1976:63).

The process of creating trinities or complementarities was seen as a way to proceed from disjoint pairs to their unity in a meta level and a way of reformulating dualities and a compact expression of cybernetics (Varela 1976:63). Complementary description also differs from the negating, clashing property of dualism where pairs are of the form "A/not A", where a whole cannot also be related to parts. Pairs could now be regarded as imbrication of levels, where the one unit of the pair emerges from the other, as in the overlapping of roof tiles or the scales of fish where the one emerges from the other. An example Varela uses is the cybernetic perception of a whole decomposing in parts which generate processes integrating the whole. The self-referential logic of complementary description becomes evident. (Varela:1976:64).

The idea of imbrication of levels also points to the relatedness of the distinctions. A level can be seen as a step in a ladder of imbricated distinctions. This means that a duality or pair of opposites are of the same level and stay in the same level if they are perceived as being in opposition or contradiction and cannot be seen as interacting. When paired as trinities this view forms a bridge and they specify or complement each other. However Varela also argues that levels must not only be seen as ascending hierarchy but as indication of movement in thinking that can take place in both directions: up and down between the levels. (Varela 1976:64)

A complementary way of drawing distinctions introduces the notion of context. For every system there is an environment which can be perceived as a larger whole where the initial system participates. For practical purposes this is often not regarded and we chop out our system of interest, and put the rest in the background as environment. We are in the "environment/system". To do this purposefully is useful, to forget it can be dangerous. (Varela 1976:64)

Another implication of distinguishing complementarity is a changed perception of the meaning of opposites. When pairs are perceived as dualities with their negating quality, the implication is that what one gets the other loses. By seeing complementarity the situation changes from thinking in terms either/or to thinking in terms of both/and without loss. He mentioned the following examples: A/not-A; right/wrong; useful/not useful; good/bad can now be viewed as connected by a recursive process and then perceived differently as not either/or but as both/and distinctions (Varela 1976:64; Keeney 1983:92).

The idea of levels also points to the subjective construction of realities instead of there being a reality. A accepted reality can be seen as one of the totality of what there is perceived to be:

A reality/ levels of realities (Varela 1976:65)

The interactions between a whole and the constituent parts can be expressed as conversational domain. The whole and the parts, when we take the perspective of one of the systems is the domain of interactions of a system. In the net of interactions that gives form to a conversational domain there are stable interactions (patterns and relations) that can be observed as units of observable behaviour, referred to by Bateson as message-in-the-circuit. The behaviour and the participants are recursively related and can be expressed as:

Conversational domain:behaviour/participants

Behaviour (conversational pattern)/participants of the conversation

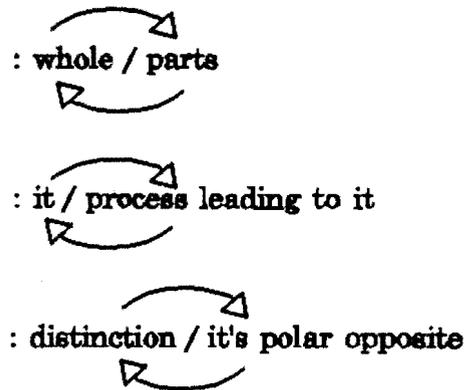
(Varela 1976:65)

Varela stressed that one of the consequences of this perspective of seeing the relation between behaviour and participants was the recognition of responsibility of the perceiver for what is seen and understood as reflected in what the observer has decided to understand and do (Varela 1976:62-66).

2.2.4 Keeney

Keeney (Keeney & Sprenkle 1982, Keeney 1983, Keeney & Ross 1983, Keeney & Thomas 1986, Keeney & Silverstein, Keeney & Ross 1992) highlighted some of Bateson's and Varela's ideas to develop the idea of cybernetic complementarity. Keeney did not invent new ideas about complementarity but, translated the theory into therapeutic practice possibilities. Keeney also graphically formulated the star statement as follows:

Cybernetic Complementarity



This emphasised the recursive connection of the complementarities. Any single distinction can also be regarded as part of a recursively and uncompleted pair and can be completed to form a recursively connected pair. Applied to the therapeutic situation it is possible to regard any described distinction of pattern, value, idea or behaviour present at any time, as always presenting along with its polar opposite:

Pattern: change/stability; distance/closeness

Value: right/wrong; good/bad;

Behaviour: leave/stay; divorce/marry; love/hate;

Idea: system/not a system; conscious/unconscious

Opposites encountered in therapeutic situations can therefore be regarded as connected and not as mutually exclusive, thereby making it possible to construct alternative meaning or difference by reframing: giving a logical explanation of fit and or coherence. The following are some examples:

conscious/unconscious, individual/family, client/helper, behaviour/interactional sequence, lineal/recursive description. (Keeney 1983:112; Keeney & Ross 1992:47).

Where Varela refers to the imbrication of levels, Keeney refers to orders of recursion and maintains that cybernetic or recursive complementarity, like recursion involves different orders of recursion. The implication of this is that when different (incomplete) distinctions are paired as a cybernetic complementarity it also can be seen as the (incomplete) distinction of a complementarity where the other distinction is of another order of recursion. Distinctions can also be paired as of the same order of process and not as cybernetic complementarities but as a dualism that forms an incomplete description of a more inclusive description belonging to a different order of recursion. Predator and prey that are usually regarded as a complementarity, can also be paired as of the same order of larger (ecological) process of species in interaction, in a battle over food and territory. In this dualism they then form a symmetry. Together they form one side of a larger picture- their battle is part of the interaction, the ecological process, that is life maintaining and regenerating. Their battle forms part of a cybernetic complementarity with ecosystem. In a similar way domination and submission in a marital relationship can be seen as another such dualism; the complementarity of their marital interaction of domination and submission forms a complementarity within the larger picture of the marital relationship (Keeney 1983:93-94).

This view of complementarity tends to a perception of wholeness, agreeing with Flemons (1991:23) that "separates connected echo completion".

The Change/Stability complementarity

Change is the act of or instance of becoming different and is the essence of therapy. Change is included in the request of the client, the process and outcome of therapy.

Keeney (1983:50) used Bateson's notion of "double description" of change "that all change can be understood as the effort to maintain some constancy and all constancy as maintained through change" and Varela's statement that "the whole is a set of simultaneous interactions of parts which exhibit stability as a whole" and Varela's idea of trinities to develop his idea of cybernetic complementary description of change:

$$\text{change} = \text{stability} / \text{change}$$


Keeney & Thomas (1986:267) say that in cybernetics stability and change cannot be separated; both are complementary sides of a cybernetic coin. Cybernetics thus proposes that change cannot be found without a roof of stability and that stability will always be rooted to underlying processes of change. What remains stable is the self-correcting system and what changes are the behaviours within the system.

This he used extensively for cybernetic descriptions and explanations. These include cybernetic system, feedback, therapy and different parts and processes of therapy.

- * *Feedback*, the basic idea of cybernetics, is the way in which systems maintain stability through processes of change, and a method of stabilizing a system by recycling into it changes of its past

performance (Keeney & Thomas 1986:263; Keeney & Ross 1992:37). In therapy this refers to the self-healing potential of a system (Keeney & Thomas 1986:266 & 280).

Cybernetic System = (stability / change)



Stability refers to the stabilization of the cybernetic systems wholeness or autonomy and change refers to the construction of different patterns and structures which serve to maintain the whole system (Keeney & Ross 1983:378).

- * *Therapy* is creating a context that enables a cybernetic system to change the way it changes in order to remain stable, utilizing its own resources to achieve the necessary change (Keeney 1983:8).
- * A client system's *request for change* is a multiple communication, a complementarity of change/stability. The stability message is often covert. This message requesting a stability of the present process can be the survival of the family's relationship system, the survival of some of the benefits of the present pattern of interaction. Requests to unilaterally change one member's behaviour also reflects the stability/change complementarity of the request. (Keeney 1983:69; Keeney & Ross 1992:37). This can be stated as:

Change request = (stability / change) request



Example: A couple were in therapy because of the husband's drinking problem. Both were dissatisfied with the situation and wanted change. The wife elaborated on the ways in which the husband was not meeting her expectations in spite of her cajoling and threatening requests. He

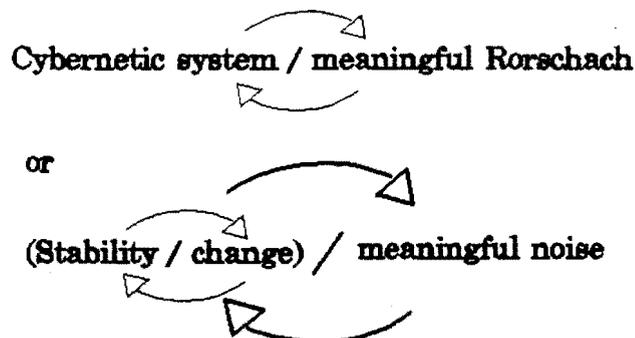
and she agreed that he was very much like his father in his ways and he didn't want to be like that but resented her telling him what he should do.

- * *Therapeutic change* is about altering the way a problematic system maintains its organisation through processes of change and could be stated as "change of change" or:



where the system at time 2 is more adaptive than it was at time 1 (Keeney 1983:177; Keeney & Ross 1992:37). Described differently it could mean that at time 2 a different description and meaning would have emerged where the problem is no longer labelled in language as a "problem" (Frosh 1991:174; Anderson & Goolishian 1988:381).

- * *The process of therapy* is facilitated by changing the context, introducing difference (also known as meaningful noise or Rorschach) from which alternative behaviours, structures or patterns, may be generated (Keeney 1983:67; Keeney & Ross 1992:37)." This can be stated as follows:



Helper and client can be seen as like a chameleon on a mirror. Like a chameleon, a helper needs an ability to vary her behaviour, an ability

to discern and use the effects of that behaviour to direct subsequent behaviour. The variations in the behaviour that can be regarded as mirroring of the problematic situation can include interpretations referring to family history, cultural myth, religious metaphor, psychobabble, stories, dramatic announcements, free associations, rituals, and behavioural assignments like prescribing the symptom, suggesting a relapse, causing confusion by amplifying deviation and emphasising the positive aspects of the symptom. (Keeney 1983:171-176; Keeney & Ross 1992:38). To be meaningful the noise or Rorschach must have meaning for both the helper and client. It must fit. To fit it must include the stability and change of helper and client simultaneously.

Keeney and Ross (1992) used the preceding ideas of the stability/change complementarity to describe how a few major therapeutic orientations construct their unique systemic views in terms of complementary semantic and political frames.

With the above descriptions where change and stability were used to as a complementarity to provide cybernetic descriptions, Keeney introduced alternative and enriched perceptions of concepts related to therapy.

2.2.5

Flemons

Flemons (1991) uses the complementarity

COMPLETION/(**connection**/separation)

to extend understanding of cybernetic epistemology especially as it refers to wholeness. It also provides useful ways for creating new ideas for therapy through alternative distinctions.

- * Flemons (1991:41) suggests that complementarities be written in tiered form using different letter types to portray and emphasise the different levels of imbrication referred to by Varela.

COMPLEMENTARITY/*whole/parts*)

The boundary created to make a distinction, indicated by a slash (/), has the property of both separation and connection. The slash (/) placed between two distinctions indicates the two sides of the distinction and their relatedness which is connection and separation. The slash (/) can therefore be seen as connecting and separating connection and separation (Flemons 1991:1-2).

- * The connection/separation distinction also defines the recursiveness of "whole-part" relations. Each side can be said to exist (distinguished) by virtue of the difference that separates it from, and connects it to, its complement. A whole is distinguished from a part of itself, as in ecosystem/species or family/child or when a part of a whole is differentiated from another part as in yesterday/tomorrow and husband/wife. (Flemons 1991:1-3, 20 & 22).
- * Being a complementarity, connection and separation also cannot be considered *apart* from each other, but must be considered *as a part* of the distinction which in separating them, connects them. Considering a distinction as *a part* implies connection to *a whole*. This expounds Varela's framework for complementarity:

whole/parts constituting the whole

The connection of connection/separation can thus be seen as evolving in the direction of wholeness, while the separation of connection/separation devolves toward a level of particularity (Flemons

1991:32-34).

- * From the above logic the following instruction for the emergence of a kind of self-referential completeness can be formulated:

**Connect separations to form wholes/
*separate connections to distinguish parts***

(and vice versa).

- * Connecting two distinctions moves in the direction of wholeness; separating two distinctions underscores the relation (Flemons 1991:39). This provides a way of responding to and participating in the making of new distinctions in communication.
- * Flemons explains problems as separation and contraction. Problems arise from the belief that distinctions that are opposite are irreconcilable opposition, separated only, like love and hate, sickness and health, problem and solution. He proposes that healing occurs when such a distinction is closed or completed to become one by regarding it as a cybernetic complementarity.

He also explains problems as contraction. Contraction is the inversion of completion and means to draw together, to narrow to limit, or shorten as in forgetting, considering only one possibility, or as in an impoverished ecology with a lack of diversity. As the contrary to completion, it is a constriction that in falling short, precludes completion. It is the short-circuited parody of the long-circuited wholeness of completion.

CONTRACTION\ [separation\connection]

In contraction the contextual stacking of connection and separation is inverted. With completion, connections relax and resolve to

dissolution. In contraction separation follows and thus precedes connection in continual recursive process. With contraction there is always a "shortcoming", a denying of the simultaneity of connection and separation (Flemons 1991:85-86).

- * Flemons (1991:115-118) poses that a therapeutic conversation is a recursive process separating and connecting and recrossing or recombining distinctions. Contractions are separated to be crossed and combined with other distinctions. Other distinctions are combined to form "wholes" of new meaning.

From:

CONTRACTION\[*separation*\connection]

to:

COMPLETION/(*connection*/separation)

Therapy ...complicates (increases complexity) the system by opening and restoring connections among the various parts, in a way restoring the ultimate simplicity of their union. The parts are healthy in so far as they are joined harmoniously to the whole (Berry in Flemons 1991:117).

2.2.6 The framework for this study

From the preceding literature study the following properties of complementarity were evolved to form the framework for this study:

- * The idea of complementarity is a system evolved through linear time; with time collapsed it is an ecology of ideas able to bring forth more ideas.
- * The perception that any distinction can be considered as one of a pair and that no distinction need be regarded as having a fixed complement opens unlimited possibilities of connection, separation and

reconnection.

- * The formula variations for forming complementarity.

COMPLEMENTARITY:

whole/parts

it/process leading to it

any distinction/its polar opposite

- * The connecting property of complementarity to evolve alternative distinctions by connecting opposing and negating distinctions, connect hitherto unrelated distinctions, create complementary distinction for presented distinctions and to introduce relation and point to wholeness.
- * The separating quality of complementarity to create a related distinction of given distinction. This separation is not a process of taking apart and dividing to analyze, but of doubling, multiplying. Imagine a process of cell division where the new cells are non-identical.
- * The possibility to reconnect separated distinctions differently to create new complementarities contributes diversity and complexity, like a life sustaining ecology, rich in diversity.

(Now that the cybernetic nature of complementarity has been explained, henceforth when referring to complementarity, cybernetic complementarity will be implied.)

2.3 The Milan approach

2.3.1 Introduction

The ideas of cybernetics and constructivism have been translated into therapeutic practice working in a team (Jones 1993:ix-xxi; Hoffman 1990:16-23; Keeney & Thomas 1986:262).

2.3.2 The team

There a variety of perceptions of the therapeutic team. Some regard it as belonging to training and unnecessary once a helper has developed basic skills. Others see it more like supervision, as peer collaboration or intervision or as a reflecting team. Proponents of teamwork claim that it enables helpers to work more effectively (Tomm 1984:113-125 & 253-271; Ferrier 1984:17-32; Boscolo et al. 1987:24-28; Roberts et al. 1989:38-46; Andersen 1990:52-79; Jones 1993:49-54).

Using a team helps to extend the creative range of a helper, creating new possibilities that are often more far ranging and discontinuous than the ideas developed in other ways. The variety of inputs and the interaction with team ideas stimulates the helper's own thinking. (Jones 1994: 50). Combining the different views provides a depth perception on observations and experiences (Burbatti & Formenti 1988:19-23; Jones 1993:31).

The team provides an opportunity of going "meta" by reflecting on the thinking and doing in therapy. The team situation also contributes to a mental mobility. It helps the therapist to stay loose, joining with the client whilst making a difference that makes a difference by being connected to the client system and the therapeutic team. When the helper and client form a new system for purposes of therapy, the helper can easily become so much part of it that she can no longer bring the difference necessary to perturb the system. On the other hand the helper may be so much part of another system of ideas

like the social worker with specific statutory or agency obligations or approaches that without a team she would not be able to appreciate the client's perspective. By being connected to the team, this process is slowed down and the helper enabled to retain enough difference in relation to the clients to make it likely that her contribution could lead to change (Jones 1993:310).

The team help each other in the development of circularity of ideas by forcing comparison of different punctuations until a dialectic contraposition results in global vision of the distinction in its complexity (Burbatti & Formenti 1988:43).

The Milan team use a circular method of assessing families (hypothesizing), a circular version of the therapeutic stance (neutrality) and a circular approach to interviewing (circular questioning) (Tomm 1984:257).

The Milan team developed a ritual of a five part session with tasks related to each part, that is pre-session, session, intersession, intervention and post session.

Therapy begins when the team meets before a session to discuss preliminary hypotheses about the family. Thereafter one of the team interviews the family while the others watch from behind the screen. The team call in questions and suggestions and towards the end of the session meet with the interviewer to discuss ideas while the family waits. The initial hypotheses are examined, confirmed or revised by a process of circular questioning. In the process the therapeutic team attempts to establish the family's epistemology about itself and to perturb it where it seems to be maintaining the problem.

The team then meets to construct a message or intervention which the interviewer shares with the family. The aim of the message is to challenge the family's belief system, to challenge their perception of the problem and therefore their ways of interacting around it. This is done by introducing

ideas of difference that will free the family from its present fit. The message consists of the team's impressions, often a logical connotation of the organization of interaction and relations; it may include a prescription or ritual to perform (Hoffman 1990:17).

2.3.3 Hypothesising

Hypothesising refers to the continuous interactional and reconceptualising activity in which the helper and team, on the basis of feedback in the therapeutic system elaborate on speculations, guesses, assumptions and explanations about the system organized by the problem. The material for this is the data about the situation, the theory of the team, the experience from seeing many families and who the people are that form the team (Tomm 1984:258; Boscolo et al. 1987:163; Burbatti & Formenti 1988:43-46; Jones 1993:14).

The hypothesis, not expected to be true but to fit and be useful, is tentatively accepted as a base and guide for the discussion with the client. (Palazzoli et al. 1980:5; Hoffmann 1981:293-295; Tomm 1984:257; Boscolo et al. 1987:94 & 164; Burbatti & Formenti 1988:28,38 & 178; Anderson 1990:28; Gilligan & Price 1993:108).

In the hypothesising process, ideas gradually connect to form hypotheses about **alliances** in the family, the family or a member with others outside, with the therapist and with the team; **ideas** about individual and family premises and myths; about **communication** in the family and within other linked systems; and the **therapeutic process**. (Tomm 1984:258; Boscolo et al. 1987:32; Cecchin 1987:405-413; Burbatti & Formenti 1988:30; Keeney & Ross 1992:168; Jones 1993:15).

The content of the hypothesis is non-adversarial and non-blaming, inclusive, explanatory, and a rationale for the entire system (people, behaviours and

ideas). This connection of ideas creates a perception of relation, a system between isolated ideas that are in and of themselves meaningless unless connected in a useful way with the presenting problem. The family members themselves are not able to make these connections, as the continuation of the symptomatic behaviour requires that they remain unaware of them (Papp 1983:18).

Hypothesising is accepted as having a direct function in the induction of therapeutic change, and a more expanded role in the conduct of the therapy session.

- * It provides a base for investigation by providing a starting point for formulating questions and responding statements- a creating of curiosity. The hypothesis eventually provokes feedback that leads to the information essential for the choice of a therapeutic intervention (Palazzoli et al. 1980:4-5; Tomm 1984:257; Cecchin 1987:411; Burbatti & Formenti 1988:29, 32, 42).
- * Hypotheses being alternative explanations can introduce difference to trigger change (Palazzoli et al. 1980:5; Hoffman 1981:294; Tomm 1984:113-125, 253-271; Cecchin 1987:405-413; Hoffman 1990:20-27; Hayes 1991:30, 36).
- * The hypothesis is the basis for positive connotation or logical explanation of the client's situation used in conducting the session and in the intervention (Hoffman 1981:18,19,296).
- * The hypothesis can assist the helper to connect himself to the client system and be empathic, without becoming enmeshed. On the other hand it facilitates the process of entering into different people's worlds, appreciating different perspectives, and gaining a extended understanding of problem behaviours. (Ugazio 1985:24-25; Wilkenson

1992:198-199).

- * The hypothesis can provide the helper with a thread to follow in conducting an interview. It enables the helper to identify a target for intervention, provides a basis for the strategy to be adopted in the interview, the topics to be discussed and the format of the questions to be asked. It thereby helps to blocking out much of the meaningless chatter that can consume so much of the any session. The circularity of the hypotheses informs the nature of the questions' circularity thereby increasing the impact of the questions (Hoffman 1981:294; Burbatti & Formenti 1988:54).
- * Hypothesizing may contribute to avoiding premature conclusions based on helper and team assumptions but teams need to be constantly alert to the danger of having favourite hypotheses, and of converging in their thinking (Boscolo et al. 1987:115; Wilkenson 1992:199).

Although hypotheses can be of value, the temptation exists that a helper or team can get too attached to their hypothesis. They then begin to shape the process and families in relation to the hypothesis. When this occurs the helper has lost his non-objective recursive perspective. Even if the hypothesis has been constructed seeing recursive patterns, it becomes lineal in the interaction between the client and the helper when he or she stubbornly persists in seeking confirmation and fails to recognise contradictory evidence (Tomm 1984:259; Boscolo et al. 1987:115).

2.3.4 Hypothesising and complementarity

Using Varela's formula of cybernetic complementary descriptions:

the it/ the process leading to it

hypothesis and hypothesising can be regarded as a cybernetic complementary description:

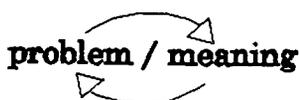


The hypothesis as a explanation is an "it" or form that emerges out of the hypothesising process leading to it. Hypothesising can be explained as a form-giving (with a team) process giving form (hypothesis) to a process of processes (in the family and therapeutic team) observed or constructed by the helper and team in relation to a family or information about a family (Pretorius 1993).

The "process" of hypothesising and the "it" the hypothesis are recursively connected. At this point hypothesising could be described as a cybernetic complementary process that produces a hypothesis.

The team in its interaction utilises the process of cybernetic complementary description in the connecting of ideas, looking for a holistic understanding and in the perception that the intervention that must also be related to, but different from the client's perception. The intervention doesn't support or reject the symptom but changes the meaning of the behaviour of the whole system (Boscolo et al. 1987:7-9; Keeney & Ross 1992:92-93; Jones 1993:16-18, 28, 145).

The above is a process of constructing a recursive complementary description between the problem behaviour and the connotation or meaning:



Looking for a way in which to provide a different connotation to a situation

can contribute towards an increased empathy of the helper's attitude as he or she strives to construct an explanation for understanding the problematic behaviour in the family. It is a way of respecting the client system and can serve as a means of finding a opening to gain entrance into the family.

It is the contribution of the Milan approach in hypothesising in a team that researcher would like to imitate by using complementarity.

2.4 **Constructing an "imaginary team" by using complementarity**

The construct of cybernetic complementary descriptions with its useful loosening up, extension and complexifying potential, provides the possibility of use as an "imaginary team" for the solo helper. This suggested way of working is not a technique or method in limited recipe-like way, but a choice to make distinctions using complementarity to facilitate the helping process.

2.4.1 **The components of the helping situation**

- * Therapy: the helping situation
- * therapeutic change: a recursive process of stability/change
- * therapeutic system: therapist/client
- * client: a recursive process of stability/change; whole/parts
- * problem and solution: a recursive process of pain/gain

2.4.1.1 **A complementary view of therapy**

Therapy is a complementarity of context and conversation:

Therapy = context / conversation

Therapy is a system of interacting ideas, creating a context of purposeful

social interaction between helper and client, that enables a cybernetic system to achieve an unpredictable, co-constructed change of change outcome, utilising its own resources to increase the wellbeing of the client (Keeney 1983:8; Anderson & Goolishian 1990;158-159).

To create this context a cybernetic helper recycles, transforms changing the feedback about the client's communication. (See 2.2.4)

This context is a communication process that takes place through the interactive usually linguistic activity of being in conversation, organised around or by that which is perceived as a problem by those in interaction. This conversation is a particular kind of ecology of ideas, that ends successfully when there is no longer a problem to be discussed. (Keeney 1983:6,178; Keeney & Thomas 1986:280; Anderson & Goolishian 1988:379; Andersen 1990:45).

2.4.1.2 A complementary view of the client

A client is an individual, individuals, couple, family or parts of a family who presents with a change request regarding a problem/situation that is associated with an experience of pain.

The client system is viewed as a self-organizing, cybernetic system in which all the parts are recursively connected and the problem is logically part of the interaction of the system in its context. (Keeney 1983:377).

Client : cybernetic system = (stability / change)



By using Varela's whole/parts distinction one is reminded that the client, whether individual, couple or family, cannot be perceived in disconnected isolation but is a and part of other recursive network(s) that processes information (Keeney 1979:119). The client is a social unit or "client-in-

connectedness" where all those who are involved or "in language" in the maintenance and resolution about a presenting problem are part of a constantly changing system. Anderson & Goolishian (1988:371) refer to this as problem-organizing, problem dis-solving systems.

The whole client system is seldom if ever directly involved in therapy. More often the presenting client system consists of the person(s) identified by the larger client system as client(s), other nuclear or extended family members and members of other social systems that interact with the client and the family (Pinsof 1988:160). The wholeness must nevertheless be kept in mind.

Using Varela's basic form of complementarity of "the it and the process leading to it" the client can be viewed as the "it" and relations between them about the problem as "the process leading to it" forming the client system.

To see a client from a cybernetic perspective and keep in mind its tendency to wholeness, is to attribute autonomy to the process with which it is connected and remember it is regulating, correcting and conserving itself. It is closed to information but can change through co-evolving with difference from its context. Interaction with a system takes place with its wholeness which can be perturbed by the interaction. It will then respond or not respond to the perturbation in accordance with its autonomy, not in accordance with the source of perturbation (Maturana 1975:313).

2.4.1.3 A complementary view of the problem

A problem is a perception of a piece of life, a situation or relationship, that has the meaning of pain and that is perceived to be desirable to change.

From a second-order cybernetic perspective a client enters therapy with a linear perception of a situation in central focus. Those in dialogue about the situation have given it the meaning of "problem". They have also developed

an accompanying change request. It is the meaning given to behaviour or situation by the people involved that distinguishes it as being a problem, not the behaviour or situation as such. "Problems in this view...emerge from the local, collaborative, collective and communicated decision that there is a problem." (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:388). Problems are a meaning present in the minds of all who are in communicative exchange about a behaviour or situation. As such they are also constantly changing (Anderson & Goolishian 1988).

The presenting problem is perceived not as a "something " that can be isolated and removed with some intervention externally imposed. It is perceived as a symptom/punctuation of a process in which the participants' behaviour and ideas are recursively connected and recycled until it is as if the ideas and behaviours are caught up and constrained to limited and painful alternatives. Viewed through a cybernetic complementarity lens, problems and pain as distinctions can be perceived as having potential alternatives if the process perceived can be perceived with its complementary distinctions. The process emitting the pain can be seen as simultaneously emitting some gain or pay-off otherwise the system would be restrained from recycling itself in that particular way. The following basic complementarity can be constructed to help open up the perceiver's perception:

S 12

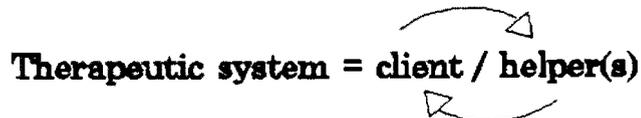
The implication of this is that, in listening to and responding to a system's overtly presented problem and pain the helper must also listen to or hypothesise about the covert complementary gain and keep it in mind when contemplating what difference to present to the process.

The situation perceived as a problem complementarily viewed can also be seen as an attempt at solution. The problem then is more a symptom or part of the

organisational logic of the ecology. It is not something gone wrong but one of the self-correcting ways in which the system has been able maintain itself. Thinking along these lines may even open the way to seeing that the symptomatic communication may provide the direction for therapeutic change as it usually points to the implied systems stability desire.

2.4.1.4 Complementary view of the therapeutic system

The helper system consists of all the interactions between, and the identified helpers and associate personnel connected in providing "help" to the client system.



Together the client and helper comprise the "therapy system" or "therapeutic system". This can refer to an a helper or therapeutic team and presenting client and other individual(s), family or any other aggregate of involved people. (compare Pinsof 1988:161)

A cybernetic view makes it possible to see the units involved in therapy not behaving in a specific way because of possessing certain qualities that cause behaviour but as living, nested, interacting networking systems.

2.4.2 Way of working using complementarity

Considering how complementarities are formed it thus seems possible to attempt to use the construct of cybernetic complementary descriptions to facilitate the therapeutic process.

With the format of the sessions of the Milan approach in mind it is suggested that the complementarity be used in pre-session hypothesising and planning

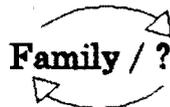
of the session and during the session as a means of creating alternatives in through connection and separation of ideas.

2.4.2.1 **Pre-session hypothesising**

Hypotheses could be evolved using Varela's formulae. This procedure can be repeated by applying it to many of the distinctions that the helper has made about the client until the helper has information that provides information, themes and patterns. In this way a single encompassing encapsulatory hypothesis with which to work can be constructed.

The client

With the first basic information that the helper gets about the system presenting for therapy he or she can start thinking about the client and people connected in the problem formed process in the following way. If the client is a family it is placed on the left side of the slash:



The helper then thinks about the complementary descriptions. A family as a distinction can also be viewed as cybernetic complementarity:



The family (process of being a family) is (re)cycled from the individual members and the individual members from the family. The family's way of being as well as each individual's way of being, recursively connected forms a cybernetic complementary description. This is an alternative way of forming a systemic hypothesis about the family that includes all the members.

This is an extension of the summative idea that a systemic hypothesis should be such that it includes all the members of the family (Keeney 1983:93).

The above can lead the helper's thinking to wholeness and autonomy. Seeing the above connections can create a realisation of wholeness and seeing the family is an autonomous system and has calibrating, self-correcting properties whereby it maintains its organisation and identity.

The presenting problem

When the meaning attached to some thing, situation, process etc is such that its presence involves so much discomfort or pain that there is sufficient consensus amongst those involved that it is a problem, such a family or individual may seek therapy or be referred. Some of this information is usually available to the helper before the onset of therapy. The helper also gives subjective meaning to the problem, be it indignation, repulsion, blame, actual, imagined or theoretically known pain. All this becomes connected to form multifaceted hypotheses about the pain, the family as a whole but also the individuals, may be experiencing. Complementary descriptions can also be used in this context to increase the understanding of the problem and enhance the joining and empathic options of the helper during the session.

the problem/ the pain

: for the family as a whole?

: for each individual?

Pre-session hypothesising may free up the solo worker and may facilitate the process of entering into different people's worlds, appreciating different, sometimes alien, perspectives and gaining a systemic understanding. Inherent in this freeing-up kind of hypothesising may be the capacity for systemic empathy and contribute to avoiding premature conclusions based simplistic assumptions (Wilkinsen 1992:198).

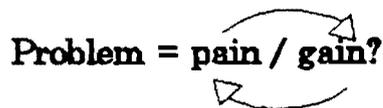
The presenting problem or presented pain of the client:

Pain / process leading to it?



It is assumed that whilst leading to pain, something in the process leading to the pain must have complementary gains for the family as a whole and for the individual members, otherwise the process would not have been maintained by the family/individuals. What is the process that has led to this "pain" situation? What advantages did the process of maintaining it contain, that were more than the pain they experienced? What is the complement of the pain in the presenting problem?:

Problem = pain / gain?



The information on the "gain" is usually not available or easily heard and the helper needs to formulate alternative assumptions in facilitating a sensitive and empathic curiosity to direct observation and exploration. These alternatives alert the helpers to possibilities for empathy and logical connotation which could begin introducing difference and creating leverage for change.

Explanation of coherence or logical connotation of the problem situation

Using this construct of complementary descriptions can help to construct a non blaming explanation about how a family has allowed the present situation to escalate to this now intolerable stage and actually perpetuated the process. The helper can do this by actually acknowledging the blaming explanation he or she experiences. This he or she places on the left side of the / and then starts constructing alternative non blaming explanations that connote the

situation as logical and coherent.

Blaming explanation / non-blaming explanation?



This process can assist the helper to "go meta" to his or her own spontaneous feelings about the situation, while acknowledging that he is part of the system. In a sense it can lift one's present perception to alternative perceptions of the situation.

Making use of the pain/gain complementary descriptions can assist the helper to address both in questions, interventive statements and the intervention message. A fitting way would be to intervene to change the pain-producing process and also retain the gain of the process. This can lead to making use of the next complementarity.

Change/Stability request

Closely linked to the preceding is the change request of the client. A client presents for therapy with a problem and an articulated clear or unarticulated implied and often obscured request for change. However using the construct of complementary descriptions it is accepted that what is being requested is a complementary descriptions.

Request for change = change / no change



This means that while asking for change the family or individual members are requesting stability, asking that some things not be changed (Keeney 1983:179). This complementary description enables the helper to move from simplicity to complexity in thinking about how to intervene. The helper needs to think about all the punctuations of the request for change, including the

possible implied messages. The helper can also develop ideas about the complement to these different slicings. He needs to speculate about which possible interactional patterns and concrete things the family and individual members would possibly like to change and which they would like to maintain and retain but with less pain.

In the initial hypothesising process the team, in listening to the available details can hypothesise about the pain/gain complementary descriptions of the problem in the family and the change/stability request of the system.

2.4.2.2 In the interviewing process

Complementarity can be used during the interview to introduce alternative distinctions, provide a point of reference and construct the intervention.

Introducing alternatives

In the interviewing process the construct of complementary description can open up areas for questioning or possibilities of responses. For each distinction there are other possible distinctions. These other distinctions can be invented if it is accepted that any distinction is a punctuation, only a part of a whole (circle) with many other possible distinctions, that could complete the circle. Any distinction drawn can be responded to with questions eliciting other distinctions or other people's perception of the distinction or a person's perception at different times. Instead of responding with questions or eliciting information the helper's responses could present alternative perceptions. The recursive process connecting the distinctions could also be the subject of inquiry or statement. If distinctions are described as complementary the question is to explore "what it is that connects them?", or if seen as unconnected the question is "what is the process that could connect them?" (see Fisher 1991:103-113).

In conducting the conversation complementarity can point to alternative distinctions about which questions can be formulated or dualistic statements to be made to introduce alternative distinctions. By connecting various distinctions that are presented, themes can be introduced and developed.

Providing a point of reference

In a similar way to pre-session hypothesising, recursive complementary description can serve as a point of reference in the process of constructing an intervention message. It can be useful for the packaging of the logical connotation of the problematic social interaction and relationship(s) and development of a stability/change instruction.

Constructing the intervention

The intervention often consists of the introduction of a different connotation is often followed by a therapeutic suggestion to maintain symptomatic behaviour or to slow down the rate of change. This is once again making use of a complementarity view of change namely that change is a complementarity of change/stability. A change of meaning is introduced while stabilizing the problematic behaviour.

2.5

Conclusion

The construct of cybernetic complementarity provides a cybernetically founded extension of the interviewing principle and process of hypothesis and hypothesising. It can also provide an alternative practice model or practical guidelines for the helper working solo but who wants to imitate some of the processes provided by team hypothesising.

If utilised in the helping process making use of cybernetic complementarity could possibly increase helper mobility, provide ways out of impasse or

entrapment in helping conversations and help to maintain a non-linear way of thinking as the team and aspects of the Milan model claim to provide. The case study in the following chapter only illustrates how some of the above working principles are used.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY ILLUSTRATING THE USE OF COMPLEMENTARITY IN THERAPEUTIC HELPING

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is the helper/researcher's perception and description of a case study in which complementarity was used. Anyone else listening to the tapes and reading the transcription might have a completely different perception of the described situation.

This chapter includes a description of the clients and their presenting problem, a description of the helping process using complementarity, illustrations of the use of complementarity, discussion of the usefulness of complementarity, the relevance of this way of working and recommendations.

As concluded in chapter 2 the different variations of the formula for cybernetic complementary description-

- (1) **COMPLEMENTARITY/whole/parts;**
- (2) **COMPLEMENTARITY/it/process leading to it;**
- (3) **COMPLEMENTARITY/distinction/its polar opposite**

is used to develop alternative distinctions:

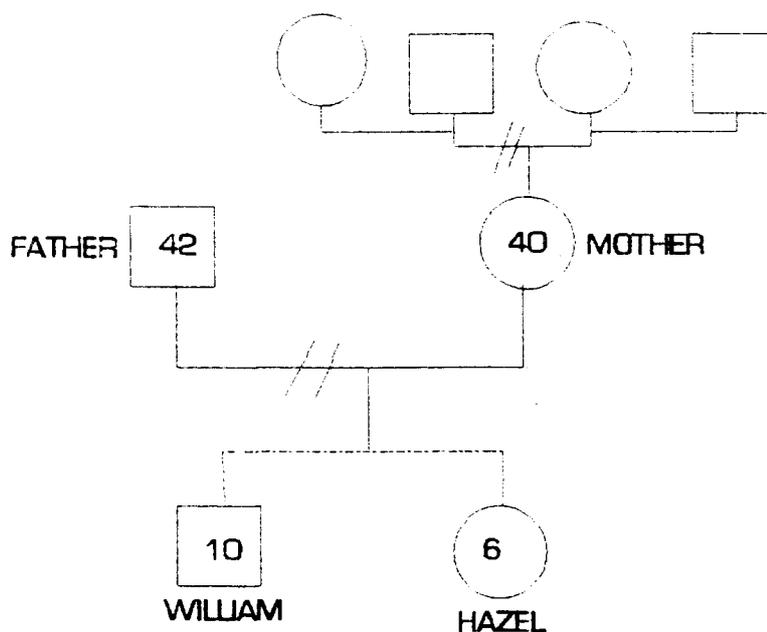
- * in hypothesising and planning in the pre-session to assist in anticipating distinctions that may emerge in the client's story;
- * in the pre-session to think of possibilities that would provide helper with alternative perceptions that could be used in the session;

- * during the session to provide a way of connecting and separating distinctions so as to introduce alternatives to keep the conversation flowing;
- * in developing intervention messages, packaging and delivering different connotations of the symptomatic behaviour.

In the process of describing the helping it also emerged that using complementarity often did not fit but that this feedback of non-fit was useful information and pointed to new avenues to follow in the conversation.

3.2 The client and the presenting problem

Genogram of the Smith family:



3.2.1 Information about the client available before the first session:

Helper had met the **mother** (± 40) previously at a singles' social function of the church where she had seemed very quiet and rather sad. The children, a boy **William** (10 years) and a girl, **Hazel** (6 years) stayed near her and she showed **concern** for and was involved in their wellbeing. The mother had

contacted the minister in the congregation who referred the family for helping. On making the appointment the mother gave the following information:

She had been **divorced** 9 months ago but only moved out of the house 2 months later to her present place of abode. Her relationship with the children's father had lately drastically deteriorated. The children saw him daily. They were at school close to their original home where the father was still staying. The mother worked full-time close by and had after-school arrangements for them close to their previous home. Every afternoon before she fetched them they went to their father for a while and then returned to their places of care where she picked them up. She was **concerned** about how the children were affected. They were telling her how **sad** they were and crying more than usual. She wanted to know how the children were thinking: should they not all be over it by now?; and she **did not want them to be too unhappy**.

3.3 The therapy

The helping process comprised two sessions of about 75 minutes each and a very brief third session of about 10 minutes. Each session was structured as pre-session and session.

The following thematic summary of the helping process can also be seen in terms of complementarity. The course of helping (whole) provided a context for the understanding of the specific (parts) to which it can be seen as being recursively connected.

3.3.1 Thematic synopsis of the helping process

SESSION ONE

THEME: *The story of "all those old things"*

The session started by the mother telling that she had told William that they were coming to talk about "all those old things". Each one's perception of the old things, the changes, losses and pain was explored with a few references made to "new things" which did not fit at that stage and the conversation lost direction.

THEME: *Walking alone with a heavy burden*

As helper started drawing a simple genogram, she summarised "all the old things" and invited the children to participate in the drawing of the mentioned old and new things. From then on the children drew and expressed their story of sadness mainly through explaining and talking about their drawings and related subjects. Out of this also flowed that Mother was finding the burden very heavy and almost carrying it on her own and the children's sadness just added to the burden.

THEME: *Still in mourning*

The message to them was that they were still in mourning about the changes and their losses ; this was normal and they would have to work at mourning before it could get better. They were instructed to look through family photo albums and even cry about the things they had lost, before the following session.

SESSION TWO

THEME: *The desert changes all the time*

On arrival William gave helper a single yellow daisy. Hazel immediately started drawing and William started explaining a drawing of himself alone in a desert with roads running in circles with no way out, done at school that day. Hazel echoed with a drawing of cross roads ending in empty places.

Helper inquiringly connected the drawings to that day and the holiday that had just ended. William said it changes all the time: then it's nice; now it's bad. Mother and Hazel told about things that were better than at the previous session. William then mentioned that he did not make sentences about "Our Family" at school because he couldn't because they were not a family.

THEME: *The daisy and the empty house*

Helper used the daisy William had brought to introduce the idea of variations of family constellations. Hazel talked about her drawing of the empty house that she would like to see occupied again.

THEME: *It must still hurt to get better*

The helper framed the above and subsequent stories of their sadness and crying and the children's fighting as the mourning process that they are busy with. They were instructed to continue mourning because the tears are the burning of a saline solution that cleans a wound so that it can heal.

As they were about to leave William stopped to make a drawing of the hole in the desert that he said was starting to fill up with sand.

THEME: *Must we still be sad?*

The family kept the appointment for the third session but Mother used it to see helper alone. She filled the helper in on details of the divorce that she hadn't wanted to the children to hear. She also conveyed that things were much better and that she wanted to terminate. On returning to the children William asked the helper whether they must really still be sad, to which the helper replied "only when he wanted to".

3.3.2 Pre-sessions

3.3.2.1 Pre-session: session one

During the pre-session five distinctions from the description of the client and the presenting problem were used by the helper as the basis of the hypothesising and planning process. These were:

- (1) The client: Single parent family.
- (2) The presenting problem: Mother's concern about the children's pain.
- (3) Helping system: Helper/client (mother and children).
- (4) Pain: Loss, change.
- (5) Change request.

During the pre-session researcher made notes of the hypothesising process of using complementarity with the "imaginary team" (see formula in 3.1). These notes have been organised, edited and explained as follows.

Distinction one: The client: Single parent family.

If cybernetic complementarity is:

CYBERNETIC COMPLEMENTARITY/*whole/parts*; and using the argument of upward and downward movement through levels the following questions evolved:

If the single parent family is the "whole", *who are the "parts"?* and, if the family is a "part", *of what "whole" is it a "part" ?*

The following questions subsequently also evolved:

What is connecting them?

How are they connected?

Who else are they connected to?

Hypotheses:

- (1) The client was the single parent family consisting of individuals, Mother (40), William (10) and Hazel (6).
- (2) They were connected as a social unit (single parent family) and by their shared pain of the divorce.
- (3) The client family were also connected to: father/ other family/ relatives.

Subsequent question that evolved from interacting with the above hypotheses:
How are they connected to this family's problem?

Further hypothesis: Possible nature of connections:
support/opposition/indifference/or.... ?

Further question: *How, in what ways was who supportive/opposing/indifferent and towards whom and what?*

Hypotheses: The different people are likely to have different perceptions about the divorce situation. Some of these perceptions could be areas of pain for the client and thus areas about which helper needs to be empathic.

Distinction two: The presenting problem: Mother's concern about the children's pain about the divorce.

Hypotheses:

- (1) The mother's concern about the children still being upset, seemed to be implying that she thought the distress they were still showing was abnormal. Mother's expectation was contrary to the theory on the changing family life cycle on the effect of divorce on families with elementary school-age children. They often experience tremendous grief and have a pervasive sadness and yearning for the departed parent, with recurring fantasies of reconciliation. Short term distress

is normal, the average chaos and disruption of divorce lasts 1-3 years (Carter and McGoldrick 1989:338 & 353).

- (2) Using COMPLEMENTARITY//it/ *process leading to it* to think about the presenting problem: if "it" is the mother's concern about the children's reaction, *what is the process that has led to the mother's pain?*

Hypotheses:

The process leading to "the it" could be:

- (1) the children are showing pain that is causing her concern (pain);
- (2) that her own pain was now becoming unbearable. The mother may be presenting the children's pain as opportunity (gain) to introduce her own pain;
- (3) both above possibilities could be recursively connected and it could be both or neither.

Distinction three: Helping system: Helper/ client (mother and two children)

All three variations of cybernetic complementarity were used in thinking about the helping system. Both the separating and connecting properties of complementarity were used in evolving the following hypothetical ideas and planning. In the description to follow the variation of the formula of complementarity will not be presented fully but only indicated by the number as indicated below.

- (1) COMPLEMENTARITY/whole/parts; and
- (2) COMPLEMENTARITY/it/process leading to it
- (3) COMPLEMENTARITY/distinction/it's polar opposite

Hypotheses:

- 1 The helping system (helper and client) are recursively connected by the

consensual process that perceived a situation (it) as a problem for which helping had been requested (2).

- 2 The helping system is the whole and the helper and clients are the parts; the parts will become connected by the interaction and recursive relation between the parts (1).

- 3 Considering who the client was and that the parts included two adults and two children and thinking about interaction as a whole (1) the idea developed that the interaction could also separated into a manner that fitted with the adults and a manner that would fit with the children of 10 and 6. With the mother, mostly verbal communication could be used but with the children an apparent opposite (3) medium of communication could also be used, that is verbal/non-verbal. Drawing or play could be considered. Due to its availability, its effectiveness with children (Oppawsky 1991:125-141) and the helper's experience of drawing with children in helping it was decided to try drawing, although the possibility of trying something else was not excluded. The complementarity of not talking, that is, making use of drawing was decided on and paper and crayons were provided.

- 4 A further hypothesis was that the drawing process could elicit the children's perception on much that was communicated verbally (Nickerson in Oppawsky 1991:139).

Distinction four: Pain:

The notes on the thinking about the pain were as follows:

What is the possible pain of the situation?

Hypotheses

- (1) Pains: loss, change, loneliness, uncertainty.

Further question:

What had changed and what had been lost?

(2) Change:

Change experienced by all: moving house, loss of familiar home.

Changes experienced by children:

Changes experienced by Mother: changed relationship with the father; from supportive and sharing parenting to critical and unsupportive parenting.

(3) Losses:

Losses experienced by all: The familiar- home, friends, routine.

Losses experienced by the children: two parent family, father, school.

Losses experienced by Mother: husband, home, financial security, change of and more responsibilities as parent, mother and father role, loss of wife role, now single parent, loss of shared friends.

Using COMPLEMENTARITY/distinction/*it's polar opposite*

introduced the possibility of thinking about the gains of a situation that is primarily characterised by loss (Carter & McGoldrick 1989:343 & 353).

What were possible gains of change and loss?

Hypothesis:

Gains: relief, new opportunities, new interesting environment, new people, relief from conflict and uncertainty of relationships.

How did this perhaps connect to the presented problem that mother was concerned about the children?

Using COMPLEMENTARITY/*it/process leading to it to develop* introduced the following:

(1) Mother wants to know their pain (it)/they hide it from her (process leading to it),

- (2) Hypothetical explanations derived from looking at what could be the recursive process connecting the two sides of the above complementarity:
 they hide it from her to protect her; they deal with it on their own;
 they are growing strong through the divorce
- (3) *Was this her pain: that they were protecting her and dealing with it on their own, growing strong and not needing her?*

Distinction five: Change request: Change/stability.

Considering the request for helping and the information available:

What do they want to change and what do they want to remain the same?

Using COMPLEMENTARITY/it/process leading to it to look at change and stability the following questions evolved:

What "its"/and what "process" did they want to change and what "its" and what "process" did they not want to change?

No hypotheses were formed but these questions indicated information to listen for and explore.

The above do not include all possible themes and alternatives. The reader could have been evolving more and others, but these were the ideas generated at that point in time by the helper/researcher.

The usefulness of the above process will be indicated by describing how the alternatives evolved during the pre-session were utilised during the session and how they were related to the eventual outcome of the helping process.

3.3.2.2 Pre-session: session two

This pre-session was very brief. The helper listened to the tape of the first

session and the following are the edited notes made before the second session:

- (1) Recurring themes of pain were loss and change that could be seen as; complementarity: *pain/loss, change & uncertainty* where loss, change and uncertainty were recursively connected to the pain.
- (2) The loss was experienced acutely by all. Mom was very aware of the children being in pain and wanted to know whether it was acceptable/normal and if it could be taken away. They seemed to be in decreasing order of sadness: William, Mom, Hazel.
- (3) William and Mother did not want to explore gains of change. A few times when helper had recognised and emphasised pain and loss mother came in to rescue, took the alternative stand and described the "pains of change". Hazel seemed to represent something closer to the "polar opposite" of the "pains of change" and was more inclined to see some "gains of changes".
- (4) It was as if the family were waiting for something to happen before getting on with the business of living: for father to leave the old home, mom to decide on schools, for Hazel to start school, perhaps change their place of abode. They could not root yet. The pain was the uncertainty, no paths only tracks in the sand that continually disappeared.
- (5) The dialogue had been complementary. Drawing and speaking had complemented each other. Drawings sometimes summarised, sometimes opened up, sometimes held the focus, sometimes like a loop returned to an interaction that had taken place previously.
- (6) There had been so much change in the family that they seemed to be asking for change of change ie no-change or stability. There had been efforts to conserve something of "all the old things" like the contact with the father, the old house, the dog, the school. "All the old things" could be separated as a complementarity:

ALL THE OLD THINGS/things of pain/things to maintain

Planning for Session 2:

- (1) To continue using the complementarities used in the first session as most had seemed to fit e.g. to use drawing again.
- (2) To stay with the pain and explore the uncertainty

3.4 ILLUSTRATING THE USE OF COMPLEMENTARITY

Illustrating the use of complementarity in helping becomes more relevant if it has contributed to a satisfactory outcome. The objective of helping is to facilitate a context where the client develops a changed perception of his situation and that which was a "problem" no longer is perceived as a problem requiring help. As seen from the description of the helping above the outcome satisfied the mother who terminated helping because according to her perception of the situation, things were better. The situation had not changed, but her perception of the situation had changed to the extent that she no longer perceived it as a problem. She now perceived the presence of sadness as acceptable and not as a problem. There was no longer a change request from the family. The mother had developed a view of change that was a change/stability complementarity. By not pressuring her to change, but by emphasising the stability in instructing the family to be sad and continue mourning, they generated the change themselves.

3.4.1 Utilisation of pre-session hypothesising and planning

How pre-session hypothesising was used will be illustrated with extracts from the transcribed sessions.

3.4.1.1 Distinction One: the client - a single parent family after divorce

The complementarity of whole/*parts* had been used to alert the helper to think of the client as a whole recursively connected to its as parts. This reminded

the helper to include all members, joining with them all:

- (1) **Mother** explained she had told William that they were coming to talk about "all the old things". She said he knew what she was referring to and he agreed, on inquiring about Hazel mother answered negatively which Hazel confirmed.
- (2) The **helper** mentioned that William had referred to his friend that he had moved away from. Had he been a support for him? Did Hazel also have a friend who had supported her?.

William and Hazel agree that they had friends and helper asks them to draw their friends. The helper asks mother who helped her.

- (3) At a later stage the **helper** asks them whether there were other people like relatives, grandparents or brothers and sisters that have been involved since the divorce.

The **children** get involved in the discussion and explain about their two sets of grandparents on mother's side.

Mother explains that her parents were divorced and married again but none of them are fully informed and haven't been very involved with the family since the divorce.

Helper: "It sounds as if you are walking the road rather alone?"

Mother agrees but also relates examples of how her ex-husband has helped but even so she barely copes.

Helper: "One of the things that seems to have come with all the changes is that you have discovered that you are

actually quite strong."

Mother: "No, not really: not when the children are not with me."

Mother then illustrates that she isn't really strong by telling that at first just after the separation she often went to her mother when the children went to their father for weekends but her finances soon prevented that because she then couldn't also visit when the children were with her, and she wanted to take them to their grandparents. However these visits have also decreased.

Helper: "Your mother has been a haven in the tornado for you?"

Mother: "Not really. Until recently she has not known what the story really is. My father is also very fond of my ex-husband and he actually planned to visit my father since the divorce. I also spent a week with my father in July to rest a little. My mother took care of the children. Actually new friends that I've got to know since starting work are the ones that have been most helpful. The friend that the children stay with in the afternoons is an old friend."

The above excerpt also illustrates how the question and hypothesis about the nature of the connections as a possible source of pain was used to alert helper.

3.4.1.2 **Distinction two: the presenting problem - mother's concern about the children's pain**

In the pre-session the complementarity "it/the process leading to it" had been

used to evolve ideas about the presenting problem.

- (1) In the following example "it/the process leading to it" was used to introduce the exploration of the process leading to incidents of the mother and children's pain experience.

Helper: (To William) "Perhaps you can tell me what mom means when she says she wants to talk about "these old things"?"

- (2) In the following example the "lack of certainty" as the process leading to the pain (the it) is introduced:

Helper acknowledges mother's lack of certainties that seem to be like walking in the desert where the tracks don't remain and new paths have to found every day.

Mother: "Yes, it's often the new little decisions and things every day that make it difficult. Nothing is established yet."

Helper: "It's as if you want to plant trees in the desert but it's so difficult for them to take root."

Mother illustrates with a few more examples of the difficulty of the changes.

Helper says that these examples and the changes seem to be some of "all those old things".

- (3) In the following example helper considered "the way of thinking" as the process leading to the pain (it) and used it as follows:

Helper: "Today at school when you sat and drew this it felt like

a desert with nothing for you?"

William: "Yes."

Helper: "There are some things that make it feel more desert-like today."

William: "Yes... Today we had to make sentences about our family in class and I didn't."

Mother: (Very concerned). "What did you do? Didn't you write anything?"

Helper: "It seems to have been difficult. (William agrees) I'm wondering if you found it difficult to think about you three as a family?"

William: "Yes."

Helper: "As it used to be with the four of you it was a family for you. But as you are now it doesn't feel like a family for you."

William nods.

Helper: "You sound both sad and angry about it."

William nods.

Helper: "You know there are different types of families. There are families as you knew your family, with a father and a mother and two children. That's how it was good for

you and how you would like it to be. There are also other types of families."

The **helper** picks up and fingers the yellow daisy William had given her at the beginning of the session feeling bereft of ideas for further response. The helper then tells him that there are also some of these in the garden and asks him to go and pick some. He must try to find examples of as many stages of growth as possible.

While William is out **Hazel** takes the opportunity to explain a picture she has drawn of paths. When asked where she would like to be she indicates the road of which at the end mother and father are together.

William returns with six flowers each in a different stage of flowering. The helper looks at each one referring to its condition or stage ie still closed, slightly open, fully open wilted, dried and just the stub and asks him whether he thinks they are all the same type of flower.

William agrees.

Helper: "For you, it seems as if you were a family like this full flower. But now you seem to feel like this wilted flower."

William disagrees and chooses the dried flower.

Helper: "Like these flowers I think there are also families that look and are different. There are some families that are still only couples without children."

William agrees and says they were like that too.

Mother says they were married nine years before William arrived.

Helper: "There are families with one child, or families with only a mother or a father and a child or children but I see them also as families even though they are different."

William: "... (families) ..with a crack."

Helper: "..or with an empty chair; and this for you, is very painful. I wonder if it was that you didn't know whether you can think of the three of you as a family as you are now, and so you didn't know what to write."

Mother: "Is that why you didn't write?"

William: (Nods) "Yes ... I didn't know."

Mother seems relieved.

3.4.1.3 Distinction three: the helping system - helper/client

The following excerpts illustrate how hypothesising about who the elements of the helping system were, and the hypothesis, that drawing as complement to verbal communication, could be used towards completion of the interaction with the children, was used.

Session one

Example 1:

After initial joining with the family the conversation started drifting and

became chatty and the children seemed to have lost interest. It had lost focus. The helper decided to make use of drawing to connect with and involve the children and to develop focus.

Helper started drawing lines for a simple genogram, summarised how they had described their situation, mentioning the old and new homes and school and "the old things" mom was worried about. Mother agreed with the summary. The helper then asked the children to draw themselves. The children became interested started adding to the genogram and speaking about what they were drawing. (See Appendix 1, **Drawing 1**).

Example 2:

The mother saw that the children had become involved with the drawing and asks William's permission to tell about a drawing he made previously. While she is telling about the drawing he draws the picture again. (See Appendix 1, **Drawing 2**).

Mother: "William drew a labyrinth and said that was what he felt like now. He said it felt as if we always lived in a forest where there was a nice path. Then we left the forest and went to where there were no trees; where there was a desert. There we fell into a deep hole. Now we are trying to climb out but we are just falling deeper and deeper into that hole. He also said that life is like a rugby match, where you are tackled and fall and sometimes you also tread on the "devil's thorns", sometimes you may fall and hurt your ankle etc but now it feels to him as if all those things are happening simultaneously like in a tornado since we aren't with his father any more."

Example 3

The **helper** acknowledges mother's lack of certainties by referring to the drawing from *example 2*. The helper says that seem to be like walking in the desert where the tracks don't remain and new paths have to found every day.

Mother: "Yes, it's often the new little decisions and things every day that makes it difficult. Nothing is established yet."

Helper: "It's as if you want to plant trees in the desert but its so difficult for them to take root."

Mother illustrates with a few more examples of the difficulty of the changes.

Example 4:

When William and Hazel mention that one of the losses they experience is the friends they have lost, the helper suggest that they draw them and they immediately start drawing.

Example 5:

Hazel: "I want them to be together again." (Does the following drawing while her mother talks. See Appendix 1, **Drawing 3**).

Hazel starts talking and explaining her drawing. She shows where both parties are now living and using an arrow shows and explains that she wants them to move together again. She crosses out a picture of one parent alone and says that she doesn't want that. She also draws a girl crying.

Helper: "You are actually still grieving about the things you have lost, like living with daddy."

Hazel: "Yes."

After the session helper saw that the message of wanting the parents to be

together again was echoed by William in the drawings he had been making although it had not been discussed with him explicitly. (See Appendix 1, **Drawing 4.**)

Session two

The following are examples of how drawing was used as a means of communicating during the second session.

Example 6:

As they came in Hazel saw the paper and crayons on the table and said she wanted to draw. She immediately started drawing.

Example 7:

William handed the helper a piece of paper with a drawing on it. He said it was his homework. He had done it at school that day and immediately started explaining it as follows: (see Appendix 1, **Drawing 5.**)

William: "There is a road. It's a very bad road and I'm on it. It feels as if I'm going around in a circle and when I get to the end of it there is nothing. There is only a bare tree with no leaves. There is also another road. Quintin (old friend) is at the end of that road. And then we walk together to where there is a only one green tree."

The helper was quiet for quite a while, silenced by the sadness of the child's voice and the negativity of the description.

Helper: "Could you make a dot on the picture to show me where you are now.....and mom..... and Hazel."

William: (Indicating) "They are all in the emptiness.... far apart."

Mother shows surprise and puzzlement.

Helper: "How do you get from the circular road to the other road near the tree?"

William: "You can't. There is no way out."

Helper: "Today at school when you sat and drew this it felt like a desert with nothing for you."

William: "Yes."

William had used a drawing to help express how he felt. Helper subsequently used elements from this drawing as metaphor during the session as illustrated in the following excerpt.

Helper: "You have just had a school holiday and it seems as if it was also very much desert."

William: "Yes, some of it was."

Helper: "And some of it was not so much desert. It was a mixture of desert and tree. Sometimes with a bit of shade under the tree where one can take a rest and look at the desert. (Looking at the picture). Quintin seems to be with you when you are on the tree side. Who is with you in the desert."

William: "No-one."

Helper: "No-one...., no-one..... no-one?"

William: "Not quite no-one. Mom and the Hazel are also there but all are far apart."

Helper: (Points to where he had placed them in the drawing.) "There ..there.... and there. Far apart in the desert.... Which one of them do you think feels the most like you?"

Example 8:

When talking about the school holidays **Hazel** starts drawing and presents her drawing about the ice skating, which leads to her telling how they went ice skating during the holidays. (See Appendix 1, **Drawing 6**)

Helper: "You all seem to have enjoyed that very much."

Example 9:

William told how he had not written the sentences on the family in school that day, because he did not know whether they were still a family now that his parents were divorced. Mother mentioned that the children's father was in the process of leaving the house they had all shared. **Hazel** then presented the following drawing. (See Appendix 1, **Drawing 7**).

Hazel: "The house is empty. There aren't even things against the walls. It's empty..... empty.....empty. An empty house isn't nice. This house is very empty. It's like a desert. I want it to be full again."

Helper: "It's full of emptiness."

Hazel: "Yes, and no one wants to go in."

Helper: "Is that how it feels to you, that you must go into an empty house?"

Hazel: "Yes"

Example 10:

Hazel gently interrupts showing a drawing and speaks in a sad tone of voice:
(See Addendum 1, **Drawing 8**).

Hazel: "It feels as if there's a paper heart that someone is holding in their hand and in the other hand there is a pair of scissors cutting the heart."

Helper: "And it hurts very much."

Hazel: "Yes. It hurts."

Example 11:

Towards the end of the second session, while helper was presenting the final intervention, **William** was drawing as he seemed to be listening. The family are instructed to continue being sad because the salty tears of sadness had healing quality because they could clean wounds. As they rise to leave William explains his drawing. (See Appendix 1, **Drawing 9**).

William: "The hole we were in was like this. (Points to A) ..And now it starting to feel like this (Points to B). The hole is getting filled up, it's not so deep any more."

The above examples illustrate how drawing and verbal communication were a recursive complementarity. The verbal communication was clearly distinct from the non-verbal-drawing but connected. They influenced each other simultaneously and maintained each other.

3.4.1.4 **Distinction four:pain - loss and change**

Example 1:

The hypotheses about the nature of or" process leading to it" the pain (it) that the client could be experiencing were used continually to provide stability and stay empathically with the client. It seems as if it was the stability message to the clients to remain sad that triggered the changed perception that it was acceptable to them to continue mourning and also the changed behaviour in William who started questioning the instruction to be sad.

Helper: "A new thing like that may also mean that....that one will lose some old things you like...?"

William: "Yes, many things."

Helper: "Like..?"

William: "..my friends, my teachers..oh, everything."

Helper asks William at length about these things.

Helper response attempts to show understanding by connecting "new" to "loss" using the complementarity: NEW/gain/loss. Helper stays with the stability and encourages William to elaborate on the losses, using the separating property of COMPLEMENTARITY/whole/parts.

Example 2:

Mother tells how Hazel was crying in the bath the other day and said when she feels like that she feels she is living alone in a house. She also wants them to go back to her father.

Helper: "The children seem to be saying how they feel about the many losses they have experienced."

Helper attempts to convey empathy by connecting the different stories as losses.

Example 3:

William starts telling how the dog was also part of the tornado by being it bitten.

Mother explains in detail what she did to save the dog and actually overspent to save the dog because she wanted to prevent the children experiencing another loss.

Helper response picks up the change-loss-pain theme and underscores mothers actions as creating stability in times of change to stabilise the family. This seems to fit with mother as it keeps the conversation flowing.

Example 4:

The hypothesis about possible losses experienced by the children: two parent family, enabled the helper to hear the implied message when William did not write the sentences on "Our family" as already illustrated when discussing distinction three.

Example 5:

Using CYBERNETIC COMPLEMENTARITY/distinction/its *polar opposite* introduced the possibility of thinking about the gains of the change and loss were not helpful. It was like a trap. Helper seemed tempted to use it technically and unempathically and it was a non-fitting conversation stopper requiring helper to introduce another or previous subject to continue the conversational process. When helper discontinued trying to introduce difference in this way and just maintained the stability the clients actually introduced the gain complement.

Helper: "It sounds as if you are walking the road rather alone."

Mother agrees but also relates examples of how her ex-husband has helped but even so she barely copes.

Mother now links walking alone with being helped a both/and perception of walking alone.

Helper: "One of the things that seems to have come with all the changes is that you have discovered that you are actually quite strong."

Mother: "No not really, not when the children are not with me."

Helper attempts to introduce a gain of change connect the different distinctions of coping and battling as making them strong. STRONG/coping/battling. This does not fit, as..

Helper: "At this stage it seems as if you feel that all the changes have actually only been losses."

Mother: "...Ye...es. Maybe there has been a very small relief of the tension with me. I'm only aware of this at times."

Cautious to fall into the trap of emphasising the gain of change, helper stresses the losses of change. This seems to fit as Mother comes with the opposite distinction of a little gain sometimes as hypothesised.

Even though introducing the idea of gains did not fit it was nevertheless useful in providing the precisely the feedback that "gains" did not fit. This was eventually picked up by helper and redirected the responses.

3.4.1.5 Distinction five: change request - change/stability.

The awareness that a change request was complementarity of change/stability was very evident but not used in the way it had been hypothesised about. The change/stability complementarity was the golden thread that wove throughout the sessions. Whenever the helper lost sight of this and tended to focus on either change or stability the conversation lost its flow. Moreover the mother developed a STABILITY/change/stability perception of the situation and accepted that sadness was part of the healing. William was feeling better- he had done a drawing of the hole filling up and was questioning the instruction to continue being sad.

3.5 Discussion of the usefulness of complementarity with this case

- 1 In the pre-session-hypothesising, as in hypothesising with a team, it was possible by using complementarity to use the data available about the family to construct questions and hypotheses to be utilised in the sessions.
- 2 Questions and hypotheses constructed about the family, their present situation and its connections, their pain and gain, made available

alternative explanations, and alerted the helper to significant areas that required empathic response and indicated avenues for exploration. Thinking in terms of complementarity also assisted helper to plan the session in such a way that enhanced connecting with the family especially the children. It also helped to keep the conversation flowing.

- 3 During the session, using complementarity to provide a way of connecting and separating distinctions to introduce alternatives helped to keep the conversation flowing.
- 4 Introducing the polar opposite of distinctions the family presented was not useful. It seemed to have a jarring effect. It could be that these distinctions were introduced too soon with too little preparation, or that they were introduced in a technical manner with the hope of "causing" a specific reaction. This underscores that there is actually little need for technique in a non-linear way of working. It is the way of thinking, the awareness of process that is important. Technique, when used, should be like a little nudge, subtle and gentle with respect for message symbolised by the symptom (Pittman 1984:6-9).

However when the helper stayed with the presented distinction (stability) of the pain of the situation, the family eventually introduced the polar opposite themselves and terminated helping. The possibility remains that using the polar opposite may well fit in some situations.

- 5 Complementarity, especially of stability/change, was useful in developing intervention messages, packaging and delivering different connotation of the situation.
- 6 The formulae for complementarities were especially used in terms of the complementary elements, that is the "it", "process leading to it",

"wholes", "parts", and "opposites" to evolve alternative ideas. The connectedness of the elements or their recursive relatedness, was not used much and its utilization to hypothesise, construct recursive questions and statements during interviewing is open to further exploration.

- 7 Using the idea of complementarity to interact with, provided a supportive conceptual guiding thread for the helper. When bereft of prepared or spontaneous ideas it was possible to ask oneself in what way could what is taking place be seen in terms of complementarity and then new ideas would form out of this interaction.
- 8 Using complementarities assisted in maintaining a non-linearity by mindfully completing separated distinctions or seeing any single distinctions part of another distinction or of separating a single distinction into parts. Non-linearity can also be maintained by being mindful that one is using subjectively punctuated distinctions that are incomplete and that in using the completing process we are doing it from our own way of knowing, thinking and deciding.
- 9 Unanticipated was the useful feedback from the complementary distinctions that did not fit. Complementarities of the non-fits was information on what avenues not to follow in the conversation and pointed the helper back to maintaining the stability the family wanted, that is to be sad as long as they wanted to.
- 10 Overall using complementarity in this way provided the opening up of ideas to alternative distinctions which did facilitate a mobility which to a limited extent can be provided by working in a team.

In the therapy and the analyses as described in the case study only some of the possibilities of using complementarity were applied and illustrated. The

possibility exists that more complementarities would be identified by another researcher. The therapy described was very limited. It may well be that more extended therapy where complementarity is purposefully kept in mind could offer more examples of the usefulness of complementarity.

3.6 The relevance of using this way of working

Social workers and other helping professions usually have to work solo with limited resources and overwhelming claims for services. They seldom have the advantages of working in a team to increase and evolve alternative ideas when rendering help. When working solo it is very easy to feel overwhelmed, entrapped and bereft of ideas. A helper may find that the way of helping has become routinist, standardised and lacking in unique fit with the individual client. Another possibility in working solo is to become technique focused and not work from a clear conceptual framework.

By using interacting with distinctions in terms of complementarity alternative ideas, it can be as if an imaginary team is contributing and evolving new ideas. This can assist helpers, especially social workers working solo. The possibility of using complementarity like an imaginary team can contribute towards countering the previously mentioned pitfalls of working solo.

3.7 Recommendation

- 1 The exploration of the usefulness of complementarity as illustrated in this single case is very limited. It is recommended that the exploration should be extended to include a larger sample to do justice to the richness and potential of the concept of cybernetic complementary discription.

The aim of this study was not to provide a model for working solo by using complementarity but to share a process that was followed. Other

helpers should not follow this model of using complementarity, but follow the process to create their own individual styles of practice that grow out of their own ways of being helpers. Each helper should avoid the temptation of tricks, the unthinking rule-following, imitation, the ready-made recipes. The helper should rather embark on a path of developing what Keeney (1990:xi) refers to as one's own improvisational style. It is a journey of construction where it must be remembered that:

"Traveller there are no paths, paths are made by travelling."

Chinese proverb

*"My path of discovering,
evolved from one, to two, to three,
distinctions of singularity, duality and trinity,
to find my path to cybernetic helping."*

2. The above outline may however be used to evolve ideas of directing thinking in preparation and during any helping encounter.

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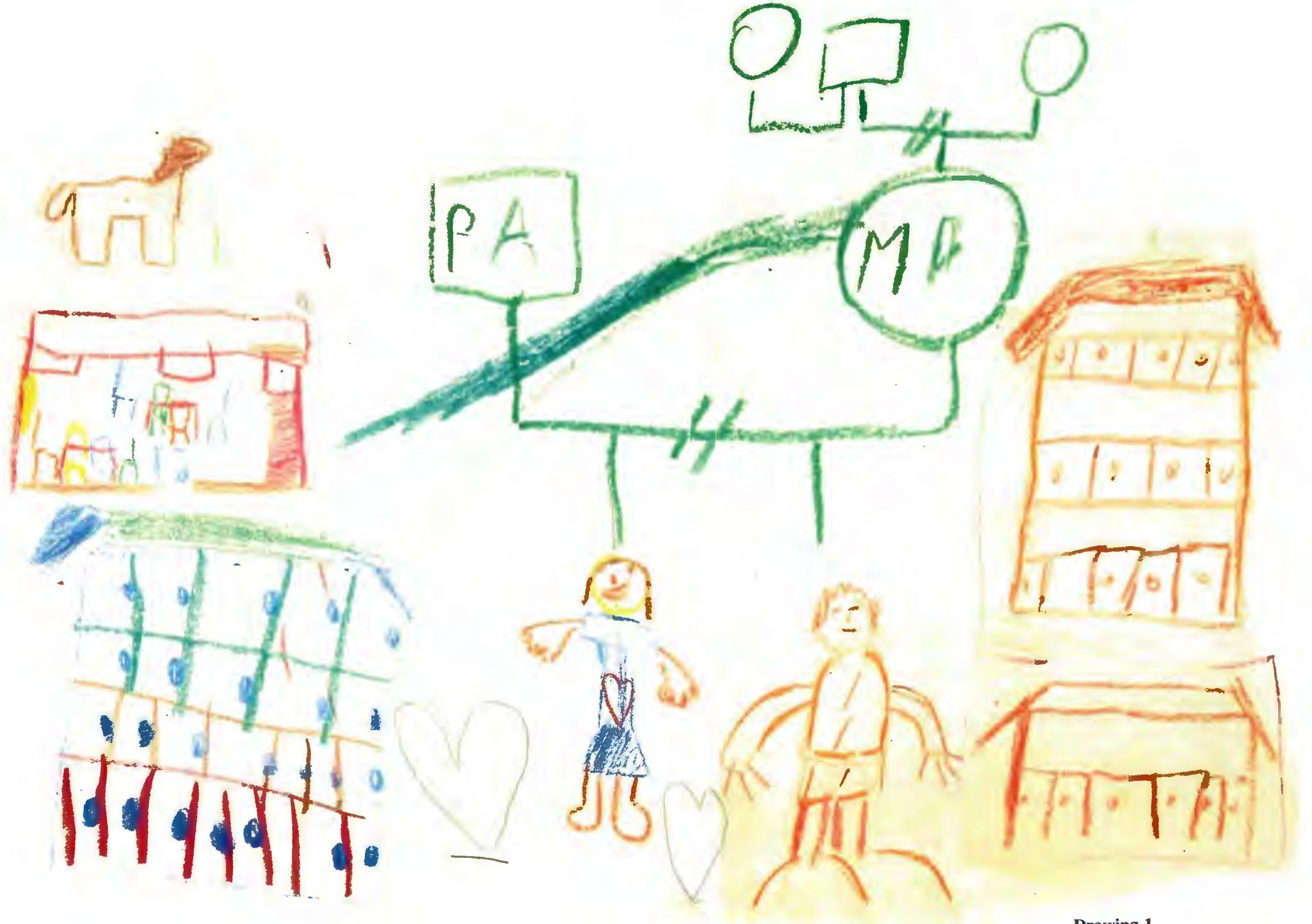
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APPENDIX 1



Drawing 1



Drawing 2



Drawing 3



Drawing 4



Drawing 5



Drawing 6



Drawing 7



Drawing 8



Drawing 9