PREFACE

Format of This Dissertation

Deviation From Conventional Academic Format

My dissertation deviates from the current conventional academic format used in most dissertations in the discipline of Clinical Psychology. I have formulated it in a postmodern way to reflect my subjective reality (Hoffman, 2000). I discuss this deviation in more detail below.

Use of a Prologue

I begin this dissertation with a prologue, which is extracted from a mini-research project that I carried out in my first year of Master's training.

I chose the word "prologue" for three reasons, based on the Oxford Mini Dictionary definition (1991, p. 408) of the word, namely: "introduction to a poem or play etc." Firstly, I have formulated my dissertation, along with my co-researchers' experiences, as a story. Therefore, the prologue introduces the story of my research. Secondly, the research contained in this dissertation uses a heuristic research method, implying that the research punctuates an ending through the creative synthesis, which itself is a story, or a poem, or a creative formulation of language (Shantall, 1996). Again, my Prologue sets the tone in the beginning for the final story. Finally, in the research on which my dissertation is based, my co-researchers tell their stories of their violent experiences. These stories and mine combine to contribute to the bigger story, which is my dissertation. The Prologue then, also introduces these stories.

My Prologue provides a context for violence which, at the same time, is the context of this dissertation. I also introduce myself to the reader as central to this dissertation by outlining the part of my self that is held within the interaction with my father. This conceptualises part of my own violence. As the research is about violence, through a postmodern lens, it cannot exclude the violence that I hold within myself and this dissertation cannot be a separate entity from myself. Therefore, the Prologue represents part of my journey of violence, as well as a discovery of the processes that I am going through, both in my journey of violence and in my journey

of life. However, much like my dissertation, this process is in constant flux and has no end.

I felt it fitting, in a postmodern setting, to incorporate this part of my life that is past into a future part of my life, thereby living in a cyclical time and not a lineal time. Bringing into this current dissertation part of my past work represents for me the postmodern idea that time is cyclical, not lineal. My past melts with both my present and my future, in a co-creation of a constantly shifting reality.

The Prologue also represents one of my motivations for carrying out this research – that stories told can contribute to the transformation or conservation of ecologies, through which we live and relate. In this way, I use the Prologue to demonstrate the way in which new meanings and different realities can be co-created through the telling of a story, as has happened in the interaction between my father and myself.

Comments on my Experience of the Journey of This Dissertation

Through the process of writing this dissertation, my ecology has been reconstructed and redefined by the "bringing together" of various stories. I found strands of similarity in the stories told to me by my co-researchers with my own story of violence. These strands intertwined with my own story to complexify it. This enriched my own story; made it more and allowed my story to be reformed. As my story of violence is so much part of my living ecology, the processes involved in the reformation of my story of violence seeped into my living ecology, which became transformed, enlarged and richer.

PROLOGUE

Introduction

In this chapter, the reader will be introduced to a mini-research project that I carried out in my first year of Master's training, wherein I explored the experience of living with a violent and rejecting father. As this postmodern dissertation discusses the concept of violence predominantly and transformation secondarily, amongst other concepts, I felt that beginning with the mini-research project encapsulated these important elements in a profound, living story.

Motivation

The motivation to carry out the mini-research project on a violent and rejecting father came from my own experience as a child. I experienced my father as a volatile, at times violent and rejecting person. Love from my father seemed to me to be conditional. For much of my childhood, adolescence and part of my adulthood, I harboured feelings of anger, hatred and injustice towards my father and spent many hours in therapy, expressing these feelings. However, I kept on looking for the pathology which I believed resided within me and wondered why my interaction with him, specifically, and with others, generally, did not become more effective or, in fact, did not become significantly different in any way. Then, whilst studying towards my Master's degree, I had the opportunity to carry out a mini-research project on any topic that I chose. As my need to learn more about my interaction with my father, as well as learn more about his interaction with his father, was so great, I decided on this topic. I believed that this had the possibility to transform the status of our relationship into something richer and deeper. Indeed, it did. I now believe that in my attempts to come to terms with my feelings towards my father, had I moved away from an intrapsychic perspective and moved towards an ecological framework, where my interrelatedness is co-created, our interaction may have become more effective and more meaningful to both of us long before it did.

Now, there seems to be less in the way of our relationship becoming more. This research process remains one of the most wonderful interactions I have ever had with my father and it has subsequently paved the way for a much deeper, more profound relationship between us, which we both had the honour of co-creating. More recently, my father has expressed his love for me in a way that he has never done before. He has told me that his love for me is not conditional and that he cares for me as a daughter, whatever behaviour I may engage in.

I feel privileged to share with the reader this story and the way in which it was able to transform the relationship between my father and myself.

Method

I carried out the mini-research project by entering into a conversation with my father about his father. This conversation was taped and I extracted and discussed four themes from it. I used the heuristic approach to carry out this mini-research project as I felt that this method suited my needs best. This method allows one to intimately experience the research and leaves the researcher having learnt more, as more of her life is revealed to her through the process. The research ended with a synthesis in the form of a poem.

Emerging Themes

The themes that I extracted became apparent after my interview with my father. This interview was not directed so that themes could naturally emerge through our conversation. After immersing myself in the dialogue and allowing myself to feel the feelings it prompted in me, and after listening to the taped interview a number of times, the themes I extracted were those that became pertinent to me. These were the themes that touched me and brought to the surface much emotion. The interview itself, thinking about it afterwards and listening to it again and again, was an extremely emotional experience for me. I encountered parts of myself that seemed to be ravaged with pain, but pain that felt old and had been carried within me for many years.

Theme One – The Absence of Feelings of Revenge

This theme came out strongly in many ways. The first was in the way my father spoke about his father, his tone of voice and facial expressions. His tone of voice was that of a normal conversation; he did not raise his voice or shout, his facial expressions were mostly consistent and set in a reflective, thinking way. Secondly, there was never any mention of "return hatred" towards his father. Although there were feelings of disillusionment, there never seemed to be any hatred or vengeful feelings. When I asked him if he harboured feelings of revenge, his answer was:

> I wouldn't say revenge, but he left me very bitter over the years, very bitter, not only bitter, disillusioned, but I wouldn't say revenge.

When I asked him if he was happy when he found out his father had died, his response was in the same non-hating spirit:

> Anything but, I wasn't happy at all. I didn't want him dead, I didn't want him dead, I didn't want my father dead, I wanted him to be an ordinary human being, a loving father, that's what I wanted, I didn't have any revenge, you know, never.

This attitude of not having revenge led me to believe that my father wanted desperately to love his father and for his father to love him. There were definite feelings of regret that his father had, in fact, not loved him and a feeling that if a second chance were possible, things might have been different. This sentiment was actually verbalised by my father when he said that he just wanted a loving father (above).

I, too, desperately wanted my father to love me as I was, without conditions. However, my feelings of anger and vengefulness towards my father were very much present for much of my adolescence.

Theme Two – Feeling of Helplessness

It seems that my father's father "imposed" a feeling of helplessness upon him. This evoked a deep sadness within me: to think of my father, whom I know to be a person with a plan at the ready, with an answer and a plan of action for many problems, feeling so hurt, but so helpless to help himself or others in this hurt. The feeling of helplessness was possibly compounded by the way in which my father saw his own father physically. He explained many times how powerful and strong and

"big" his father was physically. As a small child, the "bigness" of his father must have made him feel even smaller, which would have added to his helplessness.

This was also true in my case. I saw and still see my father as very big physically, and when I was a child, this "bigness" was very apparent to me. It also caused me to have feelings of helplessness in his presence.

What was also apparent was that he saw the feeling of helplessness in relation to his father in other people, particularly in his mother – and this, too, was true in my case. When I asked him what his mother used to do when his father hit him at the table and would not allow him to eat, this feeling of helplessness was strongly apparent. His answer was: "What could she do?"

My father's feelings of helplessness were reflected in the following parts of our conversation:

> My father's drinking caused us a lot of poverty, we didn't have anything. It forced my mother to become practically a slave in her own environment. It was pathetic; the drink took over completely. You couldn't live like that.
>
> When we ate, he would sit me next to him and I would always try to sit away from him because I knew what he would do. As soon as the food came along and I started eating, I used to take the fork or knife or spoon and he would smack me and I would fall backwards from the chair and the food was all over the place and of course I would have to walk away and this happened day after day after day. I couldn't take it anymore. That's when I was a lot younger, I couldn't take it anymore.
>
> I just lived for the moment, always with a fear of being abused, smacked around, and insulted in every possible way that you can think of. But that's all I could do, I couldn't do my studies properly, I couldn't study because I was too darn tired. I wasn't properly fed either and it was very, very difficult, but I just had to sort of live from hand to mouth if you know what I mean, from one hour to the other. I never knew what would happen, everything was a surprise. One minute it was calm and peaceful and all the rest of it and the next minute the whole thing would blow up, shouting and screaming and bashing and breaking things. A different life altogether.
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> One thing that I really hated, it really destroyed me, was when he would start beating my mother up. I couldn't take that and I could do nothing about it. That destroyed my soul actually, it did

something to me when I used to see that, I used to cringe inside me, it was terrible. I'll never forget that, I'll never get over that, what do you call it, that feeling of helplessness and feeling that you want to do something but you can't, it's very bad, that was very sad.

I used to try and separate them, but then I used to get smacked around and I used to sort of go and lay on my bed or go outside and have a good old cry. What could I do, there wasn't much I could do about it. I couldn't stop him.

This feeling of helplessness reverberated in my life through interactions with those whom I perceived to be more powerful than I. The feelings that I experienced in these interactions were that I could never be as powerful as these people and therefore, I could never achieve what they had.

Also, institutions within society, such as schools, family, religion, government and law were so much bigger and more powerful than I was, and in my interactions with them, I chose to bow down and accept whatever it was that they "taught". I became angry with them because of the paralysis that I felt through this interaction.

Theme Three – The Contrasting Feeling of Taking Responsibility

My father places much emphasis on a person's ability to 'take responsibility'. I have noticed that, to him, it usually means the ability to care for oneself, one's family and loved ones adequately, by providing support of mostly, the material kind. My father prides himself on his ability to take responsibility for his family and himself. He has always provided materially for his family, even when cash strapped. However, in the following passage, he speaks about taking responsibility for others in an emotional way. This touched me, knowing that, although he often appears to have a tough exterior, the suffering of others concerns him:

Then we had a sister in the family, she died. Then I don't know, my mother just came up to Jo'burg and she said, "You've got to find a roof to put over our heads." So I reckoned I'm not going to find a roof to put over our heads, I've got a tickey a week left over, what can I do? Anyhow, some people that had a farm, had an empty house there that was very, very old and shabby but at least it was a roof over our head and we stayed there.

If I see anybody suffer, if I can do something about it ever, I went through so much that I couldn't bear it, if I feel that I can help

anybody, I would, because I try to do the right thing from the wrongs that were done to me, if you know what I mean.

When he died, I was completely shocked and I knew from that moment on that I had a hell of a bloody problem on my hands, raising three young kids because all my brothers were still small then and I was only earning about four pounds a week those days and I had a long, long battle in front of me because my father left me with a tremendous amount of debt. So it wasn't easy, it wasn't easy at all and somehow or other, I succeeded, you know.

Instead of running away from the responsibility to take care of his entire family after his father died, he accepted it and creatively managed it, even though it was very difficult for him. My father had suffered tremendously at the hands of his father. He felt responsible for what others had also suffered at his father's hands and felt the need to "fix" it, to make it better.

My feeling of having to take responsibility for myself is one of the phenomena that contributed to my self-isolating behaviours. I told myself that no one would care for me and that I would have to care for myself. I also believed that tasks that had to be done would only be done if I did them myself. This responsibility then contributed to my desire to control my ecology. This led to much unhappiness and anxiety in my life.

Theme Four – Crushed Dreams

When my father spoke about the way he imagined his father to be, it was with longing and idealisation. My grandfather had come to South Africa from Italy when my father was 2 years old. My father and grandmother had only joined my grandfather when my father was 10 years old. This is how my father expressed the idealised way he thought about his father, and the crushing of those idealisations and dreams:

When I was a kid, I was longing to see my father, I was longing to be alongside him, etc., but that all fell flat in the first couple of months.

I met him in Nigel. He came to collect us in Heidelberg at the station with an old bucket of bolts that could hardly get there and we stayed in a little house on a piece of land in Blue Valley without any electricity, without any running water, without anything, just a house. Things were very difficult, we had to go and fetch the water in buckets, you know. We had hardly any

furniture, there was a couple of beds there, one for me and one for them and that was it. The rest of the furniture was made out of dynamite boxes.

This was extremely painful for me, thinking about how a little boy of less than 10 years old thought about his father and longed to be with him. When my father related how he just wanted his father to be a loving father, this suggested that this hurt was still with him, that he still longed for that father he never had.

This theme allowed me to touch a lot of m y own pain as I remembered becoming disillusioned about my own father, and coming to the realisation that he was not actually so powerful after all and was not the kind of father I had always wished for.

This theme is closely linked to the first theme, that of the lack of feelings of revenge, because he still seemed to harbour some hope of a loving relationship with his father, even though his father is dead.

An Individual Depiction – My Experience of the Interview Situation

My father was anxious when I requested an interview with him, but very obliging and willing all the same. On the day of the interview, it seemed as if he wanted to "get it over and done with" as he was becoming more anxious about it. At the beginning of the interview, he was willing to discuss the type of work his father had done, where his father had gone to work and similar details, but he was not eager to discuss emotional issues. Later on in the interview, after talking about highly charged emotional issues concerning himself and his father, he began to cry. I had never seen my father cry and had known him all my life, so this display of emotion was extremely touching. It led me to believe that he has carried these issues with him all his life, and at the time of the interview he was 75 years old.

It seemed clear to me that my father had experienced his own father as a 'let down', as someone who was 'supposed' to love him, but had actually hated him. This experience seems to have coloured his living ecology. He now places an enormous emphasis on family life, the importance of family members and their happy relationships with each other. He longs for a happy marriage, which he does not have. Material things rank very low in his list of important things in life, and things that feed his soul take priority.

Rather than turning to alcohol, as his father did, or becoming a "drop-out" in life, my father gave his childhood suffering meaning by trying to make a success of his own life. While much of the lineal type literature holds that once a child has been abused or neglected by his father, he usually becomes delinquent in some way (Biller & Meredith, 1974; Cronje, Van der Walt, Retief & Naude, 1985), from a postmodern perspective, this person gave meaning to his experience and turned his energies towards success.

I had a profound experience through this research. During and after the interview, I felt connected to my father through a deep current of empathy, and I also felt that he had connected with me in this very same way. Reflecting on the interview, when I was at home alone, I experienced an incredibly deep pain, so deep that it seemed to be hidden in the depths of a very primitive part of my self – so primitive that I felt a need to howl like a wolf. I was feeling my father's pain, intermingled with my own pain. I knew that this pain had to be released, to be given up, so that my father and I could move forward, not only in our own individual lives, but also in our ecologies in relationship with each other and with others. My emotional healing began to stream forward from that interview. Through this healing, new avenues began to open up for me that I felt I wanted and needed to explore. To see my father in this different way was beautiful. I now saw him without any "covering", without any barriers.

This interaction between my father and myself has shifted my understandings of our previous interaction and the way in which my father interacts with his ecology. The pain that he holds within himself seems to come into his interactions with others and blocks out the beauty of his self, not allowing him to fully interact. I believe that our interaction through this research shifted both my father's pain and my own pain and allowed us to interact in a pure, real and different way.

Through the telling of his story, my own story has changed, new meanings have been made and different realities co-created.

Synthesis

My synthesis in poem form includes both what I would imagine my father's words would be to his father, as well as my own words to him, my own father. I

believe that healing is taking place in both my father and myself as a result of this project. This poem reflects themes of "before" and "after". Old hurts, resentments and pain are giving way to a new understanding between us. For both of us, life is beckoning with a renewed and bright hope.

It Can be Another Way

If God gave you another chance, another shot
Would you still destroy me and leave me to rot?
If you could change anything in your miserable life
What would it be? Who would it affect?

What pleasure did you get from hating, from torturing?
What perverse need did this fulfil in you?
What was it about me that you chose to detest?
What was it in me that you couldn't see within yourself?

All I wanted was your love, your fatherly warmth and care
I wouldn't have asked you for more, I wouldn't have nagged
I lived in the hope that you would somehow see the light
I did my best, what I thought was right.

I don't hate you nor do I seek to avenge myself on you.
And if you see me from where you are now, forgive my harsh thoughts
But see what you left me with. These intrusive reminders,
This unquenchable pain that saws at my soul every day.

But now the pain grows dimmer, like the world underneath a setting sun
A thrashing demon, it is being exorcised from my very being.
Like God's fingers gently and lovingly stroking my heart and my soul,
Confusion slowly being replaced by understanding,
Knowledge where there was ignorance and clarity where there was blurring.

And so the cycle of fear, abuse, hatred, neglect and bewilderment begins to
close

The pattern changes from a grotesque, misshapen oddity

To one which begins to form and shape beauty to the beholder

And it's ours, ours to look at and admire, ours to hold close in comfort.

And together we walk along this rocky path that is called Life

And together we can seek understanding, love and strength from one another.

This beautiful creation is ours now, ours forever

And for this I thank you.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

It is the stories that persons have about their lives that determine
both the ascription of meaning to experience and the selection of
those aspects of experience that are to be given expression. It
follows therefore that these stories are constitutive or shaping of
person's lives. The lives and relationships of persons evolve as
they live through or perform these stories. (White, as cited in
Weingarten, 1998, p. 10)

The above quote encompasses the content of this dissertation – that of violent
stories that are told in society, the meanings these stories hold, and the contribution
of these stories to both the co-creation of realities and the transformation or
conservation of the interrelational ecology.

Language Used in This Dissertation

I use the words 'her', 'herself' and 'she' to denote both genders. I felt that
this was more congruent as I am a female and am central to this dissertation.

I use Bateson's term "lineal" (as cited in Keeney, 1983), rather than "linear".
As Keeney points out, "linear" signifies a mathematical concept. Mathematics is a
definite science, where cause and effect dominate and where there is only one correct
answer to any question. In arriving at that answer, one narrows one's thinking down,
as opposed to the postmodern thinking, where one begins with an idea or question

that is broadened. Also, there is always more than one answer and one reality in the philosophy of postmodernism. Therefore, semantically, "lineal" has a better fit with a postmodern philosophy.

I use the word 'co-researcher' to denote my research participants because these individuals' stories form the essence of my research, and through their telling, the tellers become an integral part of this research.

Posits of my Dissertation

I have chosen to position my dissertation within a social constructionist framework, which is itself part of the postmodern philosophy. Although I discuss specific and relevant concepts of both postmodernism and social constructionism in Chapter two, I discuss the essence of both briefly hereunder.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism rejects the idea of one objective truth in favour of many truths, all valid to the context in which they arise. Postmodernism maintains that people are able to formulate meanings from their experiences and that these meanings, when shared, are able to be transformed into new meanings, as well as being able to transform the life of the individual. In these ways, a shifting, subjective reality is valid and the idea of an objective, external reality is rejected. An important idea for this dissertation and contained in the postmodern philosophy that is different from many foregoing philosophies, such as modernism, is that the individual cannot divorce herself from the phenomena being observed. Therefore, when carrying out research, the researcher is not separate from that which she is studying, or when involved in a therapeutic relationship, the therapist is not a separate entity from the client (Held, 1995; Hoffman, 1993).

Postmodernism is a philosophy within which the idea of social constructionism is contained.

Social constructionism

Social constructionism maintains that the beliefs, truths and meanings that people hold about their subjective world are socially constructed, through interaction. This interaction is mediated through language. Therefore, the subjective world of the individual encompasses the knowledge that individuals hold, share and co-create about phenomena and this knowledge becomes part of their ever-changing, subjective world (Hoffman, 1993).

Using a postmodern, social constructionist framework in this dissertation

This postmodern, social constructionist framework allows me to view the phenomenon of violence as something that occurs within a specific ecology. I take the view that the experience of violence cannot be divorced from the ecology in which it occurs, rather than conceptualising it as an occurrence that is separate from its ecology. This dissertation assumes that it is more effective to view violence as occurring within a context, where it impacts upon the context and the context impacts upon it. The ecology within which violence occurs is an important factor in the study of violence, and ecologies form a major part of the discussions in this dissertation. This demonstrates Whitaker's (2000, p. 53) thoughts when he says that violence is usually a punctuation that has "many interacting, often synergistic, personal, social, and situational factors, each of which by itself is insufficient to produce lethal violence."

The use of a social constructionist framework also allows me to view violence as something that is part of the individual's living reality and, therefore, a valid part of her reality, something that is constructed and co-constructed within an individual's ecology, through her dialogue with others. This dialogue gives the event meaning, and this meaning can be transformed or conserved through the dialogue. The discussion offered in this dissertation thus proposes that violence is something that is not external to the individual, but is part of her socially constructed world. The meanings that an individual attributes to her experience of violence contribute to the co-construction of this world.

I have used individuals' violent experiences as a means to viewing their living ecology. This makes it evident how interdependent and interlinked all aspects

of the individual's living ecology are. The violent experience becomes merely a place from which to view her world.

Rationale and Intentions of the Study

As much as the violent experience is seen to be part of an individual's living ecology, this experience impacts upon individuals, therapists and society as a whole and in this way, has important repercussions. Stanko and Lee (2003) briefly discuss this and say that violence impacts upon all the many systems involved. These include the familial and social systems, the community, institutions and the larger society.

As explained above, the aim of this research is to begin seeing violence as part of a specific ecology, both broadly and at the level of the individual. The dissertation also looks at how the telling and retelling of particular stories of violence, through dialogue with others, co-creates the realities in which people live.

This may lead to a re-negotiation of the therapeutic handling of violence, and this is another of my aims in this research. This ecological therapeutic encounter would involve allowing therapy to 'leak out' into the client's living ecology, in which the violence occurs. This would encourage therapists to see their clients as part of an ecology, with trauma, violence and all other psychological constructs occurring between people within that ecology, rather than within one individual, or only between therapist and client. I see this re-negotiation of the therapeutic handling of people traumatised by violent experiences as crucial for therapists in their individual interactions with their clients as, in my view, it is neither satisfactory nor ethical for therapists to merely maintain the status quo. Transformation of less effective therapeutic intertextualities is an ethical responsibility. Therapy that does little more than raise moral and judgmental voices against what is perceived to be horrendous behaviour, without understanding the context of the client's living, is, in my opinion, ineffective. The process of construction and re-construction of meanings and, therefore, of realities, is not effectively assisted through judgement or the imposition of 'universal' meanings, values, worldviews or therapeutic techniques. A better understanding of the ecology of each individual, and bringing this ecology into therapy, are likely to be more effective than therapy that takes place in isolation from

the individual's living. This understanding and effective response will feed another's understanding, much as violence feeds another's violence (Gilbert, 1998).

Given that the therapist is an integral part of the therapeutic system, the effectiveness of a therapist who chooses to withhold and lock away her own, sometimes frightening, attributes, is questionable. Pranger (1997) maintains that if we construct ourselves as excluding violence, that construction of ourselves will necessarily be intrinsically violent, through our violent negation of it. When a client tells her violent story in therapy, the therapist inevitably confronts her own constructions of violence. If this confrontation remains unacknowledged, it is possible that it could impede and inhibit the therapist's effectiveness, which may contribute to the harming of the client. It is possible that this could contribute to the client re-experiencing violence in the therapeutic encounter. When we do this, we stand in the way of our clients' healing and begin to lean perilously close to harming them (Pranger, 1997).

Ignoring violence is a much easier option and one which is seemingly much less painful. Hassan (1998, p. 124) speaks about how difficult it was, in her work with Holocaust survivors, to persuade other therapists to become involved. This, she says, was due to the therapist having to enter the absolutely chaotic world of extreme violence:

> The … experience was a mad world, a world turned upside down in which the unimaginable happened. The abnormality and extremity of the experience is beyond the comprehension of those of us who were not there.

Clearly, such a world is an uncomfortable place.

My primary rationale for undertaking this research was the journey I made through my own world of violence. Through this journeying I have reformulated my story of violence, and this dissertation, in its entirety, is simply a single punctuation of my journey.

In writing this dissertation, I also hold a very bold hope, which is that viewing the effects of violence ecologically may offer victims of violence a way towards beginning their healing processes. My own experience, as outlined in the Prologue, helped me to transform the way in which I interact with my father and with

others in my ecology, through shifting my subjective reality and the meanings it contained.

I wish to make an important clarification of my intention in this dissertation. I in no way intend to detract from the experience of people who have suffered traumatic violence in their lives. Their pain can never be minimised or belittled by academic deliberation or meta-view musings. This dissertation is merely an exploration of what it might mean to stand in a different position in order to view the effects of violence ecologically, so that violence may be seen contextually in our South African ecology, and in our therapeutic encounters.

Organisation of This Dissertation

As Chapter 1 is merely an introductory chapter, it introduces the reader to my motivation in carrying out this research. All the important concepts introduced in this first chapter form the body of the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

The balance of the work is organised as follows:

Chapter 2 discusses postmodernism and social constructionism as the theoretical foundation upon which this research is based. The concept of context as ecology is also discussed in this chapter, as is the concept of stories and the way in which stories are told. Although this dissertation is primarily concerned with the phenomenon of violence, the way in which I have chosen to present the material requires me to delve deeply into the concept of ecologies. I use the concept of ecologies to contextualise my research, within both the South African ecology on a macro level and the interrelational ecology on a micro level.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology I have employed and covers research carried out from a qualitative perspective generally and, more specifically, the heuristic process of research.

Chapter 4 examines the phenomenon of violence and incorporates the findings of my literature survey.

Chapter 5 discusses the themes that arose out of my interviews with my co-researchers. The themes are discussed as they relate to each individual co-researcher and make up parts of the story of the individual's experience of violence. The stories of violence of the individuals whom I interviewed become intertwined with my own story, co-creating an intertextuality through which new meanings can be formed and new subjective realities woven. This relates to therapeutic processes, as therapy can become one of the places where stories are told, meanings are shifted and new, more effective realities are co-created (Keeney, 1985).

To punctuate the completion, I end this dissertation with an epilogue. This takes the form of a synthesis – the final step of the heuristic research method.

CHAPTER TWO

A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the postmodern approach and the framework of social constructionism. I regard social constructionism as one of many interrelated branches of the postmodern philosophy, and theoretically, therefore, these discussions should also be interrelated and intertwined. For the sake of clarity and coherence, however, I have had to deal with them separately in this work.

Postmodernism

As related in the previous chapter, postmodernism maintains that a subjective reality can be the only reality relevant to the individual at any specific time, which idea contributes to the concept of multiple realities. This varies from postmodern's complementary philosophy of modernism, where knowledge, truth and meanings were still seen as concepts which could be attained from places outside of the

individual (Held, 1995). This idea, of a fluid, subjective reality, underlies the three postmodern concepts that I regard as central to my enquiry and which are discussed below.

Multiple, Subjective, Intertextual Realities

Postmodernism holds that our subjective experience of reality is co-created through interaction with others in a system and is always fluid. This subjectivity, says Terreblanche (1998, p. 146), "finds its expression in a shifting zone of intertextuality." Therefore, the individuals within a system are not individuals on their own, but become individuals through their interaction and dialogue with others. Gergen (2001, p .5) summarises this well when he says "individual subjectivity is abandoned as the primary site on which meaning is originated or understanding takes place; attention moves from the within to the between."

Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, in *The Evolution of Physics* (1938), had this to say about intertextuality (as cited in Whitaker, 2000, p. 206): "A courageous scientific imagination was needed to realise fully that not the behaviour of bodies, but the behaviour of something between them, that is, the field, may be essential for ordering and understanding events."

This relates to the postmodern idea that phenomena can only be viewed from an individual's subjective point of view, and that the observer forms part of the ecology that she views (Terreblanche, 1998). Through this intertextuality, reality is able to be transformed or conserved.

Through this dissertation, my violent reality was given the opportunity to be transformed through the dialogue that occurred between myself and my co-researchers, just as my violent reality was able to be transformed through an interaction with my father. This leads me to the second postmodern concept that I discuss, which is the denial of an expert stance. Although I took the position of researcher in this dissertation, I was not the expert on the phenomenon of violence as it occurred within my co-researchers' lives. I merely became part of their subjective reality and they part of mine as we dialogued about their violent experiences. Therefore, I, as the researcher, became an integral part of my co-researchers' systems.

Researcher as Part of the System

Unlike modernistic theories, postmodernism holds that the researcher, therapist or observer is not an external, objective expert, but an integral part of the system in which she finds herself. She becomes integral to the co-creation of the situation (Moore, 1997). Therefore, postmodernism denies the expert stance of any individual on any ecology, at the same time as it recognises the interdependency and interrelatedness of all phenomena (Cahoone, 2003). Specifically, the research methodology whereby I have viewed the phenomenon of violence, which is informed by the postmodern approach, allows me as the researcher to become part of the concept that I am studying. It is through this integration of realities where neither part is an expert over any other part of the system, that my co-researchers and I come to 'know' about the concept of violence. Therefore, it is not through the seeking of an external body of knowledge but the immersion of oneself into the experiential processes of individuals. This 'knowledge' is the third postmodern concept that I discuss.

Knowledge as Non-Universal

As it does with an objective, external reality, the postmodern approach challenges the idea of objective, real and universal knowledge. This approach is therefore not concerned with discovering knowledge that exists outside of oneself, but rather with the engagement of oneself in dialogue with the social worlds of which one is an integral part. Through this dialogue, in which one explores circular contributing factors, rather than the lineal cause and effect idea, one comes to 'know' one's world intimately (Cahoone, 2003).

In my subjective worlds, my many realities that hold within them an intimate knowledge of my many selves, are not entities I set out to find in an objective, static world. They are constantly in flux, changing shape with each interaction. This dissertation is a journey without a destination. It is merely a captured moment of some of my interactions with the subject of violence, at this time. The purpose of travelling this path is not to arrive at a predetermined point, but to constantly dance with the myriad possibilities of transforming my story of violence through interaction.

From a postmodern stance, I concede that my view is not the only one, as postmodernism itself holds that philosophies and theories are never static, reified facts, but merely represent the different ways in which society thinks about phenomena. They facilitate our understanding of the world around us (Cahoone, 2003) because they allow us to formulate our thoughts in a structured manner (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001). In this view, no one theory is superior to another (Cahoone, 2003). In acknowledgement of this, I briefly discuss some of the different voices that have commented on aspects of the postmodern philosophy.

Criticisms of Postmodernism

According to Terreblanche (1998), postmodernism has been described as an externalised display of parts of speech, which could be seen to lack clarity. Terreblanche also comments on Foucault's differing ideas of postmodernism, his very own style of ontology, when he quotes him as saying the following:

> For my part, it has struck me that I might have seemed a bit like a whale that leaps to the surface of the water disturbing it momentarily with a tiny jet of spray and lets it be believed, or pretends to believe, or wants to believe, or himself does in fact indeed believe, that down in the depths where no one sees him any more, where he is no longer witnessed nor controlled by anyone, he follows a more profound, coherent and reasoned trajectory. (as cited in Terreblanche, 1998, p. 148).

These criticisms may result from questioning whether the spoken word is congruent with the individual's feelings, her inner self, or whether the explicit message is incongruent with the implicit message. Held (1995) contributes to this idea by offering various differing voices from those that proclaim to uphold the postmodern philosophy, such as Polkinghorne, McNamee and Gergen. The common thread that runs through these criticisms are that the verbal discourses, through which postmodernists maintain that realities are co-created, could be the very systems that hinder that co-creation, by limiting our repertoire of experience through language.

As postmodernism holds that philosophies are never static, the engagement with voices different from ours is crucial to maintaining the possibility of transformation of the postmodern approach itself. However, at this time, I still choose to make sense of my world through this lens, as I find the possibility of many

subjective realities proposed by postmodern thinking and the co-creation of these realities through discourse with the social world, suitable to me and to my research. I, therefore, have chosen to make use of the postmodern philosophy of social constructionism through which to view the phenomenon of violence.

Social Constructionism

Violence, much like any other social phenomenon, is a concept that is socially constructed through social negotiation and agreement (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, I use experiences that have been constructed as violent by a social discourse carried out by individuals within society. Although I speak of violence at an ecological level, it is the individuals within the ecology that carry with them their experiences of violence ("Trauma, violence", 2002).

The ontology of social constructionism differs from that of approaches that are interpretative in nature. The latter approaches view knowledge of the world as reflections of an external, objective reality, while social constructionists view it as social co-creations of subjectivity (Gergen, 1985). Social constructionists maintain that the meanings held by individuals of their experiences in society are formed through discourses with institutions and others in their social world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). These meanings and discourses can be said to contribute to the processes that occur within a specific context, or, as I have chosen to formulate it in this discussion, within a specific ecology. As with my discussion on postmodernism, and related to that discussion, I again cover those concepts contained within the social constructionist ideology that are relevant to this dissertation.

Meaning Making

Social constructionism maintains that meaning is co-created by individuals through interaction. Therefore, meaning making cannot be carried out in a situation of intrapsychic isolation, but occurs in interaction with our context or ecology (Capra, 2003).

Semin and Gergen (1990) suggest that the process of a person understanding her ecology and the meaning she attaches to the events that occur within this

ecology, has been an accepted notion for aeons. However, they maintain that 'scientists' often hold that a lay-person's understanding of her own ecology is limited and ignorant and that the understandings and meanings obtained through empirical science supersede those of the lay-person. This stance presumes an objective and static reality within which meanings may be seen as more correct than those of the individual living in her ecology. This argument cannot hold in a social constructionistic framework, as the individual is seen as representing her own reality through her living of it and cannot subscribe to a foreign and predetermined ecology. If the latter were taken as correct, the argument that meanings only become so through interaction with the ecology would be invalid, as a homogenous group of meanings would have already been ascribed to events and would be identical for each individual, no matter what their unique ecology, or their own uniqueness as individuals.

In terms of social constructionism, however, meanings are never static; they are constantly renegotiated through social discourse. The meanings that are attached to experiences are evolved and reformed throughout the entirety of the life of a person. This recreation of meaning is a central notion within the social constructionist theory, which regards meanings as malleable and changeable, in accordance with the context (Gergen, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Semin and Gergen (1990) articulate that the meanings which individuals place upon the occurrences within their ecologies have a profound effect on their behaviours. Unique meanings and understandings contribute to unique behaviours, which contribute to unique interactions, which contribute to the dynamism of meanings.

Through interaction with others, the relationship between people becomes the context (or the ecology), and as Bateson (1972) states, interactions and meanings can then be transformed. They may also be conserved through these same interactions. Transformation or conservation can be facilitated through a feedback loop as it shifts or reifies phenomena within the relationship. These two processes can occur simultaneously, whilst complementing each other in their opposition. Whether they ultimately mostly harm or mostly heal an individual, can only be

ascertained by an examination of each ecology in the unique context in which it occurs (Lifschitz, 2000).

As social constructionism maintains that meanings are exchanged through dialogue within a specific context at a specific time (Gergen, 1985), I have chosen to view this dialogue as 'stories' that are told by individuals to others, which stories contain within them the realities and meanings held and co-created by individuals.

Constructing Reality and Meanings Through Stories

In answer to a question posed to Keeney (1983, p. 195), he tells us that the psychologist in therapy listens to "stories and stories about stories" and he asserts that this is his only view into the individual and their ecology. Doan (1998) states that meanings made through interaction are inextricably linked to a cultural context and to the language system of that culture. These meanings are often contained in the stories told by one individual to another. Mair (as cited in Doan, 1998, p. 381) says the following about stories:

> Stories are habituations. We live in and through stories. They conjure worlds. We do not know the world other than as a story world. Stories inform life. They hold us together and they keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are lived by the stories of our race and place. It is this enveloping and constituting function of stories that is especially important to understand more fully. We are, each of us, locations where the stories of our place and time become particularly tellable. We are in the story and the story is in us.

Narrative therapy makes use of the idea of reconstructing our reality through our telling of stories. Although this dissertation is not placed within the narrative paradigm, this paradigm contains the postmodern concepts about which I have written. I borrow from this postmodern framework to explicate the way in which ecologies can be transformed through the telling of stories (Weingarten, 1998).

Narrative Therapy and Transformation Through Stories

Given that postmodernism holds that there is no ultimate truth and that reality can only be subjective, there can, from the perspective of both the postmodern

approach and the narrative approach, be no ultimate story. All stories are reflections of the individual who tells the story. They are windows into the way people see and experience their world. If we are able to tell a different story, then the possibility arises that the different story will contribute to a different perception of our world: a new and transformed reality in which we are able to live. The reformed story that we tell is not held within a closed ecology, separate from the rest of our living ecology. Instead, it is infused by and infuses our entire ecology of living, transforming it in its entirety (Weingarten, 1998).

The narrative approach (White, 2000), as with most approaches in psychology, uses language as the medium through which stories are told (Doan, 1998). Individuals use their language skills to tell their stories to others, to explain and co-create the meanings they place upon occurrences within their world (Gergen, 1985).

Language as Symbol

Language is one of the symbolic ways in which we convey meaning to another (Capra, 2003). Semin and Gergen (1990) and Hunter (1990) discuss this point, arguing that although words are used to convey our meanings to others, words themselves are not exact replications of our understandings and meanings. In some instances, language is used as if the meanings contained in language represent an objective, reified environment. However, to view the words of language as holding within them a reified meaning constrains our ability to co-create interaction (Walter & Peller, 1996). From a social constructionist point of view, our language is a socially constructed phenomenon and unlike linguists, social constructionists do not view the object of research as language. Research in this social constructionist context is about entering into the individual's ecology, using the symbol of language to do so (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Through language, we are able to enter into a specific ecology and begin to understand an event occurring in that ecology in an effective, contextual way (Shalev, Yehuda & McFarlane, 2000).

Ecologies

If, as the postmodern approach suggests, humans need to exist in an interactive, social environment (Baron & Byrne, 1994), ecologies of living are

fundamental aspects of our humanity (Levine & Moreland, 1995). Ecologies of humans sharing some phenomenon or another are socially constructed and, also, constantly re-constructed in part to satisfy this human need. Although ecologies of living are formed within social institutions and rituals (Lifschitz, 2000), they consist of the processes that occur within those frameworks, rather than of any definite, reified structure.

Two of these processes, both of which are interrelated, could be seen to be acceptance and belonging. Social psychologists have outlined some of the factors that strengthen people's need to belong. Those that are relevant to this discussion include the fact that belonging makes a person feel significant emotionally; that belonging enhances a person's self-concept; and that belonging contributes to the construction of a social identity (Turner & Giles, 1995).

Belonging in Ecologies

In terms of belonging within an ecology, Bar-On (1999) discusses an interview that he had with an Israeli citizen in the early 1950s. This person believed, without reservation, in Stalin and Communism. When Stalin fell, the person began to see the cracks in Stalin's ideology, but was unable to find anything else in which to invest his belief. Bar-On (1999, p. 138) says that this person "had to re-invent a whole different approach to facts, abolishing earlier emotions or pragmatics which he had suppressed or denounced previously … and others like himself just felt 'lost in the middle of the forest,' to use Descartes' metaphor." Bar-On goes on to say that something similar was found in people who had been captured by the Chinese and undergone a process of "thought reform". He comments on this phenomenon by saying that the ecology within which these people had lived was no longer and, therefore, they were no longer "belongers".

Belonging in ecologies is central to the argument put forward in this dissertation, as it allows those living in a shared ecology to share stories and make meanings from these shared stories. In this way, groups of people discover belonging through identification with others in their shared ecology. This identification gives meaning to their living. Belonging also allows those who are seen not to share in the ecology to be placed separately from them, as 'non-belongers'. This may contribute to an ecology of separateness, which allows people to distance themselves from

behaviours of which they do not approve. This kind of ecological separation may contribute to the creation of static, impermeable ecologies within which people live. In this kind of living, there is little opportunity for stories to be shared through dialogue; little opportunity for meaning making; and limited possibility of fluid realities being able to be conserved or transformed.

Conservation and Transformation in Ecologies

Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001, p. 112) speak of "rituals of conservation and those of transformation". Although the word "rituals" may elicit thoughts of trance-like dancing and animal slaughtering, in its broadest sense individuals enter into rituals each and every day. These could include daily activities such as family meals, braais, outings with friends and joyful weekend escapades, to events that occur less often such as birthday parties, barmitzvahs, celebrating religious festivals, divorces, weddings and funerals. Rituals of conservation and transformation encompass those processes that occur between individuals in interaction within an ecology, that either transforms or conserves a living ecology.

Conservation defined

Conservation may include the processes of avoiding those experiences about which we feel much discomfort. This avoidance may ensure the maintenance of our old, comfortable, but perhaps not so effective, interactional patterns and formulations of ourselves. Due to the maintenance of these processes, the possibility of transformation becomes increasingly narrower as the individual encloses herself within this ecology (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001).

Transformation defined

Transformation can be seen as a process that opens the door to possibilities of otherness or newness. An interactional ecology holds within it the possibility of transformation and this can manifest in different dialogues – dialogues about past silences, holding close that which was far and connecting with the disconnection of one's life (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001). As Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001, p. 117) put it: "Being in the fray of relationships often challenges a person's ways of thinking and categories of classification."

Viewing violence through an ecological lens

In terms of violence, it may be more effective if the entire ecology in which the violence occurs is better understood. Using this idea of complexity in order to understand some of the many facets of violence allows us to view this phenomenon from various angles in order to arrive at various descriptions. This idea is the same as Bateson's idea of double description (as cited in Keeney, 1983) and allows us to co-create the meanings attached to violence through our relationships with those in differing positions. The idea of double description does not mean that these relationships are static, but focuses instead on their dynamism (Penn, 1982).

Summary of This Chapter

In this chapter, I discussed postmodernism and social constructionism. In relation to the former, I discussed multiple realities, the researcher as part of the system and non-universality of knowledge, as three concepts that I deem important in this theory, as they relate to this dissertation. Within social constructionism, I discussed the issue of meaning making and how this is done through interaction with others, borrowing from narrative therapy to discuss the transformation of ecologies through stories. I also discussed the way in which the symbol of language is used to socially construct our world. I ended this chapter with a discussion on ecologies and the way that belonging in ecologies is an important human activity, as well as the concepts of conservation and transformation of ecologies.

Meta-Reflections on This Chapter

Through this chapter, I am conveying to you, the reader, the meanings that I have made, up to this point, regarding a postmodern approach to living and the meanings of the postmodern approach that I have co-created through interaction with many discourses on the subject. Although I have engaged in both written and spoken conversations on postmodernism, and incorporated some of these ideas into this discussion, I do not profess to live out these ideas as if they were static facts, able to be followed without deviation. Rather, I allow them to permeate my selves and reformulate my postmodern living through my interaction with them. This gives rise to a unique creation of postmodernism within me, of which this discussion is but one

photograph. Malleability and changeability will once again occur through further dialogue and interaction.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the reasons for my choice of a qualitative research paradigm. I then go on to discuss the process of heuristic research in detail, including the reliability and validity of this kind of research. In the second part of the chapter I discuss the qualitative, heuristic research processes as they apply specifically to my dissertation.

Choosing Qualitative Research

The Choice of a Qualitative Research Approach for This Dissertation

The qualitative research method fits well with the social constructionist perspective due to its concentration on the elucidation of meanings and the acknowledgement of the socially constructed aspects of phenomena (MacLiam, 2003). Therefore, the use of a qualitative design in this research is more appropriate for my aim, than the use of a quantitative research design. This appropriateness is further discussed later in this chapter.

The Qualitative Method Compared to the Quantitative Method

Data analysed through the use of a quantitative design method seeks to establish empirical and precise facts, which do not take cognisance of context (MacLiam, 2003). Qualitative research designs seek rather to describe the material collected, taking into account the important factor of context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). These qualitative research designs also seek to find meanings contained in experiences. These meanings are not static, nor do they belong to one objective reality. They are, rather, the meanings acquired by individuals through their living and are contextually based (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore, unlike quantitative methods, which seek to reach a conclusion, qualitative methods walk a path of discovery, without necessarily reaching a point of destination (MacLiam, 2003).

The reliability of a quantitative research design refers to the consistency of findings, i.e. if an experiment is replicated, the same or similar results should be elicited. Validity refers to whether the research or experiment explains what it claims to explain (MacLiam, 2003).

The reliability and validity of qualitative research are defined differently. In terms of reliability in qualitative research, the outcome of the research cannot be the

same as a previous research project, even if the research project deals with the same concepts. This relates to the postmodern idea that each individual's reality is unique and subjective, and that reality is ever changing and cannot, therefore, be replicated. However, the outcome of a qualitative research project still has to be an honest reflection of the subject. So, reliability in a qualitative design refers to "the trustworthiness of observations ..." (Stiles, 1993, p.601). Validity in this type of research refers to the honesty and dependability of the researcher's observations of the phenomenon under scrutiny, and of the meanings elicited from these observations (MacLiam, 2003). Therefore, validity in a qualitative design refers to "the trustworthiness of interpretations or conclusions" (Stiles, 1993, p.601).

Unlike quantitative research, it is unnecessary to obtain large numbers of co-researchers in qualitative research (MacLiam, 2003). As a result of the methods used to research a phenomenon in qualitative research, it would be extremely cumbersome and vastly time consuming to carry out research with a large number of co-researchers. Besides this, unlike a quantitative researcher, seeking to arrive at one conclusion which she can generalise to a specific population, the qualitative researcher seeks rather to immerse herself into the subjective worlds of her co-researchers, each of which is subjective, unique and valid.

In summary, while quantitative research starts out with a question to be answered and moves from the general to the specific in order to reach the 'truth' about a phenomenon, which 'truth' can be generalised, in an expert and external way, to a specific group (Breakwell, 1995b), qualitative research is a process of discovering more about a phenomenon by the immersion of the researcher into the phenomenon, through the subjective eyes of her co-researchers, in order to broaden and enrich her knowledge about a phenomenon. This knowledge is not seen to be static, but constantly fluid (Shantall, 1996).

Important Elements of Qualitative Designs

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) outline some elements that should be taken into account when carrying out qualitative research generally and, more specifically, qualitative research from a postmodern perspective. These include the following:

- Qualitative research is an activity that involves the interpretation of information and, at the same time, an awareness of this interpretative element. In this way, it incorporates within it self-reflexivity.

- In carrying out qualitative research, the researcher interacts with other co-researchers and reflects on this interaction. This gives credence to a postmodern methodology through the acknowledgement of intersubjectivity.

- This research is always aware of the context in which the phenomenon is placed. The political, ideological, social and historical contexts are all of importance.

- This research takes into account multiple, subjective realities and does not consider the option of a single objective reality.

For all the above reasons, the choice of a qualitative research design is most appropriate for my social constructionist research as these principles dovetail with those of social constructionism.

The qualitative method that I have chosen with which to examine this subject is the heuristic approach, as this approach is philosophically aligned with postmodernism and social constructionism.

The Heuristic Approach

Heuristic research, which falls within the qualitative research framework, does not seek to find answers or reach conclusions. Instead, it seeks to discover more about a phenomenon, without necessarily finding a logical conclusion or the 'answers' to the phenomenon. Heuristic research could be said to be a journey without a destination. One begins in a certain place, which is a punctuation but not necessarily the beginning, and continues along the road, often never reaching a destination or plotting the route on a map. Rather, the researcher is guided by her own desire to fulfil herself. Once the researcher has a strong sense or feeling of the very essence of the phenomenon, this is usually where the research ends. However, it is not an ending in the sense of finality. Rather, it is a beginning for more research along different and related paths (Moustakas, 1981).

Heuristic research is a process that begins with a specific phenomenon and creates a much broader picture of this phenomenon (Shantall, 1996).

Researcher as Research Instrument

The heuristic approach holds that the researcher is an integral part of the research. The relationship between researcher and participant is one that allows the co-construction of phenomena (Shantall, 1996).

As the researcher is the research instrument within heuristic research, it is necessary for her to become aware, through intense reflection on the subject, of her own experience of this subject. This is intended to lead to openness within the researcher, so that she is more able to melt into the research subject and become an integral part of the research context. This exercise draws the researcher deeply into her subjective reality, in which exists a different kind of knowing (Shantall, 1996).

Reflexivity

Through the reflexive process described above, the researcher becomes committed to finding out more about the subject and sets out upon the ever-broadening path of discovery. It is important in heuristic research that the researcher should feel she has reached a deep understanding and that the research does not end prematurely. This kind of knowing comes from the openness and reflexivity that should be held within the researcher from the beginning (Shantall, 1996).

Co-Researchers

The co-researchers are then selected, based upon their own experience of the phenomenon. As Shantall (1996) states, it is important that these co-researchers are able to talk about their experience, are co-operative, interested in the project and willing to involve themselves enthusiastically in it. As with most other research methods, an agreement outlining the logistics of conducting the research is vital (Shantall, 1996).

Dialogical Co-Creation

The most important component of heuristic research is the interview, which is the dialogical co-creation of the research context. It is therefore imperative that a trusting and mutually self-disclosing environment is created. Although the unstructured interview or informal conversation is an important component of the

methodology, the relationship and the co-creation of the context of the interview are equally important. Part of the reason for this importance is so that the interview is flexible, open and able to be varied according to the dialogue, which cannot be predetermined (Shantall, 1996).

As a result of the intertextuality of the situation, a co-researcher will tell a certain type of story to me, which will be different to the story that she may tell to another researcher. Therefore, researcher and co-researcher together co-create this context. All the meanings and constructs that I hold about violence are brought with me into my interaction with the co-researcher. Likewise, the co-researcher also brings with her all these constructs. These realities cannot be divorced from the research context and assist us in creating and co-creating this context.

Lineal Time

As can be seen from the above discussion, it would be impossible to determine an absolute time period for this research. However, for practical reasons, a relatively flexible period can be agreed upon between researcher and co-researcher.

Hermeneutic Circle

Once the process has reached a saturation point, the researcher brings together all the information gathered through the interview process, which would include transcriptions of the interviews, notes made by the researcher about her own feelings during the interview, any personal documents supplied by the participant and any other information that can deepen understanding of the subject. During this period, it is important for the researcher to put on hold any judgements or preconceived ideas, and to allow the phenomenon to be. In this way, themes can emerge naturally. As Reason and Rowan (as cited in Shantall, 1996, p. 243) state:

> The process involved is what has been referred to as the hermeneutic circle: Instead of a single cycle of data collection, there need to be multiple cycles, where the theory, concepts, and categories are progressively extended and refined, differentiated and integrated, reaching towards a theoretical saturation. This is a rigour of clarity, accuracy, and precision.

This process involves moving from the specifics of the information to a meta-view of the information. The information is not interpreted only once, but many times in a cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation. Within this process, the research becomes richer with the involvement of the co-researchers, and a deepening of understanding is achieved (Shantall, 1996).

Discovering Through Heuristic Research

Heuristic research is based on the tenet that we can come to know the world as we journey on the path of discovering meanings. This implies that the researcher should trust that she will be led on the right path to discover the essence of the subject. Both researcher and co-researcher enter into this relationship to expand their understanding of the phenomenon by transcending themselves and passing into a meaning that is outside of them, but between them (Shantall, 1996).

In terms of the reliability and validity of heuristic research, Shantall (1996, p. 248) states that: "It is in its intersubjectivity, that heuristic research rests its case of reliability and validity."

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity in heuristic research is dependent upon the researcher being the main instrument of research and ensuring that she is sensitive, able to use herself as the enquirer, attempts to keep her mind open at all times, employs an open awareness and is able to transcend value judgements and preconceived ideas. Altheide and Johnson (1998, p. 291) outline this as "*validity-as-reflexive-accounting* (VARA)" (italics in original). This process allows the researcher, the research topic and the meaning making of the researcher, to continuously interact with each other throughout the process of the research. The honest interaction of these three interdependent parts contributes to a valid and meaningful research project. Altheide and Johnson (1998) add that the context of the research is an important component of validity, as is the relationship between researcher and co-researcher and the style in which the researcher chooses to tell her research story. It is through this constant interaction of all parts of the research and the researcher's self-reflexivity that the validity of the research evolves.

The reliability and validity are also dependent upon the correct choice of co-researchers. The researcher should allow herself to be drawn to her co-researchers through her intuition. The co-researchers are experts on the subject under discussion because of their first-hand experience of it within their living ecology. In this way, they intuitively invite the researcher into their world (Shantall, 1996).

Synthesis

The final step of heuristic research is that of the synthesis, in which the researcher integrates the material in a unique manner, which may include poems, stories or songs (Shantall, 1996) or another kind of creative use of language.

The Research Process of This Dissertation

In this section I discuss the general points set out above with specific reference to their relevance to my dissertation.

Reliability and Validity of This Research

In order to ensure reliability and validity within this research, I have adapted and made specific to my own dissertation the following criteria from Stiles (as cited in MacLiam, 2003), which correlate well with those outlined above:

Reliability

- The manner in which I collected and analysed information, as well as my epistemology, will be described in detail in order for the reader to obtain accurate clarity on these procedures.

- The contexts of the phenomenon of violence are discussed in detail. The context plays an important role in social constructionism and, therefore, it is important to explicate these points so that the research is grounded in a specific context.

- Rapport with the co-researchers was facilitated to the best of my ability to encourage a non-judgemental and congruent relationship to elicit information that was honest and trustworthy.

- A transcript of all the interviews, which were audio-taped, is attached to this dissertation as Appendix 1.

- I listened to these recordings numerous times so that I was able to immerse myself in the worlds of my co-researchers.

Validity

- I continued to interact with the phenomena under study, as well as the interviews, by constantly discussing these with my supervisor and others in my ecology.

- I continued to interact with the phenomenon of violence generally by entering into dialogue with as many people as possible in my ecology.

- I maintained reflexivity through the consistency discussed above and the dialogue I continued with myself throughout this process.

- Meanings elicited through this research were not generalised to any other groups (MacLiam, 2003).

Co-Researchers

I interviewed three co-researchers, each at times and places that were convenient to them, who were able to offer intimate, personal accounts of the phenomenon of violence in their lives.

The people whom I chose as co-researchers were obtained from sources within my ecology, through people with whom I am acquainted. I did not have a previous relationship with these co-researchers. In line with heuristic research, I chose them on the basis of their having experienced violence. In this way, they were able to become fully immersed in this research and to assist in its co-creation in a meaningful way.

The Interview as One Information Gathering Process

The information contained in this dissertation was gleaned through open, unstructured interviews with my three co-researchers. Breakwell (1995a) states that within this kind of interview, the topics are apparent in the researcher's mind, but the questions around the topics are not fixed. Rather, this method allows a dialogue to develop between the people in the interview. She adds that the "richness of the data is determined by the appreciation that the researcher has of the topic" (p. 231).

Therefore, this method correlates well with both social constructionism and the heuristic method, as it allows interaction with the phenomena and a co-creation of it in an undetermined, subjective way.

To facilitate my relationship with my co-researchers, the interview was not structured, but open and informal. This allowed the individuals to tell their own story with as little prompting as possible. Prior to each interview, I spent some time building rapport with my co-researcher. I began each interview by informing him or her that it was more of a discussion than an interview and that I would not be asking any predetermined questions. I asked them to begin by telling me about their violent experience and then informed them that the discussion of it would arise from our conversation about their experience. I allowed the process of each interview to come to a natural close. The interviews were recorded on an audiocassette.

My Interaction and Reflexivity With the Recorded Interviews and Heuristic Process

I listened to the interviews a number of times before transcribing them. During the transcription, I was able to interact with the dialogue in a concentrated way, due to the intensity of listening to it and writing it out. This facilitated my process of becoming immersed within each unique story.

At this point it is important to note that, although it may seem that my reflexive process only began during the interviews, it had, in fact, already begun when the idea of this research became apparent to me. During the initial stages of researching violence, my own reflections on this phenomenon began and they continued with greater intensity as my delving became more concentrated and focused. At the point of the interview, my self-reflexivity processes were different to those with which I had started, but were more intense. This process of self-reflection is an important component of qualitative research, because it is the primary source of the validity and reliability of the information and, at the same time, provides the basis for the researcher's role as the main instrument of research. Its importance is well summed up by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000, pp. vii–viii) in their description of self-reflexivity in qualitative research: "Reflection means interpreting one's own interpretations, looking at one's own perspectives from other perspectives, and turning a self-critical eye onto one's own authority as interpreter and author."

The interviews were then transcribed verbatim, in their entirety, and attached to the research document as an appendix (see Appendix 1). Once the interviews were completed, a heuristic study of each interview was undertaken. In this part of the process, themes were identified and re-identified. From these, themes common to all the interviews were identified and re-identified.

Some Specific Ethical Issues for Consideration

Stanko and Lee (2003) discuss a problem encountered with studying violence that may not be encountered during the research of less sensitive topics. I discuss this ethical issue in this section, together with others that may be common to other research topics.

Access to Co-Researchers

Stanko and Lee (2003) raise the problem of access to co-researchers. They note that co-researchers may often experience the research as emotionally threatening. This holds the possibility that the relationship between researcher and co-researcher may become mistrustful, which may mean that information is concealed. Stanko and Lee point out that this feeling of threat is often located between the topic of violence and the social context in which the research takes place. If this feeling were to arise, the information obtained would not be useful. This possibility was kept in mind when accessing my co-researchers and during the interviews. I attempted to reduce this threat by addressing it overtly through talking about threatening feelings and allowing the co-researcher to feel free to confront these feelings, if necessary.

The other ethical issues I outline below are those that are likely to be common to other topics of research.

Informed Consent

The co-researchers' consent was requested telephonically, after a discussion of the research project. A convenient date and time were then arranged telephonically. Once I had met with each co-researcher, I requested them to sign a document that outlined a brief, pertinent history of myself and then went on to

indicate the content of the research project, confirmed that the interview would be audio-recorded, ensured confidentiality, stated the process of ceding copyright to the University, confirmed the opportunity to withdraw at any time after the interview was complete and explained that there would be no compensation for contributing to the research.

Withdrawal After Consent

The possibility was entertained that co-researchers might decide to decline to continue with the interview after initially agreeing to participate in this research. If this had happened, their decision would have been respected and they would not have been forced into the interview. Primarily, this would have been to prevent them from feeling further traumatised or violated. Secondarily, I wished to ensure that the people I did interview were enthusiastic and unthreatened by the process, since this would make their contribution to this research meaningful.

Confidentiality

The co-researchers were assured, during my initial telephone conversation, in the informed consent document that they signed and prior to the interview, that all that happened between us was confidential and that their names would not be used. I also informed them that, after transcription of the interviews, the audio-tapes would be deleted.

Summary of This Chapter

I have briefly discussed the qualitative approach to research in this chapter and have dealt with reliability and validity issues as related to this approach. I examined the heuristic research design in detail, and then went on to discuss the research process specific to my dissertation. I described my research activities and the way that I ensured that my research was reliable and valid. Ethical issues that I deem to be important considerations for this research were also discussed.

Meta-Reflections on This Chapter

My interaction with the subject of violence has changed dramatically over the period during which I have engaged with it. This continuing metamorphosis has been facilitated through dialogue with books, articles, supervisors, friends, colleagues, television broadcasts, world news and newspaper reports. Not least, though, it has been influenced by entering the world in which my co-researchers experienced violence. These violent experiences seemed to me not to be isolated incidents in their worlds, but became part of their larger living ecology. These experiences permeated the boundaries of their other experiences and melted into what makes up their lives. Through entering into their worlds, the co-creation of their experiences trickled through into my own living ecology and became part of my life experience. Although the writing of this chapter and this paragraph is necessarily a lineal activity, the process of my interaction and my writing is continuously filled with an indeterminate number of shifts in my understanding, expressions of my emotions and changes in my living. In this way, my living and my life story have been enriched through this heuristic process. This chapter is but one movement within my journey of discovery.

CHAPTER FOUR

VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY AND TIME

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my survey of the literature on the phenomenon of violence. I also examine violence from the viewpoint of a number of social institutions. Although these stories are written in a lineal way, for the process of writing is a lineal activity itself, I take into account the many interacting and dynamic processes that are involved in these stories. This partly involves acknowledging the qualitative aspects of violence and the way in which violence is an occurrence in a specific ecology. Through this lens, the ways in which the ecology impacts upon the violence and violence upon the ecology contribute important details in the understanding of violence.

Stanko and Lee (2003) discuss some studies on violence undertaken from a quantitative point of departure. As the emphasis here was on the number of cases and not on their qualitative, ecosystemic details, the reporting of this violence reflects a picture that does not necessarily capture the essence of the ecology at the time. Sharpe (cited in Archer, 2003, p. 17) makes the same point, saying that it is difficult to establish "whether society was fearful or not, whether it was conscious of living in a violent age, and just 'how violent is a "violent society"?'"

Definitions

As this dissertation is not quantitative, a strict working definition of the subject under study is not required. However, to define a phenomenon in an essential

way entails an analysis of the circumstances that give rise to that definition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) and this is part of the process of my research – to examine the ecology of the phenomenon of violence. I have, therefore, provided a working definition of violence.

In this chapter, I also speak of the transformation and conservation of ecologies and these have already been briefly defined in Chapter Two.

Defining Violence

Defining violence for the purposes of this dissertation proved to be extremely difficult. On reading the literature, I was torn between categorising violence as either physical or psychological, as this is what much of the literature does. However, this did not make sense to me as, in my view and from a postmodern perspective, the two are intimately related and intertwined. No physical phenomenon can be completely separated from its concordant psychological aspects. However, I felt reassured when I read Hoffman and McKendrick (1990) who seemed to have grappled with this very same problem. This helped me to allow myself to come to a definition that acknowledged both the physical and psychological nature of violence, with which I was comfortable.

As indicated, the definitions in the literature usually focus on physical violence, which seems to be the most predominant form of violence studied, or they pay attention (separately) to psychological violence. The many definitions of physical violence contained in the literature have been influenced by differing epistemologies and are associated with their relevant theories. These theories have been espoused by, amongst others, anthropologists, philosophers, criminologists, sociologists, psychologists and psychiatrists, and examine the role played in violent actions, by, inter alia, instincts, drives, cognitive neo-associations and social learning (Baron & Byrne, 1994), as well as demographics and sociological phenomena (Nell, 2001).

According to some of these theories, the aetiology of violence is located within contexts such as poverty, unemployment, stress, values, norms, socialisation, psychopathic states, personalities (Justice & Justice, 1982), organic disorders, culture

(Elliott, 1982), alcohol (Shapiro, 1982) and poor governance (Peron, 2000). Some of the reasons cited for carrying out violence include attempting to communicate political messages or attain equal power relations, acting out social frustrations, displaying anger, fighting magical powers, religious reasons, increasing in-group cohesiveness, instilling fear and gaining control (Van Walraven & Abbink, 2003).

One definition of violence that is concentrated on purely physical manifestations of behaviour is that of Abbink (2000). He defines it as the use of a force, which force is meant to damage others in some way and from which others attempt to protect themselves. He maintains that the objective of violence is usually to gain the upper hand over those at whom it is directed. According to Abbink, the intention to carry out violence against another is communicated to the other, not only in words, but also in facial expressions and bodily postures.

Some research has attempted to identify people who may display physically violent behaviour through examining psychological profiles of those who have actually carried out violent behaviour and using these as a framework, in the hope that society may rid itself of this scourge by taking proactive steps (Johnson & Becker, 1997).

It seems that, in the literature, violence is conceptualised as mostly located within the individual, in an intrapsychic way. Sigmund Freud himself had the following to say (cited in Whitaker, 2000, p. 27): "The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction." This seems to imply that external structures are able to control internal (within the individual) structures, which may be seen as fitting into the lineal description of phenomena, and the cause and effect model.

One of the works dealing with psychological violence is that of Tedeschi and Nesler (1993, p. 15), who refer to the concept of psychological violence as "interaction justice". This to some extent captures the social constructionist nature of psychological violence, as it contains a reference to the violence occurring between people, within interaction. Tedeschi and Nesler punctuate their description of this psychological construct from the point of view of the recipients of violence and, in this way, include within their description elements that are at the opposite side of the

spectrum from the elements that relate to the perpetrators of violence. The former include being treated with respect, honesty, regarding others' feelings, not reneging on agreements, not accusing others, not censuring others, being selfless in the treatment of others and not being hostile to others. If we flip this coin over, we find that psychological violence would incorporate disrespect, dishonesty, having no regard for the feelings of others, breaking agreements, accusing others, censuring others, and being selfish and hostile towards others.

The splitting of physical and psychological violence that I discovered in the literature prompted within me many questions as to the constitution of violence. Stanko and Lee (2003, p. 2) also take cognisance of this problem and pose their own questions, such as: Does psychological abuse constitute violence? Does a threat that does not lead to physical injury constitute violence? Do perpetrators and victims speak truthfully about violence? Is research on violence harmful to those subjects who participate in it? And what is the emotional impact on researchers researching this subject?

Having asked the question, "What is violence?", and discussed the many definitions of violence, Hoffman and McKendrick (1990, p. 3) go on to categorise violence into eight main categories, including wilful violence, illegitimate violence and interpersonal and intergroup violence. Although many of these categories encapsulate violence on both physical and psychological levels, the violence discussed in these categories is still that of a predominantly physical nature.

Through my interviews, the superficiality of this split became evident to me. My first co-researcher was not harmed physically, but was spoken to aggressively by her hijackers. She experienced fear and apprehension during the attack. The question that arose in my mind was, since this did not fit in with the definitions I could find of physical violence, did it constitute violence at all? The second co-researcher was also not harmed physically, but witnessed the shooting of someone else. Here I questioned the impact of such witnessing, but again, this did not fit into many of the definitions of physical violence. Although my third co-researcher was harmed physically, the harm was not so great as to threaten her life. This led me to wonder, if there was physical harm, how important the psychological experience of this violence was. From my experiences through the interviews, I began to search for a

definition that was not so rigid as to exclude either the physical or psychological experience of violence.

De Vries (1997) blurs the rigid split between physical and psychological violence and, in fact, expands the definition of violence to include within it everything that happens between people, which allows them to 'be'. This is, perhaps, too blurred to remain useful in the story I am telling here.

Kleinman (2000) also contributes to the blurring by noting that, as many definitions as there are for violence, the phenomenon of violence itself also takes many forms and, within these different forms, many different dynamics manifest themselves between people.

It is these dynamics between people that form the processes contained within the living ecology of an individual (Willi, 1999). That is what is pertinent in this dissertation. From a postmodern point of view and from the point of view of this discussion, physicality cannot be divorced from the psychological, emotional or spiritual functioning of the intricate and complex human creation. The concepts of physical violence and psychological violence can thus be seen to be inextricably linked: Physical violence does have a psychological component, and although psychological violence can occur without the outward manifestation of any physical violence, would it be correct to assume that therefore psychological violence does not constitute violence?

As a result of the struggle I had in finding a definition that explicated the violence I wanted to discuss, I have chosen to use a definition which incorporates the intricacies of both physical and psychological processes. The definition is put forward by Walter (cited in Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990, p. 3), and it describes violence as "destructive harm … including not only physical assaults that damage the body, but also … the many techniques of inflicting harm by mental or emotional means."

Thus in terms of this definition, my examination of violence in this dissertation includes forms of interpersonal violence on a micro-level that have occurred in South Africa, which are either predominantly physical or psychological, but which always contain elements of both.

Power Relations in Violence

In examining the phenomenon of violence from a postmodern perspective, it is necessary to briefly examine the concept of power relations.

It has been a criticism raised by feminist authors that the postmodern perspective does not adequately address the role played by men in violence, specifically in family violence (McConaghy & Cottone, 1998). This is in contrast to Bateson's position (cited in McConaghy & Cottone, 1998) that to believe that any one part of a system is able to exercise power over another part is to commit an error in thinking. For Bateson, each part of the system is constantly participating in a loop of circular causality. This is interpreted by some feminist authors as excusing the violence carried out by the perpetrator and blaming the victim for participating in her own violent victimisation.

In this dissertation, I take the position that power is a socially constructed viewpoint and can therefore be observed by an individual (McConaghy & Cottone, 1998). In other words, although I do not assume that power exists in society as an objective, reified phenomenon, if it is observed by victims of violence and they talk of it in their story of violence, then it forms part of their story and becomes part of their reality. However, stories are not static and the idea of power (like any other) can therefore be transformed through their retelling and through dialogue with others.

General Societal Violence Over Time

For centuries now, and in almost every human group or society, there are records of the evidence of violence (Abbink, 2000; Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990). In fact, Abbink (2000) states that there is no record of a human formation where the threat of physical assault, actual assault, murders and homicides, interpersonal violence or armed conflict is absent.

This is no different today (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990; Ismail & Naidoo, 2001; "The day," 2001).

Africa generally, and South Africa specifically, has a long history of what may be described as major societal violence (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990; Mandela, 1994; Van Walraven & Abbink, 2003), not to mention those seemingly

smaller, interrelational episodes of violence, such as hijacking, rape, armed robbery (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990) and road rage (Binge, 2003). In order to scrutinise violence that occurs in South Africa, it is necessary to examine apartheid – the ecology out of which our current ecology has emerged.

Punctuating From Apartheid South Africa

In his autobiography, Malan (1990) dialogues about his story of his experience of apartheid. This, together with Cock's (1990) discussion of this time, gives a picture of a violent ecology, one that contained violence, separateness, secrecy, power, domination, subterfuge, as well as the polarity that an ecology like this seems able to construct (Malan, 1990). As Simpson (1991) points out, our system of apartheid has been a contributing factor to a currently divided and volatile nation. He names the ecology of violence within our country as a "… culture of violence" (p. 1).

During apartheid, South Africa was afflicted by multi-levelled violence, and Malan (1990) describes it as containing the secrecy of the government's actions, the lies of those in power about those not in power, the propaganda put out by both the government and anti-government organisations, the permissible violence used by the state to maintain its superior position, as well as the permissible violence used by organisations against the government to attempt to bring about transformation.

Violence in Current Day South Africa

Although South Africa seems still to be labelled as an extremely violent society (Butchart & Seedat, 1990; Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990) and some commentators claim that the violence has escalated and is continuing to rise (Meyer & Frean, 2003; Simpson, 1991), the kind of violence carried out has changed dramatically over the years. Political violence was more prevalent before democracy, whereas since the introduction of democracy, violence such as hijackings, rapes, assault and armed robberies have become more common (Hajiyiannis & Robertson, 1999).

Moving from apartheid South Africa to post-apartheid South Africa, our ecology has been forced to transform. This, it seems, has happened with much difficulty.

Attempts at Transforming a Violent Ecology

Bar-On (1999) discusses the difficulty people experience in having to re-construct these ecologies in an extreme way, as South Africans have had to do. He says that people in countries like South Africa have had to escape one construction of their society, in order for them to reconstruct a new and different ecology.

In the political arena, a seminal event of our time relating to past violence was the intervention of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This is one of the ways in which South Africa has attempted to create an ecology of healing. This body attempted to form a picture of the past of South Africa through the stories of victims, and to confer amnesty and offer compensation (Friedman, 2000).

With a process of reconstruction taking place in our country, one might imagine that this violent ecology will simply dissipate. But in true testament to the tenacity of ecologies and their ability to hold within them the co-constructed spectres of our past, the process of transition has only exacerbated fears, uncertainties and anxieties (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001) and given rise to an increase in violence, which could be seen to be a "transmutation of political violence" (Hajiyiannis & Robertson, 1999, p. 1). This phenomenon was also noted after the American Civil War, when, it is recorded, the rate of violent crimes escalated (Pleck, 1989).

Friedman (2000) maintains that, in order to transform the ecology effectively, the parts need to be integrated into a functional whole, in which there would no longer be a 'them' and an 'us', but where everybody becomes 'us'.

Viewing the Phenomenon of Violence From Various Ecologies

In this section, I examine some of the ecologies that could be integrated into a functional whole as they relate to violence, and I outline their stance on the phenomenon of violence. I give particular attention to the ecology of the media and its portrayal of violence, as I see this ecology to be an important contributor to the way in which meanings are formed in society.

Nature and Extent of Violence in South Africa

In looking at the national statistics of crime (SAPS Crime Statistics, 2004), it is difficult not to be struck by the extent of crime, specifically violent crime, in South Africa. The most recent statistics available from the South African Police Service are for the year April 2002 to March 2003. During this period, 21 553 murders were committed, 1 049 people suffered public violence, and 52 425 rapes and 4 798 cases of child abuse were reported. Cases of common assault were among the highest types of crime reported, at 282 526. Malicious damage to property was also high at a figure of 157 070 (SAPS Crime Statistics, p.1).

Inequality of Wealth

In a society that is emerging from a past ecology that was defined on the premise of difference, we currently live in an ecology that is fraught with social inequality. Wilkinson, Kawachi and Kennedy (1998) maintain that disparities in affluence lead to the commission of violence by people who feel excluded because they have less in material terms than others. According to Wilkinson et al., however, violent crime is not carried out merely in order to acquire a material possession, but rather to regain some kind of respect, self-esteem and dignity since the affluent disrespect those who are less affluent.

Community Psychology Interventions

Community psychology is concerned with whole communities and it is practised within these communities, rather than concentrating on the individual or family. It examines the context within which people live, the impact of the context upon the person and vice versa (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001).

The story that community psychology tells of violence, particularly of violence in South Africa, is that it is a social problem and should be dealt with at this level. Social problems, according to community psychologists, lie buried within the structures of society. Community psychology can contribute to transformation by attempting to change these social structures (Cock, 2001).

According to Butchart and Kruger (2001), one of the ways in which community psychology can attempt to bring about change in society is in the area of public health. Public health purports to try and contribute to people's physical,

psychological, emotional and social health. Public health practitioners intervene and attempt to alter the exchange of unhealthy information at an individual, social and environmental level. Their strategy for halting unhealthy social practices, among which they include violence, is to identify the problem, define the problem and define the cause of the problem. Once this has been done, a strategy is developed and implemented at a social level (Butchart & Kruger, 2001).

Organisations that deal with public health include, inter alia, the World Health Organisation (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001) on an international level, and the Centre for Peace Action and the South African Medical Research Council on a local level (Butchart & Kruger, 2001). These large organisations have convened small working groups, such as the Three Neighbourhoods Safety Promotion Programme and the Safe Communities movement (Butchart & Kruger, 2001), to deal with specific violent social practices.

The Role of the Media

One of the ways in which the members of a society communicate with each other is through the printed, broadcast and electronic media. The media, the stories they tell and the way in which they tell the stories exert a powerful influence on our perceptions and thinking – and many stories reported in the media are about violence (Clarke, 2001; Hills, 2004; Kekana, 2004; Meyer & Frean, 2003; Mlangeni, 2003). Stanko and Lee (2003) point out that, as an influential social institution, the media strongly determine the way in which people receive information about violence.

They refer, for example, to a four-year study by the Violence Research Programme, which collected information on young girls' understanding of violence. They inform us that the media took much interest in this research project. However, one of the aims of the media's interest was to scoop an exclusive story that suggested that girls were "'becoming like boys'" (p.8) in the perpetration of violence. As a result of the media influence on the participants of the study, Stanko & Lee (2003) say that the findings of the study were distorted. According to them, various problems arose from this media interference, many of them flowing from the gluttony for exclusive stories and information from the subjects that would fit in with their headlines and their own preconceived stories. Stanko and Lee name this a "headline frenzy" (2003, p. 8) that occurs as these stories find their way to the front

pages of newspapers (Whitaker, 2000). The concept of 'front page stories' is itself a socially constructed phenomenon and implies that these stories are the most important ones (Archer & Jones, 2003). Stanko and Lee (2003) also discuss how violence has been reported by the media over the ages, with specific reference to the United Kingdom. They show, for example, that cases of stranger violence dominated the reporting, even though infant homicides were actually higher in number than the cases of stranger homicide.

Stanko and Lee (2003) show, too, that research done by the Violence Research Programme on vigilante activity in South Africa was similarly distorted in media reports. This, they say, was the result of a volatile political situation and the need for the media to use (and perhaps construe) research findings to reflect a certain political ideology.

This media distortion results in much distress, both to researchers and co-researchers (Stanko & Lee, 2003).

Some literature maintains that media violence increases violent behaviour in those who watch stories of violence on the television or in films, or read about it in the printed media (Baron & Byrne, 1994; Cronje, van der Walt, Retief & Naude, 1985; Geen, 1995; Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990). It has also been said in the literature that constant exposure to violence by the media 'desensitises' people to violence and that this greatly increases their ability to cope with seeing or hearing about violence (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990; McKendrick & Hoffman, 1990).

The appeal of violence is evident in the number of box office hits, such as *Pulp Fiction, Naked Killer, Reservoir Dogs* and *Natural Born Killers* (Whitaker, 2000) that have violence as their central theme. These films may be regarded as social commentaries that take into account the context of violence. However, sensationalist media stories often omit important ecological details pertaining, for example, to politics, economics, relationships and prior happenings, and this omission aggressively changes the context and therefore, the meanings of this violence. We view these 'out-of-context images' through an unfocused lens. Postmodern theory maintains that meaning is attributed to actions by the context and, therefore, without the acknowledgement of context, there can be no meaning (Bateson, 1979).

This assault of violent images and stories does not help us to understand or see violence in an ecological way. It merely perpetuates violence in our society through our violent reactions to these stories (Whitaker, 2000). In whichever way the media tells violent stories, this social institution has much influence on society, as Hoffman and McKendrick (1990) emphasise, and it therefore becomes an important consideration in attempting to understand how subjective realities are co-constructed within an ecology.

Spiral of Violence

Felson and Tedeschi (1993, p. 6) refer to the perpetuation of a cycle of violence when they speak of the "principle of *lex talionis* (an eye for an eye)". These authors also name the many researchers who have demonstrated the way in which retaliation to aggressive actions leads to "a spiral of conflict" (p.3). This is, oftentimes, the reaction to stories of violence where people within society call for the punishment of offenders. This punishment often contains as violent an action against the perpetrator as the violence committed by the perpetrator.

The story of the current conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians clearly illuminates the outcome of this lineal type of story. As far back as 1972, this escalatory relationship was documented by Blechman (cited in Felson and Tedeschi, 1993), who observes that attacks by Arabs against Israelis have consistently been met with retaliation from the Israelis and this retaliation has, in turn, been met with further retaliation.

The Story of Violence Within the Legal System

The legal system, in which capital punishment is now defined as a 'socially outlawed' phenomenon, has its own way of viewing violence. This view is expressed in current legislation and in the lineal idea that punishment hinders people from exhibiting violence (Cilliers, 1990). The existence of the law and the possibility of punishment may also serve to allow people within society to feel safer. However, it is not often acknowledged that this is merely the fighting of violence with violence.

Fighting violence with violence has been and still is prevalent in South Africa (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990; Malan, 1990). Some of the ways in which violence is fought with violence on an individual level include purchasing firearms (Cock,

2001), erecting electric fences, employing armed security guards, installing alarm systems, enrolling in self-defence courses and employing 'organised kangaroo courts' as protection (Simpson, 1991).

To lock people away, either those guilty in jail or oneself behind high walls and gates, contributes much to an ecology of separation and fragmentation.

The Story of Violence Within the Medical Model

The diagnosis of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which could be seen to lock people away in a metaphorical sense, has become a fashionable diagnosis, applied to some who have suffered violence, and comes with its own socially constructed meanings (Kleber, Figley & Gersons, 1995). It has become a common, world-wide, dominant discourse regarding the human response to catastrophe, including violence, and is widely used to measure human trauma through the presence of physiological and psychological dysfunction. These are generalised to all populations, regardless of the culture of people, as they are deemed to be a universal human reaction to trauma. The basis of this diagnosis is no different from any other diagnosis contained in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), which is centred on the individual and bound to somatic and psychological dysfunction (Summerfield, 1995).

PTSD is said to often lead to the onset of many other disorders, which are also included in the group of anxiety disorders – panic attacks, generalised anxiety disorder, agoraphobia and other phobias. However, people suffering from PTSD may also attempt to blot out the extremely anxiety-provoking flashbacks through the use of substances, which may then lead to substance abuse disorders. It is also said that PTSD sufferers are severely at risk of suicide (Depression and Anxiety Support Group, 2000).

There are various pharmacological medications used in the treatment of trauma, such as tricyclic antidepressants, monoamine oxidase inhibitors, serotonin-specific reuptake inhibitors, benzodiazepines and mood stabilisers (Shalev & Bonne, 2000).

As with most medical model stories, PTSD is a lineal cause and effect story, where a violent action causes an individual to suffer from, be diagnosed with and treated for, PTSD.

This treatment of violence may be seen to be a perpetuation of violence. A natural human reaction to an extreme experience is pathologised by the DSM-IV and the symptoms are treated. The treatment is meant to halt the symptoms. The people within the ecology of the individual may hold the view that she is weak or displays symptoms for too long a period (The Human Rights Commission, 1990). This reaction of those within the ecology may contribute to the ecology becoming fragmented, as relationships falter and the symptomatic individual begins to isolate herself from others. Rather than the symptoms being seen as an expression of the individual, they are seen as something to be removed. This occurs elsewhere in society, one example being that of the scholar who expressed himself through poetry depicting violence and was criminally punished for this ("A US schoolboy's", 2004). However, these symptoms may be used effectively in therapy, where a safe and holding ecology has been co-created, to legitimise the person's reaction to the event and to allow the individual a safe and holding place to express herself.

<center>Summary of This Chapter</center>

This chapter delineated a working definition of violence. It also discussed violence in society in general and, more specifically, in South Africa.

The chapter sets violence in an ecological framework. The various stories from the different parts of society contribute to the argument of this dissertation: that stories contribute to a co-creation of realities and that different realities exist in one ecology within one time frame. Through this chapter, I have attempted to bring together the idea of violence occurring within a specific context and shared with others through the concept of stories. Although I speak of all these phenomena separately and in a relatively static way in this chapter, my lens of postmodernism implies that all these concepts are interdependent and impact upon each other constantly. The different stories told of violence within various ecologies in society are a prelude to the stories that are told to me by my co-researchers. They tell me

their stories from within their ecology of living and, in this way, I am offered a view into their living.

Meta-Reflections on This Chapter

The violent content of this chapter seemed to impact upon my processes in a violent way. I encountered much information on violence generally and violence in South Africa specifically. Much of this information was lineal in its description of violence and often spoke of the causes of violence and the effects of violence. This lineal description eliminated, for me, much of the ecological information that makes the description so rich and full. The inclusion of ecological phenomena also makes violence more understandable, because of the different contributing factors that impact upon both the violent event and the whole experience of violence. The elimination of the ecological phenomena contributed to this experience becoming a violent one and gave rise to a dialogue with myself about the futility of understanding violent experiences. This process, when I looked at it from a meta-perspective, seemed similar to that of the cycle of violence, occurring in societal ecologies. When the context is removed, the futility of understanding becomes real and the possibility of violence being fought with violence becomes a reality. The entire context is not understood and therefore the response becomes more of the same. This process has allowed me to complexify my understanding of the importance of ecologies.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERVIEWS AND EXTRACTED THEMES

Introduction

I begin this chapter with some thoughts on the violence that I have chosen to examine in this dissertation. However, the chapter's primary concern is that of pertinent themes that I have extracted from the stories told to me by my co-researchers. In line with the heuristic process of research, the themes that I examine came out of the interviews after I, as the researcher, had immersed myself in them, through dialogue with my co-researchers, reading and re-reading the interviews, listening to them on audio-tape a number of times and reflecting upon them. In this discussion, I attempt to demonstrate the unique way in which the co-researchers related the stories of their violent experiences and how this reflects their living ecologies, contributing either to the conservation or the transformation of their ecologies. I also attempt to demonstrate the way in which patterns of interaction are mirrored in the various ecologies of their living.

After the discussion of each interview, I examine what I deem to be the essence of each of the three ecologies of my co-researchers, which I have named fragmented ecology, isolated ecology and collaborative ecology. I then carry out an

exploration of the bigger 'ecology of violence', as a contextual marker, in which I see my co-researchers' three ecologies as existing and being maintained. I end this chapter with a meta-view of the impact of my co-researchers' ecologies with my own.

The relevance of this discussion for theory and practice is examined in Chapter 6.

Some Thoughts on the Choice of Violence Examined

It will become apparent that I have chosen co-researchers who have not experienced domestic violence, but have experienced violence at the hands of perpetrators who were unknown to them. This is unlike my own experience of violence, which mostly occurred within the confines of my immediate family. My own reflection upon this took me back to 1999, when I enrolled for a course to become a crisis interventionist at the Advice Desk for Abused Women. This organisation deals only with domestic violence against women. After being trained, I only made myself available for work once. On reflection, I was not ready then to confront the violence of my own life. Although I have journeyed some way since then along my violence path, I have chosen to carry out research by examining violence that does not occur in the home, so that I can ethically ascertain my own inner position about the confrontation of my own violence and my vulnerable parts. Although, from a postmodern perspective, the violence that I research here cannot be separated from a violence which is closer to the heart, it is the position that I choose from which to come into contact, in a safe way, with my own violence.

Ecology as Contextualisation

Violence is merely a punctuation point. It is neither definitive in its existence in the lives of those who have experienced it, nor is it the only way in which I could have become part of my co-researchers' lives and they part of mine.

Through this discussion of the co-researchers' experiences, the violent experience is contextualised within a South African ecology, an ecology of violence, as well as within the individual's living ecology.

Formulation of Discussion

I have formulated the discussion of each interview as beginning with some demographic information on each co-researcher and a short, content-based summary of their experience of violence. I then go on to describe my experience of the co-researchers' ecology. This is followed by a discussion of my impact on the specific ecology because, from a postmodern perspective, I cannot divorce myself as researcher from the ecology in which I find myself. I then discuss the themes extracted from each interview in terms of the ecology. The themes that I extracted and which are discussed are those of:

- *Relationships in the co-researchers' ecology and the function of these*;

- *The co-researchers' feelings of trust and/or mistrust towards other people and towards social institutions*;

- *Racism and/or groups of 'them' and 'us'*;

- *Emotions within the living ecology of the co-researcher*;

- *Meanings made about the violent experience*.

Although these are the themes contained in each of my discussions, I see them as impacting upon, and being impacted upon, the bigger living ecology of the individual. Therefore, I discuss them in terms of the ecology of the individual. As the discussion concentrates on the uniqueness of the individual, their own subjective worlds, their individual living ecologies and their own story of their violent experience, the way in which these themes play out in each co-researchers' ecology are idiosyncratic to the experience of each co-researcher. Also as a result of the idiosyncratic nature of the emergence of these themes in the discussion, they do not rigidly adhere to the hierarchical manner in which I have listed them above. For this reason, I have highlighted them within the discussion to bring them to the reader's attention. In the same way as much of my dissertation discusses concepts that are interlinked and intertwined with each other, so is it true of the themes discussed. Therefore, in the discussion, these themes may overlap with each other.

I then carry out a short discussion of the way in which the ecology may be either conserved or transformed, by making use of the way in which the story of the violent experience is told to me.

In the quoted parts of the interview, I have substituted a name of a person or a suburb or any other identifying criteria with the name of the relationship in brackets, or omitted such references where possible, in order to protect my co-researchers' identity. I end each interview discussion by naming the particular living ecology of that specific co-researcher and expanding on the essence of each of these ecologies.

Naming the Ecologies

The three interviews painted pictures of three different kinds of ecologies, each containing relationships and stories that were a reflection of the ecology. I have chosen to name the ecologies. These names describe, but do not explain, the ecologies. They are therefore not definitive names, but simply my choice of descriptive words to succinctly capture what I feel to be the essence of the ecologies of which I speak. I came to these names through immersing myself in each co-researchers' ecology during the interview, and in listening to the taped interviews. The ecology that relates to each interview is discussed after the relevant interview.

The interviews discussed below demonstrate the way in which ecologies are predominantly fragmented, isolated or collaborative. Experiences within these ecologies, and specifically the violent experience, mirror the dominant theme of the ecology and serve to either conserve or transform this theme. Although I speak of these ecologies separately and features of fragmentation, isolation or collaboration predominate within each, to assume that they consist only of these features would be too lineal a way of understanding. They all seem to contain features of each other.

Discussion of Interviews

Co-Researcher 1

Demographics

This co-researcher is a married woman with two young, school-going children. She does not have a full-time job outside of the home, and is a home

executive. Her husband is a wealthy, successful businessman. The family lives in a beautiful, architecturally designed home in Johannesburg.

The Story

This co-researcher was hijacked in her car while she was waiting outside the home of a friend, whom she was fetching to go to a meeting of their book club. Her friend had just walked through the gate to her property and was approaching the co-researcher's car, when two males with firearms approached them and hijacked them. The hijackers did not harm either the co-researcher or her friend physically, but relieved them of their jewellery and the co-researcher's car, which was later recovered.

My Process Within the Ecology

This story was told to me during our interview on a weekday morning at the co-researcher's home. The property is surrounded by very large walls and the palatial home stands in the centre of a large, manicured garden. One has to walk along an entrance path that passes over water in order to get to the front door. The co-researcher showed me up wooden stairs leading to the second floor of the double volume home. We sat in a sitting room furnished with couches and armchairs.

I had a feeling of disjointedness about the house while walking through it. Although it is built in a double volume style and one can therefore see down into the rest of the house from the second floor, I experienced the different parts as separate, rather than as one room flowing into the other. I also had a feeling of emptiness, even though the furnishings and decorations were plentiful and in good taste. While we were sitting in the room, the co-researcher closed the door. Although I respect that the interview was confidential, it was unlikely that the domestic workers in the home would have heard us from the distance at which they were working. I experienced feelings of being enclosed and trapped behind this door. During the interview, I felt that the co-researcher might be feeling anxious. Once I had asked her to tell me about her experience, she almost fell into the story, speaking profusely and rapidly but, it seemed, without much emotional experience of the story she was telling. From this experience of the ecology, I began to feel fragmented in myself. I concentrated on her wordiness, separating it from the emotional distance that I was feeling. After the

interview, when she asked me about my work, I found it difficult to find the words to answer her. My interview was done and, in a fragmented way, that was what I had come to accomplish.

My Impact on the Ecology

It is possible that my impact on this ecology was a "more of the same" (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) kind of contribution. The story that was told to me did not create a place where the co-researcher was able to transform the way in which she thought about her experience, or the way in which she related within her ecology. It was merely another way in which the ecology's status quo was maintained.

The themes that came out of this interview are discussed as reflecting the fragmentation of this ecology.

Discussion of Interview with Co-Researcher 1 – Fragmented Ecology

Taking into account my own process within this ecology, as well as what I perceived to be the fragmentary way in which this co-researcher spoke about her experience as a whole, I have named this ecology a 'fragmented ecology'. One of the ways in which this fragmentation was apparent, is ***the manner in which this co-researcher relates to the people in her ecology***. During the interview, this was demonstrated when she spoke about the woman with whom she was hijacked: "I was on my way to book club and I went to fetch a friend."

It seemed to me, during the interview, that this woman was her "book club" friend. She may have entered other parts of the co-researcher's living ecology, but this was not apparent during the interview. The friend remained the friend with whom the co-researcher attended her book club.

The co-researcher also spoke of other friends in her living ecology in this fragmented way, referring to them not just as friends, but as friends with specific

occupations that could be useful to the co-researcher, and who were kept in specific parts of the co-researcher's living ecology, like an acquaintance of her husband who, she said, "knows the deputy director of traffic". In another instance she remarked: "I've got a psychiatrist as a friend."

All these friends were presented to me in the story as having another function, other than friendship, mostly through their occupations. They were called upon when a problem existed in one part of the co-researcher's living ecology, in which they would be able to assist through their profession.

Having said this, there seemed also to be a strong need for the co-researcher to satisfy feelings of belonging and support through having supportive, collaborative relationships. During the interview, this need was expressed in various ways, one of which was when she told me that she was relieved not to have been alone during the time of hijacking. She expressed this feeling to her friend with whom she was hijacked after the hijacking, by saying: "I said to this friend of mine, I was glad she was with me."

This need for support and collaboration was also expressed by the co-researcher to her friend during the hijacking: "She was basically near the car and I said to her, 'Come this side.'"

However, despite this need for a supportive ecology, there seemed nevertheless to be ways in which the co-researcher was able to differentiate herself, and perceive herself as different, even within the crisis of the violent experience. It may be hypothesised that, although the need for support and collaboration was present, it was not often able to be satisfied because of the way the fragmented ecology was maintained. This was apparent when she observed: "I think my friend was more hysterical than I was, and I was actually calm."

Even so, the need for a supportive ecology, although unsatisfied, seems to have been a source of strength to her and perhaps gave her some kind of sense of belonging.

The co-researcher's marriage relationship could be seen to follow a similar pattern to her other relationships. While her being married allows her feelings of

belonging, both to a family and to an identified group in society of married people, the processes within this relationship seemed to contribute to the fragmentary ecology. The co-researcher commented on the marriage relationship at various times, during and after the interview, both covertly and overtly. One of the overt commentaries was the following:

> So [my husband] said to me, he said, "You were wishing this car away", and I actually was, and he said, "Because your mindset was that you didn't want this car, they actually came after you in this car." So he blames, he says, "It's your fault, because your mind was saying get rid of the car."

Another overt commentary was the remark that her husband "said to me that I'm too blasé about how I drive".

Both these particular comments seemed to me to be rather blaming on the part of the co-researcher's husband. If this is one of the processes contained within the interaction between the co-researcher and her husband, it may be one of the contributing factors to the fragmentation within this ecology, by separating the co-researcher from her husband, because although she may accept and take on the feeling of 'being the one to blame', this cannot sit comfortably with her. Therefore, she also may attempt to protect herself from the blame, perhaps contributing to a constant feeling of ambivalence in this relationship. This feeling of 'being bad' may contribute to the co-researcher locking parts of herself away from other interactions in her ecology.

The experience of ***emotions within her living ecology*** may also serve to maintain the fragmentation of this ecology. Although it was quite evident that the co-researcher seemed to find this interaction within the marriage quite painful, both by her overt and covert commentary on it, it seemed, too, that she was prepared to accept it that way most of the time, despite the pain. Through this acceptance and lack of transformation, the ecology remains conserved. Yet, at the same time, almost pulling in the opposite direction, thoughts about the possibility of transformation of the marriage relationship were sometimes evident. She spoke of what she had wished her husband to say to her after the hijacking:

I wanted him to say, "Oh thank goodness you're alive", you know. But he's not a very emotional sort of person, you know, I think he was, I'm sure he's, you know, he's glad that everything happened for the best and whatever but, I mean he, *ja*, I don't know how he felt about it, he's never really spoken about it, you know I mean the kids talk about it, then we talk about it. We haven't really spoken about it since, you know. I mean I did say to him on the Wednesday or the Thursday, after I'd had my bit of tears and whatever, I said the thing that, I need to know that you appreciate me and that you were glad that I wasn't raped or that I wasn't killed or whatever and he just sort of brushes it off, you know. I had a bad, the Tuesday after the accident, I had a bad night on the Wednesday, it was my anniversary, but that's just because I got nothing.

It seemed to me that feelings of rejection were peeking through the fragmented surface when the co-researcher spoke about these unfulfilled wishes. It seems that her husband chooses not to comment on emotional issues much in their marriage relationship. One could hypothesise that emotions are not something that her husband can easily deal with due to his own fragmentation and this behaviour again contributes to keeping the ecology fragmented, with emotional issues being excluded from their living. As discussed earlier, if one rejects violence totally in one's living ecology, the ecology becomes intrinsically violent. My co-researcher and her husband then, in their interaction, could possibly be attempting to keep all this illicit emotion silent between them. The co-researcher's lack of emotion, even as related to her violent experience, is reflected when she says: "The other guy was taking my rings. So he took all my rings." This was followed by a stronger emotional statement: "I'm more angry that they took my jewellery, you can't get that kind of thing back, it costs a lot of money and you wouldn't be able to." Generally though, strong emotions about anything, including the emotion of anger, did not seem to be a major factor in this ecology. However, due to the fragmentation of the ecology, it may be that the anger is expressed in other contexts, separate and apart from the interview. The only indication of anger was in relation to the loss of objects: "I'm more angry that they took my jewellery."

Perhaps in this fragmented ecology, anger serves to further fragment certain contexts and is reserved for this purpose. It seemed easier for the co-researcher to acknowledge anger in relation to objects rather than to people.

It was interesting to note that she did not even comment on the inconvenience of replacing items removed from her handbag, stating flatly: "They got the bags".

A stronger emotion was, however, expressed with regard to the car: "I actually hate the car." Her husband buys cars for the co-researcher and this could be a significant metaphor in describing this marriage relationship.

In order for the fragmentary nature of this relationship to be conserved, it is possible that a deviation of both the co-researcher and her husband's emotion and attention needs to occur, so that the fragmentation does not alert too much attention as to offer the opportunity to be transformed. This diversion could perhaps be seen in the 'problems' that her son experiences. She spoke of her son in a way that struck me as somewhat pathologising, in the following comments:

> My son is more nervous about it – he's a very anxious child, I mean, he's been for play therapy. Just generally. He's much better than what he was, but *ja*, so he's like his grandfather, he's a very anxious child.

Through the deviation of the marriage partners' attention and emotion by the anxious child, one could hypothesise that the anxious child maintains the marriage, in order that it does not totally fragment (Watzlawick et al., 1974), but at the same time, the anxious child also serves to conserve the already present fragmentation. As a result of the deviation, the fragmentation within the marriage does not receive any attention. Also relevant to this discussion, is that the anxiety must surely serve to distance the child from his peers, much as the whole family system is characterised by distant and fragmentary relationships.

As much as the child is seen to be different from other children through his anxiety, the co-researcher also sees herself as different from others. She also speaks of herself as anxious, but at the same time, takes away the emotion from the anxiety and separates herself from other people by saying that she is able to control the anxiety, again, removing the emotion from her living ecology. This is the way that she spoke about herself:

> We're sort of strong people. Well, I've learned to be a strong person because there's certain things – I don't say I never get panic attacks but, you know, often, but I haven't had one since

> then, but you know I've had problems with my, my side of the family. Then you sort of worry about what's going on there but, you know, the one that we worry about is my son and he's fine.

This view of herself as a strong person, as compared to others that she may perceive as weak, may also have been her attempt at dealing with the violent experience in a fragmentary way.

The differences identified by the co-researcher between *'them' and 'us'* contributed to the conservation of this fragmented ecology. These ranged from visible differences ("There were two black chaps coming up to her") to behavioural and verbal differences ("And then he took out his gun …But the second guy, the one that didn't have the gun, he was quite abusive, he was 'Fuck you, fuck you'").

The strength of the difference that the co-researcher had noted was evident when she spoke of the one perpetrator:

> Now I said to the police that the guy had a Brazilian soccer shirt on and he was bald, that's the one I vaguely remember. And they said "If we catch them, could you identify?" and I was adamant that I could identify them, but now if I think back there's no ways that I could identify them, no ways that I could, you know, if they went into a line-up, there's no way.

The violent experience gave rise to the solution to further separate 'them' from 'us' when the co-researcher said: "I would want them to go to jail, definitely."

The conservation of the fragmentation of the ecology and the separation of the individual from others was also evident in the way in which the co-researcher dealt with the 'errors' made by the police in their report on her violent experience. She said: "The police actually got their story mixed up", but: "You don't want to correct them." She refrained from attempting to discuss or check these perceived errors with the police individual(s) concerned, preferring to say nothing to them, but rather to tell others about the police's ineptitude. In this way, she was able to keep her story separate from theirs, further differentiating herself from them. She also made sure that she related this story of the 'erroneous police report' to others so that they could be aware that her story, and hence herself, were different.

This may also be seen as a ***mistrust of social institutions***, which further fragments the ecology, as well as being a part of the fragmentary ecology.

It seemed that definite ***meanings were made about the violent experience***. The meanings attributed to this event by the co-researcher seemed to reflect the conservation of fragmentation in the bigger ecology of the society in which she lives and to mirror the fragmentation of her family ecology. She did not view the ecology as something that needed to be worked on. Rather, she viewed it as being separate from her and something that was inevitable: "I just said that's Africa you know, it's like this in Africa and these things happen", and: "I just think it's Africa and unfortunately, we live in Africa and we must just deal with things." She also seemed to employ the notion of "luck" to give meaning to her experience: "So we were very lucky." The luck factor may also have been implied when she said: "It was the 27th of June, I always tell people that." This reliance on the notion of luck may be another way of contributing to the conservation of the fragmentation, by allowing her to relinquish her responsibility to do anything different.

Conservation or Transformation of the Ecology Through the Telling of the Story

My own feeling was that I was a completely separate individual from my co-researcher and, as such, I could not access her emotions about the violent experience. I felt that she would often explain something by telling me "that was the way it was" and everyone was powerless to change it. The conservation of the fragmentary ecology was very evident to me in the way that I felt our relationship to be and the feeling that surrounded this co-researcher in her home. It felt lonely and distant inside her home, despite its opulence. We sat in a lounge, separated from the rest of the home, with the door closed. The co-researcher began another conversation with me when I was about to leave and this left me feeling as if she was reaching out to me, but through a veil of separation.

Fragmented Ecology

The relationships within this ecology indicate some of its fragmentation, as they seem to be separate and to occur within well-defined boundaries. This means that only a small part of the individual can be brought into every individual interaction. Those with whom the individuals in this ecology choose to have

relationships seem to be people who are able to offer something more than merely friendship – perhaps, through their occupations, they have some power and authority, or they are able to assist in something through their expertise or occupation. These relationships therefore, seem to have more than merely a friendship function. Relationships in this ecology also seem to be mostly fragmented in terms of 'them' and 'us' because to remain different and fragmented from others is paramount. Any emotion that occurs within an interaction is confined to place of its own and is seldom expressed effectively and in the here and now. This contributes to the boundaries of this ecology being mostly impermeable. As a consequence of this impermeability, dialogue with others through which meanings are able to be co-created and shared, is not often done. It is possible then, that meanings became reified facts, not given the opportunity to transform themselves. Therefore, possibilities for transformation, as this fragmentary ecology stands, are limited. In an ecology such as this, the individual may experience feelings of helplessness, and the fragmentation may be one way in which the individual claws for a feeling of control over her increasingly small living ecology (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001).

This fragmentary interrelatedness could be found in apartheid South Africa, as well as in the fragmentary way in which the new South African ecology attempts to control social "problems", such as violence.

Co-Researcher 2

Demographics

Co-researcher 2 is a divorced, white man with two young children who live with his ex-wife. He is currently in a relationship with a woman with whom he lives. He runs his own business, which he has recently established. Prior to this, he worked in the same field as an employee of a company.

The Story

This co-researcher's experience of violence occurred while he was having drinks one afternoon after work at a local pub in a small shopping centre. A number of armed men walked into the pub and robbed some of the patrons of their cell

phones, money and jewellery. Some patrons were physically harmed, and one patron was shot. The co-researcher himself was not physically harmed, but some personal items were stolen from him.

My Process Within the Ecology

Our discussion was held on a weekday afternoon at the co-researcher's office. His company had only recently taken occupation of the office, and the furnishings were sparse and a little disorganised. His office had not yet had a door fitted to it. When I arrived at the time we had agreed upon, the co-researcher was not yet there. His receptionist telephoned him on his cell phone and he arrived about ten minutes later.

He was extremely charming on meeting me and shook my hand, introducing himself at the same time. I felt a little uncomfortable at this formal introduction combined with the informal charm. We walked into his office, where he sat down at his chair behind the desk and showed me to the chair on the other side of the desk. Again, I felt uncomfortable about the object between us and the formality of this meeting. My reaction was to lean as far forward as possible over the desk in order to get closer to him. At times during the interview, he pushed back in his office chair, away from me.

I had a feeling, initially, of not being able to connect with this co-researcher, despite his touching me when shaking my hand and his obvious charm. All this achieved was to separate me even further from him. During the interview, the co-researcher became very angry, both about his experience and at my research, and this made a considerable impact on me, making me want to connect with him through telling him more about my research, but at the same time, silencing any conversation about it with his anger, isolating me further from him. A number of times during the interview, he told me what I should do to prevent violence from happening. The one-up position he moved into made me feel as if I was in my own insignificant cocoon of research and research methodology.

My Impact on the Ecology

Again, it is possible that my impact on this ecology was a "more of the same" (Watzlawick et al., 1974) response. The isolation I felt seemed so extreme at the time

that it was difficult for me to access the co-researcher. I then retreated into my isolation and justified this separation as the socially correct response in this type of situation. The story that was relayed to me contributed to the maintenance of this isolated ecology, which is reflected in the themes of the narration.

Discussion of Interview With Co-Researcher 2 – Isolated Ecology

This co-researcher seemed to be severely isolated from the larger societal ecology and this was evident throughout the interview generally, but specifically when he spoke about himself in the following way: "I'm quite an uneasy, untrusting sort of person, just in the new South Africa, because every person I see I think wants to try and steal something from me. And a little bit paranoid."

He conceptualised the isolation that I felt in interaction with him and which seemed to be present in his **relationships with others,** as "privacy" and saw his experience of the violence as a "complete invasion of privacy".

This isolated ecology seemed to have been conserved through the violent experience, in that he now had "proof" that relationships with others were useless for him. This was evident when he said: "This safety in numbers doesn't work for me. Completely disproved in one fell swoop." Even though he was with others during his violent experience, he was still not safe in this group because they could not protect him from the violent experience and in fact, became victims of the violence themselves. It seems, therefore, that even though he is in interaction with others, on what may perhaps be a superficial level, this interaction is more isolating than connecting.

The **mistrust** of the "safety in numbers", which contributes to the conservation of the isolation, was not the only mistrust contained in this isolated ecology. There seemed to be much mistrust of others, especially those who are different from him in some way and here he spoke often of black people. This is how he spoke about black people generally: "I've got a standard approach to them now. Don't trust them, don't give them anything."

The co-researcher's tendency to view others in **racist** terms was clear throughout the interview. However, the following excerpt reflects this well:

And you just start thinking that the new South Africa is just not such a hot place to be if you're white. Literally. … I think blacks across the spectrum gang up on middle to upper class whites in retribution for apartheid. And I'm almost 100% sure. From the guy that fills your tank, to the person that serves you in a shop, to the guy that serves your table in a restaurant, to the guy that panel-beats your car, to whoever it is. … In actual fact, in the big picture of things, what happened to me is happening to eighty percent of whites. And I say whites – it's happening to blacks too. I don't read the *Sowetan*.

The theme of *'them' and 'us'* and the separateness of these two are very evident in the above. The racism was also linked with the mistrust, as when the co-researcher said: "Every time I see a black guy walking down the road towards my stationary car, I watch him all the way. I'm ready to pull, to defend myself. It's not a way to live."

The mistrust was not just evident in relation to others, but was held within himself too, as is evident in the following:

It just amazed me that I would leave those things lying on the bar counter, but I've never thought previously that somebody could come in and take them. So I think twice about leaving stuff like that lying around anymore. … You just think that there's too much involvement. One guy tips off another guy that kicks back another guy, and the staff working there knew it was going to happen because they had the cameras cut before it happened. The security guys outside knew it was going to happen, that's why they're conveniently away from the [bar] when it did happen. … I haven't become over the top. I'm not paranoid about security, but I'm to some degree a little bit wary. I'm not as, like as relaxed as I used to be, particularly not in public places.

The mistrust permeated other areas of his living and here he expresses mistrust towards social institutions within his ecology:

Guys don't stay in jail for longer than, the biggest criminals are always escaping from jail because they're buying themselves out, because there's so much bribery and corruption in this country. And there's bribery and corruption in all countries.

All the mistrust that the co-researcher experiences, towards others that are different from him and social institutions, was captured in the following comment about his violent experience:

> They don't trust the cops and we don't trust the cops so we think, we kind of have to … The two cops that arrived at the [bar] slouched down in the restaurant table, didn't look overly concerned, kind of like "Shame, you poor rich white people, it happened to you. That, like, what do you call it, patronising, condescending. Then this big fat cop slouches down and wants coffee and wants to be spoon fed and I'm thinking, "Have you got the guys out there, are they looking for the car, what are you doing about the actual crime?" They think they're doing a lot because they're sitting there. We don't need them there afterwards, we only needed them there two minutes after the incident and then in and out to go and see, because they can't help us. After the incident, they can't help us. No investigating officer has phoned me since it's happened. I left a big report there with the one guy.

In the above quote, he also comments on feelings of helplessness. This relates again to the isolation that he feels within interaction and in spite of the presence of others. Although distrustful of both himself and others, and harbouring feelings of helplessness in spite of others, as with the previous co-researcher, there still seemed to be some need for a kind of collaborative, supportive ecology and a feeling of belonging within this ecology of isolation. He spoke of this need when he said: "But the one place where you do feel safe is an environment where there's 25, 30 people. It's loud, it's noisy, it's very vibey. And you're laughing a lot and you're enjoying, you're letting your hair down." This also highlights his ambivalence of needing to be with others and needing to belong, but at the same time, feeling disconnected from others. Therefore, even though he is present within the group, this presence is superficial in that it masks his intimate feelings of isolation.

However, his need for collaboration and belonging found its place with people that separated themselves from the bigger South African ecology, through their unfortunate South African experiences. He spoke of people that he knew, who, he seemed to believe, shared his ideas of isolation:

> But I know the people in my circle of friends, in my family and their friends and everybody that I know, that kind of middle of the road, drives a decent car, can afford to go out every now and then, those guys are having a lot of stuff stolen. Cell phones, car hijackings, armed robberies, break-ins, it's happening to everybody I know, so I'm not naïve enough to think, "Shame, feel sorry for me". … A lot of people I talk to are battling. So what is perceived to be and what is, are two different things altogether.

The co-researcher commented again about these isolated people with whom he identified and who, in his opinion, were experiencing difficulty in their South African ecology. This time, though, he used it to minimise his violent experience, as well as using it to generalise his violent experience to other people in his living ecology. This generalisation gave me the impression that his general view of the bigger South African ecology was that it was unsafe and filled with painful stories:

> "And every time I talk to somebody, they've got their own story
> so I think to myself, my story's not such a big story."

He again generalised a solution to this problem of an unsafe and painful ecology. The solution, which he maintained that many people were implementing, was to separate geographically from the South African ecology. This further conserved the isolated ecology through separation. He spoke of this solution in the following way:

> In that time, the good faring South African Samaritan with half a rand in his bank account and half a bit of intelligence is gone. The people that aren't leaving are the people that normally can't afford to. I'm in [business], I see the ones that are going and I see all the others that wish they could. Because nobody wants to live in a country where you don't feel safe in your day-to-day activities.

This desire for separation seems also to be held within the way he sees himself: when he compares himself now with how he used to be in interaction with others, he senses that this has changed. However, he regards this change towards isolation as justified and easily explainable, and the violent experience has given his justification more credence and has become easier to explain. This was most evident when he said: "I'm not as kind as I used to be. I used to give everybody money because I'm a generous person. I don't do that anymore. Why? Because for all the years of being good, it's got me nowhere."

Although this co-researcher spoke much about relationships, which seemed paradoxical to me taking into account the isolation that was prevalent in this ecology, the relationships that did occur within this ecology seemed to fulfil several functions other than providing opportunities to share meanings and co-create realities. In the above discussions, he speaks about the people with whom he identifies, through their

own isolation and separation. In the following discussion, he continues to speak about relationships, but this time with those that are different from himself:

> I do believe the following: I believe if you treat your gardener and your maid and black people in your close proximity, if you treat them well, you tend to create a bit of a safe haven around you. They won't go and tell friends what you've got, because they respect the relationship they have with you.

From the above quote, it seems that he uses relationships with others that are different to him in order to contribute to his need for safety, but still continues to perceive these people as different to him and as part of 'them'. Not only does he speak of people that are different from him, he also places social institutions into a category of "different from him", rather than identifying with them in some way. This, it seems, conserves the isolated ecology further. When he spoke of the old and new governments, he said:

> There was bribery and corruption in the old government, but things were still, there was more law and order, in my humble opinion. … So, I'm of the opinion that crime's getting worse before it gets better. That doesn't make me feel comfortable about things.

As much as he sees social institutions as different from him, he also sees their duties in society as different from his. Much like the previous co-researcher, it was apparent that he did not feel the need to contribute to the betterment of the South African ecology. He spoke of relinquishing his responsibility to the bigger South African ecology, which could be regarded as maintaining the isolated ecology through not changing anything, in the following way:

> Now, it's, you get a fine, you pay the guy. Why don't you report him? Because, um, shit, you aren't the problem, you aren't meant to rectify it. It's the government's job. The government says you pay rates and taxes and you pay personal tax and you pay VAT and you pay transfer duty when you buy a property, with all of that money, they must employ their own people and put the right people in places with the right ideas. It's not my job to say to the guy that's on the take, "You aren't doing your job". It's their job to make sure those guys are caught up.

From the discussion thus far, it is evident that, within this isolated ecology, there were strong ideas about the constitution of 'them' and 'us', with 'them' and

'us' constituting both individuals and social institutions. The criteria used to differentiate himself from 'them' were based on a number of variables. One of these variables was observable differences, such as race, evident when he identified the race of those who carried out the violent attack: "And that is broken by the sound of black, male voices and it goes along the lines of 'down, down, down, down'."

Another was the inability to see the "other" as human. He spoke of his feelings about the humanness, or lack of it, of the black men who carried out the attack in which he was involved: "There's no feeling of: it's a human and I should protect them because they're human too. It's happening to you because you've really got more than we've got."

Yet another distinguishing factor was his comment on the way in which the observable behaviours of his attackers was different to his. This was his comment on the external behaviours of the 'other':

> The fact that it's a little guy that's so nervous and his hand is shaking and he'll pull the trigger at any time worries me more than it would be if it was a guy in a suit with a well-organised outfit. I'd probably feel safer in that kind of environment. If the motive was strictly financial gain and that's where it ended, it would be acceptable. But I suppose what hurts me or worries me a little bit is that it's sometimes, it's unprovoked.

He compares the behaviour of his 'real' attackers to behaviour that he would hope an attacker more similar to him would display. He speaks about an imaginary attacker sporting a neat outfit, perhaps a suit. This well-dressed imaginary attacker would, the co-researcher presumes, display more confident and trustworthy behaviours. The co-researcher was well-dressed and well groomed on the day of our interview and I would imagine, due to his occupation, this is the norm for him. It would also complement his charm that he displayed on our meeting. Therefore, this imaginary attacker about whom he speaks is probably more like him in his attire, and therefore, according to the co-researcher, in his behaviour, than that of the actual attacker.

In the above quote, he also speaks about the attacker's motive. Again, the motive of the imaginary attacker, that of "financial gain", could be seen to be more similar to his own motives for opening his own business, as well as the type of

business in which he is involved, which yields high financial returns on a single business transaction. The motive of the real attacker, that of a lack of motive as spoken about by the co-researcher, could be related to the values or the lack of values of this person. The concept of values held within the "other" was another way that the co-researcher distinguished between 'them' and 'us': "The key is moral values. You've got to teach people the difference between right and wrong."

He made another comment on moral values, this time not related to his attackers, but nevertheless, related to a black person. It seems that he views black people's lack of moral values as related to their culture, implying that this is the way black people are raised and almost, that it becomes intrinsically fixed, furthering conservation of the isolation through an inability for it to change. It also relates to the idea that the "others" belong in one homogeneous group, sharing similar traits (Turner & Giles, 1995). This was his comment:

> A maid that worked for me for many years, I used to find stuff regularly in her maid's room. And she was of the belief that she could share it, you know. And she was a good person, she's got good morals but where did she learn that? I'm not sure, but there's something in their culture.

He also spoke about the values of honesty and integrity. This was another distinguishing factor of the "other":

> I got my money because I worked hard for it. If you want money, go work. Why don't I give handouts anymore? Because it doesn't teach them to get ahead. As long as they're getting handouts, they'll carry on getting handouts. When they stop getting handouts, they'll take, because everybody else is taking.

Finally, and almost in a summary of all the differences discussed between 'them' and 'us', the co-researcher speaks says:

> If you think you're stopping crime in this country, you're wrong. What you need to do is spread the word around the townships, amongst your people, that those guys that are doing it, that isolated bunch, let's call it five percent, is wrong. And what I see happening at the moment with the blacks taking the law into their own hands I think is great for the mental understanding of crime in this country because that's how they address it.

Above, he differentiates himself from me by firstly telling me that I am not stopping crime through this research and then giving me the solution to stop crime. He therefore, intimates that he has knowledge that I do not have. Secondly, the co-researcher referred to those who live in the townships as "your [i.e. my] people". In South Africa, many black people live in townships. Although this initially came about as a result of the attempt of apartheid to isolate black people from white people, these living arrangements still remain the case in present day South Africa. I am visibly white and had also informed him that I did not live in a township. Therefore, I felt that, even though he could see that I was white, he was still differentiating himself from me and I had now also become one of the "others". Perhaps, one could hypothesise, this was because, through my research, I was attempting to alter the ecology and the threat of this potential change on his isolated ecology may have been uncomfortable for him. He also speaks about people living in the townships as those that are the ones committing crime. As he does not live in a township, he differentiates himself from them in this way. He then goes on to speak about one of the ways in which the problem of violence is dealt with by the 'other'. He says that black people are "taking the law into their own hands" which he says, "is great". Taking into consideration that the entire interview was peppered with comments about the way in which he is an upstanding citizen, it could be assumed that he does not take the law into his own hands. Therefore, he deals with crime in a different way to 'them'. As he acknowledges that "taking the law into their own hands" is a good thing, he could be seen to prescribe to the notion of fighting violence with violence. He also again abdicates responsibility for changing the ecology and seems to think that, even though his idea is that the "others" are the perpetrators of violence, it is still the "others" that need to change the way in which social problems, such as crime and violence are dealt with.

These observations of difference further contribute to the isolation of the ecology because this co-researcher cannot identify with others when there is so much that seems to be different between them. This narrows down the people whom he will allow into his ecology.

While the above comments concentrated largely on the differences that were apparent within individuals in his ecology, there were also many identifications of

the "other" in the bigger South African ecology in which the co-researcher lives. These came in many different guises, such as immigrants, the government and its social institutions and South Africa as a country, all contained within the following comment:

> You've got to stop the illegal immigrants coming into the country, which you can't do because there's too much bribery and corruption in this country. I've had one of my gardeners, a Zimbabwean, deported and he got as far as the Jo'burg station and paid his way off the train. It cost him R200. So they can put their systems in place, but until they teach their cops and everybody involved in government, security, crime prevention, all of that, until those guys, in their minds, know that stealing is wrong and taking bribes is wrong, we're on a one-way slide. This country cannot be saved.

This strong separation of himself from others and the isolated ecology within which he exists is clearly not conducive to interacting and dialoguing with the group of "others". Although the co-researcher maintains that he attempts to dialogue with people in the "other" group in order to try and understand them, this dialogue seemed only to maintain their "otherness" as the very dialogue seemed to be based on the aspect of difference, which leads to a "more of the same" kind of non-understanding of 'them'. The following comment seems to be related to the way in which the co-researcher views black people as amoral, without honesty and integrity and without motivation for their actions because, he says, they don't even know how they feel about their South African ecology, even when he, a person that he perceives them to trust, asks them questions. All this dialogue seems to do then, is to further contribute to their "otherness" because it was 'them' who could not understand their people's own behaviour:

> I don't know what they say. You need to go interview lots of black people and find out exactly what their feelings are about, but their true feelings. Because I try and speak to people, to blacks, my caddy, my gardener, my maid, the guy that fixes up, all of them I look after and I'm known to look after them and they like me a hell of a lot and I've asked them and they can't really put a finger on it.

Even though the co-researcher concludes that the "others" don't know why their own people behave in the way that they do, he certainly made quite definite meanings about why "others" were carrying out violent crime. Within the following

lengthy piece of conversation on the ***meanings he has made about violent crime***, he also again comments on immigrants, social institutions, differences between himself and "others", the larger South African ecology, bringing much of the above discussion points into a summary:

> The only thing I want to say is that I know it's a small minority of illegals, of locals, of Zimbabweans, of Mozambicans that are doing a lot of the crime, because there's no employment and they're living in this country and they expect to be getting ahead and they aren't. I've heard all those arguments and I understand it. But those five percent aren't the people that I'm really upset about. I'm upset about the other eighty that know who they are and won't say a word because it's kind of, we kind of understand why you're unhappy with the middle to upper class white person in this country, because he's driving the nice car and he's got the nice house and he's getting ahead and you aren't. So they kind of empathise with the guys doing the crime. I'm not saying they're involved with it. But it could be your maid, or it could be your gardener that knows stuff that the cops need to know. Why don't they tell the cops? They're scared the cops will tell the criminals – which happens, because the cops and the criminals also work hand in hand for kickbacks – and then it will come back on them. So the problem with South Africa is nobody trusts each other and because there's no trust, the blacks won't, if the guy next door has got a new hi-fi that he stole yesterday, the person living next door won't say a word. Why? They're scared of retribution, but they've been hiding behind that for years. But until they're told that if we don't clean up our act, South Africa is going down the tubes, then, well, maybe that's what they want. They want another Zimbabwe. … They want what the ANC promised them, jobs and houses and security and a life. And I think maybe the standard of living has come down for them over the last couple of years. I don't know.

The meanings this co-researcher attributed to his violent experience were very strongly linked to the 'them' and 'us' view that he expressed, as discussed above, as well as to his mistrust of people. This is evident when he says:

> It's redistribution of wealth. And for a fact I know that people that evening were involved in what went down. Whether there was somebody in having drinks with us, watching what was going on, or if it was somebody serving behind the counter. Somebody in the [bar] gave them a brief. The fact that the camera wires were cut tells me somebody working there must have been involved. The fact that it was managers' conference night out and the managers weren't there tells me it was inside. The fact that the doors were normally locked at nine or closed at nine and on that

particular evening, that Sunday night, they were wide open at half past nine, tells me it was an inside job … they could have quite easily have shot me that night. It was quite unprovoked. The fact that they're so quick to pull the trigger also tells me it's pent up latent hatred that comes through at every opportunity. Somebody that doesn't give them the wallet fast enough, or any little excuse.

All these meanings seem to conserve the isolation of this ecology.

The need to conserve the isolated ecology seemed to come through in his claim that he "always treated blacks with a lot of dignity and respect, but unfortunately, at the end of the day, the person that's robbing you doesn't know that." This comment seemed to justify the co-researcher's need to maintain his isolated behaviour, as well as maintain the idea that it was not his responsibility to have to change the ecology.

The co-researcher's perception of a desire for retribution on the part of the "others" came through in his assertion that "if you want to take something from a white guy, it's OK and if you shoot one of them, don't worry because they shot many of our children during the apartheid." This contributes to the maintenance of his isolated ecology because of the idea that the "other" will always behave differently to him as a result of injustices of the past, which, the co-researcher maintains, is a motivating factor for the "other" to continue to behave in amoral, inhuman and criminal ways.

The ***expression of emotion***, specifically anger, during the interview was almost palpable to me, although it was covert and not overtly acknowledged much of the time, except when the co-researcher said: "Within a couple of minutes you start feeling anger. I certainly did."

Even when emotion was acknowledged, it was spoken of as being a past emotion. It also seemed possible for it to be a future emotion, as was the case when he answered one of my questions. He assured me, "I'm ready for them the next time", and I asked: "What would you do?" "Shoot the shit out of them", was his reply.

Although this co-researcher was willing to express emotion as a past or future emotion, he was not able to express it as a present emotion. This perhaps further

isolates him from others because the emotion is present, but without acknowledgement, which may leave other people feeling confused, not understanding that the anger is not directed at them. Perhaps this is an experiential example of the concept discussed in the dissertation previously, that if one locks, for example, violence away and it is something that is not allowed into one's ecology, one's ecology becomes intrinsically violent.

Conservation or Transformation of the Ecology Through the Telling of the Story

I felt the anger strongly throughout this interview, and although I was familiar with this feeling because of my own anger, I felt that this co-researcher was able to use his anger to isolate others from him and to avoid acknowledging hurt or pain in relationships that could serve to bind him to others. I experienced him as judgmental and not willing to listen to another's story. The opportunity of story-telling thus served to further maintain the co-researcher's isolated ecology.

Isolated Ecology

Within this ecology, relationships are few and even though the individual is present in interaction with others, he is not connected to those with whom he interacts. In this way, he is unable to bring himself fully into an interaction. His emotions are also not allowed expression within the space of the present, further isolating the emotional parts of himself from interaction. The individual may regard others with suspicion, especially those that are different from him in any way. However, even those similar to him are regarded as part of 'them', in that this individual is unable to fully connect with others, even when in interaction. When assistance from others is needed, the individual is usually unable to break through the impermeable barriers of his ecology to find it. As a result of the impermeability and the mistrust of others, meanings are not able to be co-created and transformed. The individual becomes increasingly poverty stricken in a lonely ecology as the possibilities of transforming his interrelatedness become fewer and fewer. He may experience feelings of helplessness and this may be exacerbated once a crisis, such as

a violent experience, enters his living ecology. An isolated ecology may encourage the individual to become rigid in his thinking and unable to enter into the world of another. This isolated world therefore does not facilitate transformation, since dialogue with others is stunted and others are regarded as suspect and untrustworthy. The individual may define himself as individualistic as a way of justifying and formulating his ecological crisis (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001).

Co-Researcher 3

Demographics

This middle-aged woman is married with two grown-up children and lives in a middle-income suburb in Johannesburg. She does volunteer work as a crisis counsellor at a local police station.

The Story

This co-researcher's experience of violence occurred at home one weekday morning, while she was getting ready to go out. She had just come out of the shower and was naked, sitting on her bed, blow-drying her hair. Three armed men walked into her home and held her up in her bedroom. They then tied her and the domestic worker up in the bedroom, while they ransacked the house. The attackers were verbally and physically abusive. Apart from being bitten by one of the attackers while he was trying to remove her rings from her fingers, the co-researcher was not physically harmed. The attackers did not physically harm the domestic worker, other than tying her up. However, they did beat up the gardener. They stole some household goods, a gun and jewellery.

My Process Within the Ecology

This interview was held on a weekday afternoon at the home of the co-researcher. The house is in a panhandle property and therefore not visible from the

road. After driving along a lengthy driveway, I found myself outside the house, in front of a door. A friendly cat was sitting outside this door. When I rang the bell, the co-researcher came to open up for me. I was surprised, from a security point of view, to see her hang the key to this outside door on a small hook on the inside of the door. Her house felt like a homely place to me. We sat in the sunken lounge, amongst many cats.

The co-researcher was friendly, relaxed and mother-like. She offered me tea and took some time to organise herself and the tea, chatting about herself all the time. She told me about her cats, her work and her family. This made it easy for me to connect with her.

My Impact on the Ecology

The connected feeling I had within this ecology allowed me to easily connect with the co-researcher in a human way. The impact of this may have been to expand the collaboration of this ecology. The information she gave about herself fascinated me and made me curious to find out more. My enjoyment of her seemed to be reciprocated as I felt that she enjoyed telling me her story, even though it was emotional for her at times. I feel that my impact on this ecology was to facilitate the creation of space for her story to be told. Considering that this co-researcher listens to traumatic stories all the time, she may have found this impact refreshing.

Discussion of Interview with Co-Researcher 3 – Collaborative Ecology

This interview reflected an ecology of collaboration, with solid relationships that were able to hold the pain between them (Bar-On, 1999). This co-researcher spoke of various **relationships** – her marriage relationship ("[My husband] phoned … and said to me 'Are you alright?'"); her spiritual life relationship ("I go for spiritual direction"); her children ("I'm very fortunate I think, because my children have always chatted to me a lot, you know. They've always told me everything."); her family ("we always pray about it, the whole family") and her work ("I had dialled and there was somebody on the other end … and I said to him, please call the police … it's [co-researcher's name] and we're being attacked … if you phone the [suburb name] police, they know me. I'm a counsellor").

Not only did there seem to be many relationships, they also seemed to be caring, as many people arrived at her home after her violent experience: "Anyway, everybody arrived … I ended up having to make endless cups of tea and hand out Rescue tablets to my son, my husband, my daughter, her fiancé, his mother."

It is interesting that she was the one who did much of the caring, even though she had been the one involved in the violent experience. Perhaps caring is one way in which she deals with her life in general, and in particular, with events that are unpleasant, especially seeing that her profession is a caring one. This taking of control through caring may limit her feelings of chaos, helplessness and isolation.

Relationships that were defined on a functional level, still seemed to take into account the humanity of others, even relationships with those who were different from the individual. This was apparent when she spoke of her domestic worker and how wonderful she had been during her violent experience:

> My char was phenomenal, she was literally on his heels, sort of almost on his heels and as he went out the bedroom door, the only door in the house that has got a key is my bedroom door, she slammed the door and locked it and he turned around to try and come in and he couldn't.

There seemed to be a deep understanding between the people with whom she has relationships. This understanding sometimes did not necessitate verbal language and this came across when she spoke about how her husband would have understood what was happening to her without her having to actually tell him, when she telephoned his workplace during her attack, had he answered the telephone. This non-verbal understanding between people seemed to contribute to the conservation of this collaborative ecology, because of the depth that a relationship has to reach in order for there to be non-verbal understanding of the other's situation. She said this of the telephone call that she made to her husband's place of work: "I was actually hoping my husband would be there because he would have twigged."

The collaborative nature of this ecology is something that seems to have been familiar to the individual from childhood. She spoke of her childhood in detail, and the following conveys the close, collaborative relationships that she experienced as a child and the comfortable feeling with which she remembers that time in her life:

> As a child, I lived in one place. My father, the gentlest guy, he used to drink. I never heard him, drunk or sober, say anything ugly about anyone or do anything ugly. My mother was a very strong woman. She worked with the Royal Women's Guild. There was a man that used to live in the hotel and the hotel manager said, "Don't worry, I know just the lady that will take you in" and it was my mother. So I started off, my mother always made us aware of our social responsibility. There was always extra in the pot and if somebody asked for food, they were always given. My sisters were the laughing stock of the school, because there had been a train crash and they were selling bolts of material very cheaply, so we bought a bolt of material and made dresses. When I look back, our pride was ridiculous, we felt nothing, we felt sorry for them, because their fathers were having affairs, they were all rich and had everything, but their fathers were having affairs and their fathers used to beat their mothers. And we just thought we were the most incredible family. But you don't really see that as a child. I was always so proud of my parents. I used to walk to school, everybody else drove. I just think it's the Christian upbringing. At church, when any of the visiting priests came, nobody wanted to put them up; they were always put up at our house. You know, a little peasant house, we lived in a railway house. The doctor always used to say to me, "Oh, Mrs [mother's name] unwanted child", because my sisters had scarlet fever when I was born, so I had to be born at home.

Although the co-researcher is involved in many relationships and currently interacts with many different people, the violent experience seems to have contributed to the idea of a possibility of transformation: "In fact, I said to my husband, 'I think next year I'll take off from people.'" Although this transformation may mean that she interacts with fewer people, it may provide a space for recovery for the co-researcher, both from her story, as well as from the many stories that she hears. Transformation in this ecology also seemed possible through her acceptance of those that were different to her.

Although there was identification with the 'us' group and differences were perceived between *'them' and 'us'*, it seemed as if it was possible for the 'them' group to sometimes become more like the 'us' group. This idea of transformation of the "other" being able to become part of the 'us' was apparent when she spoke of her nudity during the attack:

> It was only afterwards that I realised that the three of them were just as embarrassed about me being naked as I was, because they were looking everywhere else. … My maid said to the police

"They weren't smelly and they were well dressed." … In fact, if you could see them walking down, you would think they were young kids from (private school) or anywhere. Very well dressed.

This idea that the "other" could become part of the 'us' indicates that the boundaries of this ecology are permeable and therefore, transformation is a possibility. However, even though there was an acceptance of the idea that the 'them' group could become more like the 'us' group, their differences were acknowledged when she speaks about the way in which her spiritual counsellor identified their differences and that "they" could possibly have behaved in a much more violent way:

> [S]he was saying, "You know … there were three of them." She said, "And if you had started fighting, they might have strangled you. Because they didn't have weapons, doesn't mean they couldn't harm you."

Perhaps this co-researcher was sensitive to the way in which differences in the identification of 'them' and 'us' groups was prevalent in society generally through her voluntary work. She spoke about how the people that come to her for counselling after a violent experience often differentiate themselves from those who have harmed them. Through this awareness and the context of healing in which she works, she was sensitive not to differentiate herself too much from her attackers:

> I was interested to see my reaction, 'cause you know when I do counselling, I've got a lot of people that their reaction is they hate all black people, they hate all young black people or they hate all black people with this kind of jacket, or that kind of look, or this kind of air, you know. Or they hate all white men or, you know, whoever it is that harmed them, those are the people they hate. And they seem to take it into the rest of their lives.

In the above excerpt, she also comments on the way in which individuals interact with their living ecologies so as to maintain their ecology in the same position.

The identification of 'them' and 'us' groups was quite strong though, when based on a group of people who are believers in God, a group to which she belongs, and those who do not believe in God:

I think a lot of people who don't have support, have that inner strength because they've got to cope on their own. But then you will get other people, and I haven't been able to put my finger on it, but there's some people, you know, I'll tell you the other thing that I've discovered, people with faith, doesn't matter what they call God, they have faith in God and they believe that there's something outside of them that is going to give them that strength, that they can ask for strength, cope far better than those people who say, "Well, I don't believe in all that clap trap and so I'll just cope on my own." They normally fall apart after three months. If you have a rail to run on, you know, that's the only way I can see it. You know, they don't have a rail to run on. … I think there's some people that we actually have to accept, always need something extra to help them. It's not that I'm a strong person, I think maybe it's my upbringing and my faith. I think it's people's view on life.

This co-researcher, unlike the other two, seems to see social institutions as able to belong to a group of both 'them' and 'us', at the same time, depending upon the situation. The police force is one social institution of which the co-researcher sees herself as a member, through her close collaboration with them in her work. Even though this group is an 'us' group, they nevertheless have some 'them' group properties, evident in the sceptical and ***distrusting*** views of them, some of which follow in the quotes below. However, this scepticism becomes more obvious in relation to those social institutions that are less familiar to this person. In the work that she does, she does not often interact with the call centre of the police emergency number, 10111. She spoke of the person who answered her call to this call centre with some scepticism of their ability in their occupation:

 [T]o dial 10111 you get "Hello, hello", nobody gives you any kind of service … dialled 10111, gave my address and I got "Can you spell that?" I spelled it for them.

In relation to institutions that are more familiar to this co-researcher, such as the police, with whom she works closely, there was a sense of understanding their inadequacies, thereby identifying this group as both 'them' and 'us':

Our police just don't have proper training to investigate or something, because people just come around willy-nilly and it's bad policing, and it's bad, I don't know. They just don't seem to have the ability to do proactive policing. They're very good at reactive policing. And I should imagine that's from the apartheid

years. They were never taught anything except how to keep black people and white people apart.

In relation to the violent incident, however, the understanding of the very same social institutions decreased, identifying the police as 'them':

> I had to give about three statements. And then they all got it wrong anyway, it was unbelievable. … And of course, the police didn't go there, they went down and battered the poor old homeless people that I feed.

The latter part of this excerpt, where the co-researcher talks about the people to whom she gives food, again demonstrates the collaborative nature of relationships within this ecology.

In relation to the co-researcher's relationship to personal possessions, distress at the loss of these seemed absent and was mentioned merely as a link from one thought to another ("They had my cell phone and they had my rings, they took my cell phone and they started pulling the drawers out of the dressing table"). ***Emotions within her ecology*** became evident when her acknowledgement of the loss became more intense, and, in answer to the question, "And how does the anger come out?" she responded:

> Well, I'll be walking down to my bedroom, just minding my own business and you know, suddenly just think about the cross, they also snatched my cross and chain. My husband's given me another one, but it's completely different.

The sentiment attached to possessions could possibly be a metaphorical indication of the importance of relationships within this ecology and the anger at the unwelcome breaking into the ecology in a divisive and intrusive way.

The anger that was displayed within this ecology was clear and present and evident in the concise statement: "I'm so angry."

However, it seemed that she attempted to direct this anger specifically at the people who had provoked her, rather than experience a general and diffuse anger at others in her ecology: "I felt good that I hadn't sort of carried this anger, because I still have it to this day. I still feel angry, but particularly at those three."

This co-researcher attributed somewhat different ***meanings to her violent experience*** than did the previous two co-researchers. They seemed to arise from an internal perspective, manifesting as her ability to deal with the experience in an effective way, rather than giving external meanings to the actual event itself. This is evident in her observation that "it's life experience, because also talking to other people, people who cope, are people who haven't had, sort of, easy existences."

She seems to believe that she coped well with the violent experience because of her previous experiences in life, from which she probably gained effective coping skills. She identifies with those who have had to endure difficult experiences in life, but rather than seeing these difficult experiences as obstacles, she rather views them as transformational opportunities through which she is able to develop effective coping skills.

Another meaning that she placed on the violent experience was that something good would come from it, entertaining the idea of transformation. But this good, it seemed, would be more appropriate if it occurred in the lives of the perpetrators rather than in her life, demonstrating yet again the collaborative nature of this ecology. Her comments on this possible transformation also reflected on the ineffectiveness of a cycle of violence:

> The other thing now is to believe that something good will come out of it. I mean, somebody does something horrible to me in the traffic. I'm really the most impatient person in the traffic. And I've learned to say, "Bless them Lord", instead of swearing at them, because I really think the more anger we put out, it's almost like electrical, I really feel it is.

In some way, it seems that her experience has allowed her to think about the transformation of the entire society. She speaks about this possibility of transformation in her discussion about what she believes should happen to society:

> I would really like to see, I really would like to see an overhaul of the judicial system. I think we have the ability, I think we've got the police with the right heart, there's a lot of prosecutors and magistrates, there's also a lot of them that are corrupt and what they're doing, they're actually stressing out the good people. I would actually like to see a revamp of the whole justice system. I would like to see more community service for first time offenders. I really think – but really hard community service.

Making them go and work in casualty, work in the SPCA, you know, make them do things, but make them really take stock. Working with HIV children, you know, real community service, not this business, going and mowing somebody's lawn. To me that's codswallop. But something that will make them, that will twist their heartstrings, you know. With some kind of psychological influence on them, where they would have to report to psychologists, or somewhere like FAMSA, where they would get the right guidance.

It seems that the meanings she gives to her violent experience contain elements of both transformation and conservation. In the above quotation, the possibility of the transformation of society is evident. While in the following quotation the possibility of transformation is also apparent, it also contains ideas of the way in which the social ecology, and specifically the criminal ecology, is maintained through the behaviours of the criminals, as well as through the comments of others in society about criminals:

I go to meetings with nuns and monks and the one nun said to me, "Oh those poor boys, I feel so desperate for them, waking up every morning and they have nothing to look forward to." I was quite sharp with her, I said to her, "Rubbish, of course they're looking forward to the day, otherwise they wouldn't be out there. If they weren't looking forward to the day, they would be sitting like my poor homeless guys, sniffing glue or, if they had no hope that's what they would be doing. They have made a choice to do evil." "Oh, they must be ill," other people say. They're doing really ill people a disservice, because really ill people don't do things with thought and planning and they keep coming back every two years. That takes thought and planning. I honestly think, and I'm not saying that they can't be rehabilitated, but at this moment I don't think they're, first of all, I don't think, "Shame, poor little guys".

Conservation or Transformation of the ecology Through the Telling of the Story

I felt the collaboration of this ecology through the co-researcher's connectedness to me and willingness to talk to me within the interview context. Although it may seem that this ecology was merely conserved through the telling of this story, it is possible that this collaborative ecology could have expanded through the telling of the story to me, as I was not a police official, a friend or a family member. The transformation of this ecology would thus have comprised an expansion of collaboration, rather than a transformation into a different ecology.

Collaborative Ecology

The relationships within this ecology are varied and many and seem able to be included in many different parts of the individual's living ecology, rather than stagnating only in one small part of the ecology, locked away in their own small space. The individual can fulfil her needs through the many relationships that occur within this ecology, and these relationships usually promote collaboration between ecologies as relationships are able to flow throughout various ecologies. Through this interrelatedness, the individual is able to co-create herself and her realities through the dialogue in relationships, facilitating meaning making. Individuals with whom interaction and dialogue occurs are not rigidly placed in groups of 'them' and 'us', but are able to contain characteristics of both 'them' and 'us' groups at the same time. Emotions are given an effective opportunity to be felt in the relevant parts of her ecology in which they occur and in this way, are effectively directed at those involved. Through the ways in which the individual interacts with her living ecologies, transformation is a constant process. The collaboration of the individual's living may leak out into other ecologies of living, and the boundaries of this ecology are therefore relatively permeable (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001).

A Meta-view of the impact of the co-researchers' ecologies on my own

It may become apparent to the reader that the third interview that I carried out was the one that I enjoyed the most. On reflection, this was probably because I felt totally accepted by this co-researcher. This was in contrast to the other two co-researchers who awoke my own feelings of fragmentation and isolation. It was also unlike my own childhood experience of my own family and my rejecting father. During the third interview, I experienced the collaborative nature of the ecology and this felt comfortable for me.

When I consider my own life and the ecologies through which I have moved and still continue to move, I identify my extreme fragmentation and isolation at various times in my history. As a junior school child, my experience of myself was that I was different. In order to understand this feeling and in a child-like way, my explanation to myself was that my family, and hence myself, were different because we were of Italian origin. The food that we ate, the language that was spoken at

home and the cultural activities in which we participated, seemed to create this distance from my peers. With this understanding, I began to aggressively isolate and compartmentalise my family life from my school life. The violence that I experienced at home was also part of my difference and I kept this tightly locked away, in a compartment all of its own.

This isolation contributed to me choosing one special person to befriend. Throughout my childhood, my adolescence and well into my adulthood, I consistently maintained a friendship with one individual at a time and for long periods at a time. I still find it difficult to befriend many people at one time, although, through necessity and through my training, I am developing this skill, allowing for transformation.

Further, when the isolation and fragmentation became too difficult to bear, and when the violence at home escalated, I developed what the medical experts refer to as "school phobia" (Barlow & Durand, 1995, p.179). However, this contributed to my isolation in that I did not attend school very often and in this way, furthered my isolated and fragmented ecology. I then became the patient in the family, contributing to the maintenance of the family, as well as the maintenance of the then current ecology, much like the child of my first co-researcher. This patient role continued throughout my childhood and into both my adolescence and adulthood, where I experienced various 'illnesses' and psychological complaints. In both my childhood and adolescence, I was taken to doctors of varying kinds, all of whom treated me within the medical model. Eventually, on reaching adulthood and having what I like to think of as a 'built-in survival mechanism', I took myself off to a psychologist.

Exploring the ecologies of my family life was, initially, extremely traumatic. However, after years of therapy which still continues today, I have allowed the trauma to contribute to some transformation in my life, which transformation is perpetually ongoing. Currently, I have been able to enter into a therapeutic relationship with a therapist who allows the boundaries of my therapeutic ecology to be so permeable as to allow my living ecologies to flow through it and vice versa.

My choice of profession has contributed in a significant way to my transformation. The training that I have undergone, both at University level and at internship level, have also contributed to the permeability of my ecological boundaries in that I have been able to bring in the understanding of the pain of my own living into my work, which, I believe, contributes both to my own healing, as well as that of the clients whom I consult.

The choice of the topic of this dissertation has also furthered my own transformation. Therefore, to come back to my initial comment in this section, the ecology that was collaborative was the most comfortable for me. I recognise that that is the ecology that I work towards co-creating. Although I have gone through, and still continue to live within both an isolated and fragmented ecology, I also have small glimpses of a collaborative ecology in my life. This is especially true of new relationships that I have formed, as well as transformation that has occurred in old relationships. Although I experience much difficulty and pain in my attempts at transformation and it necessitates an intimate examination of my living, I cannot imagine what living is about, if not this continuous expansion and transformation of oneself in relation to one's living ecology.

The above discussion was necessary in this dissertation due to my centrality in this paper. However, I now continue with an exploration of the bigger ecology in which the smaller living ecologies of myself and my co-researchers exist and are maintained.

Discussion

The co-researchers and my own experience of violence occurred within the context of South Africa and can, therefore, be conserved or transformed within this context. South Africa may be said to allow an ecology of violence to be conserved, through fragmentation and isolation. This leads me to discuss what I describe as an ecology of violence, within which the ecologies of my co-researchers and mine are able to function. This ecology of violence is the context within which I place the aforementioned three ecologies and which contributes to the maintenance of these three ecologies in which both my co-researchers and I live.

Ecologies of Violence

From examining the interviews in depth, I found that the themes that ran through both the fragmented ecology and the isolated ecology were those of silence and separateness. In both these ecologies, silence and separateness surrounded the ecologies in, amongst other things, not allowing the expression of emotion a space in the present, the inability to relate to loved ones about one's violent experience, the inability to communicate effectively with others who were different, and the inability to interact with others to transform the ecology. Certainly, in my experience of violence, both silence and separateness were present in my ecology and to a certain extent, they still are. I see both these themes as contributing to the maintenance of an ecology and therefore, I deem them important enough to this discussion to delve into them.

Silence

Silence is prevalent in an ecology of violence. If we examine the concept of family violence, it appears from the literature that the concept was largely unheard of before the 1960s, although attempts were made to uncover some kinds of domestic violence as far back as 1640 (Pleck, 1989).

Bar-On (1999, p. 155) discusses the silence contained in ecologies and calls it "undiscussability" and "silenced facts". In this silence, the process of silencing manifests in emotions, behaviour and thinking, but at the same time, it is itself a taboo subject. Therefore, the silencing of the process is given a home in some no-man's land, within an ecology that is kept separate from our living, in much the same way as mentally ill people or those who have committed violent acts are kept separate from us. This silence does not reside only within individuals; it is a shared silence in our collective ecology that disallows the communication of the process in the here and now. The process of silencing itself becomes a way in which we communicate with others and this silence is held between us, knowingly (Bar-On, 1999).

Taking into account the silence surrounding violence generally, it is understandable that research and literature on this subject are somewhat incomplete. This is not because of the amount of work that has been done in this field, because,

as Pleck (1989, p.5) says, this is a subject with "a literature that is extensive", but is, rather, a result of the silence that has surrounded it.

Stanko and Lee (2003) discuss the difficulties encountered by other researchers of violence. One of the main difficulties they examine is that violence is often hidden. This leads some researchers to evade the subject because they believe that it will remain elusive to study. In doing so, they contribute to the silence. However, the amount of research that has been done on the subject is testament to the fact that, overtly, it is not hidden at all. Covertly, though, it may well be that the subject is a hidden one.

Pleck (1989) also informs us of the problems of researching this subject. She says that, historically, the methodology used to study violence has been weak at best. She also raises the point about the ethical treatment of victims of violence. Both the manner in which much of the research on violence has been conducted and the unwillingness of some to enter into a relationship with those who have experienced violence may contribute to the conservation of a violent ecology by the maintenance of silence. Often, victims of violence seem to harbour embarrassment about the fact that they have suffered violence, as if it is in some way their own doing (Pleck, 1989). Again, the silence is maintained.

It is only through the telling of the silence that transformation can occur, as otherwise the silence contributes to the conservation of the violent ecology. However, the ecology which is co-created through dialogue needs to be safe enough to allow the silence to become spoken (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001).

Separateness

People in society are expected to testify to the sanctity of living through protecting both "others" and 'us' in society. Once a person denies this sanctity and commits an act of violence against another, the perpetrator is seen as having less worth than others and as being not altogether human (Derrida, 1997). It is, therefore, interesting to note that (as Johnson & Becker, 1997, point out) most people imagine or fantasise about violence, but do not act upon these fantasies. It seems then, that what separates 'them' and 'us' is the execution of the violent action (Johnson & Becker, 1997). Once violence has occurred, we feel justified in separating the person

who has committed a violent act from 'us', by locking her away, and we can then experience what we may construct as being safe. Through this, we contribute to the construction of an ecology of separateness. One could hypothesise whether this locking away symbolises the locking away of our own violence.

The ecology of separateness is evident in the geographical location of the places that confine some of the population of 'them', such as correctional facilities, mental institutions and what are known as halfway houses. To borrow from social psychology, this may contribute to the notion of out-group homogeneity, where members of a certain group that are different from us are seen as sharing similar characteristics and behaviours with each other that are different from characteristics and behaviour of members of an in-group (Devine, 1995). If perpetrators of violence are separated from others in society, the possibility of interaction with these perpetrators becomes much reduced and the telling and re-telling of stories between these groups is minimised.

Even the study of violence has occurred within well-defined boundaries. Pleck (1989) and Hotaling and Straus with Lincoln (1989) tell us that the research on family violence has been kept separate from research on other types of violence. Pleck states that this is so because interest in researching family violence has come primarily from the fields of medicine, social work and psychology, while societal violence has been the concern of sociology.

Baron (2003), who has worked extensively with people from war-torn countries, proposes that healing cannot occur in an ecology of separateness. She maintains that in order to understand a violent experience told by an individual, one has to take into account the living context of the individual and the context in which the violence occurred; the culture of the ecology and the capacity of the individual. These sentiments are also echoed by Willi (1999). Only once all these factors are acknowledged and explored, can one begin to dialogue about the violence.

Conclusion

This chapter brings together the concepts of ecologies, violence and stories in a living punctuation of three South Africans' lives. Through this punctuation, I was offered a view of my co-researchers' living worlds, their subjective realities, the way

in which their ecology is co-created through their telling of their stories and the way in which their stories contribute to their ecology. So dynamic are these constructions that I hypothesise that if I re-did this research in the future, these stories would be different and I would extract different themes from them. In this way, this research is based in a particular historical time, a particular ecology and is seen through the subjective eyes of particular individuals. All these concepts reflect my postmodern lens.

Ecologies were discussed in detail, specifically those that were predominantly fragmentary, isolated and collaborative. An ecology of violence, within which these three ecologies specifically are able to be maintained, was described and the three ecologies discussed through the interviews were seen to be conserved within the South African context.

This discussion of ecologies makes up an important part of my dissertation. I have, in the previous chapters, discussed my methodology and postmodern theory. From a postmodern perspective, context is an important component of any discussion. In order to contextualise the violence about which I speak in this dissertation, I place it within an ecology. This allows the postmodern concept of context to be given life. The discussion of ecologies also includes within it the idea that violent stories that are shared through dialogue occur within a specific ecology and that this ecology contains within it, and is contained within, a specific culture within a specific society.

The descriptive names used for the ecologies were merely my own way of bringing to life a concept that is abstract and, therefore, difficult to name and identify. Another researcher, with a different, yet equally valid, subjective reality would perhaps have identified different ecologies or themes. This possible variance does not make this research invalid, but would merely make it a different way of seeing.

Meta-Reflections on This Chapter

This chapter proved to be the most difficult one for me to write and this may be apparent to the reader. On reflecting on this experience, I enter into thoughts about my own living ecology. The violence that I experienced as a child, along with

the conditional love and many judgements made about me by my family, contributed to the fragmentation of my self. This was reflected in my living ecology throughout my life, where I would fragment various parts of my living and separate them from each other. With much effort, I kept these separate and distant from each other, and through this process, kept the parts of myself separate and distant from each other. This violent tearing apart of my self and my ecologies contributed to feelings of worthlessness and non-acceptance, which further contributed to my self-isolation and separation. In fighting isolation with isolation and violence with violence, my living ecologies became uncomfortable and filled with pain. The writing of this chapter and this entire dissertation has become one manifestation of my attempt to conglomerate my living ecologies and parts of myself. As with this dissertation, I believe that there will be no end to this process. It will merely transform and continue along with my transformation and my continuance.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Summary of This Dissertation

It is evident from my discussion of the many lineal theories on violence that humans have sought numerous ways to understand and, more importantly, to resolve and eradicate violence (De Vries & Weber, 1997). However, if we examine the South African ecology today, the evolution of our understanding of violence seems stunted, as violence is still very much present. This is confirmed by Nell (2001), in his comment on Butchart and Nell's observation (as cited in Nell, 2001, p. 271) that various models formulated to prevent violence have met with "limited success" in their quest to halt it. Therefore, it seems that even with the proliferation of theories and the understandings that grow from them, our understandings of and reactions to violence have not been enhanced. Perhaps a contributing factor is that many of the theoretical writings seem trapped in a mechanistic, lineal, Newtonian view of the world. In such a world one is presumed able to fix something by merely changing part of it, but without contextualising the phenomenon within an ecology or understanding the impact of all the various parts of the ecology on each other (Gilbert, 1998). Often, in lineal and quantitative examinations of violence, the context within which violence occurs is treated merely as background information (Twemlow & Sacco, 1999).

I have attempted in this dissertation to broaden the understanding of violence by expanding the view that we take of the site of violence to include the ecology in which it occurs. I have also attempted to explicate the idea that the ecology impacts upon individuals and their behaviour, as much as the latter impacts upon the former. In this reciprocal way, a reality is co-created and lived by individuals. Stories are told about this reality, which facilitate either the transformation of this reality or its conservation (White, 2000).

I have used the experience of violence as a way of entering into an individual's living ecology. The way in which individuals interact with the violent event goes some way towards giving us an idea of how they interact with their ecology and of how that ecology is made up. The themes that I extracted from the interviews of my co-researchers are those that reflect their living ecology.

The importance of an ecological vantage point is paramount, especially as this relates to therapists.

Discussion

The importance of viewing phenomena from an ecological position is that it provides the opportunity for the transformation of our living ecologies on an individual level, which may spill over into the transformation of ecologies on a societal level. There are many ways to discuss this importance. However, as this is a psychological dissertation, I will discuss it from a psychological perspective generally and, more specifically, from a postmodern, social constructionist point of view.

Training of Therapists

Ecological Training

Clinical psychologists are trained primarily to carry out therapy – individual, family or group therapy. However, the dialogues that take place within this training are vital in influencing whether the psychologist will eventually take a lineal, content-based view, on one side of the continuum, or will be able to work ecologically. Although a therapist may change the way she works over the years (Hoffman, 1993), it is possible that she may contribute to psychological damage if she has not been effectively trained. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, once a therapist's own violence is locked away and unacknowledged, this allows the opportunity for it to rear its head in a therapeutic space, in a potentially damaging way (Pranger, 1997). This is true not only of violence, but of all those aspects that the therapist chooses to lock away.

Baker (1998) talks eloquently about the process of training therapists. Of particular relevance and importance here is the process she refers to through which trainee therapists journey in their training. At the outset, students begin to think about their training in an academic way. This is much safer than allowing the emotions that they feel through the training to surface, as training is an extremely anxiety-provoking situation in which trainee therapists may well feel unsafe. However, shortly after this point, trainee therapists begin to realise that they cannot continue to deal with issues in an academic way and that their inner selves are beginning to emerge. This is one of the crucial points in training, which facilitators or trainers need to recognise and use in the development of the trainee therapist. Baker (1998)

says that, at this point, it is important for trainee therapists not to become overwhelmed by these feelings, but as important, is that they not be rescued by the trainers. Baker goes on to caution that it is possible at this juncture that trainers may allow trainee therapists to become invisible through the non-acknowledgement of their pain.

At this early stage in training, it could be beneficial for trainers to position their training within an ecological framework. This would mean acknowledging the ecology from which the trainee therapist comes, which would be different for each individual, and using this ecological view to facilitate the creation of a safe place within the training into which the trainee therapist is allowed to bring her living ecology. A postmodern perspective would hold that the trainee therapist's living ecology cannot be divorced from her training, just as a client's living ecology cannot be separated from her therapeutic encounters.

Within this safe space, the trainer could initiate or permit a dialogue that would facilitate the transformation of the trainee therapist's story, whether it be a story dominated by violence or a story about another phenomenon (Baker, 1998). As Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) point out, it is through such a dialogue that one finds a connectedness to others, which facilitates an understanding of both oneself and others. Transformation or conservation of the story may become apparent at this point.

By contrast, to ignore the feelings of trainee therapists at this crucial juncture and leave them unacknowledged is to commit an unethical and violent act.

Although this process has an early beginning in the training, it may continue throughout the entire training process. Through the ecological training described above, the trainee therapist learns a different experience, of allowing the essence of herself to show, and this triggers a domino effect of becoming more real in each situation. After training is concluded, it becomes part of the way in which the individual interrelates and is taken into each living ecology, including the therapeutic situation.

Training in Techniques

Another way in which trainers can use the ecological framework for training is through the recognition that techniques, although useful in some instances, are not paramount.

Gianfranco, Lane and Wendel (1992) comment on the paradoxes to which trainers expose their trainee therapists when training them in techniques. The trainer believes in her own techniques, and this may contribute to a feeling on the part of the trainee therapist that what she does is not good enough or is ineffective. An over-emphasis on techniques may also rob the trainee therapist of the opportunity to develop as an individual (Keeney, 1990). Techniques do not often take the process of interaction into account and may therefore be harmful if used in a therapeutic situation in which the client is either not ready for a given technique or is too traumatised to cope with it.

The type of therapy that has become popular in the treatment of trauma related problems is brief therapy (Brief Therapy Institute of Sydney, 2000; Hajiyiannis & Robertson, 1999; Lankton, 1998). As the name suggests, this therapy is a short-term approach. According to the Brief Therapy Institute of Sydney (2000), it often lasts for approximately six sessions. Its focus is on goals and how to achieve them. These goals assist clients in coming up with solutions, rather than becoming lost in their problems. The technique therefore concentrates on the present and does not "dig up" past occurrences in the client's life. The Brief Therapy Institute of Sydney maintains that the overriding objective of brief therapy is transformation. Proponents of this modality believe that through transforming a client's current state, she is able to move ahead with her life. The Brief Therapy Institute of Sydney (2000, p. 2) acknowledges that brief therapy may seem a simplistic approach. However, they deflect this criticism by saying that it has evolved through a continuous examination of the question: "what do clients and therapists do that works?"'

According to Hajiyiannis and Robertson (1999), brief therapy integrates principles from psychodynamic theory and cognitive-behavioural theory. The cognitive-behavioural component is employed in developing coping skills and identifying cognitive distortions, while the psychodynamic component is employed in integrating the traumatic event, thereby preventing repression of this event. Its

epistemology is the "recognition that trauma impacts on both internal and external psychological functioning" (Hajiyiannis & Robertson, 1999, p. 4).

In summary, this model consists of the following five components:

- telling and retelling of the story

- normalising the abnormal

- talking about self-blame and survivor guilt

- restoring coping mechanisms

- creating meaning

Hajiyiannis and Robertson (1999) report that in an appraisal of this model by counsellors who were trained in its use, it was found to be useful with clients across cultural, age, gender, kind of trauma suffered and socio-economic boundaries. It was found that different clients responded to different components, but that all clients found at least one component that was useful from the five outlined above. It was said to be flexible enough to be able to be moulded into the therapist's unique theoretical orientation (Hajiyiannis & Robertson, 1999).

This said, the appraisers did outline many shortcomings of this model, some of which contradict the perceived strengths. Of interest to this discussion are the following shortcomings mentioned by Hajiyiannis and Robertson (1999):

- The model was less effective with older black males whose beliefs were very traditional. Therapists evidently found that with such clients the non-judgemental counselling stance elicited feelings of helplessness within them.

- The model was felt to be less useful in addressing anger resolution.

- Perhaps of greatest importance to this discussion, the model was regarded as being particularly ineffectual with regard to the last component, namely, the facilitation of meaning.

As Hajiyiannis and Robertson (1999) explain, clients report that the increase in violent crime and the perceived randomness of these crimes make it more difficult to find meaning in what looks like disorganised destructive behaviours. It was reported that the briefness of the model worked against the possibility of creating an ecology where meaning could be explored. This was the "greatest weakness"

identified by Hajiyiannis and Robertson (1999, p. 9) in their paper. They go on to say that meaning could only be found after undertaking an in-depth exploration of the client's life. Because the model was a brief therapy model, there was no time for this to occur. Further, it was stated by the counsellors in their assessment of this model that in the "absence" of meaning, clients resorted to racism, anger and disillusionment (Hajiyiannis & Robertson, 1999, p. 9).

Perhaps the shortcomings of brief therapy may be summarised as having to do with the fact that this therapeutic technique does not at all take into account the living ecology of the individual. In fact, it attempts to separate and isolate the individual from her ecology and concentrates on the violent experience, to the exclusion of everything else. From a postmodern and social constructionist perspective, it is not surprising that meanings cannot be made through this technique. The dialogue is stunted through the inability of the client to talk about her living ecology. This prevents the co-creation of a safe ecology through the introduction of silence and separateness. Simpson (1991) talks about the potential dangers of ignoring the living ecology of an individual, specifically in relation to violent experiences. Among these dangers he names delegating responsibility to "others" for the violence that occurs outside of an ecology, as well as dealing with it in a superficial way that does not take the humanness of people into account. He also discusses the danger of dealing with the individual experience of violence rather than the "collective experience of violence" (Simpson 1991, p. 4).

Trainee therapists trained in techniques such as the brief therapy technique discussed above, may fail to recognise the individuality and unique humanness of each therapeutic encounter. They may also not recognise the impact of the therapeutic experience upon them. Therapeutic encounters become ecological once the therapist becomes part of the client's living ecology, when this ecology is brought into the therapeutic encounter and acknowledged (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001). By excluding the client's living ecology, it becomes difficult to establish a safe ecology in which the client can confront her feelings, upon which the violent experience has impacted, and in which she can co-create meanings. The feelings of discomfort within the therapist can be more easily thrown into complex theoretical understandings, pinned upon the client or upon her story of violence (Lifschitz &

Oosthuizen, 2001). The "expert therapist" may thus facilitate more damage in this kind of therapeutic encounter.

My Experience of Psychology Training

Part of my own experience of training was that, in certain instances, I felt unacknowledged and helpless. At times, information I gave about my living ecology was ridiculed, which had the effect of silencing me and isolating my living ecology from my training ecology. I was, at times, also led to believe that my way of seeing things and my therapeutic style were not as they should be. This kind of information was, for me, "more of the same" as it had the same impact on me as my experiences with my family had had in the past. The violence that I experienced as a child had also left me feeling unacknowledged, silenced and isolated. However, because of the contribution of other parts of my training, which did acknowledge my inner self and my therapeutic self, I was able to transform the story of "unacknowledgement", silence and isolation into something useful for myself. This experience in the training impacted upon my living ecology and contributed to my decision to carry out the mini-research project with my father that is included as part of this dissertation. Again, transformation was given an opportunity. This dissertation is a continuation of that transformation. I expect this process to continue indefinitely.

Training as Contributing to an Ecology of Violence

It is possible that some trainers who work with trainee therapists contribute to an ecology of violence. Just the short discussion above reveals ways in which training may be silencing of trainee therapists' inner selves. Trainee therapists are given limited opportunities to bring into their training parts of their living ecology, while the rest is locked away in a silent place. This contributes to the separation of parts of the trainee therapist's living ecology, with compartments that contain specific emotions and experiences. These compartments are enclosed by non-permeable boundaries, and the compartmentalisation fragments and isolates the living ecology of the trainee therapist and eventually, of the therapist, leaving little opportunity for collaboration. From a postmodern perspective it is argued that this impacts upon the therapist's therapeutic encounters and therefore upon the client who has experienced violence, conserving the fragmentation and isolation of this

experience. Although one can read much about the ethics in psychology in a content way (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2002; Steere, 1984), this silencing and separating, fragmenting and isolating, and prevention of transformation of the living ecology are not broached, yet in my view these lie at the very heart of the ethics of psychology.

As Keeney (1983) informs us, therapy is listening to "stories and stories about stories". In therapy we have the opportunity to transform the violent stories that are told to us and to facilitate our clients' co-creation of a different reality, by bringing into the therapeutic encounter the wider ecological frame of their living. In this kind of ecological therapeutic encounter, the violent story of our client's living finds expression in a safe, holding space and the transformation that occurs within this space can be brought into other ecologies of the client's living (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001).

Alternatives to the Lineal Way of Dealing With Violence

In order to deal with violence effectively and ecologically, there needs to be a recognition of violence. Much of the violence that occurs is unrecognised and, when it is, the ecology in which it occurs often remains unacknowledged (McKendrick & Hoffman, 1990). In order to recognise and acknowledge violence, the silence that surrounds it needs to be 'unsilenced' and therefore, needs to be spoken. If an ecology is created in which that unbearable pain that one holds has the opportunity to be spoken, the long process of transformation is given the opportunity to begin (Lifschitz & Oosthuizen, 2001). Therefore, ecological training of therapists in particular, but of other professionals too – sociologists, social workers, occupational therapists, politicians, psychiatrists and correctional officers – could contribute to a different way of dealing with violence. This could short-circuit the cycle of violence through promoting a more effective understanding of the ecology and the promotion of transformation of ourselves, our ecologies and our entire society.

Opportunity for Further Research

Through this dissertation, I have been given the opportunity to delve deeply into the phenomenon of violence. However, there were many other phenomena that I have had to research in order to write this dissertation. This has provided me with food for thought about further research that could be carried out in the field of violence, as well as in regard to the concepts of ecology, ethics, psychology training, therapy, psychiatry and community psychology.

In all of these fields, my overriding feeling about future research into them is that an ecological perspective would yield more useful information than other, more lineal, approaches. Much of the literature that I surveyed was written and researched from a lineal perspective. This left me feeling frustrated and angry, as if I was at the end of a dark road. However, taking the ecological aspects of these phenomena into account allowed me to feel there was light at the end of the tunnel.

Although some of the future research questions that I thought about have already been researched and written about, it is often in a lineal, cause and effect way. Issues that I have thought about for future research include the following:

- A study of the ecology of legalised violence, such as that in politics (Cock, 1990); corporal punishment (Sloth-Nielsen, 1990); sport (Siff, 1990); schools (Holdstock, 1990); psychology training (Baker, 1998); and medicine (Szasz, 1961).

- A comprehensive study of the violent ecology of mental institutions (Szasz, 1961).

- A study of the violence of medical model diagnosis and treatment (Szasz, 1961) in South African mental health circles and the violence of stigmatisation that this brings into the patient's other living ecologies.

- A study of the ethics that guide the profession of psychology and the way in which the current ethics, as outlined in the Ethical Code of Professional Conduct (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2002), contribute to silencing some processes that occur between therapist and client. This silencing contributes, to a much larger extent, to the real ethical issues.

- A study of the social discourse of violence in current day South Africa and the way that this is presented in this ecology, specifically through the media, and the

impact it has on individuals. This study could incorporate the inability of individuals to confront their own violence within themselves and the way in which this contributes to maintaining the status quo of the bigger social discourse.

- A workshop to introduce individuals to the idea contained in the point above, thereby co-creating the opportunity not only for an ecological way of thinking to be borne in them, but also for individual healing to occur through delving into one's dark places in a safe and collaborative ecological framework.

- A comparative study of the frameworks from which domestic violence, specifically, is dealt with through non-governmental organisations (Padayachee & Singh, 1998) and whether these could become more effective by using an ecological framework.

- A study of the ecology of organisations that deal with violence (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2000), examining whether the ecology of violence is mirrored within such organisations, between their employees.

- A workshop on the legitimisation of anger and violence within oneself, again within a safe and collaborative ecological framework.

Meta-Reflections on This Ending Point

To end this dissertation does not mean that the processes I have explored through interaction with it come to an end. It is merely a punctuation of ending.

I have reflected upon literature, media reports and people in my writings. All these reflections have enriched my experience of violence. My viewing position shifted numerous times, which aroused many feelings, including feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, isolation, being lost, being unacknowledged, inadequacy, anger, hatred, not fitting in, being left behind and not being good enough. Ultimately, my viewing position moved to one which is more encompassing rather than separating, and contributed to thinking of my living ecology as fluid, rather than reified and static. My hope is that readers of this dissertation will experience some part of this malleability and fluidity in their own ecologies of living.

My synthesis, as an epilogue, ends this chapter. I have given it the form of a few short paragraphs.

EPILOGUE

Synthesis

Viewing the world from my subjective standpoint only allows me to see phenomena within a 180 degree radius. Dialogue with others, through the written and spoken word, gives me the opportunity to stand high up on a mountain top and survey the many peaks and valleys of my self and my ecology. I see their relationships and I experience my own. I see their separateness and I experience my own. I see their mistrust and I experience my own. I see their losses and I experience my own. I listen to their meanings and I hear my own. I see their anger and experience my own. And I see their violence and I feel my own.

Together, our stories converge to elicit an ever-changing world, in which we live and of which we make meaning. Our stories shared are precious gifts that we give to others, from which their living is re-formulated, as is ours.

So when I see the violence within our South African ecology, I can no longer say that I am separate from it. I can no longer say that I despise what happens and divorce myself from it, or from the people involved. I see violence's mark of pain and I experience my own pain and my own violence. I look into my father's eyes and I see my own.

My whole world is interlinked and intertwined with the other. Much as it is easier, in the short term, to separate myself from the atrocities and pain that I see in this ecology, if I find it within myself first, my view of it becomes larger, more holistic. It becomes, in a word, complexified. From this viewing point, I can reach within, as well as without, with a different kind of understanding. This understanding does not spring from academic or cerebral activities. Rather, it springs from my humanness. Through this, then, I am able to bring more healing than harming into

my ecology, which I can allow to seep through into other ecologies with which I interact. This gives meaning to my living.

> "Whoever fights monsters, should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look into the abyss, the abyss also looks into you." (Nietzsche quoted in Pistorius, 2000).

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APPENDIX 1

Interview – Co-Researcher One

It was the 27th of June, I always tell people that. I was on my way to book club and I went to fetch a friend at about quarter to six, no quarter to seven, just before dusk. Her house has got a wall, but her garages are open to the road, so there's no gates or anything. And I got out and I rang the buzzer to say, "I'm here", and she said, "Fine I'm coming, five minutes, I'm coming now, just wait for me." And I actually looked, stood outside my car for a while, about a minute or so, because there were two little boys on BMX bicycles and they were going into their gate and then I got into the car and I was waiting for her and she came out her gate and as she came out there were two black chaps coming up to her. And I actually thought, "Oh, they're looking for a job", you know, how stupid can you get. Anyway, the one grabbed her and pulled her to the other chap and then he took out his gun and he came up to the driver's door. Because what she was doing, she was also faffing at the back door, she thought somebody was at the front with me and she was going to get into the back and he came up with a gun and he said, "Get out of the car." So we got out, I got out the car and then the second chap who had grabbed my friend was looking for the bags. He wanted the bags, he said "Where're the bags, where're the bags?" Now I usually keep my bag down at my feet, but I had actually put it in the back and he didn't give me time to tell him and as he was asking for the bags, the other guy was taking my rings. So he took all my rings and everything and I had a long sleeved shirt on, so he didn't see my watch and I had a gold bracelet on. But the second guy, the one that didn't have the gun, he was quite abusive, he was "Fuck you, fuck you", you know, so he was quite abusive. So anyway, he saw that the guy with the gun was taking my

rings, so he decided to do the same with my friend and then basically they just said to us, they took my friends keys and I thought, at that stage, I thought, "Ha, don't rape us" because you know, you think when they're taking the keys that they're going to take you inside, but she's actually got a dog in her courtyard so they wouldn't really have gone inside and they made us lie down and the guy casually with the bags, took the bags under his arm and walked down the road and there was actually a car waiting for them down the road and then the guy with the gun got in the car and drove off and left us there. So we were very lucky. You know, I said to this friend of mine, I was glad she was with me. I'm sorry that she had to go through the whole thing but they were definitely opportunists because they must have driven past and seen me waiting in the car and decided to take the car. But in that respect, I think they were more looking for bags and jewellery than they were for the car and the car probably was just. I actually got the car back. Yes, yes they found it that night in Alex so you know, so I think they were opportunists, took the car and waited to see if anybody would come and find it and because nobody, ah, because they did find it, but they got the bags and the. Then we just, she was basically near the car and I said to her, come this side and then they drove off and as soon as they were gone, as the guy was out the driveway, we knocked on the garage door because they had the keys and her maid was there and I phoned my husband immediately and she. The police actually got their story mixed up because they actually, when we were waiting for them to arrive, they drove up the road. And with sirens and everything and then about five minutes later, they came back and they said they've just driven past, it must have just happened, but you know you don't want to correct them, but it had actually happened at about quarter to seven in the evening and the police were there at about seven. And then my husband, he came down to sort everything out. And he knows the deputy director of traffic metro so he put an APB; he phoned (name) to put one out.

I: And the car was fine when you found it?

The back, the parcel shelf was broken and so instead of going through the boot they went through the back to get the CD shuttle and the radio, you know, so little things, not major damage, just more of an irritation than anything else. And I've still got the car.

I: And how do you feel about driving it?

Well you see the thing is, I actually hate the car. Not because of the incident, I've had an accident in the car as well, so with having an accident, I always hate keeping a car, I mean, I'm terrible, I've been married fourteen years and had thirteen cars, so I love cars, so (my husband) said to me he said," You were wishing this car away", and I actually was and he said "Because your mindset was that you didn't want this car, they actually came after you in this car." So he blames, he says "It's your fault, because your mind was saying get rid of the car." So, *ja* I've still got the car and I'm nagging like hell to get rid of it, but you know, my husband, we had an accident in his car, we've had an horrific time this year you know, with cars and my son's bird died and my uncle died, so it's really been an horrific time. So *ja* but you know I mean, I wasn't really affected by the hijacking and I'm still not, I mean I say you know, a lot of people say how are you feeling and actually I'm fine. I said to (my husband) I was at the traffic lights down at (name) road and a guy must have jumped off a bakkie to cross the road and a motorbike was coming down the road and there was a like a bit of a scream and then I get a bit nervous, then I sort of look around and jump. But I really am not fazed by it anymore. I think more the accident in the car has affected me because I'm wary of cars jumping out and people walking across the road and animals. I had a bad, the Tuesday after the accident, I had a bad night on the Wednesday, it was my anniversary, but that's just because I got nothing (laughs) but you know and then I was in tears and then (my husband) phoned, I've got a psychiatrist as a friend and he phoned her and she said unless she starts panicking and things, it's really not a problem, which I haven't done.

I: You weren't nervous after the hijacking at all?

No, no, no, not, no.

I: Amazing.

No.

I: Why do you think that is?

I just think that you've got to sort of think, well, I just said that's Africa you know, it's like this in Africa and these things happen. I think if they had done more, like

raped us, or something as I say, that was one of my thoughts, I thought "Please don't rape us', then I think, then it would have been, it would have affected me more. Because we were fine, you know, it sounds terrible, but that's the thing. My friend was really badly traumatised. She actually, she, I think because it happened at her house and also the kids weren't involved, you know, there were no children, it's a terrible thing to say but you know it is you know, I mean. My son is more nervous about it than, I mean, he will say when we drive up, just watch or, he's a very anxious child, I mean, he's been for play therapy. Just generally. He's much better than what he was but *ja*, so he's like his grandfather, he's a very anxious child.

I: Do you talk about it at home?

Yes, no he knew immediately and what had happened was my bag, somehow on my cell phone, it went to a friend and she saw the number and she phoned the number back and the guys were actually saying "Oh we've just stolen the madam's bag and her car and we've hit her and we've done this and we've done that", so they phoned another friend of mine who then phoned the house to say what was going on and (my son) then said "Oh no, my mom's been hijacked."

I: Otherwise he would probably feel that something was going on and not know?

Ja.

I: How did your husband react?

Not the way I wanted him to.

I: How did you want him to react?

I wanted him to say, "Oh thank goodness you're alive", you know. But he's not a very emotional sort of person, you know, I think he was, I'm sure he's you know, he's glad that everything happened for the best and whatever but, I mean he, *ja*, I don't know how he felt about it, he's never really spoken about it, you know I mean the kids talk about it, then we talk about it. We haven't really spoken about it since, you know. I mean I did say to him on the Wednesday or the Thursday, after I'd had my bit of tears and whatever, I said the thing that, "I need to know that you appreciate me and that you were glad that I wasn't raped or that I wasn't killed or whatever" and he just sort of brushes it off you know.

And you know, I'd, you hear a lot of stories and people say let them take the car and so I just said "Take it, take it, take it, take it." I think my friend screamed and if I think about it, I think I sort of remember screaming, you know just give a bit of a yell and you sort of block it off. Now I said to the police that the guy had a Brazilian soccer shirt on and he was bald, that's the one I vaguely remember. And they said "If we catch them, could you identify?" and I was adamant that I could identify them, but now if I think back there's no ways that I could identify them, no ways that I could you know, if they went into a line up, there's no way. You think about what's happening at the time, but block it off in a way, you know what I'm trying to say, in order to survive. I'm more angry that they took my jewellery, you can't get that kind of thing back, it costs a lot of money and you wouldn't be able to. I would want, if I could find them, that's what I would want. I would want that more than anything else. I would want them to go to jail, definitely, because I feel that you know we got off lightly, but maybe the next person won't get off lightly. So the one chap that was swearing, I'm sure it was maybe his first job, that's why he was swearing, and he was swearing and he was trying to sort of demoralise. He just wanted to show that people like that were walking around. I never, I actually don't even dwell on it you know, I just carry on with life. (My husband) said to me that I'm too blasé about how I drive, I mean, I'm more aware now because of the car. I think my friend was more hysterical than I was and I was actually calm. He also couldn't tell what's in the house, so they don't know if there's a husband waiting in the house or. It was as the sun was setting so they couldn't really do much in the road. I think my friend would have been a better candidate than I was. I just that, you know, we're sort of strong people. Well, I've learned to be a strong person because there's certain things. I don't say I never get panic attacks but you know often, but I haven't had one since then, but you know I've had problems with my, my side of the family. Then you sort of worry about what's going on there but you know, the one that we worry about is my son and he's fine. I just think it's Africa and unfortunately, we live in Africa and we must just deal with things.

Interview – Co-Researcher Two

A Sunday evening, half past nine, quarter past nine, sitting at the (bar) in (suburb), I don't know if you go there much?

I: No.

In a shopping centre, modern, one of those modern convenience shopping centres where young folk go to relax I suppose. It was after (work). I'm quite an uneasy, untrusting sort of person, just in the new South Africa, because every person I see I think wants to try and steal something from me. And a little bit paranoid, but the one place where you do feel safe is an environment where there's 25, 30 people. It's loud, it's noisy, it's very vibey. And you're laughing a lot and you're enjoying, you're letting your hair down. And that is broken by the sound of black, male voices and it goes along the lines of "Down, down, down, down". And you hear this and suddenly the whole place has gone quiet and people are diving under tables in all directions and you don't even think, you just think "I better go down" and you do and within a minute there's a guy standing quite close to you and you hear a gun shot and you don't look up, you're petrified beyond belief. I suppose the first thought that goes through your mind is maybe this is it, or maybe I'm going to get hurt, or maybe I'm going to get shot, or maybe you know, pick on me and want something from me and how can it be happening in a place that's so busy and where are the staff and what are the staff doing and where are the cops and all of that flashes through your mind in about ten seconds. And before it started, it's finished and within a minute, they're gone and they've taken a few things, cell phones stolen, wallets stolen, both of which were lying on the counter. Car keys weren't stolen and it just amazed me that I would leave those things lying on the bar counter, but I've never thought previously that somebody could come in and taken them. So I think twice about leaving stuff like that lying around anymore. Complete invasion of privacy. Got up to establish that my (colleague), who's now working out of this office, was hit on the back of the head and she was right next to me, but I didn't hear it and I didn't see it. She was like just behind me. So she was smashed on the back of the head with a gun and she's bleeding all over the place and the gun shot that I heard I think that she had been shot. Meanwhile, it's another guy that was walking through the front door that

was shot. And it was meant to be a body shot, but they caught him in the arm, so he's down on the ground.

I: So what did you do, the first thing that you did? Or can you remember?

I thought (colleague) had been shot so I rushed (colleague) to the bathroom. I realised soon after that she hadn't been because I felt where the blood was coming out of and it was a gash in the back of her head. Rushed her to the bathroom and started cleaning her up and my logic tells me, "They aren't going to come back", but something deeper than that tells me "But what if they do?" So you're a little bit concerned and the doors are now closed and everybody's talking this quiet hush and there's just a feeling of shock and a feeling of an invasion of privacy and within a couple of minutes you start feeling anger. I certainly did. And then it's, has your car been stolen? and the keys that were lying there, some of the keys were taken, so we quickly go out and see if the cars are still there. And the guy that's been shot, you don't want to get too close because there's a whole lot of people over him already and the security in the complex are nowhere to be seen. You just think that there's too much involvement. One guy tips off another guy that kicks back another guy and the staff working there knew it was going to happen because they had the cameras cut before it happened. The security guys outside knew it was going to happen, that's why they're conveniently away from the (bar) when it did happen. And you just start thinking that the new South Africa is just not such a hot place to be if you're white. Literally.

I: Do you think that that's what it is?

I think blacks across the spectrum gang up on middle to upper class whites in retribution for apartheid. And I'm almost 100% sure. From the guy that fills your tank, to the person that serves you in a shop, to the guy that serves your table in a restaurant, to the guy that panel beats your car, to whoever it is. There's no feeling of: it's a human and I should protect them because they're human too. It's happening to you because you've really got more than we've got and it's redistribution of wealth. And for a fact I know that people that evening were involved in what went down. Whether there was somebody in having drinks with us, watching what was going on or if it was somebody serving behind the counter. Somebody in the (bar)

gave them a brief. The fact that the camera wires were cut tells me somebody working there must have been involved. The fact that it was manager's conference night out and the manager's weren't there, tells me it was inside. The fact that the doors were normally locked at nine or closed at nine and on that particular evening, that Sunday night, they were wide open at half past nine, tells me it was an inside job.

I: How has it affected you since then? How do you feel?

We've had counselling. We had three sessions of counselling where a few of us involved sat and spoke about it and spoke it through. I'm ready for them the next time.

I: What would you do?

Shoot the shit out of them. I won't give up anything of mine ever again. If I have to put myself in jeopardy to do that, then I did that anyway. They could have quite easily have shot me that night. It was quite unprovoked. The fact that they're so quick to pull the trigger also tells me it's pent up latent hatred that comes through at every opportunity. Somebody that doesn't give them the wallet fast enough, or any little excuse and I haven't become over the top. I'm not paranoid about security, but I'm to some degree a little bit wary. I'm not as, like as relaxed as I used to be, particularly not in public places. This safety in numbers doesn't work for me. Completely disproved in one fell swoop. The fact that it's a little guy that's so nervous and his hand is shaking and he'll pull the trigger at any time worries me more than it would be if it was a guy in a suit with a well organised outfit. I'd probably feel safer in that kind of environment. If the motive was strictly financial gain and that's where it ended, it would be acceptable. But I suppose what hurts me or worries me a little bit is that it's sometimes it's unprovoked. Well, about the incidents that I've heard. And every time I talk to somebody, they've got their own story so I think to myself, my story's not such a big story. In actual fact, in the big picture of things, what happened to me is happening to eighty percent of whites and I say whites, it's happening to blacks too. I don't read the *Sowetan,* but I'm sure there's a lot of stuff going down there, well I know there is. But I know the people in my circle of friends, in my family and their friends and everybody that I know that

kind of middle of the road, drives a decent car, can afford to go out every now and then, those guys are having a lot of stuff stolen. Cell phones, car hijackings, armed robberies, break ins, it's happening to everybody I know, so I'm not naïve enough to think, "Shame, feel sorry for me". But in the big picture of things, I don't think crime stats are coming down in the country. In actual fact, in certain pockets, like in this north-west area, it's gone through the roof and your minister of safety and security, I could have a discussion with now and he could pull out his moratorium on crime stats, or he could give me the latest break down and I'm telling you a lot of the things aren't reported in volume. Because there was one case docket opened for our incident and twenty-five, thirty people had stuff stolen. They could have had thirty case dockets opened. The guy that was shot could have opened his own case docket. So, I'm of the opinion that crime's getting worse before it gets better. That doesn't make me feel comfortable about things.

I: Do you mean that it is going to get better or do we have to do something? What is the solution?

You've got to stop the illegal immigrants coming into the country, which you can't do because there's too much bribery and corruption in this country. I've had one of my gardeners, a Zimbabwean, deported and he got as far as the Joburg station and paid his way off the train. It cost him R200. So they can put their systems in place, but until they teach their cops and everybody involved in government, security, crime prevention, all of that. Until those guys, in their minds, know that stealing is wrong and taking bribes is wrong, we're on a one way slide. This country cannot be saved.

I: What you're saying is educate?

I don't even know if education is the key. The key is moral values. You've got to teach people the difference between right and wrong. Because education doesn't necessarily do that.

I: So educating them on moral issues?

Ja, it's going to take thirty years, forty years. In that time, the good faring South African Samaritan with half a rand in his bank account and half a bit of intelligence is gone. The people that aren't leaving are the people that normally can't afford to.

I'm in (business) I see the ones that are going and I see all the others that wish they could. Because nobody wants to live in a country where you don't feel safe in your day to day activities. Every time I see a black guy walking down the road towards my stationary car, I watch him all the way. I'm ready to pull, to defend myself. It's not a way to live.

I: Do you find that you're trusting yourself less because you mentioned that you had difficulty trusting people even before. Do you question yourself more now? When you had put your keys and your wallet on the table and they were taken in some way maybe you thought you shouldn't have done that?

I've always been an individual that was democratically raised, with my stepfather carrying an ANC card like long before the ANC came into, got the limelight that they did get. So I was very democratically raised. Always treated blacks with a lot of dignity and respect, but unfortunately, at the end of the day, the person that's robbing you doesn't know that. I've got a standard approach to them now. Don't trust them, don't give them anything. I'm not as kind as I used to be. I used to give everybody money because I'm a generous person. I don't do that anymore, why? Because for all the years of being good, it's got me nowhere. I do believe the following: I believe if you treat your gardener and your maid and black people in your close proximity, if you treat them well, you tend to create a bit of a safe haven around you. They won't go and tell friends what you've got, because they respect the relationship they have with you. But as for everybody else, no more Mr Nice Guy. I got my money because I worked hard for it. If you want money, go work. Why don't I give handouts anymore? Because it doesn't teach them to get ahead. As long as they're getting handouts, they'll carry on getting handouts. When they stop getting hand outs, they'll take, because everybody else is taking. A maid that worked for me for many years, I used to find stuff regularly in her maids room. And she was of the belief that she could share it, you know. And she was a good person, she's got good morals but where did she learn that? I'm not sure, but there's something in their culture that if you want to take something from a white guy, it's OK and if you shoot one of them, don't worry because they shot many of our children during the apartheid. I don't know what they say. You need to go interview lots of black people and find out exactly what their feelings are about, but their true feelings. Because I try and speak to people, to blacks, my caddy, my gardener, my maid, the guy that fixes up, all of

them I look after and I'm known to look after them and they like me a hell of a lot and I've asked them and they can't really put a finger on it. What else do you want to ask me?

I: Do you have any thoughts about why it was you and why you were there at that time?

Complete fate.

I: You believe in fate?

I believe things happen because they happen. I don't believe things happen because of auras or things like that. It's like why was they guy crossing the road when a piano fell out of the sky and believe me, they have. I believe a piano did fall out of a plane and it landed on somebody. So what was the guy doing walking along there at the time? No, I think things happen whenever they happen and if you try and read too much into it, you're going to confuse yourself.

If you think you're stopping crime in this country, you're wrong. What you need to do is spread the word around the townships, amongst your people, that those guys that are doing it, that isolated bunch, let's call it 5%, is wrong and. What I see happening at the moment with the blacks taking the law into their own hands, I think is great for the mental understanding of crime in this country because that's how they address it because they don't trust the cops and we don't trust the cops so we think, we try to have to. The two cops that arrived at the (bar), slouched down in the restaurant table, didn't look overly concerned, kind of like "Shame, you poor rich white people, it happened to you". That like, what do you call it, patronising, condescending. Then this big fat cop slouches down and wants coffee and wants to be spoon fed and I'm thinking, "Have you got the guys out there, are they looking for the car, what are you doing about the actual crime?" They think they're doing a lot because they're sitting there. We don't need them there afterwards, we only needed them there two minutes after the incident and then in and out to go and see, because they can't help us. After the incident, they can't help us. No investigating officer has phoned me since it's happened. I left a big report there with the one guy. Insurance, that's like three weeks delay. The system's just weird. Is that thing still running?

I: Yes.

I want to say something – this is for old Thabo Mbeki. Have you got time there?

I: *Ja.*

The only thing I want to say, is that I know it's a small minority of illegals, of locals, of Zimbabweans, of Mozambicans that are doing a lot of the crime, because there's no employment and they're living in this country and they expect to be getting ahead and they aren't. I've heard all those arguments and I understand it. But those 5% aren't the people that I'm really upset about. I'm upset about the other 80 that know who they are and won't say a word because it's kind of, we kind of understand why you're unhappy with the middle to upper class white person in this country, because he's driving the nice car and he's got the nice house and he's getting ahead and you aren't. So they kind of empathise with the guys doing the crime. I'm not saying they're involved with it. But it could be your maid, or it could be your gardener that know stuff that the cops need to know. Why don't they tell the cops? They're scared the cops will tell the criminals which happens, because the cops and the criminals also work hand in hand for kickbacks and then it will come back on them. So the problem with South Africa is nobody trusts each other and because there's no trust, the blacks won't, if the guy next door has got a new hi-fi that he stole yesterday, the person living next door won't say a word. Why? They're scared of retribution, but they've been hiding behind that for years. But until they're told that if we don't clean up our act, South Africa is going down the tubes, then, well, maybe that's what they want. They want another Zimbabwe, or another.

I: What is it that they want? What is their ultimate goal?

They want what the ANC promised them, jobs and houses and security and a life. And I think maybe the standard of living has come down for them over the last couple of years. I don't know. I think it's a slow process, I think a lot of what the government is doing is good. But they have got fundamental problems and those fundamental problems, until they're addressed at the core, nothing will work. Our economy might temporarily be going well, but a lot of people I talk to are battling. So what is perceived to be and what is, are two different things altogether.

I: So there are two things going on – one that is perceived to be going on and one that really is?

At the top level they think that crime is coming down, but at the bottom level, I can tell you, crime is going up. Why wouldn't it be going up? Guys don't stay in jail for longer than, the biggest criminals are always escaping from jail because they're buying themselves out, because there's so much bribery and corruption in this country. And there's bribery and corruption in all countries, but, there was bribery and corruption in the old government, but things were still, there was more law and order in my humble opinion. Now, it's, you get a fine, you pay the guy. Why don't you report him? Because, um, shit, you aren't the problem, you aren't meant to rectify it. It's the government's job. The government says you pay rates and taxes and you pay personal tax and you pay VAT and you pay transfer duty when you buy a property, with all of that money, they must employ their own people and put the right people in places with the right ideas. It's not my job to say to the guy that's on the take, "You aren't doing your job". It's their job to make sure those guys are caught up. That's all I have to say.

Interview – Co-Researcher Three

About half past nine in the morning, I had just got out the shower. My char was here and so was my gardener and the char was actually plugging something into the wall, she said. And I had left the garage door unlocked, like unlatched, and it was obviously, they just came and tested it and found it was open, but they couldn't open it properly because my daughter's car was in the way. It was the same guys that were here two years ago. At that time, we put up razor wire. The second time they managed to get in through a tiny little window. This time they crawled in, they got my maid and they told her to shush. I thought, first of all, my daughter and son-in-law had been caught in the gate, at the doorway. I was sitting on my bed, I had just had a shower, I had my head down blow drying my hair and this guy walked in and told me to be quiet. I put my towel around me and I said "No dammit, what are you doing in my room?" and I started screaming because I thought, you know, the agreement was that my gardener, if he ever heard myself or my maid scream, would jump over the nearest wall and go for help. So I screamed as loud as I could and he came and started hitting me. So I grabbed his hand, I said to him "Alright, just calm down, let's be calm about this" and as I was talking he started tying my hands, no before that, sorry, as I was talking to him, his friend came in and the other one came in with the char and was trying to stuff things in her mouth. The other one just came and started biting my fingers. I said to him "Don't bite my fingers my friend, because the rings come off" and he said, I'm going to use the exact words, he said "Shut up, fuck you". He bit my fingers, three of them, quite severely. And when I looked down I could see the skin and blood pouring and I thought, "Well obviously I'm in shock because I didn't feel that" you know. From sort of going in and doing this counselling and that I just thought "OK I'm in shock, that's the adrenalin, I didn't feel that". They had my cell phone and they had my rings, they took my cell phone and they started pulling the drawers out of the dressing table. It was only afterwards that I realised that the three of them were just as embarrassed about me being naked as I was, because they were looking everywhere else you know. But I only picked that up at about six o'clock in the evening when I was relating the story to my niece. And the funny thing is, I had been reading a newspaper the night before, my bedroom is always a mess in the morning. The newspaper was over my bag; the

newspaper was over the telephone, so they never saw the telephone. So I actually had my hand, if you don't mind, under the newspaper, I had taken the phone off the receiver and I was dialling the shop phone. I thought I would dial the shop because to dial 10111 you get "Hello, hello", nobody gives you any kind of service. But I was hoping somebody at the shop would listen and hear what was going on. I was actually hoping my husband would be there because he would have twigged. So I was dialling the shop phone and they started pulling out my drawers. I said to them "Yes there's money in one of those drawers" because there had been and I had forgotten that I had taken it out. Anyway, they got all excited, they started pulling out. I had forgotten we had a gun with no bullets in my husband's drawer. They found it. They got all excited, a gun, a gun, they were so happy, you know. With that, my gardener, instead of jumping over the wall, the twit, had come, in fact it was a good thing, he had come to the bedroom window. We've got trellidoor and he was trying to peep to see what was going on and the one guy who was still trying to tie (the maid) up and stuff things in her mouth heard him and said to them "There's somebody out there". And they felt so brave because they had this gun, so they went running out. Oh, and in the meantime one of them had said to (the maid) "Who was that that left? in Zulu or something. It was my daughter and her fiancé, but I still thought that somebody must have my daughter and her fiancé in front of the house. Anyway, they went running out with this gun and they ran around and apparently they just fired the gun three times at him. Two went running out and the third one obviously panicked and ran out after them and my char was phenomenal, she was literally on his heels, sort of almost on his heels and as he went out the bedroom door, the only door in the house that has got a key is my bedroom door, she slammed the door and locked it and he turned around to try and come in and he couldn't. He came through and by this time the other two had (the gardener) under the table and (the gardener) said he said to them "We must go quickly, because they've locked themselves in and I think they're phoning the police". Because as he slammed the door, I picked up the phone, because I had dialled and there was somebody on the other end, that guy (name) and I said to him, please call the police (guy's name) it's (name) and we're being attacked. There's three guys here and they now have a gun and I slammed the phone down. Dialled 10111, gave my address and I got "Can you spell that?" I spelled it for them. They said, "What's the nearest corner?" and I said

"(street names), but if you phone the (suburb) police, they know me. I'm a victim support counsellor". They got away, but when the police came down the drive, they found my car with the engine running and the radio in it. So I knew it's the same guys and I know they will be back in two years time.

I: What is this two-years thing?

I'm sure they do a circuit and our police just don't have proper training to investigate or something, because people just come around willy-nilly and it's bad policing and it's bad, I don't know. They just don't seem to have the ability to do proactive policing. They're very good at reactive policing. And I should imagine that's from the apartheid years. They were never taught anything except how to keep black people and white people apart. Anyway, everybody arrived. Well, first of all, when I phoned the police, I put the phone down, (guy's name) had got hold of (my husband) already. (My husband) phoned, that's my husband and said to me "Are you alright?" I said, "Yes I'm fine, but I can't stand here talking, I've got to go and get some clothes on" and slammed the phone down on him. "The police are going to be here any minute," says me. And also, I was running around and (the maid) had run into the toilet, she was sitting on my toilet weeping. So I was trying to calm her down, get dressed, you know, and with that, the police arrived and came to the door and (the maid) saw them and said to me, "It's the police, they can't get in". What had happened, they had taken the skinniest guy they could and stuffed him under the garage door. I went charging down without thinking, opened the door and the police are there with a gun. We both went "Whooh". But anyway, it was just everything, I ended up having to make endless cups of tea and hand out Rescue tablets to my son, my husband, my daughter, her fiancé, his mother.

I: And you?

That's what I do.

I: I know. Even when you're the victim, you're doing the same thing.

My son, eventually at 3 o'clock, said to my husband, "You know Dad, mom's been bitten, I think she must go to the doctor now. Forget about everybody else, tell them all to take a hike". Because every police station came. I had to give about three

statements. And then they all got it wrong anyway, it was unbelievable. I'm so angry. Anyway.

I: And what were the reactions of people?

My son went scouring the area and saying to everybody, I mean we had phone calls like you can't believe, because he went to every black person and said, "If you find these guys wearing these clothes and those clothes, there's a R10 000 reward". And they never got them, because I know what happened. They were youngsters, none of them were older than 20. I think they just jumped over this wall, they managed to climb up a tree and over the wall because they couldn't get over the wall otherwise. I think they just then waltzed off quite naturally into the cinemas at the (mall). And of course, the police didn't go there, they went down and battered the poor old homeless people that I feed. They come for food regularly. My maid said to the police "They weren't smelly and they were well dressed". In fact, if you could see them walking down, you would think they were young kids from (private school) or anywhere. Very well dressed. I don't think they expected to get in, I think they were a little bit surprised. I think they were also a bit shocked about how easy it was. In retrospect, I said to my husband, if I had only realised, maybe if I had gone "Aaaaah" they would have all run away, you know. Opened my towel and screamed at them. As I said to my son, you know, Captain (name) from (area) police, said (name) "Why didn't you battle them off or something?" I said to him "You know Captain, I had no clothes on". He said, "That was a hell of a disadvantage". I said "Exactly". But then, I go for spiritual direction and she was saying "You know (name), there were three of them". She said "And if you had started fighting, they might have strangled you. Because they didn't have weapons, doesn't mean they couldn't harm you". You know, you're actually told stay calm and I was, I was pretty much in control. I never felt that I was out of control. The best thing about it was when I went to the doctor; she put me on the anti- retrovirals because the bites were severe. I did research and discovered and that's the other thing, there's no real help for people who're raped or. Maybe if I had been raped, I would have gone to Milpark or something, they've got very good, you know, assistance. But for a bite, there was no help. I went to my doctor who actually had to look it up in a book. I mean, she's a switched on cookie, but she had to look it up in a book and tell me. And I actually phoned the AIDS

helpline and there was a black woman who, when she found out, she wasn't really interested. I found out about AIDS link and I phoned them and they were phenomenal. They said there were two people in the whole world since HIV started that have ever got it from a bite. The chances are so remote. But when I said to them "Do you think I should bother with taking these tablets, they're making me desperately ill? they said "No, you don't want to be the third one". But I said to them "I'm so ill" so they said to me "Has your doctor put you on Stemetil?" I said "No". They said, "You must phone your doctor". And I discovered that, I've spoken to young doctors who've had these needlestick injuries, and they don't know to take Stemetil. Because the one guy, a friend of my son's, said he stopped taking his after four days, he said, "How did you manage for 29 days?" I said, "I took massive doses of Stemetil". There was no ways that I was going to have a schizophrenic episode. And he said "Oh, I didn't think of that", so you know it's not common knowledge and it may make people's lives so much easier if they knew they could take Stemetil. I still felt dreadful and that was actually the worst, because it made me quite *deurmekaar* and I still carried on. It's amazing actually, I never felt, I didn't have to have sleeping tablets, I slept fine. Everything's fine. The only thing, the clinical thing you know, the adrenalin and. It was interesting you know, from a counselling. I was able to actually pin point, OK here comes the serotonin, that's why I'm feeling so tired, you know. And the shock, you know, this is all just reaction. So I had the physical reactions that I was able to pick up. But everybody's saying to me "But you must be in denial". And I was quite concerned about that because I didn't feel frightened. We went out to lunch on the Sunday and a young, 18-year-old black guy was our waiter and I was interested to see my reaction, cause you know when I do counselling, I've got a lot of people that their reaction is they hate all black people, they hate all young black people or they hate all black people with this kind of jacket, or that kind of look, or this kind of air, you know. Or they hate all white men or you know, whoever it is that harmed them, those are the people they hate. And they seem to take it into the rest of their lives. I was actually very interested, I was quite calculating about that, it was very interesting to keep a check on it. When we went out I looked at him and I thought, "He's a nice kid", you know and I thought "Well that, that's good". I felt good that I hadn't sort of carried this anger, because I still have it to this day. I still feel angry, but particularly at those three and I will

recognise them again, I will recognise and when they come in two years time, I'll have them arrested because I've seen these three hanging around the road before. So, you know, so I'm waiting for them.

I: And how does the anger come out?

Well, I'll be walking down to my bedroom, just minding my own business and you know, suddenly just think about the cross, they also snatched my cross and chain. My husband's given me another one, but it's completely different, you know. And then, what really affected me more than anything, my son was hijacked two weeks ago. He was selling his car and he advertised in the (magazine name). And I warned him and he said to me, "Mom don't be so psychotic. It's because of the work you do", he says. He says "I can't tell you how many hundreds of cars are advertised and you think they're going to come for mine". Well, they did. Somebody phoned here and they said, "Have you got tracker?" and I said, "Put the phone down". I said, "Nobody asks you if you've got tracker because everybody knows they have to have their own tracker installed". You know tracker is a personal thing, it goes from owner to owner, he's after your car. So anyway, then I gave him a long list of instructions: "don't see anybody unless there's security guards around, unless it's in a very public place and there's lots of people, never get into the car with them, rather keep their driver's license or ID book and they can take the car. Rather let them steal the car than shoot you". I thought that was all pretty good, but it wasn't good enough. They came to his office at about 4 o'clock. He said to his partner, "Look I'm just going to take this guy down and show him the car, etc. etc." He got through the security gate, through the security guards, and they just let him in, because he was walking. He looked around the car and (my son) said you can take the car for a drive, but you'll have to give me your ID. So he pulled out a gun and told (my son) to get into the car. Then he cocked the gun and told him to wave at the security guards. There was another car waiting outside with three other guys in it and two of them got out and got into (my son's) car. The guy put a gun to (my son's) head. He said, "Listen chum, don't put the gun to my head. Haven't you ever watched Pulp Fiction? If you hit a speed bump the gun goes off. I don't want to be that guy". He said to me afterwards, "You know mom, I tried my one-liners". (my son) was giving directions and he took a wrong turn. Then the one guy said to him, "You're taking us in circles". And (my son) said "No, I told

you, I took a wrong turn, don't panic". He asked them how business was and they said, "Actually great, we make R3m a month". He said, "Oh really, how about a job, a job for me?" They thought that was funny. Then he said, "How can you make R3m a month, how many cars do you hijack? And they said "Well you know, if you hijack a fancy Merc, that's R1m and blah-dy blah-dy blah". And they were quite blasé. They said to him "You better not do anything wrong". And he said to them, "But I'm not doing anything wrong". I always said to him "If you're ever in a hostage situation, try and talk to them. Help them to see you as a human being with a family, not as somebody just to be disposed of". Then he said he realised they were going out towards Soweto. So he asked them not to take him into Soweto, but to drop him outside, which they did. They told him he had to walk away from the car with his eyes closed and then lie down and not get up for half an hour. They made a big deal of pretending to talk to someone else on the phone saying, "Just watch this guy, he doesn't seem to be giving any trouble, but if he gets up before half an hour, shoot him". So they said to him, "Get up and run". He also asked them, "You don't need my SIM card, give me my SIM card", so they gave him his SIM card before he got out of the car. He also asked them for his laptop, but they didn't give him his laptop. He watched them go and when they had gone, he got up. When he ran, he did a little zigzag. That was the worst thing that ever happened to me. I felt it, I felt the shock. I have got arthritis, but it's never given me any trouble, but that weekend I was totally paralyzed. It actually had a bad effect on me. He was there, he was in control, he's OK. He's quite chuffed that he dealt with it. He also managed to keep his wallet because they said to him "Have you got a wallet?" And he said to them "No, I left it in the office". And that also gives me the colly-woggs actually. He said "I left it in the office" and every time they searched him, he had a leather jacket on, every time they searched him, he lifted the leather jacket so that they could search his pockets and they searched and they never thought to search the jacket pockets and he had his wallet with R2000. Now I'm on sleeping tablets. My attack was in March and I was back counselling, back living my life normally.

I: Has this affected your relationship with your son in any way?

Oh no, not really. I'm very fortunate I think, because my children have always chatted to me a lot, you know. They've always told me everything. He went through

a very bad patch where he was very ratty. And I wondered about whether I might have had that and I spoke to my husband and said "Was I ratty or something?" and he said, well actually he couldn't tell, because I was on these tablets. And so you know, I think that maybe that was probably my saving grace, that I was so ill the whole time, that that gave me the time to think and to work it through. Because I didn't have to go straight back to work, you know, I mean I did, I actually had like those 29 days without. We went away and (my husband) was hysterical because we were walking through the forest and he hit his head on a branch and there was a snake in the tree and it fell and landed on my feet and scurried through the forest. And I was just so mesmerised by its beauty; I'm not particularly scared of snakes anyway. But this poor old snake, I've never seen such a startled snake in my life. But because I was still so sick from the tablets and this is why I didn't go "Aaaah". Although when we did disturb a buck, I was ready to run, you know, because by now I was nervous. But, *ja* no, now I'm actually, we've always been able to talk about things, as I say. That first week after his attack, his partners, I don't know if they suddenly thought "Well good, he can't think straight, so now is the time to strike and see if we can get him out of the business and stuff", because then they started doing really ugly things you know, business wise. So I don't think he had a chance, I mean, he got here, he went straight to work the next day, he wouldn't stay at home, I wanted him to stay at home. I immediately wanted him to stay. I was aware that I couldn't, you know, with sons you learn never to show that kind of panic, you know. When he arrived, he realised, funnily enough they know me well enough, because while I was waiting for them to come home, my husband to bring him home, they phoned me and said could I go out, there had been a hijacking in Blairgowrie and I did think about it for a split second and then I thought, "I don't know if I can drive". I said "I can't do it" and they said, "There's nobody else". I said, "Well I'll phone, give me his number" and they gave me his number and I phoned the guy and he said, "You know, this is the second time". And I said to him "Well you know, this is too big for me. You must see a psychologist, take your child to a psychologist". And I said to him "This is what you might be feeling". And then I said to him "The best thing is to talk about, tell everybody about it, then come and do the trauma debriefing". The problem with that is that 99% of men won't have a conversation, they don't want to be seen as woosie. I say to them "Trauma debriefing is not

counselling. What it is, is debriefing, literally debriefing, like you have in the army, bring it to the surface of your mind, so it doesn't come back as a nebulous fear later as a panic attack, or something like that". I tell them that so that they know what to expect. I wish I could get feedback, come back to me, because I've never known. Somebody said "Oh you mustn't give them so much information, they don't take it in". And this girl came back and I said to her "So how did you manage to cope?" And she said, "Well, you did". And I said "No, but I wasn't there". She said "No, afterwards". She said, "When you were talking to me and my friend and I, when the symptoms hit, as we felt tired, instead of thinking we're going nuts, we said "Oh yes, the lady at the police station said". The next day, her friend had the runny tummy, she was constipated, they said to each other, "Yes, but remember, the lady at the police station said". And so, and everything came up, when they started getting ratty, when they started being forgetful and they said that helped them tremendously, until they went for the trauma debriefing. So that was very helpful for me, because it made me feel that at least, they may not be able to say "This is what she said", but as the symptoms and things like that hit, they can say, you know. So we managed to talk about it and discuss it, but I learned something there too, because half way through the week, (my son) started worrying about his business and we always pray about it, the whole family, and his father and brother kept phoning him and he said to me, "I'm going to lose this, I'm losing the money I put into this business, what am I going to do?" I kept on saying to him "But you've got so much going for you" and things like that, to try and I said "I'm proud of you because you've done everything. And if you have to give up this business and they take all your money, you will still cope". And I just said to him "You know, you've got daddy and I". He said, "Having to leave home again at my age". At the same time, his friend had said to him, you know, whenever he started getting depressed he thinks of his friendship with (my son). So I said to him "So have you decided to give up being depressed?" He said, "Well you know, look mom, I have to tell you, I know you love me and I know you talk sense and you've never lied to me, but you're my mother, I expect you to tell me things, but I can't take you seriously". So I asked him "So what got through to you?" He says "(girlfriend) and his friend" and when his friend said that, he suddenly thought, "There he is, he's quite cool about things because he's got two friends to rely on" and (my son) suddenly thought "You know, I've got my family, I've got

five friends and I've got a girlfriend and I've got a brother and a sister and so I'm well equipped". I think a lot of people who don't have support, have that inner strength because they've got to cope on their own. But then you will get other people, and I haven't been able to put my finger on it, but there's some people, you know, I'll tell you the other thing that I've discovered, people with faith, doesn't matter what they call God, they have faith in God and they believe that there's something outside of them that is going to give them that strength, that they can ask for strength, cope far better than those people who say "Well, I don't believe in all that clap trap and so I'll just cope on my own". They normally fall apart after three months. If you have a rail to run on, you know, that's the only way I can see it. You know, they don't have a rail to run on. People who do have. I know one girl who couldn't cope, but she had this very supportive fiancé, wonderful guy, who was with her during the one attack, I referred her to a psychologist, I could see she just wasn't coping. We tried to work out what she could do. I think there's some people that we actually have to accept, always need something extra to help them. It's not that I'm a strong person, I think maybe it's my upbringing and my faith. I think it's people's view on life. I don't view South Africa as peaceful; it's a scary place, a place where bad things happen. I'm astounded, you know, because I haven't travelled much. I went to Israel and that was interesting to see how other people live. But I don't view life as a safe thing; I view life as a changing thing. I mean my whole life has been. As a child, I lived in one place. My father, the gentlest guy, he used to drink. I never heard him, drunk or sober, say anything ugly about anyone or do anything ugly. My mother was a very strong woman. She worked with the Royal Women's Guild. There was a man that used to live in the hotel and the hotel manager said, "Don't worry, I know just the lady that will take you in" and it was my mother. So I started off, my mother always made us aware of our social responsibility. There was always extra in the pot and if somebody asked for food, they were always given. My sisters were the laughing stock of the school, because there had been a train crash and they were selling bolts of material very cheaply, so we bought a bolt of material and made dresses. When I look back, our pride was ridiculous, we felt nothing, we felt sorry for them, because their fathers were having affairs, they were all rich and had everything, but their fathers were having affairs and their fathers used to beat their mothers. And we just thought we were the most incredible family. But you don't

really see that as a child. I was always so proud of my parents. I used to walk to school, everybody else drove. I just think it's the Christian upbringing. At church, when any of the visiting priests came, nobody wanted to put them up; they were always put up at our house. You know, a little peasant house, we lived in a railway house. The doctor always used to say to me, "Oh Mrs (mother's name) unwanted child". Because my sisters had scarlet fever when I was born, so I had to be born at home and the only person they could find was a 70-year-old midwife, who hadn't delivered a baby for 25 years and she was 70 years old. When I was due to come, she was supposed to tell my father, my father was supposed to jump on the borrowed bicycle, get to the nearest telephone and phone the doctor. So when I was born, she ran out screaming in a panic, "It's born, it's born", because she actually left my mother to deliver me because I had the cord around my neck, my mother had to deliver me herself. My father got on the bike, rode down to the nearest phone box, and phoned the doctor and said "It's a boy, it's a boy" because that's what he thought she had said. So when the doctor got down there and found out it was a girl, and from that day on he kept on saying to me, every time he saw me. I can remember as a little girl, crossing the road, so that he wouldn't shout it out to everybody, "Here's Mrs (mother's name) unwanted child". You know, I knew I was wanted, because my parents loved me, my sisters loved me, I was adored by everybody, I knew I was adored and wanted and loved, but it had a real deep psychological effect which I only figured out when I was doing my counselling course. I discovered that I always ran around and could never say no to anybody and I always had to keep the peace and run around and do things and that and I suddenly realised I felt that I had to justify, why do I feel I have to justify my existence because I was told a lie. And I find this, that when you're counselling and somebody comes to you with some kind of hang up like that, you sit back and realise, "Oh it's such a lie". My feelings didn't equate with my knowledge. My mother used to send me off to go and do homework with these children. Their parents used to batter each other. The father was really wild and woolly and he used to come home and he used to take the children and shove them. He used to beat the mother and he used to batter the children. My mother, she used to send me out at the age of 12 and I used to say, "Excuse me Mr (name), we're doing the homework now. And no, you can't take the children's shoes. My mother said that the Guild has given those shoes to the children to wear to school". And when I think

about what a prissy little thing I must have been. You know, that's all he needed. And that's one thing I've realised, is that people just need you to stand up to them. These guys, when they were pulling on my rings, I said to them, "Is this what your mothers were hoping you would grow up to be, thieves? Is this their dream for you? Didn't they want you to be doctors?" And my maid was hysterical. And afterwards she said to the police, "I thought they were going to kill us because the madam was telling them off".

I: How did they react to that?

They said "Shut you, fuck up, fuck you", sorry, "Shut up" and the other one said, "I'm hungry". And I lost my temper and I said, "Don't talk rubbish, if you were hungry, you would be in my kitchen eating my food, not here biting my fingers". And with that, they ran out after the gardener. What they would have done after that, I don't know. As I say, they weren't looking at me.

I: I suppose they were quite shocked because nobody else has ever reacted like that, I would imagine.

You see, that's what the policeman put down. He put down that I said, "Please don't hurt me". I said, "I never said that". He said, "But you said, "let's calm down", it's the same thing". I just really think there's a lot of work to be done on the justice system.

I: Have you always been such a strong person?

I think it's life experience, because also talking to other people, people who cope, are people who haven't had, sort of, easy existences. I mean, I worked with a couple of ladies at church and one of them got so hit up over this little thing. And I thought "Now why?" She comes from this area, she went to very good schools, (name of school), like a hundred years ago, never struggled financially, they got married in this area, the children have gone to the same school, their children have been good and gone to university, story book like, you know. I honestly never thought you would find people like that. The slightest thing happens and you know. The one lady suffers from the most terrible depression and I think, "What have you got to be depressed about?" I mean, the children went to university, they've been married for thirty years, they don't struggle financially, they were in the area for about 2 years

and then they went to Cape Town and had a wonderful time and came back again. You know, living in this little town of QweQwe, you know, everybody had their problems. I mean, if they were rich, the husbands drank, you know what I mean, and beat up the wife. Well, my father drank, but as I say, he was wonderful. I said to my dad, "Daddy, why don't we have a car, everybody has a car?" I said to him, "Daddy, why don't we have a car". And he told me quite seriously, "No my darling, you can't drink and drive. And I drink, so we don't drive". Not that he could have afforded a car when I look back, in retrospect. He probably couldn't have afforded a car. But that was a fairly reasonable thing. We used to ride bicycles. My sisters and I are still very close. Any time anything goes wrong, we're on the phone to each other, light a candle, say a prayer. The other thing now is to believe that something good will come out of it. I mean, somebody does something horrible to me in the traffic. I'm really the most impatient person in the traffic. And I've learned to say "Bless them Lord" instead of swearing at them, because I really think the more anger we put out, it's almost like electrical, I really feel it is. I go to meetings with nuns and monks and the one nun said to me, "Oh those poor boys, I feel so desperate for them, waking up every morning and they have nothing to look forward to". I was quite sharp with her, I said to her "Rubbish, of course they're looking forward to the day, otherwise they wouldn't be out there. If they weren't looking forward to the day, they would be sitting like my poor homeless guys, sniffing glue or, if they had no hope, that's what they would be doing. They have made a choice to do evil". "Oh, they must be ill" other people say. They're doing really ill people a disservice, because really ill people don't do things with thought and planning and they keep coming back every two years, that takes thought and planning. I honestly think, and I'm not saying that they can't be rehabilitated, but at this moment I don't think they're, first of all, I don't think "Shame, poor little guys". Yesterday when I heard about those two youngsters who were painted white and burned and they said "That's what I would like to happen", you know, because I'm so angry at these youngsters and I thought "No". At the moment, I feel like I would actually go, I would want to smack them myself, but I'm not a violent person. I would really like to see, I really would like to see an overhaul of the judicial system. I think we have the ability, I think we've got the police with the right heart, there's a lot of prosecutors and magistrates, there's also a lot of them that are corrupt and what they're doing, they're actually stressing

out the good people. I would actually like to see a revamp of the whole justice system. I would like to see more community service for first time offenders. I really think, but really hard community service. Making them go and work in casualty, work in the SPCA, you know, make them do things, but make them really take stock. Working with HIV children, you know, real community service, not this business, going and mowing somebody's lawn. To me that's codswallop. But something that will make them, that will twist their heartstrings, you know. With some kind of psychological influence on them, where they would have to report to psychologists, or somewhere like FAMSA, where they would get the right guidance.

I: Have you always been so in control of your life and responsible?

It's come with years of training, you know, because like, when I was a child, we had this old guy living with us and a iguana got into the garden and I had to hold his hand, because he was nervous. But also because my mother always had expectations of us, but she never said, "I expect you", but she always trusted us with certain responsibilities that she couldn't have coped with. In fact, my sister was an epileptic and there was no nursery school. So as a child, I had to stay at home by myself and when my sister had an epileptic fit, the teachers would get frightened and they would come and dump her on the doorstep. At the age of 4, I had to know how to deal with an epileptic. So, I don't know, you know, if my mom ever expected it of my sister. My second oldest sister used to have to go and pay the lights and things like that. She used to have to go and pay all the bills. She did try and send my oldest sister, the epileptic, but she could never get the right change and we couldn't afford that. I wasn't very good at maths, so it had to be the middle sister. So we all had our responsibilities. My oldest sister was supposed to look after me during the holidays. She used to batter me horribly and in fact, she regrets it now. She never hits her children. She did Dr Spock with her children. I said to her "I'm so sorry he wasn't around when I was a kid". But I used to wander, because we lived quite near bush and I used to watch the elephants. I started my first conservation effort there, with my friend next door. Her brother used to shoot birds and as they were about to take a pot shot, we would throw stones into the bush, so that was my first attempt at conservation.

I: And you're still doing it, just with people now.

Ja. In fact, I said to my husband, "I think next year I'll take off from people".