

Section B: Empirical study

Chapter Four

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals exclusively with the various steps taken in order to execute this study. The respective phases will be discussed with regards to the choice of methods and techniques utilised and the advantages thereof. The study began with a question; why do juveniles commit crime? Which significant factors are conducive to the crime being committed? Why do youth offenders commit serious crimes?

As this study revolves around individuals, their thoughts, behaviour and motivation behind their actions; the only relevant research approach to use must be qualitative in nature. *“The aim of qualitative research is often to describe in detail what is happening in a group, in a conversation or in a community - who spoke to whom, with what message, with what feelings, with what effect”* Bouma (2000:173). Stangor (2004:14) corroborates this by stating that qualitative research is in fact descriptive research; it entails observing and describing actions as they occur: the goal being to acquire the richness of day-to-day behaviour. The researcher wants to gather data that is intense in order to establish a variety of factors that are causal to criminal behaviour. The crux of qualitative research is to determine the dynamics of the research subject and the personal impression the subject has of his life, who is the subject, where does he come from, why did he do this, are pivotal questions that the researcher must ask. Bouma (2000:175) asserts that every individual is incomparable to another and that it is impossible to group the individuals for the purpose of analysis; consequently, this research requires in-depth interviews with individual young offenders as unit of analysis.

Various steps were followed with regards to gaining access to the prisons, establishing contact with the offenders, gathering and analysing the data; pertinent phases have been identified in this regard.

This study was executed in five phases:

- Gaining access.
- The pilot study.
- The main study.
- Interpretation and explanation of data.
- Conclusion and recommendations.

4.2 Phase one - Gaining access

Prior to any formal measure taken for the research, permission was needed from the Department of Correctional services to have easy access to the prisons and conduct interviews with youth offenders. The department was contacted early in May 2000 and after numerous phone calls and red tape related obstacles the researcher was finally (in June 2000) put into contact with Miss R.O.M. Moila from the Department for Research Administration within Correctional Services. An application form had to be completed whereby the researcher was required to explain and subsequently substantiate the need for interviews with juvenile inmates. Letters confirming the intended research and registration with Unisa (supplied by Professor Joubert - Department of Criminology) were attached to the application form, as well as an exposition of the research project (supplied by the researcher) and forwarded to Miss Moila.

On the 10th October 2000 permission was obtained to conduct interviews with youth offenders as well as the assurance of assistance with any information required concerning the offenders (see appendix for a copy of the letter of permission). The researcher was informed that only sentenced offenders would be made available for the interviews. The researcher was subsequently given (on request) a printout of the prisons in question and the allotted number of youth offenders per prison. The Department also supplied the researcher with the respective phone numbers of the prisons and the contact person to speak to for each prison.

4.3 Phase two – The pilot study

Phase two deals exclusively with the pilot study; what constitutes a pilot study and the purpose of a pilot study for this research project. Thereafter the semi-structured interview will be discussed as a technique used in the pilot study, as a means of gathering data, this will

include the interview guide. Finally the different themes that are emphasised in the interview guide will be presented. A short overview of the offenders/participants for the pilot study will be supplied before entering into a description of the pilot study. Six male, youth offenders were interviewed at the Baviaanspoort Juvenile Prison. The offenders' ages ranged from 18-21 years old.

4.3.1 Definition of a pilot study

Pilot studies or trial-runs are a smaller version of the actual study to be conducted. Pilot studies allow the researcher to detect any faults with the method of data collecting and to gain ideas with regards to the effective execution of the main study (Champion 2000:233). The pilot study concerns itself with the administrative and organisational problems that relate to the entire study and its participants (Sarantakos 1998:293). In terms of possible problems that the pilot study can highlight for the researcher, Huysamen (1994:197) mentions ambiguous instructions and inadequate time limits as examples. The definition of a pilot study is aptly supplied by Dane (1990:43) "*A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practices or tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent main study*". Undertaking a pilot study is not a futile exercise: the following functions of a pilot study considered by writers cited in Sarantakos (1998:293) show that indeed, a pilot study is in fact a necessary tool when undertaking a research project:

- To estimate the costs and duration of the main study and test the effectiveness of its organisation.
- To test the research methods and research instruments and their suitability.
- To show whether the sampling frame is adequate.
- To estimate the level of response and form of drop-outs.
- To gain information about how diverse or homogenous the survey population is.
- To familiarise the researchers with the research environment in which the research takes place.

- To give researchers and their assistants the opportunity to practise research in real situations and before the main study begins.
- To test the response of the subjects to the method of data collection and through that the adequacy of its structure.

It is important to note that the configuration of a pilot study differs from study to study. The structure of the pilot study depends very much on the type of research and the type of methodology used (Sarantakos 1998:293).

4.3.2 Purpose of the pilot study for this research project

A pilot study proved indispensable for this research project as it allowed the researcher to determine any flaws or strengths in the trial run; the correction or deletion thereof which ultimately may prove vital for the success of the main study. The reasons for undertaking a pilot study for this research were:

- The pilot study could indicate to the researcher the approximate duration of an interview; this was necessary for this research project as twenty youth offenders were included in the main study and in order to effectively manage time, the researcher needed to determine the approximate length of the first interview.
- It was at this stage (after the first interview) that the researcher was able to establish whether a follow up interview was essential in obtaining the desired information. Primarily the function of a follow up interview was to gather information that so to speak would fill in any “gaps” from the first interview. It was during the first interview that the researcher tried to establish rapport with the youth offenders. The follow up interview allowed the interviewer to dig in deeper into the offender’s life and ask sensitive questions that could yield the information significant to this study. It was important to remember that the youths in question had unique backgrounds, this means that the follow up interview needed to be a personalised/individualised interview with befitting questions to the youthful offender in order to extricate the sought after data.
- The questions initially arranged in the interview schedule needed to be assessed with regards to whether the information given was in fact; relevant to this study. Another point to consider was

whether the questions in the first interview were comprehensive in that they covered all the required areas so that the researcher could obtain the desired information. Finally, the researcher could discover that specific questions needed to be added to the interview schedule so as to ensure information rich in content and other questions. In this regard, Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996:112) claim that the researcher must also pilot test the interview guide by:

- Checking each item for relevancy.
 - Determining ranges of response for some items.
 - Establishing the best sequence of questions.
 - Establishing the best wording of questions
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- The youths involved in this study were coloured and therefore had their own way of communicating. It was imperative that the researcher became acquainted with the style of talking; reference was made specifically to the jargon used by the coloured offenders in everyday discourse. The familiarity with the language gave the researcher the opportunity to relay questions in a comprehensible manner; ensuring that the youths understood the questions, and in turn the researcher was able to understand the information supplied. The advantage is that time was not wasted and the researcher was able to build rapport with the offender as the researcher was able to communicate in the youth's slang.
 - The pilot study aided the researcher in developing a rapport with the youth offenders; any techniques used in the pilot study by the researcher to establish rapport could be avoided if proven unsuccessful or maximised if proven effective. The aim of establishing rapport (good fellowship) was to ensure that the offender felt comfortable with the researcher; that a sense of trust developed with the consequence that the youth had few reservations when supplying information, feeling assured that the answers were "safe" with the researcher. For the researcher this rapport meant that in depth and sensitive questions were asked without the fear of offending the subject; rapport between the researcher and the youth was essential for the gathering of significant information for the study.
 - Observation was a vital tool when conducting interviews. The pilot study was an opportunity for the researcher to sharpen observation skills; this entailed listening well and looking at non-verbal behaviour i.e. body language. This was important as the researcher; through observing body language, tone of voice

and the demeanour of the youthful offender could perceive if the offender was withholding information or lying, whether the subject was nervous or uncomfortable concerning certain questions or if there was hostility towards the researcher. The aforementioned factors if correctly observed, could result in the researcher confirming information with the prison authorities, avoiding questions that could cause discomfort to the offender and a possible change of attitude to avoid any hostility by the offender.

Observation was a valuable component for this specific study. The researcher made notes whilst the interview was in progress. The pilot study was thus a means for the researcher to improve observation proficiencies whilst taking notes – these observation skills included noticing non-verbal behaviour.

4.3.3 The semi-structured interview

The interview for this study is qualitative in nature. In this regard Babbie (2001:291) asserts that a qualitative interview constitutes interaction between the interviewer and the respondent. The interviewer has a general overview of the line of inquiry, a standardised set of questions and wording are not necessary. As a result, the interview proceeds smoothly and naturally. A qualitative interview is in essence a conversation wherein the interviewer steers the direction for the conversation and pursues topics raised by the subject. It is preferable that the subject does most of the talking. Baker (1999:247) confirms this by stating that in qualitative research an interview is fundamentally a conversation between the interviewer and the subject.

Champion (2000:254) states that researchers intentionally opt for interviewing as a data collection technique as the interview allows the researcher the prospect of moving into unexplored areas. The type of interview chosen largely depends on the kind of information that the researcher wants to obtain. As this is a qualitative study and the researcher wants to determine which factors in the youth offender's life were contributory to the offender committing a crime, the researcher has deliberately chosen to utilise the semi-structured interview. According to Huysamen (1994:145) the semi-structured interview typically includes the use of an interview guide (this will be dealt with in the subsequent section). The semi-structured interview is unique in that despite the participants being asked the same questions, the researcher is at liberty to modify the questions based on the background and educational level of the participant (Huysamen 1994:145). The researcher is aware that by utilising a semi-structured interview, certain questions can be specifically formulated to suit the

youth offender's level of understanding and as a means to gain in-depth information about sensitive issues. Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996:112) supply the following advantages of a face-to face interview:

- It provides an opportunity to establish rapport with the subjects and to stimulate the trust and co-operation often needed to probe sensitive areas
- It provides an opportunity to help the subjects in their interpretation of the questions
- It allows flexibility in determining the wording and sequence of the questions by giving the researcher greater control over the situation (for example: by letting the interviewer determine on the spot the amount of probing required).

Huysamen (1994:145) states that a semi-structured interview is expedient as it gives the researcher the opportunity to ask in depth and sensitive questions that may yield important information. The semi-structured interview has a list of questions (interview schedule) that the researcher utilises as a guideline during the interview; however, the opportunity exists for the researcher to direct the interview or questions to focus on answers rich with valuable information. According to Dane (1990:125) the semi-structured interview is flexible as it allows the interviewer to investigate more fully the opinions and behaviours of the subjects; therefore the total collection of responses should contain more information that is diverse in detail. Corbetta (2003:270) maintains that in a semi-structured interview the interviewer has the freedom to investigate certain information further by probing, asking for clarification and prompting. Greeff (2002:302) confirms this by stating that a semi-structured interview gives both the researcher and the participant much more flexibility. The emphasis of the semi-structured interview was to gain information regarding the subjective opinions and experiences of the respondents, in this regard Greeff (2002:302) alleges that “...*the participant can be perceived as the expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell his story*”. It was in this way that the researcher gained an in-depth understanding and insight into the life of the respondent.

The type of questions used in this interview are open-ended (Greeff 2002:302). This entails the researcher asking a question where the answer is not merely a yes or no, for example: How did you experience your parents' discipline? The youth is impelled to provide the researcher with an explanation rather than one-word answers, for example good or bad. It is at this point; where if the juvenile has answered the aforementioned question with a one- word answer that the researcher will ask the juvenile to explain, for example, why the

youth experienced the parent's discipline as good or bad. The first open-ended question leads to other questions that results in the researcher obtaining the desired and invaluable information.

At this point probing as a technique for interviewing the offenders must be emphasised. The researcher used probing as a means to acquire a deeper understanding to an answer, to obtain data that is rich in detail while at the same time giving an indication to the subject as to the intensity of the response required for example, the researcher can ask "*Can you be more specific when this took place?*" Greeff (2002:20) declares that probing is a means of persuading the subject to divulge more information about the topic at hand. Various methods of probing are available for the researcher, an attempt was made in the pilot study to utilise these methods as presented (in Greeff 2002:20):

- **Contradicting.** This entails deliberately giving an opinion opposite to that of the participant, in an attempt to arouse further comments.
- **Linking.** Linking up the participant's comment with the information that the researcher wants to know.
- **Faking puzzlement.** Pretending to be confused, indicating that elaboration is needed.
- **Challenging.** Demanding more information to prove the validity of the participant's claims.
- **Encouraging.** Giving compliments to encourage the participant to carry on.
- **Showing understanding and allowing time for elaboration.** Letting the participant know that his comments are understood and treasured and allowing him time to for further comments.
- **Acknowledging.** Repeating the participant's answer to show attention.
- **Direct question.** Asking questions to get more information.
- **Procuring details.** Asking further questions to see if more information can be obtained.

As mentioned earlier, the aim of this study is to determine significant contributory factors in youth crime. The semi-structured interview is best

suited for this study as it gives the researcher the freedom to explore the youth's life in detail while at the same time adhering to an interview guide with open -ended questions. In conclusion, Kvale (in Baker 1999:247) provides a list of factors that capture the mode of understanding in a qualitative interview; only the relevant factors for this study will be presented:

- The topic of the interview centers on important themes in the *life world* of the interviewee.
- The aim of the interview is to understand the *meaning* of these themes and of the subject's life world.
- The interviewer seeks qualitative descriptions which are loaded with meaning.
- The qualitative interview is descriptive; it should seek complex descriptions and not be circumscribed by fixed categories.
- The qualitative interview develops *specificity* about particular situations and actions that have occurred in the respondent's life world.
- The interviewer must maintain a certain *naivete* so that the respondent feels the need to explain and describe more.
- The interviewer must be *focussed* on the themes of the research topic.
- While an interviewer needs to be naïve, she or he must be *sensitive* to the comments of the interviewee.

4.3.4 Non-probability sampling

The non-probability sampling technique was used as the researcher was restricted by the department of Correctional Services (DCS) with regards to choosing the research subjects at random. Non-probability sampling, indicates that not every subject had an equal chance of being included in the sample (Uys & Puttergill 2003:13).

In particular, the researcher applied a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling entails selecting an appropriate sample that is based on the researcher's skill, judgement and needs (Hagan

2000:142). Coloured youth offenders were chosen as the researcher is able to communicate fluently in Afrikaans (the language most often used by coloured citizens in South Africa). The advantage of this; is that the researcher was able to have a fluid discourse with the offenders, thus promoting meaning and understanding into their lives. Determining the meaning and social reality of the offender's lives was essential for this research which is qualitative in nature. The three prisons chosen (Boksburg, Leeukop and Bavianspoort) were chosen specifically due to their proximity to the researcher's residence.

4.3.5 The interview guide

The interview guide comprises a list/set of questions that are to be asked during the interview. Huysamen (1994:145) alleges that an interview guide consists of a list of topics and related questions which are related to a given theme, these topics and questions are asked by the interviewer during the course of the interview. It is essential to utilise an interview guide when conducting a semi-structured interview, particularly for this study as

- The researcher is compelled to adhere to the interview guide and not ask questions at random; the aim after all is to obtain specific information from the respondent and not waste time with trivial information, Greeff (2002:302) cautions however that the interview must be guided by the schedule and not be dictated by it. If required, the researcher must ask questions not on the interview guide in order to obtain the data required
- The interview guide is arranged in such a way that the questions fall under certain themes. These themes based on research findings; guide the researcher to asking specific questions in order to obtain the sought after information

For this study the interview guide was the same for each youth offender and only changed for the follow up interview. Huysamen (1994:145) clarifies *“Although all the respondents are asked the same questions, the interviewer may adapt the formulation, including the terminology, to fit the background and educational level of the respondents”*. A standardised set of questions (see appendix for a copy of the interview guide for the pilot study) had been arranged for the interviews with the subjects, the questions provided a framework wherein which the interviewer could develop the questions and determine which information needed to be pursued in depth. This entailed that the interview guide could be formulated in greater or lesser detail

depending on which information was required. The interview guide according to Patton (1990:283) is organised in such a way that the same information is obtained from a group of individuals by covering the same material.

The questions in the interview guide inquired as to the biographical data of the youth offenders, their upbringing, the influence of their peers and school as well as factors leading up to and including the criminal event. Patton (1990:283) states further *“The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular area”*. Due to the flexibility of an interview guide (even though it is standardised) the interviewer is able to create a conversation about a particular topic; word the questions in a natural and self-generated manner and to generally establish a style of conversation with the respondent (Patton 1990:283). The biggest advantage of the interview guide is that it grants the researcher the opportunity to effectively use the limited time allowed in the interview setting, Patton (1990:283) describes this by saying *“...it keeps the interactions focussed but allows individual perspectives and experiences to emerge”*.

The researcher compiled the interview guide based on the criminal event framework. The criminal event will be discussed in the next section.

4.3.6 The criminal event

According to Baker (1999:251) a qualitative research project must be based on a theoretical framework. This entails that the researcher needs to have an integrated set of ideas about how he/she will function in the social environment studied and how the collected data will be interpreted. This study was conducted within the criminal event theoretical framework. This is an integrated model that incorporates individual-oriented factors, milieu-oriented factors, the victim, the crime and the aftermath of the crime. Van der Hoven (2001:59) points out that the integrated model of the criminal event is based on the following assumptions:

- Crime causation is multi-dimensional.
- The criminal event is a dynamic process.
- A unique combination of various factors contribute to the criminal event

- Human behaviour is governed by the mind (cognitive function) and the mind is shaped by the biological and developmental processes, including the relational environment.
- All voluntary, conscious behaviour is purposeful.
- Individuals differ in their ability to conform to the norms of society and to function effectively in society. This implies that some individuals are more prone than others to committing crime.

The criminal event focuses on three main aspects that together constitute the criminal event. These are the precursors to the crime, the criminal act and the aftermath of the crime.

4.3.6.1 Precursors

It is important to consider the factors that led the youth offender to committing a crime. In this regard, Sacco and Kennedy (2002:11) assert that if one understands that the criminal event stems from predisposing circumstances; one is able to differentiate between conformist and criminal behaviour. Examining the precursors to a crime allows an individual to understand that depending on the circumstances *“behaviour that is defined as or evolves into criminality in one situation may not have the same consequences in other situations”* in (Sacco & Kennedy 2002:11).

Various factors contribute to the criminal act/transaction; for the purpose of this study high-risk factors such as child rearing, negative peer associations and gang activity (to mention a few) have been included.

4.3.6.2 Criminal act/Transaction

Sacco and Kennedy (2002:14) maintain that a criminal event cannot be look at in isolation. In other words, circumstances surrounding the transaction need to be considered as well, particularly social circumstances. This includes examining the location of the transaction, if the offender was under the influence of drugs/alcohol and if any weapons were used.

Taking into consideration that a crime does not *“just happen”* the researcher investigated factors such as motive for the crime and facilitating factors.

4.3.6.3 Aftermath

The offender's perception of his/her crime and the reaction of society are considered in the last component of the criminal event (Sacco & Kennedy 2002:16).

Bearing this in mind, the researcher looked at the remorse of the youth offenders in this study, as well as their support system (socially) upon release from prison.

4.3.7 Relevant themes for the interview guide

Based on research findings; pertinent topics have been identified for the interview guide. These topics were discussed within the criminal event framework; namely precursors, criminal act/transaction and aftermath. The use of these aforesaid topics allowed the researcher to easily identify factors that fell within the respective categories. It also provided the researcher the advantage of directing the interview in such a way so as to illicit information that would shed light as to the precursors of the crime, the criminal act/transaction and the aftermath of the crime.

4.3.7.1 Precursors

High risk factors are predictors of future criminality, the following factors are based on the Cambridge study (in Muncie 2002:236) in delinquent development:

- Socio-economic deprivation (e.g. low family income/poor housing).
- Poor parenting and family conflict.
- Criminal and anti-social families.
- Low intelligence and school failure.
- Hyperactivity/impulsivity/attention deficiency.
- Anti-social behaviour (e.g. heavy drinking, drug taking and promiscuous sex).

Bartollas (1997:71) explains that the risk of a youth becoming involved in problem behaviour increases if there are specific factors present in the juvenile's life. The presence of more than one factor will in all probability result in a youth committing criminal acts. These factors include: age, psychological variables, school performance, home adjustment, drug and alcohol use, neighbourhood and social adjustment of peers. Taking the aforementioned factors into account,

the researcher highlighted the family, school and the youth's environment as themes that were concentrated on in the interview guide. These themes per se; do not contribute to youth offending, rather it is the variables that fall within these themes that are considered to be high risk factors that play a role in the commission of crime by the youth. These variables include: single-parent families, family criminality, dropping out of school, age of onset of substance abuse and the youth's neighbourhood.

a. Family and childhood

As the primary socialisation agent for the child, the family of the youth offender is an important theme to focus on. Farrington (2002:669) maintains that the family is an important predictor for criminal behaviour. Angenent and de Man (1996:87-88) emphasise the role of the family in the development of the child's personality. They expand on this by stating that the family should provide a secure and harmonious environment for the child; thus ensuring that the child develops into a well balanced individual. As the primary caretakers of the child the parents should be aware of the child's daily activities; and it is the parent who will discipline the child if there is concern regarding his/her behaviour. A collapse of the aforementioned factors can result in delinquent and problem behaviour.

It was important for the researcher to establish the type of upbringing the youth offender has had; did the parents negatively or positively influence the child. Factors that are considered are birth order and family size, discipline and child rearing. Child rearing refers to the type of discipline the offender experienced as a child. There are varied styles of parenting with varied results i.e. the child is well-adapted socially and enjoys a good relationship with the parents or the child experiences inadequacy in society and suffers due to a poor relationship with the parents. Freedman et al elucidate "*The poor relationship with the parents often leads to a limited ability to empathize with others and to establish social contacts. They are not interested in other people, but are suspicious and feel easily threatened. As a result they encounter a great number of problems in their relations with other people and institutions*" in (Angenent & de Man 1996:101). Other factors included in this section are: presence of a father figure, single-parent families and broken homes, family criminality, parents abusing drugs or alcohol, family violence and conflict, physical/sexual abuse. Child abuse needs to be considered as a high risk factor conducive to criminal behaviour. Siegel, Welsh and Senna (2003:217) link child abuse to delinquent behaviour by claiming that the victims of child abuse learn to solve problems in an aggressive manner, it "*prevents them from feeling*

empathy for others. It diminishes their ability to cope with stress. It makes them vulnerable to the aggression and violence in the culture". Finally the socio-economic-status of the family is also considered to be a risk factor that falls within the ambit of family and childhood. Smith and Stern conclude that *"We know that children who grow up in homes characterized by a lack of warmth and support, whose parents lack behaviour management skills, and whose lives are characterized by conflict or maltreatment will more likely be delinquent..."* in (Farrington 2002:670).

b. School

The school is the secondary socialisation agent of the child. It is important to establish if the offender was exposed to any negative influence at school - juveniles with discipline problems could involve themselves with peers who behave in a similar manner; this could lead to the juvenile learning tainted behaviour and petty crime from his/her peers. *"Young people rely increasingly on school friends and consequently become less and less interested in adult role-models"* in Siegel et al (2003:269).

Specific authors cited in (Bartollas 2003:257) argue that the school is the decisive social context for the origination of youth offending.

c. Youth's environment/Community

It is in this theme that the researcher was trying to determine the physical and social environment of the offender. Of particular importance is whether the offender lived amidst a delinquent and more specifically gang subculture. The researcher distinguished which factors within the youth's environment were conducive to criminal behaviour.

4.3.7.2 The criminal act/Transaction

In this theme the researcher required an indication concerning the motivation behind the crime. Cusson (in Fattah 1997:277) states that to understand delinquent behaviour, one must determine what the youthful offender wanted/hoped to gain as a result from his/her criminal behaviour for example; money. Fattah (1997:275) lists among others; greed, revenge, jealousy, excitement, power and profit as motivational factors behind a criminal act.

Facilitating factors were also considered for example; substance abuse.

Yablonsky (2000:267) claims that *"...the excessive use of alcohol contributes to the commission of serious delinquent acts. Many delinquents admit that they committed serious delinquent acts under the influence of alcohol"*. The same applies to the abuse of narcotics.

The researcher established if the offenders were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the criminal act, if so where they first used them and with whom. The influence could be peer pressure, the socio- environment wherein the juvenile lived or the family, or perhaps a culmination of all three.

4.3.7.3 Aftermath

It was important to establish the offender's perception of his amoral behaviour. The aftermath of the crime was expanded on in detail for the main study; section 4.4.1.3 (d).

4.4 Phase three -The main study

When the researcher completed the pilot study and was confident that every aspect of the interview setting, the interview guide and establishing rapport with the subjects had been dealt with, then and only then did the main study commence. To follow is an overview of the offenders interviewed for the main study and a detailed account on how the main study differed from the pilot study. Eight offenders from Baviaanspoort prison, seven from Boksborg prison and six from Leeukop prison were interviewed for the main study, these offenders remained the same for the follow-up interviews. The ages of the offenders ranged from 16-23 years old.

4.4.1 Differences between the main study and the pilot study

The techniques and methods of data collection did not change for the main study, rather the researcher enhanced on the experience derived from the pilot study with the result that the information gathered from the main study proves to be rich and detailed in content. The researcher will provide a clear description of how the main study differed from the pilot study by first looking at the personal changes made by the researcher per se, the practical implementation of various techniques and the development of the themes in the interview guide and finally the inclusion of offender's life stories.

4.4.1.1 Personal changes made by the researcher

The researcher entered the main study with more confidence and with a far more objective attitude, objective in the sense that the researcher was able to detect if and when the offenders were perhaps lying, hiding information and specifically when the offenders were trying to manipulate the researcher. The researcher was well aware of what to expect when commencing interviews with offenders despite the fact that the interviews were with new and different offenders, in the same breath the researcher was also aware of the unexpected i.e. an offender who absolutely refused to co-operate or an aggressive offender; circumstances which the researcher had not encountered in the pilot study. The entire disposition of the researcher was far more relaxed and open, this ensured that the offenders were made to feel immediately comfortable and non-threatened. The researcher also took the time before commencing with the first interview to enlighten the offenders as to the aim of the interviews, this was done by providing the offender with an outline of the study and the importance of their contribution to the research project. The researcher wanted to assure the offenders that (1) they were an integral part of the study and that (2) the information they supplied would indeed have bearing on the results of the study. The researcher felt it was necessary to show the offender that he was making an input by relating his life story and not that he was a statistic spilling out words. The researcher feels that these aforementioned changes aided in the building of rapport and thus ensured successful interviews.

4.4.1.2 Practical applications

The offender managed to establish a solid rapport with each offender as a result of the pilot study. Through the trial run the researcher realised how important it is to embrace the offender's jargon. From the onset of the interviews, terminology characteristic of the coloured community was used by the researcher, this was done in a convincing manner so that the conversation was free-flowing.

In the pilot study the researcher did utilise the probing techniques suggested by Greeff in section 4.3.4, in the main study however, the researcher wholeheartedly embraced these techniques as a means of gaining more information (the pilot study was merely a testing ground for these methods). To refresh the reader's memory, the researcher will list the techniques and how they were employed by the researcher:

- **Contradicting.** The researcher would purposely disagree with the offender at which time the offender would expand on the information as a means of substantiating/justifying his actions.
- **Linking.** With this method the researcher would suggest a link between two variables in the offender's life for example: a cause and effect relationship between two factors, this would be either be confirmed or denied by the offender. No matter the answer of the offender elaboration of information was needed each time.
- **Faking puzzlement.** This technique proved invaluable to the researcher, particularly when the researcher showed ignorance in areas where the researcher knew the offender to have personal knowledge, for example: drug use, gang-related activities and fights/clashes with other individuals or rival gangs. The researcher found that this method allowed the offender to feel as though he was, in fact, in control of the discussion (due to the offender having personal insight into the various aspects of his life) this in turn incited the offender to open-up and divulge more information.
- **Challenging.** In this technique the researcher learnt to be more daring than in the pilot study. This forced the offender to stand his ground and provide an explanation on the topic at hand.
- **Encouraging.** The researcher enjoyed using this technique as the encouragement was a genuine form of (1) showing the offender that his story was important and (2) as a means of getting the offender to open-up and talk freely.
- **Showing understanding and allowing time for elaboration.** The offenders oftentimes revealed more information after this method was employed by the researcher. This technique gives the offender the idea that he is being listened to and that what he has to say is worthwhile and fundamental to the study.
- **Acknowledging.** The researcher was fastidious in using this technique with every offender and often throughout the interviews. The offenders needed to know that they were being listened to and taken seriously.
- **Direct question.** This method was a simple case of asking a direct question in order to obtain a straightforward answer.

- **Procuring details.** This method proved helpful when the researcher was inquiring as to the criminal event: this technique produced information pertaining to the triggering and facilitating factors as well as having insight into the offender's thoughts concerning the aftermath of the crime.

The researcher found that after establishing a solid rapport with the offenders and successfully utilising the techniques suggested by Greeff, it was almost easier to ask sensitive questions, indeed, the researcher was more daring in this regard. The sensitive line of questioning yielded not only detailed information but information inundated with deep personal meaning to the offender: thus information that embodies the gist of qualitative research. The researcher was also able to pay particular attention to the offenders' body language as a form of non-verbal communication. This aided the researcher in determining the comfort level of the offender and any resistance to the line of questioning.

4.4.1.3 Themes expanded on in the main study

After perusing the information obtained in the pilot study, the researcher realised that certain themes needed to have more detail added in order to ensure that the offender's background and motivation for behaviour are properly understood, to highlight the significant factors conducive to their actions and as a means of gaining the offender's personal insight about his life. The following themes were enhanced on in the main study:

a. Family and childhood

- **Discipline:** The researcher asked the offenders to be specific in terms of the discipline they received, for example; the offenders had to distinguish if their discipline was lax, consistent or inconsistent. The researcher wanted to determine the type of discipline received in order to associate discipline with problem behaviour.
- **Absence of a father figure:** The researcher asked the offenders' their personal opinion with regards to them not having a father. This was done in order for the researcher to illustrate the importance of a positive father figure for a male youth. The personal remarks of the offenders ensures that the reader is clear as to the importance of a father for a male child.

- **Family criminality: Family members who commit crime:** Offenders were asked to relate who committed crimes in their families, the type of crimes and the contact that the offenders had with their criminal family members. The researcher wanted to determine how much contact offenders had with criminal family members and if such contact played an influential role in the offender committing crime.
- **Physical/sexual abuse:** In this section offenders were required to inform the researcher of any form of abuse and to specifically reveal their personal opinion of the abuse suffered in terms of how the offenders felt about being abused and their abuser.

b. School

- **Substance abuse:** The offenders were required to provide the following details with regards to their abusing substances: their age at the onset of abuse, who played an influential role in the offender taking drugs or alcohol and the type of drug abused. The researcher wanted to establish the seriousness of substance abuse by looking at the age the offenders started abusing and the type of drug used. Determining who manipulated the offender into the world of drugs and alcohol, shows the researcher who played an important role for him.

The researcher further inquired as to the rationale for substance abuse, this will inform the researcher if for example: the offender was abusing drugs/alcohol as a way of escaping problems at home. The researcher also required the offender to supply his perception of substance abuse i.e. did the offender perceive that abusing drugs or alcohol was the wrong thing to do? This information allows the researcher to determine if substance abuse is regarded as an acceptable pass time to the offender.

c. Youth's environment/Community

- **Gang involvement:** The offender revealed whether he was involved in a gang and his reasons for joining the gang. This will demonstrate to the reader the type of community the

offender grew up in i.e. preponderance of gangs. Reasons for joining will also illustrate to the reader the attraction that a gang holds for a young male. The researcher required the offenders to supply detailed information with regards to the gang as a family, in other words the researcher needed to determine if the gang was a surrogate family for the offender.

d. The criminal act/Transaction

In this section the researcher looked at previous offences committed by the offenders. This was important to ascertain, as it is interesting to note the reasons for re-offending. Detailed information was required as to the offenders' perceptions of the consequences to their actions, the researcher wanted to learn if the offenders had any prudence and insight into the repercussions of their crimes, specifically with regards to their families, communities and society as a whole.

e. Aftermath of the crime

- **Offender's remorse:** In this section the offender was asked to relate in detail how remorseful he was and why, this enables the researcher to establish if, in fact, the offender has developed any insight in terms of the wrongfulness of his crime (legally and morally).
- **Recidivism:** The researcher wanted to determine if the offender would re-offend once released. Offenders were asked to reveal how they would abstain from any further criminal activities.
- **Experience of prison life:** The researcher was curious to learn how the offender coped with life in the prison i.e. the rules and regulations and authority.
- **Offender's support system once released:** Does the offender have a significant other who is able to support him once released back into society? The researcher wanted to establish if there was someone to help him to avoid illegal behaviour, negative peer influences and substance abuse.
- **Life change due to existence/absence of factors:** The researcher asked each offender to clearly explain what should have been different in their life in order for them not to have committed a crime. The researcher wants to establish which

factor played the most significant role in the youth offender's life with regards to the commission of crime – bearing in mind that this is the personal opinion of the offender, once again epitomising the essence of qualitative research.

The changes made in the main study definitely contributed to the effectiveness of the interviews and the yielding of information that is full of detail; loaded with the personal opinion of each offender.

4.5 Phase four - Interpretation and explanation of findings

According to Baker (1999:335) there are three major tasks which the qualitative researcher must accomplish at this stage of the research process.

- First, the information needs to be condensed. This entails choosing which information to keep and which to discard without actually losing any meaning and significance of the subject. The information gathered from the pilot and the main study will be arranged and interpreted according to the main themes in the interview guide. This allows the researcher to organise the data in a systemised way and for easy reading by the reader. It is within these themes that the researcher is able to identify predominant factors that proved contributory towards criminal behaviour. The researcher also provides comments as to the choice of significant factors highlighted.
- Second, the researcher needs to determine ways in which the data is to be presented. This must be done in such a way so as to appear vivid and vital to the reader. This may necessitate visual displays of diagrams which not only aid in the organisation but also the layout of the data clearly. The researcher will use different diagrams to illustrate the significant factors found and their contribution to youth offending, these diagrams aid the researcher to highlight the written text as well.
- Third, the data needs to be interpreted in order for the researcher to draw conclusions and to ascertain the validity and credibility thereof.

4.6 Phase five- Conclusion and recommendations

Miles and Huberman (in Baker 1999:343) recommend various strategies to utilise for developing conclusions:

- The researcher needs to look for patterns and themes.
- Miles and Huberman encourage researchers to scrutinise whether the findings are plausible or not. If the findings prove to be plausible then the researcher is required to search for further evidence to substantiate the findings.
- Researchers are also required to look for cluster ideas and overlaps (for example: the researcher can look for cluster behaviours manifested by the offenders in this research project).
- Many qualitative researchers use some form of counting to help them draw conclusions from their findings another strategy is to make comparisons or show contrasts between cases.

The researcher addressed the objectives of the study and whether they were adequately executed. The researcher also assessed the methodology used for this study and its effectiveness as a method of obtaining the desired information. Factors were highlighted as significant and contributory to youth offending.

Finally, the researcher made recommendations for further consideration based on the findings from the pilot and main study, problems encountered in the study and possible unidentified areas identified within the information supplied by the offenders.

4.7 Summary

The methodology for this research project was examined and is explained in depth in this chapter. The researcher divided the steps of the research process into five phases.

Phase one provided a description of how the researcher went about contacting the Department of Correctional Services in order to obtain permission to conduct interviews with youth offenders in prison. Phase two dealt with the execution of the pilot study, a definition of a pilot

study was given as well as the advantages of conducting a trial run. The researcher explained in detail the rationale for a pilot study for this research project and how the pilot study was intended to aid the researcher for the execution of the main study. The semi-structured interview along with the interview guide were discussed as techniques of data collection. An overview of the criminal event was presented after which the researcher provided an outline of the themes that were emphasised in the interview guide.

Family and childhood, school and the youth's environment/community were included under precursors to a crime. Motivational and facilitating factors were included within the criminal act/transaction component and offenders' perceptions of their crimes was included within the aftermath of the crime.

Phase three concentrated on the main study. The researcher highlighted the differences between the execution of the pilot study and the main study, these differences consisted of:

- Personal changes made by the researcher.
- Practical applications.
- Themes expanded on in the main study.

The themes that were altered somewhat include:

- Family and childhood.
- School.
- Youth's environment/Community.
- The criminal act.
- Aftermath of the crime.

Phase four dealt with the interpretation and explanation of data from both the pilot and main study. The researcher explained how the data will be elucidated. Phase five was the final phase of the research project and involved the conclusion for the entire research project. Recommendations for further study and /or factors that need to be considered for attention by various professionals, government officials and correctional officers were discussed.

4.8 Conclusion

It is clear on reading through this chapter that a pilot study was indeed necessary in order to achieve a successful execution of the main study.

The researcher found that the pilot study allowed her to practice various probing techniques, methods of building rapport and the ability to observe non-verbal behaviour. Through the pilot study the researcher learnt to look deeper into the comments made by the offenders and to exercise objectivity. The main study went into far more detail with regards to the main themes used in the interview guide, in the sense that the researcher wanted to extract every detail about the offender's background and factors leading up to the crime. This ensured that the data collected would be full of the offender's personal input and personal opinion – an aspect that plays a big role in the premise of qualitative research: to gain understanding into an individual's life and social reality. Chapter five deals with the implementation of the pilot study, the steps of which will be discussed in detail.

Execution of the pilot study

5.1 Introduction

The contents of this chapter include the implementation of the pilot study; therefore the steps followed will be discussed extensively. Details pertaining to the subjects interviewed will be supplied as well as information regarding the first and second interview. Finally the findings of the interviews will be discussed. It was essential to conduct a trial study for this research project. There are many and diverse factors that are present in this study (this is evident from the literature chapters) not only as high-risk factors but also as conducive to youth offending. Given the sizeable amount of factors the researcher felt that a pilot study would aid the researcher to (1) structure the interviews for the main study and (2) streamline the factors/approach to the study so that they are presented in a simplified form that ensures easier understanding. The majority of the findings in the literature chapters are derived mainly from international sources and this proved to be another motivation for a pilot study. This research project is a South African study; therefore it is relevant for South African youths who are involved in criminal activities. The pilot study assists the researcher in determining the best method to approach the youths in order to extract the required information.

5.2 Contacting the desired prison

The pilot study was undertaken and completed in 2001. The interviews were conducted at the Baviaanspoort juvenile prison; this particular juvenile facility was chosen for its convenience i.e. the prison is situated in close proximity to the researcher's residence, and the researcher felt that being uncertain as to the amounts of interviews required for the trial study it would be beneficial for the researcher to conduct the pilot study at the Baviaanspoort juvenile prison.

The researcher contacted the head of Baviaanspoort juvenile prison Mr Ntlateng and explained that permission was received (a copy of a letter of permission by the Department of Correctional Services was given to Mr Ntlateng) to conduct research in the juvenile prisons of Gauteng. The researcher further enlightened Mr Ntlateng as to the nature of the

study, the respondents needed as well as the ideal setting for the interview.

The researcher requested to interview six males (Baviaanspoort prison is a facility exclusive for males) ranging from the youngest age of sentenced offender (13 years) to the oldest (23 years). The requirement was made for a quiet room wherein to conduct the interview, with little chance of disturbance by correctional officials or other prisoners. Four of the six interviews, were conducted in Mr Ntlateng's office with the remaining two in the conference room. These areas proved adequate as there was no interruption or noise.

5.3 The offenders

The six offenders ranged from the ages of 18 to 21 years old. The breakdown is as follows:

Table 5.1 Age of offenders in the pilot study

| 18 years old | 19 years old | 20 years old | 21 years old |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |

The offenders were males; it was previously stated that the juvenile facility where the pilot study was conducted was exclusively for males and the researcher did not have the freedom of choosing from a range of ages: the situation for the pilot study was a matter of *"take what you can get"*.

The offenders were in for various crimes of which robbery and housebreaking were predominant:

Table 5.2 Crimes committed by offenders in the pilot study

| | |
|--|---|
| Murder | 2 |
| Unlawful possession of firearm | 1 |
| Unlawful possession of ammunition | 1 |
| Robbery | 5 |
| Housebreaking | 3 |
| Attempted murder | 1 |

The above table indicates only the crimes for which the youth offenders were caught and convicted; it is interesting to note that in three incidents of housebreaking and six incidents of mugging (with a knife) the subjects were never caught.

5.4 The first interview

The first interview was conducted in the prison during the months of October/November 2000 with convicted, sentenced offenders. The interview was semi-structured in that the researcher did have an interview guide on hand to serve as a guide for the questions to be asked (and as a method of maintaining structure) throughout the interview. The interview was semi-structured to the extent that the researcher did not restrict the subject to solely answering the questions presented but to deviate slightly and elaborate on the questions asked, thus ensuring information that was rich in content and detail. Prior to the interview commencing the researcher ensured that the subject was comfortable. The researcher introduced herself to the young offender and as a means of establishing rapport proceeded to explain the following to the offender:

- The nature of the study and its importance to the researcher; the relevance the study may have for the coloured community and the value of the offender's contribution to the study.

- Assurance was given to the offender that any information supplied would be kept confidential at all times and that the offender's name would not appear in the study.
- The researcher asked the offender to answer all questions with honesty; it was emphasised to the offender that if at any stage he did not want to answer a particular question he was under no obligation to do so.

The interview commenced thereafter. The researcher asked questions based on the interview guide, on asking the question the researcher made a point to maintain eye contact with the offender as (1) a way of showing interest to the offender and (2) observing the offender as he answers the question and only then transcribing the information supplied. During the interview questions were asked extemporaneously as and when the researcher wanted more information from the offender. Attention was paid to the jargon used by the offender. When the interview had come to an end; the researcher thanked the offender and inquired as to the willingness of the subject to sit for a second interview; the six offenders responded positively to a second interview. The duration of the first interview was between 50 minutes and one hour.

As soon as the researcher exited the prison, concise notes concerning the answers, the demeanour and body language (based on observation) of the offender were written. This was done while the answers and observation of the offender were still fresh in the researcher's mind.

5.4.1 Analysis of the first interview

The researcher read through and scrutinised the first interviews several times before making notes for the follow up interview. These notes included:

- A follow up interview was definitely needed in order to clarify information as well as requesting the youth offender to elaborate on specific information. The researcher concluded the above due to finding "*holes*" or "*gaps*" in the information supplied by the youth offenders. The fact that the researcher was constrained during the interview (the information had to be written down whilst at the same time the researcher needed to observe the offender's non-verbal behaviour) resulted in the researcher not finding the "*holes*" or "*gaps*" in the information while it was being given.

- The jargon used by the youth offenders in the interview was memorised for the follow-up interview; for example “*doelas*” means stolen goods, “*gafief*” refers to crack-cocaine rocks. Attention was specifically paid to the slang used by the offender for various reasons: firstly, the researcher wanted to use the language for the second interview so as to maintain rapport initially established with the young offenders, secondly; understanding the jargon of the offenders in the pilot study means that the researcher is able to establish rapport early in the first interviews for the main study thus ensuring time is not wasted and information is readily supplied, thirdly, qualitative research involves the social reality and experiences of the subjects being studied, noting the jargon of the subjects ensures that this study is qualitatively rich in information.
- Although rapport was established to a degree in the first interview, the researcher was aware that the follow up interview would be more comfortable and familiar for the researcher as well as the offender. In this regard, the researcher made a mental note for the second interview: before commencing with the interview the researcher would inquire as to the offender’s week and general well being as a means of showing interest and thus encourage renewed rapport with the offender. Showing interest in the offender and his life is an important aspect of qualitative research.
- The researcher realised that if there was a pause between each question then the opportunity existed for the offender to give any additional information.
- Based on the analysis of the first interviews; the researcher compiled separate lists of questions for each offender for the second interview. The interview guide utilised in the initial interview was exactly the same for all offenders, however, given that the offenders are individuals; their answers varied in length and intensity. Some answers were more detailed than others, this led the researcher to compiling specific questions that (1) not only suited each respective subject; meaning that the researcher compiled the questions with the insight and knowledge of which subject could be asked more sensitive and matter-of-fact questions and not be offended and (2) that these particular questions would impart the information still required. The majority of the questions compiled for the second interview were concerned with obtaining information that needed clarification and information that would fill any “*gaps*” or “*holes*” found. Certainly,

there were questions that were more sensitive in nature that proved indispensable as far as obtaining the desired information.

5.5 The second interview

The second interview was conducted (for each offender) in a small office at the Baviaanspoort juvenile prison, there were no interruptions and they lasted on average 45 minutes to an hour. The offenders were more relaxed in the second interview and at times seemed to enjoy talking to the researcher. The offenders seemed pleased that the researcher at times embodied their style of communicating. The researcher found little if any resistance to the follow up questions asked, in fact, the offenders supplied information readily and did not seem to mind if the information was sensitive or personal. The information provided by the offenders was therefore more personal and indeed more substantial, thus ruling out the need for a third interview. The information supplied was detailed, the researcher found that the offenders spoke more freely and actually seemed to want to relate “*their*” story, the impression was given that the offenders needed to talk about their lives; past, present and future. The details of this pilot study will now follow.

5.6 Findings from the pilot study

The findings of the trial study will be presented as follows: each subject will be dealt with separately and according to the themes.

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Offender one | 20 years old, eldest of five boys Crime: Housebreaking and robbery |
|---------------------|---|

Family and childhood:

The father of the youth in question died (as a result of being stabbed with a knife during a fight) when the offender was thirteen years old. The offender was uncertain as to the nature of the fight but was adamant that his father was not involved in any illegal activities. The relationship with the father was described as being a good one. The offender’s mother abused drugs and alcohol, “...’n *persoon wat alcohol like*”. The mother had a good influence on the offender, when asked in

which way; the offender replied *“sy’t altyd gekyk ek moet nie verkeerde dinge doen nie”*. She was oblivious to her son’s frequent drug use.

The discipline administered was not consistent, in fact the discipline that did take place cannot be considered strict at all. Although there was money, the offender felt that the money was never enough to cover the family’s needs and that the lack of money placed the family in an economical predicament.

School

The offender completed grade 9 only. The reason being that the school fees were too high and that the mother never paid them as a consequence. The offender had good relationships with his teachers and classmates and claims that he actually enjoyed school. On leaving school so early, the offender spent time at home, loitering around with friends and skulking on the streets.

Substance abuse

This offender started abusing cocaine and mandrax at the age of sixteen. He maintained that it was due to peer pressure that he used drugs in the first place; he says *“ek moet voel hoe lekker dit voel”*.

Youth’s environment/Community

The juvenile was born and raised in Toekomsrus, Randfontein. The area is characteristically a poor area where unemployment is rife. The friends that the offender interacted with had a negative effect on him as they were more interested in being in the streets and taking drugs than trying to complete their schooling and aim for a bright future. The offender mentioned that some of his friends were aggressive by nature and that he had been involved in one or two fights with other youth in the community, this took place while under the influence of drugs *“deurmekaar met dwelms”* and oftentimes drugs were the catalyst for brawls.

The criminal act/Transaction

At the time of interview the offender was serving a 3 ½ year sentence for housebreaking and robbery. This was not his first attempt at the aforesaid crime. He was caught after his first housebreaking and robbery and was sent to Krugersdorp prison to serve a sentence of 9 months.

The aim of the housebreaking and robbery was to sell the stolen goods for money; the money was needed for drugs and clothes. The offender was assisted by his 20 year old friend. A crowbar was used to gain access into the house, the idea to use the crowbar was that of the friend: the offender claimed that he had no idea how to use a crowbar.

The researcher felt it necessary to concentrate on the first and second housebreaking and robbery attempts by the offender. The researcher needed to understand why the offender failed to learn his lesson after (1) having served 9 months in a correctional institution and (2) being caught in the first place. These questions were put to the offender. The offender was evasive concerning the first sentence served and its lack of impact on him and subsequent criminal acts, he could not reveal at all why the 9 months of incarceration had left no imprint on him whatsoever. The researcher questioned the offender concerning his feelings about the criminal event. In neither the first or second housebreaking was the offender afraid of being caught, especially concerning the second housebreaking, the offender said he was not scared at all and the possibility of being caught did not enter his mind. The offender did not for one second think of the repercussions of his criminal acts even though he knew he was acting against the law and knew that what he was doing was wrong. He was not under the influence of any substance at the time of committing the crime. The aim of the crime was to steal goods and sell them for money.

Closing comments

At the end of each interview, the researcher questioned the offender about his experience of prison life, remorse and guilt and as to which aspect of his life should have been different in order for him not to have committed the crimes he did.

The offender says of prison *“ek kry swaar in die tronk”*, he describes prison life as hard as there is no money for him to buy cigarettes. He does feel remorseful of his acts and is steadfast in his claim that he has definitely learnt his lesson this time. The offender has a lot of guilt and the reason for this he says *“omdat ek hier binnekant sit”*, not only is he in prison but he has a criminal record and he has hurt his mother with his behaviour.

The offender expressed anger at the mother as he feels that if she had paid his school fees he would not be in prison today, he stated that poverty is the main cause of his illegal behaviour. The offender did not think of doing honest work as a means of obtaining money, he was too busy socialising and *“hanging out”* with friends, the offender states that he would have looked for work *“as ek groot geword het”*.

The researcher feels that this offender is of below average intelligence (this is merely the impression of the researcher based on the manner in which the offender answered the questions, questions had to be repeated as the offender did not understand them the first time) is prone to impulsive behaviour and vulnerable to peers' influence. The offender has an external locus of control: he seems to think that his life is in the hands of others and not for him to steer in the right direction. Although he claimed to have learned a lesson the second time round, the offender is incapable of accepting full blame; rather directing blame and anger at his mother who failed to pay his school fees, hence his criminal activities.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Offender 2 | 18 years old, second eldest of four children Crime: Housebreaking and robbery |
|-------------------|--|

Family and childhood

The offender was 11 years old when his father died due to alcohol-related problems. The relationship with the father was said to be good. The mother was the biggest influence in this juvenile's life; he feels that he "*was brought up right*". The mother was unaware that the offender was abusing drugs and alcohol. He had a good relationship with his siblings as well.

The offender described the family's economic status as poor, they had food but no clothes, there was however, enough money for school fees.

School

The offender completed grade 8. He left school due to the influence of his friends. He thought that if he left school then he would be able to buy himself the clothes he desired via illegal activities or as the offender says "*tsotsi gedragte*". The offender stated that he had a good relationship with teachers and peers and that he enjoyed school. On leaving school the offender started abusing drugs and alcohol. He did not consider what he could accomplish in his life without a solid education.

Substance abuse

This offender began using dagga and mandrax at the age of fifteen. The primary influence being his friends at school, the offender also claimed that he continued to use the aforementioned narcotics so that he could sleep. Alcohol was used on a daily basis.

Youth's environment/Community

The offender was born and raised in Kliptown (near Soweto). The offender testified that his friends had a big influence on him and his subsequent criminal activities, these are friends that he made at school.

The criminal act/Transaction

This subject is serving a four year sentence for housebreaking and robbery. The offender had prior to this crime, carried out approximately six muggings and two housebreakings without being caught. The motive for all the acts committed was to get money for drugs, shoes, clothes and food. The offender tried to give his mother money but she refused to accept it from him. The offender used a knife as a means of scaring the victims of the muggings; he never intended to actually use the knife.

The offender stated that he learnt how to rob people's houses through friends "*tjommies*" they taught him how to utilise a crowbar in order to gain access into the house. The crimes were never planned but rather a spur of the moment occurrence, the offender claimed that he did feel bad afterwards but nonetheless proceeded with the illegal activities to obtain money for drugs, clothes etc.

Closing comments

Early in the interview the offender asserted that it was his friends' fault that he is in prison, but at the end of the interview insisted that it was his own fault that he is in the position he is. He should have continued with school and not listened to his friends – "*Crime does not pay*".

Unfortunately the researcher had only one interview with this offender as he was transferred to another prison, the officials at Baviaanspoort were unable to reveal which prison so that a follow up interview could be arranged. However, based on only one interview the researcher is confident enough to state that this offender was of below average intelligence (this statement is made as the responses of the subject

were indistinct) with a lot of anger directed firstly towards himself and secondly towards his friends.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Offender 3 | 19 years old, third eldest of 7 children. Crime: Housebreaking |
|-------------------|---|

Family and childhood

The parents of this subject were divorced when the subject was very young, he was unable to supply the exact time of divorce: he only knows that it occurred when he was very young. The offender's father was killed in 1996, he was unsure as to who killed his father, no one in the family is able to indicate who the murderer was or the motivation behind the father's demise. The relationship with the mother was described as a good one - discipline was not strict. The parents never used any drugs or alcohol and there was no involvement in criminal activities by the mother or father. The relationship with the brothers and sisters was also described as a good one. He maintained that his parents had a big influence on him as they tried to show him the proper way to behave "*op die pad te sit*".

His three brothers were all sent to a reformatory for various reasons: the brothers displayed problem behaviour and would indulge in mischievous behaviour. The offender was also sent to a reformatory school between the ages of 9-18 years, partly due to general naughtiness "*stoutigheid*" at school and due to his involvement at a young age in criminal activities; these included fighting and stealing, the offender would steal television sets and videos and sell them for money which he kept for himself. It was a combined decision of the court and his mother to send him to a reformatory in order for him to better himself. The offender claimed that he started with his aversive/problem behaviour as a result of his parent's divorce.

School

The offender completed grade 10 and claimed that at times he enjoyed school and that he had a good relationship with teachers and peers. He stopped attending school as he missed the bus one day and never bothered going back, finding transport proved difficult for him. "*Ek het moed opgegee, ek het nie geworry nie van die skool nie*". The offender learned to fight from his friends at school – he was often involved in fist-fights.

Substance abuse

Friends taught this offender how to smoke “*rocks*” crack/cocaine. This drug was smoked on a daily basis. The offender stated that he knew it was wrong “*ek het gedink dit was sleg*”, but no one told him to abstain from drugs and he wanted to know what drugs felt like “*hoe voel dit*”.

Youth offender’s environment

The offender was born and raised in Davidsonville, Roodepoort. The offender often mentioned that the community wherein he lived was riddled with individuals who are involved in anything from misdemeanours to serious criminal activities “*daar is te veel tsotsi’s by die lokasie*”. The selling of drugs is done openly and is an everyday occurrence. The offender was part of a gang called the “*Young destroyers*”, fighting with other gangs was part of their daily activities.

The criminal act/Transaction

The offender is serving time for housebreaking. He was influenced by his friends to commit this act, they insisted that he accompany them “*toe het ek moed opgehou en saam gegaan*”. The motivation for this incidence was to sell the stolen goods “*doelas*” and to buy “*rocks*” crack/cocaine with the money. The offender admitted that he knew that what he was doing was wrong and against the law but that he was under the influence of drugs, too high “*ek was te gestook en gevlam*” to actually comprehend that he was in fact committing a crime.

The offender has a previous conviction for which he served 7 months in the Krugersdorp prison (with a 5 year suspended sentence), the time served was for attempted murder - the offender had an argument with an African male about a girl, the offender had a knife on him (which he had bought at a shop) and stabbed the man. His intention was not to kill the man but merely to hurt him, to “*teach him a lesson*”. The offender claimed that he would not have done anything had the man not attacked and beaten him up in the first place. It was asked of the offender why he had a knife in his possession in the first place, he answered saying that it was merely habit to always have a knife with him “*dit was ’n gewoonte*”.

Closing comments

This offender had a very tough and hard attitude towards himself, people and life in general, he was unperturbed with regards to his criminal record, he claimed that having a criminal record does not

bother him; he does not care what people think of him either. The offender was strong in his view that if possible once released from prison then he will work, however if he is unable to find any employment he will commit crime again in order to obtain money. Towards the close of the second interview however, the offender stated that he has learnt his lesson with regards to committing crime. The offender contradicts himself and the researcher feels that every time the offender appears “soft” he will make a negative comment in order to seem tough and strong. For instance, the researcher asked the offender if he viewed himself as an aggressive person to which he promptly replied no, however seconds later he stated that if an individual hassles him he will retaliate “*as n mens aanhou om vir my kuk te gee sal ek hom slaan, ek sal aanhou as ek sien hy is swak*”. He hates being incapacitated and would escape from prison given half the chance “*hierdie plek maak my mal*”. He does not like the people in prison and he has no need for friends either.

Compared to the first interview the offender was far more relaxed and open with his answers in the second interview. The researcher did get the impression however that the offender was putting on a show with regards to his toughness and strength (it is felt that the offender thought he was impressing the researcher with his hard “*I can take care of myself*” attitude) but that deep down he was an individual who was unhappy about his current circumstances.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Offender 4 | 21 years old third youngest of ten children Crime: Murder |
|-------------------|--|

Family and childhood

The offender was born and raised in Davidsonville – Roodepoort. The childhood is described as okay “*orait*”. The parents were still married at the time of interview. The relationship with both parents was described as a good one; he got on well with his siblings. There was always enough food and clothes at home for the family. He explained that the discipline at home was neither too strict nor too lax, it was described as being in the middle of the two styles of discipline “*50% in die middel*”. The offender is the only member of the family involved in criminal activities.

School

Grade 10 was the highest qualification that this offender obtained, it was stated that he had to leave school as there was not enough money to pay for the school fees. Subsequent to leaving school, the offender worked for his father and brother in their transport business. He mentions that he had a good relationship with his teachers and peers whilst at school.

Drug and alcohol abuse

This offender has never used any drugs and drinks alcohol on special occasions.

Youth offender's environment

The offender did not reveal anything about his friends or the community wherein he was raised.

The criminal act/Transaction

The offender is serving a seven year sentence (of which one year and five months have been completed) for murder. From the onset of the interview, this offender vehemently stated that he was innocent and that his incarceration is a huge mistake on the part of the criminal justice system/process.

An African male was shot and killed in the coloured location and a 10 year old male was witness to the murder. This ten year old gave testimony in court that the offender was in fact the one who was in possession of the gun and was definitely at the scene of the crime. The offender claimed however that his friend was in possession of the murder weapon and that the friend was in fact the murderer, the offender was merely a bystander, he explained that once the shooting began he ran away. How and why was the offender caught if he ran away when the shooting began? The offender responded that he gave himself up as he was a bystander and therefore a witness to some of the shooting and the parties involved. He was adamant that the justice system is faulty as the testimony of a youngster was taken into account when considering who was guilty of the murder. The offender felt that he was unjustly imprisoned and will therefore appeal his conviction.

Closing comments

The researcher does not want to seem pessimistic, but one must consider that this offender has painted a pretty picture with regards to his life. Drugs and alcohol were not abused, the home appeared as a happy one, he was forced to leave school early due to financial problems. He was absolutely innocent of the crime and has never possessed a firearm. The researcher does question the possibility of a well-balanced individual with a normal upbringing landing up in jail. The researcher had a strong feeling after the first interview that this offender failed to reveal important information. It was discovered quite serendipitously that this offender was in fact a member of the “Fast guns” gang (this information was supplied by one of the other subjects interviewed). This gang is synonymous in the coloured community for their involvement with drugs, drug dealing and fights with rival gangs. Literature chapters in this study (section 3.4.2.1) have discussed that in many instances juveniles who join gangs do so due to family problems (broken homes, family conflict, abuse etc) and the gangs provide the member with a sense of belonging and unconditional approval/love. It is believed then, that this offender lied and hid information that would in all probability confirm suspicions by the researcher that this offender does come from either an unhappy family life or a crime-ridden community, factors (high-risk) which predispose an individual towards problem behaviour. This offender was transferred to another prison before the researcher could conduct the vital second interview; correctional officials were unable to provide information as to which prison the offender was transferred to.

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| Offender 5 | 19 year old, youngest of four children Crime: Murder and Robbery |
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Family and childhood

The offender was born and raised in Klerksdorp, at the age of fifteen he moved to Johannesburg to live with his mother and stepfather, before which he stayed with his grandparents. The offender was uncertain of the reason for staying with his grandparents for so long; he thinks perhaps his mother was not interested in him “*miskien my ma was nie geïnteresseerd nie*”. He described his relationship with his grandparents as very good; they were very strict with him but never hit or hurt him. His relationship with the mother was not portrayed as a close one, the offender did not get on with the stepfather at all – he asserted that they used to fight a lot, the researcher feels that this offender was in all

probability physically abused by his stepfather, this is derived from the way in which the offender spoke about his stepfather and their relationship. It must be mentioned that his stepfather has served a 15 year sentence for murder – he was also a member of a gang. Both the mother and the stepfather abused alcohol. The offender indicated that he moved to Johannesburg as his mother wanted him with her. The offender maintained that his mother had no major role to play in his life; he never listened to her as he felt that she did not take part in his life. The time he spent with his grandparents was a happy time for the offender as he felt loved and well looked after. The offender had never met his biological father.

School

The offender's highest qualification is grade 7. He did not enjoy school at all, his attention was not on the school work either, he was more concerned with his friends and after school activities. When he left school he stayed with his friends for three years, the mother had no choice in the matter neither did she try to dissuade him from leaving school and living with friends. His relationship with teachers was not a good one and he got along with selected peers at school. The friends he made at school carried firearms and through them he learnt how to carry out housebreaking. The money from the housebreaking was used to buy a firearm – he wanted to be like his friends.

Substance abuse

The offender started abusing drugs at the age of sixteen, cocaine and mandrax were used every day. The offender claimed that his initial taste of drugs was due to peer pressure.

Youth offender's environment

The offender became involved in the Fast Guns gang at the age of fifteen. The gang was involved in clashes with rival gangs (for revenge) and mostly taking drugs – he described his time spent with the gang as okay "*alright*".

The criminal act/Transaction

A ten year sentence is being served for the following:

- Murder.
- Robbery.
- Unlawful possession of firearm.
- Unlawful possession of ammunition (bullets).

The crime was committed whilst under the influence of drugs. The offender committed the aforementioned crimes with the help of a friend. The offender admitted that he was high on drugs at the time of the housebreaking, the aim of the crime was to steal goods in order to sell and buy more drugs with the money. The owner of the house interrupted the break-in and the offender subsequently shot and killed the owner. The offender indicated that he needed a firearm in his possession in order to protect himself should something go awry during his criminal activities, he pointed out that he did not think of the consequences of his behaviour; his only thought was to steal quickly and leave quickly, sell the stolen goods get money and buy drugs. The thought of getting caught crossed his mind but it did not override his need for money for drugs. The offender was hesitant to discuss the crime in more detail as he claimed that he could not cope with the fact that he had actually killed another human being “*ek wil nie weer in my kop nie*”. The offender wants to serve his punishment and get on with his life.

Closing comments

The offender is a very angry young man. His anger is not as a result of being caught or being in prison, but that he became involved in criminal activities in the first place. He feels that his behaviour and subsequent results thereof were 50% his fault and 50% his friends' fault, he said that had he not befriended such dubious characters he would not be in prison today – the offender did not, however, lay entire blame on his friends, he was aware that he was influenced wrongly by them and that he should have been more resistant to their pressure. The offender was indeed remorseful and knew that he must pay for what he had done “*ek waardeer die straf wat hulle vir my gee*”. He was adamant that he would not return to a life of crime “*ek is klaar*” and that he will stay with his family in Klerksdorp where they will financially support him and help him to live a new, crime-free life. His relationship with his mother has remained the same – he gave no indication that he wanted it to improve. The offender had enrolled for a computer course and had already completed a building/construction and welding course at the prison. The offender felt that his life could have turned out differently if a) his mother was with him from birth (this could indicate that he felt rejected by her even though he loved his grandparents very much and they were good to him) b) he needed his biological father and c) he needed proper discipline when he started with his problem behaviour.

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| Offender 6 | 20 years old, youngest of four children from the same father, has a younger brother from a different father Crime: Robbery |
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Family and childhood

The offender was born and raised in Westbury, Johannesburg (This area is synonymous with many violent gangs and their criminal activities). The father abandoned the mother when the offender was four months old. The father had in the past tried to show interest in the offender's life but to no avail. The offender wanted nothing to do with the father as he felt that the father never cared for him "*my pa het nie vir my omgegee nie*". The offender also stated that his father did not stand by his mother when she needed him and therefore has no role to play in his own life at present. The relationship with the mother was described as a good one; she exercised strict discipline on the family. The stepfather and the offender also enjoyed a good relationship "*hy praat altyd mooi met my*", the stepfather was also strict with regards to discipline. The offender got on well with his siblings. The eldest brother of the offender (32 at the time of interview) served a 10 year sentence for murder, he was a member of a gang, currently lives a crime-free life and has steady employment. The uncles and cousins of the offender were also gang members. The economical status of the family was described as fair, there was always enough food and clothes in the house.

School

Grade 7 is the highest qualification obtained by the offender. He was expelled from school during grade 8 for his involvement in gang activities; these usually spilled over into school time. The Fast Guns gang had two main rival gangs, the Majimbo's and the Farado's. Members of these aforesaid gangs who attended school would fight with other Fast Gun gang members during school time.

Substance abuse

At the age of fifteen, this offender tried crack and mandrax; his friends were with him and put pressure on him to try the drugs. The offender enjoyed the experience and continued abusing the substances thereafter.

Youth offender's environment

The offender testified that Westbury is full of gangs. In fact, the offender grew up wanting to be a gang member, the fact that his mother was strict meant nothing, the lure of the gangs was too strong. The offender maintained that in his community one almost does not have a choice – the attraction of being a gang member is unavoidable. The offender explained further that he grew up amongst gangs, gang members and their activities. The offender became a member of the Fast guns gang and his “*job description*” was to sell drugs to other coloured youth “*Ek het gafief [crack-cocaine] en pille verkoop*“. The offender used to (along with other gang members) steal cars and sell the cars for money. He did not feel bad about this; he did it for his own pleasure; especially for the money. Belonging to a gang felt like being a member of a family. The gang could have allowed the offender to identify with other adult males as a substitute for his own biological father.

The criminal act/Transaction

The offender is serving a three year sentence for robbery. The offender was alone when the crime was committed. He was high on drugs “*cooking drunk*” and realised that he had run out of money and thought the only way to obtain money was to steal. The offender robbed a male walking past him; the offender used a knife as a means of intimidation. The offender revealed that he used money given to him by his mother previously (for clothes) to buy the knife. He stole a cell phone from the victim and sold it for R600-00. The offender did not consider the consequences of his actions.

Closing comments

The offender admitted that if he were not caught then he would still be a gang member and actively involved in gang activities. The possibility of leaving the gang and doing something constructive with his life had not occurred to him “*ek was al klaar diep in met hulle*”. He thought that he would be a gangster for the rest of his life selling drugs and stealing cars. He was unwavering when he stated that he would not return to the gang once released, he would work with his uncle who is a member of the church in his community. The offender felt that his life would have

turned out differently if (1) he finished his schooling “*ek sou miskien iets geleer het in die lewe*” and (2) if his biological father was involved in his life from the time he was born; then maybe he would have been taught a life other than gang life. The offender conceded that he did not listen to his stepfather (despite the fact that he was a good man) as he was not his real father. The offender was aware that what he had done and the way he had lived his life was wrong – he admitted that it was not worth it in the end.

The researcher thanked the offenders for their time at the end of the second and final interview.

5.7 Precursors

It is essential to look at the different factors that play a role in the youth committing a crime. In the methodology chapter, the criminal event was referred to as the framework within which the results of the study will be discussed. These factors are high-risk factors that provide the cause and motivation for the criminal act.

5.7.1 Personal factors

The youthful offender is unable to change these factors; these factors include family size and birth order.

5.7.1.1 Age

The age of the offender must be taken into account. The younger the youth the greater the probability of peer influence. Resiliency skills are not properly learnt nor mastered and avoiding negative influence and thus negative behaviour proves difficult. Results from this study show that friends did indeed play a role in the offenders’ commission of crime.

5.7.1.2 Birth order

Three of the six subjects were middle children. It was mentioned in section 2.3 that middle children are more prone to delinquent behaviour.

5.7.1.3 Family size

Literature chapters have discussed the importance of the size of the family as a contributory factor towards crime. Oftentimes a large family means that financial resources are stretched, members of a large family have the disadvantage of not receiving everything they desire, for example: toys, cars, sufficient spending money and good/designer clothes. Supervision within a large family is also limited as the parents are working most of the time in order to provide the family with essentials; children are left to fend for themselves and each other. Children cannot discipline and effectively supervise one another. It was found that the least amount of children in a family was four with ten children as the maximum. Two of the six subjects described their economic status as poor. Interaction between parent and child is also limited as parents have to share their time with all the children within the family unit, some of the subjects did mention that their parents were unaware of their activities, for example drug use.

5.7.2 Contributing factors

Family related factors fall within this category – factors that proved conducive to criminal behaviour are investigated in this section.

5.7.2.1 Discipline

Inconsistent discipline has been discussed (section 2.5.1) as resulting in troublesome behaviour, lax discipline in particular yields the same results as inconsistent discipline. One offender informed the researcher that his parents were not strict at all and another offender spoke of his mother's inconsistent discipline.

5.7.2.2 Presence of a father figure

The importance of a positive father figure for a young male was emphasised in the relevant literature chapter (section 2.5.4), the male child identifies with the father and learns socialising and resiliency skills from the father. Two of the subjects' fathers died when they were quite young – 11 and 13 years old. Two of the subjects never had a father figure at all.

5.7.2.3 Single-parent families

Restricted financial means, inadequate supervision and discipline are common problems found in a single-parent family or broken home. Four

of the offenders were raised with only one parent present (this due to the demise of a father, divorce or abandonment).

5.7.2.4 Family criminality: Family members who commit crime

The family is the youth's principal learning and socialisation agent. Through the family the child learns what is correct and incorrect behaviour, manners, norms, morals and values. When family members are involved in criminal activities then the youth depicts such behaviour as correct and acceptable. Three of the subjects had family members (sometimes more than one) who were involved in criminal conduct.

5.7.2.5 Parents abusing drugs or alcohol

Children learn about life through observing and subsequently emulating their parents, if the observed behaviour is harmful; the resultant behaviour of the child may be problematic. Two of the offenders claimed that their parents abused drugs and alcohol.

5.7.2.6 Family violence and conflict

Conflict between parents creates an unhealthy and insecure environment for a juvenile, one offender's parents divorced when he was still young – usually conflict between a husband and wife precedes a divorce. Conflict with a parent creates an unhappy setting, one offender clashed considerably with his step-father, he did not enjoy spending time at home as a result.

5.7.2.7 Socio-economic status

The economic status of a family is regularly an indicator of future problem behaviour by the children. Youngsters have always wanted to fit in with their peers, when it is unlikely to obtain what their friends have via legal means, the youth may resort to illegal methods. Two of the offenders disclosed that they became involved in criminal activities due to poverty and relative deprivation.

5.7.2.8 School

It is imperative that the modern youth complete their school years. Education means knowledge and knowledge enables the youth to obtain employment. None of the subjects in this pilot study had completed their schooling; the highest grade passed is grade 10 and the lowest is grade 7. The subjects had no foresight for their long-term future, they thought that hanging out with friends and taking drugs was the fun thing to do, money was obviously needed for their drug

dependency and indulging in criminal behaviour was seen as a quick and easy alternative to rather seeking employment. Parents of the subjects had minimal influence concerning their abandoning of their school career; friends played a greater role in this regard.

5.7.2.9 Youth's environment/Community

The community wherein the child is raised plays a critical role in the youngster's life. Subsequent to the family, a juvenile will learn how to behave through his day-to-day interactions and observation of others in the community. A community filled with gangsterism, drug use and dealing does not render a positive, well-balanced image to the child. Five of the offenders resided in communities where gang-related actions are ubiquitous, one of the offenders admitted that he grew up wanting to become a gang member.

5.7.2.10 Negative peer influence

Young individuals are vulnerable to the influence of their peers. The susceptibility of associating with the wrong crowd is exacerbated by poor discipline, poverty, a single-parent family, corrupt community, conflict in the family and incomplete education – all of which have been discussed. Three of the subjects confessed that they were negatively influenced by their friends and that their friends were very important to them at the time.

5.7.3 Motive

In this section, factors that initiated the youth offenders to commit their crime at the specific time and place are examined. Three activators for the crime showed dominance: money, drugs and clothes. The main motive for the crime was drugs and money, they are interconnected as the offenders needed money in order to satisfy their drug habits, they needed drugs (a facilitating factor which will be dealt with in the next section) to commit the crime in order to get money to buy more drugs, ad infinitum. In some cases the catalyst for the crime was both drugs and money or drugs and clothes. Two offenders committed crime in order to buy fashionable clothes; this could be viewed as an indicator of relative deprivation.

5.7.4 Facilitating factors

Facilitating factors makes it easier for the criminal to commit the crime. Three of the subjects were under the influence of drugs at the time of offence, whilst under the influence of the drugs the offender does not fully realise the implications of his actions nor does he care, immediate satisfaction of his needs is uppermost in his mind.

Using weapons or knives is another facilitating factor. These items not only assist the youth to commit the crime (as a form of scaring potential victims) but neutralise the criminal act. Two subjects used a knife, one used a firearm and one a crowbar, they indicated that these objects were used as a form of protection: perchance that the victims themselves had a weapon.

When looking for reasons and motivations for criminal activities one cannot simply attribute such behaviour to a single factor. Various factors must be considered to play a role in a juvenile's life. Precursors, contributing factors, motive and facilitating factors, together form the basis, cause, incentive and catalyst for criminal behaviour by a youthful offender – they have to be addressed separately and interdependently as the presence of one factor leads to the existence of another.

5.8 Summary

The various steps undertaken in the pilot study were dealt with in this chapter. In the first step; contacting the desired prison, the reader was supplied with the necessary essentials needed by the researcher (i.e. six males between 13-21years old, a quiet office wherein the interviews could be carried out without any disturbance) in order for the pilot study to be effectively executed.

The researcher provided the reader with an outline of the offenders involved in the pilot study; this included their respective crimes. The gist of the first interview was provided as well as the analysis of the interview – this allows for the reader to experience this study “*first-hand*” and to appraise the changes made by the researcher for the subsequent and final interview. It was necessary for the researcher to conduct a follow-up interview, certain information needed to be simplified and confirmed. The language used by the offenders was memorised and used by the researcher in the second interview as a means of establishing rapport quickly. Offenders were asked questions based on *their* lives, in other words the line of questioning was in congruence with typical qualitative research – to establish the social reality of the participant and to establish the participant's personal

understanding and meaning of his/her life. The second interviews took place without any obstacles or setbacks. Offenders spoke freely and were comfortable with the questions asked.

The results from the interviews were broken down under the following sections:

- Family and childhood.
- School.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Youth's environment.
- The criminal act.
- Closing comments.

The various sections of information allows for easy reading and understanding, the reader is able to gain insight into the offenders' background before moving onto section 6.7. This section pertains to the precursors, contributing factors, motive and facilitating factors pertinent to the commission of crime by the youth offenders. Contributing factors are those aspects of an individual's life that prove conducive/contributory to criminal behaviour for example,

- Lack of or inconsistent discipline.
- Absence of a father figure.
- Single-parent families.
- Family criminality: family members who commit crime.
- Parents abusing drugs or alcohol.
- Family violence and conflict.
- Socio-economic status.
- Negative school experience.
- Youth's environment/Community conducive to criminality.
- Negative peer influence.

The motive was found to be the need for money, drugs and clothes. These are factors that initiated the youth to commit the crime. Facilitating factors aided the offender to either neutralise the crime (in other words the crime does not seem so bad or immoral to the offender) or as a means of executing the crime effectively (through the use of weapons). The researcher found that the three of the offenders were under the influence of drugs/alcohol at the time of committing the crime and four offenders used a weapon.

5.9 Conclusion

This pilot study has proved indispensable. The researcher, through the pilot study, has the opportunity and advantage of conducting the main study with few obstacles.

A pilot study allows for a researcher to improve his/her interviewing skills. The researcher for this specific test study has learnt to:

- Record information that is vital for the study only. There were times when the researcher noted everything that the subjects had to say; this is not entirely incorrect as a qualitative study requires data rich in content and detail. However, documenting everything is not time-efficient; information was given that had no bearing whatsoever on the research topic. The researcher has learnt that whilst in discussion, only information that will contribute to the study must be noted. Steering the subject in the required direction of discourse, as well as probing is a skill that has been acquired and sharpened by the researcher through the pilot study.
- Establish rapport speedily but solidly. The pilot study has given the researcher the advantage of conducting interviews using jargon characteristic of the coloured community, this will allow for rapport to be easily attained.
- Distinguishing lies from truth. It would be naïve to think that all the information given is honest. The researcher looks for non-verbal language and the manner in which the subject speaks as a means of recording truthful information. The second interview assisted in this regard, questions could be repeated in the second interview to confirm previous answers supplied.

A follow-up interview was vital for this study. It yielded information that was sensitive (as rapport was established in the initial interview) and allows for the researcher to corroborate information from the first interview.

Factors that were found to be significant in this test study (for example: age of offender, discipline, negative peer influence etc) will be concentrated on in the main study. The results of the pilot study have shown a predominance of specific factors; these will be highlighted by the researcher in the initial interview of the main study, this allows for obtaining desired information quickly.

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that the researcher inquired of each offender as to what should have been different in their lives (predisposing factors) so as to ensure a crime-free life. To follow are the thoughts of the offenders:

- Poverty, the mother should have paid for the school fees so that he could have completed his schooling.
- He should have completed his schooling, should not have listened to friends.
- He should have had his mother from birth, had his biological father in his life, proper discipline should have been exercised and he should not have allowed his friends to influence him.
- He needed his father as a role figure in his life and he should have completed his schooling.

Incomplete schooling, inconsistent or lack of discipline and the absence of parents are issues that are pertinent to the offenders. Given the preponderance of the aforesaid factors, the researcher will take them into consideration when conducting the main study as factors that need to be addressed and explored as not only relevant; but conducive to youthful offenders committing criminal acts. The pilot study has aided the researcher immensely in this regard; the researcher has the advantage of executing the main study with knowledge of the key elements that need to be highlighted. The following chapter concerns itself exclusively with the execution of the main study.