

Main Study

6.1 Introduction

The pilot study as the forerunner to the main study proved invaluable as vital knowledge was gained, specifically, the establishing of rapport with the subjects, the enhancement of interviewing skills (for example: probing) and approaching the interview setting. The aforementioned factors are a pre-requisite for a successful main study.

The researcher has learnt through the pre-study that an interview is a conversation with a function. Therefore, the questions posed to the subjects must not be interrogative by nature, the demeanor of the researcher/interviewer must be relaxed and good-natured; this ensures that the researcher is depicted as a trustworthy, able interviewer. Dane (1990:130) describes the relationship between the researcher and the subject by saying *“When conducting face-to face interviews, you are asking potential respondents to open their doors and perhaps even allow you inside their homes”*. Being a qualitative study, it is imperative to ensure that the subjects trust the researcher to the extent that sensitive, rich in content and thus important information is divulged.

Factors that showed predominance in the trial study will be taken into consideration when conducting the main research. Issues that proved prominent in the youth offenders' life will be addressed; these include; the family, school and the community. These social areas were found to play a considerable role in the commission of crime by the offenders.

A short overview of the interviews will be given, followed by the data collected in the main research. The data will be illustrated in tabular form, followed by a discussion pertaining to the information supplied. This qualitative data will be divided into three main sections: family, school and the community. These facets were found (as already stated) to be not only prevalent but also highly influential in the offender partaking in criminal activities. The data will be presented within these three main spheres. The reader will find however, that these spheres will overlap: they are inter-related as factors present in one sphere exist in another as well. The writer will examine the family, the school and the community as separate areas of influence that also function as a whole

(with regards to their impact on the youth offender) and therefore display associations to each other: this will be done in the conclusion.

6.2 A short overview of the interviews

Twenty subjects were interviewed for the main study. Eight subjects were serving a sentence at the Baviaanspoort prison in Pretoria, seven in Boksburg prison, on the Eastrand and six in Leeukop prison in Sunninghill.

The researcher approached each interview with a confident and relaxed attitude. The initial interview lasted approximately 1–1½ hours, a second/follow-up interview was necessary; these lasted on average 45 minutes to 1 hour. There was no difficulty in establishing rapport with the offenders. The researcher used the jargon characteristic of the coloured community from the onset of each interview and this aided in building quick and solid rapport. Of the twenty subjects interviewed, two subjects were distant and hesitant in both the first and second interviews, it was quite clear to the researcher that they did not want to take part in the research (each subject was informed that taking part in the research was not compulsory). Apart from the two aforementioned subjects, every subject was more than willing to share this life with the researcher; they were all relaxed and comfortable in the presence of the researcher for the duration of both interviews. As rapport was established fairly quickly, the researcher found that sensitive information was given easier and quicker than in the pilot study, consequently the researcher asked sensitive and bold questions earlier in the interviews for the main study.

The three prisons provided the researcher with an office wherein to conduct the interviews, there was no disturbance or interruption (noise or physical) at any time throughout the interviews, the interview setting was, therefore, ideal for obtaining the required data.

The interviews were indeed in-depth in nature. The researcher used the opportunity that a face-to face interview allows, to explore the life of the offender while at the same time getting to know the offender on a personal basis. The aim in this qualitative research is to gain an understanding of the offender's life and the dynamics behind his behaviour. Offenders were given the chance of answering the questions at their own pace and in their own style of conversation; this gave the researcher the advantage of observing the subject's verbal and non-verbal behaviour, the level of responses provided, an indication of the offender's intelligence and notably the offenders' interpretation of his life

course. To enhance the qualitative value of this study, the researcher asked the offenders (only if they were willing) to provide a written story of their lives. Extracts from these written life-stories are provided as a means of illuminating specific information. The researcher wants to impress on the reader that these stories of the offenders are their natural responses, the researcher did not stipulate at any time what was to be included in their life stories. It must be mentioned at this point that the researcher utilised the interviewing techniques and tips adapted from Seidman (in Greeff 2002:293). The methods provided by Seidman aided the researcher in conducting the main study and obtaining data rich in content. The methods most helpful to the researcher are set out below:

- Allow the participant to do 90% of the talking.
- Ask clear and brief questions.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Ask questions from broad to specific.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Repeat key questions throughout the interview.
- Maintain control while allowing free rein.
- Return to incomplete points.
- Start with questions that are not controversial.
- Refrain from interrupting a good story to ask a question, wait for story to finish and then ask the question.
- The interview should not be used to show off the interviewee's knowledge, vocabulary, charm or other abilities.

The researcher made a point of showing the offenders that their dialogue was being listened to and that the researcher was interested in what they had to say, whether the information was inconsequential or not. The researcher allowed for humour in the interviews (this is also cited by Seidman as an interviewing technique) this makes for a relaxed atmosphere for the offender and the researcher, as well as a means of facilitating and promoting rapport. The researcher ended the final interviews with words of thanks and encouragement to the offenders.

6.3 Results from the main study

6.3.1 Age of the offenders

Table 6.1 Offender's age

16 years old	17 years old	18 years old	19 years old	20 years old	21 years old	22 years old	23 years old
2		1	4	3	6	2	2

As stipulated in section 1.5.1.3 the age category of the youths included in this project range from 16-23 years.

6.3.2 Family and childhood

This section includes anything that deals with family related issues. Although drug abuse by a parent has been shown to affect drug use by a child, the researcher has opted to incorporate drug use by the offender under school-related issues, this is done as the influence of friends at school plays a major role in the offender's use of narcotics.

6.3.2.1 Birth order and family size

Table 6.2 Birth order

Eldest	Second eldest	Middle child	Second youngest	Youngest
11	2	1	2	4

The majority of the offenders were the eldest of the offspring in the family. Research cited in section 2.3 has suggested that the eldest child

is not likely to commit crime. The information supplied in the table shows otherwise. The eldest child is seen as the more responsible child who feels obligated to care for his/her younger siblings. Section 2.3 discusses that if a parent is missing (for example a father) then the eldest child takes over the duties of the father. An offender stated that he left school early as his mother fell pregnant and he knew that another child meant more expenses, his mother would not be able to pay for his school fees, he decided to leave school and seek employment as a means of bringing money into the house.

One offender claimed that he was a naughty child as a result of being the eldest, as he wanted to be noticed and try everything *“die oudste wil altyd gesien word”*. The same offender threatened his father with a firearm as he was angry that his father never provided the family with money. This indicates a sense of responsibility towards the rest of the family by the offender as the eldest child. At this point the researcher wants to introduce the overlapping of the three spheres mentioned in the introduction: the offender was under the influence of drugs when threatening his father with a firearm, his initiation into the drug world was due to pressure from his friends. The first offender mentioned in this section left school to seek employment so as to provide for the family, the family were in dire straits financially and often had to depend on handouts from members of the community or welfare. His friends convinced him to indulge in crime as a means of obtaining money; he started abusing drugs with his friends as well. This offender had no interaction with his father and therefore had no positive male figure to identify with. The aforementioned information aptly illustrates how the family, the school and the community overlap and are interdependent of each other, single-parent families, lack of a father figure, poverty, availability of firearms, early school leaving and the influence of peers are factors that have been mentioned thus far, these factors can be placed within the three main spheres of this chapter – the family, school and community.

Table 6.3 Family size

Family size	6	5	4	3	2
Number of offenders	2	3	2	8	5

Offenders hailing from families with three or more children talk of poverty. They specifically refer to them not having the same clothes and shoes as other youngsters in the community. Mothers were often at work all day leaving the offenders to fend for themselves; three of the offenders were sent to live with their grandparents and aunt as the mother had to work in order to financially sustain the family. One offender who was sent to live with his aunt felt that he need not listen to his mother as she was never around when he needed her “*my ma is nie my ma nie*”. Typically large families suffer from financial constraints, parents are forced to work a lot in order to provide the bare minimum, as a result children are not adequately supervised and fall prey to negative influences.

6.3.2.2 Discipline

Table 6.4 Discipline experienced by offenders

Inconsistent	Strict/ Consistent	Lax
	14	6

As the table shows, the majority of the offenders felt that the discipline they received was strict and consistent, however, only four of the fourteen offenders had both parents as disciplinarians. One offender explained that his father would beat him as a form of discipline, he knew that this was not the correct way of discipline as he states “... *not the proper way of discipline to be hit instead of being spoken to properly*”. Researchers in Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1996:133) found that when parents physically punish and /or discipline their children it often results in the child acting out/behaving in an aggressive way. Three of the offenders were disciplined by their aunt, grandmother and sister respectively, (this was due to the abandonment or demise of the mother). The offender who had his aunt as a disciplinarian; never paid attention to his aunt’s attempts at disciplining him as he felt that she never really cared for him much “*Sy’t ook nie vir my omgegee nie*”. Notwithstanding that the majority of the offenders felt that they were raised strictly, they did explain that despite the strict discipline; they never listened to their mothers as she was the sole disciplinarian in the home “*Sy was streng maar sy was alleen*”. Seven of the offenders who

experienced strict discipline had only the mother as the major role player in the family. Another offender justified his resistance towards his mother's discipline: he felt that she was too soft; with no control over him, he felt that he needed a stronger influence in his life to discontinue his deviant behaviour. Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1996:133) state that mothers who are the only disciplinarian within the family are unable to discipline their children adequately as they lack the personal resources or commitment to do so.

The remaining offenders experienced their discipline as being very lax. Two of the six offenders were raised by their aunt and grandmother respectively, four were raised by their mothers. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber and Rollins and Thomas (in Kratcoski Kratcoski 1996:134) concluded through their findings that children who experience a very low level of parental control or very strict discipline do not learn desirable behaviour later in life.

The reader may at this stage question the high figure of offenders who experienced strict discipline; traditionally strict discipline does not lead to deviant behaviour. The reader must note that these offenders (although subjected to strict discipline) rarely if ever paid attention to the regulations imposed on them. Many of the offenders felt that a father figure (who is conventionally portrayed as the stronger presence in the family) was needed as the enforcer of rules. Another factor that bears significance is that four of the parents who were involved with the discipline were either abusing drugs or alcohol or both. An offender claimed that his parents were never really sober enough to tell him what to do. Offenders admitted that they did not listen to their mothers as (1) she was a woman and therefore emotionally soft and (2) she was at work all day and was therefore not aware of the offender's activities throughout the day. Mention must be made at this point that the majority of the offenders were brought up in a broken home where the mother was the single parent, this will be dealt with in detail on presentation of the data. The researcher feels that despite the offenders' claim of receiving strict discipline they did not experience this discipline as consistent, consistency in discipline has been examined in section 2.5.1.

6.3.2.3 Presence of a father figure

Table 6.5 Presence/Absence of a father figure

Absence of father figure	Poor father figure	Positive father figure
8	9	3

Of the twenty offenders interviewed, a mere three described their father as being a positive role model to them and as having a positive relationship with their fathers. Reasons for absence of a father figure varied: death of the father, divorce, abandonment, serving prison sentence and not knowing where the father is. The following excerpt by an offender describes how his father had never taken part in his life, particularly in the role of caretaker and disciplinarian:

My ma het gesterwe toe ek nog baie klein was en my pa het van daardie dag af nooit weer na my toe gekom om my te kan groot maak nie en ek het saam met my Ouma, my Ma se ma groot geword.

Nine offenders felt that they had poor father figures, reasons for this included: alcohol and drug abuse, time away from home due to temporary abandonment and incapacitation in prison. Two of the offenders had stepfathers who were strict with them but they never listened to their step-fathers as they were not the offenders' biological father.

The reader will remember the in-depth study conducted by Robert G.Andry (in Yablonsky and Haskell 1988:130) that is presented in the literature study on family-related risk factors. The results show that offenders identified more with their mothers than their fathers, offenders felt that their fathers could have been more affectionate and played a bigger role in their life. Sons identify with their fathers and in this study it is clear that the offenders lacked the relationship a son not only needs but also desires to have with his father.

The following are statements the offenders made concerning their relationship with their father or their opinion of him:

- One offender mentions that every time his father was drunk (his father was an alcoholic) he would beat the offender quite badly.
- Being fearful and afraid of the father is how one offender described their relationship, this fear was exacerbated by his father's alcoholism.
- *"My pa was nie 'n groot rolspeler in my lewe nie, hy was meer soos 'n broer as 'n pa"*.
- *"Ons het 'n so-so verhouding gehad"*.
- An offender always saw his father under the influence of Mandrax *"Hy was altyd gevlam"*.
- On being asked as to what should have been different in his life two offenders replied that they needed a father figure, one offender expanded on this : *" 'n Pa gehad het wat my kan slaan/guide"*.
- An offender who described his relationship with his father as bad felt that it was his father's fault that he is in prison *"Dis sy skuld dat ek hier is"* His father used to hit him a lot.
- Communication between father and son was minimal, the father was drunk 90% of the time.

The majority of the offenders interviewed expressed anger, disappointment and disgust at their fathers, due to the father's lack of financial assistance, ill-treating the mother or abandonment. The offenders who had no father figure whatsoever indicated that a patriarch was needed in their childhood and subsequent adolescence as a disciplinarian, caregiver and as the enforcer of rules, emphasising the aversive affect of negative influences, for example: wayward friends.

The paternal influence for a male youth is vital. The presence of a father figure was found by researchers such as Glueck, Hirschi, Nye and Stagner (in Angenent & de Man 1996:107) to be a definite influence with regards to the hampering of youth offending. In 1999, research was undertaken by Princeton University with regards to the absence of the father and youth incarceration. The researchers found that *“as the incidence of father absence grows, community disintegration and crime, especially youth crime, will continue to grow”*. The study revealed further that fathers make up the high figure (93%) of incarcerated parents (Maree 2003:59). The life of one offender can attest to the aforementioned research: This offender had a bare-minimum relationship with his father, in fact, his father used to see him every now and then. A typical father-son relationship was non-existent and the subject in question has the following to say about his lack of father figure *“Ek het baie agtergebly sonder hom”*. This offender ardently blames his father for his criminal ways. One offender claimed that he only saw his father four or five times a year (his parents divorced when he was seven years old) and this impacted on him negatively as he had no one to tell him right from wrong, this offender was adamant that he needed a father figure.

6.3.2.4 Single-parent families

Table 6.6 Offenders hailing from single-parent families

Single parents families
13

A broken home refers to a family where only one parent/guardian is present. Prior to discussing the results displayed above, the researcher wants to examine the remaining seven offenders’ family setting (the offenders not listed in the table). Four of the offenders were raised in a home with both parents present, two offenders raised in this complete family system had fathers who were alcoholics (one father perpetually beating the mother), the third offender did in fact experience a single-parent family for eight years whilst the father was serving a prison sentence. Notwithstanding that these aforementioned offenders were raised in a complete family environment, the researcher feels that it is

particularly important to note that the presence of both parents does not de rigueur; imply a balanced family setting. The importance of a positive father figure was dealt with in section 6.3.2.3. The fact that three offenders were raised in a complete family setting indicates zero if the parents are not positive role players in the youths' life. Three offenders were raised in a home where a step-father was present, therefore, there were two guardians overseeing the offenders. The offenders indicated in section 6.3.2.2. however, that the step father was not their biological father and hence little attention was paid to any disciplinary attempts made by the step-parent. One offender explained that his mother tried to enforce discipline on hearing of his deviant behaviour; the offender paid no attention to her efforts due to the fact that she was a single parent – he did not take her seriously *“My ma het gehoor van my aktiwiteite maar as ŉ single parent, ek wou nie gehoor nie”*.

When looking at the figures provided the reader clearly sees that the mother is in the majority of cases the single parent and therefore the only breadwinner in the family, added to this, the supervising and chastising of the children is the sole responsibility of the mother. Literature cited in section 6.3.2.2. states how a single mother lacks the resources and commitment to properly discipline her children. The mother (as the only parent) is compelled to work long hours in order to provide financially for the family, this means that she is unable to spend quality time with her children, this in turn leads to poor supervision of the children particularly after school. Youngsters are left to their own devices: the mother is unaware of their after-school activities or the friends they socialise with, she is therefore powerless to do anything due to her lack of knowledge.

Coupled with the single-parent factor is the problem of broken homes. The majority of the offenders (13 in total) were raised within a broken home environment, a further three have step-fathers (this indicates that at one stage the offenders did in fact experience a broken home setting). The balance of the offenders had both parents present (the reader will remember that one offender's father served a prison sentence for eight years – thus this offender experienced a broken home for several years). Children/adolescents from broken homes often exhibit problem behaviour as opposed to children from complete families. Siegel, Welsh and Senna (2003:196) assert that this is largely attributed to the collapse of the family: oftentimes the disintegration of the family is accompanied by aggression, hostility and conflict – children from a divorce have poor supervision, weakened attachment and are susceptible to peer pressure, factors that are conducive to criminal behaviour. Maree (2003:59) states that a large number of youth in South Africa have fathers who are incarcerated (especially if you take into account the predominantly, large male prison population in this

country) this makes for an incomplete family, which, has already been mentioned as a risk factor for criminal behaviour.

6.3.2.5 Family criminality: Family members who commit crime

Table 6.7 Offenders' family members who were involved in criminal activities

Offenders	Family member	Crime committed	Contact with the offender
Offender 1	Cousin	Shoplifting and theft	Yes
Offender 2	Grandfather 2 x uncles	Gangster Murder	No No
Offender 3	Uncle	Robbery	No
Offender 4	Cousin	Murder	Yes
Offender 5	Uncle	Housebreaking	Yes
Offender 6	2 x uncles Uncle Stepfather	Murder Rape Robbery and theft	Yes Yes Yes
Offender 7	Uncle	Gangster	Yes
Offender 8	Brother	Car theft	Yes
Offender 9	Brother	Housebreaking	Yes
Offender 10	1x uncle 2 x uncles	Robbery Murder and drug related offences	Yes Yes
Offender 11	2 x cousins	Housebreaking	Yes – very close contact
Offender 12	1 x cousin Cousins Father	Robbery, assault and theft Gangsters Various	Yes – very close contact Yes – very close contact Yes

		crimes, offender unsure of exact crimes	
Offender 13	Uncle	Murder	Yes
Offender 14	2 x uncles	Drug smuggling	Yes
Offender 15	Father	Gun smuggling	No
Offender 16	Stepfather	Gangster	Yes
Offender 17	Brother	Housebreaking and murder	No

The figures presented above are in fact significant. One cannot discount the possibility that criminal family members influence younger family members. Conceivably, the youth is in reality emulating the behaviour of his family members. The importance of the family and its influence on the youth has been underlined throughout chapter two, particularly the discernible fact that the family is the primary socialisation agent for the child/adolescent.

The researcher presented this data in this fashion as it was felt that it was necessary for the reader to note how many offenders (1) had more than one family member involved in criminal activities (2) whether there was any contact with these criminal family members and (3) the types of crimes committed, all of which will be now be discussed. There are three offenders who each had three family members involved in criminal activities, two offenders each had two criminal family members and two offenders had more than three family members as criminals. Thirteen of the offenders had contact with the members of their family involved in criminal activities. This is relevant for this study as the researcher wants to show the reader that there is a correlation between contact with criminal family members and committing a crime as a result of the contact, this will be discussed in detail shortly. The types of crimes committed by the offenders' family members are serious in nature, in spite of this not all of the family members are serving a prison sentence for these crimes, the offenders have stated how these family members have either spent their life in and out of prison or have never been detained. The researcher mentions this as the impression was given by the offenders that the crimes committed by their family members did not act as a deterrent, the offenders saw that despite the seriousness of the crimes committed the family members did not serve lengthy prison terms or were not apprehended at all.

Research conducted by the Gluecks (in Bartollas 1997:234) showed that a much higher proportion of offenders than non-offenders had criminal parents and delinquent siblings. The family teaches the youth how to behave in a socially acceptable manner, the importance of education and good morals and values. When family members are involved in criminal actions the youth in question will not internalise good values and morals, the youth will always identify stronger with family members (the family is after all the youths first teacher in life). For example: offender 16 would witness his stepfather's criminal actions and the stepfather would regularly arrive home with stolen goods/items. The offender acknowledged that he would think how easy it looked to commit crime and get away with it. This offender did not have a bad relationship with his stepfather and even though the stepfather was not his biological father, the offender still identified with him. Offender two is very proud of the fact that his grandfather was a gangster, the offender claims that his grandfather is a very famous gangster and is acknowledged in a museum in Pretoria. This offender is very proud of his infamous grandfather, despite the fact that he was involved in criminal actions. Considering that seventeen of the twenty offenders interviewed had criminal family members and that thirteen of the seventeen offenders with criminal family members had contact with the family members in question, one must suppose that there is indeed an association between criminal family members and the influence thereof on young offenders. Maree (2003:60) states the following with regards to contact with family members *"It has also been found that if siblings are close and interact with one another, they may easily influence one another, or encourage or discourage deviance in one another. Shared environmental experiences in a family might also account for behavioural resemblance among siblings"*. Although this excerpt discusses the influence of contact between siblings, the reader must consider that in many cases the criminal family members of the offenders were resident with them at one time or another.

6.3.2.6 Parents abusing drugs or alcohol

Table 6.8 Substance abuse by offenders' parents

Father	Mother	Mother and Father	Stepfather
7	2	1	1

Eleven of the twenty offenders had parents who abused drugs or alcohol or both. Parents are the first and most vital influence of a child's life; the lifestyle that a parent follows has a profound effect on a child. It has already been established that a child will identify with his parents, particularly; a male child will identify with his father. When the father (in this case seven fathers) is abusing drugs and alcohol and often in view of the child, the consequences are most surely negative in nature.

One of the consequences is the impact that the substance abuse has on the parent/child relationship: an offender declared how his father (under the influence of alcohol) used to beat him with a belt, sometimes till he bled, needless to say the offender had no respect for his father and rejected anything his father said (this includes any attempt at discipline). One offender confirmed the effect alcohol abuse had on his relationship with his father: there was no relationship whatsoever, his father was drunk 90% of the time, with the result that the offender and his father never communicated with one another. An offender's father was a heavy Mandrax user and the offender stated that his father was always under the influence of this narcotic, he was always "high", "my pa was altyd gevlam". One offender professed that there was never an opportunity to communicate with his father as his father was always drunk, this offender in fact, emphatically stated that it was his father's fault that he (the offender) was in prison. Another offender received beatings (sometimes bad enough to draw blood) from his father when his father was drunk, the father left his job due to his alcohol abuse, the family suffered financially as a result. The step-father of one offender was a serious alcoholic who regularly assaulted the offender and his mother, this offender claimed that these beatings served as the cause for his own drug use: abusing drugs was a means of escaping the problems at home; specifically the abuse that the offender and the mother suffered at the hands of the step-father "dit het my seer

gemaak". An offender related how his drunk father would belittle him in front of his friends, the offender indicated that this would anger him immensely:

Go and Live with my father was'nt a nice story. When he got drunk he told me that I wasn't his son inFront oF my Friends

Studies (in Ellis & Walsh 2000:191) reveal that children whose parents abuse alcohol run the increased likelihood of criminal behaviour. Children identify with their parents and assume that their parents' behaviours are not only acceptable but normal as well. This is confirmed by one offender who stated that his father abused cannabis and would often buy the aforesaid drug for the offender.

6.3.2.7 Family violence and conflict

The following data reveals how many offenders experienced family violence and conflict. The reader must note that the researcher has not included physical and/or sexual abuse of offenders in this section as the researcher feels that this occurrence needs to be addressed separately.

- Two offenders witnessed their mothers being assaulted regularly by their step-fathers.
- One offender's mother was beaten by her boyfriend.
- One offender's biological father beat the mother.
- Two offenders claimed that although physical contact was absent his parents used to engage in vicious arguments that led to violent conflict, the parents of one offender divorced due to theses violent arguments.
- One offender and his brother were frequently involved in violent brawls where the exchange of blows was not uncommon (the offender noted that his brother and him were unable to have a normal sibling relationship).

In total, seven offenders experienced a family environment filled with arguments, violent disputes and beatings. It is interesting to note that the performer of the assaults was inebriated with drugs and/or alcohol at every violent occasion. Research conducted discloses that a poor home life or environment; which can be measured by marital adjustment and accord within the home can in fact affect the quotient of delinquent behaviour amongst children more than a broken home can (Bartollas

2000:237). The impact of living in a violent and dissonant milieu is not easy to erase from one's memory, an offender asserted "*Ek onthou alles soos gister, dis iets ek sal nie vergeet nie*". An unhappy home leads to the children avoiding spending time at home, with the result that the children are on the streets, unsupervised and therefore vulnerable to external, harmful influences, one offender affirms "*I was on the streets a lot, couldn't handle the fighting*". One offender felt that it was his fault that his parents fought so much "*ek het gedink dit was my skuld, as ek nie gebore was sou hulle nie baklei nie. As 'n kind dink jy so – dis die rede ek uit die huis gebly het*". Yablonsky (2000:126) elucidates with regards to the effect of a violent, conflict-ridden home "*Parents are role models to their children. It logically follows that husbands and wives who are violent with each other are prone to be violent with their children. This is how children learn to settle their frustrations or disputes by acting out violently*". An offender who was raised in a characteristically violent and tense environment discussed with the researcher how his step-father would attack his mother and on occasion attack him (the offender) as well. The offender felt powerless, in the offender's words "*useless*". He was unable to do anything to protect his mother or himself, he claimed that when under the influence of alcohol he would become aggressive and take part in small street fights. The offender ended the discussion by saying "*My childhood was unhappy, it's not nice seeing your mom being beaten up*". This offender maintained that his unhappy childhood played a contributory role in his commission of crime, the following excerpt provided by this offender illustrates his perception of the violence and conflict within the home:

My life as a child was one that not every child would experience. The fact that at a young age I experience physical abuse at home meaning my father always beat my, mother, it wasn't even my real father

One offender experienced a great deal of pain and stress when his parents fought; the fighting became increasingly more violent nearer the subsequent divorce. The offender in question blamed his father for the fighting at home and claimed that he felt only hatred towards his father.

6.3.2.8 Physical/ sexual abuse

Table 6.9 Number of offenders who experienced physical/sexual abuse

Father	Stepfather	Aunt
2	1	1

The abuse referred to above was physical in nature. An offender's aunt used an electrical cord and whip in order to carry out the beatings, the balance of the offenders were beaten with the perpetrators' fists. Research conducted in Yablonsky (2000:127) found that youth who were the victims of abuse were more likely to engage in violent behaviour than youth who were not maltreated. The researcher found one offender with an aggressive demeanor, an angry young male who felt that there is no use in trying to be good, he believed that he was born evil, treated badly his whole life and nothing can be done about it. Correctional officers confirmed this, informing the researcher upon questioning that this offender had repeated fights with other inmates, was unable to form a meaningful relationship and had no respect towards authoritative figures. Another offender became increasingly aggressive and angry when relating his physical abuse at the hands of his father, he declared how much he hated his father and how much intense pain the father had caused him, thoughts of his father were always accompanied by anger as did the fact that he was beaten so badly "*Dit het my baie kwaad gemaak*". One offender maintained that he had become a hard person "*dit het my hard gemaak*" as a result of his aunt ill-treating him. A South African study conducted by Wedge, Boswell and Dissel (in Maree 2003:61) shows a 68% rate of some type of abuse experienced by inmates in their younger years.

The reader will remember that in chapter two the researcher included neglect as a form of abuse. The researcher found one inmate to have been emotionally neglected by his mother (the reader will also remember that maternal love and affection are vital for a child, the mother is the first person with whom a child develops a sense of trust, security and love). The aforementioned offender maintained that his mother never showed him any physical or emotional affection, the

despair of the offender was apparent to the researcher on discussion of this subject. The offender declared that all he ever wanted (and still does) is for his mother to hold him and tell him how much he was loved, he feels that he needed his mother to alert him when he was doing wrong (discipline once again comes to the fore as an important aspect for a balanced individual). The offender claimed that his mother would only show him affection when she was drunk, this angered him as he felt it was the incorrect way to show affection – as with discipline, affection by a parent needs to be consistent in order for the child to feel secure and loved.

6.3.2.9 Socio-economic status

Table 6.10 Economic background of offenders

Middle class	Average/Poor	Very poor
	11	9

“Party keer die kat staan by die stoof”. This Afrikaans idiom was used by an offender to illustrate his family’s low socio-economic status, the researcher asked for clarification and the offender explained that when the cat sits by the stove then one knows how dire the financial situation really is. Many offenders related how single mothers worked long hours in order to afford basic essentials for the family, for example, food and clothes, the offenders indicated that they had to fend for themselves whilst their mothers were at work and that adult supervision was rare. Stories were told of how a desperate family would ask neighbours for food when money ran out, where a family relied solely on welfare and handouts from the community and how school fees were left unpaid due to financial constraints. Comments from offenders with regards to their economic status at home ranged from financially average *“Ons was orraait”* to despair *“Die bietjie wat my ma gebring, dit hou ons maar in die lewe”*. The researcher cannot without a doubt positively prove the correlation between poverty and crime; however, the reader must note that relative deprivation plays a key role in the commission of crime. Many offenders stated how they wanted to have the same fashionable

clothing that their friends or peers owned, how they needed money to buy “nice” clothes as “girls want guys with nice clothes”.

Although the offenders accepted their socio-economic status, they were nonetheless ashamed of their lack of money and material possessions. Maree (2003:58) explains “As a result of a family’s low socio-economic status, children may develop a negative self-concept and feelings of inferiority, shame and guilt”. Too often, people are judged not by who they are but by what they possess, this is a phenomenon that affects every individual in society, young and old. When considering the motivating factor for the crimes committed by the offenders (in section 6.4) the reader will agree that the need for money and clothes is related to relative deprivation. All the offenders acknowledged that they had clothes to wear, however, the majority of these young offenders stated how they wanted fashionable clothes and shoes which (1) their mothers/caregivers could never afford and (2) the offenders were unable to obtain through legally prescribed and socially acceptable means.

6.3.3 School

6.3.3.1 Highest qualification, academic ability and reasons for incomplete schooling

Table 6.11 Details of offender’s school career

Highest grade passed	Academic capability	Reason for leaving and turning to crime
Grade 8	Good – passed every subject	Wanted “nice” clothes, committing crime was the only way of obtaining the desired clothes
Grade 10	Very good	Girlfriend fell pregnant, decided to commit crime to support child and girlfriend – finding employment was not an option, the offender’s first job earned him R350.00 a month, the offender witnessed other males committing crime without being caught, he decided to turn to crime as it looked easy and he could earn more. Offender claimed to have earned approximately R2 500.00 a day

Grade 10	Average	Wanted to seek employment to bring more money home
Grade 9	Good	Suspended for drug use – offender decided not to return
Grade 5	Poor	Offender's mother fell pregnant, he knew that she would not be able to afford his school fees on the birth of the baby. The offender's friends informed him that they would show him how to make money – he wanted to follow his friends
Grade 3	Good	No money
Grade 8	Average	Offender could not say why he left school <i>"Ek het nie 'n antwoord vir daai nie"</i>
Grade 9	<i>"Always failing"</i>	Better to leave school and seek employment
Grade 5	Poorly	Decided to leave school due to family problems: a lot of drinking and fighting at home
Grade 9	Poorly	Arrested for a crime for which he is currently serving sentence
Grade 9	Average	To follow friends – he thought school was a waste of time
Grade 7	Good	Due to a fight with a teacher (the teacher was involved in a gang) offender left school along with his friends – this offender was also involved in a gang with friends
Grade 8	Poorly	Due to gang involvement
Grade 9	Poorly	Decided to commit crime <i>"ek sou spien"</i> (This means to commit crime). The offender needed money to buy drugs, committing crime made <i>"sense"</i> to him
Grade 9	Poorly	Offender decided to leave as his father was arrested and he was abusing drugs heavily
Grade 10	Good	Offender arrested for hijacking
Grade 10	Good	When the offender's grandmother died he and his siblings lost their house (grandmother provided for the family) offender decided to sell drugs and fend for himself
Grade 3	No comment	School fees not paid – did not want to be at school

Grade 10	Good	Due to drugs and did not want to be attend school any more
Grade 9	Good and later very poor	Offender decided to leave as the mother could not afford to buy shoes for the offender and he was ashamed to attend school without shoes. He failed a great deal before he left as he concentrated more on “ <i>meisies en vriende</i> ”.

Through the ages, emphasis has always been placed on obtaining an educational qualification. Completing high school is the gateway to further education and future employment. The reader can agree that the data presented in the above table leaves one with feelings of concern; the highest level passed among the twenty offenders is a grade 10 with the lowest being a grade 3. The reader will also note that the majority of the offenders faired average to poor academically at school, it is essential that the researcher explains at this point that the academic achievement of the offenders cannot be proven by for example: reports from their schools. However, the researcher includes an excerpt written by one of the offenders to illustrate that perhaps the academic ability is not existent; attention is drawn to the grammar used by the offender:

As ek no uit by die trong se heke stap wil ek so grag stuuder vir 'n elektoniese werk ek wil ook mense vertel dat misag pleeg helpe nie as 'n persoon aan gaan met snaks se dinne sal hy kom by die trong en hier by die trong is nie eens bedoel vir 'n hond nie ek glo 'n hond sal nie eës so wil lewe nie, maar ek wil net se om snakes dinne te doen is nie wert nie ek glo ook no het ek baie hard gevoel daar buite is nie meer kans vir my om tevat wat nie aan my behoord ek het gehoor en gevoel hoes trong.

The offenders provided their own impression with regards to their scholastic achievement; those who did badly seemed unperturbed by their meager efforts at school. Regarding the aforesaid, Hirschi and Hindelang, Jensen, (in Angenent and de Man 1996:119) state that school records reveal that youth offenders do not perform well academically. LeBlanc and Lanctôt (in Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith and Tobin 2003:59) connect poor academic performance to gang membership as well “*Poor school performance and low commitment to and involvement in school are correlated with gang membership*”. Offenders admitted that they did not attend school every day, hanging about with friends, drinking, smoking and taking drugs was found to be

a more desirable way of passing time. It is interesting to note that some offenders revealed that they had minimal respect for their school and any authority bound to it. In this regard William E. Schafer and Kenneth Polk (in Bartollas 2000:280) contend *“There is considerable evidence that students who violate school standards pertaining such things as smoking, truancy, tardiness, dress, classroom demeanor, relations with peers, and respect for authority are more likely to become delinquent than those who conform to such standards”*.

The relationship a learner has with a teacher and peers is a factor; that if negative in nature; can play a key role with regards to early school-leaving. Fourteen offenders asserted that they had an average to good relationship with both teachers and peers, the remaining six had disquieting tales to tell. Two offenders had regular clashes (sometimes leading to violent fights) with teachers and peers due to gang-involvement by aforesaid parties, two offenders fought with students only, once again the basis for these disagreements was as a result of gang related issues i.e. conflict would occur between offenders and teachers/peers due to gang rivalry and initiation – an offender confirmed that the teachers involved in the fighting were full members of competing gangs. The fifth offender declared that he had no friends whatsoever at school *“ek hou nie van vriende nie”*. This offender did not want to expand on his statement of not wanting friends. The last offender in question smirked when asked about his relationship with teachers and peers: this offender claimed that he hardly exchanged words with any teachers as he was never in class. The importance of the school as the next socialisation agent after the parents; has been established in chapter three, having said this; the role of the teacher and his/her influence with regards to a learner’s career and life choices must therefore be considered as an important role. McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter (1998:70) say in this regard *“Regardless of the specific role played by teachers, teacher climate is important to the school’s culture and ultimately to students’ success”*.

Most of the offenders reported that they did not enjoy school at all. Some offenders felt that attending school was a waste of time, one offender was particularly passionate in his opinion of education, this offender wanted to have enough money in order to buy fashionable clothing (he explained that *“girls only wanted guys with nice clothes”*) dropping out of school was an attractive option as he felt that attending school was of no use, committing crime assured him of quick, hard cash. This offender remarked to the researcher *“ek maak drie tot vier keer meer geld as juffrou”*. Two offenders alleged that the schools they attended were *“no good”*. One offender claimed that there was a criminal element present at his school, for example: drugs were freely available, the second offender stated that his school was *“bad”* due to

its location in a “bad” area, he clarified by stating that pupils at the school did whatever they wanted to; there was no authoritative control.

When looking at the reasons for dropping out of school McWhirter et al (1998:105) maintain that “drop outs” do not use lack of desire to learn as the main excuse. The offenders in this study had various reasons; ranging from financial difficulties, arrest, drugs to seeking employment and following friends. Two offenders claimed that they did not want to attend school at all, in both cases however drugs and friends’ influence played a contributory role. The researcher found a prevalence amongst the offenders’ perceptions regarding key influences and contributory factors to early school leaving: the majority of the offenders performed poorly at school (a few offenders felt a lack concern by the teachers regarding their academic capabilities) economic deprivation played a role in their dropping out early, the lure of criminal activities proved too strong and the influence of friends pervasive.

The researcher thought it was of great consequence to inquire whether parents and/or caregivers emphasised the value of acquiring an education. The family has after all a large amount of influence on a young child with regards to a solid education, stable future and quite simply in the development of foresight. On the whole the offenders affirmed that their parents (mostly single mothers) were powerless to do anything about it, had they attempted to force their children to attend school; the offenders claimed they would not have listened anyhow, an offender alleged that his parents failed to ensure that he continued with his schooling (they were drunk most of the time). Three offenders commented on the influence their parents had (if any) regarding the completion of school. Offender one stated that no one cared for him anyway, dropping out of school was not an issue, offender two maintained that his mother did not send him to school and offender three asserted that his parents were drunk most of the time, so; there was nothing they could have done to prevent him leaving school. It seems that the offenders’ parents did not highlight the necessity for a high school certificate as a pre-requisite for a secure future.

In the following extract an offender recounts the reason for leaving school and how his life changed as a result:

And so after my mother’s death I left school to go & work so that I could buy my own stuff without anyone making a fuss about it. I think that that’s where everything started, the time I left school to go & work cause ever since ive started work my life changed completely

6.3.3.2 Substance abuse

Table 6.12 Drug and alcohol history of offenders

Age of onset of abuse	Main influence	Type of substance
15	Friends	Dagga, mandrax, alcohol and crack-cocaine
15	Friends	Mandrax and crack-cocaine
13	Friends	Dagga and alcohol
16	Friends	Alcohol
9	Friends	Dagga, mandrax, alcohol and crack-cocaine
17	Friends	Dagga and mandrax
15	Friends	Dagga and alcohol
13	Friends	Dagga, mandrax, alcohol and ecstasy pills
14	Friends	Dagga and mandrax
16	Friends	Dagga, mandrax and alcohol
16	Friends	Mandrax and alcohol
15	Friends	Dagga, mandrax and ecstasy pills
18	Friends	Mandrax
13	Friends	Dagga, mandrax and crack-cocaine
17	Friends	Dagga
14	Friends	Mandrax and alcohol
14	Friends	Mandrax and alcohol
16	Friends	Mandrax and alcohol

The researcher has found (through empirical literature) that substance abuse usually occurs owing to contact with peers at school, hence the inclusion of this phenomenon under the realm of school-related issues.

A total of eighteen offenders abused drugs or alcohol or both. The remaining two offenders stated that they had a drink every now and then; but not enough to be defined as misuse; these two offenders in

question had never tried any form of drug at all. When looking at the information in the above table one is not sure how to react at first i.e. with disbelief at the early age of onset or with pity for the damage the youth have done to themselves by abusing substances, with alarm at how strongly friends can impact on an adolescent and in puzzlement as to how this aforesaid influence goes undetected. The range of substances used, raises the harrowing realisation that these substances must be readily available to the youth.

The researcher wants to mention briefly at this stage two theories that aptly explain (specifically Thornberry's adolescent attachment theory and Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime and criminality) how an adolescent places more value on the opinion of a friend than that of a parent, how susceptible an adolescent is (in terms of peer influence) in the teen years and the problem of low self control, impulsive personality, poor social and parental bonding as conducive to criminal behaviour. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi (Joubert 2003:111) *"Low self-control is a product of an impulsive personality, combined with social factors such as deviant parents and poor supervision. Weakened social bonds are the product of low self-control and the subsequent development of alternative attachments, involvements, commitments and beliefs"*. This theory holds true when one considers the interplay of factors present in the offenders' family, school and community environment. An offender confirmed this theory of adolescent attachment: the offender claimed that he was introduced to the drug-world through individuals he encountered and befriended whilst spending time at his aunt's shebeen (tavern), the reader can agree that a shebeen is not a fitting environment for an adolescent. The majority of the offenders lacked proper supervision, full-time fathers, mothers were unable to or did not care to control their sons, family environments were abusive and sometimes violent, all of which are contributory, high-risk factors for criminal involvement.

Offenders taught the researcher the terminology used to describe the different narcotics characteristic of the offender's culture. This is presented below as a matter of interest for the reader.

Marijuana	dagga, zol
Mandrax	stars, sterre
Crack-cocaine	gafief

The following table will show the offenders rationale for substance abuse and their opinion of whether it was right or wrong to misuse narcotics and alcohol. The researcher wanted to determine once again if parental control and influence had any bearing on the youth, concerning substance abuse or if, in fact, it was largely due to the

parents and home environment that the youth turned to abusing substances. In this regard research conducted by Yablonsky (2000:276) reveals that *“In some cases it appeared that abusing and neglectful parents caused the use of dagga in the adolescents. That is, the adolescents used the drugs to cope with or block out the emotional pain that resulted from their pathological and emotionally painful situation”*.

Table 6.13 Rationale and context for substance abuse

Rationale for substance abuse	Their perception of their substance abuse	Family set-up
He was not sure as to the whereabouts of his parents	He knew it was <i>“bad”</i> but it helped alleviate the pain that no one cared about him	Lived with his aunt, two siblings and two cousins. Did not know who his father was, mother severe alcoholic. His aunt physically abused him. Presence of family criminality
Took drugs to keep calm <i>“as ek nugter is wil ek net steel”</i>	He knew it was wrong but he needed to use drugs otherwise he became a bad person	Good relationship with mother, poor relationship with father. Presence of family criminality
Drugs calmed the offender	Did not think it was wrong, he needed it after the stress he endured with the parents’ divorce	Conflict between parents, physically abusive, alcoholic father. Presence of family criminality
Wanted to try drugs to know what it feels like	Thought it was bad, but did it anyway <i>“dit was lekker”</i>	Good relationship with mother, good upbringing <i>“die jare as ’n kind was baie reg”</i> Presence of family criminality
Friends forced offender to use drugs	Knew it was wrong bad carried on regardless	Never knew father, very poor. Presence of family criminality
No comment	No comment	Absence of father, attended school till 9 years old. Presence of family criminality

For fun	No comment	No relationship with father, witnessed stepfather assaulting mother throughout childhood. Presence of family criminality
<i>“Net om my nice te laat voel”</i>	No comment	Mother died when offender was quite young (offender was not sure of how old he was at the time of his mother’s demise) lived with sisters, uncles and siblings. Uncles were alcoholics which resulted in violent conflict. Did not know his father. Presence of family criminality.
<i>“’n manier om weg te hol van my probleme af”</i>	Not really	Parents divorced when offender was 7 years old, very poor. Often smoked mandrax with uncle. Presence of family criminality
No comment	No comment	Poor relationship with father, very poor. Offender described himself as a very naughty child. Presence of family criminality
Offender abused drugs as a means to forget about his involvement with housebreaking and stealing	Thought it was wrong but carried on anyway	Good relationship with mother and stepfather. Offender eldest of six children. Presence of family criminality

<p><i>"Dit het my kalmeer – ek hou van daardie gevoel"</i></p>	<p>Did not think about it</p>	<p>Parents divorced when offender was 17 or 18 years old. Offender's father was in prison for most of the offender's childhood. Father and uncles involved in crime</p>
<p>Drugs gave the offender a <i>"lekker"</i> feeling</p>	<p>Did not think about it</p>	<p>Offender lived with both parents (still married). Good relationship with mother and despite the father abusing mandrax (offender consistently saw his father under the influence) and the father's imprisonment for gun smuggling, the offender claimed that he had a good relationship with his father</p>
<p>Due to problems at home</p>	<p>Knew it was bad but the pressure from friends proved too much, the offender became addicted and had no choice but to continue; besides taking drugs was <i>"lekker"</i></p>	<p>Had two step-fathers due to mother re-marrying. Both step-parents abused mother physically. One step-father was involved in criminal activities: murder and robbery, offender felt that his step-father had a influence on him.</p>
<p>No comment</p>	<p>No comment</p>	<p>Offender lived with his grandmother for most of his life; he had a good relationship with his grandmother. He did not have a father figure and was not close to his mother.</p>

<p><i>"Dit het my lekker laat voel"</i></p>	<p>Did not think it was wrong</p>	<p>Both parents of the offender were severe alcoholics. Offender's father would often assault the mother and the offender. Very poor. Presence of family criminality</p>
<p><i>"To escape van problems"</i></p>	<p>Knew it was wrong but he enjoyed the feeling, <i>"dan die probleme is nie so erg nie"</i></p>	<p>Parents still married, father is an alcoholic who engaged in many fights with the mother. Offender did not have a good relationship with his father</p>
<p>To escape family problems <i>"Dwelms maak my sterker, beter, laat my die lewe aanvaar"</i></p>	<p>Not really <i>"Onder die invloed het ek nie gevoel en gehoor watter soort lewe ek het nie"</i></p>	<p>Offender lived with his grandmother and abusive, alcoholic aunt. Mother died when he was 1 year old. Offender had no contact with his father until he was 15 or 16 years old.</p>

The phenomenon of substance abuse can be attributed to a variety of factors. Offenders in this study had unhappy home environments, no father or poor father figure, parents or caregivers who were alcoholics or drug users, low income and poor academic achievement. Offenders spoke of their abusing substances as a life-saving device; it kept them sane and calm in a world rampant with conflict, abuse, violence, poverty and criminal influences. The offenders were either aware that misusing drugs was wrong or damaging to them or did not contemplate the harmful effects (physical, psychological and financial) of substance abuse. The researcher feels nonetheless, that offenders probably had considered at certain times the destructive nature of their substance abuse but as quickly as the thought entered their minds so it was erased, an offender's comment clarifies *"As jy cocaine rook wil jy net meer en meer en meer..."*. Offenders indicated that abusing drugs and alcohol was the only stable force in their lives as well as a means of distraction from their problematic, violent, poverty-stricken milieu. It then comes as no surprise that friends appear to be the strongest influence with regards to the offender's initiation into the ambit of drugs and alcohol. In an idealistic world one could say that the offenders would not have fallen prey to peers/friends negative persuasions if they had had a

stable home environment, consistent discipline and adequate supervision, positive role models and the commitment to complete their schooling with the knowledge that an education was imperative for a secure future. These aforementioned factors do not guarantee a well-balanced individual either. However, given the offenders' circumstances at home one cannot overlook the offenders' natural response of turning to friends for support and sometimes affection – this aforesaid attachment to friends is not only an example of, but aptly exemplifies Thornberry's theory on social bonding and adolescent attachment.

The researcher wants to alert the reader at this point to the confluence and overlapping of the family, school and community. Discipline, positive role models, conflict within the family, abuse and neglect and the emphasis of completing school (family-related issues) all of which contribute to the youth's academic performance, respect for authority, commitment to education and vulnerability to friends and peers (school-related issues) and which assist the youth to avoid and resist negative influences such as the lure of gangs, availability of drugs and alcohol and activities characteristic of the youths' greater environment (community-related issues).

6.3.4 Youth's environment/Community

6.3.4.1 Area where offender was born and raised

As with any gathering or groups of people, a community has certain characteristics that are exclusive to its location and people. The different communities where offenders were raised will be listed with a discussion of communities that are recognised as violent and poor, rife with unemployment, gangs and free availability of drugs and alcohol.

Table 6.14 Offender's neighbourhood

Community	Town	Number of offenders
Reiger Park	Johannesburg	3
Westbury	Johannesburg	2
Toekomsrus	Johannesburg	2
Alra Park	Nigel	1
Diegatolo location	Germiston	1
Eden Park	Germiston	1
Germiston	Germiston	1

Alexandra	Johannesburg	1
Riverlee	Close to Langlaagte	1
Eldorado Park	Johannesburg	1
Bosman	Johannesburg	1
Eersterus	Pretoria	1
Onverwacht	Cullinan	1
Namibia	Namibia	1
Lived in many areas		2

Two offenders moved around a great deal with their families, both offenders acknowledged that it was very difficult for them to make new friends and that they felt alienated as a result. Perhaps abusing substances and committing crime was their way of fitting in and feeling accepted by their peers? Reiger Park and Westbury are known as a breeding ground for crime and gang-related activities, one offender who grew up in Reiger Park explained that in his neighbourhood seeking revenge was an accepted form of behaviour. If an individual wrongs you it is just for the wronged person to seek revenge, the greater community did not question this behaviour despite it being violent in nature, for example: a stabbing or a shooting. An offender (also from Reiger Park) claimed that there were a lot of corrupt individuals living in his street (the offender gives rape and murder as an example). In Westbury, one offender alleged, selling drugs is an accepted way of making money *"It's a thing in the community, word is, you want money you sell drugs"*, another offender who confirmed Westbury's criminal element stated *"There's no way to escape Westbury, you have to move to another place"*, the researcher found that the following comment of an offender encapsulates Westbury as a destructive community *"Westbury is corrupt"*. Returning to his place of birth is not an option for one offender. He argued that in Eden Park there is no other way but to commit crime, he knows that if he returns to Eden Park he will fall back into the trap of drugs and ultimately crime *"Ek sal weer in die tronk in val"*. Maree (2003:57) corroborates the offender's stories' *"A person who lives in a community in which crime is accepted and endured will not experience the social control that a person living within a culture which finds the commission of crime unacceptable would"*.

Unemployment and low-income are factors which also determine the make-up of a community. The offenders informed the researcher that their communities have many unemployed individuals and those who do work earn a low income. Large families need to be fed and clothed on a small salary, the offenders maintained that the majority of their leisure time was spent on the streets with other youngsters, all of whom had parents working long hours and were therefore left unsupervised. The availability of drugs is also indicative of the offenders' communities,

albeit the gangs who bring the drugs into the community. The communities are ubiquitous with gangs who are involved in housebreaking, drug dealing, rape and murder to mention a few. One offender stated how the majority of youngsters were involved somehow in gang-related activities, not only is gangsterism and its activities accepted in the communities but it is seen as a high-status and prestigious occupation (the researcher uses the word occupation as a few offenders felt that being a gang member meant you had a career of some sorts). Gang involvement will be dealt with in detail in the following section.

6.3.4.2 Gang involvement

Table 6.15 Offenders' comments on gang involvement

Name of gang	Reason for joining gang	Offenders feeling as a gang member
Junior kings	Through criminal activities and drug dealing	The gang was like a family to the offender, they shared each other's problems <i>"almal was een en dieselfde"</i> .
Thugs	Offender was the leader of the gang. He formed a gang for vengeance on individuals who stabbed him.	Offender felt protected and strong within the gang
Tougens	For revenge, offender wanted retribution for his cousin's death (he was stabbed) <i>"Dit het wraak in my gebou"</i>	Initially, the gang was a family away from family, after a while there was a lot of conflict within the gang
Chronick crew and later Varados	The gang helped the offender to sell drugs so that offender could buy expensive clothes; he also joined the gang for protection.	Offender felt safe within the gang <i>"As ek genodig het, praat ek met hulle"</i> . The offender claims that gang members were good to him

L.T.K's (Little tough kids)	Offenders' two cousins were members, he decided to join as well	They were like family to the offender; they shared each other's problems. <i>"Ek sal saam met hulle staan"</i> .
LBZ	Offender formed a gang with the friends he grew up with	Gang members cared for the offender <i>"Hulle het meer omgee vir my, want ek het my hele lewe met hulle groot geword"</i>
Varados then Majimbos	He wanted revenge; another gang killed his friend <i>"om op gangs gaan skiet"</i> .	<i>"Daai tyd bly, maar as ek myself nou sien, was dit nie die lewe nie"</i> . Offender was happy with the gang but has since realised that it was not a good life to live.
Majimbos	Offender joined as he wanted the good clothes and cars that gang members owned. Offender also wanted love and acceptance	Offender felt loved and accepted.
Red devils	Offender also wanted to own expensive clothes so gang members told offender to join them.	Offender felt at home with the gang, <i>"sterk gevoel"</i> offender claimed he felt <i>"big"</i> as a gang member.
Superga	Offender and friends formed their own gang for protection <i>"Ons het veiligheid gesoek teenoor almal"</i> .	No comment

The researcher wants to draw the attention of the reader to the names chosen for the gangs: the title chosen for the different gangs indicate the toughness and hardness of the gang, this is precisely the image the gang members want to render. The aforementioned is illustrated in the following excerpt by an offender, it shows how the offender was in possession of knives and guns and that he joined a gang so that others would be afraid of him:

I started to join the LTK it means Little Troble kids. So we start to fight with other gangs So I started to assault others. I began to walk with knives and cans to brotect my self as a member of the gang LTK. I join them because of name I wanted the people must be scare of me and don't come and look for trouble with me.

Offenders maintained that their gangs were ruled by a tough approach with the main aim of eliciting fear. Offenders argued that joining a gang meant that members of the community would be fearful of them and importantly; offenders were protected from other criminal individuals simply by being part of a gang. An offender asserted that his decision to join a gang was based on the fact that there was a great deal of gang activity within his neighbourhood, becoming a gang member assured an individual protection from other gangs; despite the fact that as a gang member one was required to fight with rival gangs and therefore risk being attacked. The offender is adamant that at least as a member of a gang one was ensured of more protection from external forces as opposed to trying to defend oneself single-handedly. One offender explained how he perceived his gang to be infallible, no one could hurt them and people were afraid of them.

Offenders affiliated themselves with gangs for various reasons, to earn money, as assistance for revenge, friends or family influence and the physical security a gang provides for a member. Offenders informed the researcher that they would observe gang members in action and the fear it spread amongst the community, this attracted offenders; particularly those from abusive, conflict-ridden and poor environments. The sense of fear installed by gangs allowed the offenders to have a sense of individual power and control, both of which are absent due to the offenders' personal circumstances. Offenders maintained that they earned enough money (through the gang's criminal activities) to afford the expensive clothes they coveted and the drugs/alcohol they were addicted to. An offender declared how he witnessed leaders of a particular gang (Majimbos) own fancy cars and large quantities of drugs/alcohol as a result of smuggling, leaders of this aforesaid gang were in fact the biological fathers of gang members.

Criminal activities of the gangs included: drug dealing, mugging, robbery, smuggling and housebreaking, all of which ensured financial gain. Revenge killings, clashes with rivals gangs for territorial purposes were also part of daily gang behaviour.

Seven offenders were emphatic in stating that the respective gangs they belonged to showed them acceptance, love and affection. The researcher put forth to the offenders that they had to carry out certain tasks in order to gain the acceptance, love and affection from other

gang members, the offenders, however, were resolute that despite what was required of them, the gang provided security, stability and solidarity. Offenders were able to discuss their problems quite freely with other members; one offender revealed that most of the gang members hailed from similar backgrounds hence the solidarity within the gang and the ability for gang members to identify with each other.

6.4 Crimes committed

Table 6.16 Details pertaining to crimes committed

Crime for which offender is incapacitated	Previous offences
Housebreaking	Rape, murder, theft and housebreaking – offender not apprehended
Hijacking and housebreaking	Murder (self-defence) – offender not apprehended
Housebreaking	Housebreaking – offender apprehended and incapacitated
Armed robbery	First offender
Housebreaking	First offender
Housebreaking	Housebreaking – offender not apprehended
Armed robbery	First offender
Theft	First offender
Housebreaking	Housebreaking – offender not apprehended
Assault with grievous bodily harm	Shoplifting, armed robbery and housebreaking – offender not apprehended
Assault	First offender
Assault	First offender
Housebreaking	Housebreaking – offender apprehended and received a 5 year suspended sentence
Possession of implements for car theft – offender apprehended trying to steal a car	Car theft – offender apprehended and incapacitated
Housebreaking and robbery	First offender
Hijacking and theft	Housebreaking – offender not apprehended

Drug dealing	First offender
Housebreaking and theft	Housebreaking – offender not apprehended
Housebreaking, attempted murder and animal abuse	Theft and housebreaking – offender not apprehended
Theft	First offender

Eleven offenders had committed crimes prior to the crimes for which they are currently incapacitated. Seven of these offenders claimed that they had never been caught for their previous crimes, an offender stated that he had committed housebreaking *“too many times to count”* he could not remember how many times he was involved in the incidence of housebreaking, another offender commented on his pattern of housebreaking *“my hobby is steal”*. The researcher was surprised at how many crimes the offenders had committed without being apprehended or suspected, for this the offenders supplied various answers (the reader must take note: these are the opinions of the offenders and not statements that can be substantiated by correctional officers or the South African Police Service) – the first offender listed in the above table maintained that his previous crimes were not observed by anyone; there were no witnesses – the offender gave his rape victim R150.00 and threatened to kill her if she mentioned the rape to anyone. The victim did not report the incident as the offender claimed that she along with other members of the community were afraid of him. Other offenders stated that members of the community were too afraid to turn them in due to their involvement with gangs and the reaction of the offenders should they be reported to the police. Offenders felt that the police were unable and incapable of apprehending them for their crimes, lastly offenders stated they were plain lucky to have escaped arrest by the authorities.

Two offenders had served time for their previous offences; the researcher inquired how they came to commit crime once more after gaining their freedom - surely they had learnt a valuable lesson through their incapacitation the first time? The first offender was apprehended for housebreaking and served a twelve month sentence, he asserted that he felt immense pressure with regards to the family’s circumstances, for example: his mother was unemployed and could therefore not afford to send the offender’s sister to school; there were times where food was scarce in the home – the offender claimed that he had to do something about the dire situation and decided to commit crime once more, the offender was under the influence of drugs when committing the crime and did not consider the consequences for his actions. The second offender started abusing crack-cocaine on release from prison and soon enough; needed to commit crime in order to pay

for his addiction, he did contemplate being caught but felt at the time that he was smart enough to avoid arrest. One offender had criminal cases pending against him for robbery and housebreaking (he was out on bail) when he was arrested. He is currently serving a ten year sentence for robbery – the researcher questioned the offender about re-offending whilst out on bail and the offender replied that the situation at home had not changed i.e. money was scarce; as was food, the offender felt he had no choice but to commit crime in order to get hold of some money.

The researcher put forth to one offender who committed murder as an act of self-defence that the offender was involved in criminal activities at an early age (the offender was 13 years old at the time of the murder). The offender argued however; that self-defence is not a crime, he claimed *“a crime is only a crime if there is a law against it and there is no law against self-defence”*. The offender explained the circumstances of the murder – he had intercourse with his friend’s girlfriend and soon afterwards his friend arrived at his house (the offender’s friend was accompanied by another male acquaintance) with a knife in hand. The offender decided to defend himself and attacked the two males (stabbing them) and subsequently one male died. The offender was also attacked (he stated that he was stabbed near the heart area) he was in a coma for four weeks as a result, the offender maintained that he was *“reborn”* after this attack and decided to abuse drugs and lead a life of crime, the offender declined to expand on this.

The researcher would like to clarify that the first-time offenders listed in the above table had never committed any crimes prior to the crimes for which offenders are incapacitated. One offender that stands out in this regard is an offender who was under the influence of Mandrax with his girlfriend, they had no money and wanted to buy more drugs; they decided to borrow the girlfriend’s father’s firearm (from their residence) and rob someone (anyone) on the street. They managed to find the firearm and subsequently they robbed an innocent person on the street, they were caught, arrested and incapacitated – the offender stated that he is in prison for a mere R30.00 that was stolen from the victim. The fact that the offender was in possession of a weapon turned a petty crime into a serious one; aggravated by the offender’s possession of a firearm that makes the crime violent as well.

The researcher wants to establish if the offenders were in the possession of weapons at the time of committing the crimes; this could indicate the level of aggression and violence within the criminal youth as well as their perceived need for a fear-invoking object. Possessing a firearm, knife etc is a facilitating factor in terms of the criminal event i.e. the aforementioned object helps the offender to commit the crime.

Table 6.17 Weapons used in criminal actions

Firearm	Knife	Screwdriver or crowbar	Firearm and knife	Teargas	Absence of weapon
7	3	4	1	1	4

Offenders who were in possession of firearms claimed that they obtained these weapons through their criminal activities: housebreaking, mugging, robbery and from gang members. Two offenders were supplied with firearms by their girlfriend and friend respectively. Offenders maintained that the firearm or knife gave them (as the perpetrator of the crime) the courage to commit the crime (the researcher interprets this within a psychological framework i.e. the offender exhibits more bravado when in possession of a weapon; psychologically the weapon allows the offender to be brave when; in fact, the offender is afraid). The researcher inquired from one offender (who was insistent that a firearm is essential when committing a crime) as to the exact justification for carrying a firearm, the offender alleged that many offenders carried weapons for two reasons:

- As a tool of fear; potential victims are frightened by the weapon and therefore do not show resistance to the perpetrator and
- As a form of protection from potential victims who might be in possession of a weapon themselves

Drugs and alcohol are also considered a facilitating factor in the commission of crime; the following table provides an indication of how many offenders were under the influence when committing their respective crimes.

Table 6.18 Sobriety of offenders when committing the crime

Under the influence of drugs	Under the influence of alcohol	Sober committing the crime
12	3	5

The fifteen offenders who were under the influence of drugs and alcohol informed the researcher that when intoxicated; the offender was able to commit the crime without worrying about his safety, the wrongfulness of

the act, the possibility that the victim might be present at the time (in the case of housebreaking) and hence the gamble that the victim might retaliate.

One offender claimed that drugs helped him *“to break in”* the offender needed to be high *“op ’n plak”* in order to commit the crime. Two offenders offered the following explanation *“Ek moet drug gebruik voor ek die crime doen want dit gee my krag”* this offender viewed his drug habit as his partner in the commission of crime, he stated that if he were sober he would not have been able to transgress the law. The second offender maintained that he had contemplated the likelihood of arrest each time he wanted to act illegally; once under the influence of Mandrax however, the offender argued that he had the *“power and the courage”* to take part in criminal acts. Due to being heavily inebriated with alcohol; an offender is unable to recall how he came upon the house he broke into, how he broke in or even what day of the week it was, the offender claimed that the whole occurrence seemed like a dream for him. Ben M. Skosana, minister of Correctional Services (www.ccja-acjp.ca) presented a discussion on drugs and crime (in South Africa) at the Canadian Congress on Criminal Justice (2003) in this presentation the minister highlighted the following:

- *“People on drugs, just like people on alcohol, act out in ways they would not ordinarily behave. Some drugs distort perceptions, some impact mood, and most ‘dis-inhibit’ in some sense of the word”.*
- *“Far more common is the violence that comes from that little push a chemical can give towards acting on impulses that would otherwise be ignored. Alcohol has been used for years to provide both the excuse and the recklessness to perform acts most people in their right minds wouldn’t do, like robbing a liquor store. Drugs can be used in very much the same way, if one prefers to smoke, snort, or inject one’s Dutch courage”.*

The comments made by Minister Skosana aptly explains the relationship that exists between drugs/alcohol and crime. Individuals (in this case youth offenders) under the influence of the aforesaid substances are more likely to behave in a manner that is unfamiliar to them yet perhaps not entirely unwelcome. Fifteen offenders have alleged that the effect of drugs and alcohol was required in order to commit their crimes. Confusion must not arise however; as to the causative value of the drug/alcohol towards the crime: drugs and

alcohol are after all inanimate objects which cannot physically force the offender to commit the crime, the offender makes the decision to commit a crime and then uses his preferred substance merely as an aid to commit illegal acts due to the false courage the offender experiences when intoxicated.

The five remaining offenders' circumstances made for them to be sober at the time of the criminal acts. One offender was a drug dealer yet had never abused drugs or alcohol, his motivation for drug dealing was to obtain money for his economically deprived family, this offender stated that drugs and alcohol had no role to play in his life. The second offender had also never abused drugs or alcohol; he was sober every time he transgressed the law. The third offender was sober when he was provoked by two males; they stabbed him and the offender retaliated aggressively. The fourth offender stole money (R60 000.00) from his employer, this occurred during working hours and the offender claimed that he was always sober at work. The fifth offender asserted that he was clear-headed when behaving illegally. After having established the facilitating factors in the commission of crime, the researcher needed to determine the motive for the crime i.e. what prompted the offender to commit illegal acts? The following table supplies this information:

Table 6.19 Motives for the commission of crime

Money – for drugs, clothes and food	Other reasons
17	Provocation x 2 Revenge attack

Only three offenders did not have money as the motive for their crimes – one offender was attacked by two young males and the offender retaliated by stabbing them (this was the offender's first infraction with the law), the second offender was attacked by a "huge male" and stabbed the attacker in retaliation (this was one of many infractions with the law, this offender was also involved in shoplifting,) the last offender decided to look for rival gang members (attending offender's old school) to strike back at them for their attack on his gang (this occurred during school hours) the offender was armed with teargas and threw the dangerous gas at his enemies. Small children were caught within the cloud of teargas and were subsequently harmed. The balance of the offenders committed crimes solely for financial gain. The reader must note that although the need for money was the motive for the crimes

committed; the necessity for the money stemmed from the offenders' need for drugs, clothes and in some cases food (these three items have been listed according to their level of priority for the offenders). The researcher wants to draw the attention of the reader to the following extract; this offender explains how he committed crime in order to feed and clothe himself, the offender cites lack of parental love as a contributory factor for his criminal behaviour:

Ek het die misdaad gepleeg omdat ek nooit ouers liefde gehad het nie toe pleeg ek die misdaad om vir myself kleure en voedsel te kan koop om te kan lewe.

An offender explained that once addicted to crack-cocaine it was difficult to stay away from the drug and when money is scarce the only option is to steal for money "As jy cocaine rook wil jy net meer en meer en meer, as jy nie geld het nie...". An offender committed crime for money so as to buy "nice" clothes for his girlfriend, although the offender's father gave him money; the offender claimed that it was not enough for him and that he did not want to bother his father for more. An offender hailing from a very poor family was forced to steal for money so as to buy food "net om by te bly". In this instance the poverty of a family and lack of employment forced an offender into a life of crime. Having said this though, the researcher is acutely aware that many individuals are faced with the same or similar circumstances as the aforementioned offender; yet do not turn to crime as a solution. Perhaps one of the most interesting stories related to the researcher is one involving an offender's girlfriend – she being the motivating factor for the offender's crime. The offender was employed at a bicycle factory where he was considered an able and trustworthy employee; he got along well with co-workers and generally had a good employment record – the offender maintained that he enjoyed his work along with the responsibility. His girlfriend had been fighting with her father for a while when she informed the offender that she intended running away from home and that the offender must accompany her; the offender felt that this was a daft idea as neither of them had enough money to support themselves once on the road. The girlfriend however, persisted, threatening suicide and before long, running away with his girlfriend dominated the offender's thoughts. The offender devised a way to steal money from his employer and on the given day stole R60 000.00. The offender and his girlfriend used the money for transport (to Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth) eating out, accommodation and other pleasure-seeking activities and items. The offender's family convinced him to return home and turn himself in.

The researcher wanted to ascertain whether the offenders had deliberated the consequences of the crime; had they considered the option of being caught, arrested and incapacitated? It was important to establish if the law meant anything to the offenders at the time of committing their crimes; did the thought even cross their minds that perhaps they were doing wrong; transgressing the law; behaving in a socially unacceptable and immoral way. The question was put forth to the offenders with interesting answers; each offender will be listed with their respective comments.

Table 6.20 Offenders' perceptions of the consequences of their crimes

Offender 1	No comment
Offender 2	He did not think about the law; he did not "worry" about the law – he did not care. He maintained that he did not consider the consequences of his actions, he only thought of getting killed whilst committing the crime
Offender 3	The consequences of the crime did not enter his mind
Offender 4	No comment
Offender 5	This offender alleged that he was so inebriated with alcohol that he did not; could not think about the consequences or of transgressing the law
Offender 6	Although this offender thought of the consequences of his actions, his friends nonetheless convinced him to go along and have no fear
Offender 7	He knew it was "bad" but his friends were persistent. The researcher inquired as to why the offender listened to his friends despite his uncertainty, the offender claimed he just wanted to fit in " <i>Ek wou soos die ander jong manne gewees het</i> "
Offender 8	He did not think of the consequences, only of obtaining money to run away with his girlfriend
Offender 9	No comment
Offender 10	No comment
Offender 11	No thoughts, offender was

	provoked/attacked, he acted on impulse and stabbed the attackers
Offender 12	No comment
Offender 13	No, offender was heavily under the influence of drugs, could not think of consequences
Offender 14	The thought crossed the offender's mind that he might be caught but he felt he was " <i>cleverer</i> " than anyone else
Offender 15	No comment
Offender 16	No comment
Offender 17	No comment
Offender 18	No comment
Offender 19	He knew it was wrong but he needed the money for drugs; offender was high on drugs the whole time, if he did not steal for money he would be without drugs, offender thought " <i>what the hell</i> ". Offender was aware that there existed the possibility of being caught but drugs gave him " <i>the power and courage</i> "
Offender20	No comment

The instant satisfaction of the offenders' needs proved to override the consequences of the crime. According to Freud's psychoanalytical theory, this is an example of how a strong id (as part of the structure of personality) compels the individual to behave in a certain way "*The id functions according to the primary processes and the pleasure principle. This means that it seeks immediate and complete satisfaction of its drives without considering anything but its own immediate pleasure*" Meyer (in Meyer, Moore & Viljoen 1997:59).

6.5 Aftermath of the crime

In this section the researcher discussed the consequences of the crimes with the offenders. This includes the remorse of the offenders, the possibility of returning to a life of crime once released from prison, the offenders' experience of prison life, the offenders' support system on the "*outside*" and the offenders' impression of how their life could have been different if certain factors were absent/existent in their lives. This information will be presented by listing each offender under each

section and the accompanying comments; this allows the reader to follow the same offender's thoughts throughout.

6.5.1 Remorse of the offender

The researcher wanted to determine if the offenders were repentant for their crimes, if so, why? This gives an indication of whether the offender had the insight to appreciate and comprehend the wrongfulness of the crime, the consequences and impact of his criminal activities not only for and on himself but also on the direct and indirect victims i.e. the offender's family. The researcher has supplied the reader with the exact phrases the offenders used (these are in Afrikaans) some of the information was directly translated into English at the time of interview.

Table 6.21 Remorse experienced by the offender subsequent to the crime

Offender 1	Did not feel bad about housebreaking – he needed the things he stole, offender claimed that on occasion he did feel bad but maintained that crime was his occupation <i>“dis my werk”</i> He felt bad about the rape as girls in the neighbourhood were afraid of him, they ran away from him, when he walked past them they would call him <i>“the rapist”</i> He did not feel bad about his murder/self-defence as it was justified.
Offender 2	Offender felt bad at times but his mother told him not to look back; only at the future.
Offender 3	Felt very bad about his crimes.
Offender 4	Felt bad <i>“Wat kan ek maak, ek het iets verkeerd gedoen, ek moet maar betaal vir dit”</i> .
Offender 5	He is sorry for what he has done, feels bad for the family whose house he broke into.
Offender 6	Feels bad has a <i>“guilty conscious”</i>
Offender 7	<i>“Voel baie skuldig”</i> .

Offender 8	Felt very bad, <i>“spyt kom agterna”</i> .
Offender 9	Felt very bad; but feels it was his friend's fault.
Offender 10	Felt bad.
Offender 11	Felt bad <i>“voel skuldig”</i> .
Offender 12	Felt very bad about what happened.
Offender 13	<i>“voel sleg en crime pay nie”</i>
Offender 14	Felt very bad <i>“en jammer aan wat ek gedoen het aan die mense”</i> .
Offender 15	<i>“ek voel spyt”</i> offender says that he could be helping his mother (financially)
Offender 16	<i>“ek voel sleg daaroor, ek het rêrig 'n les geleer – die Here is hier!”</i> .
Offender 17	<i>“feels bad now”</i> . Offender claimed that he felt bad about his crime
Offender 18	Felt bad, both parties miss and lose out. Offender has made a promise to himself, his mother and God that he will never steal again.
Offender 19	No comment
Offender 20	<i>“ek voel bad daaroor, ek kan nou sien wat ek gedoen het was nie 'n gooie ding nie”</i> .

The impression was had by the researcher that the majority of the offenders showed genuine remorse, they are aware of their illegal behavior not only as a transgression of the law but also recognise their actions to be immoral. However, the researcher cannot discount the fact that the offenders' comments could have been staged, perhaps to impress the researcher?

There were a few offenders, who were flippant in their demonstration of remorse; the researcher was not quite convinced that they were regretful of their criminal activities. It is interesting to note that some offenders felt remorse for their crimes and the victims for example, offenders 2, 5, 14 and 15. Perhaps the remorse experienced by the offenders might deter them from committing crime once released from prison.

6.5.2 Possibility of recidivism

Will the offenders involved in this study re-offend? The researcher wanted to ascertain how the offenders felt in terms of their returning to a life of crime once no longer incapacitated. What impact has the punishment of incapacitation had on the youths in this study?

Table 6.22 Possibility of re-offending by offenders

Offender 1	Offender was unsure whether he would re-offend. Offender claimed that it depended on whether he returned to the same family, or if maybe someone adopted him or if he found employment
Offender 2	No, will study further
Offender 3	No, will seek employment and support mother and sister <i>“die regte pad loop”</i> .
Offender 4	No, will finish his education or work in the welding industry.
Offender 5	No, will seek employment – definitely no more crime
Offender 6	No, does not want to; therefore he will live with his aunt in another community – in his community (Eden park) there is no other way but to commit crime.
Offender 7	No
Offender 8	<i>“Won’t do crime ever again”</i> .
Offender 9	No, will try to find work
Offender 10	No, <i>“Want to set up a program, help in the community, I want to give back to the community”</i> .
Offender 11	No, will look for work <i>“toekoms bou”</i> .
Offender 12	<i>“Nee, wil ander pad loop”</i> .
Offender 13	No, stepfather will find him a job at his work. Will not do crime – learnt his lesson.
Offender 14	No, he has learnt his lesson <i>“my oë oopgemaak”</i> offender will become a regular churchgoer.

Offender 15	No comment.
Offender 16	No “ <i>ek het rêrig 'n les geleer</i> ”.
Offender 17	No comment.
Offender 18	“ <i>Werk soek, maag volhou en aantrek</i> ” “ <i>Ek ken die duiwels se traps, ek sal nie meer nie</i> ”.
Offender 19	“ <i>Klaar, hard geleer</i> ”.
Offender 20	No, look for work

The majority of the offenders appeared adamant (before the researcher) that they would not return to their illegal activities. They were aware that it would be difficult to resist their “old” ways for example taking drugs, loafing on the street and committing crime (this holds true for offender 6), the social structure of this offender’s community is not entirely conducive to conventional behaviour. The following excerpt provides the reader with an in idea of how one offender wants to live his life upon release from prison:

When I went out of prison I want to go and looking For a job so that I can go to study For an engeneering or a Poiler maker. To start getting my self together and to fupull my dreams and be success ful in life.

The following extract explains how an offender will never commit crime and will try to support himself without his family’s assistance:

As Ek uit hierdie gevangenis is wil ek nooit weer misdaad pleeg ek wil 'n werk hê en ook 'n plek om te bly, waar ek ver van my vamielie lede af te kan wees, want ek voel dit sal nie 'n goeie ding wees as ek my vamielie lede met slegete oe aan kyk. Ek soek 'nbaie oordentlike werk sodat ek vir myself kan voedsel en kleure kan koop en vir myself kan saport sonder enige help van my vamielie af.

6.5.3 Experience of prison life

The offenders’ impression of their time in prison is important to the researcher; the impact of the punishment meted out to the offenders provides an idea of whether the youths in question feel that they deserve to be in prison, how they cope with their loss of freedom and the realisation that it was through their own actions that they find themselves in such a predicament.

Table 6.23 Offenders' experience of prison

Offender 1	Prison life is heavy " <i>swaar</i> ". " <i>Wil nie hier wees nie</i> ". No one visits him. Prison has taught the offender to feel bad about his crimes. " <i>Verlang na buitekant</i> ". " <i>Lewe maar soos varke hierso</i> ". Offender felt that prisoners were treated like pigs.
Offender 2	" <i>Baie sleg in die gevangenis</i> (offender is referring to witnessing rape and males being intimate with each other) " <i>... word geroof voor my</i> ". Being in prison has taught offender to be calm, he is attending school in the prison. Offender says that prison is giving him hope.
Offender 3	" <i>Sleg in die prison</i> " There is a lot of fighting within the prison.
Offender 4	Not nice inside, always locked up, we have to do things the way and in the time the prison dictates.
Offender 5	" <i>Nie 'n gooie plek hier binne</i> ". Cannot do anything in your own time, you are locked up when you do not want to be.
Offender 6	No comment
Offender 7	No comment
Offender 8	" <i>No freedom in prison, the prisoners work on your nerves</i> ".
Offender 9	" <i>Prison is not nice</i> ".
Offender 10	No freedom
Offender 11	No comment
Offender 12	Prison life is " <i>bad</i> ". " <i>Wardens het geen respek vir bandiete hier nie, hulle ken jou nie hier nie, nie persoonlik nie</i> ".
Offender 13	" <i>Nie lekker nie</i> ". Offender claimed that prisoners are told when to eat. He does not get involved with any fighting " <i>Ek hou my kaartjie dop</i> ". The offender is behaving himself.

Offender 14	<i>"Hier binne lewe is nie lewe nie, geen vryheid en elke dag is dieselfde".</i>
Offender 15	<i>"Harde lewe, dink baie aan my ma hier, hoe kan sy lewe, dit laat my nie lekker voel nie. Ek loop kerk by die gevangenis, ek maak die bybelstudie".</i>
Offender 16	No comment
Offender 17	<i>"Very difficult, freedom taken away".</i>
Offender 18	<i>"Dis nie 'n mens se plek nie, jy word gesê wat om te doen – ek is moeg daarvoor. Jy kan nie vir jouself dink nie. Ek wil nie weer kom by die tronk nie".</i>
Offender 19	Prison life is tough. <i>"Nie maklik nie, jy kan nie jou kop op iemand se skouer sit".</i> This offender asserted that you cannot trust fellow prisoners; no one cares about you in prison.
Offender 20	Not nice inside, the offender thinks about his family a lot. <i>"Ek doen programs, hulle help my hier binne..definitief les geleer".</i>

A preponderance of attitudes come to the fore when reading the comments supplied by the offenders: offenders are resentful that they have lost their freedom, this entails being cut off from the outside world, being told when to eat, sleep and stay in the cells as offenders 1,4,5,8,10,13,14,17 and 18 have stated. Some of the youth are offended almost at the way they are being treated, offenders 1 and 12 feel that they are not being treated with respect. The monotony of the prison seems to affect the offenders as well, this is linked to the loss of freedom as offenders are unable to do as they please; something which is taken for granted before incapacitation (offender 14). Offenders 2, 13, 15 and 20 have had positive things to say about their time in prison, they have become calmer, consider the impact of their misdeeds on their family, refrain from conflict with other prisoners and attend programs and courses offered by the prisons as a means of bettering themselves as human beings. The researcher is aware of the contradiction in comments by offender 2, this offender describes prison life as bad yet at the same time claims that prison has given him hope. This offender feels that the experience of being in prison coupled with

the fact that he is learning to adopt a calm demeanour and complete his schooling will aid him (gives him hope) to live a better, crime-free life.

6.5.4 Offender's support system once released

It is always positive when an offender claims that he does not want to commit crime once he has served his sentence, however, a solid support system made up of parents, extended family, friends and correctional officials are vital if the offender is to behave within the boundaries of the law. This form of support assists the offender in finding employment, surviving the temptation of drugs and alcohol, avoiding negative influences and leading a crime-free life.

Table 6.24 Support system for offender on release from prison

Offender 1	<i>"Nérens om te gaan nie"</i> . Offender has no one to whom he can turn to for support once released from prison.
Offender 2	Mother
Offender 3	No comment
Offender 4	Mother
Offender 5	No comment
Offender 6	Offender will stay with his aunt
Offender 7	No comment
Offender 8	Offender will stay with his aunt
Offender 9	Two sisters
Offender 10	No comment
Offender 11	Father
Offender 12	Offender's aunt and cousins
Offender 13	Mother and stepfather
Offender 14	Offender will stay with a good friend
Offender 15	Aunt
Offender 16	Mother
Offender 17	Mother and aunt
Offender 18	No support, both parents are severe alcoholics. Wardens confirmed that the offender's parents are heavily intoxicated when visiting their son.
Offender 19	Brother

Offender 20	No support. <i>“Niemand wat vir my omgee nie”</i>
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Three offenders have no support system at all; they are negative and apprehensive about their future as a result. Six offenders have parents who will help them seek employment, steer clear of criminal activities and any harmful influences. The balance of the offenders had no answer to give or have brothers, sisters and aunts as their support system. There is a distinct difference between the offenders who have a support system and those who did not. Offenders who have no one to look after them seemed nervous and afraid for what their future might hold – offenders who have support once released, are confident about their future and impending crime free life, the mere fact that offenders have someone to provide for them seems to give the offenders a guarantee that they have a secure future.

6.5.5 Life change due to existence/absence of factors

This section deals with the offender’s interpretation of what went wrong in his life. This gives the reader the opportunity to learn first-hand the thoughts of a youth offender. The offender is forced to use some form of introspection in order to reach an answer about his life path and where he as an individual could have had a better life if specific factors were absent for example, parental conflict or present for example, a positive father figure.

Table 6.25 Offenders’ perception of contributory factors for their criminal behaviour

Offender 1	Love and affection were never shown to the offender. <i>“Daar was nooit liefde vir my gewys nie”</i> .
Offender 2	No comment
Offender 3	This offender feels that his life would have been different if his parents remained married (they divorced when offender was 12 years old, offender hardly saw his father). Financial support.
Offender 4	<i>“Not take drugs”</i>
Offender 5	Offender should have completed his schooling and not follow

	friends. Offender maintained that his friends were a huge influence on him.
Offender 6	Offender should have finished school <i>"Ek was slim by die skool"</i> .
Offender 7	Offender should have stayed away from friends
Offender 8	<i>"Nothing crime done out of my own stupidity"</i> .
Offender 9	Offender should not have listened to his friends
Offender 10	Needed more self-esteem. Offender mentioned this as he has realised that one does not need clothes and drugs to feel good, offender needed to be stronger, more resilient, should not have listened to his friends.
Offender 11	<i>"Vriende weg bly"</i> Offender should have listened to his parents
Offender 12	Not to join gang or listen to friends.
Offender 13	<i>"Moes nie met vriende loop en drugs rook"</i> . Offender feels that his friends played a paramount role in the way his life turned out.
Offender 14	<i>"Skool klaar gemaak...my moeder was bly"</i> . Offender says that he should not have listened to friends, should have listened to his mother, he feels that having a happy family would have made a difference as well.
Offender 15	Should have finished school and not listened to friends who were a negative influence.
Offender 16	<i>"Pa gehad het wat my kan slaan/guide"</i> . Offender needed a father figure
Offender 17	Better financial circumstances at home.
Offender 18	This offender needed a girl to control him. <i>"Ek het meisie nodig wat vir my kan control, wat vir my omgee"</i> . Offender says he needed to be told what to do. The researcher thinks that the offender

	craves affection and love.
Offender 19	A closer family and more obedience to parents.
Offender 20	Offender needed more of a father figure.

The factors identified by the offenders at a first glance, appear to be simple, by this the researcher means that the presence of these factors are not reliant on various forces to ensure that they exist in the lives of the offenders – governments, architects, doctors, clerics etc cannot contribute to put these factors in place. Having a father, completing school, avoiding negative friends and receiving love and affection are factors human beings take for granted; but without which can affect the life of an individual irreversibly. The various aspects recognised by the offenders as having influenced the outcome of their lives/behaviours, prove to be detrimental issues for the offenders.

Many of the offenders were adamant that their friends' negative and harmful manipulations and the offenders' subsequent falling prey to their influences, played a contributory role towards the illegal behaviour of the youths. A few offenders; cited that the presence of a father figure, a happy and close family and parents who remained married would have had a notable impression on their lives. Other factors such as lack of financial support, not receiving love and affection and drug addiction were mentioned by a couple of offenders as being conducive to their criminal activities. The researcher wants to impress on the reader that the aforementioned information comprises the social reality of the offenders' in this study; it constitutes *their* thoughts and perceptions. Based on this; it would be fair to suggest that these factors have had a deep and lasting impact on the offenders. Many of the factors pointed out by the offenders are interdependent and overlap with each other, in other words, to some extent these factors influence one another. Again, this is based by what the offenders' perceive to have made a difference in their lives. Consider for example this ideal scenario: if the offender had had a positive father figure he would have been able to identify with his father and through this association learn to resist negative influences, internalise positive, socially acceptable morals and behaviour and realise the importance of completing his education. The reality is though that even if these factors were present in the offenders' lives, it does not guarantee a crime-free life. The researcher wants to remind the reader that these factors are considered to be *contributory* and not *causative*, in other words the presence or absence of these factors does not necessarily result in youth offending.

6.6 Summary

The information obtained from the main study covers many aspects of the youth offender's lives, the researcher attempted to uncover the factors that are conducive to youth offending in South Africa.

Leading the offenders through various stages in their lives and requesting their personal interpretation and impression of their path in life thus far, revealed the desired information. Family-related factors such as birth order and family size were shown to bear some significance as the foundation for committing crime. Ineffective discipline, absence of a father figure, single-parents/ broken homes yielded data that suggests an association between these aforesaid factors and deviant behaviour. The impact of family criminality, parents abusing drugs and alcohol, family violence and conflict, abuse and socio-economic status is undeniable, the circumstances in which the offenders were raised; moulded them into the individuals they are today.

The value of an education was examined as well as offenders' attitudes towards academic achievement and motives for dropping out of school. Substance abuse was included within the category of school - many offenders started abusing substances due to the influence of school friends.

The community is the offender's immediate environment, aspects characteristic of a community i.e. gang activities, criminal elements and corruption were investigated with special emphasis on gangs. Offenders were questioned as to their gang involvement, reason for becoming a member and the significance of the gang and its members for the offender.

Every facet of the criminal act committed by the offender was taken into consideration: types of crimes committed, whether offenders were first time offenders or not, motivating and facilitating factors. Offenders were questioned about their prudence when partaking in illegal activities; did the offender consider the consequences of the crime?

Finally the researcher explored the sensitive topic of the aftermath of the crime. Various features were looked into; offender's regret, experience of prison life, offender's support system once released and the offender's opinion of significant factors contributing to his commission of crime.

6.7 Conclusion

This empirical research has yielded data rich in detail, an understanding of; and insight into the background of the offender and the mechanics behind the offender's behaviour.

Family-related factors largely influenced and affected the growth of the offender as a moral, stable and confident individual. Discipline administered; although strict was not consistent, offenders failed to take notice of their mother's attempt at discipline; it was suggested by the offenders that the presence of a father would have made a difference with regards to authority. As the primary socialisation agent and teacher; the family has sizeable influence on a child, when family members are involved in criminal activities or substance abuse the child inevitably identifies with improper form of conduct and faulty morals and norms. The impact of a tension-filled, conflict-ridden environment on a youth is unquestionable, again the child learns to behave deficiently and bears the brunt of a stressful environment – acting out in a sometimes aggressive and insecure manner, forcing the youth to spend as little time as possible at home. Offenders had antagonistic feelings as a result of physical abuse and neglect, the rejection experienced made way for the offender's later affiliation with gangs. A poor socio-economic environment seems to affect particular offenders and their motivation for crime.

Lack of education and the disregard for an education influences an offender's future choice of actions. Many justifications were supplied for dropping out of school: obtaining money for clothes, seeking employment, not enjoying school and insufficient funds for school fees. Parents did not ensure that their children remained at school to complete their education; emphasis was not placed on the importance of an education for a stable future. The principal influence on the offender is the offender's friends. Offenders were enticed into the world of drug and alcohol use by their friends, once the offenders became dependent on the aforesaid substances their interest for education waned and their commencement into criminal activities began. Satisfying their reliance on drugs/alcohol became the main point of interest for the offenders and as a result partaking in illegal activities was found to be a means of obtaining money in order to meet their dependence.

The majority of the offenders affirmed time and again that the community wherein they were raised played a contributory role towards their criminal behaviour. The respective communities were described as corrupt, bad and rife with criminal activities – gang-related activities were typical of the communities as well. Offenders joined gangs to

satisfy their need for love and affection, security and protection and as a way of obtaining money for drugs/alcohol, clothes and food.

Eleven offenders had committed crimes prior to being currently incapacitated. Various crimes were committed of which housebreaking, robbery and theft showed dominance. Carrying a weapon (for protection) and being under the influence of drugs/alcohol (to give the offender courage) whilst committing the crime was prevalent among the offenders, some offenders claimed to consider the consequences of their crimes while others argued that the thought never crossed their minds. The youth in this study gave the impression that they were remorseful; they were adamant that returning to crime was not an option for them as (1) they had realised the wrongfulness of their actions and (2) they did not want to return to prison. Thirteen offenders claimed that they had a support system upon release from prison; on the whole offenders felt that the presence of a support system would prevent their re-offending. Finally, offenders concluded that avoiding friends' negative influences and completing school would have been major contributory factors in their not transgressing the law.

It is easy for the offenders to comment on what will prevent them from re-offending; unfortunately, the reality and thus the prognosis for these offenders is grim. For instance, one must consider the manner in which offenders expressed themselves; their lack of education is apparent and their language abilities poor. The majority of the offenders are older than 18, therefore they are not considered children anymore. Some of the offenders were unable to comment whatsoever on:

- Their perception of substance abuse.
- The consequences of their crimes.
- The remorse of the offenders was consistently expressed in the form of "*feels bad*" or "*voel sleg*".
- Available support system on release from prison.

One cannot deny the hard facts that these offenders were addicted to illegal substances nor their involvement in gang activities. One must not be misguided by the fact that some of the offenders have a support system (upon release from prison) and that such support will guarantee (as the offenders themselves indicated) that the offenders will not re-offend. The hard facts and reality need to be taken into consideration when predicting the possibility of recidivism among the offenders involved in this study. Firstly, some of the offenders are re-offenders. Secondly, the youth offenders' level of education at this stage does not provide the offenders with an opportunity to pursue the respective careers they desire. The offenders have unrealistic expectations for their future as they believe that a support system out of prison or

completing their schooling will ensure that they will not re-offend. The offenders display a lack of insight into their personal and respective situations, changes are needed in various areas of the offenders' lives.

This study has revealed information resonant with contributory factors, motivations and personal impressions with regards to criminal activities by youth offenders. One cannot attribute one single factor as being predominant in youth offending, there is a preponderance of negative associations between the factors investigated in this research. There are so many aspects of an individual's life that are dependent on each other; deficiencies in one or more aspect can influence an individual's life irreversibly.

The following written story by one of the offenders encompasses some of the factors found in this study, for example; absence of a positive father figure, family criminality, a parent who abused alcohol, the suggestion of physical abuse by the uncles, gang activity and an indication of remorse:

My name is I live in Toekomsrus. My Mothers name is Martha And my fathers name was Jacobus I have one sister from my father and two from my mother. My father die 1998/1999 I am not sure when didt he die. My father was in Prison when I was still a baby. So I live with my mother and sister and my mothers new husband. He was like my Real father he than take me also as his own Child. Than my Father came out of Prison and he wanted me to come and stay with him So my mother agree with it. Go and Live with my father was'nt a nice story. When he got drank he told me I wasn't his son on front of my friends. Than I began to get angry at him That time I was still a little boy there wast nothing I can do about it that time. And than I want to go and live with my mother again and he just come and take me back from my mother. As I grow up I Realize why He don't want me to live with my mother Because he was jelous that I also call my step father also Father. And he began to tell me about Im not his Child that time I was already 13 years old I than began to fight back with him. And he then go and call my uncles to come and beat me. So I started to join the LTK it means Little troble kids. So we start to Fight with other gangs So I started to assault others. I began to walk with knives and cans to brotect my self as a member of the gang LTK. I join them because of name I wanted the people must be scare me and don't come and look for trouble with me. So I step my xFriend I want to the police station And they arrest me for it. I than start to carry on with crime because every time I want to court they just left me and give me a warning. One day I was with my Girl friend child So came my friend and ask me to come with them to the high school in my location So I told them that they must just wait For a few minuts I will coma with them. So we went to the school we than ask

Permission to go in and The teacher agree and say that It is alright I can go in. So we than didn't talk the truth with them we than told them we came and looking for a other boy we steel me so causons takkies so they told us to go and look for him. So we didn't looking for no-one we just go and spray the other gangs with tear cast so there where other children who than just walk in the way where we wast spraying the tearcast and than also get that smell of tearcast. So the school open a cast agiangst me and the court sentence me 3 jear in prison for assault. That is the reason why I am here today. And I am not happy about what I have done wrong.

The following chapter will interpret the data from the main study and provide an explanation as to the results found.