

A FAMILY SYSTEMS ANALYSIS OF

CHILD MURDERERS

By

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I declare that 'A family systems analysis of child murderers' is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

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(Miss K. Pillay)

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ABSTRACT

For decades there has been growing interest into the crime of child murders. Emphasis was placed on victims and those at risk. Not much focus was placed on perpetrators and their families. Evidence suggests that the family and social systems play a vital role in determining adult violent behaviour. This qualitative study aims to explore the experiences of convicted child murderers in their family and social system. Data was collected and analysed, using genogram interviews and analysis. Themes were highlighted using hermeneutic thematic analysis, within a post-modern paradigm. Results were presented in the form of genogram analysis and thematic content analysis. Prominent themes that arose were separation, rejection, abuse, neglect and substance abuse. These life experiences together with poor education are some of the characteristics that may have contributed to the child murderers actions towards children.

Key words: Family systems, child murder, violence, post-modernism, qualitative research and genograms.

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Chapter One

Introduction, Rationale, Aim and Focus of the Study

1. Introduction

Crime and criminal behaviour have been studied for over a century by disciplines such as sociology, psychology, criminology, penology and psychiatry (Stephenson, 1992). Such disciplines that have researched crime and criminal behaviour have focused on individuals who commit crime and on criminal behaviour with the aim of determining the causes, prevalence, nature, and impact of the crime. The intention of previous research was to enrich our understanding of crime and criminal behaviour. The knowledge and understanding gained from these studies was aimed at methods of preventing crime, apprehending individuals who commit criminal acts, assisting victims, as well as conceptualising methods of punishment.

Since over a century ago ways of conducting research has changed from a positivist view to include post-modern research approaches such as systemic and social constructionist paradigms. A crime that has attracted worldwide attention over the past decade is child murder (Smith, 2001). The murder of children particularly in South Africa has occupied a significant place in the media over the past decade. In most provinces in South Africa there is an alarming increase in deaths involving children (Smith, 2001). This study aims to include the above two areas, namely the child murderer and post-modern research approaches by exploring child murder from a systemic perspective, specifically with regards to the role played by the child murderer within his or her family system.

This chapter will briefly define and outline the crime and context of child murder and outline the rationale and purpose, as well as the focus of the study and the research design.

1.1 Definition

One of the academic issues regarding research on child murder is the difficulty to determine a precise definition of the concept child murder. The reason is probably that definitions differ with regards to the various disciplines (e.g. sociology, criminology, etc). For the purpose of this study a generic definition was developed, namely: the murder of a child by the intentional actions of an adult.

1.2 Rationale and Aims of the Study

The high incidence of crimes against children in South Africa, particularly child murder seems to indicate a desperate need for urgent intervention to protect young children. The primary aim of this research arises out of the latest spate of rapes and murders of young children in South Africa that has left the country reeling with horror and communities filled with anger over government's seemingly inability to protect children. Child murder has featured frequently in the popular media in the form of newspapers, television programmes, non-fiction crime literature, and fictional works.

With regards to newspaper sources references and articles dealing with child murder can be found across South African media sources. The following are examples of child murder cases in the press: Special Assignment (June, 2005) ran a programme about a six-years-old girl who went missing in Eldorado Park in Johannesburg in 2005 and her body found a day later; the Sunday Times (September, 2007) ran an article about several young boys who were murdered by a man in Cape Town in 2006; the Sunday Times (October, 2008) also ran an article about a man who killed his step-daughter in 2008; the Sunday Times (August, 2007) also ran another article about a six-years-old girl's body that was found in Rawsonville in 2007.

Television programmes featuring child murder have occurred on local series such as Carte Blanche, Third Degree, and Special Assignment in the form of

documentaries. Examples of popular non-fiction crime literature include the works of Micki Pistorius, namely *catch me a killer* (2002).

Speaking on crimes against children, Social Development speaker from the Western Cape, Koleka Mqulwana commented, "We should sleep, dream and eat child safety. It should be second nature, all year long, so that we can stop the abuse and murder of innocent children (Sunday Times, 2007).

Given the above situation, and many more incidents as mentioned in chapter two it is the researcher's concern to address child murder as a crucial and immediate issue. The researcher's goal in this research is to focus on the perpetrators within their family contexts. The researcher aims to establish to what extent familial events and situations shape individuals to later commit criminal acts such as child murder. In South Africa there is no official database pertaining to child murder. This area has not been researched. This research is an attempt to fill the gap and add this area of research on child murders to the South African criminal research database.

1.3 Focus of the Study

Previous research focused on the victims and their families. This research aims to analyse the perpetrators of child murder within a family systems perspective. The research aims to look at the lives and families of perpetrators who violate all human values and choose to go against all norms of humanity. The research plans to go beyond the headlines and into the lives of some of these notorious child murderers.

In Cape Town the man who murdered several young boys, confessed to the crimes and indicated in his defence that he was tortured and sodomised by bigger boys at boarding school. He said he first tried to commit suicide at age five and again several years later by slashing his wrists and drinking pesticides. This description gives some insight into how the systems involved in the life of the perpetrator can impact on the behaviour of an individual.

It is reported that the life experiences of perpetrators are reeled with trauma and neglect. A variety of factors such as individual, family, community, and societal factors contribute to the development of violent acts in adulthood. Individual factors include temperamental difficulty and failure to meet parental expectations as in the case of John Wayne Gacy (Lohr, 2001). Family and caregiver factors include unrealistic expectations about child development, patterns of physical violence, geographic or social isolation, absent or unhelpful extended family, substance abuse, and mental illness. This description also gives some insight into how the systems involved in the life of the perpetrator can impact on the behaviour of an individual.

It is the researcher's assumption that child murderers come from dysfunctional family backgrounds that create anger and violence in individuals, which may have contributed to their later acts of violence against children. The trauma that they might have experienced in their childhood might have led them to flee the pain of the past by turning to alcohol and drugs, whilst others repeat the abuses that were done to them (Farmer, 1989). The research will discuss what dysfunctional families are like and what the impact of such experiences is as well as common themes that seem to play a role in such families. Common themes that describe systemic dysfunctionality will be highlighted in the data analysis.

It is important to do this research in this way in order to understand the systems that create and maintain such people and in doing so possibly identify appropriate interventions. This research will consider the various systems involved in the child murderers life. This view lends itself well to a systemic investigation of child murderers as it takes into account the interplay between many systems such as family, educational systems, socio-economic status, as well as childhood experiences such as physical and sexual abuse.

1.4 Theoretical Framework: The Family Systems Theory

The Family Systems Theory views families as inextricably interconnected. The Family System Theory states, neither people nor their problems exist in a

vacuum. Physical, social, and emotional functioning of family members is profoundly interdependent, with changes in one part of the system reverberating in other parts. Families repeat themselves; what happens in one generation will often repeat itself in the next. The same issues tend to be played out from one generation to another generation. As a result relationship patterns in previous generations may provide implicit models for family functioning in the next generation (Bowen, 1978). Given that problems and symptoms reflect a system's adaptation to its total context at a given moment in time, it is probable that the perpetrator's current actions reflect his or hers adaptation to the family context at a given point in history thereby making the murder possible.

The adaptive efforts of members of a system reverberate throughout many levels of a system, from the biological to the intrapsychic, to the interpersonal, i.e. nuclear and extended family, community, culture and beyond (Bowen, 1978; Engel, 1980; Scheflen, 1981). Also, family behaviours including problems and symptoms are related to emotional and normative meaning in both the sociocultural and historical context of the family (Elder, 1977; McGoldrick, Pearce & Giordano, 1982). Adopting the family system's theory involves understanding the problem on as many levels as possible. This research does not exclude the other systems that are involved in a person's life. Therefore the family systems theory allows for the inclusion of social systems, economic systems and any other organisation or system that may have been involved in the development of the individual.

The Family Systems approach involves an understanding of both the current and historical context of the family. The flow of anxiety in a family system occurs along vertical and horizontal dimensions (Carter, 1978). The vertical flow derives from patterns of relating and functioning that are transmitted historically down the generations, primarily through the process of emotional triangling. The horizontal flow of anxiety emanates from current stresses on the family as it moves forward through time, coping with inevitable changes, misfortunes and transitions in the family life cycle. With enough stress on the horizontal axis, any family will experience dysfunction (Bowen, 1978).

Furthermore, stresses on the vertical axis may create added problems so that even a small horizontal stress can have serious repercussions on the system. For example, if a young mother or father has many unresolved issues with his or her mother and/or father (vertical anxiety), they may have a particularly difficult time dealing with the normal vicissitudes of parenthood (horizontal anxiety) (Bowen, 1978). The genogram (map of the family structure) helps the clinician or researcher to trace the flow of anxiety down through the generations and across the current family context.

The Family Systems perspective takes the coincidences of events into consideration. Concurrent events in different parts of the family are not viewed as simply random happenings but rather as interconnected in a systemic way. Critical events are seen as occurring at nodal points of life cycle transitions in a family history. The difficulty arises when families face the task of reorganising relationships in order to move onto the next phase of the family life cycle (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). The symptomatic family becomes stuck in time, unable to resolve its impasse by reorganising and moving on. The history and relationship patterns revealed in a genogram assessment provide important clues about the nature of this impasse, how a symptom may have arisen to preserve and protect some relationship pattern or to protect some legacy of previous generations (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

A detailed account explaining the theoretical framework, that is, the family systems theory is available in Chapter Four.

1.5 Research Design

The research will be qualitative in nature. Qualitative research focuses on the meaning of experiences, actions and events as they are interpreted through the eyes of the researcher, participants and cultures, and is sensitive to the particular context of the study, as well as the impact of the researcher and the participants on the study.

1.6 Sampling

In qualitative research there are no demands placed in terms of the sample size and therefore accepts even one-person populations. This is in view of the fact that qualitative research is based on the interpretations and the meaning that each individual attaches to the concept being studied and it gives acceptance to the fact that different people can have different meanings in a single situation (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996). Therefore there will be four participants in this research study that will be chosen from the prison population who were convicted of murdering a child or more than one child under the age of 12 years. Sampling will be done via a convenient sampling technique called Non-probability purposive sampling to identify the participants. Non-probability purposive sampling is suitable since it allows for a predefined group of few individuals to be studied.

1.7 Data Collection

The following method for collecting information will be used:

- The perpetrators will be interviewed; and with permission, family members and other professionals involved in the life of the perpetrator will be interviewed as well.
- Genograms of the families of the perpetrators will be developed
- Newspaper reports and television interviews will be utilised in order to gain a comprehensive picture.

1.8 Procedure to obtain permission for data collection

Form G197 of the Department of Correctional Services is required to be complete. This form caters for research carried out by individuals as well as groups. Supporting documents that need to accompany form G197 are:

- Research proposal
- Certified copies of researcher's identity document

- Proof of registration from the academic institution

The above information will be submitted to the Department of Correctional Services for approval and permission to conduct the research.

1.9 Interview Schedule

The interview to be used in this research study is a genogram interview. The purpose of the interview is to explore the family experiences of the perpetrators who have committed child murders. The intention is to allow the data and themes to emerge without restrictions. The researcher will conduct the interviews personally and make use of interpreters where necessary. The potential influence of an interpreter is noted and will be included in the analysis.

The interviews will consist of questions about the family system. The specific genogram interview schedule appears in chapter three. The interviews are only structured in so far as the interviewer keeping the focus of the interview on the topic; the family system; the views of family members about the crime and feelings towards the incarcerated member; and the interviewee's perceptions of their own family. Information on the family patterns will be guided by the following key factors:

- Demographic information
- Family and individual functioning information, and
- Critical family events

Demographic information includes dates of birth and death of significant individuals in the perpetrator's life, their ages, locations, occupations and educational level. Functional information refers to the medical, behavioural and emotional functioning of family members. Critical family events refer to important events that may have impacted upon family functioning or the functioning of the individual concerned. These include transitions, migrations,

failures, and successes, demographic events such as births and deaths, and loss of job, for example (Del Fabbro, 2006). Housekeepers, extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, foster children, adopted children and best friends will also be included in the analysis of families for research purposes, as these members may have contributed significantly to the behaviour of the individual concerned.

The basic format of the interview will follow the interviewee's interpretations, and explanations of the topic. Effort will be made to interpret and clarify meanings expressed by the interviewee throughout the interview so as to ensure the quality of analysis. Sensitivity to the emotional well being of the interviewee will be practiced throughout the interview process and will be used to inform interview questions. This means that the researcher will listen carefully and react to the cues given by the participant (Kvale, 1996). The researcher's way of communicating will be guided by the following questions in her mind:

- What is happening in the interview between the researcher and the participant?
- Under what circumstances is it happening?
- How does it happen?
- Why does it happen?
- How is what is happening connected to what follows?
- How and with what can the researcher behave to intervene without contamination of the research process?

1.10 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality, informed consent, permission to record interviews and a detailed account of ethical guidelines will be discussed in chapter Three.

1.11 Data Analysis

Data will be analysed using thematic hermeneutic analysis. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed for emerging themes. An integration of all material will follow and thereafter emerging patterns in the family system will be identified for possible dysfunctionality within the family system. Possible themes that the research will include is, childhood isolation and neglect; physical abuse and pain; and exposure to aggressive adults. Isolation and neglect have been associated with poor relationships and the development of aggressive behaviour. Aggressive behaviour can be learned through modelling by ways of exposure to aggressive adults. Children who have experienced repeated pain infliction and physical abuse tend to be more aggressive than non-abused children (Coleman, 2006).

1.12 Chapter Outline

Chapter Two: Literature Survey provides an overview of the existing literature on the topic and thereby marks the beginning of the study. The context of the research is set in this chapter whereby the reader is guided through previous research on child murders, the changing and evolving viewpoints regarding the child murderer, and the aspects that have been considered as contributing to, and forming part of the system of the child murderer.

Chapter Three: The methodology chapter provides an explanation of the focus of the research, the aims of the study, the research method and techniques that will be used to conduct the research, and the process of analysis.

Chapter Four: This chapter provides the theoretical framework of the study, which is the Family Systems Theory. This theory provides an explanation for the processes involved in the perpetrators life and how this relates to the processes observed in violent systems.

Chapter Five: Interpretation and Analysis relates to the discussion of the methods used in data collection and highlights the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations will end the research study, integrating the final results with the Family Systems Theory and how it applies to the child murderer.

1.13 Conclusion

To summarise the researcher will aim to develop an understanding of these individuals and their family systems. It is hoped that this study will develop an understanding of child murderers from a family systems perspective and may allow for a better management of individuals who commit child murders and the prevalence of this type of criminal behaviour in larger society. It is understood that the evidence collected from the participants may be contradictory; therefore at the outset the researcher acknowledges that such discrepancies may occur, and aim only to understand interpersonal familial patterns and family structures. Lastly the researcher is aware of her own subjective experiences and that it might impact on the study being conducted as well as the findings; the researcher acknowledges that qualitative research includes the researcher's subjectivity in the research process.

Chapter Two

2. Definitions, History, and Review of literature

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyse the family systems of child murderers incarcerated in a prison in Gauteng in South Africa. The previous chapter introduced the background to this research as well as the proposed research design. This chapter will begin with the definitions relevant to the study, family systems theory as a framework for conducting research, the child murderer in context and thereafter research that has been conducted on child murderers, will be reviewed.

2.2 Definitions

The following relevant terms will be defined in order to gain a better understanding of topic:

- Definition of child
- Definition of child murder
- Definition of child murderer
- Definition of family
- Definition of system

2.2.1 Definition of a child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as every human being below the age of 18 years. Biologically, a child is anyone in the developmental stage of childhood between infancy and adulthood (Dunant, 2001). For purposes of this research a generic definition was developed namely: a child is defined as any individual between the ages of 0 to 12 years old. The reason for selecting this age category is due to the fact

that the perpetrators of child murders committed the crimes against children between the ages of 0 and 12 years.

2.2.2 Definition of Child Murder

The legal definition for murder in many countries in the world including South Africa comprises of two elements:

The act of killing a person

The state of mind of the perpetrator as being intentional, purposeful, premeditated, and malicious (Dunant, 2001)

For purposes of this research child murder is defined as the killing of a child by the intentional actions of an adult.

2.2.3 Definition of Child Murderer

A child murderer is any person who commits an act against a child, with the intention of killing the child.

2.2.4 Definition of family

In this research, "family" consists of the entire kinship network of at least three generations, both as it currently exists and as it has evolved through time (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980). It includes biological and extended family as well as adopted or foster families.

2.2.5 Definition of system

The concept of a system is used in this study to refer to a group of people who interact as a functional whole. According to Watzlawick (1976), a system is a set of objects together with relationships between objects and between their attributes. Both are inextricably interwoven with broader interactional

systems, the most fundamental of which is the family (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

A family is a system that is interdependent with the community, health and social development, criminal justice system, South African society, and the global village with alteration in one part of the system influencing the system as a whole (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

Holmes and De Burger (1988:155) identify the following aspects of a system that may contribute to the prevention of a child killer:

- *Components of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), namely police services, courts and correctional services*
- *The media*
- *The public*

According to Holmes and De Burger (1988) these aspects of the system should focus on the early identification of circumstances that create violent tendencies in an attempt to prevent murders. Focusing on early identification of violent tendencies implies a relationship between those circumstances that can prevent child killings and those that create it.

2.3 Family systems theory as a framework for conducting research

The Family Systems Theories on the origin of child murderers focus on how the whole system, including the perpetrator, family experiences, the educational system, social structures like the church and welfare organisations, law enforcement, the judicial system and correctional facilities contribute in a reciprocal manner to the development of a child murderer (Hammond, 2007). This is in accordance with the general systems theory, which focuses on the interaction between the individual and different societal subsystems (Hammond, 2007). The family systems theory, used synonymously with general systems theory also pays attention to how the

system may act to prevent the development of a child murderer (Hammond, 2007). A more detailed description of the family systems theory is discussed in chapter four.

Lane and Gregg (1992) question how much freedom the state and social workers should have in interference in the domestic activities of families and individuals where child abuse is suspected. These authors also consider the defects of the system as a contributory factor to homicide.

In searching to understand the child murderer the researcher has decided to consider the systemic levels present in an individual's life and analyse familial patterns and experiences within a larger social context to determine the reciprocal influences and co-creation of attitudes and actions towards violent behaviour.

It has been shown in various cases that the offender's immediate family is dysfunctional in a variety of ways such as a history of criminality, absent father, frequent relocations, institutionalisation, a parent known for promiscuity, and much violence in the family (Schechter & Everitt, 1996). These experiences indeed contribute in shaping a person's reactions to future situations. Deprivation in the form of resilience, warmth, support and close relationships can leave a person susceptible to future difficulties in adult relationships.

Furthermore an individual can lose respect for the value of life and belief in flexibility and change (Lewis, 1993). By this the researcher means that a person that grew up in a dysfunctional family may develop a rigid role repertoire and inappropriate responses to conflict and cooperation. He or she may not possess healthy characteristics to deal with situations and a variety of problems can occur. These problems include an inability to express emotions accurately and safely, inability to form and maintain lasting relationships, and the capacity to repeat the dysfunctional experiences of the previous generations.

Common symptoms and behaviour patterns result due to common experiences within the family structure. These symptoms and behaviours tend to reinforce the dysfunctional behaviour, either through perpetuation or enabling (Lewis, 1993). It has been shown that for many sub-groups who are involved in violent crimes, a high proportion had suffered some serious head injury or other physical trauma at some point in their life prior to the killing (Schechter & Everitt, 1996).

According to Lawrence (2004) child killers experience the power over life and death. They seem to have little control over their own lives and feelings. They become addicted to the control over someone else's life. Other researchers have found situational factors to be associated with potentiating the aggressive crisis (Parrot & Zeichner, 2000). Parrot and Zeichner (2000) further iterate that an individual's inability to regulate the expression of aggressive behaviour results in uncontrollable acts of violence in interpersonal relationships. Therefore the identification of factors that predict the risk for violence has become extremely important to mental health providers. It is this discovery that motivates the researcher's aim to analyse the family systems of child murderers. The advantage of the family systems theory is its capacity to utilise all frameworks as part and parcel of an individual's development. Each aspect forms part of the perpetrators system, with changes in one part affecting the whole.

Analysing the family systems of the perpetrator seems to be in accordance with authors who emphasise that optimal family functioning is imperative to developing a healthy self-image with respect for self and others (Pistorius, 2002). Dysfunctional family patterns can lead to behaviour that reinforces dysfunctionality within the system. Society and its institutions shape individuals; therefore if there is hope to decrease, prevent or combat the incidence of violent crime especially against children in our country, or in the world as a whole, it is fundamental to enhance our knowledge and skills in understanding the impact of the systems influencing the perpetrator (Pistorius, 2002).

Given the above discussion the purpose of this study is to take into account the factors that contribute to shaping violent behaviour such as environmental influences, parent child relationships, poverty, alcohol abuse, etc.

2.4 Child murderers in context

With respect to the research being conducted the following assumption is made regarding child murderers in the context of their families. Given that problems and symptoms reflect a system's adaptation to its total context at a given moment in time, it is probable that the child murderers actions serves as a metaphor of the ecology of interactions within the family and as such reflect his or hers adaptation to the family context at a given point in history.

The adaptive efforts of members of a system reverberate throughout many levels of a system, from the biological to the intrapsychic, to the interpersonal, i.e. nuclear and extended family, community, culture and beyond (Bowen, 1978; Engel, 1980; Scheflen, 1981). Also, family behaviours including problems and symptoms derive emotional and normative meaning in relation to the socio-cultural and historical context of the family (Elder, 1977; McGoldrick, Pearce & Giordano, 1982). Thus adopting the family system's theory involves understanding the problem on as many levels as possible.

Since the genogram was developed primarily out of the family system's theory of Murray Bowen (1978), the conceptual framework for analysing genogram patterns has been based on his ideas. According to Bowen's ideas for genogram patterns people are organised within family systems according to generation, age, sex, to name a few of the most common factors. Where a person fits in the family structure can influence their functioning, relational patterns, and the type of family he or she forms for the next generation (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

Families repeat themselves. What happens in one generation will often repeat itself in the next generation. The same issues tend to play out from generation to generation, though the actual behaviour may take a variety of forms.

Bowen terms this the multigenerational transmission of family patterns. The hypothesis is that relational patterns in previous generations could provide implicit models for family functioning in the next generation. On the genogram we look for patterns of functioning, relationships and structure continuing or alternating from one generation to the next (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

The family systems approach involves an understanding of both the current and historical context of the family. The flow of anxiety in a family system occurs along vertical and horizontal dimensions (Carter, 1978). The vertical flow derives from patterns of relating and functioning that are transmitted historically down the generations, primarily through the process of emotional triangling. The horizontal flow of anxiety emanates from current stresses on the family as it moves forward through time, coping with inevitable changes, misfortunes and transitions in the family life cycle.

With enough stress on the horizontal axis, any family will experience dysfunction (Bowen, 1978). Furthermore, stresses on the vertical axis may create added problems so that even a small horizontal stress can have serious repercussions on the system. For example, if a young mother has many unresolved issues with her mother and/or father (vertical anxiety), she may have a particularly difficult time dealing with the normal vicissitudes of parenthood (horizontal anxiety (Bowen, 1978). The genogram helps the clinician or researcher to trace the flow of anxiety down through the generations and across the current family context.

The systemic perspective takes the coincidences of events into consideration. Concurrent events in different parts of the family are not viewed as simply random happenings but rather as interconnected in a systemic way. Critical events are seen as occurring at nodal points of the life cycle transitions in a family history. The difficulty arises when families face the task of reorganising relationships in order to move onto the next phase of the family life cycle (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

The symptomatic family becomes stuck in time, unable to resolve its impasse by reorganising and moving on. The history and relationship patterns revealed in a genogram assessment provide important clues about the nature of this impasse, how a symptom may have arisen to preserve and protect some relationship pattern or to protect some legacy of previous generations (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

2.5 Literature Review

2.5.1 Systemic descriptions of crimes such as murder

Since criminal behaviour is condemned by society, research into the lives of notorious criminals focuses on their experiences with their social institutions, which creates a tendency to disobey most of the rules of society and risk punishment (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). This has resulted in the evolution of many sciences focusing on observing and explaining human behaviour and social interactions, such as sociology, psychology, and criminology. The aspect that most researchers' interest lies in is not in the 'normal' behaviour but rather behaviour that deviates from the conventional and appears to defy the established boundaries of society (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985).

International research shows that most child killers had difficulty making friends in the childhood years, they were also bullied, teased and physically abused either at home or at school, or were orphaned at a very young age (Smith, 2006). These early childhood incidents may have shaped some of these abused and traumatised children to grow up and become abusers themselves. Childhood maltreatment and violence contributes to subsequent violent behaviour (Fehon, Grilo, & Lipschitz, 2005). Therefore it can be argued that perpetrators of child killers in adulthood are significantly more likely to have been a victim of or witnessed family and community violence (June, 2005).

Initially psychiatric illness was thought to be the cause of killings but later it was found that most of these offenders do not differ significantly in

psychological traits from non-offenders (John, 2007). There seems to be a growing consensus that sociological problems as well as psychological problems contribute to the development of violent behaviour. These resources contribute to my research in terms of analysing psychological as well social circumstances of the offender since not much research has focused on that area.

In a US study of sexually oriented murders it was found that families did not have a process for children to become adults and relate to and value other members of society (John, 1985). Inadequate patterns of relating as well as infrequent positive interaction with family members were noted. High degrees of instability in the home life, as well as poor quality attachment among family members, were also found. Interviews showed that most offenders had unsatisfactory relationships with their fathers, while also reporting that the relationships with their mothers were of highly ambivalent quality (John, 2005).

Parents and guardian figures play a vital role in the future behaviour and thought patterns of the individual. One study showed that having a convicted parent at age 10 was the single best predictor of criminal behaviour at age 32 (Farrington & Coid, 2003). These authors also identified that when parents or guardians provide attention and affection in the formative years of life, children who possess risk factors for the development of criminal behaviour generally do not develop any behavioural abnormalities. Tierney (1996), states that biological, situational, developmental and adaptive elements and social circumstances are fundamental to the developmental process of the criminal.

Environmental factors hugely impact on the development of violent behaviour in adults. Negative settings are abhorrent enough to create serious damage to a persons self causing them to place no value on the lives of others (Farrington & Coid, 2003).

John Wayne Gacy is one example of this scenario. John Wayne Gacy also known as The Killer Clown was an American serial killer. He was convicted and later executed for the rape and murder of 33 boys and young men between 1972 and 1978. Twenty seven of his victims were buried under the floor of his house, while others were found in nearby rivers. He became notorious as the "Killer Clown" because of the many block parties he threw for his friends and neighbours, entertaining children in a clown suit and makeup, under the name of "Pogo the Clown." He was also in the Guinness Book of World Records for the longest sentence imposed on a mass murderer; he was given 21 consecutive life sentences and 12 death sentences. Regarding his personal circumstances John Wayne Gacy was raised a Catholic in a suburb of Chicago. He had a troubled relationship with his father, who was a physically abusive alcoholic who often called his son a "sissy". He was close to his mother (Lohr, 2007).

Gacy married in 1964. The same year, he had his first known homosexual encounter while his wife was in labour with their son, Michael. Gacy's marriage fell apart after he was convicted of child molestation in December 1968 and was sent to prison. He was paroled in 1970 after serving 18 months of a 10-year sentence. The killings began in earnest the month after Gacy's wife divorced him in March 1976 (Lohr, 2001).

The patterns of abuse, rejection, shame and guilt experienced by John Wayne Gacy may have influenced the co-creation of his violent tendencies and lack of respect for life. John Wayne Gacy received severe beatings from his father, for his suspected homosexuality and underachievement; together with his own marital discord are a few of the systems that could have influenced his violent behaviour.

Abuse from a parent or caretaker must be one of the most hurtful of all insults, because it combines physical pain with the psychological blow of being attacked by one's protector (Wolfe, 1987). The child has no way of judging the meaning of what is happening. Their perspective of adult behaviour towards children is limited, and it thus becomes easy for the child to believe that all

parents severely spank, beat or do other violence to their offspring (Pelton, 1981). The child may justify the abusing parent's behaviour by assuming guilt of being bad and therefore deserving the blows. Thus the child grows up risking physical attack and holding a distorted view of parent-child relationships, which includes a first hand lesson in aggression (Wolfe, 1987).

Child abuse has internalising consequences such as depression and lowered self-esteem, as well as externalising effects in the form of aggression (Wolfe, 1987). According to Blackburn (1993), abuse prohibits the child from developing a healthy sense of self, an understanding of intimacy, or feelings of personal self-esteem. Such children grow up with a distorted view of their own identities and an increasing need for control. The combination of physical predisposition and environmental stressors helps develop a pattern of maladjustment with two major consequences, a distorted sense of self and a dysfunctional societal component (Blackburn, 1993).

The impact of violent crimes on young victims can be devastating, and the violent or sexual victimisation of children can often lead to an intergenerational cycle of violence and abuse (Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 1997).

People who commit murderous and violent crimes are often influenced by the media, their family situations and any disorders that they may have (Bailey, 2008). An interesting research result was mentioned in 1996 where the perpetrators of child murders were found to torture or kill animals when they were young, a known sociopath criterion (Cavendish, 1996).

The case histories of killers are rife with instances of juvenile animal torture. For example, as a boy, Henry Lee Lucas enjoyed trapping small animals, torturing them to death, and then having sex with the remains. Henry Lee Lucas later became a US serial killer, killing over a hundred women. His personal life history also cries abuse, neglect and rejection. His mother considered him an unwanted child who deserved nothing but punishment (Cavendish, 1996). Although his killings were not directed at children the nature of his killings was violent and murderous.

Therefore it coincides with Bailey (2008) on the relationship between murder and systemic experiences. Animal torture is such a common denominator in the childhood of killers that it is considered one of the three major warning signs of future criminal behaviour, along with unnaturally prolonged bedwetting and juvenile pyromania (Giannangelo, 1996).

Another key finding has placed impulsiveness as a significant concept in thinking about the determinants of violence and aggression (Edwards, Scott, Yarvis, Paizis & Panizzon, 2003). Aggressive outbursts that result in harm and injury present a major problem for the public as well as the criminal justice system; therefore it is crucial to understand the determinants of such dangerous behaviour.

In a study of abusive environments, the relationship between impulsiveness, impulsive aggression, and physical violence is confirmed. Impulsiveness and exposure to aggressive environments in childhood have significant correlations with physical aggression in adulthood (Edwards et al, 2003).

According to Mohr & Andrea (1993), there is an association between parent psychological violence and the development of aggressive tendencies in children. These authors suggest that there are four types of families in which psychological violence is likely to occur. Such includes a scapegoat child, a domineering and intolerant father, a rigid and manipulative mother, and a chaotic and incompetent parent. This typology was submitted to practitioners working in the field of child protection and community family support, who applied the typology to real life cases in order to assess its usefulness in clinical settings (Mohr & Andrea, 1993). The different family typologies will be discussed in chapter four under the theoretical framework.

Maternal physical abuse of a child has also been reported and contributes to the death of many children. Maternal physical abuse can range from a regular pattern of physical punishment to sudden expressions of anger and frustration caused by feelings of social isolation or helplessness. Often, mothers who were physically or emotionally abused as children strike out at their own

children to protect themselves from painful memories (Newton, 2001). Newton (2001) examines the internal dynamics of women who physically abuse their children; specifically those women who are subconsciously reacting to their own childhood abuse and identify closely with their children as an extension of themselves.

The correlation between depression or isolation and physical abuse is illustrated in the case study of the abusive mother of a 17-month-old son (Newton, 2001). The young woman had an abusive childhood and a history of relationships with violent men. She tended to withdraw from attempts to address her traumatic experiences, but acted out her frustration by shaking, hitting, and injuring her son. Feeling helpless, she asked for assistance for her child as a way of crying out for help for herself. Professionals failed to recognise that her abusive behaviour was her attempt at communication. The case demonstrates the necessity of treatment for abusers who were maltreated as children to prevent the continuation of the cycle of violence.

In the following sections the prevalence of child murders and research of child murders from countries across the globe to South Africa will be reviewed. Perpetrator relationship to the victims as well as perpetrator characteristics will be reviewed.

2.5.2 International versus local perspective on general crimes and crimes such as the murder against children

United States

In the US an estimated 18.6% of inmates serving time in prisons in 1991 for violent crimes had been convicted of a crime against a victim under age 18. More than half the violent crimes committed against children involved victims age 12 or younger. Seven in ten offenders with child victims reported that they were imprisoned for a rape or sexual assault. Two-thirds of all prisoners convicted of rape or sexual assault had committed their crime against a child (Greenfield, 2005). These statistics, although alarming, do not indicate that

the child has been murdered. There seems to be a gap in the research in the US that suggests that child murders have been given less priority in terms of research as compared to serial murders, robbery and assault. It has been indeed the case since violence towards children was open and socially acceptable since the early 1900s, when parents were allowed to beat their children as a form of discipline and corporal punishment (Smith, 2008). Many people were keen to adopt non-violent methods for disciplining children but most had very little knowledge of what these methods might be (Smith, 2008). Child labour was also very common in the trade industry, farming industry, as well as child trafficking (Sergio, 2005).

The attitude towards violence has changed in modern society. Efforts have been made to be more humane in the treatment of those who cannot care for themselves. Today hospitals, social welfare, attorneys and child protection services embark on efforts to pioneer research towards violence against children. The first major research came from Kempe in Hurt (1974) when a nation wide survey was conducted in the US concerning child abuse and neglect. From this research the term “battered child syndrome” emerged (Kempe, 1962). From this early research came a mushrooming of research on child abuse. The Department of Health, Education and Social Development are greatly involved in the protection of children. Today child abuse is a well-researched topic and child rights have evolved to a substantial degree. However child homicide is still in its early stages as far as research is concerned, even though statistics regarding child murder is alarming (Kempe, 1962).

The US department of child abduction and murder research states that more than half of the child murder victims were female and the average age was 11 years old. Child killers were strangers as well as friends or acquaintances to the victim and the family. Almost two thirds of the killers have prior arrests for violent crimes with more than half of those prior crimes were committed against children. The primary motive for the child killer in the US is sexual assault.

The racial distribution of perpetrators in the US was similar to the race of their victims. During 2005 perpetrators were white, african-american and hispanic. Many of perpetrators of child murders were parents of the victim.

More than half of all perpetrators were found to have a history of having neglected children. 10.9% of perpetrators physically abused children, and 7.7% sexually abused children. 10.8% of all perpetrators were associated with more than one type of maltreatment.

England

In 1992 in England, 385 deaths of under-one year olds were reported as homicides (McDonough, 1996). Figures from the same source show that in 1995, 754 deaths of children were recorded as homicides. These England statistics suggest that the incident of child murder is greatly on the increase. Apart from criminal statistics research into the murder of children in England is limited. Research indicates that under the age of 5 years, children are likely to be killed by their caretaker. After age 5 children were reported to be killed by family friends, strangers or acquaintances. Women are reported more likely to kill their offspring from birth until two years, while men are reported to be the perpetrators of children older than 2 years (Smith, 2006).

Sweden

In Sweden a study over a 10-year period was done and the results showed that a total of 96 children under 15 years of age were killed in Sweden. This number constituted an average annual rate of 0.6 per 100,000 children. The nature of the crime most frequently involved strangulation, shooting, and stabbing. The pattern of child homicide was mainly characterised by intrafamilial violence, especially in connection with the suicide of a parent-perpetrator. Extra familial homicides were rare and only committed by male perpetrators. Cases of child abuse by a parent and cases of sexual abuse were infrequent. By psychiatric examination after the crime, only 10 perpetrators out of 47 examined were found not mentally ill. The statistics for

child murders in Sweden seems to be well below the world's average in other countries (McDonough, 1996).

South Africa

In South Africa the incidence of crime and violence in general are well above the world average. In a recent Nedcor report, South Africa, together with Southern Africa, is referred to as "...probably the most murderous society(s) on earth, even with probable under reporting" (Smith, 2007). Research in South Africa has focused on understanding violence, deriving intervention strategies, assisting victims of violence to recover both psychologically and emotionally; and identify and enable insight into criminal behaviour (Stones, 2003).

High profile child murder cases that have made headlines in South Africa include that of Annestacia Wiese, 11, who was found raped and killed in the ceiling of her home in Woodlands, Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town in March 2007 by Richard Engelbrecht; Steven Siebert, 6, of Johannesburg who was killed by Theunis Olivier; Jordan Lee, of Cape Town who was killed by a group of four black men, instigated by one white woman, Dina Rodrigues; Sheldeen Human of Pretoria, who was killed by Andrew Jordaan.

The question of what drives such perpetrators to commit such crimes seems to be a pattern of rejection, abandonment and a dysfunctional home environment (Van Niekerk, 2006). These experiences may have created a tendency where empathy for human life is seriously lacking, together with an inability to deal with their own emotions. Research has shown that children who grow up without love and positive role models are more at risk of developing abusive tendencies (Van Niekerk, 2006). If children grow up in a home where parents are not interested in them they do not learn to be empathetic or how to show love. Far too many children are in bad situations in South Africa and this does not bode well for the country's future. Therefore it seems that it would be useful to consider the fact that children at risk become

adults who have no concern about the impact their behaviour has on other people.

Samantha Waterhouse in Buss (2005) says that “people assume child killers are scary monsters”. Yet we see that even the nice guy next door cannot be trusted as in the case of Sheldeen Human. How does society deal with the ‘nice’ guy next door, who is friendly, functions well socially and often holds down a job, when he is identified as the killer, rapist or abuser? These are the alarming incidents that are occurring in South Africa and throughout the world that needs to be addressed.

Statistics show that in South Africa 2000 children are murdered each year. The actual figures are probably much higher as most often these murders go unreported (Smith, 2001). South Africa has been named as being the country with the second highest murder rate in the world, second to drug ridden Columbia in Latin America resource. South Africans are more likely to die of murder than to die in a traffic accident or of normal causes. It further reports that the murder of children is a disturbing trend (Smith, 2001).

In Kwa-Zulu-Natal research has been done in Durban's Gale Street Mortuary and statistics show that 12% of children under the age of 10 were murdered. In Durban in 2001 only 4.2% of children died of natural causes and in 1991 only 1% of cases were deaths by natural causes. It can be seen from this that the number of deaths of children is increasing rapidly, and more than half of all autopsies report homicide as opposed to natural causes for the death of children (Smith, 2001).

Dr Sandra Marais (2007), senior specialist scientist of the Medical Research Council's Crime, Violence and Injury Lead programme notes that in 1995 that children aged five to fourteen in the Western Cape were beaten to death, shot, stabbed or died from injuries rather than a natural death.

Some child killers fall within the domains of serial killers and commit several murders of children. Such killers include the station strangler, Afzal Simmons,

who is serving a life sentence in the Drakenstein Maximum Correctional Centre in Paarl, in the Western Cape for the death of numerous children. Forensic psychologist Micki Pistorius did extensive research on the station strangler's killings in the 1990's. Like many other killers the station strangler refused to take responsibility for his actions. He knew that what he was doing was wrong, but he placed the responsibility on the police to catch him before he killed more children (Pistorius, 2002).

Research headed by Prof. Mohammed Seedat of Unisa Institute of Social Science states that South Africans need to teach conflict resolution and non-violent decision-making in the homes and schools, parent child relationships need to be strengthened, and access to firearms reduced as they are the leading cause of death (Smith, 2001). He further states that the government needs to introduce harsher gun control legislation, as well as more stringent steps to control alcohol abuse, and most importantly stimulate economic equity and macro level development (Smith, 2001). He reasons that countries with smaller economic differentials in their population have very low rates of violence and homicide (Smith, 2001).

According to Prof. Seedat, South Africa needs jobs, equal economic opportunity, a decrease in earning differentials between men and women and race groups, infrastructure development, better preventative policing, conflict reducing skills in the home and schools, home visitation for those at risk for violence, and immediate change in physical environments that lend themselves to violence (Smith, 2001).

Prof. Mohammed Dada (professor at the Medical Research Council), speaking on a project into fatalities by the MRC states that firearms are the preferred tool for killing as they are less personal and the blood from the victim does not splash over the perpetrator. The killings are reported to take place more often during Christmas or New Year when people tend to get drunk and stab friends or relatives (Smith, 2001). Prof. Dada states that the criminal justice system is failing because of a lack of sufficient staff in the mortuaries and police departments, which results in inability to collect

evidence at the mortuary or talk to research teams. This accounts for the lack of sufficient and credible research and statistics. He furthermore states that in the rural areas there is a serious lack of reporting unnatural deaths due to insufficient knowledge by doctors about natural and unnatural deaths (Smith, 2001).

In the past decade in South Africa, media coverage of crimes committed against children has grown substantially. This publicity has led to an increase in local and national efforts to report, arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate those who commit these crimes.

2.6 Summary

The phenomenon of child murder fascinates many people. Many are intrigued by the horrendous deeds that some are capable of. Their deviant behaviour makes us feel uncomfortable. We manage this uncomfortable feeling by trying to find reasons for their deviant behaviour (Pistorius, 2002). This research is an attempt to explain the deviant behaviour of child killers in South Africa.

The research looks at the perpetrator in relation to the crime committed. It aims to explore the perpetrators of the child murders and the role played by the systems involved in their lives.

The research will concern itself with the reciprocal experiences of the child murderer and his or her family. The benefits of the systemic approach in this study are its attempt to explain violent actions in a circular and reciprocal way. This approach will assist the researcher in identifying such interactions and influences within the family and other systems of the child murderer. Significant assumptions about the nature of such interactions and influences become clearer using this approach.

Chapter three follows with the method of research to be conducted.

Chapter Three

3. Methodology

3. 1 Introduction

The preceding chapters outline the research that is being done and the literature survey. This chapter presents the research method.

3.2 Research Method

A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Cresswell, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) define qualitative research as, "multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter". This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, personal experience, introspective life story interviews, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The use of a qualitative research methodology in this study will enable the researcher to understand the child murderers' conceptions of their behaviour in relation to their family systems and vice versa. It enables understanding the context of their lives and situations and the meanings attached to those situations. This implies that the researcher will use qualitative research to understand the world of the child murderer from their experience of their world.

3.3 The Research Technique

The researcher will use the genogram interview as a form of qualitative investigation (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). The researcher will interview the perpetrator as well as family members where possible, and compile genograms of the families, in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the patterns of interaction within the family.

A genogram is a format for drawing a family tree that records information about family members and their relationships over at least three generations (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). It provides an effective graphical presentation of family patterns, which enable the researcher to view how problems within the family or affecting the individual members may be related to these patterns. It allows the research to move beyond the perpetrator in relation to nuclear family, family of origin, and also to reflect on intergenerational aspects across time. A genogram is a flexible tool and can be used for research purposes, as well as a clinical tool to inform therapeutic interventions (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). It provides a rich source of hypotheses about how a problem, such as child murder may be connected to the family context and evolution of both problem and context over time. The information on a genogram is best understood from a systemic perspective. The genogram will assist the researcher to think systemically about how events and relationships in the child murderer's life are related to patterns of criminal behaviour. The genogram interview should be seen as one part of a comprehensive systemic clinical assessment (McGoldrick, & Gerson, 1985). The genogram will be constructed in the first interview and revised as new information becomes available.

Genograms can help family members to see themselves in a new way. They will enable the interviewer to reframe, detoxify, and normalise emotion-laden issues, creating a systemic perspective, which helps to track family issues in time and space (McGoldrick& Gerson, 1985). The genogram helps both the interviewer and the participant to see the larger picture both currently and historically. Therefore this form of interview can benefit the participants in the

study to evaluate the strengths and vulnerabilities in relation to the overall situation. Given different family structural configurations on the genogram, the interviewer can tentatively predict likely relational patterns and relational compatibility problems (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

The Genogram interview schedule will consist of an initial interview with the child murderer, and if possible with other family members. Getting information from several family members increases reliability and provides the opportunity to compare perspectives and observe interactions directly. Therefore the researcher will request permission from the participants to include family members into the data gathering process. The researcher acknowledges that there might be contradictory information that could be elicited from the participants and other family members. In order to clarify these discrepancies, permission will be requested from the participants to share information in order to clarify contradictory genogram information. Clarifying genogram information is at the heart of genogram usage (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). As information is collected the researcher will be constructing and revising hypotheses about the family. Then the researcher will offer these observations as tentative hypotheses, which the participants may confirm or disconfirm in follow up interviews (McGoldrick, 1985).

The length of each interview session will be approximately one hour long. This duration allows for a comprehensive interview to be conducted (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

The content of the interview will consist of gathering relevant information about the family and its broader context. The following issues will be covered:

- From the presenting problem to the larger context. In this case from the incident to the family and other related systems.
- From the immediate household to the extended family and broader social systems

- From the present family situation to a historical chronology of family events
- From easy non-threatening queries to difficult, anxiety provoking questions
- From obvious facts to judgments about functioning and relationships to hypothesised family patterns (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

3.4 Organising and Interpreting Genogram Information

The data on the genogram will be scanned for the following:

Repetitive symptoms, relationship or functioning patterns seen across the family and over the generations. Repeated triangles (two people against a third party), coalitions (a certain number of people teaming up against other people or person), cut-offs, and patterns of conflict, over and under functioning.

Coincidences of dates e.g. the death of one family member or anniversary of this death occurring at the same time as the event or child murder.

The impact of change and untimely life cycle transitions such as changes in functioning and relationships that correspond with critical family life events. Of particular interest are untimely life cycle transitions like births, deaths, or marriages that occur 'off schedule' (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985).

The researcher will acknowledge reactions to charged emotional issues that may arise in response to research questions that could significantly impact a person's behaviour (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). These issues will be dealt with in a debriefing session following the interview.

3.5 The Participants

Four participants will be used in this research. They will be chosen from the Gauteng based prison population and from those who have been convicted and serving their sentences for murdering a child or more than one child. A

letter of consent will be sent to the perpetrators in order to inform them of the research purpose and to get their voluntary consent.

The profile of child murderers will not be chosen from specific categories of race, relationship to the child, or gender. The participants will be chosen according to consent, availability and convenience. The dates and times of the interviews will thereafter be arranged, as well as an interpreter if necessary. The preferable medium of communication will be English, however accommodation will be made for those perpetrators who cannot communicate comfortably in English.

3.6 Ethics

Application of Ethical Principles in this Research

- Permission will be sought from the Department of Correctional Services for entry into the prison in order for the interviews to take place.
- Consent: The participants will authorise his/her participation in the study in writing.
- The perpetrators will be further informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage in the interview process.
- The perpetrators will also be informed of the storage and safe keeping of the interview transcript in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the information that will be provided.
- Disclosure: Full disclosure of research procedures, nature and purpose of the research, the expected benefits to the participant and/or society, the potential of reasonably foreseeable risks, stresses, and discomforts, and alternatives to participating in the research will be discussed.
- Contact details: The document will have clear details on whom to contact with questions about the research study, and research subjects' rights.

- Understanding: The instructions will be clear and understandable with respect to language competence. For instance if a participant cannot speak and understand English, the services of translator will be made possible.
- Language: The translator will be utilised if necessary.
- Confidentiality and Anonymity: There will also be a statement that describes procedures in place to ensure the confidentiality or anonymity of the participant.
- Autonomy: Regarding autonomy the researcher will respect the right of all participants to make their own decision regarding the participation in the research without any coercion.
- Voluntariness: Participation will be voluntary and the participants will be informed of their right to refuse to participate at any stage of the research process.
- Competence: The researcher will ensure that competent participants will be used. Tracing mental history or any illness affecting the ability of the participant to understand the terms and conditions of the research will screen competence of the participant.
- Debriefing: Following each interview the participants will be given the opportunity to debrief should it be necessary.

The guidelines mentioned above will ensure research integrity and satisfy the moral code of conducting research (Government Gazette, 2006). Observance of these guidelines will help the researcher to avoid departures from accepted ethical research practice and prevent those most serious deviations that constitute research misconduct.

3.7 The Structure of the Interview

The researcher plans to thank the participants for voluntarily participating in the research and indicate to them the purpose of the research and the issue of confidentiality and anonymity, meaning that they will not be identified in the media as the names of all participants and family members will be

pseudonyms. Permission for interviewing family members will be sought at the introduction phase of the interview when interview details and consent is determined. The researcher further plans to explain to the participants the main aims of the research and that there are no right or wrong statements because their thoughts and experiences are unique to them. The use of the audiotape will also be explained and permission to use the tape will be obtained. The participants will be given a non-threatening environment in which they can express themselves freely. All sessions will be recorded and fully transcribed.

3.8 Limitations

- All participants may not speak English. As a result of this the services of a translator might be utilised. The difficulty of doing this is that valuable information might be lost during translation (Babane, 2002).
- Another limitation of this study is the fact that the evidence collected from the participants and collateral information from family members may contradict each other. For this reason as well as to accommodate for such discrepancies, the researcher aims only to understand familial patterns and family structures.
- Lastly the researcher is aware of her subjective experiences, in terms of the way a topic is conceptualised and findings are interpreted and that it might impact on the study being conducted as well as the findings. The way in which a researcher characterises a phenomenon will change how it operates for him or her and that will change the way that phenomenon will be perceived. However the researcher acknowledges that qualitative research includes the researchers' subjectivity in the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

3.9 Data Analysis

Data will be analysed using thematic hermeneutic analysis. This type of analysis aims to discover meaning and to achieve understanding of that which

is not understood yet. According to Durheim and Terblanche (1990), this approach is based on the principles of co-creating reality. Here the researcher is part of the interview and subjectively involved. The researcher aims to understand the material from the participant's point of view.

Hermeneutic analysis fits well with social constructionism and postmodernism as it allows for the voice of the participants in expressing their internal emotional processes.

The method that this approach uses involves the following steps by Durheim and Terblanche (1990: 246).

- Step
- Familiarisation and immersion: In this stage the researcher is working with texts rather than with lived experience. The researcher will need to immerse herself in the world created by the text, such as the literature survey so that I can make sense of that world.
- Thematising: Step two requires the researcher to infer themes that underlie the research material. From the interview transcripts themes will be inferred describing the participant.
- Coding: Coding occurs when similar instances are grouped together under the same theme. Meta themes will be established from the transcript and explained in the context of the participants' experience.
- Elaboration: In this stage the researcher explores the generated themes more closely. This enables the researcher to gain a fresh view and deeper meanings, alternative meanings, and changes over time, as she moves back and forth between individual elements of the text and the whole texts in many cycles, called the hermeneutics spiral.
- Interpretation and Checking: This refers to the final account or narrative that related to the research question being studied. It is also good for the researcher to reflect on her role in the whole process.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter gives an account of the research methodology that was used in this study. The genogram interview appears to be effective in understanding such social phenomena. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework that informs this research.

Chapter Four

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to orientate the reader with the theoretical framework, the Family Systems Theory, which informs this research. It will begin with a discussion of a theoretical framework. It then discusses healthy functioning families and dysfunctional families. It ends with a discussion on the Family Systems Theory and how it can be applied to this research.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a theoretical perspective or a basic approach to understanding something (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Typically, a theoretical framework defines the kinds of phenomena that you will want to look at. In this research the theoretical framework that will be used is the Family Systems Theory or also known as the General Systems Theory. This theory will be applied to the child murderers and the families of child murderers in an attempt to explain their violent actions in a circular, reciprocal way.

4.3 Healthy Functioning Families versus Dysfunctional Families

Before describing the Family Systems Theory it is important to mention the assumption that healthy families allow children to grow up into resilient, warm, supportive adults, capable of sharing a close relationship with another (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). It is important to be aware of healthy functioning families in this research in order to assess and analyse those dysfunctional family patterns that contribute to the development of violent actions in the perpetrators of child murders.

Characteristics of a healthy family according to Becvar & Becvar (1999: 103) are:

- A legitimate source of authority established and supported over time.
- A stable rule system established and consistently acted upon.
- Stable and consistent shares of nurturing behaviour
- Effective and stable childrearing and marriage-maintenance practices
- Effective and stable childrearing practices in single-headed households
- A set of goals toward which the family and each individual works.
- Sufficient flexibility and adaptability to accommodate normal developmental challenges as well as unexpected crisis

Since optimal family functioning is characterised by a variety of processes interacting with one another there needs to be a range of processes interacting with one another along many dimensions, such as:

- A caring affiliative attitude, versus an oppositional approach to human encounters
- Respect for the subjective worldviews, differences, values held by self and others or the ability to agree or disagree, versus authoritarianism.
- Belief in complex motivations and the ability to be flexible and to change both form and structure in active resonance with a complex environment, versus rigidity in approach to the world at large
- High levels of initiative, as manifested in high degrees of community involvement, versus passivity
- Flexible structures characterised by a strong parental/marital/caregiver or couple alliance, with clear individual and generational boundaries, an absence of inappropriate internal or external coalitions, high levels of reciprocity, cooperation, and negotiation.
- High levels of personal autonomy, expressed by clarity of communication, acknowledgement of what the other feels and thinks, and strong encouragement of individual responsibility for feelings, thoughts, and actions

- A congruent mythology, with family members perceiving themselves in a manner consistent with how others perceive them
- Openness in the expression of affect, a prevailing mood of warmth, affection, caring, a well-developed capacity for empathy, and a lack of lingering conflict or resentment.
- High doses of spontaneity and humour (Lewis, 1993: 106)

Therefore a healthy family that possesses the above characteristics will reflect a system that shares a sense of mutuality and responsibility, a clear and definite structure, and openness to growth and change. In such families boundaries are distinct and appropriate, individual and relational privacy is respected, and communication is effective. Also parents handle power issues hierarchically and with strong egalitarian parental leadership. Children are furthermore encouraged to develop autonomy and independence. In healthy families a wide variety of emotions are expressed and individuals are able to be angry at one another and play well together (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Such a family will find its members cooperating with these rules or working to change rules in a way that might better serve the common good of the family (Sherman & Dinkmeyer, 1978).

Should the family system not possess healthy characteristics, a wide variety of problems can occur. These problems include an inability to express emotions accurately and safely; inability to form and maintain lasting relationships; and the capacity to repeat the dysfunctional experiences of the previous generations (Sherman & Dinkmeyer, 1978).

Dysfunctional family members have common symptoms and behaviour patterns as a result of their common experiences within the family structure. These symptoms and behaviour patterns tend to reinforce the dysfunctional behaviour, either through enabling or perpetuation. The household unit can be affected by a variety of factors. Such factors include:

- Inconsistency and unpredictability such as chaotic, unstable parents/caregivers who behave in a wildly inconsistent manner with their children
- Role reversal (parentifying children) as described by childlike parents/caregivers who "parentify" their children and tend to be needy and incompetent, usually allowing the other parent to abuse children.
- Closed family system such as a socially isolated family that discourages relationships with outsiders
- Denial (i.e. a refusal to acknowledge the alcoholism of a parent or child/teenager; ignoring complaints of sexual abuse)
- Lack of empathy toward family members or others
- Lack of clear boundaries (i.e. throwing away personal possessions that belong to others, and inappropriate touching)
- Mixed messages
- Extremes in conflict (either too much or too little fighting between family members (Farmer, 1989)

Children growing up in a dysfunctional family, which lacks structure and stability, can lead to them adopting one or more of the six basic dysfunctional roles:

- "The Good Child" – a child who assumes the parental role.
- "The Problem Child" – the child who is blamed for most problems, in spite of often being the only emotionally stable one in the family
- "The Caretaker" – the one who takes responsibility for the emotional well-being of the family
- "The Lost Child" – the inconspicuous, quiet one, whose needs are often ignored or hidden.
- "The Mascot" – uses comedy to divert attention away from the increasingly dysfunctional family system.
- "The Mastermind" – the opportunist who capitalises on the other family members' faults in order to get whatever he/she wants (Farmer, 1989: 30)

They may also:

- Think only of themselves to make up for the difference of their childhoods.
- Distrust others etc.
- Have difficulty expressing emotions
- Have low self-esteem or have a poor self image.
- Have difficulty forming healthy relationships with others.
- Feel angry, anxious, depressed, isolated from others, or unlovable.
- Perpetuate dysfunctional behaviors in their other relationships (especially their children).
- Lack the ability to be playful, or childlike, and may "grow up too fast".
- May be unpatriotic to their hometown, state, province, or country, and often learn to live far away from their families (Farmer, 1989).

The aspects that will be focused on in this research are those dysfunctional patterns that create anger and violence in individuals, which may have contributed to their later acts of violence against children. It is the researcher's assumption that child murderers come from dysfunctional families and dysfunctional contexts and that because of the trauma experienced they grew up different from other children, missing important parts of necessary parenting that prepare one for adulthood.

For some individuals the trauma has led them to attempt to flee the pain of the past by turning to alcohol and drugs, whilst others feel inextricably compelled to repeat the abuses that were done to them (Farmer, 1989). Child murderers were once innocent children themselves. Therefore, the researcher makes the assumption those forces in their family they had no control over dramatically shaped their actions in adulthood. This hypothesis is waiting to be confirmed or disconfirmed. This research will discuss what dysfunctional families are like and what the impact of growing up in such a family is. Below is a discussion of the Family Systems Theory as the chosen theoretical framework.

4.4 The Family Systems Theory

Ideas and principles that underlie the Family Systems Theory came from two sources during the 1940's. These two sources were Von Bertalanffy family systems theory and the field of cybernetics (Carr, 2000). These theories were applied to the study of families and utilised concepts like Wholeness, Feedback-loops, Circular causality, Homeostasis, Morphogenesis, and Closed-Open systems, etc (Carr, 2000). The researcher will begin with a definition of the family systems theory and thereafter explain the concepts mentioned previously. The family systems theory suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family context.

The family systems theory views clinical problems in terms of dysfunctional interactional patterns in the whole family (Feldman, 1992). What this means is that the relationships between the parents/caregivers and the children are strained and unnatural within the family (Boyd, 1992). Conflict, misbehaviour, and even abuse occur continually, leading other members to accommodate such actions. Children sometimes grow up with the understanding that such a situation is normal (Farmer, 1989). Dysfunctional families are most often a result of alcoholism, substance abuse, or parents emulating their own dysfunctional families patterns and dysfunctional family experiences. Violence and verbal abuse are typical outcomes (Farmer, 1989). The child murderers may also have come from communities where such behaviours and child rearing practices or lack thereof are the norm.

Therefore one of the motivations for using the Family Systems Theory in this research is based on the belief that most difficulties in life arise and can best be addressed within families (Gladding, 1995). Therefore the child murderer should be seen in light of his or her family context. Such interaction is seen as a non-causal, dialectical process of mutual influence in which all people participate (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Assessing such patterns of interaction places emphasis on what is happening rather than why it is happening.

Emphasis is placed on reciprocity, recursion, and shared responsibility (Becvar, & Becvar, 2006).

4.5 Concepts utilised by the Family Systems Theory

4.5.1 Cybernetics

The term cybernetics is sometimes used synonymously with the term Systems Theory (Beer, 1994). Both Systems Theory and Cybernetics are based on the same assumption that relationships have a circular, reciprocal nature. Circularity and reciprocity in relationships will be discussed later in this section.

Cybernetics exists on two levels, called first and second order cybernetics. First order cybernetics involves placing oneself outside the system as observers of what is going on inside the system. One's focus is on describing the following:

- What is happening in the system
- Who are the members of the system
- What are the characteristic patterns of interaction in the system
- What rules form boundaries of the system and distinguish it as separate from other systems (Keeney, 1983).

In first order cybernetics one attempts to define the degree of openness and closedness of the boundaries, that is how freely is information able to transmit into or out of the system. One looks at the balance between stability and change not only in the family but in the community as well. The concern is with the here and now rather than on the past. Concern is also on the tendency of the system to move toward or away from order. All questions are asked according to recursiveness (Asking what rather than why) and feedback (self-correction). This research will utilise first order cybernetics.

4.5.2 Context

It is important to see all our actions in context. It is very difficult to understand behaviour outside its context. Thinking in terms of context means constantly aligning one's actions and inactions with those of others and gauging what events will emerge in the process. Behaviours are embedded in inextricably linked contexts, such that their particular nature may be knowable only within their native contexts (Hanson, 1995). The Family Systems approach tends to move away from the individual towards the context in which they live. Context is described in the Family Systems Theory as non-summativity (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). Given that the context in which an individual grows up in has such a profound influence on their actions, it is safe to say that the child murderer has also been influenced by his or her context. This concept will be dealt with at a later stage during the analysis and discussion chapter.

Hanson (1995) identifies another concept under the umbrella term of context and that is a system.

4.5.3 System

A family can be described as a system. The concept of a system is used to refer to a group of people who interact as a functional whole. According to Watzlawick, a system is a set of objects together with relationships between objects and between their attributes (Watzlawick, 1976). From this it can be understood that neither people nor their problems exist in a vacuum. Both are inextricably interwoven with broader interactional systems, the most fundamental of which is the family (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). The family is the primary, and except in rare instances, the most powerful system to which a person ever belongs. The physical, emotional and social functioning of family members is profoundly interdependent, with changes in one part of the system reverberating in other parts of the system. Watzlawick (1976) defines this as the wholeness of a system. The whole affects the part and the part

affects the whole in a circular fashion. This concept is referred to as circular causality.

4.5.4 Circular Causality

By circular causality it means that forces do not simply move in one direction, with each event caused by a previous event, but rather they become part of a causal chain, with each influencing and being influenced by the other (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994). In addition, family interactions and relationships tend to be highly reciprocal, patterned and repetitive (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985). It is this redundancy of patterns that allow us to make tentative predictions from the genogram. Therefore blame can neither be assigned to the individual alone nor to the context of the circular relationship patterns present in the family.

4.5.5 Linear Causality

In contrast to circular causality, linear causality suggests that A causes B and B causes C. Elements or parts that have a linear relationship with respect to causality do not form a whole and as such cannot be regarded as forming a system (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994). In this research the researcher will use circular causality and not linear causality as a way of describing the family. Where circular causality is present, the system relies on a mechanism called feedback-loops in order to monitor and govern it's functioning (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994).

4.5.6 Feedback-Loop

Winer defines feedback as a method of controlling a system by reinserting into it the results of its past performance (In Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994). This means that in a system, information about what happens and how it happens is looped back from the output to the input, thus modifying the behaviour of the system. Feedback-loops are circular mechanisms whose purpose is to reintroduce information about a systems output back to its input

in order to change, correct, maintain, or govern the system's functioning (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994). A system can have two types of feedback-loops, namely negative and positive feedback-loops.

4.5.7 Negative Feedback-Loop

A feedback-loop is regarded as negative if it activates behaviour in the system that seeks to maintain certain aspects of its functioning within prescribed limits (Becvar & Becvar, 1999). Thus negative feedback is corrective, adjusting the input so that the system returns to its steady state. In this study an example of the presence of a negative feedback loop is when there is no room for individuals to grow and reach optimal functioning. Their function is to maintain the homeostasis of the family even if it involves committing a crime in the context of this study to keep the parents together, or to keep members from leaving the household. Such behaviour if activated in the system seeks to maintain certain aspects of functioning within prescribed limits.

According to the Family Systems Theory and Cybernetics, crucial to the systems functioning is the concept of homeostasis, the tendency of a system to move towards a stable state of equilibrium (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Negative feedback-loops are error activated and are thus suited towards maintaining a system's homeostasis (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). In a family where negative feedback-loops are present there is no room for adaptability and change and therefore the system becomes rigid.

4.5.8 Rigidity

Rigidity or rigid boundaries refer to an arrangement between sub-systems and imply disengagement within and between the sub-systems (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). In such families the members are isolated from one another and from the systems in the community. Such segregation, when carried to the extreme may be dysfunctional. Transactions between the parents/caregivers and children are restricted and neither system can respond to each other's needs.

Members in such families turn to systems outside the family for the support and nurturance (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

4.5.9 Positive Feedback

Positive feedback-loops are also error activated; meaning it regulates itself through behaviour in this system that seeks to change certain aspects of its functioning. Positive feedback-loops are deviation amplifying, as opposed to deviation counteracting (Luckhurst, 1985). In other words, when a system is activated to increase deviation to the extent that change or transformation occurs, the positive feedback-loops are in operation. When the deviation is constructive, the amplification results in growth and adaptive change (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996). Thus whilst negative feedback-loops are pro homeostasis, positive feedback-loops on the other hand are pro Morphogenesis, described later. The discussion on feedback-loops calls for a distinction between two types of systems, that is the closed and the open systems.

4.5.10 Closed System

According to Hall and Fagen (Watzlawick et al, 1976:122) a system is closed if there is no import of energies in any form such as information, heat, physical, material, etc., and therefore no change of components. An example of a closed system as given by the authors is a chemical reaction taking place in a sealed insulated container. Such a system remains stable over time and is not influenced by changes outside of its environment. Furthermore feedback-loops play a less important role in this system since information from the environment does not affect it. In a closed family the members are unable to develop independently and responsibly. As a result an individual can develop symptomatic behaviour. An example a closed family system is one where there is no room for interacting with members outside of the family such as those in the community, work, etc. In such families the tension eventually accumulates and gets released as symptomatic behaviour in the form of violence or criminal activity.

4.5.11 Open System

In contrast to closed systems an open system exchanges materials, energies, or information with their environments (Watzlawick et al, 1967). Both feedback-loops play a crucial role to the survival of such a system since it is affected by what occurs in its environment (Becvar & Becvar, 1999). Most importantly about an open system is the fact that it has sub-systems that operate as entities on one level, and as a whole on another level (Watzlawick et al, 1967). Open families are capable of allowing individuals to develop independence and resilience. In open families the interaction between individuals are clear and effective.

4.5.12 Symptomatic Behaviour

Symptoms are often ways to distract/protect family members from threatening conflicts (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Often problems and symptoms represent a relationship problem between two or more family members and arise at a time of transition for the family. Instead of adapting to the changing context that the problem has introduced the symptom functions to maintain homeostasis. For example a child murderer's symptomatic behaviour may be in response to a family problem such as marital conflict with the parents that is too threatening to accept and change. Therefore his or her actions serve as a symptom to distract the family from addressing the parental problem within the family and focus is shifted to the current crisis of the child murderer thereby maintaining the family homeostasis.

4.5.13 Homeostasis

Homeostasis is the tendency of the family to maintain a steady balance or equilibrium (Haley, 1979). In fact the appearance of symptomatic behaviour serves a function in perpetuating a particular family system (Brown, 1995). The person carrying the symptom is called the identified patient.

4.5.14 The identified Patient

The identified patient is the family's scapegoat or black sheep of the family. He or she carries the symptom for the family and in effect is expressing a problem affecting the entire system. However the denial of the family's responsibility for the symptom creates tension, as the attempts made by the family to solve the problem of the identified patient become the problem in the system.

4.5.15 Morphogenesis

Morphogenesis is the tendency of a family to move towards growth and development (Haley, 1979). For example if a family is in a crisis where there is marital conflict, Morphogenesis is in action when the family accepts the problem and adapts itself to the new situation and to finding alternate solutions.

4.5.16 Sub-systems

All systems are made up of sub-systems. Family's sub-systems include spousal sub-system, parent-child sub-systems, caregiver sub-systems and sibling sub-systems. A family's roles and functions are defined by its subsystems (Fine 1992; Stafford & Bayer, 1993, Walsh, 1982).

4.5.17 Interaction

Interaction between individuals and the environment is an important aspect of the Family Systems Theory (Magnusson, 1976). Interaction is absolutely essential in the healthy development of an individual. Interactional deprivation leads to anguish, loneliness and depression since it is interaction itself that defines and affirms the humanness of the self (Lennard & Bernstein, 1971). All people need people to form close, on-going relationships and to negotiate the range of acceptable behaviours. Deprivation of such an opportunity to

develop a range of behaviours results in inappropriate expression of feelings and desires, which can have negative consequences.

As Maier (1969) says, the developing child learns to form relationships through his or her experience of those relationships offered to him or her by the people around him or her, and these experiences are of extreme importance in developing healthy and meaningful interactions. If, on the other hand, when learning to form relationships, he or she is not given the necessary conditions to express himself or herself freely and directly, and if he or she is taught to react in a stereotype way to different situations, and if those relating to him or her do so in an ambiguous and inconsistent way, then there is an increased chance of developing relationship problems and other personal problems in adulthood (Swart & Wiehahn, 1979).

In interactions with significant others, maintaining and/or enhancing feelings of acceptability and self-worth via the process of feedback represents a fundamental goal (Anchin & Kiesler, 1982). All behaviour is a response to stimuli in the environment (Van Kessel, 1978). Therefore when a person acts out a certain behaviour it is usually a response to the acceptability and self-worth and feedback experienced by that individual from his or her interactions with significant others.

From these interactions rules that govern that interactional pattern are established and labelled as acceptable or unacceptable. In a dysfunctional relationship such rules are incongruent and results in confusion for the individuals involved and is expressed in various dysfunctional roles.

There is evidence to suggest that people who are excessively isolated and lonely may be more prone to negative feelings, such as sadness and depression, and anger (Miell & Dallos, 1996). There is a correlation between symptomatic behaviour and the patterns of interaction, so the symptom/problem fits logically into an interactional pattern. Therefore there is a relevancy between the complaint and the pattern of interaction (Vorster,

2001). The complaint is thus reporting on the experience of the individual and therefore can be described as functional behaviour.

4.6 Conclusion

Though the child murderer may now be an adult, he or she can still carry the effects of past circumstances. The past may have impacted on them and moulded them into particular ways of relating to certain incidents and experiences. The trauma of growing up in a dysfunctional family may leave scars, wounds that still hurt, emotional pain, confusion that won't go away, crazy patterns of acting and relating that don't make sense. The use of the Family Systems Theory is an attempt to unlock the experiences of child murderers within the family and community in order to understand and explain their violent actions. Chapter five will consist of the interpretation and analysis of the interviews with the participants.

Chapter Five

5. Data Interpretation and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the information gained from the interviews and deals with the experiences of four participants with regard to their family and social environment. The four participants herein referred to as Mr. X, Mr. Y, Ms. A, and Ms. B met the criteria for this research study based on purposeful convenient sampling. A brief description of each participant and their families will be given below. Following the description of each participant and their family will be a discussion of the genogram interview. The information will be presented in the following format:

- Demographic details of participant and family
- Clinical observations
- Genogram details
- Thematic analysis

When dealing with systemic descriptions it is difficult to separate results from a discussion of results due to the fact that the results are already interpretations of the system. Therefore this chapter will outline the information obtained, which will be used to develop an understanding of the four participants and their family systems.

5.2 Description of participants and their families

Participant One: Mr. X and family

Mr. X is a white, Afrikaans speaking male in his late 20's, who is currently incarcerated in a prison in Gauteng in South Africa. In 2006 Mr. X was convicted of one count of murder, 2 counts of rape, and one count of

attempted murder. He knew his victims. They were his friend's children. The victims were females, under age 12 years. His immediate family consists of a father and stepmother and six siblings all residing under the same roof at the time of the incident. The father and stepmother are currently employed. Mr. X was employed at the time of the incident. He was not in a relationship. Mr. X denied consent to interview his family members and so it has been decided to proceed with the research with Mr. X's experience of his family. The interview consisted of two one-hour sessions. Mr. X completed standard seven and his socio-economic status was average at the time of the incidents.

Participant Two: Mr. Y and family

Mr. Y is a black, Sotho speaking male in his early 20's, who is currently incarcerated in a prison in Gauteng in South Africa. In 2007 he was convicted of two counts of murder, 2 counts of robbery, and one count of attempted murder. His victims were under the age of 12 years from different ethnic backgrounds. The victims were unknown to him. Mr. Y's family consisted of three sons and a mother and a father. The family split up following his parent's divorce when he was 12 years old. Mr. Y's family is currently not contactable, as they have moved homes since his trial and due to the high profile nature of the crime. Therefore it has been decided to proceed with the research with Mr. Y's experience of his family. Mr. Y has completed Standard nine and he was in a relationship at the time of the incidents. Currently he is not in a relationship. Mr. Y socio-economic status was below average at the time of the incidents.

Participant Three: Ms. A and her family

Ms. A is a black, Tswana speaking female in her early 30's, who is currently incarcerated in a prison in Gauteng in South Africa. She was convicted of one count of murder in 2006. Her victim was her 12 years old daughter. Ms. A's family was an intact nuclear family consisting of five children with both parents until her mother left their home in Potchefstroom and moved to Carletonville for work. Ms. A and her younger brother went with their mother leaving behind

her father and three brothers who subsequently died of various reasons such as AIDS, murder, and illness respectively.

Participant Four: Ms. B and family

Ms. B is a black, Sotho speaking female in her early 30's, who is currently incarcerated in a prison in Gauteng in South Africa. She was convicted of two counts of murder and one count of attempted murder in 2004. Her victims were male and female under the age of 12 years of the same ethnic background. The victims were her children. Ms. B's family was a remarried parent household, consisting of her mother, stepfather and herself. Her socio-economic status was below average. Ms. B's highest standard of education was standard seven.

Summary of the four participants

All four participants share the same circumstances in terms of life experiences and separation from their nuclear families. Each of the four participants was removed from one or both of their parents before the age of twelve years. Each of their families was disrupted by death or divorce. Each of the four participants did not complete school. Each of the four participants suffered some form of trauma as a result of these early childhood experiences.

5.3 Clinical Observations

The researcher observed the following characteristics for each participant during the interview:

Participant One, Mr. X

Mr. X was dressed in prison uniform.

He is a short, medium built male.

His hygiene was average.

Mr X maintained eye contact throughout the interview.

His attention and concentration was good and he showed enthusiasm for the interview.

Mr. X speech was average and he displayed low cognitive functioning in terms of reading and writing.

His mood was child-like with instances of appropriate emotional breakdown.

His memory was good for recent events; however his long-term memory seems to be poor, as he cannot recall many years of his childhood.

Mr. X has a good ability to interact with people.

He shows a poor problem solving ability.

Participant Two, Mr. B

He was also dressed in prison uniform.

He appeared to be a tall, medium built male with average sense of hygiene.

He maintained eye contact throughout the interview.

His attention and concentration was good.

His speech was coherent and he displayed an intellectual style of speech, using a high standard of words and sentences.

Mr. Y was initially nervous about doing the interview, but changed his mind and appeared cooperative and enthusiastic once the interview began.

His memory for long term and short-term events seems to be good.

His interaction with people seems to be poor, as he tends to talk more about himself and listen less to others.

Mr. Y shows a poor problem solving ability.

Participant Three, Ms. A

She was dressed in prison uniform.

She is a tall, medium built female with good hygiene.

She maintained eye contact for most of the interview.

Her attention and concentration was good.

Ms. A's speech was average, and she showed low intellectual functioning in terms of reading and writing.

Initially Ms. A seemed to be nervous about the interview but soon relaxed and adjusted to the interview environment.

Her memory for both long term and short events seemed to be good.

She expressed a difficulty interacting with people.

Ms. A's problem solving ability is poor.

Participant Four, Ms. B

She was dressed in prison uniform.

She is a short, small built female with average hygiene.

She maintained eye contact during the interview.

Her attention and concentration was good and intellectual functioning fair.

Ms. B seemed nervous and depressed during the interview.

Her memory for both long and short-term events seemed to be good.

She displayed an ability to interact well with people.

She has poor problem solving ability.

Summary of clinical observations

All four participants seemed to show poor problem solving ability. This was shown during the interview when asked about alternative solutions to their life problems. All four participants displayed a severe inability to think about different ways of attending to life's problems. They have resorted to violence, drugs, alcohol, and murder. They also showed an inability to take responsibility for their actions and continued to see things in a linear way. They see their problems as having a cause and effect. Three participants seem to recall past events with participant one having severe difficulty accessing memories from his childhood. All four participants seemed to have relaxed during the interview, even though the beginning might have been uncomfortable. The participants seem to have a strong need to have their stories heard.

5.4 Genogram details

The genogram will be interpreted with respect to six categories as outlined by McGoldrick & Gerson (1985), as follows:

- Family structure, which includes nuclear family, sibling constellation, unusual structural configurations, and summary of family structure
- Life cycle fit
- Pattern repetition across generations
- Life events and family functioning
- Relational patterns and triads
- Family balance and imbalance (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985)

Each section will commence by outlining the main aspects applicable to the section found in the genogram, and thereafter will elaborate on each aspect in greater detail in terms of how it relates to the family system in the discussion section.

5.4.1 Participant One: Mr. X

Category one: family structure

- Nuclear family
- Sibling constellation
- Unusual structural configurations
- Summary of family structure

Nuclear family

The genogram interview of the family of Mr. X shows the family structure to be a remarried form, consisting of his biological father, stepmother, and five siblings, one sister in-law and two brother's in-law, two nephews and one niece. Both parents have been married before and have children from

previous marriages. Not much information is known about the maternal and paternal sides of the family. The remarried family seems to have been the predominating form in this family system. The maternal and paternal sides of the family system are cut-off and distant from each other with little interaction between any of the siblings. The only link seems to have been with the paternal grandmother many years ago until she grew old and could no longer visit. On the same property as Mr. X lived his friend with his wife and a nine-year-old daughter. There were a total of sixteen people living on one property. Below follows a description of the genogram interview at each stage in the family life cycle.

Sibling Constellation

The genogram yielded the following information concerning the sibling position of the members of the remarried family:

Mr. X was the younger of two children in the previous nuclear family, with his sister Mary and his biological mother and father until he was five years old. When his father remarried he became the second youngest in a family of seven children.

His father was the youngest of seven children.

His stepmother was the youngest of six children.

Details of Mr. X's biological mother's family structure are unknown.

Mr. X's paternal grandfather is deceased and his grandmother still alive. Mr. X reports that they used to visit his grandmother when he was younger but the visits declined over time. According to Mr. X his father is not close to anyone of his siblings and does not keep in contact with them anymore. Mr. X reports that there was a time when his father visited his siblings but that changed a long time ago. Mr. X reports that he was never close to anyone of his father's siblings. Mr. X's father being the youngest of seven children may have developed into a more introverted character unable to assert himself and so it became easier to cut-off contact with them (Tomman, 1961). Father X might have decided that he would take care of his own family in his own passive way, without having to interact with his extended family. Due to Mr. X's refusal

to allow interviews with other family members no collateral information regarding this statement is available. What we do have about father X's character is Mr. X statement that father X had a passive style of relating. He says that "my dad only talked to me when I was rebellious, but he never made any attempt to stop me from misbehaving; my step-mum disciplined me when I was naughty".

With reference to the stepmother's family, it would appear that mother X was the youngest of six children. She also lost contact with her siblings over the years. Being the youngest she may have been socially excluded from her siblings and consequently this may have left her feeling lonely, having to turn to her parents while growing up. Mother X lost contact with her siblings after their mother died. This could have left mother X feeling that she should always be there for her children and therefore developed an enmeshed relationship with them.

As stated above, Mr. X was the youngest child in the nuclear family system and struggled to fulfil the role of older brother in the remarried family system where he had one sister younger than him. He reports to have a conflictual relationship with her. Mr. X experienced neglect at the hands of his biological mother and only had his sister Mary to turn to. This would indicate that there were no other children in Mr. X's life that he grew close to and could adapt to playing with or communicating as a child. Therefore in the remarried family he faced the challenge of engaging a new younger sibling as well as four older siblings.

Mr. X also struggled in intimate relationships and reports that he could not trust any woman. He reports that the women in his life had either died or cheated on him. These traumatic events at such a young age may have created in him a sense of hopelessness in life, happiness and trust. He seems not to have developed the interpersonal skills necessary to function in a healthy adult relationship. As a result he resorted to being friends with young girls under 10 years old because he felt they could be trusted. Mr. X's position as the youngest child may have also contributed towards a strong

identification with younger children. His friendships may also have been affirmed by their strong attachments to their parents as well as considerable immaturity that both seem to have shared, young children being naturally close to their parents and Mr. X's unnaturally close bond to his father and step-mother who seemed to have created an enmeshment in their remarried family.

In terms of birth order, Mr. X being the youngest child at the time was treated like the baby and was accustomed to be taken care off. According to McGoldrick (1985), the youngest child may feel more carefree and less burdened by responsibility, and often has less respect for authority and convention. This description seems to aptly describe Mr. X who became a rebel in his teenage years following the death of his sister and parental figure, as well as his father's remarriage and the extension of his family of three to now eight members.

In terms of gender roles, Mr. X seems to have been closer to females. He reported to having close relationships with his sisters Mary and Natalie than to his brothers. In fact he had a conflictual relationship with all of his brothers. Mr. X also had difficulty relating to his younger sister Elizabeth. This could be as a result of him being accustomed to the role of youngest and so struggled to fulfil the role of an older brother.

In terms of distance in age, Mary was five years older than Mr. X and being that much older and taking on a parental role forced both the children of the first marriage to experience life differently. Each of them developed different ideals of the world and Mr. X for many years functioned as an only child. However once the family was extended to include the stepmother and stepbrother and sisters each person's role in the family had to shift. Mr. X may have struggled with this readjustment and subsequently could have developed a dysfunctional pattern of relating. This is seen in his attitude towards drugs, violence and neglect towards other people and their belongings. He expressed an ability to assault policemen and steal their cars. He displays an attitude of childishness and immaturity for his age. He

childishly laughs at his destruction of people and property. He seems not to understand the extent of his actions or take responsibility for it. He displays no remorse for his actions.

In terms of the family's programme for him as a child, his birth mother neglected Mr. X and his father and stepmother seemed to have fulfilled a nurturing role. Their attitude towards him seems to indicate that they pampered him in order to make up for his bad childhood as they let him get away with illegal events. As a result Mr. X seems to have fulfilled the role of a child throughout his life without growing up. This can be seen in his choice of friends. Although Mr. X had adult friends at the time of the incident, he reports that his closest friend was nine years old.

Unusual Family Configurations

The genogram demonstrates one unusual family configuration in Mr. X's family, the struggle of children leaving home. All the adult children still remained in their parents' home, even after they were married. This indicates a pattern of dysfunction by either a severe fear of separation or enmeshment. Children seem to have difficulty in the launching phase in which children leave home. In this family it seems like separation only occurs forcibly either through death or by law. Mr. X's parents had been cut-off from their siblings and it would seem like they attempted to prevent that from occurring in their family. It would appear that the only solution the parents could find was keeping the family together for as long as possible, thereby creating an enmeshed remarried family.

Category Two: Life cycle fit

The genogram interview revealed the following significant areas in the life cycle of the family system, namely separation and death.

The genogram appears to reveal a great deal of activity in the family system on separation and death:

- The separation of the Mr. X and his sister from their mother
- The death of Mr. X's sister
- The death of Mr. X best female friend
- The death of grandparents
- The death of children (nieces and nephew)

Mr. X seems to have been close to females in his life, first his sister, then a close friend, both of whom died. Together with this loss, a separation from his biological mother at such a young age of 5 years and losing his sister at age 14 could have impacted on him profoundly, setting a premise that females are not permanent in his life. The death of Mr. X's sister coincided with a number of significant events in the family system. Mr. X's father and stepmother married, Mr. X withdrew from the family and turned to drugs and violence, Mr. X's parents struggled to face the challenge of losing one child to death and another to drugs. The difficulty of dealing with the death and loss may have contributed to Mr. X's isolation from his family. He could have felt that the person with whom he shared a common bond and background is no longer there. Furthermore he could have felt that he cannot speak to anyone else about it, which in turn increased his frustration and anger, and resentment at being left alone.

Intimate relationships

In terms of life cycle events, the capacity to develop intimate relationships, and leave the nuclear family system to form one's own nuclear family unit is important within a family system and is an indication of a healthy family system. In this light, two problematic areas emerge in the family system of Mr. X:

Mr. X's inability to form healthy intimate relationships

Mr. X's inability to leave his parents home

Mr. X had experienced two intimate relationships in his life. However he reports that these relationships were a failure because both women cheated on him. As a result Mr. X ended the relationship and decided that women were not to be trusted. This pattern fulfils the paradox Mr. X has created for his life that firstly he needs women in his life to fill the gap of his mother and sister and secondly women will always leave him. Considering Mr. X's difficulty forming intimate relationships and his attitude towards women always leaving him indicates a certain attitude towards women that seems to have had an absence of emotional loss after the death of his sister and best friend. Both of these aspects may explain Mr. X's enmeshment with his own family and his tendency to want to exclude emotional relationships outside of the family system and thus a tendency towards aggressive and violent behaviour towards non-relatives individuals.

Mr. X experienced life in the remarried family as normal and happy. He says that his parents were good to him and took care of him when his biological mother neglected him. Leaving this home and starting a life independent of his family meant another separation from a family system. This might have been a difficult adjustment for Mr. X who may have decided he would remain in his parent's home. This satisfies his need to remain a child and be taken care of by his parents, without losing or being separated from his family system and it also satisfied his parents need to keep the family together. Furthermore Mr. X experienced many deaths in his nuclear family system, which could be linked to his difficulty in wanting to start a nuclear family of his own.

Category three: pattern repetition across generations

Patterns of functioning

In terms of patterns of functioning, the genogram demonstrates the following patterns being repeated across generations in the family system:

- Emotional distance and cutting off as a means of dealing with problems

- Diminished coping skills with stress and anxiety
- Trouble with the law
- Addictive behaviour

It would appear that in Mr. X's family the entire family system tends to deal with problems by distancing themselves from the family. This pattern of avoidance is repeated in both generations of Mr. X as well as his parents. In the parent's generations, Mr. X divorced his first wife for neglecting the children and allowing them to be placed in an orphanage. He subsequently cut all ties from her without even allowing the children to see her. In Mr. X's generation he avoids speaking about his feelings to anyone and resorts to violence when the tension gets too much.

Mr. X's family also seems to have an unhealthy response to stress and anxiety by turning to alcohol, drugs or violence. This created trouble for Mr. X, his uncle, as well as two of his brothers with the police causing them to be arrested several times for assault, drugs, and stealing.

Another pattern repetition is seen by his addiction to drugs. Mr. X's biological mother was addicted to alcohol.

Patterns of relationships

With respect to patterns of relationships, there appears to be two significant patterns that are repeated across generations in the family system of Mr. X. These are a close parent-child relationships with his father and the emotional distance and isolation of his biological mother. On his paternal side there appeared to be a close emotional relationship between his father and grandmother as is reported by Mr. X when he says that his family visited his grandmother often at one stage in his life and they were close to her. And then there is the emotional distance that surfaced later on between his father and grandmother. One can hypothesize that the mother-father triad interrupted the close emotional relationship between his father and

grandmother after his father remarried. This emotional distance seems to have been carried over to Mr. X who is emotionally distant and cut-off from his biological mother and reports that he doesn't want to see her ever again.

One can justify this decision when one considers her neglect of him and his sister, but on the other hand one can't ignore the father's influence in the son's decision not to associate with his mother. As a child being cut-off from one's mother can have huge consequences for a child. Furthermore being placed in an orphanage with many other young children exposes a child from a small family to an experience that could be overwhelming and difficult to adjust to. Such re-adjustment problems at this age set a trend for future re-adjustment problems as can be seen in Mr. X's life. Having been separated from many people from a young age developed in him a fear of committing to and relating to others. In terms of the above two patterns of relationships, Mr. X's father would have been drawing him closer and developing a close emotional relationship with him, and on the other hand, his cut-off relationship from his mother would have been passing on the pattern of relating to others with emotional distance. This conflict of relating may have created considerable anxiety for Mr. X who began isolating himself from others.

Category Four: life events and family functioning

The following events will be discussed under this heading:

- Coincidental events
- Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas
- Anniversary reactions

Coincidental events

Not much is known about coincidental events in Mr. X's family, as Mr. X reports that he didn't invest any time and effort to get along with his extended family and therefore does not know about their lives. Furthermore he reports that his parents do not share information regarding the extended family.

Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas

Mr. X experienced the following transitions:

Separated from birth mother at age 5 and placed in an orphanage

Removed from orphanage at age 11 and move in with father

Father's remarriage and new stepfamily at age 14.

Witnessed sister's death at age 14

Mr. X and his sister were removed from the custody of his biological mother due to her alcoholism and subsequent neglect of the two children. At this stage the father was working in the army. Mr. X and Mary were placed in an orphanage until he was eleven years old, and his father returned from the army and got custody of the two children. Whilst under the care of his mother Mr. X grew very close to his sister Mary who adopted a parental role over him and became his protector and care taker. When Mr. X was fourteen years old his sister Mary died of a gunshot wound to her stomach by her policemen boyfriend. This incident had a huge impact on Mr. X after which he resorted to withdrawing from his family and to drugs and violence towards policemen as a way of coping.

Traumas experienced by Mr. X

Premature death of children is a common phenomenon in Mr. X's family. There have been three children who died at different points in their life, Mary died at 19 years, Elizabeth lost a two month old daughter and another child died at birth.

Mr. X and Mary were both neglected children by their biological mother. Their father's remarriage was also a major life event for the children who had already been through a traumatic childhood.

Alcohol, drugs, and addictive behaviour seem to have played a major role in their lives as well.

Critical periods and events in Mr. X's life are likely to have left an emotional legacy for him who struggled to re-adjust to each new phase of his life. Aggressive behaviour in childhood is linked to delinquent and criminal behaviour in adolescence and adulthood (Campbell, 1995). The impact of individual characteristics such as being the youngest child, marital instability in the parent's relationship, and his mother's alcohol abuse are some of the characteristics that should be considered in Mr. X case when determining his delinquent tendencies and criminal behaviour. The above three characteristics are a powerful predictor of continuing aggression, contact with agencies known to deal with delinquents and substance abuse and criminal behaviour (Campbell, 1995). Juvenile crime is a source of concern and offenders with a past history of sustained aggression carry out a significant proportion of juvenile crime, as can be seen in Mr. X's case with the police. Mr. X was definitely at risk of developing aggressive tendencies and criminal behaviour when one considers his early family experience, social adversity such as being placed in an orphanage, and his aggressive profile as a young child.

Anniversary reactions

There appears to have been an anniversary reaction with respect to life stages. This reaction concerns the stage at which members in the nuclear family are expected to start families of their own and leave the family of origin. Within Mr. X's family the father was married and started a family of his own by age 26. Consequently as Mr. X approached this age, he may have felt increasing pressure to start his own family system. However the system did not allow him to move on. As can be seen from the genogram, in the second generation of children, the adult children appear to distance themselves emotionally from the nuclear family of origin when they form their own families. This can be seen on the paternal side. Therefore if Mr. X had made plans to move out and start his own family, this may have presented a challenge to the homeostasis of the closed system and may have contributed towards increased anxiety within the system. Mr. X would have been in the ambivalent position of feeling pressure not to leave his family and pressure to start his own family. Often when a closed system's homeostasis is challenged,

a symptom presents itself (chapter 4). Mr. X's criminal behaviour as a symptom may have provided a necessary outlet for the system's anxiety that prevented the escalation of anxiety beyond the capacity of the system, as well as a means to manage his ambivalent position within the system. Once this symptom provided positive feedback to the system with regards to managing the levels of anxiety and homeostasis, it may have become a strategy that was used more often by the system in order to achieve these ends. Mr. X reports that whenever he tried to leave home, his stepmother would stop him. In this way, Mr. X's criminal behaviour may be seen as a technique used by the system at times when the homeostasis of the family became threatened or when anxiety escalated. Additionally Mr. X's criminal behaviour in the form of entering other people's homes or lives may reflect a testing of the boundaries of his own system, and the extent to which his own system would be flexible enough to permit such movement.

Category five: relational patterns and triads

Relational patterns

A relational pattern that presented itself in Mr. X's family was same sex conflict. He reports to have constantly fought with his brothers to the extent that he didn't speak to his brother Abel for six years.

Triads

A number of relationship triads are evident in the genogram of Mr. X. The most significant of which are:

Sibling triad of Mr. X and his sister against their biological mother

There existed cross sex triad between Mr. X, his sister Mary, and later on with his sister Natalie against the other brothers.

In-law triad between Mr. X's father, stepmother and grandmother

Relationship triads outside the family

In the first significant triad Mr. X and his sister joined together for their survival. This triad is characterised by a close relationship between him and his sister and a distant relationship with their biological mother when she neglected to take proper care of them.

In the second triad Mr. X joined forces with two of his sisters, Mary and Elizabeth against his brothers. He reports to have had a conflictual relationship with his brothers.

In the third triad Mr. X's father and stepmother seemed to have coupled together distancing the grandmother. This triad made possible the existence of a closed family system in Mr. X's family. It involved the isolation of outside members from the family system and an enmeshment of the family system. The enmeshment can be seen in the way family members struggle to leave home and start their own lives. Even though some of Mr. X's siblings did marry, they still remained living in the parent's home even with their spouses and children. Such a closed boundary made it impossible for the marriages to survive in a healthy way and therefore Mr. X's siblings got divorced, broke up with their partners, or lost their children to death.

The fourth triad involved a relationship with a friend and his family who lived on the same property as Mr. X. Although Mr. X's family was particularly closed, there was one family system that featured on the genogram. This belonged to Mr. X's friend who lived with his wife and nine year old daughter. Mr. X reports to have enjoyed a close relationship with this friend's family and their daughter who was his goddaughter and his only close friend. He claims that she understood him when no other woman could. This expresses concern for the researcher in the sense that it is unnatural for an adult man to call a nine-year-old child his only true friend. A dysfunctional relational pattern is described here, which indicates the level of maturity of Mr. X as well as his dysfunctional role repertoire.

Category six: family balance and imbalance

- Family structure
- Roles
- Level and style of functioning

This section discusses the extent to which the genogram appears to have certain aspects represented in unequal proportions. It describes the ways in which the family may be balanced or imbalanced in certain areas and the functions served by each. The discussion will discuss imbalances in four main areas, namely: structure, roles, level and style of functioning, and resources.

Family structure

Not much information is known about the Mr. X's parent's family structure. There seems to have been a cut-off relationship in Mr. X's family, which one can speculate resulted after the divorce and remarriage.

One imbalance evident from the genogram involves the spousal relationships within the family system. There seems to be no evidence of divorce in the first generation of spouses, yet in the second generation both parents have been divorced and remarried. This difference in marital relationships could have contributed to the emotional cutting-off of Mr. X's parents from his grandmother. This could have sent the message that when any change occurs the remarried family should distance itself from others in the family system. This could explain Mr. X withdrawal from his family at the time when his sister Mary died.

Roles

Mr. X's father seems to have performed the over responsible role of a father who first married an under-responsible alcoholic woman. Their mutual needs of the father and mother stabilised and balanced the first family of Mr. X. In

the remarried family both parents seemed to have had a desire to keep the family closely connected. This could have been the reason for the difficulty in the launching phase with the children's inability to leave home, as well as their struggle with alcohol, drugs, and the law. By the children staying home, the needs of the parents to be caretakers were fulfilled.

Level and style of functioning

The genogram data reveals the following imbalances in these areas:

- Emotional style
- Over and under functioning
- Success and failure

With regard to emotional style Mr. X was isolated and distant. He reacted to disappointment with violence and drug addiction. His parents did little to reform him, as their emotional style was passive and distant. This under-functioning in his family emotional relationships would explain his confusion and inability to deal with emotional conflicts and aspects in interpersonal functioning outside of the family system.

Within the family system, women have been seen as dispensable, given the separation of Mr. X from his mother and the death of his sister, as well as the death of his close female friend. This may explain Mr. X's treatment of female children in his criminal behaviour. Mr. X being extremely young when losing the close female relationships could explain why he chose children as his victims, as he could identify with their weakness and vulnerability.

Summary

The genogram interview elicited various events in the family that could have had circular causality. Such events include being separated from his birth mother, and placed in an orphanage, losing his biological sister by witnessing

her death, his father's remarriage and inheriting four new siblings. He further lost his best friend to suicide and had two failed intimate relationships.

The impact of being separated from his birth mother created a tendency in Mr. X to depend on his sister for support, as she was his only family member available to him at the tender age of six. Such a dependency trait may have continued throughout his life preventing him from attaining autonomy and independence. Instead Mr. X might have developed a dysfunction in relation to value and honour human emotions (Kaslow, 1982). As such Mr. X struggled in intimate relationships and friendships making a healthy relationship impossible.

Healthy families encourage diversity amongst members and allows for each family member to grow and change, while maintaining their basic continuity. This encouragement helps to strengthen family relationships, acknowledge role performance and influence rules and boundaries. In Mr. X's family encouragement to grow and change was not allowed as Mr. X was never allowed to leave his parent's home and start a family or life of his own. Therefore the ability to assert oneself, express grief and joy, and contain and relieve anxiety was inhibited.

Being able to allow the development of autonomy and independence allows the family to conserve its basic identity even during periods of disruption. This conservation of identity was never possible in Mr. X's family, as they grew more and more enmeshed and inflexible with each disruption.

Healthy families also tend to have a network of relations outside the family (Becvar & Becvar, 1974). Mr. X can be seen to have tested the family in this area when he socialised and made new friends. However the need for the family to maintain the status quo always brought Mr. X back home leaving himself in social isolation and unable to pursue outside relations. Social isolation can be dangerous and is said to be an area where dysfunctional tendencies such as abuse can reside (Becvar & Becvar, 1974). Healthy families have a capacity for intimacy. Dysfunctional families seek control and

power (Becvar & Becvar, 1974). Mr X's family prevented him from reaching out and seeking intimacy, therefore he developed a pattern that was unsuccessful in achieving coherence and reaching out to others.

Communication is another area where families create either healthy or dysfunctional patterns. In healthy families communication is clear and congruent allowing family members to form flexible roles and boundaries. Dysfunctional families create chaos and rigid roles in individuals who are unable to assert themselves appropriately. In Mr. X's family the patterns of communication was paradoxical; distant yet enmeshed. Mr. X's parents distanced themselves when there were problems and at other times kept the family severely enmeshed and the system closed. This may have confused Mr. X who lacked the ability to make his own decisions outside the family thus creating anxiety too great for him to handle and developing criminal behaviour as a symptom to provide a necessary outlet for the system's anxiety. At the same time this symptom prevented the escalation of anxiety beyond the family and maintained Mr. X's position within the family system. This maintained the status quo of the family of Mr. X.

These events shaped Mr. X's family to fulfil dysfunctional roles and patterns, which ultimately created tension too great for the family to handle.

Repercussions of that tension swept through the entire family network impacting the lives of each family member, especially Mr. X who will spend the next 24 years of his life in a prison.

5.4.2 Participant Two: Mr. Y

Category one: family structure

- Nuclear family
- Sibling constellation
- Unusual structural configurations
- Summary of family structure

Nuclear family

The genogram interview of the family of Mr. Y takes a single-parent household form, consisting of his biological mother and three sons. The father moved to Rusty-Venter after the parents' divorce and Mr. X did not have much contact with him after the divorce. On the maternal side of the family there are five brothers and two sisters. On the paternal side there are four brothers. The maternal family seems to have been the predominating form in this family system. The paternal sides of the family system are cut-off and distant from each other with little interaction between Mr. X and his paternal family. Below follows a description of the genogram interview at each stage in the family life cycle.

Sibling Constellation

The genogram yielded the following information concerning the sibling position of the members of the single-parent family:

- Mr. X was the youngest of three children in the nuclear family, when his parents divorced.
- His father was the eldest of four children.
- His mother's sibling position is unknown.

Mr. Y's maternal grandfather and grandmother are deceased. He shared a close relationship with his grandfather whose death had a devastating impact on Mr. Y. He reports that his grandfather had a positive effect on his life as a motivator and mentor. According to Mr. Y his father is not close to anyone of his siblings and does not keep in contact with them anymore. Mr. Y reports that there was a time when his father visited his siblings but that changed a long time ago. Mr. Y reports that he was never close to anyone of his father's siblings. Mr. Y's father being the oldest of four sons may have developed a more assertive character and became a policeman. It is said by Tomman (1961) that a firstborn usually has drive and ambition and a sense of

responsibility. Father Y could not relate to Mr. Y's immature style and lack of ambition, which led to father Y cutting ties with Mr. Y when Mr. Y became rebellious during his teenage years. Mr. Y states that when he says that "my dad refused to take me to rehab because it was too much far for him and too far drive".

With reference to the mother's family, it would appear that mother Y shares a close relationship with her family and from whom she gets support. Her family is described as educated and successful, with Mr. Y being the "problem child". As stated above, Mr. Y was the youngest child in the nuclear family system and struggled to fulfil a mature role after his parents divorced. He reports to have a conflictual relationship with his brothers, as they were mature and responsible. Mr. Y experienced rejection at the time of the divorce. He struggled to adjust to life after the divorce of his parents. He retaliated by turning to crime to attract the attention of his parents. He believed that "if I was naughty then my parents might reconcile their relationship". His delinquency therefore served the symptom of trying to unite the family. When he was not successful his criminal activity served another function for him, a method of survival, financially and socially.

Mr. Y also struggled in intimate relationships and reports that he could not trust any woman. He reports that he was unfaithful to the women in his life. The traumatic events that he experienced at such a young age may have created in him a sense of hopelessness in life, happiness and trust. He seems not to have developed the interpersonal skills necessary to function in healthy relationships. As a result he resorted to crime to fulfil his needs. Mr. X's position as the youngest child may have also contributed towards a strong identification with younger children. His friendships may also have been affirmed by their strong attachments to their parents as well as considerable immaturity that both seem to have shared, young children being naturally close to their parents.

In terms of birth order, Mr. Y being the youngest child at the time was treated like the baby and was accustomed to be taken care off. According to

McGoldrick (1985), the youngest child may feel more carefree and less burdened by responsibility, and often has less respect for authority and convention. This description seems to aptly describe Mr. Y who became a rebel in his teenage years following his parent's divorce.

In terms of gender roles, Mr. Y seems to have been isolated from his older brothers and in fact had a conflictual relationship with both of his brothers.

In terms of distance in age Mr. Y and his brothers only two years apart from each other. They are not even a generation apart, yet it seems that there was a distance between them that could not be filled. The older brothers both shared common traits of responsibility and maturity that was lacking in Mr. Y, probably because being the youngest he was spoiled by his parents during the marriage. This favouritism may have created sibling rivalry, which created and maintained the distance and hostility between them. It is possible that Mr. Y may have struggled with readjustment after the divorce and subsequently could have developed a dysfunctional pattern of relating. This is seen in his attitude towards crime and disrespect towards other people and their belongings.

In terms of the family's program for him as a child, Mr. Y received unconditional love from both his parents before the divorce and rejection and isolation after it. His grandfather seemed to have fulfilled the only nurturing role but unfortunately he died shortly after Mr. Y was placed in his custody.

Unusual Family Configurations

The genogram demonstrates one unusual family configuration in Mr. Y's family, the struggle of parents to accommodate rebellion in children. Mr. Y experienced rejection and isolation yet his attempt was to create the opposite effect. This indicates a pattern of dysfunction by either a severe fear of separation or enmeshment. In his case his fear of separation was realised.

Category Two: Life cycle fit

The genogram interview revealed the following significant areas in the life cycle of the family system, namely separation and death.

Separation and death

The genogram appears to reveal activity in the family system on separation and death:

- The separation of Mr. Y's parents through divorce
- The death of Mr. Y's grandfather

Losing his grandfather may have impacted Mr. Y profoundly with respect to receiving unconditional positive regard. The death of Mr. Y's grandfather developed a struggle for him to adjust in a healthy way. He subsequently withdrew from the family and turned to crime and violence. Mr. Y's parents struggled to face the challenge of losing their marriage and caring for a rebellious child. Therefore they sent him to his grandfather so he could be rehabilitated. The difficulty of dealing with the divorce and loss of his family unit as he knew it may have contributed to Mr. Y's isolation from his family. He could have felt that the people with whom he shared common bonds and background are no longer there. Furthermore he could have felt that he cannot speak to anyone else about it, which in turn increased his frustration and anger, and resentment at being left alone.

Intimate relationships

In terms of life cycle events, the capacity to develop intimate relationships, and leave the nuclear family system to form one's own nuclear family unit is important within a family system and is an indication of a healthy family system. In this light, two problematic areas emerge in the family system of Mr. Y:

Mr. Y's inability to form healthy intimate relationships

Mr. Y's inability to accept his parents' divorce

Mr. Y had experienced one intimate relationship in his life. However he reports that this relationship was a failure because the woman called the police to get him arrested for his criminal activity. As a result Mr. Y ended the relationship and decided that women are not to be trusted. This pattern fulfils the paradox Mr. Y has created for his life that firstly he needs women in his life to fill the gap of his mother not being available to care for him and secondly women will always leave him. Considering Mr. Y's difficulty forming intimate relationships and his attitude towards women leaving him indicates a certain attitude towards women that seems to have had an absence of emotional loss. Both of these aspects may explain Mr. Y's tendency to want to exclude emotional relationships outside of the family system and thus a tendency towards aggressive and violent behaviour.

Category three: pattern repetition across generations

- Patterns of functioning
- Patterns of relationships

Patterns of functioning

In terms of patterns of functioning, the genogram demonstrates the following patterns being repeated across generations in the family system:

- Emotional distance and cutting off as a means of dealing with problems
- Diminished coping skills with stress and anxiety
- Trouble with the law
- Addictive behaviour

It would appear that in Mr. Y's family the entire family system tends to deal with problems by distancing themselves from the family. This pattern of

avoidance is repeated in both generations of Mr. Y as well as his father. In the parent's generations, Mr. Y's father distanced himself from his brothers for an unknown reason. In Mr. Y's generation he avoids speaking about his feelings to anyone and resorts to crime and violence when the tension gets too much.

Patterns of relationships

With respect to patterns of relationships, there appears to be two significant patterns that are repeated across generations in the family system of Mr. Y. These are a close parent-child relationships prior to the divorce and emotional distance and isolation following the divorce. This indicates a difficulty with readjustment to new situations. This emotional distance seems to have been carried over to Mr. Y who is emotionally distant and cut-off in his relationships.

A child being cut-off from one's mother can have huge consequences for the child. It can be an experience that is overwhelming and difficult to adjust to. Such re-adjustment problems at this age set a trend for future re-adjustment problems as can be seen in Mr. Y's life. Having been separated from many people from a young age developed in him a fear of committing to and relating to others. It may have created considerable anxiety for Mr. Y who began isolating himself from others.

Category Four: life events and family functioning

- Coincidental events
- Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas
- Anniversary reactions

Coincidental events

Not much is known about coincidental events in Mr. Y's family, as Mr. Y reports that he didn't invest any time and effort to get along with his extended

family and therefore does not know about their lives. Furthermore he reports that his parents do not share information regarding the extended family.

- Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas

Mr. Y experienced the following transitions and traumas:

- Parents divorce at age 12
- Separated from birth mother at age 12 and placed with his grandfather
- Loss of grandfather

Critical periods and events in Mr. Y's life are likely to have left an emotional legacy for him who struggled to re-adjust to each new phase of his life. Aggressive behaviour in childhood is linked to delinquent and criminal behaviour in adolescence and adulthood (Campbell, 1995). The impact of individual characteristics such as being the youngest child, marital instability in the parent's relationship, and subsequent divorce are some of the characteristics that should be considered in Mr. Y's case when determining his delinquent tendencies and criminal behaviour. The above three characteristics are a powerful predictor of continuing aggression, contact with agencies known to deal with delinquents and substance abuse and criminal behaviour (Campbell, 1995). Juvenile crime is a source of concern and offenders with a past history of sustained aggression carry out a significant proportion of juvenile crime, as can be seen in Mr. Y's case with the police. Mr. Y was at risk of developing aggressive tendencies and criminal behaviour when one considers his early family experience, social adversity such as being placed in the care of his grandfather at a critical time in his development and his aggressive profile as a young child.

Anniversary reactions

There appears to be no anniversary reactions with respect to life stages.

Category five: relational patterns and triads

Relational patterns

A relational pattern that presented itself in Mr. Y's family was same sex conflict. He reports to have constant conflict with his brothers.

Triads

Two relationship triads are evident in the genogram of Mr. Y. The most significant of which are paternal family triad against maternal family triad and the cross sex triad between Mr. Y and his aunt Julia.

In the first significant triad Mr. Y's paternal and maternal family joined together after the divorce for support. This created tension and conflict between the two sides of the family.

In the second triad Mr. Y joined forces with his aunt Julia who seemed to be a positive influence in his life with respect to ambition and work.

Category six: family balance and imbalance

- Family structure
- Roles
- Level and style of functioning

This section discusses the extent to which the genogram appears to have certain aspects represented in unequal proportions. It describes the ways in which the family may be balanced or imbalanced in certain areas and the functions served by each. The discussion will discuss imbalances in four main areas, namely: structure, roles, level and style of functioning, and resources.

Family structure

Not much information is known about the spouse's family structure. There seems to have been a cut-off relationship in Mr. Y's paternal family, which one can speculate resulted after the divorce.

One imbalance evident from the genogram involves the spousal relationships within the family system. There seems to be no evidence of divorce in the first generation of spouses, yet in the second generation there has been divorce.

Roles

Mr. Y's father seems to have performed the responsible role of a father and Mr. Y's mother a responsible role of a mother. This balanced the family structure. When their mutual needs within the marriage were not being met unbalancing occurred within the family. Their roles shifted to exclude the spouse dyad. Mr. Y seemed to have had a desire to maintain the roles and thereby maintaining the family homeostasis and keeping the family closely connected. This could have been the function of the symptom of rebellion in the teenage phase.

Level and style of functioning

The genogram data reveals the following imbalances in these areas:

- Emotional style
- Over and under functioning
- Success and failure

With regard to emotional style Mr. Y was isolated and distant. He reacted to disappointment with violence and crime. His parents did little to reform him, as their emotional style was passive and distant. This under-functioning in his family emotional relationships would explain his confusion and inability to deal

with emotional conflicts and aspects in interpersonal functioning outside of the family system.

Mr. Y being extremely young when losing the close relationships could explain the link between his victim's age and the age at which he lost his security. He could possibly identify with their weakness and vulnerability.

Summary

The genogram interview elicited various events in the family that could have had circular causality. Mr. Y was experienced his parents' divorce and this event had a significant impact on him in relation to forming relationships with others and valuing life and property. Mr. Y resorted to robbery and crime to relieve his anxiety. He was further separated from his mother and brothers at age sixteen in order to reform his delinquent behaviour. Mr. Y had not yet adapted to the change of his family divorce when he faced his second major life change. These two traumatic events may have created in him a sense of hopelessness and distrust in life and people making him unable to appreciate life and property on the one hand. On another hand Mr. Y being very young during these incidents of separation may have developed a strong attachment to children having common feelings and natural attachments to their parents. Therefore resorting to murdering children would seem possible.

Mr. Y experienced rejection when his parents divorce and again when he was moved to his grandfather's house. Such rejection may have created in him disrespect for people and relationships, which may have contributed to his inability to form healthy relationships of his own.

Mr. Y further struggled to adjust to the death of his grandfather and again turned to violence and crime as a way of coping. These unhealthy ways continued throughout the next few years of his life possibly making Mr. Y feel more isolated and rejected as his anger and frustration increased.

Critical events shaped Mr. Y's family to fulfil dysfunctional roles and patterns, which ultimately created an emotional legacy for Mr. Y who struggled in each

new phase of his life. Repercussions of that struggle swept through the entire family network impacting the lives of each family member, especially Mr. Y who will spend the next 24 years of his life in a prison.

5.4.3 Participant Three: Ms. A

Category one: family structure

- Nuclear family
- Sibling constellation
- Unusual structural configurations
- Summary of family structure

Nuclear family

As can be seen in the genogram the family of Ms. A took the form of an intact nuclear family until her mother moved to Orkney to work. Then she and her brother moved to Carletonville with her mother. The household then took the form of a single-parent household, consisting of his biological mother and two children. The father remained with the older three sons in Potchefstroom. Even though Ms. A's parents did not divorce, they did not see each other often. Therefore Ms. A lost the close involvement that she once shared with her family. As a result she struggled to adjust to life in Orkney and was reportedly alone most of the time during her teenage years. Ms. A had four brothers, two older and two younger. She was the middle child. All three older brothers died of different reasons, and her youngest brother is still alive. She reports that she has not seen him since she was incarcerated but that she is very concerned about him.

Sibling Constellation

The genogram interview yielded the following information concerning the sibling position of the members of the intact nuclear family:

Ms. A was the third and middle child and only daughter of five children in the nuclear family.

Her father was the eldest of two children.

Her mother's sibling position is unknown.

Ms. A's maternal and paternal grandparents are deceased. She shared a close relationship with her maternal aunt Nana. According to Ms. A she had a conflictual relationship with her brother Charles but still cares about him very much. Ms. A's father was not close to anyone of his family members and does not keep in contact with them anymore. Ms. A. reports that there was never a time when she had good relationships with any extended family member. Ms. A's father being the oldest of two of two sons may have developed a more assertive character whilst his wife was a passive woman. As result he was physically abusive to all the children and the mother could not defend the children. This could be one of the reasons that contributed to her moving to Orkney taking two children with her. Her interpersonal style may have been an isolating one. It is not known why she left the three sons behind. Ms A believes her mother to be a weak woman for not being able to protect them against her father.

As a result of her mother's seemingly inability to protect her children Ms. A may have developed a pattern of thinking that excluded emotional response. She may have decided to protect herself at all costs because she did not feel protected by others. Her child's father rejected Ms. A and her child and this may have further confirmed her rationale of having to fend for herself and her child at all costs, even to the death. This created a dysfunctional pattern of thinking that perpetuated Ms. A's actions towards her daughter. In Ms. A's family the men were never challenged about their behaviour and so she grew up with the same dysfunctional pattern of relating to her brother so that even though he rejected her daughter she did not blame him. Instead she murdered her 12-year-old daughter to please her brother.

With reference to the mother's family, it would appear that mother A shared a close relationship with her family from whom she got support.

As stated above, Ms. A was the middle child in the nuclear family system and struggled to find a role in which to belong in the family. She struggled to be noticed. The conflicts between her mother and father and herself and her brother created in her a feeling of rejection, which she struggled to deal with. She then turned to crime to attract the attention of her family and her especially her brother, whom being the youngest could have shared a favourite position in the family. She believed that if he realised what she did for him, then maybe their relationship would improve. Her actions served the symptom of trying to attract the attention of the family so she might find identity and acceptance.

Ms. A also struggled in intimate relationships and reports that the partners she had could not take care of her. Maybe she felt that they did not notice her.

In terms of gender roles, Ms. A seems to have been part of a family that isolated females and one in which males dominated.

In terms of distance in age Ms. A and her brothers shared a two-year gap between the two oldest children. There was a seven-year gap between Ms. A and her second brother. Thereafter there was a one-year gap between Ms. A, Rusty and Charles. With respect to distance in age between siblings a gap that is five years or more signifies a distance of a generation between siblings that creates emotional cutting –off, and emotional attachment in families where dysfunctional patterns prevail. Therefore Ms. A could have been cut off from her older two brothers, and since she was separated from Rusty and shared a conflictual relationship with Charles Ms A lived a life without any good sibling relationship. His parents probably spoilt Charles being the youngest during the marriage. This favouritism may have created sibling rivalry, between Ms. A and Charles, which created and maintained the distance and conflict between them. It is possible that Ms. A. may have also struggled with readjustment after the move to Orkney and subsequently

developed a dysfunctional pattern of relating. This is seen in her attitude towards crime and lack of insight and judgement towards her actions.

In terms of the family's program for her as a child Ms. A was unnoticed and unattended to throughout her life. Neither her father nor her mother fulfilled nurturing roles. This being the case, Ms. A had no proper role models to follow and use in her role as a mother. It would seem possible that such dysfunctional patterns of relating carried over to her own experience of motherhood, which made the killing of her daughter possible.

Unusual Family Configurations

The genogram demonstrates one unusual family configuration in Mr. Y's family, the struggle of parents to protect children. Ms. A experienced rejection, isolation and abuse in her childhood, which she wanted to prevent her daughter from experiencing. However the double bind that she created for herself eventually repeated the same pattern she experienced.

Category Two: Life cycle fit

The genogram interview revealed the following significant areas in the life cycle of the family system, namely separation and death.

Separation and death

The genogram appears to reveals activity in the family system on separation and death:

- The separation of the Ms. A's parents and children
- The death of Ms. A's mother, three brothers and her daughter

Intimate relationships

In terms of life cycle events, the capacity to develop intimate relationships, and leave the nuclear family system to form one's own nuclear family unit is important within a family system and is an indication of a healthy family system. In this light, two problematic areas emerge in the family system of Ms.

A:

- Ms. A's inability to form healthy intimate relationships
- Ms. A's inability to accept herself unconditionally

Ms. A had experienced one intimate relationship in her life. However she reports that the relationship was a failure because her partner could not take care of her and her daughter. As a result Ms. A ended the relationship and decided that men cannot be trusted. She developed an absence of emotional loss towards death and separation that may explain her tendency to want to exclude emotional relationships and thus a tendency towards aggressive and violent behaviour.

Category three: pattern repetition across generations

- Patterns of functioning
- Patterns of relationships

Patterns of functioning

In terms of patterns of functioning, the genogram demonstrates the following patterns being repeated across generations in the family system:

- Emotional distance and cutting off as a means of dealing with problems
- Diminished coping skills
- Trouble with the law
- Addictive behaviour

It would appear that in Ms. A's family the entire family system tends to deal with problems by distancing themselves from the family. This pattern of avoidance leads them to dysfunctional solutions. Ms. A. resorted to an extreme measure such as crime and violence when the tension got too much for her.

Patterns of relationships

With respect to patterns of relationships, there appears to be one significant pattern that is repeated across generations in the family system of Ms. A. This distant parent-child relationship leads to emotional distance and isolation as a way of coping in adulthood. This emotional distance seems to have been carried over to Ms. A, who was emotionally distant and cut-off from her daughter.

A child being cut-off from his or her parent can have huge consequences for the child. It can be an experience that is overwhelming and difficult to adjust to. Such re-adjustment problems at this age set a trend for future re-adjustment problems as can be seen in Ms. A's life. Having been separated from many people at a young age developed in her a fear of committing to and relating to others. It may have created considerable anxiety for Ms. A, who began isolating himself from others especially when the tension grew too intense.

Category Four: life events and family functioning

- Coincidental events
- Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas
- Anniversary reactions

Coincidental events

Not much is known about coincidental events in Ms. A's family, as Ms. A reports that she didn't invest any time and effort to get along with her extended family and therefore does not know about their lives. Furthermore she reports that her parents do not share information regarding the extended family.

Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas

The traumatic events that she experienced at a young age may have created in her a sense of hopelessness in life, happiness and trust. She seems not to have developed the interpersonal skills necessary to function in healthy relationships. As a result she resorted to crime to fulfil her needs. Ms. A's position as the middle child may have also contributed towards a strong lack of confidence and belief in herself. Her friendships may also have been superficial and disconfirming

Ms. A experienced the following transitions and traumas:

- Separated from her intact nuclear family
- Raped when she was eight years old
- Death of her mother and three brothers

Critical periods and events in Ms. A's life are likely to have left an emotional legacy for her who struggled to re-adjust to each new phase of her life. Exposure to aggressive behaviour in childhood is linked to delinquent and criminal behaviour in adolescence and adulthood (Campbell, 1995). The impact of individual characteristics such as being the middle child, marital instability in the parents relationship, and subsequent relationship failures in her own life are some of the characteristics that should be considered in Ms. A's case when determining her violent tendencies and criminal behaviour. The above three characteristics are a powerful predictor of continuing aggression, contact with agencies known to deal with delinquents and substance abuse and criminal behaviour (Campbell, 1995). Ms. A was at risk of developing

aggressive tendencies and criminal behaviour when one considers her early family experience, personal trauma and social adversity such as being removed from her family home.

Anniversary reactions

There appears to be no anniversary reaction with respect to the life events and family functioning.

Category five: relational patterns and triads

Relational patterns

A relational pattern that presented itself in Ms. A's family was same opposite sex conflict. She reports to have constant conflict with her brother.

Triads

Two relationship triads are evident in the genogram of Mr. Y. The most significant of which are:

Father and the two sons triad against mother and daughter son triad

Mother daughter triad against father son triad

In the first significant triad Ms. A's mother left the family home with only two children creating a triad with the two children against those left behind. In the second triad Ms. A and her mother had to stand together against her father and brother Charles's aggressive behaviour towards them. This created tension and conflict within the family.

In the second triad Mr. Y joined forces with his aunt Julia who seemed to be a positive influence in his life with respect to doing schoolwork.

Category six: family balance and imbalance

- Family structure

- Roles
- Level and style of functioning

This section discusses the extent to which the genogram appears to have certain aspects represented in unequal proportions. It describes the ways in which the family may be balanced or imbalanced in certain areas and the functions served by each. The discussion will discuss imbalances in four main areas, namely: structure, roles, level and style of functioning, and resources.

Family structure

Ms. A 's paternal family was small in comparison to her maternal family. Her father had only one brother who died when he was young. Her mother's family had five children. There seems to have been distance in the relationships with the extended family.

One imbalance evident from the genogram involves the spousal family structure. Paternal family is small and maternal family large. This could have created a difficulty within the spouses to adjust to the difference in family structure. This could have created tension and could not be controlled. Therefore one way of dealing with such anxiety was for the mother to separate. Since divorce is not evident as a way of solving such a problem Ms. A's mother did the only solution she could think off. This displays an inflexible decision making process.

Roles

Ms. A's father seems to have performed the role of a father and Ms. A's mother a role of a mother even though they did not live in the same house. This balanced the family structure. When their mutual needs within the marriage were not being met unbalancing occurred within the family. Ms. A seemed to have had a desire to keep the family closely connected but could not succeed.

Level and style of functioning

The genogram data reveals the following imbalances in these areas:

- Emotional style
- Over and under functioning
- Success and failure

With regard to emotional style Ms. A was isolated and distant. She reacted to disappointment with violence and crime. Her mother did little to accommodate her feelings of inadequacy and rejection, as her emotional style was passive and distant. This under-functioning in her family and emotional relationships would explain her confusion and inability to deal with emotional conflicts and aspects in interpersonal functioning outside of the family system and within.

Ms. A being extremely young when losing the close relationships could explain the link between her victim's age and the age at which she lost her security. She could possibly identify with their weakness and vulnerability.

Summary

The genogram interview elicited various events in the family that could have had circular causality.

Events shaped Ms. A's family to fulfil dysfunctional roles and patterns, which ultimately created tension too great for the family to handle. Repercussions of that tension swept through the entire family network impacting the lives of each family member, especially Ms. A. who will spend the next 17 years of her life in a prison.

5.4.4 Participant Four: Ms. B

Category one: family structure

- Nuclear family
- Sibling constellation
- Unusual structural configurations
- Summary of family structure

Nuclear family

As can be seen in the genogram the family of Ms. B takes the form of an intact-nuclear family, consisting of his biological mother, stepfather and one child. The biological was absent until Ms. B was 12 years old. She found out about him from her grandmother. On the maternal side of the family there are two brothers and three sisters. The paternal side of the family is unknown. The maternal family seems to have been the predominating form in this family system. The paternal sides of the family system are cut-off and distant from each other with little interaction between Ms. B and her paternal family. Below follows a description of the genogram interview at each stage in the family life cycle.

Sibling Constellation

The genogram yielded the following information concerning the sibling position of the members of the single-parent family:

Mr. X was the eldest of two children in the nuclear family.

Her mother was the eldest of five children.

His father's sibling position is unknown.

Ms. B's maternal grandfather is alive and divorced from her grandmother. Her grandmother is still alive and shares a close relationship with Ms. B. She shared a distant relationship with her grandfather. According to Ms. B her

mother and grandmother have a conflictual relationship. Ms. B was taken care of by her mother and grandmother. There seems to have been a power struggle between the mother and grandmother to care for Ms. B.

With reference to the mother's family, it would appear that mother B shares a distant relationship with her family from. Ms. B and her mother shared the same sibling position as first-born.

Ms. B's uncle physically abused her uncle when she was staying at her grandmother's house. He reports to have a conflictual relationship with him. Ms. B experienced rejection at the time when she discovered that the man she thought was her father was not her biological father. She said "I was heartbroken". She struggled to adjust to living with her parents thereafter and moved to her grandmother's house. She then resorted to promiscuous behaviour and had her own child at the age of 15 years. Her violent actions served the symptom of trying to unite the family. When he was not successful his criminal activity served another function for him, a method of survival, financially and socially.

Ms. B struggled in intimate relationships and this struggle served the function of keeping her mother and grandmother in contact with each other. In that way she united the family and maintained the homeostasis. She experienced abuse from her uncle at a very young age and that may have created in her a sense of hopelessness in life, happiness and trust. She seems not to have developed the interpersonal skills necessary to function in healthy relationships. As a result she resorted to crime to fulfil her needs.

In terms of birth order, Ms. B being the eldest child was also 15 years older than her sister. There was a large generation gap between them that made Ms. B treat her sister like her own child and not as a sister. Ms. B thus grew up as an only child. According to McGoldrick (1985), the only child may grow up quite isolated. An only child lives primarily in the presence of older people and as a result may feel close attachments to their parents. Ms. B struggled to adjust to life after she left her the family home and moved into her

grandmother's home. The separation from her parents had a devastating impact on her, which resorted to promiscuous behaviour in order to cope. She became carefree and less burdened by responsibility, and often has less respect for authority and convention.

In terms of the family's program for him as a child, Ms. B received unconditional love from both parent until she was 12 years old and rejection and isolation after it.

Unusual Family Configurations

The genogram demonstrates one unusual family configuration in Ms. B family, the absence of men in the family. It seems that the grandfather, father and boyfriend of Ms. B were separated either through death or divorce. The rejection and isolation experienced by Ms. B in her childhood created a pattern of dysfunction by a severe fear of separation in adulthood. In his case her fear of separation was realised.

Category Two: Life cycle fit

The genogram interview revealed the following significant areas in the life cycle of the family system, namely separation and death.

Separation and death

The genogram appears to reveals activity in the family system on separation and death:

- The separation of the Ms. B from her parents at the age of twelve
- The death of her stepfather

Losing his father may have impacted Ms. B profoundly with respect to receiving unconditional positive regard from him. Then when she found out that he was not her biological father, she resented him. Shortly after that he

died of a heart attack. Her father's death created feelings of guilt for Ms. B who excluded him from her life.

Intimate relationships

In terms of life cycle events, the capacity to develop intimate relationships, and leave the nuclear family system to form one's own nuclear family unit is important within a family system and is an indication of a healthy family system. In this light Ms. B experienced the following:

An inability to form healthy intimate relationships

Difficulty with self-trust and self-acceptance

Ms. B had experienced two intimate relationships in her life. However she reports both relationships were failures.

Category three: pattern repetition across generations

- Patterns of functioning
- Patterns of relationships

Patterns of functioning

In terms of patterns of functioning, the genogram demonstrates the following patterns being repeated across generations in the family system:

Emotional distance and cutting off as a means of dealing with problems

Diminished coping skills with stress and anxiety

Trouble with the law

It would appear that in Ms. B's family the entire family system tends to deal with problems by distancing themselves from the family. This pattern of avoidance is repeated in both generations of Ms. B as well as her father. In the parent's generations, mother B and grandmother B distanced themselves from each other after the grandmother told Ms. B about her biological father.

In Ms. B's generation she gets triangulated in the problems between both females. As a result she gets confused because she does not know who to side with, as she cannot trust her own judgement. Thus she avoids speaking about her feelings and resorts to alcohol when the tension gets too much.

Patterns of relationships

With respect to patterns of relationships, there appears to be two significant patterns that are repeated across generations in the family system of Ms. B. These are a close parent-child relationship prior to separation and emotional distance and isolation following the separation. This indicates a difficulty with readjustment to new situations. This emotional distance seems to have been carried over to Ms. B who is emotionally distant and cut-off from her own family.

A child being cut-off from one's mother can have huge consequences for the child. It can be an experience that is overwhelming and difficult to adjust to. Such re-adjustment problems at this age set a trend for future re-adjustment problems as can be seen in Mr. Y's life. Having been separated from many people from a young age developed in him a fear of committing to and relating to others. It may have created considerable anxiety for Mr. Y who began isolating himself from others.

Category Four: life events and family functioning

- Coincidental events
- Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas
- Anniversary reactions

Coincidental events

Not much is known about coincidental events in Ms. B's family, except that both she and her mother had their first child at age 15.

Impact of life changes, transitions and traumas

Ms. B experienced the following transitions and traumas:

- Found out about biological father at age 12
- Separated from birth mother and step father at age 12 and placed with his grandmother
- Loss of stepfather at age 12
- Physical abuse by her uncle from age 12 to age 16

Critical periods and events in Ms. B's life are likely to have left an emotional legacy for her who struggled to re-adjust to each new phase of his life. Exposure to aggressive behaviour in childhood is linked to delinquent and criminal behaviour in adolescence and adulthood (Campbell, 1995). The impact of abuse at the hands of her uncle further added to her traumatic experiences. The above four characteristics are a powerful predictor of continuing aggression, contact with agencies known to deal with delinquents and substance abuse and criminal behaviour (Campbell, 1995). Ms. B was at risk of developing aggressive tendencies and criminal behaviour when one considers her early experiences, social adversity such as being placed in the care of his grandmother, and abuse by her uncle.

Anniversary reactions

There appears to be no anniversary reactions with respect to life stages.

Category five: relational patterns and triads

Relational patterns

A relational pattern that presented itself in Ms. B's family was mother-daughter conflict. This can be seen in both generations of Ms. B and her mother and her mother and her grandmother. She was triangulated into the

mother-daughter triad in order to form a coalition with the grandmother against her mother.

Triads

Two relationship triads are evident in the genogram of Mr. Y. The most significant of which are:

Mother-daughter-granddaughter triad

This created tension and confusion for Ms. B who subsequently isolated herself from both women.

Category six: family balance and imbalance

- Family structure
- Roles
- Level and style of functioning

This section discusses the extent to which the genogram appears to have certain aspects represented in unequal proportions. It describes the ways in which the family may be balanced or imbalanced in certain areas and the functions served by each. The discussion will discuss imbalances in four main areas, namely: structure, roles, level and style of functioning, and resources.

Family structure

Not much information is known about the father family structure. There seems to have been a cut-off relationship in Ms. B's paternal family. In Ms' B's maternal family there is emotional distance and isolation.

Roles

Ms. B father seemed to have performed the responsible role of a father and Ms. B's mother a responsible role of a mother until she was 12 years old. This balanced the family structure until then. When their balance was disrupted unbalancing occurred within the family. Ms. B seemed to have had a desire to keep the family closely connected but was prevented from doing so by her grandmother. This could have been the reason for the symptomatic presentation of difficult behaviour and bad choice in partners, which forced the family to unite.

Level and style of functioning

The genogram data reveals the following imbalances in these areas:

- Emotional style
- Success and failure

With regard to emotional style Ms. B was isolated and distant. She reacted to disappointment with violence and crime. Her family did little to reform her, as their emotional style was often resulted in family conflict and subsequent isolation from each other. This under-functioning in his family emotional relationships would explain his confusion and inability to deal with emotional conflicts and aspects in interpersonal functioning outside of the family system.

Summary

The genogram interview elicited various events in the family that could have had circular causality. Events shaped Ms. B's family to fulfil dysfunctional roles and patterns, which ultimately created tension too great for the family to handle. Repercussions of that tension swept through the entire family network impacting the lives of each family member, especially Ms. B who will spend the next 18 years of her life in a prison.

This concludes the data interpretation and analysis. Each of the four participants family and social environment was analysed and interpreted in order to understand the systemic processes involved in their lives.

Chapter six will discuss the thematic analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Six

6. Thematic analysis, Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

6.1 Introduction

To recapture, the focus of the study was to analyse the family systems of child murderers. To achieve this the researcher drew genogram interpretations of each of the four participants by interviewing and analysing the information obtained from the genogram interview, then extracted prominent and significant themes from all four participants life stories.

The questions that the researcher asked regarding the families of the child murderers were: what is the family structure? Who are the people in the family system, and how do they maintain the family system?

This chapter will critically discuss the findings in terms of common themes and then make recommendations for future work. The four participants from chapter five will be compared and contrasted with respective themes and similarities and differences that emerged in the genogram.

6.2 Thematic Analysis

The interviews elicited the following common and significant themes amongst the four participants:

- Separation from parents or caregivers through either death, divorce or for employment reasons
- Rejection of children by parents and caregivers
- Abuse and neglect in childhood
- Addiction to substances as a means of coping.

Theme 1: Separation of children from parents and caregivers

The separation of young children from parents and caregivers seems to have a profound impact on the regulation of moral behaviours and respect for human life (Amato, 2004). Separation of a child from a parent or caregiver involves a temporary crisis that most people gradually adapt to. However in perpetrators of violence it has been shown that adaptation is severely limited resulting in reactions that go against the norms of humanity, which is to protect and respect human life (Amato, 2004). In each of the four participants there was a degree of separation from the parents or caregivers at a very young age. Such separation may have impacted on their ability to adjust to future changes and traumas in healthy ways.

Mr. X was separated from his birth mother at age six and was placed in an orphanage, until age eleven. He was then placed in the custody of his father. When he was fourteen years old he was separated from his sister who died an unnatural death. Mr. X struggled to adjust to each case of separation, which created in him a fear of commitment in later adult relationships. In each instance Mr. X experienced a temporary crisis that he could not adapt to in a healthy way. He developed dysfunctional patterns of coping that created moral and legal consequences.

In terms of participant 2, Mr Y was separated from both his parents when they divorced and was placed in the custody of his grandfather. He was twelve years old at the time. At age 16 Mr. Y's grandfather passed away.

Ms. A was separated from her nuclear family home at the age of 12 when her mother moved for employment. She struggled to adjust to life in Orkney and she lost contact with her father and three of her five brothers. This impacted on her future ability to connect in healthy relationships.

Ms. B was separated from her parents and placed with her grandmother when she was 12 years old. She was told that the man she was living with was not her biological father. This news had a profound impact on Ms. B who

thereafter struggled to relate to her stepfather, mother and grandmother. As a result, this difficulty to relate to individuals progressed into adulthood and Ms. B struggled to form healthy lasting relationships outside her family.

Early separation seems to affect individuals who struggle to develop healthy adult relationships. They seem to develop a dysfunctional pattern of relating which impacts on emotional factors and subsequently the success of the relationships. The patterns that develop are, an inability to relate in a healthy way to intimacy, trust and appropriate emotions. Such patterns persist until the tension becomes too much to handle and explodes as a form of violent action, in this case towards children.

Separation seems to have the potential to create considerable turmoil in people's lives. Although people vary in their reactions those who experience a decrease in self-esteem and well-being develop patterns that they may never fully recover from. Therefore understanding the contingencies of separation and the diverse outcomes should be a priority for future research.

Theme 2: Rejection of children by parents and caregivers

Rejection at the hand of the parents or caregivers can have profound consequences for a child's future development (Paton, Crouch & Camic, 2009). Rejection increases one's risk for delinquency, adult criminal behaviours and violent criminal behaviours, which can be seen clearly in the participants (Paton, Crouch & Camic, 2009).

Mr. X felt rejected by his biological mother and by women in intimate relationships. As a result he failed to value and trust women. Mr. Y felt rejected by his parents after the divorce. He developed a negative attitude towards women and relationships. Ms. A was rejected by her father, brothers and by men in intimate relationships. This impacted her in a way that made her feel alone and unable to trust others. Ms. B was rejected by her biological father as well as by men in intimate relationships. She developed a

dysfunctional pattern of addressing her problems because she lacked good role models and support structures.

Theme 3: Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is associated with a variety of difficulties later in life such as justifying bad behaviour towards their own children and loved ones, risking physical attack, holding a distorted view of parent-child relationships (Wolfe, 1987) However, it is unclear to what extent these outcomes are related to the type and combinations of abuse (i.e., sexual versus physical), rather than the variable characteristics within each type. Severe physical abuse in childhood is associated with physical abuse in adulthood, as well as low-self esteem, depression and an understanding of intimacy, with people who were more severely abused showing worse outcomes.

It can be seen in Ms. A and Ms. B that the impact of physical and sexual abuse created dysfunction in the way they perceived their problems and in trying to find solutions. Ms. A killed her daughter to avoid fighting with her brother. This is one indication of the distorted view of parent-child relationships, mentioned above.

Ms. B killed both her children due to problems with her partner. Here depression as a symptom of early physical abuse is played out.

His birth mother neglected Mr. X. As a result he grew to hate her and distrust other women in his life. He developed a self-fulfilling prophecy that all women are bad. Mr. X had a lack of understanding of intimate relationships, which could have been a result of early childhood neglect.

Mr. Y felt neglected after his parent's divorce, when they sent him to live with his grandfather. As a result he grew up with low self-esteem and lack of respect for people and property.

As pointed out in chapter 2, the combination of a physical predisposition and environmental stressors can develop a pattern of maladjustment to an individual's sense of self and maladjustment to society. If this is indeed the case, then one can argue that all four participants had both the physical predisposition as well as environmental stressors that could account for their maladjustment to self and society.

Theme 4: Addiction to substances as a means of coping

Abuse of alcohol and drugs predisposes an individual to subsequent violent behaviours. All four participants resorted to alcohol or drugs as a means of coping with bad situations. Mr. X used alcohol and marijuana to help him forget his sister's death. Mr. Y used alcohol to cope with losing his intact nuclear family. Ms. A. used alcohol to cope with life stressors that she could not deal with, such as finding out about her stepfather and being in the middle of the fight between her mother and grandmother. Ms. B used alcohol to help her move away from her abusive relationship. All four participants used substances in a way that created dysfunctionality.

6.3 Limitations of the study

Collateral information from family and the media was not possible to obtain. This therefore limits the researcher's initial aim of obtaining collateral information to substantiate each case. This is an indication of the difficulty of addressing child murder from a family systems perspective.

Secondly with regards to the data analysis another researcher might have found different themes informed by their own backgrounds and understanding.

6.4 Conclusion

Each of the four participants had similar circumstances in terms of life experiences, abuse or neglect, separation from their nuclear families and

abuse of alcohol or drugs. As a result of the above family experiences each participant learnt to relate in dysfunctional ways to relationships and situations. For example:

All four participants seemed to show poor problem solving ability. They resorted to violence, drugs, alcohol, and murder as ways of coping. They also showed an inability to take responsibility for their actions and continued to see things in dysfunctional ways.

The participants seem to have a strong need to have their stories heard and as such willingly participated in the interviews in a cooperative way.

As mentioned in chapter five healthy families encourage diversity amongst members and allow for each family member to grow and change, while maintaining their basic continuity. The participants in this research did not come from healthy families that foster growth and encouragement. As a result they lacked the strength and means to grow and change: the ability to assert oneself, express grief and joy, and contain and relieve anxiety was inhibited.

This together with a poor education is some of the characteristics that the participants share with each other that may have contributed to their actions towards children. This dissertation merely scrapes the surface with regard to uncovering the aspects involved in child murders and how these are linked to systemic processes. In one sense, this is the very nature of systems. Systems are layered in terms of complexity, depending on the level one chooses to observe (Preininger, 2007).

Furthermore each system is unique and perceived differently by each person involved. It is therefore impossible for the researcher to suggest that the above discussion holds the key to understanding the perpetrators of child murders. What the research does provide is an alternative perspective on child murders and how this research could be seen as an extension of preceding research, thereby adding to a host of useful insights.

Child murderers form part of a system of interactions that take place in society and in families. As with all forms of communicative behaviour, certain meanings are ascribed to certain interactions that take place between people and thereby learning takes place. All people including child murderers continuously negotiate new ways of relating to significant people and experiences and thereby form their perceptions and views of the world in the process. The family systems of child murderers also form a significant part of their development and therefore have a significant role to play in the development of their aggressive tendencies.

The participants in this research were not chosen according to particular difficulties or struggles they may have encountered within their families. They were selected to provide a more general understanding of their perceptions of their families and social systems and how child murders may form part of the systemic interactions in order to understand their actions through a family systems perspective.

The researcher observed the impact of her presence in the interview with each participant. Each of the four participants had a different reaction to the presence of the researcher. Mr. X was comfortable with the researcher and used the interview as a safe place to share his life experiences. Mr. Y was initially anxious and uncomfortable with the researcher and slowly progressed to a state where he could share his life story comfortably. Ms. A reluctant to participate in the research study and asked for time to decide whether or not to participate. Ms. B initially refused to participate in the research and also agreed after asking for time to decide.

Further to the researcher's impact on the participants, the researcher experienced her own anxieties with respect to the participant's impact on her. There was a level of anxiety during the interview, which came from hearing vivid descriptions of the life experiences of the participants and the descriptions of the crimes committed. The impact of these instances contributed to the research in ways that created and shaped the responses by the participants and gave meaning to the research study.

6.5 Recommendations

In terms of possible intervention strategies, a renegotiation process of the systems rules and boundaries within at risk families might be beneficial to at risk individuals. This renegotiation should possibly focus on the level of the system than on the individual, thereby considering what rules or boundaries need to be targeted to prevent violence towards children. For example, allowing family members to develop healthy patterns of leaving home at an appropriate stage and forming their own families.

Secondly making the covert (unspoken) rules overt (spoken) by allowing family members to form networks of relationships outside the family will foster a development of trust towards others and assist social groups in redefining their rule system. Such a redefinition of rules might reduce aggressive practices. Such interventions could possibly also empower the individuals within a system to establish better coping and prevention strategies, as they would become aware of the systemic dynamics at play in their own system.

Future research could focus on group interventions for families at risk, where the rules and patterns are brought to the fore and analysed and each member is provided with a greater understanding of the systemic processes at play in the group or family. This openness in communication will help develop clear and congruent patterns of communication between family members.

Furthermore, it may be useful to conduct further research to establish when aggression practices become part of an individual's pattern of relating, and when they become part of a typical process of social negotiation.

Interventions should take place in situations where an individual or families support system is broken down and in situations where psychological impact could be considerable.

Parents and caregivers should be educated or sensitised to the impact of assault and therapeutic measures available, in the form of psychological

services and these should be accessible to the individuals and families involved.

Understanding the contingencies of separation from parents and caregivers and the diverse outcomes for children should be a priority for future research, as separation seems to create considerable turmoil in people's lives, which creates difficulty in trying to adapt to each new phase of life. Future researchers may also want to collect data from a sample of individuals from different social, geographical, and ethnic backgrounds in order to compare differences and similarities across such variations.

South Africa has changed remarkably in the past 15 years with respect to its political history. This change has undoubtedly impacted on individuals and families and society. Given that the child murderer also forms part of this society the researcher is interested to examine the extent to which changes in the societal sub-systems may have impacted the child murderers role as part of the societal sub-system and as an individual within his or her own family system.

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