

CHAPTER 3

EXPLORING NARRATIVE PSYCHOLOGY'S APPLICATION TO RESEARCH INTO CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

The term 'narrative' is often used in qualitative research, but is seldom explicitly defined (Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach & Zilber, 1998). The Webster's Dictionary defines narrative as a "discourse...designed to represent a connected series of happenings" (1966, p. 1503). Lieblich *et al.* (1998) thus define 'narrative research' as any study that aims to analyse narratives in whatever form they may occur, for example, interviews or field notes. They note that narrative research has become an increasingly popular addition to the inventory of research methods over the last 15 years. This 'narrative revolution' has seen narrative concepts embedded in the theory, research, and application of disciplines as diverse as history, education and psychotherapy (Lieblich *et al.* 1998; Polkinghorne, 1988). This chapter will outline the theory of narrative psychology, before focusing on how narrative psychology and narrative research methods have been applied to the study of crime. It will also introduce narrative concepts that show particular potential to assist in the investigation of crime.

3.1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS NARRATIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

Narrative is one of the forms used to make human experience meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricouer, 1988). It is therefore fundamentally concerned with the study of the self and identity, seeking to gain insight into ourselves, others, and the human condition (Crossley, 2000). Before we can address how narrative psychology has sought to explore these issues in research, we need to gain an understanding of the epistemological and theoretical assumptions that inform a narrative approach and provide the reason for its existence.

3.1.1 Approaches to the study of self

Crossley's (2000) four-fold division of the previous approaches taken by the discipline of psychology in studying the self helps to delineate the theory of narrative psychology. The four major approaches to the study of the self are experimentally based social psychology, humanistic psychology, psychoanalytic/psychodynamic psychology and social constructivist approaches.

3.1.1.1 Experimental social psychology

Experimental social psychology studies the development of the self by studying the development and expression of behaviours which suggest that the person is able to identify themselves as a unique processor of information, that is, as possessing a unique self (Crossley, 2000). Kvale (1996) criticises this type of approach, which has its roots in J. B. Watson's experiments in the 1920's, on the grounds that it depends on observable behaviours in an experimental setting. This, he states, draws too heavily on the ideals of behaviourism which assume not only that universal laws of human behaviour can be discerned, but that these are best discovered in controlled laboratory conditions. Crossley (2000) continues that this encourages a 'shallow' definition of self as only that which can be observed, and so is unable to capture how people experience their identities and selves.

3.1.1.2 Humanistic psychology

Humanistic psychology avoids similar criticisms by focusing on the individual and the unique meanings they attribute to events and lives. This is reflected in the qualitative methods used by the humanist psychologists such as Abraham Maslow, George Kelly, and Carl Rogers (Crossley, 2000). The humanist and narrative perspectives share a belief in the importance of the individual's uniqueness and agency. They also share origins in the philosophy of phenomenology, which emphasises the experience and uniqueness of the individual. In particular, phenomenology calls attention to the role of an individual's meaning and experience in the self, and how this relates to behaviour. Phenomenological research seeks detailed qualitative descriptive accounts from individuals, aiming to represent the

essence of their experience as a wholeness, or *gestalt* (Moustakas, 1994). These philosophical roots are reflected in the ongoing debates around narrative research methodology. Humanistic psychology's emphasis on individual choice and agency in studying the self is however limited, as psychodynamic and social constructivist approaches point out.

3.1.1.3 Psychoanalytic/psychodynamic psychology

From the perspective of psychoanalytic/psychodynamic psychology, humanistic psychology places too much emphasis on conscious choice. There are a vast range of psychoanalytic/psychodynamic approaches, originating with practitioners such as Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein, but all share the emphasis on 'depth'. That is, psychodynamic perspectives place great store in the idea that a majority of our activities and behaviours are unconsciously motivated by hidden layers of our self (Crossley, 2000). While this model of the psyche is not shared by the narrative approach, this perspective shares narrative psychology's concern with the individual and with qualitative descriptions of their experience.

3.1.1.4 Social constructivist approaches

Crossley (2000) explains that social constructivist approaches to the study of the self arose as a challenge to many of the implicit assumptions of the above approaches. In particular, social constructivist approaches emphasise the interrelations between the self and social structures, especially between the self and language. Narrative psychology shares the label 'social constructivist' with approaches such as discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and postmodern research (Kvale, 1996).

In emphasising the role played by language and society in the creation of the individual self, social constructivist approaches challenge traditional 'realist' assumptions inherited from the natural sciences. These realist assumptions are contained in the other approaches to studying the self and assume that a single, objective, and universally valid reality can be discovered (Kvale, 1996; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1988). This implies that the self exists as an objective entity independent of language (Crossley, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Kvale (1996)

likens these assumptions to the perception that researchers can ‘mine’ out an objective nugget of meaning in the individual’s accounts that can be called their true self. Social constructivist approaches generally oppose this perception (although aspects of this philosophical debate are still reflected in philosophical and methodological tensions within narrative psychology). Instead, social constructivist approaches emphasise that language is crucial in the formation and structuring of the self (Del Fabbro, 2006; Crossley 2000; Hook, 2003). Social constructivist perspectives’ greater emphasis on the role played by language in creating and structuring the self is reflected in the central assumptions of the narrative approach.

3.1.2 The narrative approach to the study of the self

Narrative psychology proceeds from the assumption that human experience and behaviour are meaningful and thus understanding ourselves and others requires that we explore the systems and structures of meaning that make up our world. Narrative psychology states that one of the vehicles that we use to make our experience meaningful is language (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative psychology adopts the social constructivist stance that language is central in the formation and structuring of the self (Crossley, 2000). This stance opposes the ‘traditional’ natural scientific and empirical perspective that language is either irrelevant to our perception of reality, or is capable of objectively reflecting a universally valid external reality. Rather, this stance asserts that the operation of narrative organises our reality into meaningful wholes (Ricoeur, 1988), that is, language shapes our reality.

By claiming that when individuals use language they are constantly engaged in the process of self-creation, narrative psychology emphasises meaning and interpretation. By emphasising meaning and interpretation narrative psychology seeks to acknowledge some of fundamental features of the “order of meaning” that characterises human consciousness (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.4).

Polkinghorne (1988) finds that the human order of meaning is an activity, and thus fundamentally different to the orders of meaning employed by the natural sciences in the study of an object or substances. We create this uniquely human order of meaning by constantly engaging in the activity of interpreting, understanding, and reflecting on

our environment (Crossley, 2000). A personal narrative is part of this order a meaning; a story used by a person to synthesise the various parts of their lives into a coherent whole defined by the development of plot and character (Crossley, 2000). Individuals create themselves through narrative so that “our lives, and the lives of others will make sense” (McAdams, 1993, p.92).

Another implication of the human order of meaning that narrative psychology seeks to acknowledge is the relationship between time and identity (Ricoeur, 1988). That is, since our order of meaning is an ongoing activity, it inevitably has a temporal dimension (Polkinghorne, 1988). Attempts to quantify human experience (as experimental social psychology does in studying the self) cannot take this temporal dimension into account, and this “results in a loss of attention... to the very nature of human reality and identity” (Crossley, 2000, p. 11). This emphasis on time means that narrative psychology has a clear developmental orientation, acknowledging dynamism and change. Self-narratives are therefore dynamic and constantly evolving (Maruna, 2001).

The final relevant feature of the human order of meaning is relationships and connections (Polkinghorne, 1988). Put simply, Polkinghorne (1988) finds that we engage in the activity of making meaning by seeking to acknowledge the relationships and connections between things. As Crossley (2000) summarises “When we ask ourselves the question ‘what does it mean’ we are asking...*how* something is related or connected to something or someone else” (p.11). The relationships and connections between objects thus determine their meaningfulness. The narratives we inherit from our families and culture that assist us in establishing these relationships and connections are another aspect of this interrelatedness (McAdams, 1993). This implies that attempts to understand the individual’s self in isolation from his or her context (as psychodynamic / psychoanalytical approaches to the study of the self risk doing) is to under-appreciate the interrelatedness of human experience (Crossley, 2000).

The human order of meaning’s emphasis of relationships / connections further implies that the self is created and maintained in interaction with others (Crossley, 2000). George Herbert Mead’s (1967) well-known differentiation between the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ calls attention to how we only come to know ourselves through the processes of

interaction with society and self-reflection, in the form of both specific and generalised others. Narrative psychology emphasises interaction and interrelationships between the individual, others, and their culture as fundamental in the creation of the self (Crossley, 2000). Mead's (1967) emphasis on how the different images of self that we hold may affect our behaviours is also picked up by narrative psychology's use of the concept of the imago (McAdams, 1988; 1993).

This acknowledgement of the importance of the relationships and connections in the creation of self is echoed in findings which find that self-narratives are shaped by experience and then reflected in behaviour (Maruna, 2001). Self-narratives are thus not merely individual perceptions. Rather they are systems of meaning created in relationship with others and our environments which fundamentally affect the way we behave. Maruna (2004), citing the Thomas Theorem, reminds us that "If (persons) define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p.572). The self-narrative is increasingly understood as a critical part of person's inner self and personality (Giddens, 1991; Maruna, 2001), providing continuity, coherence, and playing a central role in our communications with others (Lieblich *et al.* 1998).

3.1.2.1 The advantages of a narrative understanding for research.

As the above suggests, narrative psychology is well-suited to areas of research interested in the individual's structures of meaning; temporal or developmental factors; the interaction between the self and others in the creation of self; and how the individual's meaning structures are reflected in behaviour (Crossley, 2000; Maruna, 2001; McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricouer, 1988). However there are additional advantages which narrative psychology has over both 'realist' and other social constructivist approaches to studying the self.

As discussed, narrative research differs significantly from 'realist' research in its assumption that there is no absolute, single, truth in human reality (Crossley, 2000; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). Rather than a single truth, or a 'correct' reading of a text, there are a number of possible interpretations. Polkinghorne (1988) finds a generic advantage of narrative forms is their ability to acknowledge many potential meanings.

In any given situation, narrative schemes are often layered, even contradictory, with certain schemes only being revealed under certain conditions. Consistent with a phenomenological paradigm, these narrative schemes do not necessarily represent objective reality. Rather, they demonstrate the personal perspectives and theories of reality held by an individual. This does not however mean that these narratives do not affect that individual's behaviour. Narrative research aims to describe the collection of narrative schemes held by a person, and the situations that draw these narratives into expression (Polkinghorne, 1988).

It is narrative psychology's greater commitment to a phenomenological orientation that sets it apart from other social constructivist approaches, such as discourse analysis (Crossley, 2000). While both share an emphasis on the importance of meaning and language, discourse analysis considers people's statements about themselves to be behaviours in their own right, bearing little relationship to their cognitions and experience, to be analysed only with reference to their function in a certain setting. In contrast narrative psychology reflects phenomenology's particular emphasis on the experience and uniqueness of the individual. It gives primacy to the individual's inner experience, assuming a link between what they say about themselves, and their cognitions and behaviours (Crossley, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Smith, 1996). Narrative psychology thus appears to have a stronger tendency towards a 'realist' epistemology than other social constructivist approaches, and echoes of this tension are still found within 'postmodern' and 'historical' approaches to narrative (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). Notwithstanding the limitations of a tendency towards realism, it helps ensure that narrative psychology remains an effective research method for those seeking an understanding of human experience as it is lived and interpreted (Bickman & Rog, 1998; Crossley, 2000).

3.1.3 Research from the perspective of narrative psychology

There is a wealth of material that can be classified as ‘narrative research’ (Hevern, 1997). This material can be divided into three categories:

1. Studies that employ narrative as part of a wider discussion on the methodology and philosophy of qualitative research.
2. Studies that have narratives as their research object.
3. Studies where narrative is used to investigate any research question (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998).

The first category focuses on discussing the philosophical perspectives represented in narrative research. This encompasses studies advocating the use of narrative methodologies as part of a qualitative, or anti-realist, paradigm (Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986). The second category refers to studies that investigate the formal qualities of narrative itself, such as structure, development of plot, and linguistic features (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). The final category uses narrative as a means to study other questions. This category is the largest and most varied. Here, narrative is chosen as the research method that best suits the phenomenon being investigated, and narrative has been employed in this capacity in fields such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, education and medicine (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). Bickman and Rog (1998) assert narrative is a ‘real life’ measure, suited to investigating ‘real life’ problems: “when researchers...address real-life problems...it may be advisable to approach people whose lives are relevant to the issue in an open manner, exploring their subjective, inner experience on the matter at hand” (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.5). This study falls in this category.

As implied by the above, there is a wide range of theoretical emphases within narrative research. Most fundamental is the tension between ‘postmodern’ and ‘historical’ perspectives on narrative. This echoes the philosophical tensions between social constructivist and other more ‘realist’ approaches to studying the self, as well as between discourse analysis and narrative psychology (Crossley, 2000; Smith, 1996), outlined earlier. The postmodern approaches assert that narrative *is* reality (implying there is no objective reality), while the historical perspective claims that narrative is a representation of an outer, objective, reality (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998;

McAdams, 1993). The study presented here adopts a middle position between these poles in assuming that personal subjective narratives are fundamental to the individual's identity, but bear some relation to external, 'objective' events. That is, it assumes that an individual's narrative was not created in complete isolation from external events, while simultaneously assuming that the way in which a person thinks about external objects determines how they behave in relation to these objects.

Beyond these broad categorisations and theoretical stances, the use of narrative concepts in research has outpaced the formalisation of narrative research methodologies (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). There is therefore no clear 'narrative methodology', and narrative concepts have been used to investigate a wide range of phenomena in various disciplines. Within this heterogeneity Lieblich *et al.* (1998) identify some basic features of narrative research in the social sciences. Narrative research tends to use qualitative studies of small samples, necessarily making use of interviews and seeking rich data. There is also a great emphasis in narrative research on interpretation. This interpretative process is personal, ongoing and dynamic (Kvale, 1996; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). In this process, hypotheses are generated whilst analysing the narratives, and then tested in further reading. This circular process, as proposed in Glaser and Strauss's (1967) concept of *grounded theory*, leads to a constant refinement and development of hypotheses. This process requires the interpreter remain sensitive to the interviewee's text and the theoretical position informing the analysis, while simultaneously being reflexive about the decisions made in the process of interpretation. Meaning and hypotheses are generated through this process of 'dialogic listening' (Bakhtin, 1981).

3.1.3.1 Lieblich, Tuval – Maschiach and Zilbers' (1998) classification of narrative research

Lieblich *et al.* (1998), in their review of narrative research in the social sciences, identified two fundamental and independent dimensions in narrative research. These dimensions are useful in explaining the theoretical and methodological positioning of this study in the heterogeneous field of narrative research.

The dimensions they propose are (a) holistic versus categorical approaches and (b) content versus form approaches. The first dimension (a) “refers to the unit of analysis, whether an utterance or section abstracted from a complete text or the narrative as a whole” (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.12). As they explain, in a holistic perspective the subject of the analysis is the entire life story of the individual being studied, with sections of the text interpreted with reference to the narrative as a whole. By contrast, the categorical approach dissects the original story (or stories), taking sections or single words belonging to a defined category as the subject of the analysis. Holistic approaches are preferred when the object of exploration in the study is the “person as a whole, that is, his or her development to the current position” (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.12). By contrast, categorical perspectives are best suited when studying a phenomenon or problem shared by a group of people.

The other dimension (b), content versus form, reflects the traditional dichotomy made in the literary reading of texts (Lieblich *et al.* 1998). Those readings of the text that focus on content pay attention to the explicit or implicit content of the text from the perspective of the narrator, that is:

What happened, or why, who participated in the event... (or) what the meaning of the story, or a certain section of it, conveys, what traits or motives of the individual are displayed, or what a certain image used by the narrator symbolises (Lieblich *et al.* 1998, p.12).

On the other hand, readings that focus on form ignore the content of the life story. These readings focus on aspects such as the structure of the plot, its complexity and coherence, the feelings it evokes, the narrative style and metaphorical language it adopts, the sequencing of events, and so on. Structure can also include comments on the key influences in the creation of the narrative. An investigation of the form of the story may reveal the deeper layers of the narrator’s identity missed by content approaches (Lieblich *et al.* 1998, Wengraf, 2001). However Lieblich and colleagues make the point that these dimensions are continuums. That is, while there are clear differentiations between the polar ends of the holistic-category and content-form

continuums, “many possibilities for reading a text represent middle points along these dimensions” (Lieblich *et al.* 1998, p.12).

This study is not positioned at the polar end of either continuum. As will be explained further in coming chapters, while this study is interested in the whole narrative of the participants (a holistic approach), given its focus on those aspects of the narrative that express an offender’s imagoes it also contains elements of a categorical approach to the narrative study of texts. The risk in adopting a categorically-oriented method is that the data becomes fragmented (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). That is, it becomes difficult to understand the categories we wish to study if we ignore the narrative as a whole. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) draw attention to the need to have an understanding of the whole meaning (or *gestalt*) of a narrative if one wishes to have a deeper understanding of any of its parts. Bearing this in mind, this study has adopted certain methodological measures to mitigate fragmenting the data and in so doing limiting the meanings that can be created from the data. These measures will be discussed further in the following chapter, on the narrative inquiry.

Since the primary focus of this research is the content of the offenders’ life narratives, that is, their imagoes and the roles played by them, this study tends towards the ‘content’ end of the content-form dimension. As alluded to above this lack of attention to the form of the narrative risks neglecting deeper layers of meaning in the narrative, particularly those that are expressed indirectly or unconsciously. Similarly, focusing on the content rather than the form or structure of the offenders’ overall narratives and imagoes may limit the understandings we can draw from this study. To mitigate this risk, certain elements of the narratives’ overall form or structure will be considered; because they forms the framework within which the content of the narrative (in this case, the imagoes) should be considered. Given the developmental focus of this study those elements of form that reveal the participant’s conception of their evolving life experience will be most appropriate. Gergen and Gergen (1988) propose three basic formats for the development of narrative over time: the progressive, regressive, and stable narratives. In the progressive narrative the story advances steadily, in the stable narrative the plot is marked by a lack of change, and in the regressive narrative there is a course of deterioration and decline. While these

authors have combined these basic forms to construct more complex plots, this study will only consider the narratives presented in the context of these three forms.

The form of the narrative is also concerned with how well constructed a narrative is. Bruner (1991) defines a well constructed narrative as one with an ongoing plot and a clearly defined objective with a series of events progressing towards it. These events should be also related by sequence and causality (Bruner, 1991). Bruner's (1991) definition accords well with the criteria adopted in this study for evaluating and validating narrative research, as will be discussed below and in the following chapter on the narrative inquiry. These elements of the narratives' form and structure will be discussed in the sixth chapter, when the results of the narrative enquiry are considered.

3.1.3.2 Validating narrative research

Narrative psychological research is fundamentally interpretative, and these processes have implications for assessing validity. In the past, social science research has tended to limit the evaluation of research to discussions of reliability, generalisability, and validity (Kvale, 1996). However these terms, with their origins in quantitative research methods, are extremely difficult to apply to qualitative research (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). While some qualitative researchers have rejected discussion of reliability, validity, and generalisability as a positivist relic, this study will adopt the more moderate postmodernism of Kvale (1996), who rather than rejecting these concepts, "reconceptualises them in forms relevant to interview research" (p.231). As will be shown, considerations of validity are the most relevant in evaluating qualitative and narrative case study research.

Kvale (1996) notes that historically, social science research has tended to adopt a correspondence criterion of truth to determine validity. That is, research is considered valid if it corresponds with objective reality. Postmodern perspectives, by challenging the assumption that there is one objective 'truth', have called this perception of validity into question. Postmodern explanations, such as narrative psychology, replace a single objective reality with a multiplicity of socially constructed and subjective interpretations. Validation therefore becomes the issue of examining,

providing arguments for the credibility of, and choosing between, competing interpretations (Polkinghorne, 1988). Based on this understanding, Kvale (1996) goes on to propose three alternative forms of validation: communicative validity, pragmatic validation, and validity as quality of craftsmanship.

Communicative validity acknowledges the ways in which knowledge is socially constructed. Here, the validity of the research is decided in dialogue and argumentations with others, be they research participants, other specialists in the field, or the general public. However the circumstances of this study (which precludes verification with the research participants), and its scope (where validation of the results with specialists, or the public, is not included amongst its aims), means this form of validity is less relevant. Furthermore, as Kvale observes, a dependence on communicative validation may imply that the researcher is not confident in their findings or is unwilling to take responsibility for them. Alternatively, pragmatic validation asserts that validity is determined by whether the results assist us in taking actions that produce the desired results. For example, given this study's aims the findings would be considered pragmatically valid if they assisted in compiling offender profiles that were helpful to serial murder investigations. Nevertheless, as for communicative validity, considerations of pragmatic validity (applying the findings to ongoing investigations) fall outside the scope of this study.

Validity as quality of craftsmanship depends on “continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale, 1996, p.241). At the simplest level, this requirement demands that all interpretations and conclusions follow a trail of evidence that originates in the text being researched in order for them to be valid (Rogers, Casey, Ekert, Holland, Nakkula & Sheinberg, 2001). However this process needs to go further, with validation being built into the research process and with continual explicit checks on the credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness of the findings. In this approach to validation

the researcher adopts a critical outlook on the analysis, states explicitly his or her perspective on the subject matter studied and the controls applied to counter selective perceptions and biased interpretations, and in general

plays the devil's advocate toward his or her own findings (Kvale, 1996, p.242)

The four criteria offered by Lieblich *et al.* (1998) for assessing narrative research make aspects of validation through the quality of craftsmanship more explicit, and show how quality is reflected in the final research product. The criteria for good narrative research products are: (a) width, referring to the comprehensiveness of the evidence, (b) coherence, asking whether the different parts of the interpretation create a complete and meaningful picture, (c) insightfulness, whether the study presents its findings in an innovative or original manner and (d) parsimony, requiring that the analysis is based on a small number of concepts, and presented in an aesthetically pleasing manner. These criteria have similarities to those offered in relation to grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and will be discussed more in Chapter 4. Parsimony highlights an implicit consideration in the discussion of validity as quality of craftsmanship. As Kvale (1996) puts it, validity as quality of craftsmanship should ideally result in products that “are so powerful and convincing in their own right that they...carry their validation with them, like a strong piece of art” (p.252). Kvale continues that such research should have transparent procedures, evident results, and intrinsically convincing conclusions. A clear communication of the overall meaning, or *Gestalt*, of this research is thus essential (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Such research would make appeals to external sources of validity a secondary concern. In this sense “valid research would...be research that makes questions of validity superfluous” (Kvale, 1996, p.252). While this study can obviously not adopt this ideal as a criterion for validity, it will be acknowledged as one this work accepts and strives towards in contributing to research in narrative psychology.

3.2 NARRATIVE AND CRIME

3.2.1 Advantages of narrative in the study of crime

Research into the psychology of crime has focused on distinguishing the specific personality traits that differentiate offenders from non-offenders. By definition, ‘trait’ research has considered criminal behaviour to be a stable phenomenon, unchanged by time or context (Maruna, 2001), much like the personality itself. Trait research has therefore focused on the study of stable dispositional traits (Caspi & Moffitt, 1995), assuming criminality, and by implication criminal behaviour, is a continuous trait innate in a small minority of individuals (Eysenck, 1977). Research supports these conclusions: personality trait scores, including those for criminality, remain relatively stable throughout an individual’s life (Sampson & Laub, 1995; Stevens & Trauss, 1985). The evolution of criminal behaviour is thus an ongoing process beginning in the offender’s childhood years (Block, 1971; Dannefer, 1984; Farrington, Coid, Hartnett, Jolliffe, Soteriou, Turner & West, 2006). Loeber (1982) states the finding that criminal behaviour is continuous feature of some individual’s life course is a ‘consensus’ of research into criminal psychology.

However ‘trait’ studies of crime cannot explain all the observed aspects of criminal behaviour. By assuming criminal behaviour is constant, trait theory ignores certain established features of criminal behaviour. By assuming constancy, trait theory cannot address social and developmental influences on offending (Maruna, 2001). Nor can trait theories address the changes that occur in an offender’s criminal career, such as desistance from offending (Maruna, 2004), change in type of offence committed (Farrington, Coid, Harnett, Jolliffe, Soteriou, Turner & West, 2006) or behavioural changes in the offence behaviour itself (Canter, 1994; Hodgskiss, 2001; Wentink, 2001). Evidence also suggests that contemporary personality trait measures are not sufficient to establish correlation between the offender’s personality and the characteristics of their offence (Youngs, 2004). These factors limit the utility of trait theory to the practice of offender profiling, where the explicit focus is deriving the likely personality traits of an offender from information about their crime (Canter, 2004; Davies & Dale, 1995; Douglas *et al.*, 1986; Labuschagne, 2003; Richards, 2005; Rossmo, 2000). Canter (1994, 2004) and Maruna (2001, 2004) have advocated

narrative psychology as a more dynamic framework for understanding the personality and offences of those involved in crime. Other authors have similarly found that research into offenders' personal constructions of meaning may allow greater insight into the motivation for their offending, and is a credulous approach to predicting violence (Skrapec, 2001; Winter *et al.*, 2007).

Overall, narrative research into crime proceeds from the assumption that while they may appear irrational, deviant acts have their own internal logic (Canter, 1994; Maruna, 2004). Being social constructivist in orientation this perspective is similar to social learning perspectives (Bandura, 1973, 1974). Maruna (2004) finds narratives of offenders are of particular interest for three reasons. First, a growing amount of research suggests that internal self narratives assist in organising and guiding individuals' behaviours. He cites Scott and Lyman's (1968) insistence that the study of criminal behaviour and the study of peoples' accounts of their behaviour are intrinsically related and "the clarification of accounts will constitute a clarification of deviant phenomena" (p.62). This exploration of the offenders' constructions of meaning is particularly relevant to serial murder. Meaning is deemed central to the understanding of serial murder, with the meaning attributed to their offences by those who commit serial murder considered to be an important determinant of the offences' characteristics (Canter, 1994; Holmes & Holmes, 1998; Labuschagne, 2001; Pakhomou, 2004; Ressler *et al.*, 1986; Wright *et al.*, 2008). Second, narratives are dynamic and constantly evolving (Maruna, 2001). Narrative theorists reject strict stages of development, stating that a person's self-narrative is continuously restructured in light of new experiences, with narrative development a life-long process (McAdams, 1993). While the various other potential motivators of human behaviour (such as genetics, personal history, age or personality traits) cannot be altered, narrative can (Maruna, 2001). Third and finally, narratives are explicitly contextual. They thus offer an ideal way to understand the stories of group at a certain time. Of particular relevance to this study of South African offenders, narratives can give insight into the societal views on crime, at a given moment in history. This is supported by Hook's (2003) study of a South African serial murderer which, while not investigative in orientation, found that social constructivist work could add considerable qualitative richness to our understanding of serial murder.

Narrative descriptions allow the researcher to study offending behaviour as experienced by the offender him or herself (Rhodes, 1999, Winter *et al.*, 2007). This overcomes the inadequacy of previous approaches to studying violent crime, where the offenders' view of the phenomenon is ignored (Nee, 2004). In most cases, narrative research into crime has used interviews with offenders (for example, Maruna, 2004; Parkinson, 1999; Schultz, 2005), although other narrative studies have primarily analysed crime scene and case file data (Canter, 1994; Hodge, 2000; Winter *et al.*, 2007). Like narrative research generally, narrative research into crime is not homogenous. However the research is sufficient to allow us to hypothesise features of a 'criminal narrative', and how this narrative may be reflected in crime scene behaviour.

3.2.2 The use of narrative in the study of crime

In the study of crime, narrative theory has been used in various ways. Maruna (2004) finds that the best-developed narrative theory in criminology is Sykes and Matza's (1957) theory of neutralisation techniques. This theory, and the very substantial body of research it inspired, has proved that people who commit all types of crimes rely on rationalisations for their socially unacceptable behaviours (Wolfgang, Figlio & Thornberry, 1978). They use these accounts to justify their actions to themselves and others. The role these rationalisations play is still debated by criminologists. Do they 'precede' the offending behaviour and make it possible (Sykes & Matza, 1957)? Or are they merely rationalisations offered by the offender after the crime (Hindelang, 1970)? Both perspectives may be valid (Hirschi, 1969). That is, when an individual commits an offence, their retrospective justification for this act may facilitate and even encourage further offending (Maruna, 2004). Thus an initial offence can occur without any "definition favourable to them" (Akers, 1985, p.60) and the subsequent development of a "definition" (or 'rationalisation', or 'narrative') to excuse this act may lead to the offender becoming 'hardened' to offending (Hirschi, 1969), which could in turn lead to the offence being repeated (Akers, 1985). Therefore while a person's actions may be inexplicable and senseless to observers, they are rational in terms of that individual's self-narrative (Canter, 1994). This conception has obvious implications for the study of serial murder, where not only is the initial offence perceived as 'motiveless', but this offence is repeated in an often-characteristic

manner (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005; Hickey, 2002; Holmes & DeBurger, 1988; Keppel & Birnes, 1998; Labuschagne, 2004).

Maruna (2004) demonstrated the influences that self-narratives can have on offending behaviours. He analysed the roles played by narratives in desistance from crime. He found significant differences between the self-narratives held by offenders who continue committing crime, and those who do not. Desisting offenders followed a “generative script” (p.99), characterised by the sense that the individual is capable of making a positive contribution to society, is in control of their destiny, and is not “essentially tainted” (p.43) by their previous misdemeanours. By contrast, offenders holding a “condemnation script” (p.73) saw themselves as powerless victims of an inhospitable environment, and so continued offending (Maruna, 2004). The distinctive narratives offenders held thus illuminated the evolution of their criminal careers. Again, these findings suggest characteristics that may be observed in chronic recidivists, such as those who commit serial murder. In fact, the finding that South African serial murderers characteristically feel helpless and inadequate (Labuschagne, 2001), may suggest a similar ‘condemnation’ script exists for these offenders.

While Maruna (2004) focused on the content of offenders’ narratives, Parkinson (1999) studied the structure. She analysed interviews with 15 offenders, each convicted of a single murder, and found support for a developmental model of narrative structure. The offenders in her study could be divided into five groups. Each group represented a discrete stage of narrative and identity development: from those with little self-knowledge and identity development to those possessing nuanced, mature identities capable of making sense of their lives. Parkinson (1999) found that the less developed and well-formed a narrative was, the more likely it would be that the murder would occur. She suggests that dysfunctional self-narratives are more likely the cause of offending, than the result of it. This she based on observations that offenders with more developed narratives were more able to cope with adverse circumstance and so avoid re-offending. Parkinson (1999) also made some suggestions around how features of the individuals’ self-narratives may have influenced features of the murder they committed. This has implications for the investigative applications of narrative theory and will be discussed further in following sections. Parkinson (1999) concluded that a “dysfunctional narrative”

(p.283) can have a far more profound affect on an individual's functioning than most narrative theorists have realised. That is, a dysfunctional narrative may not merely result in a crisis of the sort that would require therapy (as implied by, for example, Crossley, 2000 and McAdams, 1993), but may be a contributory factor in a crime as severe as murder.

3.2.2.1 Summary of the benefits in using narrative psychology to study crime

Narrative psychology has therefore been proposed as useful in explaining features of criminal behaviour that are interpersonally and socially constructed, dynamic and changeable, and that acknowledge the offender's agency and self concept (Canter, 1994, 2004; Canter & Heritage, 1990; Maruna 2001, 2004). Research into crime using narrative has reflected, and supported, these proposals. Narrative theory has been used to explain how criminal behaviour is generated and maintained (Sykes & Matza, 1957) and what factors influence a criminal career's change and development (Maruna, 2001), both of which are areas where conventional personality or trait theory has proven inadequate (Canter, 1994; Maruna, 2004; Youngs, 2004). These findings in narrative theory and research deepen our understanding of repetitive, 'motiveless', serial murder. Based on the above findings, we would expect serial murderer's self-narratives to be poorly structured (Parkinson, 1999), and characterised by condemnatory scripts (Maruna, 2004) that serve to justify their actions and allow them to continue offending (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

3.2.3 Narrative and offender profiling

These hypotheses around the narrative structures of those who commit serial murder are interesting from an academic and rehabilitative point of view, but they cannot contribute to offender profiling. Offender profiling aims to establish characteristics of an offender based on their crime scene behaviours prior to arrest. Offender profiling, like narrative psychology, deals with highly variable behaviours and considers the offender's personality and meaning structures to be a core concern (Canter, 2004; Davies & Dale, 1995; Douglas *et al.*, 1986; Labuschagne, 2003; Richards, 2005; Rossmo, 2000). These similarities suggest that narrative psychology can assist in generating hypotheses around criminal behaviour, directly applicable to offender

profiling. Furthermore, narrative has been proposed as an important element in understanding offence and offender behaviours (Maruna, 2004; Parkinson, 1999). Thus the characteristics of a crime scene are fundamentally affected, even created, by the personal narratives of the offender who committed the offence (Canter, 1994).

As discussed in the previous chapter, Canter and his colleagues draw on narrative psychology to propose that offenders possess distinct interpersonal narratives, and their offence behaviours are expressions of these interpersonal narratives and strategies. These narratives will be evident in their offence behaviours and their everyday life, thus potentially providing the most productive basis for establishing linkage between crime scene behaviour and features of the offender's personality (Canter, 1994; Canter & Fritzon, 1998; Canter & Heritage, 1990; Youngs, 2004). Canter (1994) hypothesises that if the narratives expressed in crime scene behaviours can be deciphered, potentially valuable information on the background characteristics, criminal history, and future behaviour of the offender responsible could be obtained. This interpersonal narrative perspective has proven particularly useful in identifying behavioural themes of criminal behaviour (Canter & Fritzon, 1998; Hodge, 2000). This approach has been applied to studies of serial and stranger murder (Hodge, 2000; Salfati & Canter, 1999) as an aspect of the empirical and statistical narrative of offender profiling.

Notwithstanding this the research conducted by Canter and his colleagues uses narrative as a guiding metaphor and not as a methodological orientation. That is, they use narrative psychology primarily to articulate their concern with interpersonal strategies in criminal behaviours. They do not adopt many of the basic features of narrative research in the social sciences: qualitative studies of small samples that emphasise interpretation of the data and treat it as a dynamic process (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). Rather, Canter and his colleagues' research is usually rigorously quantitative and empirical, asserting that law-like interpretations of offender behaviours are possible and desirable (Canter, 2004). Although this partial adoption of narrative psychology does not lessen the utility of their results, it does mean that Canter and colleagues have not paid sufficient attention to those aspects of narrative theory that may be particularly useful to offender profiling. Given the potential utility of Canter's (1994) 'interpersonal' perspective in relation to offender profiling, it may be those

elements of a self-narrative that reveal the offender's interpersonal concerns which are the most useful. The most relevant narrative concept here is that of the imago (McAdams, 1993).

3.3 IMAGOS

3.3.1 Defining the narrative concept of the imago

In the self-narrative, the main character is the person who the narrative is about. However, the main character can appear in different roles. Each of these roles personify particular aspects of the self. These 'personified roles' function as characters in the self-narratives, and are known as imagoes (Parkinson, 1999). McAdams (1993) states the imago is a key part of narrative identity and defines an imago as a "personified and idealised conception of the self" (p.122). By 'personified' McAdams means that, in self-narratives, the imago functions as if it were an active person. 'Idealised' simply refers to the simplified, exaggerated nature of an imago. McAdams (1993) goes on to propose eight principles of the imago:

- The self is composed of personified and idealised internalised images, or imagoes, that are laden with affect.
- The origins of a particular imago lie in the internalisation of loved (and hated) 'objects' in the person's world.
- A person's most significant personal relationships are profoundly affected by his or her imagoes.
- Imagoes are often arranged in the self as dialectical opposites.
- The synthesis of opposing imagoes is a hallmark of the mature self.
- Imagoes are superordinate schema for organising and evaluating information about the self.
- Imagoes specify recurrent behavioural plans.
- Imagoes give cognitive form to personal goals, fears, and desires.

The third, sixth, seventh and eighth points are of particular interest to this study.

The third point chimes with recent research into offender profiling, which advocates an interpersonal narrative approach. The seventh and eighth points correlate with the research concerns around the development of, and motivation for, serial murder.

Together these three features of the imago link with the questions research into serial murder generally aims to answer: what motivates the person who commits serial murder? How does their offending develop? How are these factors reflected in their offences? (see sections 2.3 to 2.5). However, using McAdam's term 'behavioural plans' in this context suggests that the offender is always aware of this motivations and intentions. Given that this may not be the case, this study will rather use the term 'behavioural patterns'; which makes no presumptions as to the offender's intent, or his insight into his motivations.

McAdams (1988) acknowledges that the concept of imago, encompassing a large part of self-narrative in a diffuse manner, is difficult to define. Despite this, he insists the imago can potentially reveal the most about the individual's identity. The imago resembles a number of related concepts in social and psychoanalytic psychology, such as the Jungian 'archetypes' or Fairbairn's 'internalised objects' (McAdams, 1988, 1993). These conceptual relationships will not be discussed here, but it is worth clarifying a seeming difference between McAdam's (1993) definition of the imago as 'a personified and idealised conception of the self' and the dictionary definition of an imago as "an elaborated representation of an important or influential person in an individual's life, persisting in the unconscious" (The Chambers Dictionary, 2003, p.737), which reflects the term's origins in object relations and psychoanalysis. These two definitions, 'imago as idealised conception of self' versus 'imago as personification of others', demonstrate a conceptual ambiguity in narrative research. It may be possible to reconcile these different definitions. McAdams (1988, 1993), who fused Jungian and object relations theory in his definition of imago, makes it clear that imagoes are the internalisation of emotionally significant 'objects', and that these 'objects' can often be other people. Narrative theory also asserts that human identity is constructed through social processes (Crossley, 2000). Thus from the narrative perspective it would be inaccurate to assert that the self-concept a person holds is unrelated to the interpersonal processes that create it. Rather "imagoes are often built around significant others... (and) forged from interpersonal relationships" (McAdams, 1993, p.130). For these reasons, this study's definition of the imago will explicitly be expanded to incorporate both definitions, along with McAdam's (1993) eight principles. This study will thus define an iamgo as a dynamic, evolving,

characterisation of a mode of interpersonal interaction. This characterisation forms an important part of that individual's self-concept.

3.3.2 Negative and dysfunctional imagoes

Since imagoes personify an individual's "profound identity truths" (McAdams, 1988, p.101), we can expect differences between the imagoes of dysfunctional individuals and those possessed by healthy people. While the bulk of narrative research has focused on well-adjusted individuals, and McAdams (1988) states that he largely ignored negative imagoes in his research, it is possible to identify some ways in which imagoes can contribute to, or even embody, an individual's pathology. McAdams (1993) draws on object relations theory to explain how imagoes may result in pathology. Pathology results from excessive conflict between internalised objects, or from certain objects leaving the healthy confederation of the self ('splitting') and becoming "inner mischiefmakers" (p.131). Imagoes may also represent a fundamental conflict in an individual's life. McAdams (1993) hypothesises that one of the most common tensions are between 'agentic' and 'communal' characters. That is, between the imagoes striving for control and independence, and those seeking relationships with others.

However McAdams (1993) emphasises that conflict between imagoes does not necessarily cause pathology. Rather, growing dialogue between these 'inner voices' is the hallmark of healthy psychological development (Watkins, 1986), with the mature psyche aiming to integrate opposing aspects of the psyche (such as conflicting agentic and communal imagoes) into more complex structures (McAdams, 1988). Evidence suggests that a diverse and complex self-concept reduces stress (Linville, 1985). Linville (1985) found that a greater number of identities implied that any negative event is less likely to have an affect on all aspects of the self, and so it is less likely that that event will be traumatic. For example, if a man thinks of himself only as an accountant, the loss of his job would be a devastating blow to his self. In contrast, if he thinks of himself as an accountant, father, badminton player and confidante, the loss of employment is less likely to directly undermine all aspects of his self. Research supports this hypothesis, finding that individuals with more complex self-concepts are less prone to illness, depression, and severe mood swings following

success or failure in one part of their lives (Linville, 1985; McAdams, 1993; Watkins, 1986). For this reason McAdams (1993) found that speaking as if inhabited by multiple selves is a characteristic of the absence of pathology. Well-adjusted individuals were not characterised by having only one, simple, imago (McAdams, 1988).

3.3.3 Imagoes and crime

Parkinson (1999), drawing on McAdam's (1988) research, suggests two areas where the imagoes held by offenders may differ from those of non-offenders. First, in regard to the number or complexity of imagoes held. This relates to the structure of the self-narrative. Second, in regard to the type of imagoes held, that is, the content of the self-narrative. She further proposes that the organisation and content of the imagoes may highlight unique aspects of the offender's identity. Given the focus of this study, the proposed content of offenders' imagoes will be discussed in more detail.

3.3.3.1 Findings on the number and structure of offenders' imagoes

Parkinson's (1999) research emphasised the number of imagoes held, and how well they were structured. As discussed previously, evidence suggests that multiple and / or complex imagoes reduce stress (Linville, 1985; McAdams, 1988; Watkins, 1986), and 'dialogue' between these multiple self-concepts is healthy (McAdams, 1993). Parkinson (1999) thus hypothesised that offenders will have fewer imagoes, resulting in them having a narrower choice of behaviours when problem solving. Her study of murderers' narratives found that less developed and less well-formed narratives were associated with an increased likelihood of offending, supporting her hypothesis around the imagoes of offenders. She found that an extremely limited range of imagoes could contribute to offending in two ways. In one group, their extremely under-developed (or even non-existent) imagoes lead them to live chaotic lives with no clear sense of self or of direction in their lives. Members of the second group seemed to have a single, highly inflexible imago. The lack of alternative imagoes limits this group's ability to develop appropriate, or alternative, coping strategies. This will mean they, like those offenders with under-developed imagoes, are likely to

continue with the dysfunctional patterns of behaviour that lead them to offend in the first place (Parkinson, 1999).

3.3.3.2 Findings on the content of offenders' imagoes

The structure of imagoes overlaps with their content. This overlap between content and structure, between 'what the narrative says' and 'the form the narrative takes', can be observed in narrative research as a whole (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). In this case, content refers to the characteristics of an imago. Few narrative research projects have sought to explicitly analyse the content of offenders' imagoes but the work that has been done allows us to suggest hypotheses. McAdams' (1993) study of imagoes addresses them from a therapeutic angle, and so he focused more on the imagoes of highly functional people. He arranged his imagoes according to how strongly 'agentic' or 'communal' they are. That is, how much they embodied the individual's desire for power and love, respectively. McAdams (1993) also identifies imagoes where the individual is motivated neither by power (agency) nor love (communion). Examples he gives of these "Low in Agency, Low in Communion" imagoes include "The Survivor" and "The Escapist" (p.124). People displaying these imagoes, McAdams (1993) states, tend to avoid influencing the direction of their lives, or creating lasting bonds with others. These imagoes resemble the condemnation scripts Maruna (2004) identified in chronic offenders. In these scripts, offenders asserted that they continued offending because they were at the mercy of a hostile environment. South African research has identified a similar imago "The Martyr". This imago

Embodies a sense of unending hardship and travail with no hope of relief...The martyr sees no active manner in which he or she can end his or her hardship and has resigned himself or herself to pain as an inevitable part of life (Laubscher & Klinger, 1997, p.172)

These imagoes represent an individual's sense that they are powerless. In relation to offending, the presence of these imagoes may suggest that a person feels unable to take control of their life. They are thus doomed to continue with their maladaptive

behaviour and so continue offending. This has obvious relevance to serial offenders. Furthermore, in line with McAdam's (1993) observations, the presence of these imagoes may suggest that the individual underemphasises or disregards meaningful interpersonal interaction, which could also be relevant in violent offenders.

a) Parkinson's findings on the content of offenders' imagoes

Parkinson (1999) hypothesised that there are likely to be obvious differences in the content of offenders' and non-offenders' imagoes. She suggested that these differences could potentially be very obvious, such as persons stating their primary self-concept was that of a burglar or murderer. Alternatively, these differences can be more subtle, such as an individual who sees themselves as someone to be feared, or as a deviant outcast. While Parkinson's (1999) project found some support for these hypotheses, Athens (1997) addresses them more directly in his study of violent offenders.

b) Athens' findings on the content of violent offenders' imagoes

To help explain violent offences, Athens (1997) proposed a concept analogous to that of imagoes, "phantom others" (p.82). As with imagoes, these 'phantom others' consist of the internalised attitudes of the offender's significant others, providing the individual with continuity in their perception of self and assisting them in making sense of their varied social experiences. The phantom others interact with one another, together forming an internalised "phantom community" (p.83) that the individual constantly interacts with, often being unaware of doing so. Athens (1997) asserts that phantom communities are the source of an offender's violent responses to others. His research found that the self-concepts, or imagoes, of violent offenders are consistent with the offences they commit. More specifically:

The types of self-image that the offenders held at the time of their offences were always congruent with the types of interpretation that they formed of the situations in which they committed the violent criminal acts (p.87)

Offenders holding non-violent self images, or imagoes, only resorted to violence in situations they interpreted as directly physically threatening. Those with “incipiently violent” (p.87) imagoes resorted to violence in response to situations interpreted as physically threatening, or situations where the victim evoked deep-seated frustration and hostility in the offender. Offenders who held violent imagoes used violence in response to the widest range of interpretations, whether the offender felt threatened, frustrated, hostile, or a combination of these. This is because their imagoes provide them with a “pronounced and categorical *moral* support for acting violently towards other people” (Athens, 1997, p.93)

Perhaps more significantly, Athens (1997) found that offenders’ imagoes change across their criminal career, in response to interpersonal interaction. This lends support to narrative psychology’s causal theories, which emphasise social processes. It is also in marked contrast to Parkinson (1999), who ignored interpersonal interaction in her explanatory model. Athens (1997) further noted that changes in the individual’s imagoes were reflected in the offences they commit: the violence of the imago correlated with the degree of violence used in the offence. For example, offenders in a period where they held substantially violent imagoes commit offences involving “substantial physical harm or sexual violation” (p.91). By contrast, offenders in a period where they held incipiently violent imagoes committed less violent acts, employing physical threats and only inflicting substantial violence when the offence was victim-precipitated. These findings have two investigative applications. Firstly, they find a correlation between the characteristics of an individual’s imagoes and characteristics of the offences they commit. Secondly, they find that the type and degree of violence an offender employs may vary substantially between different stages of that offenders’ criminal career. Both findings have obvious potential usefulness in offender profiling, and in linking cases together.

c) Summary, comparison and critique of Parkinson’s and Athen’s findings

Athens (1997) found links between violent crime and imago content, with changes in imago content reflected in the offender’s offence behaviours and criminal career. He also found that interpersonal interaction was important in the development of the content of imagoes. Unlike Parkinson (1999), by considering the developmental

aspect of an offender's imagoes he begins to address the concerns researchers into serial murder have with the motivation and development of offending. However, Athens' (1997) findings do not go into enough detail on the features of his sample's imagoes, and how these correlate with features of their offences. This limits the applicability of Athens' (1997) findings to offender profiling (Canter, 2000), also limiting its ability to address research into serial murder's concern with how motivation and development is reflected in offences. Furthermore while Athens (1997) establishes broad categories of offenders, he does not suggest ways to differentiate between the crimes committed by offenders in the same group. This is especially of concern as he proposes extremely broad categories of offenders (violent, incipiently violent, and non-violent), which would suggest that any one category would contain a diverse range of offenders. This further limits his model's investigative applicability.

Parkinson's (1999) study makes more detailed hypotheses than Athens (1997) about the relationship between characteristics of an offender's imago and those of their offence, but Parkinson's (1999) study suggests ways in which the structure, rather than the content, of the imago relates to offending behaviour. Referring to murder, she found that offenders with very under-developed imagoes tended to commit impulsive offences, mirroring the chaos and lack of direction in their lives. She also found that offenders with few, rigid, imagoes (that is, a limited self-concept) tended to murder victims who reflected the offenders' central personal concerns. For example, a subject who had been abused as a child murdered a man who tried to force him into sexual relations. While under-developed imagoes were associated with indiscriminate violence; few, rigid, imagoes tended to be associated with 'personalised' victims. In both cases, the structural dysfunctions in the individuals' imagoes would lead them to continue offending, as they are less able to develop alternative self-concepts and so ways of interacting with others.

While valuable, Parkinson's (1999) study has limitations. She does not account for how the offender's imagoes may develop, and thus cannot address a key concern of research into serial murder. She also did not address the role played by interpersonal interaction in imago development or expression, and so proposes a closed intrapsychic system, which contradicts fundamental assumptions of narrative psychology,

and limits her findings' applicability to investigations. In her model Parkinson implies that an offender can either fall into the category of having underdeveloped imagoes, or they can have few imagoes. She does not discuss the possibility that these categories overlap, and what implications this may have for offending. That is, would an offender with a single, rigid, underdeveloped imago commit indiscriminate or highly personalised offences? This oversight in her study may be a function of her only briefly discussing imagoes (usually using the term 'self-concept') and not discussing the content of these imagoes in much depth. Parkinson's (1999) focus on creating exclusive categories of offenders means that, like typologies of serial murder, her model may be too rigid to adequately account for the variation observed in offence behaviours.

d) Schultz's findings on the content of child molesters' imagoes

Schultz's (2005) study of child molesters attempts to discern the imagoes of offenders in greater depth than either Athens (1997) or Parkinson (1999). Schultz (2005) sees the "mythic persona" (p.190) that is, their imago, as fundamental in the aetiology of offending. She attempts to differentiate the various aspects of their imago, and suggests how these aspects relate it to the situation in which they offend. Schultz (2005), like Athens (1997), explicitly emphasises the role of interpersonal interaction in shaping these imagoes and so influencing offence behaviours. She states that imagoes represent

(The offenders') attempt to show how the events of their lives and their understanding of the social world help them create a mythic persona, an identity they adapt that communicates the roles they perceive for themselves. These roles, and the scripts they enact as the result of environmental pressures, form the basis for determining sources of attribution, motivation, and accountability for their crimes (p. 189 - 190).

Where Athens (1997) emphasises the imago as a representation of others, Schultz (2005) emphasises the imago as an idealised perception of the self. As discussed,

these positions are not contradictory, since both share the same basic position: that the imago is a fundamentally interpersonal construct shaped by, and influencing how, the individual interacts with others.

The themes in child molesters' narratives represent the roles they perceive themselves as playing. These roles, the contents of their imagoes, help shape their offending (Schultz, 2005). An example Schultz (2005) gives is of an offender who views himself as a well-meaning man who tries to help other people, but who is constantly thwarted by his environment. He considered himself to be a long-suffering saviour, possessing greater understanding than those around him, and constantly struggling to bring them "up to his level of moral development" (p.191). He explains his offending as the result of children making themselves available to him when he was weary of his struggle to improve others and "because (he) wanted to make other people happy, he went along with their desires" (Schultz, 2005, p.191). Similarly, another offender described himself as a "great big animal...an ape" (p.192) and his offending reflected this. His first offence occurred because his niece happened to be available when he was extremely angry, and wanted to commit violence. He raped her as "a substitute for more heinous crimes, such as murder" (p.192). He committed an impulsive offence, without introspection or consideration for morality, as if he was an animal reacting by instinct (Schultz, 2005). In both cases, features of the offence are congruent with features of the respective offenders' imagoes. Schultz's (2005) findings support both Parkinson's (1999) and Athens' (1997) hypotheses around the relationship between imagoes and offending. However they go further, giving evidence to suggest that the various features of an individual's imagoes will be reflected in crime scene behaviour. While Athens (1997) and Parkinson (1999) found similarities between categories of imagoes and categories of offence behaviours, Schultz (2005) draws attention to similarities between specific, single, imagoes and that offender's specific offence behaviours. Her findings suggest that the study of the content of imagoes may be particularly productive for offender profiling, where there is a need to differentiate between offenders, link offences and infer characteristics of the offender from their crime scene behaviour alone.

Schultz (2005) linked features of the imago to offence behaviours, but she did not study this relationship in detail. Her study is also limited by her presupposition that

the individual has a single imago with various contradictory aspects. This acknowledges narrative theory's assumption that imagoes can be complex and multi-faceted, but does not acknowledge the other possibility proposed by narrative theory: multiple imagoes, with each imago representing a facet of the individual's conceptions of the relationship between themselves and others (Athens, 1997; McAdams, 1988, 1993; Parkinson, 1999). By assuming the imago is a single entity, Schultz's (2005) conception has less explanatory power. It cannot, for example, address in detail how offending may emerge as a result of a clash between imagoes, as proposed by McAdams (1993), or as a result of certain imagoes failing to adapt to changing circumstance. Finally, like Parkinson (1999), Schultz (2005) considered the motivations embodied in her sample's imagoes, but did not consider how these imagoes may develop, and thus cannot meet the key requirements for research into serial murder.

e) Potential for research into the content of offenders' imagoes in South Africa

The relationship that Schultz (2005) highlights between imago content and offence behaviours may be a promising avenue of research in the South African context. An individual's self-narrative is shaped by the culture in which they live (Crossley, 2000; Schultz, 2005). The political upheaval and violence that has characterised South African culture will thus most likely be expressed in the narratives created by South Africans (Laubscher & Klinger, 1997). In addition to the generic 'types' of imago proposed by McAdams (1993), such as "The Warrior" or "The Sage" (p.124), Laubscher and Klinger (1997) identified a number of additional, uniquely South African imagoes. One whose content could be hypothesised to be congruent with the individual committing violent crime is "uTokoloshe" (p.172). As its name, drawn from African mythology, suggests, this imago is vengeful, powerful, and over-confident.

uTokoloshe... moves swiftly to strike fear into its enemies (of which it has many)...This character lives by retaliation and retribution, and seems to believe that only with such action can his or her importance and

existence be acknowledged. Invariably distrustful and alone, uTokoloshe also has a false sense on invincibility and omnipotence (p.172)

On the basis of this, and studies into the object relations of South Africans who commit serial murder (Hodgskiss, Pistorius & Welman, 2004; Pistorius, 1996), it is possible to hypothesise that the content of South African offenders' imagoes may bear some relationship to their offences. The differences between the offence behaviours of South African serial murderers and those from the developed world (Hodgskiss, 2004) may be a product of these differing imagoes. In spite of this, no narrative research has yet addressed these issues in South Africa. Such research could address the central concerns of research into serial murder: motivation, development, and the reflection of these in offences.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Narrative theory offers the study of criminal behaviour the dynamic, flexible framework lacking in conventional personality and trait theory (Canter, 2004) with much research to suggest that the structure and content of offender's narratives affects their criminal behaviours (Canter, 1994; Maruna, 2004). However previous research into the narratives of offenders has not paid sufficient attention to those aspects of narrative particularly applicable to offender profiling. Canter (1994) advocates an interpersonal thematic approach to research aiming to support offender profiling, which suggests the narrative concept of imago (McAdams, 1993) would be the most useful to progress this. Furthermore narrative psychology's highlighting the importance of activity, relationships, and time in creating the human order of meaning (Crossley, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricouer, 1988) accords well with the research on serial murder which finds it is similarly dynamic and evolving (Burgess *et al.*, 1986; Hodgskiss, 2001; Wentink, 2001), can be seen as caused by social and environmental influence (Hickey, 2002; Kurtz & Hunter, 2004; Labschagne, 2001; Whitman & Akutagawa, 2003) and is frequently defined by temporal factors (Leyton, 1986; Holmes & Holmes, 1998). The concept of imago is thus suitable to investigate serial murder in a manner which may yield results that capable of supporting offender profiling.

Imagoes provide an individual's life with a coherent sense of self, specifying recurrent behavioural patterns and giving cognitive form to fears, aims, and desires (Crossley, 2000; McAdams, 1988, 1993). This makes them particularly suitable to address the motivation and development of offending behaviour. Previous research suggests a correlation between the characteristic content of an offender's imagoes and the characteristics of the offences they commit, with changes in imagoes reflected in crime scene behaviour (Athens, 1997; Parkinson, 1999; Schultz, 2005). As yet no narrative inquiry has specifically addressed the role played by imagoes in the motivation of the offender, and how this affects the development of their offending behaviour. This is particularly true of research into serial murder. Thus more research needs to be done if the narrative concept of imago can be used to address the main concerns of research into serial murder, particularly in the South African context, and in an investigative setting. A detailed analysis of the content of a person who commits serial murder's imagoes may yield valuable insight into the interpersonal processes that generate offending, and also be helpful to offender profiling.

CHAPTER 4

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

In this chapter the method of the study is discussed. Firstly, the aims of the study are presented and the narrative inquiries given. Secondly, key concepts are defined. Finally, the research processes used to answer these inquiries, including the methods used to collect and analyse the data, are explained.

4.1 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

This study aims to explore the phenomenon of serial murder from the perspective of narrative psychology, in particular using the narrative concept of the imago, to explore two of the central concerns in research into serial murder: the motivation and development of those who commit serial murder. Furthermore it is hoped that this exposition of serial murder in South Africa will increase our understanding in directions that support offender profiling.

In this study, the motivation of those who commit serial murder is expressed by the reasons they give for having committed the offences; including their personal goals, fears and desires. The analysis of the development of offending behaviour will include a consideration of how the individual's motivations and developmental patterns are reflected in their crime scenes. While in the literature concerns of motivation and development tend to be addressed together, linked by the cognitions and meaning structures of the offender, this study will endeavour to address them separately and in interaction with each other. This approach may also yield results useful to offender profiling, although this is not a specific aim of the study.

4.1.1 Narrative inquiry

In terms of the concept of imago, and with reference to the narratives of those who commit serial murder, the narrative inquiries being made are:

1. What role do imagoes play in the motivation of a person who commits serial murder?
2. What role do imagoes play in the development of the offending behaviour?

4.2 METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research takes a post-modern view, placing greater emphasis on the subjective meanings of experience from the participant's point of view, prior to scientific explanations (Kvale, 1996). Qualitative research is also sensitive to how the researcher's interpretations, and their relationship with the participants, affect the creation of meaning (Harre & Secord, 1972). The fundamental assumptions of qualitative research require a different approach to evaluation and validation. The approach taken to evaluation in this study needs to be discussed in detail, given that there are no clear criteria for evaluating qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4.2.1 Evaluation and validation in qualitative research

The traditional quantitatively-oriented measures for evaluating social science research – reliability, generalisability, and validity – are difficult to apply to qualitative research (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). As suggested in the previous chapter, considerations of validity are the most relevant in evaluating qualitative case study research. The measures put in place to support the validity of this study's findings will thus form the bulk of this section. The reasons why considerations of generalisability and reliability are less relevant to this study, and how the relevant issues they raise will be accounted for, will first be briefly discussed.

Generalisability asks to what extent the research sample reflects the population from which it is drawn. This has tended to be measured in statistical terms (Stake, 1994). This evaluative measure is less relevant in qualitative research, which intends to gain rich and nuanced descriptions of the phenomenon at hand (Kvale, 1996). This is particularly true of this study where the aim is to describe the narratives of the two participants in detail, not make statistical claims as to the applicability of these two narratives to the whole population of South African serial murderers. However Stake (1994) argues that generalisability can also take on an 'analytical' form. This refers to a reasoned judgement of the extent to which the results from one study can be used as a guide to what may occur in another situation. This generalisation is based on the soundness of a researcher's analysis, rather than on statistics. Therefore, by making

the supporting evidence and analyses explicit, the researcher allows the readers to judge the soundness of their claim to generalisation. While this study makes no claims to generalisation, the measures put in place to ensure the validity of the findings could also support analytical generalisation.

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research findings (Kvale, 1996). In this study, reliability refers to issues such as whether the interviews were carried out consistently or introduced biases into the data; whether the interviews are transcribed using the same method; and the degree to which the analysis of the interviews is consistent. In this study it is acknowledged that having a single researcher may have meant that there are fewer measures to check systematic errors or bias in the study. On the other hand since a single researcher completed all aspects of this study there is perhaps less chance of the “haphazard subjectivity” (Kvale, 1996, p.236) that measures of reliability in research aim to counteract. These concerns will be addressed in more detail in the following section where measures instigated to ensure the validity of the findings are discussed.

4.2.1.1 Validity

This study adopts the post-modern and narrative position that validity is a concern that pervades all stages of the research enquiry, from conceptualisation to final writing up (Kvale, 1996; Lieblich *et al.* 1998). Put simply, validity refers to “the extent to which our observations...reflect the phenomena or variables of interest to us” (Pervin, 1984, p.48) that is, whether the research results are true or correct. Yet this definition masks a more complex set of concerns. As Flick (2002) observes, the problem of how to assess qualitative research has yet to be solved. This study agrees with Rolfe’s (2006) finding that the same judgement criteria cannot be used across qualitative methodologies, with each method deserving its own judgement criteria.

Historically, social science research has tended to consider research valid if it corresponds with objective reality. This is challenged by post-modern explanations, which assert that validation is rather an issue of choosing between competing interpretations. Based on this understanding, Kvale (1996) goes on to propose three alternative forms of validation: communicative validity, pragmatic validation, and

validity as quality of craftsmanship. The most appropriate measure for this study, given its aims and scope, is validity as quality of craftsmanship.

a) Validity as quality of craftsmanship in Grounded Theory and narrative research

Validity as quality of craftsmanship depends on “continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale, 1996, p.241), ensuring that all interpretations and conclusions follow a trail of evidence that originates in the text being researched, in order for them to be valid (Rogers, Casey, Ekert, Holland, Nakkula, & Sheinberg, 2001). This process needs to ensure that validation is built into the research process, with continual explicit checks on the credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness of the findings. This approach requires the researcher take action throughout the research process to attain validity (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002).

This approach to validation is inherent in *grounded theory* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which provides the analytical methodology for this work. That is, this study uses the procedures associated with grounded theory to analyse serial murder from the theoretical perspective of narrative psychology. The constant process of checking and questioning the findings required by grounded theory was the primary validation technique used in the study. This has already been implied previously, where validation is considered an issue that impacts on all stages of the research process.

Lieblich *et al.*'s (1998) four criteria for assessing narrative research support this type of validation, and were thus also adopted in this study. These criteria were mentioned briefly in Chapter 3. In more detail, they are:

- *Width*: This refers to the comprehensiveness of the evidence. This criterion requires the researcher supply the reader with sufficient evidence to judge the validity of the study's findings. This evidence should include the quality of the interview(s), the extensiveness of the supporting evidence for the conclusions, the presence of clear support for interpretations, and the offering of alternative explanations.

- *Coherence*: Defined as whether the different parts of the interpretation create a complete and meaningful picture. This can refer to how the various aspects of the research product’s findings fit together, as well as how well this study fits with previous research and existing theory. Given this study’s aims, the former will be emphasised.
- *Insightfulness*: Whether the study presents its findings in an innovative or original manner, allowing for a greater insight into the phenomenon being studied.
- *Parsimony*: This refers to the ability to provide an analysis based on a small number of concepts. It requires that the “elegance or aesthetic appeal” (p.173) of the narrative research also be considered.

These criteria are consistent with those of “credibility” and “applicability” proposed to evaluate grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This consistency helps ensure that the methodological orientation of the study (grounded theory) is not inconsistent with its theoretical orientation (narrative psychology). It also helps clarify the criteria by which the quality of this study’s craftsmanship will be evaluated. This will now be discussed in greater detail.

i) Evaluating ‘credibility’, ‘width’ and ‘coherence’

‘Credibility’ incorporates Lieblich *et al.*’s (1998) criterion of ‘width’. That is, the researcher supplies the reader with sufficient evidence to judge the validity of the study’s findings. This evidence should include how the data was gathered (in this study, chiefly the interviews) the extensiveness of the supporting evidence for the conclusions, the presence of a clear analytical process and support for interpretations (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). By supplying this information the researcher allows the reader to contextualise the concepts proposed. This contextualisation allows the reader to judge why certain meanings are ascribed to events and not others, or why certain events occurred. Without this contextualisation, the findings of the research are incomplete (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and validity thus lessened. Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) ‘credibility’ also includes Lieblich *et al.*’s (1998) and Bruner’s (1991) criteria of ‘coherence’, which asks how well the research product’s findings fit together, how well constructed a narrative is, as well as how

well this study fits with previous research and exiting theory. Expanding on this, Corbin and Strauss (2008) further specify that a credible / coherent research product should show logic, depth, and variation. ‘Logic’ refers to the need for a logical flow of ideas, that the ideas makes sense to the reader, and that methodological decisions are sufficiently clear for the reader to decide their appropriateness. ‘Depth’ requires that there is sufficient descriptive detail and richness to the findings to make them have an impact on the reader. ‘Variation’ requires that the researcher demonstrates the complexity of the phenomenon being studied and showing, for example, how cases don’t fit the expected pattern or show differences in certain dimensions or properties. The measures this study takes to evidence its coherence, width, and so its credibility (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998) are described later in this chapter.

ii) Evaluating ‘applicability’, ‘insightfulness’ and ‘parsimony’

Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) criterion of ‘applicability’ incorporates Lieblich *et al.*’s (1998) criteria of ‘insightfulness’ and ‘parsimony’ in evaluating qualitative research. This criterion asks whether the findings provide insight, are readily understandable, are suited to the area from which they are derived, and will provide the user with a sufficient understanding of the phenomenon to bring about change in the situation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To these criteria we can add Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) requirement that applicable / insightful / parsimonious research be ‘creative’ or, to use Charmaz’s (2006) term “original”. That is, the research needs to add offer new insights and fresh understanding, as well as presenting the findings in a creative or innovative manner. This is consistent with Kvale’s (1996) finding that validity as quality of craftsmanship is indicated by the ability of the research to generate theoretical insights into the phenomenon being studied. Therefore part of the validation in this study will rest on its ability to generate readily understandable and well-presented insights into narrative psychology and serial murder.

By requiring as part of both ‘coherence’ and ‘insightfulness’ that valid narrative research consider how it fits with previous theory, Lieblich *et al.* (1998) also address grounded theory’s requirement that applicable, valid research ‘fit’ and resonate with the experience of the professionals for whom the research was intended, and the participants themselves (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). While the ‘fit’ between this study’s

results and previous literature will be discussed, directly testing the applicability of these findings to the participants themselves and to the profiling an unknown offender in a serial murder investigation, is beyond its remit.

iii) Other aspects of validation in grounded theory

In addition to the above there are a number of other proposed criteria for evaluating grounded theory research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967); however only the additional criteria which are helpful in evaluating this study's 'quality of craftsmanship' will be discussed here.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that research should also be evaluated according to how sensitive it was to the participants and to the data, that is, how much the researcher let the analysis drive the research, not only imposing pre-determined concepts and questions on the data. The last mentioned requirement cannot be fully met given this study's focus on the narrative concept of the imago, but it will still be considered as part of the discussion of results.

Hall and Callery (2001) also require that the qualitative researcher needs to be able to evidence self-awareness, as a condition of their producing valuable qualitative research, a proposition which fits with grounded theory's requirement for clear analytical process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This study takes a number of measures to evidence this and so support its claim to validity through quality of craftsmanship. These include theoretical memo's kept throughout the research process, and in reflections on interview process provided in the final case studies. Further details will be given later in the chapter.

iv) Summary of method of validation

To conclude, the study presented here adopts quality of craftsmanship (Kvale, 1996) as its primary source of validation. The craftsmanship will be evaluated using Corbin and Strauss (2008) criteria of 'credibility' and 'applicability'. These criteria incorporate those proffered for the evaluation of narrative research by Lieblich *et al.* (1998). Thus this study aims to generate findings that are comprehensively and clearly

evidenced, coherent, insightful and original, as well as parsimonious. This criteria should also help indicate that the studies' findings are trustworthy, believable, and presented in an innovative and understandable manner that reflects the experience of the phenomenon (for reader, researcher, and participant) while simultaneously acknowledging that the explanation proffered is but one of many plausible interpretations of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). To ensure it is able to meet these criteria for validation, this study accepts the requirement that I, as the researcher, make my decisions and analytical processes explicit throughout. It also accepts that there should be clear evidence of a constant and ongoing process of checking and questioning the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kvale, 1996; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998).

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research can be described as ‘descriptive-dialogic’ (Edwards, 1993) in that it aims to describe the data in terms of a theory, and test the degree to which that theory could describe the phenomenon being observed. In this case, the theory is narrative theory, and the phenomenon is serial murder.

The descriptive aspect of this approach, being more exploratory in orientation, is suited to the study of serial murder in South Africa. Descriptive approaches such as grounded theory can be particularly useful due to their seeking to explain the world view of the research participant from their perspective (Del Fabbro, 2006). This approach is suited to the South African context given the lack of research into the potentially distinctive features of South African serial murderers and their behaviours (Hodgskiss, 2004).

The dialogic aspect of this approach is appropriate because the research method suits the phenomenon being investigated (Bickman & Rog, 1997). Here, this means that narrative psychology is well suited to researching serial murder in a way that is applicable to offender profiling. This is because all three (narrative psychology, serial murder and offender profiling) share central concerns. As described in Chapters 2 and 3, all emphasise the active and ongoing creation and expression of meaning and the importance of environmental and interpersonal influences. Serial murder and narrative psychology also share an interest in temporal factors. An emphasis on the active creation of meaning also makes qualitative research methods particularly appropriate. Given that research into those who commit serial murder is usually obliged to use small samples, qualitative research becomes even more appropriate.

4.4 SAMPLING

The sample for this study was drawn from a previous study which undertook a quantitative analysis of South African serial murderers' offence behaviours (Hodgskiss, 2001). The current study is markedly different from, and does not rely on ,the results of this previous study.

The current study made use of a non-random purposive sample, drawn from the population of individuals who have committed serial murder and who are incarcerated in prisons in South Africa. The small sample of offenders used in this study was selected on the basis of availability, the sampling strategy is thus a non-probability, or non-random, strategy. Such non-random samples are limited in respect of how representative they can be said to be of a particular population (Trochim, 2002). However given that validity has been established as the primary means to evaluate the study; that in qualitative research generalisability is defined as making reasoned judgements based on the soundness of the researcher's analyses (Kennedy, 1979; Stake, 1994), and as the sample population is limited, non-random sampling is suitable for this study.

Of the two types of non-random sampling, accidental and purposive, this study made use of purposive sampling. This sampling strategy is ideal when the proportionality of the sample is not of concern and when a certain predefined group is sought. The current study meets both of these criteria, being concerned with qualitative analysis and focused on the predefined group of those who committed serial murder. Patton (1990) would further classify the purposive sampling strategy used in this study as being criterion based, given that the cases were selected on the basis of their meeting some criteria. These criteria are given below.

4.4.1 Criteria for selection

The definition of serial murder used in the study is the first criterion for selecting participants. In this study serial murder is defined as two or more separate acts of murder occurring at different times, in separate events and committed by an individual

acting alone or with another (Egger, 1990; Geberth, 1996; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005)

The second criterion is that the participants be male. This criterion was used due to the overwhelming prevalence of male serial murderers in South Africa (Hodgskiss, 2004). The masculine form is therefore used when referring to the participants.

The third criterion is that the participants had to be convicted and sentenced offenders. Awaiting trial offenders or those appealing their sentences were not included since they may be motivated to avoid discussing their criminal behaviour. Similarly, no offenders who had been found unfit to stand trial were included in the sample. Thus no psychotic offenders were included.

The fourth criterion is that the participants could speak English or Afrikaans, since this allowed the interviews to be conducted without using an interpreter. It was deemed that working via an interpreter would inhibit the interview process excessively, limit the fullness and richness of the responses given, and possibly discourage the participants from giving full and frank responses to the interview questions.

The fifth criterion adopted was that participants' interview response had to be complete and detailed. 'Detailed' refers to the complexity and richness of the interview material, and is congruent with this study's qualitative orientation and the tacit criteria for selecting participants in life story research: select those participants who are a 'good find' and who can supply an interesting and valuable narrative (Plummer, 1996). 'Complete' refers to the offender discussing some or all of their offences and offending behaviours. This is essential given the focus of the study. This requirement does not mean that an offender was required to disclose *all* aspects of the offences he was convicted of to be selected. Where an offender denied all knowledge of or responsibility for their offences, they were excluded from the sample. While this fifth criterion may have created a bias in favour of talkative participants, it complemented the aims of this study. Of the 13 participant interviews originally collected for Hodgskiss (2001), six were deemed suitable for the present study. Of

these two were randomly selected for use in this study. The below table (Table 5) gives the characteristics of the sample used for this study.

Table 5: *Characteristics of the research sample*

	Simon Mandlenkosi*	Jacques Eksteen*
Race	Black	White
First Language	Xhosa	Afrikaans
Number of Victims**	3	5
Race of Victims	Black	White, Black
Gender of Victims	Female	Female
Age at time of first murder	29	22
Age at time of last murder	29	25
Age at time of interview	31	33
Language interview was conducted in	English	Afrikaans

* The names here are the pseudonyms assigned to the participants in the study.

**Refers to murders for which the participants were convicted only.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection focused on three sources, namely:

1. clinical observations of the participants(s);
2. semi-structured interviews with the participants;
3. archival records in the form of:
 - police case files for the individuals involved
 - informal interview with the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO)
 - documents from legal proceedings
 - media reports of their offences

There was a single difference between the case studies in terms of the data used. This is shown in Table 6. While the semi-structured interviews represent the narrative of the participant the clinical observations and archival records can be conceptualised as

‘narratives of others’ which may have an impact on the findings. How this was dealt with, and the three sources of data, will now be discussed in more detail.

Table 6: *Data sources used for each case study*

	Simon Mandlenkosi	Jacques Eksteen
Clinical observations	✓	✓
Semi-structured interviews	✓	✓
Archival records:		
police case files	✓	✓
informal interview Senior Investigating Officer (SIO)		✓
documents from legal proceedings	✓	✓
media reports of their offences	✓	✓

4.5.1 Clinical observations

Clinical observation refers to learning more about an individual’s behaviour, mental health, or psychological functioning through direct observation (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Aspects focused on in these observations can include appearance, body size, hygiene, eye contact, speech, mood, ability to interact with others, memory and repetitive behaviours (such as tics) (Del Fabbro, 2006).

In this study, clinical observations occurred in the context of the semi-structured interviews. These observations thus provide information regarding the behaviour of the participants during the interview and their interaction with their surroundings, which includes aspects such as tone of voice, posture, body language, and use of affect. This information was used as an additional data source to inform the analysis. These observations can be conceptualised as part of the researcher’s narrative of the interview process, impacting on and informing the analysis of the participant’s narrative. This will be discussed further in sections 4.5.2, 4.7 and 4.8.

4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

The main data source is semi-structured focused interviews. Given the descriptive-dialogical orientation of this qualitative research, the semi-structured interview method used here was required to tread a middle line between the minimal structure of the narrative interview and the strict structure of the IMAGO format. Semi-structured interviewing gives greater access into the psychological and social world of the respondent (Smith, 1995). I, having had previous experience in interviewing offenders using the IMAGO as a guide to a semi-structured interview, found that this approach allows for better rapport.

The IMAGO Autobiographical Questionnaire was used as an interview guide (see Appendix F). The IMAGO was created by the Criminological and Psychological Services in Austria for use in interviewing apprehended homicide offenders (M. Pistorius, personal communication, 2000). To avoid confusion with the narrative concept of imago, and the various methods used to analyse it, when the IMAGO Autobiographical Questionnaire is being referred to, the word 'imago' will be written in capital letters. While in its original form the IMAGO is a form of highly structured clinical history-taking spanning the offender's life from childhood to incarceration, in these interviews it was only used to encourage adequate coverage of the significant episodes in the participant's criminal career. The IMAGO structure was therefore subordinate to the construction of the participant's autobiographical narrative.

Typically narrative research interviews only use a few set questions, with the content of the narrative being decided by the participant (Lieblich *et al.* 1998). The semi-structured interview format used in this study has more questions than required by conventional narrative interviews (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Wengraf, 2001). Given that the aim of the interview was to elicit information about the participants' offences, it was necessary for the sake of clarity that direct questions be asked. Since the interviews aimed to elicit information on specific events, they could be termed 'focused interviews' (Mishler, 1986). This focus on specific events is consistent with the aims of this study. The cultural and linguistic differences between the researcher (being South African English-speaking) and the participants in this study also made it necessary for me to ask further interpretative, clarification and potentially leading,

questions. The possible implications of such a focused, semi-structured style will be discussed in later chapters.

Although the semi-structured interview process used is consistent with a narrative approach, the interviews were not carried out with narrative analysis in mind. I did however encourage the construction of the interviewees' narratives with statements such as "I would like to hear your story" and by seeking to clarify the interviews' temporal structure. Thus the administration of the interviews was congruent with a narrative approach. Despite this, not conducting the interviews from a narrative perspective may have meant that opportunities for encouraging the creation of narratives in the interview process were missed (Wengraf, 2001). Conversely by not expressly stating the research aims to the participant there is less risk of introducing prejudice into the research by signalling what the researcher wants or expects to hear (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This is particularly relevant with the current participants as their situation (being imprisoned, and being interviewed) could have possibly made them feel vulnerable and 'at the mercy' of the researcher, which could in turn have lead to them being anxious to please me and so introduce bias into the data. The procedure and interview process will be described in more detail in Section 4.6.

4.5.3 Archival and other sources

Archival records generically refer to the ongoing and continuous records of society (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). Examples of archival records include records of births, deaths and marriages; political and industrial records; governmental records (such as crime reports); judicial records; as well as the types of mass media. This archival data used in this study falls into the last three records, consisting of the police case files for the individuals interviewed (supplemented by, in one case, an informal interview with the Senior Investigating Officer), documents from legal proceedings, and media reports of their offences.

The researcher viewed the police case file for each participant. Permission to view these case files was given by the Head of the Investigative Psychology Unit of SAPS (see Appendix G). I then compiled notes of the content of these case files, particularly previous convictions, details of the crime scene, offence behaviours and victim

characteristics. These case files typically also contained crime scene photographs and the results of the victims' autopsy. In the case of Jacques Eksteen, I was able to discuss the participant with the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) who investigated the participant's offences. This informal interview aimed to gather more information on the circumstances of the offences, and on how the participant may present in interview. Documents from legal proceedings usually consisted of the State prosecutor's summary of charges against the participant at their trial, or the judge's summary of the case.

Media reports of the participants were a further source of useful summaries of their offences. The media used were newspaper reports, internet articles, and books about the participants written for the mass media audience (e.g. Micki Pistorius' *Strangers on the Street*, 2002). However given that the source and veracity of these media are not always clear they were used with caution, and only if not contradicted by police or other data.

Using multiple sources of data in this study would, it is hoped, create a more rich and complex interpretation of the topic being studied (Patton, 1990). Using multiple sources would also support the post-modern approach to validation taken by this study, which places emphasis on obtaining deep and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being studied, and making the process by which conclusions are reached explicit (Kvale, 1996).

As stated, archival sources and clinical observations represent 'narratives of others'. These narratives may not be entirely consistent with the narrative presented by the participant. These 'narratives of others' were not given precedence over or allowed to overwhelm those of the participant, instead being used as points for comparison with omissions or discrepancies between the various narratives adding a further layer to the analysis. This is consistent with a post-modern approach (Richardson, 1994) where it is not essential that the various data sources used correlate precisely. The role played by these narratives of others in the collection, analysis and presentation of the data will be described in more detail in subsequent sections.

4.6 PROCEDURE

The procedure followed by this research study consisted of a number of steps. These steps are arranged chronologically

- Obtain permission from the Department of Correctional Services;
- identify possible participants and where they are being held;
- review case files and archival data;
- interview SIO (in one case);
- approach prospective participants for permission;
- interview participants who have committed serial murder;
- review literature;
- obtain further archival records, legal documents and media reports;
- choose research design appropriate for data held and phenomenon being studied;
- transcribe and analyse interviews in light of narrative theory;
- compile case studies.

The process used to analyse the interviews and compile the case studies will be discussed in Section 4.8.

4.6.1 Administration

I carried out all the interviews and am fluent in English and Afrikaans. The administration of the IMAGO in a semi-structured format was informed by the case files and archival data reviewed before the interview (this data was then again used in the compilation of the case studies). The additional data informed my responses in interview. This technique fulfils a dual purpose. Firstly, to demonstrate the researcher's knowledge of, interest in, and non-judgemental attitude towards, the participants' offences. This has been found useful in previous interview studies of violent offenders, including those convicted of serial murder, to establish rapport and deepen the interview enquiry (Athens, 1997; Ressler & Shachtman, 1993). Secondly, to allow the researcher to make an assessment of the factual accuracy of the participants' accounts (Athens, 1997). This is useful because, as Athens points out,

It is much more difficult than it may seem to falsify in a detailed and consistent manner the so-called subjective side of a situation, that is, one's perceptions and evaluations, while at the same time not falsifying any of its material, or objective, details (p.61)

Therefore these additional data sources were used to inform the interview and to help assess the validity of the interviews. Interview accounts consistently at odds with the material facts of the offence would not have been useful to this study. As discussed, interview accounts that bore no relation to the case material were excluded from this sample.

There was a risk that my prior knowledge of the participants may have created biases within the interview material, a bias exacerbated by my desire to discuss the offences and offence behaviours. This may have lead to the narratives discussed in the interview being merely a function of the interview context, rather than an accurate reflection of those held by the participant. This risk is partly ameliorated by the semi-structured interview format, but will be taken into account in the transcription and analysis of the interviews, as well as in the discussion.

The participant was allowed to guide the avenue of enquiry taken, with me remaining sensitive to their responses and adapting my approach accordingly. This allowed elements excluded from the IMAGO format to be discussed, while avoiding those IMAGO items that take a prescriptive stance (some IMAGO items have clear psychodynamic assumptions). This flexibility also allowed me to take the cultural differences between myself and the participant, and the sensitivity of the topics being discussed in the interview, into account. It was also sometimes necessary to divert from the IMAGO format in order to ask more leading and explanatory questions, or clarify developing interpretations, both of which were needed in order to ensure adequate coverage of the topics being discussed.

The interviews used in this study lasted between four and eight hours each, and were recorded on audio tape. The length of the interview was dictated by the amount of

time necessary to establish rapport and reach saturation with regard to the questions posed in the IMAGO format. In one case, the interview took place over two consecutive days. An effort was made to spend as much time as possible with the participant, to take the suspicion of others resulting from incarceration into account, and to allow for the building of better rapport (L. Bergh, personal communication, 2000). The participants were not interviewed on same day. This was done to minimise the possibility of the interviewer transferring issues from one participant to another.

After each interview I compiled brief field notes recording how the participant presented himself in interview, clinical observations, and if the interview was the first of two, highlighting aspects that needed to be brought up or touched on in next interview session. Post-interview note taking avoids losing impressions and useful information; useful when transcribing and analysing the interviews and when compiling the case studies (Wengraf, 2001). In this study these notes were particularly helpful given the time delay between when the interviews took place and when they were transcribed and analysed. After each interview was concluded, the interview audio tapes, consent forms, and field notes were kept together. This further prevented confusion between participants.

There are inevitable imbalances of power in the interview context, and these need to be acknowledged and mitigated in qualitative interview research (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Kvale, 1996). The imbalances most relevant in the interviews presented here pertain to the participants being imprisoned, and so my having perceived power over them. This was mitigated by my clear explanation of the interview consent form and my ethical obligations, alongside clear communication that participation in the research would not affect prison privileges. Additionally, the efforts I made to express my understanding of the participants' situations and maintain a non-judgemental attitude during interviews may also have helped to ease the effects of this particular power imbalance.

There are other issues within the interview context that may have affected the narratives expressed. These include, but are not limited to, issues such as:

- How did the researcher's characteristics (demographic, personality or other) affect the participants' responses?

- How did the interviewing style, the environment the interview was conducted in, or the interview method chosen, affect the narratives produced in that interview?
- In what ways did each researcher's characteristics affect the participants' reactions and perceptions?

These issues will be discussed during the analysis of each case study, and in the discussion section.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Once the data was collected using the various methods outlined above, the analysis of the data in this study occurs in two ways:

- A case study method and.
- A grounded theory method.

These two processes are not mutually exclusive, and occurred simultaneously.

4.7.1 Discussion of case study method

I selected a case study methodology to obtain a descriptive, in-depth, account of the narrative given by the participant. Given that the literature into serial murder suggests that concepts used in narrative psychology may encourage a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, a descriptive-dialogic case study (Edwards, 1993) was deemed most appropriate. This type of case study aims to describe the data in terms of a theory, and test the degree to which that theory (in this case the narrative concept of imago) can describe the phenomenon being observed. This study is qualitative, does not aim to make causal attributions about serial murder or act as a critical test of a previous theory, and so quasi-experimental design and control groups are not necessary (Edwards, 1993; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981).

This study also adopts the basic features of narrative research in the social sciences, being the qualitative analysis of a small interview sample, emphasising rich data and the process of data interpretation (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). The case study approach is thus amendable to the epistemology, theory, and grounded theory analytical method of the study.

4.7.1.1 Defining a case study

Yin (1994) has two main criteria for defining a case study. A case study must be (a) an empirical enquiry into a contemporary phenomenon in its “real-life” (p.13) context; and (b) the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear. The investigation of serial murder in South Africa meets both these criteria. Serial murder is an issue of contemporary concern in South Africa, increasing markedly over the past two decades, with an incidence that is still amongst the highest in the world (Hodgskiss, 2004; Pistorius, 1996). In a similar vein the increased incidence of serial murder during a period of increased political instability and violence in South Africa (Hodgskiss, 2004); and the linkages made in the literature between serial murder and the wider familial, social and cultural context (Del Fabbro, 2006); it would appear to suggest that both of Yin’s criteria are met. It would thus appear that a case study methodology is appropriate for the topic and aims of this study.

4.7.1.2 Defining the unit of analysis

It is further necessary to define what constitutes a case and what the time boundaries of the case are, in order to clearly separate what is inside a case from what is outside (Yin, 1994). In this study, a case refers to an individual who has committed serial murder and who meets the sampling criteria. The time boundaries of the cases are defined in two ways: (a) according to the period of the time covered in the narrative presented by the participants; and (b) according to the time I took to engage with them to access their narratives. In the cases presented, (a) stretched from their earliest memories up until they were interviewed in 2000. The aims of the study mean there was less emphasis on their narratives after their incarceration. In turn, (b) was defined according to the length of the semi-structured interview. Each case study was analysed separately. While comparative analysis between case studies is beyond the remit of this study, comparisons between the cases will be made in Chapter 6 when discussing the results.

4.7.2 Grounded theory

This study used a grounded theory method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyse the data collected. As discussed, Lieblich *et al.* (1998) found that there is no single ‘narrative’ methodology for analysing data, with narrative psychology rather providing a theoretical orientation. Conversely, grounded theory has been conceptualised as a set of methodologies for analysing data, concerned more with building theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A grounded theory approach has been used previously to investigate serial murder in South Africa (Du Plessis, 1998).

Grounded theory advocates a circular process of analysis when dealing with qualitative data such as interview narratives. In this analytical process, hypotheses are generated whilst analysing the narratives, and then tested in further reading. This circular process of hypothesis generation and testing continues throughout the analytical process. Grounded theory is an interactive approach, involving the interplay between interview data, field studies, analysis and conceptualisation; and not a linear set of steps (Kvale, 1996). The data is thus continuously coded and recoded as the researcher’s insight increases during the analysis, and as they work towards a theoretical interpretation of what was seen or heard (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The dynamic, personal and ongoing process of interpretation advocated by grounded theory is shared by narrative research (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). Therefore in this study the analytical process advocated by grounded theory was used to empirically test the applicability of the narrative concept of imago. The following section will describe how this analytical process was implemented.

4.7.3 The analytical process

This section gives details of the process followed to compile the descriptive-dialogic case studies. The analyses aim to undertake the narrative enquiry by:

1. Analysing the content of participants' imagoes in more detail.
2. Analysing the interactions and relationships between the various imagoes held by the participants.
3. Analysing how the characteristics and interactions of the imagoes develop throughout the narrative. This analysis will include how the characteristic imago content, and their stated motives, may change in the course of the participants' criminal careers.
4. Analysing how the characteristics of, and the relationships between, imagoes correlate with characteristics of offence behaviours.

The analytical process runs from the transcription of the interview tapes to the drawing together of the various sources in case study form. This process entails the weaving together of the narrative of self presented by the participant's interview with the 'narratives of other' presented in the archival material and the researcher's observations of the participant and the interview process. How this is done will be discussed later. Although grounded theory eschews the use of strict stages in research, the analytical process has been divided into sections for the sake of clarity. These sections are: defining the imago, transcription, ordering and evaluating, and compiling the case study.

Each section will include a discussion of the various measures implemented to ensure that the circular process of hypothesis testing was supported, interpretations were recorded and tested, and the overall meaning (*Gestalt*) of the interview was not lost. These measures include the use of, in each case, a transcription matrix, imago identification forms; and an overall theoretical memo. These research tools will be defined when their use is described. These tools also allow the study to take into account narrative research's requirement that I consider the impact of my own perspectives on the interview process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Kvale, 1996).

4.7.3.1 Defining the imago

Before the analytical process can commence, the theoretical concept being used to describe the data needs to be clearly defined. The definition used for the imago is given in Chapter 3, and imagoes in the interview data had to meet this criterion in order to be acknowledged as imagoes. To support this, this study drew on McAdams' (1988) proposed seven features for identifying an ideal or prototypical imago in interview data. These are:

1. *An origin myth.* The person should describe the biographical events or series of events which gave birth to the imago, functioning as a biographical explanation for the genesis of a particular self-image.
2. *A significant other.* The imago should be incarnate in at least one other significant person in the individual's life.
3. *Associated personality traits.* The imago should be characterised by a set of personality traits which it exemplifies.
4. *Associated wishes, aspirations, goals, occupational or personal strivings.* The imago should be reflected in what the person would like to accomplish during his or her life; who the person would like to become.
5. *Associated behaviours.* The imago should be reflected in numerous incidents in which the person behaves in a way that is commensurate with the imago.
6. *Philosophy of life.* The imago should be consistent with some part of the person's expressed philosophy of life.
7. *An anti imago.* The imago should be diametrically connected to an opposite image of the self.

In order to separate the less relevant characters in the participants' narratives from imagoes, and drawing on McAdam's (1988) findings, this study required that a character display at least two of the above characteristics. In addition, I required that a character be mentioned on at least five occasions in the narrative in order for it to be defined as an imago. This study accepted that an imago's characteristics, motivations, and associated behaviours may change as the narrative progresses, and that an imago may only be noted in a certain part of the narrative. This was required given the study's focus on the development. Given this possibility of change an imago's name was changed during the analytical process when its existing name no longer

accurately reflected the mode of interpersonal transaction it embodied. The above points were incorporated into the imago identification forms compiled during the interview analysis, and acted as an *aide memoire* for identifying features associated with the imago.

This study does not adopt McAdams' (1988, 1993) proposed taxonomy for naming imagoes for four reasons. Firstly, he was not studying criminal behaviour and thus emphasised mainly positive imagoes. By contrast this study aims to analyse negative and maladaptive imagoes. Secondly, his use of Greek mythological characters to name imagoes risks being incongruent in the African context, and so potentially clashes with narrative psychology's phenomenological orientation (Crossley, 2000). Thirdly, his taxonomy does not consider the possibility that imagoes may change as the narrative progresses or may only be noted in certain parts of the narrative. Finally, his taxonomy was developed to facilitate comparison across his research samples. This study does not intend to make similar comparisons. Rather, in naming imagoes this study seeks to describe them in a way that reflects the mode of interpersonal interaction they represent. The names of the imagoes thus need to describe the emotional character of the interaction, the role the imago plays, and the person it is associated with in the narrative. The emotional character was expressed as an adjective (e.g. Vengeful, Adventurous). The role the imago plays was expressed as simply as possible, with emphasis given to the role in relation to others (e.g. Suitor, Thief). Finally, the person with whom it is associated in the narrative was reflected in the gender assigned to the imago.

4.7.3.2 Transcription

This stage involved filling out the transcription matrix. Wengraf (2001) proposes the use of a transcription matrix to facilitate interview transcription and analysis. This research adapts the format he proposed to better suit transcription from audio tapes (see Appendix C for a blank template of the transcription matrix used). The transcription matrices used in this study were spreadsheets divided into columns. The first four columns refer to the interview audio tape number and the counter on the tape recorder. The text of the interview is transcribed in the 'Content' column. The 'Associations' column records the tone of the participant's or interviewer's speech, or

the emotional tone in that section of interview. The ‘Category’ column records whether that excerpt falls into any identifiable category drawn from the interview (examples include ‘participants significant others’ or ‘discussion of offence’). The column ‘Notes Ideas’ is included to record the developing theoretical insights that occur during the process of transcription and comments on the interview process. The final column, ‘Imago sheet’ was used to record when an interview excerpt may be relevant to a certain imago identification form or the theoretical memo. In this study, a transcription matrix makes the process of data analysis more clear and consistent, records my impression of the interview process, and tracks my developing understandings. The notes in the transcription matrix also proved valuable when compiling the imago identification forms and theoretical memo.

The transcription matrix was completed as the researcher listened to the audio tapes of the interview. The sections of the interview relating to the participants’ significant others; interpersonal relationships; victims and offending behaviours were recorded verbatim in the transcription matrix. These are the sections most likely to be relevant in light of this study’s aims. The remainder of the interview was recorded in the transcription matrix in summarised form. This method ensured that no interview data was excluded from the transcription matrix. The verbatim transcriptions had the following characteristics:

- Alongside the words used, the transcriptions noted the exclamations, hesitations, repetitions, difficulties in expression, and changes in tone and volume that enhanced the meaning of the interview.
- On some occasions it was also necessary to clarify the meaning of a word or exclamation in context. In the transcriptions these notes are given in square brackets.
- Where a passage was inaudible it was excluded and a note made in the transcript.

The contents of the transcription matrix (both verbatim and summarised data) were revisited when compiling the case study and, if needed, more detailed transcriptions were completed. The presentation of the transcriptions used in this study will be discussed in section 4.9.

a) Drafts of imago identification forms and theoretical memo

Initial drafts of the imago identification forms were completed during transcription, drawing on interview content and the notes made in the transcription matrix. McAdams (1988) used an “imago description sheet” (p.191, 303) in his research to facilitate the identification of imagoes within the interview data and to provide a format for organising the evidence supporting a particular imago interpretation. This study makes use of these sheets, incorporating features of the prototypical imago to act as an *aide memoire* for identifying features associated with the imago, as proposed by McAdams (1988). See Appendix D for a blank template of the imago identification form used in this study. These draft forms were constantly updated as my understanding of the imago developed in the course of the transcription. All notes made in the imago identification forms were referenced to the source in the interview material.

The theoretical memo was also started during transcription. A single overall theoretical memo was kept for each interview transcription / case study. Wengraf (2001) defines theoretical memos as notes of the interpretations, impressions, and insights that occur during the process of transcription. Whereas imago identification forms are only concerned with a single imago, this study uses theoretical memos to record aspects of the interview as a whole. The aspects considered in each memo are:

1. Narrative tone, imagery and themes.
2. Developing ideas and understandings.
3. The imagoes being recorded and how they developed; including their changing characteristics, motives, and relationships between them. This includes how they relate to significant people and behaviours.
4. How the participant reacted to others, the interviewer, and expressed themselves.
5. Process notes on the interview itself.

See Appendix E for a blank template of the theoretical memo used in this study. In this study these memos were used to record the above issues as they arise, as well as helping remind me to pay attention to them. The information captured in the ‘Associations’ and ‘Notes Ideas’ columns of the transcription matrix assisted in populating the theoretical memos. This memo drew on the contents of the imago

identification forms, the interview, and the notes made in the transcription matrix. These memos not only served as a record of supporting evidence (McAdams, 1988) but could also highlight weaknesses in the methodology followed by the researcher (Wengraf, 2000).

4.7.3.3 Ordering and evaluating

In this stage the interview data is ordered to deepen understanding and further develop my interpretations of the imagos. This stage allows for a better consideration of the structure of the interview, and helps draw out the underlying patterns and meanings that may not be apparent when proceeding directly to analysing the verbatim transcripts of the interview. It also helps address discrepancies between the guiding narrative metaphor and the administration of the original interview (including the limitations of the IMAGO questionnaire and possible biases its use may have introduced). This stage involved the creation of a chronology, and finalising the contents of the imago identification forms.

These steps required that I revisit the interview transcriptions to confirm or amend the interim analyses. This is consistent with the circular analytical process proposed in grounded theory, and consistent with narrative psychology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lieblich *et al*, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

a) Creating a chronology

A chronology was created whereby the key events discussed in the interview were arranged in point form from the earliest to the most recent. That is, from the participants' earliest memories up until their offences and incarceration. This was necessary given the narrative inquiry's developmental focus. The chronology referenced the relevant parts of the transcription matrix, and of the interview. Use of the 'Category' column on the transcription matrix supported the process of compiling a chronology of events. This chronology helped clarify the patterns, structure, and changes in the participants' narrative. It also helped suggest causal relationships that the participant may not have been willing to discuss overtly. This chronology also assisted when it came to writing up the final case study.

b) Finalising the contents of the imago identification forms.

The process of ordering and re-visiting the contents of the interview allowed for the completion of the imago identification forms. This study did not require that all the suggested fields in these forms be completed. Rather, it attempted to capture as much data as was available on each imago to facilitate the presentation of the imago in the narrative of the case study. The names given to each imago; and their relationships to the other imagoes present in the participant's narrative; were not finalised at this stage.

4.7.3.4 Compiling the case study

This study followed Lieblich *et al.*'s (1998) and Plummer's (1996) recommendation to present narrative psychological studies in chronological form. Compiling the case study was the last step in the analytical process. The names given to each imago; and their relationships to the other imagoes present in the participant's narrative; were finalised at this stage.

In final form, each case study consists of a prologue, the participant's story, and an epilogue. The structure and presentation of the case study, what each part of the case study consists of, and what each part addresses; will be discussed further in Section 4.8. Here this will be only briefly mentioned, with the focus of discussion being the function of the various parts of the case study in the analytical process, and the sources they draw on. In this process the narrative of the participant was analysed on its own and alongside the 'narratives of other' mentioned earlier (archival material and the researcher's observations). As discussed, these narratives of others were used to enrich our narrative inquiry and our understanding of the participant's narrative, and did not take precedence over it.

a) Creating the prologue

The prologue was compiled from the transcribed notes of the interview process recorded in the transcription matrix, and the comments captured in the theoretical memo. The prologue helped me take the interview process into account when drafting the participant's story. The prologue was confirmed, and in some cases amended, by referring to the contemporaneous process notes made during the interview (in 2000). These notes were not used earlier in the analytical process because I sought to avoid unintentionally confirming any biases or misconceptions I may have had immediately following the original interview. Rather they are used to confirm and contrast the conclusions drawn during transcription and drafting the case study. This further adds to the analysis and helps ensure my observations of the interview process and interpretations are valid. These notes also helped paint a more detailed picture of the participant, and how he presented in the interview. This adds to the richness and descriptiveness of the case study, and so the narrative. The prologue represents my narrative of the interview process and presentation of the participant; so adding to our understanding of the participant's narratives.

b) Creating the story

The participant's story drew primarily on the narrative they gave in the semi-structured interview. The chronology created in the previous stage was elaborated using the interview content to create a rich and detailed chronological presentation of the participant's narrative. The use of categories in the transcription matrix allowed relevant segments of the interview to be quickly re-visited and compared if necessary. The contents of the imago identification forms and the theoretical memo were drawn on to assist in this process. By re-visiting the earlier stages of the analysis, the recommended circular analytical process proposed by grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kvale, 1996) was maintained.

The imagoes were given their names, and the relationships between imagoes were clarified, in the process of compiling the story. While the contents of the imago identification forms had already been finalised, the theoretical memo was added to

and amended as interpretation continued in the process of drafting the case study. This ensured that analysis continued.

As this stage the ‘narrative of other’ represented by the archival data was incorporated with the participant’s narrative of self expressed in the interview material. The archival data used is given in section 4.5.3. The above data, particularly crime scene data, was woven into the narrative. This comparison between the narratives presented in the interview and non-interview data, in the process of telling the story, is the means by which the case studies test the extent to which the concept of imago is useful in explaining crime scene behaviour. That is the imagoes presented in the participant’s narrative of self were compared with the non-interview material’s narrative of crime scene behaviours. The narrative inquiry is thus answered in the process of creating the participant’s story.

As mentioned, it was not essential that the imagoes presented in the participant’s narrative correlate precisely with the descriptions of crime scene behaviours recorded in the archival data’s narrative. This study’s theoretical orientation requires it not make a judgement over which account is ‘true’. This study considers the two accounts as equally valid, and analyses the relationships and discrepancies between them accordingly. This allows for a more nuanced and complete answer to the narrative inquiries. In light of the range of possible investigative applications of offender profiling (Copson, 1995; Labuschagne, 2003), a partial match between narratives of the imago-content and crime scene behaviour can still yield useful observations, with divergence between imago-content and crime scene behaviour potentially having investigative and theoretical importance.

c) Creating the epilogue

The epilogue presented the conclusions of the case study, reflections on the process, and summarised the answers it gave to the narrative inquiries. The epilogue drew strongly on the theoretical memo. Apart from clarifying the findings, the epilogue helped ensure the *Gestalt* of the interview was not lost. The epilogue will be discussed further below.

4.8 DATA PRESENTATION

This section describes how the interview transcriptions will be presented (in Appendix A), and how the imago analyses and case studies will be presented and discussed (in Chapter 5). In describing the latter this section will further demonstrate how the participants' narratives of self were woven together with the 'narratives of other' in the presentation of the case study.

4.8.1 Presentation of transcriptions

The transcriptions included in Appendix A present all the interview material that was used to construct the case study, identify the imagoes in the interview narrative, and support the imago interpretations made. These transcriptions are not necessarily presented in chronological order, rather presenting the narrative as it occurred in interview. This narrative is placed in a chronological order in Chapter 5.

The various notes I made in the transcription matrix were excluded from the transcriptions presented in Appendix A. They were rather presented as part of the case study, with inclusion in the Appendix thus being unnecessary repetition. How these transcriptions were referenced in the case studies is discussed in section 4.8.2.

When required, I translated the interviews from the original Afrikaans. When a word can be translated in multiple ways or when English does not convey the nuances present in Afrikaans, the Afrikaans word is given, italicised, in square brackets afterwards. My notes on the interviewee's tone, facial expression, gestures, or vocal volume, where relevant, are also given in square brackets in the text of the transcription.

All the interview material that was not used has been excluded from the transcripts. All interview material was used unless saturation on that topic had already been reached, or using it would mean excessive repetition of points already made. The complete interview tapes will be kept at the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria. All transcriptions have been made anonymous, with

individuals (i.e. the participants, their victims and any other people named in the narrative) given pseudonyms, and location names changed.

4.8.2 Presentation of case studies

This section describes how the descriptive dialogical case studies are presented in Chapter 5. Each of the three parts of the case study (prologue, participant's story, and epilogue) performs a different function in presenting the results of the analysis. In presenting the case studies the researcher refers to himself in the first person ("I"). This was done so as to acknowledge my role in creating the meaning in the interview, and in the case study. This supports the criteria proposed for evaluating this study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kvale, 1996; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). The case studies focus more on the content than on the form of the narratives; and while they primarily aim to analyse the category of imago, they do take the holistic aspects, the *Gestalt*, of the narrative into account (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998).

4.8.2.1 The prologue

A prologue is inserted at the start of the case study to give a brief overview of the process of the interview. It consists of three sections: clinical observation, responses in the interview process, and reflections on the interview process. Clinical observations (as defined in section 4.5.1) commented on how the participant presented in the interview. The 'responses in the interview process' section states how the participant habitually expressed himself, his characteristic modes of expression, and his tone. 'Reflections on the interview process' consisted of my comments on the interview. This includes whether the interview flowed or was interviewer-led; initial comments on the overall structure and tone of the narrative; and how the researcher responded to, and felt about, the participant. It closes with an initial assessment on the reliability and validity of the interview narrative, in light of the other sections of the prologue.

As mentioned, the prologue is my narrative of the interview process and the participants' presentation during it. The prologue serves three purposes: to 'set the scene' for the participant's story by giving background to the participant; to help the

reader of the case study understand the interview dynamics that underlie its production; and to make the reader aware of possible impacts I had on the creation of meaning in the case study. Accounting for the affect of the researcher on the creating of meanings is a fundamental requirement of both narrative psychology (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Kvale, 1996) and grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Presenting these factors in the prologue enables the reader, when reading the participant's narrative and the findings contained within it, to have a better understanding of the interview's *Gestalt*.

4.8.2.2 The participant's story

This is the narrative of the participant, presented chronologically, with the narratives contained in archival sources woven around their offence descriptions. This story covers the life span of the offender, from youth to incarceration. Telling the whole narrative of the offender, not just selected periods of life, ensures the overall sense of the story is not missed. This also supports the focus of the narrative inquiry on how the participants' imagoes developed. For the sake of brevity and clarity it was occasionally necessary to summarise what was said, or explain the meaning of a statement when it was not apparent from the interview transcript (e.g. when the meaning was implied, or given by the participant's tone of voice). This narrative was illustrated with quotes drawn from the transcription matrix. To support the aim of this study, direct quotations from the interview were given when discussing his relationship with others, his offences, or his motivation for offending. Where the interview was conducted in Afrikaans, the quotes were translated into English. Where an Afrikaans word had a double meaning that may not translate accurately, the original word is given after the translation in square brackets and italicised.

In line with recommendations from narrative and life story research, the participant's stories are arranged in chronological order with the content split into chapters denoted by a bold heading. The same chapter structure was used for each case study: 'Childhood'; 'Adolescence'; 'Adult life (Pre-murder series)'; their offences, each of which was given a separate chapter; and then 'Arrest and reflection'.

‘Childhood’ deals with the participant’s upbringing and schooling up until the last year of primary school (age approximately 12). ‘Adolescence’ deals with the narrative of their teenage years up until the last year of high school (age approximately 18), and ‘adult life (pre-murder series)’ covers their life from their leaving school up until the first murder they committed. Those chapters devoted to the murders were named according to how the participants referred to them (i.e. by victim name; or by number of offence). The victims themselves were referred to by the pseudonyms I gave them, first name and surname in the first instance, then first name only in subsequent mentions (unless both name and surname would aid understanding). Although using their names does not always reflect how the participants referred to them, it avoids confusion between victims and aids understanding. The final chapter, ‘arrest and reflection’ covers their narrative after their arrest.

The use of common chapter names for both case studies facilitated the construction of a clear chronology and comparison between the cases. The use of common chapter names also allowed for a separation to be made between the development of the participant’s imagoes up to the first murder, and imago development after that. This separation allows the applicability of these findings to offender profiling to be tested more easily. The possible implications of using common chapter names, especially as it is not consistent with the phenomenological orientation of narrative psychology, will be discussed in the final chapter.

Each chapter ended with an ‘imago analysis’ section. These explain how the imago(s) developed in that stage and interpret the episode in terms of the overall narrative. This includes a discussion of how the imago evolved, how it stayed the same, and what characterised this evolution. It also states what motivated and facilitated this evolution and what the limits of the imago’s influence on the participants’ narrative and behaviour are. Where relevant, comments on the interactions between imagoes, the narrative features which form the background to the imago, and some links to the narrative inquiries will be given. Subheadings are inserted in these sections to highlight the key developments in the imagoes and the interactions between them.

The imago analysis sections will also help in understanding how the participant’s imagoes developed before they committed their first murder, and how they developed

after that. This will allow for a nuanced response to the narrative inquires. It will also help answer whether the imago is a facilitator or motive of serial murder; and whether imagoes are motives for the offences, post-offence justifications, or a combination of both. These issues are fundamental in the narrative study of crime.

Unlike the rest of the story, which is based directly on the narratives presented by the participant and archival material, the imago analysis sections are my interpretation of that chapter. These analyses may highlight patterns and correlations in the participant's narrative that the participant himself may not have called attention to. For example, it may become apparent that the participant consistently avoids discussing his emotional state in his narrative; and his refusal to acknowledge emotional states may subsequently have a clear bearing on his offending. I will call attention to this pattern in the narrative, despite the fact that the participant himself may not be aware of it, or may not acknowledge it. While this approach is at variance with the phenomenological orientation of narrative psychology it was adopted to allow more insight into the participant's offending, and was necessary to meet the needs of the narrative enquiry.

To assist the reader's understanding of the imago analysis sections, reference will be made to which parts of the transcription presented in Appendix A provided were particularly drawn on in compiling that imago analysis section. This will be done using footnotes. The transcriptions have been divided into sequentially numbered segments to support this referencing. The length of these segments differ, being based on the length of my comments in the original transcription matrix. It should be noted that a single segment of interview material may contain reference to a number of different imagoes. This intertwining can make it difficult to separate various imagoes from one another (the implications of this will be discussed in the final Chapter). It should be remembered that the various imago analysis sections were not drawn up exclusively from the parts of the transcription highlighted in this way, as to do so would ignore grounded theory's requirement that one remain aware of whole meaning and the context, or *Gestalt*, of the text being analysed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

4.8.2.3 The epilogue

The epilogue is provided after the story, at the end of each case study, summarising the structure of the story and the imago interpretations given. The epilogue then summarises the answers to the narrative inquiries each story gives. By reflecting on and summarising the narrative inquiries' assessments of the role played by imagoes in the motivation and development of serial murder, the epilogue ensures the inquiry's answers are clear and provides an assessment of the degree to which the concept of imago is useful to offender profiling, in this case study (although the latter is not a main aim of the study).

The epilogue also ensures that the *Gestalt* of the case study is clear to the reader, and not lost in the presentation of the narrative. In helping create this *Gestalt*, the epilogue also helps synthesise our understandings of the 'narratives of other' presented in the case study with our understanding of the participant's narrative of self. Finally, in presenting this *Gestalt* in the epilogue, I am again meeting narrative research's requirement that he take the impact of his own perspectives on the interview process is taken into account.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission to conduct the interviews was obtained from the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and the interviews were conducted in the East Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa. Each prospective participant was approached and informed of what the research interview entailed. They were also informed that participation in the research, and the results obtained, would not influence parole, prison privileges, or sentence length. The prospective participants' voluntary co-operation was sought and no inducements were offered. If a prospective participant refused to give his permission for an interview then no interview was conducted, and they were not included in the sample for this research.

Each participant was guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. They were assured that their name, the victims' names, the names of family and friends, and location names would be changed in the case studies. These assurances were included in the

initial approach to the participants and in the pre-interview briefing. I changed any information which could serve to identify the participant, his relatives, or his victims during the transcription and analysis of the interviews. All persons were assigned pseudonyms, while place names and geographical locations were changed (for example, a town was given the name of another, similar sized, settlement). However given the demographic diversity of South Africa and the degree to which ethnicity in South Africa could affect a person's narrative (especially under apartheid), the population and ethnic group of the original participant was left unchanged. I kept a list of all changes made to the data to anonymise it, to ensure it was sufficiently and consistently altered.

The participants were also assured that they had the opportunity to ask questions or withdraw from the study at any time. Ethical concerns around the participants feeling exploited, suffering stress or trauma as a result of the interviews, or making legally compromising disclosures; were all addressed in the initial approach to the participants and in the pre-interview briefing. My ethical and legal obligations were also explained. This helped ensure that the interviewees did not have unrealistic expectations of the interview or make statements that could be harmful to them.

In relation to the possibility of the offender making legally compromising disclosures, it was expressly explained that should they admit to an offence for which they had not been convicted, I would be obliged to inform the Department of Correctional Services. The possibility of a participant being put in this position was minimised by the criteria used to select the sample. In relation to the participants feeling stressed or exploited, all participants were given the opportunity to ask questions or withdraw from the study at any time. Each interview ended with me offering the participant an opportunity to address any concerns that may have arisen during the interview.

Interview consent forms were supplied to the participants making all the above clear, and stated that the data could be used in future research studies. Both participants consented to this. Consent forms were supplied in both English and Afrikaans to ensure the participants understood the conditions of the interview. These conditions were also explained verbally to the participant, and the researcher checked that the participants fully understood the consent form before the interview began. The

interview consent forms were signed, along with an additional consent form agreeing to the audio tape recording of the interview (see Appendix B). Consent forms were signed, dated, and stored with the interview audio tapes. All audio tapes were labelled with the interviewee's name, date of interview, and the name of the prison where the interview was conducted. This avoided confusion between tapes or between interviews on different days with the same participants.

Permission to conduct this study is granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria, and the Department of Correctional Services, after carefully scrutinising the conditions and nature of the research. For full particulars on the ethical aspects of the research, refer to Appendix B.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This study investigates the role of the narrative concept of imago in the motivation and development of those who commit serial murder. This will assist in demonstrating the usefulness of the narrative concept of imago to offender profiling. This investigation takes the form of qualitative, dialogical-descriptive, case studies. The criteria for evaluating these case studies have been given, and will be again referred to when the limitations of the study are discussed in Chapter 7.

This study uses the methods of grounded theory approach to analyse the narratives presented in each case study. Each case study was analysed separately, which allowed for the imagoes and behavioural patterns for each participant to be fully explored. Given that the aim of the study was to gain a rich and detailed picture of the applicability of the concept of imago in each case, rather than obtain results that could be generalised to all South African serial murders, comparative analysis between case studies is beyond the remit of this study. Similarities and differences between the cases will however be discussed as part of Chapter 6. This should facilitate future research undertaking further explorations of the narrative patterns revealed by testing particular findings, adding more case studies, or undertaking formal analysis of the patterns between the case studies.