

## Chapter 4

### Method and procedure

"Chance favours only the prepared mind"

Louis Pasteur.

#### 4.1 Introduction

Chance is never the predominant factor in discovery. The novice scientist who hopes that he can, by luck, emulate the great names in science is directed to Pasteur's famous saying: "chance favours only the prepared mind" (Rappaport & Wright, 1964, in Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the quest for what is to be known we need to be scientific, yet creative. Sensitivity towards that which is already known and that which may probably be, or not be, is necessary. Therefore the method and procedure, together with theoretical sensitivity may adequately prepare the mind of the researcher to be able to search beyond the obvious so as to uncover and understand, by "chance", the reality which cannot actually be known, but is always interpreted.

#### 4.2 Qualitative research

I have specifically chosen the qualitative research method for this study, as it may better unveil and understand the finer nuances and intricacies of serial murder. The qualitative method of interviewing may contribute more to the understanding of this phenomenon. This mode of understanding may help us to gain a new perspective on a serial murder. Qualitative research methods further enhance one's attempt to understand the nature of people's experience of a phenomenon. A specific type of qualitative research based on the principles of Grounded Theory will be used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

This means that the data will be interpreted, analyzed and conceptualized and the concepts may be linked to form a theoretical rendition of reality (a reality that cannot actually be known, but is always interpreted) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theory building then represents the most systematic way of synthesizing and integrating scientific knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19-22).

#### **4.3 The "team approach" explained**

In Chapter One it was mentioned that a team approach to the understanding of serial murder was followed. The two researchers, myself and Mr Gérard Labuschagne, undertook the research investigation, which lead to two separate research reports. These two research projects have not been integrated into a comprehensive report.

Team approach in this sense meant that the two researchers worked in close concert, yet divided the final products into two independent studies. For the reader and future researchers alike, Mr. Labuschagne's Master's dissertation on the phenomenon of serial murder is titled is once again mentioned (see Chapter One and/or the reference list).

#### **4.4 Method**

The method will be aligned with the methodology of Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is concerned with the following: a field understanding of "what is going on", the importance of a theory based in "reality", the nature of experience as continually evolving, the active role of the person in shaping the world he lives in (emphasizing change, process, and the variability and complexity of life), and the interrelationship between action, meaning and condition (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 25)

The researcher attempts to arrive at a qualitative understanding of serial murder by using the principles of grounded theory in abstracting concepts and categories from qualitative interviews with people who have committed serial murders (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These concepts may then be abstracted and reconstructed by means of a conditional

matrix and theoretical sampling so as to capture the complexity of phenomenon of serial murder in the conditions and consequences that have a bearing upon it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These qualitative interviews are defined as conversations which are different to social conversation, in the sense of having a method and purpose. The method includes careful questioning and listening skills with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge (Kvale, 1996, p. 6).

The data for qualitative research though, may come from various sources, of which interviews and observations remain the most common sources (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 20). Interviews can literally be seen as an inter-change of views, between two people conversing about a theme of mutual interest. Qualitative research interviews thus attempt to understand the world from the subjects' pre-scientific point of view so as to uncover their lived experience (Kvale, 1996, pp. 1 - 2).

#### 4.4.1 Nature of literature

With regard to observation and interviewing, theoretical sensitivity is of importance. Theoretical sensitivity can be described as a personal quality or attribute of the researcher: the ability to understand, to have insight, being able to give meaning to the data, an awareness of the subtle meaning of the data and being able to separate the important data from the rest. Theoretical sensitivity may be derived from various sources, such as relevant literature, professional experience, personal experience and the analytic process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theoretical sensitivity facilitates creative potential in the way the researcher deals with both the literature and the data. Caution must, however, be taken to keep a healthy balance between the creative and scientific. Occasionally stepping back from the research provides a balance so as to rethink it, maintaining an attitude of scepticism by which one regards both the theoretical explanations and the data findings as provisional, and following the research procedure which gives the research the necessary scientific rigour, but also helps to break through some biases (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 41 - 46).

The researcher can make use of two types of literature within the paradigm of the grounded theory approach, namely technical literature and non-technical literature.

Technical literature consists of reports, research, theoretical and philosophical papers and other disciplinary writing, and may be used in comparison with the findings of the actual grounded theory research. Non-technical literature may be comprised of biographies, diaries, documents, manuscripts, reports, catalogues, newspapers and videotapes, and may be used as primary data sources to supplement the grounded theory research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 48 - 49). Technical literature may also have a constraining and/or inhibiting effect. In the light of the evolving theoretical framework of the grounded theory approach, the technical literature may superimpose existing categories and theoretical frameworks onto the researcher and thereby inhibit and restrain the researcher in his discovery or uncovering.

In this research the author relied heavily on non-technical literature, such as newspaper clippings (to help identify possible candidates for interviews), and videotapes of the actual interviews with the identified people (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). The technical literature, such as the current literature understanding of serial murder, plays an important role in sensitizing the researcher for the literature and is of pivotal importance.

This is an example of the reciprocal relationship between the literature and the evolving grounded theory: the researcher needs a point of reference from which he can start the research, this starting point may be provided by the literature which may also guide theoretical sampling. Through theoretical sampling and data analysis the new grounded theory evolves. This newly evolved grounded theory may be supplemented and compared with the literature so as to extend the existing literature understanding. Although this research is not hermeneutical per se, one can see how one rotation of the spiral of knowledge is completed.

#### 4.4.2 Techniques in Grounded Theory

To enhance the theoretical sensitivity and to open up the data beyond the obvious, the following techniques may be used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 77 - 93):

- asking questions (Normal questions pertaining to the specifics of certain themes. One may, for instance, ask, when, where, why, how many times and how did you commit murder, and who did you murder? One may then also question the temporal dimension of a specific theme, for instance, with what frequency did you experience this boredom, how long did it last, at which point in time did you experience this boredom and how long did you take to break this boredom?);
- analysis of a word, phrase or sentence (Scan the data and then return to any word, phrase or sentence that has struck one as significant, interesting or important, and that one would like to reflect upon more deeply);
- the "flip-flop technique" (This basically means that one turns the concept of domination upside down and imagines the very opposite, in order to think more analytically than descriptively about the data. This in turn helps to generate provisional categories and their properties);
- systematic comparison (This means that one compares a specific phenomenon with another known phenomenon with the underlying similarities and differences. One's eventual theoretical explanation, although it may draw the same conclusion as the original literature, has a higher density due to the different avenues of exploration);
- far-out comparisons (It is a technique that may be employed by the researcher to get unstuck by generating properties and dimensions to pursue. This technique is self explanatory. It entails the comparison of two seemingly unrelated areas. If One wants to generate more properties and dimensions surrounding the relationship between the person who commits serial murder and the actual murders, one may compare it to a person who collects butterflies and the actual catching of butterflies. Although these two activities are far apart, they may shed some light on hidden dimensions and properties of serial murder); and
- waving the red flag (The analytic issue at hand is never to take anything for granted. Therefore absolutistic statements, phrases or words such as: "never", "always" and "it will last forever", should be examined more closely and they may be clarified or even challenged).

## 4.5 Procedure

The analytic procedure of grounded theory is designed not only to test, but also to build theory. This procedure provides the research process with the rigour a) to produce a theory which is scientific, b) to help the researcher to break through preconceived ideas that are both brought into, and generated during the research process, c) and to ground the theory. Procedure assists in building a dense, tightly woven explanatory theory which is developed through sensitivity in integrating the data, so that it approximates the reality which it represents (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). Theory building is, however, not the aim of this research, but rather the abstraction of qualitative themes.

The researcher used personal interviews based on the principles of Grounded Theory as a qualitative data gathering basis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Several interviews (about six) were conducted with each person. The aim is not necessarily to find commonalities and norms, but to understand the psychological structure and dynamics of each individual (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The narratives and conversations inherent in interviews are considered essential for obtaining knowledge about the social world, and this includes scientific knowledge (Kvale, 1996, pp. 8-9)

### 4.5.1 Selection of candidates

Specific candidates had been selected according to the operational definition of serial murder. This research population may thus be seen as an availability sample. The following criteria had to be met:

- convicted of several (at least three or more) murders;
- the murders must seem motiveless, i.e. seemingly without any motive such as gain or revenge;
- the murders may not be gang, cult, race or ideology related, or for the reason of eliminating witnesses to other crimes;
- there may be cooling off periods between the murders; and
- the person had to be legally competent to stand trial and all appeals must be concluded.

Following this criteria only four people were identified as people who have committed serial murder. Information regarding convictions was verified through the identified persons criminal record and data from the Department of Correctional Services' computer records. These candidates were expected to be available and willing to part take in the research without reward.

#### 4.5.2 First meetings

The purpose of the first meeting was to take care of the formal-legal aspects of the research. First of all it was necessary to establish the following:

- willing consent to take part in the research without any advantages or disadvantages attached thereto;
- consent for audiovisual recording of interviews; and
- the signing of a legal undertaking which protects their identity.

The legal undertaking was translated into several languages: Afrikaans, English, SeTswana, Northern SeSotho and IsiZulu. (See Appendix C, which is the English version of the legal undertaking).

The first meetings took place on two different days, early in December 1996. On the first day the researchers met Messrs N., M. and D. for the first time, and two days later the researchers met Mr. C. All the candidates met both the above mentioned criteria and definition of this study. A standard introductory explanation has been used which contains the following basic principles:

- this research is conducted under the auspices of the University of Pretoria;
- the focus of this research is murder;
- all information will be treated as confidential and identities will be protected;
- interviews are conducted in a discussion-type fashion;
- various interviews will be conducted and videotaped for research purposes;
- the videotapes will be used for research purposes and will only be seen by the researcher and his supervisor; and

- there are no positive or negative consequences related to your choice of participation or non-participation.

#### 4.5.3 First interviews

The first interview with every candidate was done in an unstructured way. A certain amount of rapport had already been established with the interviewees from the first meetings and interviewer and interviewee were thus already acquainted. The researcher treated the first interview in the same fashion as one would treat the first interview with a client in a client centred therapeutic context, fostering support, warmth and empathy. The researcher was non-directive and was guided, to a large extent, by what the person brought into the interview situation and he phrased the questions in an open ended fashion so that even the clarification of statements by the interviewee remained non-directive.

It was further explained that the research process would involve a few sessions where the interviewers would have an informal discussion with each interviewee separately.

The first interview was unstructured and non-directive and was led by what the interviewee presented. All the interviews were recorded audiovisually and the first five minutes of each first interview is transcribed (see Appendix C). The first interviews and subsequent follow-up interviews were videotaped and analyzed to extract themes. These themes are described in Chapter Five in no specific order and have not been placed in any construct of inter-relatedness or interpretation. Such interpretations and conceptual frameworks will be provided later in Chapter Six. Where necessary, follow-up interviews were used to clarify certain aspects from the first interview.

#### 4.5.4 Defining the concept "themes"

As already explained, the recognition and abstraction of theme forms an important aspect of the analysis of interviews. "Theme" refers to a concept, an idea or phrase which is repeated during the communications. Primary themes are those repeated most often and the lesser ones are considered secondary themes.



A verbatim transcription has been made of the first five minutes of each person's first interview (see Appendix C). The lines of each such transcription are numbered in the left-hand margin. Thus, when reporting and analysing the themes (see Chapter 5: Results), the line number(s) serve the purpose of indicating the location(s) of each theme and are placed in brackets next to the quoted theme.

However, due to the length of the interviews it is not feasible to transcribe each interview completely. These short transcriptions and the quoted themes serve as an example of how the researcher abstracted the themes. The reader may find that many themes have been mentioned (Chapter Five) without a mention of a corresponding line number. In such instance the theme was abstracted from the audiovisual recording of the interview. These audiovisual recordings are available, on request, from Ms. M. Bergh, Director of Psychology, Department of Correctional Services (see Appendices E and F).

#### 4.5.5 Context

It is not plausible to report the description of interviews and themes in isolation. Contextualization is important, given the subjective nature of these descriptions. Therefore, mention will be made of the situation, the people involved, the setting and all other relevant factors that may have a bearing upon the interview and subsequent description. Minor aspects which could shed light on the identity of the four persons and so jeopardize the confidentiality were omitted or changed.

#### 4.5.6 Analysis of the data

As introduction to each person's presenting qualitative themes, the interviews are further contextualized and other possible relevant factors are discussed. Specific attention is also given to the type of information with which the interviewee starts off the interview.

Analysis of the first interview is done by means of open coding. This means that the search for themes started off with a line-by-line analysis of the transcribed data which generated categories that formed the basis of the theoretical sampling. Sentence or paragraph analysis helped to code the then already existing categories, while analysis of

the entire document or observation helped to facilitate comparison in terms of similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 73).

Follow-up interviews clarify certain questions prompted by the concepts and/or categories revealed during the first interview. This guided the following interviews. Categories and concepts may be refined and abstracted through the use of axial and selective coding. Clarifying and collecting data through non-directive and directive questioning helped to saturate and understand the categories.

The newly derived grounded theory understanding of serial murder is eventually compared with the existing theories and literature. The research findings, comparisons, and documented data are written up.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

A brief summary has been given of the theoretical roots of grounded theory and the underlying rationale thereof. An overview of the theoretical premises of both the method and the procedure has been provided. The researcher discusses how he conceptualizes and applies the principles and procedure of the grounded theory approach in his research. The researcher will thus attempt to understand the nature of the phenomenon of serial murder from a grounded theory approach, using the methods and procedures thereof.

In the following chapter the results from the interviews are presented. This chapter can be seen as the raw data of this research.

## Chapter 5

### Results

#### 5.1 Introduction

The data is reported on a descriptive level and consists of the researcher's description of the content and process of the interviews. The data consists of a short contextualization of the interview situation, the researcher's clinical impressions of the interviewee and qualitative themes from the interview.

#### 5.2 Person I: Mr. N.

Mr. N. is a 25-year-old, Afrikaans speaking, white male. He is short and of medium build. He has brown hair and blue eyes. He is the oldest of three children. His parents are both still alive. He was married for seven years and has one child from that marriage, aged seven years. He still has contact with his family.

He had no criminal record prior to the current convictions. He was convicted on three charges of murder and received three sentences of 30 years each. He has been incarcerated since 1996.

##### 5.2.1 Contextualization

The first interview was held in the legal consulting room in the maximum security section at Pretoria Maximum Correctional facility. It was a bare room, with two wooden benches and three other single chairs tied together with a chain and lock. I was struck by the amount of noise in this room. I could clearly hear sounds from both inside and outside the correctional facility. This room was adjacent to a very busy corridor and only a door with a glass pane separated the two. This added to the noise problem.

A series of small vertical windows ran along the length of the room's outside wall with bars in front of each window. Although the interview was conducted out of sight and hearing of the correctional officer at the door, I was aware of his presence.

### 5.2.2 Clinical impressions

Mr. N. was dressed in a light green shirt and trousers, with shining black shoes. His appearance struck me as very neat: he was well groomed with short and neat hair. He is short and of slender build.

I would describe him as a small person. When we shook hands his hand was dry and his grip was normal. I experienced something almost sensitive about him, as if he was very susceptible to being hurt by other people. He was, however, slightly nervous, but this may have been attributed to the fact that he thought that both Mr. Labuschagne and myself were lawyers. This misconception was corrected soon after. Despite the fact that he understood both the content and implication of the undertaking, he chose to consult with his lawyer before actually signing it. This may have indicated that he was wary of trusting people on face value, and/or it may simply have meant that he knew that this undertaking had certain legal implications which needed further consideration.

He seemed to be of average intelligence and was not very talkative. He twiddled his thumbs at the beginning, he seemed rather solemn and did not initially smile at all. He also appeared slightly hesitant or unsure of himself. Later he started to liven up a bit as he smiled more frequently and appeared very thankful that someone had eventually come to his assistance. He stated that he was afraid of himself and that he did not always feel in control of himself and of what he might do.

He further stated that he would like to get to know and understand himself better. I experienced this statement as very sincere. He almost seemed touched by his own incapacity to understand himself. According to him he still could not remember exactly what he had done. When the police showed him photographs of the crime scenes he was shocked and could not believe that he could have done something like that.

He was very polite, well spoken and well mannered. He also expressed his gratitude for our help several times. He reiterated his willingness to part take in the research, especially if such research could, in future, help other people with problems similar to his. He said that his problem (he did not specify what precisely it was) did not end just because he was incarcerated. According to him, that which happened to him outside, continues to happen to him during incarceration. Thus his problem still exists.

### 5.2.3 Themes from the interviews

Instead of an elaborate explanation of how themes were abstracted, a short illustration follows. For this purpose the first section of Mr. N.'s first interview transcription (refer to Appendix C) is used:

- 1     **R 1:**            "Ons begin vandag met ons eerste onderhoud, en ons  
2                        wil hê jy moet praat waaroor jy ookal wil."  
3     **Mr. N:**            "Ek is nou nie 'n persoon wat sommer self so kan  
4                        begin nie...Wel, waar wil julle hê moet ek begin?"  
5     **R 1:**            "Enige plek."  
6     **Mr. N:**            "Toe ek 'n kind was, toe ek groot is?"  
7     **R 1:**            "Ja, net soos jy wil, enige plek."  
8     **Mr. N:**            "Wel, as kind het ek seker 'n nie te slegte  
9                        lewe gehad nie, dis net...'n paar goeters wat gebeur het,  
10                       het nie die lewe so lekker gemaak nie. Ek's nou 'n man en  
11                       ek hou nie daarvan as mans, met gay stories deurmekaar  
12                       is. Ek kan dit nie hanteer nie. Dieselfde met hoere ôk.  
13                       Ek's nie 'n ou wat hoere kan hanteer nie, 'n vroumens wat  
14                       begin uitspatterig raak is vir my absoluut soos 'n doring  
15                       in die vlees. Ek haat dit. Ek kan dit nie hanteer nie."

As already explained in Chapter Four, this serves as an example of how the researcher abstracts themes from the data. The themes from Mr. N.'s interviews are the following:

- Self disclosure: he starts off with self disclosure by qualifying that he is a person who possibly needs guidance and finds unstructuredness difficult to deal with (3).
- Dislike of homosexual activities: The self disclosure continues. He can't handle men who are involved in gay activities (11). He later links this dislike to the fact that a cousin had sexually molested and indecently assaulted him when he was in senior primary school.
- Strong dislike for prostitutes: He can't handle whores (13). Both these references to gays and prostitutes may disclose the puritanical nature of his psycho-sexual development.
- Impaired logic: the link between his dislike of homosexual activity and prostitutes is very vague and seems like a jump in logic (lines 11 & 13). He uses a circular argument to identify his first murder victim as a whore (31-32).
- His judgement is influenced by a stereotypical view of what a whore is (31-32).
- Stereotypical images: he stereotypes people very easily, for instance women, whores and gays.
- Seeks guidance: he seeks guidance in how he should start (3, 4 & 6).
- He thinks in terms of extremes: child versus grown-up (4), he absolutely detests whores (15).
- A very strong dislike of whores: He can't handle them (line 13), they are like a thorn in his flesh (line 15), he hates it (line 16) and again he can not handle them (line 16).
- Idiomatic language use (14-15).
- Something inside himself: He struggles to explain this concept (19, 60, 61). Sometimes he describes this in an impersonal manner as "it" (19, 21, 27 & 38) with lifeless attributes like that of a wall which you walk into (19-20). More often he personalizes this entity, ascribing living qualities to it. For instance, this entity reacts to a specific name and it can wake him up on the inside (59), it is like another person (61) or another part of him (66-67), and this entity does not always react to its name (64-67). In a later interview he said that it is as if he is communicating with himself (or someone else inside himself) and his self (or this other person) can communicate back. He also displays ambivalence about the nature of this entity when he states that "...Emile is iets..." (Emile is something) (59).

- Involuntary behaviour: The entity causes him to do things which are out of his control and he cannot stop it (26- 27, 57, 35, 37-42, 63-64). This involuntary behaviour has serious results such as fighting and even death (24-27).
- Hot headedness: this may be seen as a synonym for both "something inside himself" and "involuntary behaviour" He refers to these states as being "warmkop" or hot headed, which means "that you do your own thing". He further described it as, "It is as if your body dies, you feel empty and you do not feel like yourself. Although you may be aware of what is happening, your brain cannot control your body any more, you feel as if you are radio controlled. You think thoughts that may not be thought". He states it very well by saying it is "...like someone else climbs into you, cuts you off and controls you."
- Visible changes: according to him, his wife said that one can see the changes (hot headedness) in his eyes, the look in his eyes changes completely (from timid to hostile). This has been confirmed by the social worker when she stated that he is not the person she knows. Both his wife and the social worker have reported that his behaviour changes to being more unruly and aggressive.
- Visceral experience: he reports various visceral experiences during the process of becoming "hot headed". He feels cold on the outside and then becomes hot from the inside and "then he (other part or person, or the entity) is there".
- Uncertainty about "split personality": he is uncertain about having a split personality. He says he is okay with himself, but he is scared of the other half of himself.
- Uncertain about his own identity: he asks the question "Who am I then?". He is desperate to understand himself and he seeks help, for example: he went to a neurologist, in court he requested to receive psychotherapy, and again asked the researchers to help him with his problem. When the other part/person takes over, the clean side of him disappears and this other part/person has an identity of its own.
- A moral sense: He knows when he is doing something wrong (23-25) and he knows he should stop (41-42). He is moralistic, because he judges other people and himself by a strict code of conduct.
- He is aware of his problem (20-22).
- Unsure of the cause of the problem: he speculates that the problem may be in

himself. However, he is not sure of the exact location of the problem, for example it may be in his body, his mind, his thoughts or his soul.

- Subjective discomfort: he dislikes being out of control (20-21), involuntary behaviour is incompatible with his own body (21), it makes things (and life) difficult for him (22), he does not like to murder (36-37), it shocked him to see what he is capable of (28) and it is not part of his self definition, it caused disbelief (28-30). He later said that "this thing must come out of him". When he is controlled like this, he wants to trade in his head or body for another. He has been so desperate with himself that he tried to commit suicide in 1994. When he was shown the crime scene photographs of the second and third murder, the court proceedings were adjourned so that he could go to the bathroom where he was sick. He describes these murders as inhumane and he looked disgusted when he described the detail on the photos.
- Shifting responsibility: He does not take responsibility for his actions, it is "something inside him" that does not want to deal with "whores" and "gays" (16).
- Time lapses: he experiences time gaps, for instance from the moment he opened the door for his first victim to actually beating her (35-36). He has no recollection of the second and third murders. On the evening of the second and third murders he experienced a two-hour lapse from approximately 20h00 to 22h00. He remembers going to town, visiting a friend. He had a heated argument with his friends wife, during which she swore at Mr. N.'s mother. This upset him very much because, as he puts it, she swore under his mothers dress: "...sy het my ma onder haar rok in gevloek. Dit het my omgekrap. My ma is my ma". He remembers leaving through the garden gate with his friend, but cannot recall how he got there. He remembers getting into a car with his friend and another woman. The next thing he remembers is being back at home and getting in to bed. The first time he saw the victims and what he had done was during the trial with when the crime scene photographs were shown to him.
- Triggering process: these spells of involuntary behaviour and/or time lapses may be triggered by people or events that upset him, for instance "whores", "gays", interpersonal conflict or severe insults to his mother.
- Historical onset: his problem with "hot headedness" started in childhood (56-58).



### 5.3 Person II: Mr. M.

He is a 44-year-old, Tswana speaking, black male. He is of slender, small build and has brown eyes. He comes from a complex, reconstituted family. He is the only child of his biological mother and father. His father divorced his mother and married another woman and they had three children. He does not know any of his mother or step mother's names. His father had a girlfriend before his biological mother and they have seven children. Since the age of two he stayed with this girlfriend of his father, whom he used to call his mother. This step-family was characterized by a lot of conflict, fighting and drinking. His father died approximately twelve years ago.

His occupation may be described as an entrepreneur. He fixes radios and televisions, and sells spices for a living.

He has a prior criminal record. His previous convictions start in 1975 and range from housebreaking, theft and assault to escape from custody. He was found guilty on six counts of murder, one of attempted murder and one of rape. He was sentenced to six times life long imprisonment and has been incarcerated since 1993.

#### 5.3.1 Contextualization

Mr. M's interviews were conducted in the same room and under similar circumstances as with Mr. N. The interview was conducted out of sight and hearing of the correctional officer guarding the door.

#### 5.3.2 Clinical impressions

What struck me when I first saw him was the small size of his head in proportion to his body. He was dressed in the standard dark green uniform. When we shook hands, his hand was slightly damp and this may indicate anxiety. He had a timid handshake which may have indicated interpersonal submissiveness or may otherwise have been indicative of his cultural background. He greeted me with the commonly seen alternating-three-grip-handshake.

In a way he seemed fragile and almost brittle, as if he could be easily be broken or hurt, both physically and emotionally. I experienced an almost sad quality about him. He was a bit soft spoken. I caught myself speaking slower and articulating more clearly to him, sitting forward on my chair and paying close attention to him. I think this was partly due to my first perception of him as being not too intelligent. On the contrary, he later proved to be intellectually quite capable.

He initially thought that the researchers were human rights lawyers and he wanted us to help him re-open his criminal case. The researchers stated that they were doing research about murder and he immediately contested his suitability for this study. He maintained that he did not commit any murders. He went to great lengths to explain the researchers and to convince them that he is was mistakenly identified and trailed for murders which he did not commit. According to him there had been a confusion with the names and he was eventually arrested. Due to an earlier rape conviction and sentence, he was seen by the police as the ideal suspect to fit the murder charges.

In the light of my sensitivity to keep an open mind, his explanation was so convincing that it caused enough doubt in my mind to actually check the file with his conviction records. Though possible, it seemed highly unlikely that he could have been "framed" for several murders.

After he realized that we were not lawyers he scaled down on his persuasive attempts. He seemed to be slightly cautious and suspicious of us, but later relaxed and even started to smile. He asked whether he might read his undertaking aloud and did so in his mother tongue. Despite the fact that he read slowly and often with difficulty, he persisted and finished reading the whole document. This might have been a display of his abilities and/or education. Hereafter he said that despite that fact that he knew what he read, he did not understand it and for this purpose we brought a translator in. The translator explained the content and implication of the undertaking to him in his mother tongue. This seemed to put him more at ease and he signed the undertaking.

### 5.3.3 Themes from the interviews

The following themes were identified from his interview(s):

- Seeks guidance: Unsure where to start (2 & 5).
- Self disclosure: He qualifies what type of man he was outside, by saying "...I was a man who..." (9 & 18). He subsequently discloses his occupations (8-9 & 15), where and with whom he lived (10-13) and what type of person he is (18-21).
- Self perception: he is a person who enjoys life with other people (19), he is not a criminal (20), other people know him as being well (21).
- Life outside (before incarceration): He mostly speaks about his occupation where he sold spices or repaired radios and televisions (8-9).
- Seeking confirmation: at the end of sentence he often repeats the phrase or a part of the phrase "...you see? Yah" or "...you see? No" (9-10, 10, 13, 19, 20-21, 21, 26-27, 29, 30, 31, 32-33, 33, 35, 38, 40, 40-41, 42, 43, 45, 48, 50 & 52). It seems as if he is uncertain whether the listener understands and therefore he seeks confirmation of the listener's understanding.
- Innocence: he firmly believes that he did not commit any murders and that he was framed for all six murders (22-23). He gives a detailed explanation of how he was framed by the defense and the complainant (22-45).
- The court failed to fulfil its responsibility: he pointed out to the court that there are discrepancies in the testimony and process of the hearing (23-30) and despite this the court still sentenced him (38-43).
- He wants to appeal: This may be seen as an attempt to assert himself, he is trying to appeal against the court sentence (43-47).
- Being left to his own devices: nobody helps him (47) and nobody is willing to help him (47-48), he has applied for legal aid (46-47), his lawyer has promised him an appeal, but this has not been realized (44-45), and the court did not help him either (23-30 & 38-43).
- Loosing hope: he is constantly trying to obtain help (46-47), but if nobody helps him he may lose hope (48).
- Instilling hope: he is not ready to give up hope (48-49) when he says "I say no, see maybe...". He furthermore places his hope in the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission (TRC) or God. He believes it is possible that the TRC or God may release him (48-50).

- Christian faith: he believes that God is in control of our lives, He knows what He is doing and He knows why things happen to us (50-51). God is his only hope (52).

In terms of understanding a person who has committed serial murder, I feel that Mr. M's data lacks in richness. This may be due to the fact that he communicated in English and not in his mother tongue. Despite this, the data holds several themes.

#### 5.4 Person III: Mr. D.

He is a 53-year-old, Tswana speaking, black man. He is rather skinny and of average height. He is the second oldest child of five children. He has one older and three younger sisters. Both his parents are alive, they have been traditionally married and have divorced. His mother remarried and has one child from that marriage. Mr. D. is married to his first wife and they have two daughters. He feels the closest to his wife, children and his younger sister.

He is religious and belongs to a specific church. He has been a farm worker by trade and has a standard five (grade seven) education.

He has a criminal record starting in 1968. Convictions range from theft, escape, attempted escape, malicious damage to property (damaging the police cell) to manslaughter. He has been convicted on 14 counts of murder and one of attempted murder. He has received a sentence of life imprisonment and he has been incarcerated since 1990.

##### 5.4.1 Contextualization

He was seen in the administrative part of Pretoria Local Correctional facility. The researchers met him in the office of the secretary to the commanding officer. We went

into the next door office, furnished with a standard government issue furniture including a bare table and some old dilapidated chairs.

The room had a series of small vertical windows along the length of the room's outside wall with bars in front of each window which overlooked a main road to and from the city. The floor was largely covered with a brown, loose carpet and the floor tiles had come undone in a few places. The interviews were held in privacy and there was no correctional officer guarding at the door.

#### 5.4.2 Clinical impressions

He was dressed in an old shirt of which the collar was frayed with an outdated, old vest underneath. He struck me as very friendly. The way in which he greeted me with his right arm extended and his left hand supporting the right forearm from beneath, indicated a traditional and/or rural way of greeting.

On grounds of his handshake, I perceived him as being steeped in traditional ways and that he might be as traditional in his beliefs. His hands were dry and rough and his grip was very timid (which may be interpreted as a cultural sign of being respectful and friendly). His shoes were old and it seemed as if he either made them himself or had re-patented an old pair of shoes. This might have indicated a certain degree of ingenuity on his side with an odd and/or eccentric way of creating things.

He had rugged hands which seem to have done a lot of hard labour in their day. He spoke a rather fluent Afrikaans, with the exception of a few odd or weird word uses. He preferred Afrikaans as the conversation language. He did, however, prefer the undertaking to be in his mother tongue and also used an interpreter to help explain the implications of the undertaking, after which he signed the undertaking. He initially thought that the researchers were members of the South African Police Service who were re-investigating one of his cases and therefore inquired if he could have an interpreter to help him with the "investigation". Only after the interpreter helped to explain our affiliation, plans and purpose did he understand that we were not "investigating" in the criminal sense of the word, but rather researching.

Although he did not seem to do it deliberately, he was sometimes very amusing in the way he made sense of things and in the way he expressed himself. In this sense, I experienced him as a very likable character and this also made the atmosphere very informal and relaxed. He came across as very genuine and interested in us, he asked whether we were going away for the festive season and without giving me a sense of prying, enquired about the researchers' family lives. Despite these inquiries he kept his distance and when we showed our reluctance to answer his questions directly he did not press for an answer.

He spoke a lot about his family. He was very eager to participate and no persuasion was needed. He seemed to be delighted by the attention that was given to him by our research. Even after we had formally said our goodbyes he waited for us on the stairs to say that we must not forget about him. This also led me to experience him as dependent and almost lonely. The question remains whether any of this may be attributed to his character or the correctional setting.

#### 5.4.3 Themes from the interviews

The following themes were identified from his interview(s):

- Starting immediately: he starts off without asking for guidance as to what to say. This may indicate a certain degree of independence or anxiety
- Postponing: he postpones what he is about to say by starting off with a long elaborate sentence. It is as if he is preparing the way (1-3).
- People must listen to him: he regards himself as one who has something to share with the world, for example "...listen up all you people...I can tell you something..." (1, 17) and "...ek sê so:" (70).
- Moralistic: people must listen to what he has to say (1 & 17). He starts off by prescribing to the people what they should or should not do, for instance, we can not live on our own (4-5) and we should live together as South Africans (10). People should not kill each other, it is not good (7-8). He often uses the words "must" and "must not" (3, 9, 30, 70, 72 & 73). Another moralistic story is that one should not rape and murder another person, because one will go to jail and ones family will suffer (21-26).

- Religious messages: this may also form part of the moralistic streak he has. There are several religious-moral themes, such as, "you must go to church and associate with church people" (14-15), and " you must walk with God and pray to Him, you shouldn't walk with the devil, otherwise the devil will get you" (34-38). He brought sketches which he traced of God standing on the serpent's head and of God and the dove (Holy Ghost).
- Seeking confirmation: he often asks the rhetorical question "You see?" after his statements. This may be a mannerism or he may be seeking confirmation of the listener's understanding (2-3, 4, 10, 26, 32, 40, 43, 51-52, 59-60).
- Perseveration: this may be a single word(s) repeated a few times or it could be an idea (9, 31, 34-38, 57, 62-64, 73-77, 78-79).
- Minimizes the effect of his behaviour: He refers to wrong doings as "funny things" (21).
- Peculiar verbalizations: for example "beur" instead of "gebeur" (2), "Sôt-Afrika" instead of "Suid-Afrika" (10, 56, 58 & 79), "kintietjie" instead of "kindjie" (21 & 22). He also refers to human anatomy in terms of animal anatomy, for instance "poot" (paw) instead of "hand" and "speen" (udder) instead of "breast". This may be due to his understanding of the Afrikaans language.
- Thought pressure: He repeats "En so aan" (And so forth) very often, especially at the end of a specific idea (16, 26, 43, 47-48). It is almost as if he is saying that he has more to say about the topic, but for the moment he will decline from doing so.
- Loose associations: for example he starts off by talking about how he likes it to be outside and how he dislikes being inside. He then starts to wander off with loose associations and ends up talking about president De Klerk (49-60).
- Tangential thinking: this occurs elsewhere in his interview where he starts off with a story about a man who is going to town. He then strays off completely and starts to tell in detail about the buildings that he sees and how he can build such buildings.
- Numerical omissions: when he would like to say "I have build seven houses while I was outside", he would for instance say "I have build 1, 2, 3, 4,..., 6, 7 houses". Despite counting out aloud and using his fingers to guide him, he would always leave out a number.

- Intellectual striving: his intelligence seems to be average to low average. Despite this he comes across as trying to sound more intelligent than he is, almost as if he tries to compensate.
- He is childlike: for instance counting out aloud and using his fingers or the way in which he describes something that is not good (7-8). He has been thrown away by his family for being "very naughty".
- Little emotional flow: there is a discrepancy between his verbal content and his non-verbal expression. For instance when he speaks about murder and rape that is not good, his face does not change and his voice remains the same. All through his interview his affect may be described as blunt.
- Speech pressure: he speaks incredibly fast and non-stop. Compare the transcription length of his first five minutes with those of the others'.
- He portrays himself as a good Samaritan character: he found a sick man alongside the road, he took him to hospital and visited him regularly. He is a person prescribing advice to other people to keep them on the straight and narrow. He wants to prevent other people from being killed, because we are all South Africans and children of God (70-79).

## 5.5 Person IV: Mr. C.

He is a 30-year-old, Afrikaans speaking, white male. He is of slender build with short, black hair and he is taller than average. He is an only child from his parents' marriage. His parents are still alive and married. He does not know his father's side of the family, but he knows his mother's side of the family very well. He feels the closest to his mother's side of the family. No close relationship is indicated with either of his parents.

He was a member of the former South African Railway Police. He had no prior convictions. He was convicted on five counts of murder, three of rape, one of attempted rape, one of robbery and four of theft. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and has been incarcerated since 1993.



### 5.5.1 Contextualization

With Mr. C one of the correctional officials sat in with the first interview. Although this was not intentional it may have had an effect on the interview. Although the correctional official's presence did not necessarily invalidate these themes, it did however create a different context. Therefore specific notice is taken of possible differences between the first and second interview (when the correctional official was absent). For the duration of the other interviews, the correctional officer guarded the door out of sight and hearing and I was not constantly aware of his presence.

The first interview was held in the administrative block of an East Rand correctional facility. A wooden door separated the corridor from the second in command's office where the interview took place. This was a large office, neatly furnished with new furniture, full floor carpeting, and an open reception area. The office is finished off with a few personal touches like family photos on the desk and a bookshelf.

### 5.5.2 Clinical impressions

Mr. C. seemed very suspicious of the researchers and did not speak much. The way in which he looked around, he seemed almost hyper-vigilant with a lot of sideward glancing. He was, however, very willing to co-operate and take part in the research and he also signed the undertaking during the first meeting. During the discussion on how the researchers might later contact him, the one researcher suggested that he would phone a certain contact person. The interviewee replied by telling the researcher that there were certain procedures and channels through which the researcher should work.

Before the first contact session, Mr. C notified the researchers that he would only speak to a researcher who was affiliated to the South African Police Service. Despite this, he did speak with both interviewers during the first session, without mentioning his prerequisite.

During the first meeting Mr. C. hardly showed any emotional fluctuation and had an almost aloof way in which he dealt with the researchers. He seemed almost matter-of-

fact and it also seemed as if he did not want to waste unnecessary time on this conversation. He shared his own opinion whenever he disagreed with anything the researcher's said and I therefore may conclude that he may be able to assert himself, especially if it was in a new interpersonal situation.

### 5.5.3 Themes from the interviews

The following themes were identified from his interview(s):

- Seeking guidance: he is unsure of how and where to start and seeks guidance from the researchers (6, 26-27).
- He is formal in the way he speaks: he refers to the crimes as "dade" (deeds) (6), "voorvalle" (incidents) (10).
- Anxiousness: this is evident from his non-verbal behaviour, for example fidgeting with his hands, swallowing a lot, a lot of sideward glancing and perspiration on his forehead.
- He speaks very haltingly: he does not speak in a flowing manner. He often stops or pauses. He uses a lot of unnecessary insertions such as "okay...'n...wel" (okay...hm...well) (9-19).
- He speaks in a slow and roundabout way: his transcription is the shortest one of all (see Appendix C).
- Uncertain way of speaking: he often repeats parts of a sentence (9) and changes direction midway in his sentences (9-14).
- He has a ponderous way of speaking: it often seems as if he thinks a lot about what he is about to say. His eyes tend to look upwards while he is talking and one often get the impression that he may be thinking more than he is actually saying.
- Detailed account: he starts off by giving detailed accounts of the rapes, murders and other wrongdoings. He does this in chronological order.
- Apathetic: he displays very little emotion during the accounts of his rapes and murders. His affect may be described as flat. His non-verbal behaviour may be described as absent, in the sense that he seems to be elsewhere.
- He comes across as nonchalant: for instance "Okay, the first one is in '89..." (11 & 14-19). Here he is speaking about his first murder and it seems as if he is

speaking about a normal day at the office. His descriptions are devoid of emotional content.

- He did not have a fixed plan of how to murder: he just went somewhere and did it. This is well illustrated by the way he approached his first victim. He did not know what to say to her and lacking a fixed plan, he drove her back into her room (17-19). He later confirms this (33-36).
- The first murder had a negative impact on him: it drained him emotionally (30), after the murder he was tired (37-38) and he took approximately two years before he committed the next murder (40-41).
- The subsequent murders were easy: as opposed to the first murder where he strangled the victim, the other murder victims were all shot dead with a pistol. According to him this had no impact on him, it was like going to work and going on with your daily routine.
- Coping style: during the murders he did not think, he just did it (36-37). This is a strong theme that is reiterated throughout the interview.
- He is interpersonally submissive: he would go along with other people's statements about him, even though he disagrees. For instance, during his psychiatric observation he was told that he has a "split personality". He has a well formed opinion, stating that he may have a soft and a hard side, but they are both still the same person. Even though he finds their feedback amusing, he does not assert himself. He simply says that they are the experts, and therefore they must be right.
- Self perception: he describes himself as an introvert, somebody who does not mind being alone. He bottles up things that bother him and he says that this may be part of his problem. He knows what his problem is and he is working on it. He sees himself as somebody who is sick and who needs to be "healed".
- Attitude toward women: He says that he does not hate women and they would be safe if they go out with him. He will not force her to do anything against her will. Sexuality is private, he does not easily speak about it and will not brag about his sexual conquests.
- Self disclosure: He is not completely comfortable with talking about himself and what he did, but he must do it to understand himself better. He grew up as an only child and describes his childhood years as being alone and boring. This boredom has

carried over into his adult life and he needed to break the boredom. Later when he read about himself, he found the discrepancy between who he is and who people think he is, amusing.

- Good-bad or hard-soft split: he states that each person has a good and bad part (or a hard and soft side). With him the bad part was more in control, the good part was still present, but the bad part is the guilty one.
- Recurring and intrusive thoughts: the thoughts and memories of what he has done are still with him. He states that they haunt and destroy him as they "eat away at his thoughts, they destroy you on the inside and you don't have any feeling left". These memories mill around inside his head and frustrate him. He also reports getting flashbacks to the murder and rape scenes. He does, however, try not to think too deeply about these things. He often thinks about what he has done, but does not want to do it again.
- Feeling out of control: he did not feel in control of himself or his life. He could not stop on his own, and he had to be caught. Being engaged was one attempt to help himself, because he believed that his fiancé would be able to bring him back on to the straight and narrow.
- A strong hubris to rehabilitate himself: he is adamant that he is capable of rehabilitating himself, despite the feedback he got from his psychiatric evaluation. He says that a part of his problem is that he does not discuss his concerns with other people. He has now started to write to pen friends with whom he discusses certain concerns, and the psychologist and reverend are also part of his healing process. He also says that being arrested is part of his rehabilitation, he could not stop out of own free will. So now he is working hard to continue his rehabilitation. He wants to be "better" when he is released.
- Willing admission of guilt: when the police brought him in for questioning, they took his finger prints and then he confessed to the crimes.
- Relief after arrest: he was prepared for what would happen after his arrest and he felt relieved, because he could not stop on his own.
- Existential concern: after his arrest he was very confused and questioned why this had to happen to him. He also took this matter up with his reverend.
- Risk taking behaviour: as a child he started off by stealing money from his mother's purse. This evolved into stealing small amounts of money from friends

- and family members' purses. He would use this money to play arcade games. He would always steal a small amount so that the person would not notice.
- Excitement seeking behaviour: he describes his life as uneventful and boring. Apart from the childhood risk taking behaviour, he also extended this behaviour into adulthood. As a young adult he joined the Police and worked at Johannesburg international airport. He says that he did not do this for power, but because he likes to work with people and to help them. Also, he often had to escort valuable cargo to foreign destinations. Other examples of excitement seeking behaviour include him entering someone's flat through an open window without being noticed. He would see the person in the flat, take the car keys, leave the flat and take the person's car. He would take the car for a joy ride and after a few days he would return the car and throw the keys through an open window. A week later he returned, entering the flat and raping the woman. He did not kill her and left again.
  - Cocaine addiction metaphor: Mr. C explain it as follow, "the person who is addicted to cocaine may have started off with a less potent drug, like cannabis for instance. Later this is not enough and he moves on to something stronger. He would go to great lengths to satisfy his cravings and in the process he may destroy his life and those of his family members. He would steal money from anybody to obtain cocaine. He can not stop the addiction on his own and needs some intense event to make him or her turn around, like a unexpected pregnancy, for example". Mr. C. too started off with a less potent activity, but increasingly needed more excitement and stimulation. He explained that he learned how to obtain excitement, "it becomes like any other task and you do it step by step. It becomes like a habit and then you become addicted to the excitement. The excitement begins when you start feeling the urge to get out the house and to go somewhere. You want to get out to break the boredom". Hence he refers to himself as an "adrenaline junky". The excitement is obtained through the risks involved in the crimes. When he enters a house he feels anxious and cold, and he can feel the adrenaline pumping, "it becomes like a drug and you become addicted to the feeling and the element of surprise, you never know who or what to expect and somebody may even shoot and kill you. Later you do not think about what you are doing, you just do it for your own enjoyment". He did not have the courage to

commit suicide or to hand himself over. Therefore, to end the addiction he needed a radical event to stop him, like being arrested. However, it did not end at being arrested, he needed to work on himself, "you need to understand yourself better, keep yourself busy and to talk about that which bothers you".

- Family: communication within his family was not good. He was closer to his mother and his relationship with his father was non-communicative. His mother was the one who did the punishing. He respects them and denies that they may have contributed in any way to what he has done. He takes full responsibility for his actions.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter reiterates the main thrust of the research, and that is to arrive at psychological themes about individuals who have committed serial murder. Despite certain similarities, these people each remain individuals in their own right.

In the following chapter these themes (results) are discussed and integrated into a thematic understanding of each person.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The discussions in this chapter and the interpretations are based on the context, clinical impressions and themes from the interviews. The discussion is centred around the primary themes from the data and the secondary themes where relevant. Each discussion starts off with a summary of the important themes from the data. Each such summary represents a reconstruction of the important themes and may be seen as a way of making sense thereof.

The purpose is to provide integrated themes through which one can better understand the individual who has committed serial murder. All the themes referred to in the discussion have been explicated in the results chapter.

#### **6.2 Discussing themes from Mr. N.'s interviews**

The strongest single theme is his dissociative experiences. He describes these dissociative episodes as something inside himself which causes him to act involuntary. During such an episode he may be aware of what he is doing. However, he never seems to have control over his actions and he experiences his own actions in the second person.

These dissociative episodes are usually provoked by a situation involving some sexual content which he cannot tolerate. Such dissociative experiences are preceded by a visceral experience. This acts as a warning signal that he is about to be taken over by an entity inside himself. During such experiences other people report a visible change in his demeanour. Usually he has no recollection of what happened and he experiences such an episode as a time lapse.

These dissociative experiences have a historical onset starting in primary school and still continue while in the correctional facility. He has a strong moral sense and he knows that killing people is inhumane and wrong. This, among others reasons, is why these dissociative experiences cause a whole array of subjective discomforts.

He is very much aware of his "problem" and he invests a lot of time and effort in understanding himself. This seems to cause him a lot of doubt about his identity.

From the above one can see that the most prominent theme concerns his dissociative experiences or as he coins it, his "hot headedness". Such dissociative experiences do not occur in a vacuum. Therefore, all primary and secondary themes relevant to the main theme are discussed. Other primary themes that may be linked to his dissociative experiences include: involuntary behaviour, something inside himself and subjective discomfort. Secondary themes includes the historical onset, triggering process, time lapses and visible and visceral changes.

#### 6.2.1 Hot headedness

The terms "hot headedness" and "dissociative episodes" may be used interchangeably. Hot headedness is a colloquial term used in the correctional facilities. It refers to a state during which a person's behaviour blatantly disregards the rules and/or consequences. He attributes the following characteristic to himself when he becomes hot headed: feeling unreal, being aware of what is happening (sometimes), not being in control of his body and being radio controlled.

There are strong indications that he experiences a mind-body split during the spells of hot headedness. He explains that the brain should be in control of the body. However, when he experiences this hot headedness, the brain is "cut off" and becomes unable to control the body. This feeling is equated with a feeling of being radio controlled. For him the problem lies either within his head or his body and therefore he would like to trade in either of the two. From the way he speaks about his mind and body, it seems as if he views them as two different, autonomous entities, but that the body's behaviour is dependent on the mind's control.



### 6.2.2 An entity inside himself

He finds it difficult to explain this concept. He struggles to understand himself and to make sense of his experiences. This struggle enables him to present different explanations for this experience. Despite the fact that he has given these experiences a lot of thought, he remains uncertain about the exact nature of these experiences. He seems to be unsure whether this entity is animate or inanimate. However, he tends to attribute more living qualities to this entity and thereby personalizes it.

This entity has the power to stop him and to control him against his will. More often than not, this entity is experienced as inside himself like another person or another half or part of himself. This entity emerges on provocation of some sort, for instance severe sexual insults to his mother or the presence of prostitutes. A visceral experience precedes the emergence of this entity and once it starts to emerge, he cannot stop it. Although he is always unable to counteract the effect of the entity, he may sometimes be aware of what is happening.

### 6.2.3 Involuntary behaviour

This entity causes him to behave involuntarily. This means that although he does not want to perform certain behaviour, he has no control over his actions. Most of the time he is not even aware of the fact that he is performing such behaviour. This involuntary behaviour includes shooting at people, fighting and killing people.

### 6.2.4 Subjective discomfort

His deeds during these dissociative episodes cause a wide variety of subjective discomforts. To murder somebody is directly contra his self definition and this topples him into questioning his own identity. He strongly dislikes the feeling of not being in control of his actions.

#### 6.2.5 Secondary themes

He can be described as passive in his interaction and it seems as if he cannot easily be excited. He has a strong childlike quality that gives him a boyish innocence. He is dependent on others for reassurance and guidance. He is interpersonally cautious. He does not easily trust other people and he would first consider his options before making a decision.

He displays a very strong moralistic sexual attitude toward prostitutes and male homosexual activities. This attitude forms part of the triggering process of his dissociative experiences. He seems to attribute his dislike of male homosexual activities to his own sexual abuse as a child. It is not certain how he obtained his psychosexual attitude towards prostitutes.

#### 6.2.6 Concluding with Mr. N.

Mr. N.'s data presents a rich source of information regarding his experience of the self, dissociation and of killing someone. In conclusion I will discuss each of the above mentioned.

##### 6.2.6.1 Self experience

He experiences intense subjective discomfort and he feels a great need to get rid of his problem. In his experience of himself there seem to be two major splits. The first is a horizontal split and the second a lateral split. The horizontal split seems to divide him into a head and a body. Head and body are perceived as two separately functioning parts and he experiences the problem as being in either of the two. In terms of his experience this is very valid. According to his frame of reference the brain should be in control of the body. However, he experiences episodes where the body acts outside the control of his brain and against his will. This experience of himself doing something bad or wrong, brings us to his experience of the second split.

The lateral split divides him into two distinct parts, halves or people. The one side is the clean side, the obedient and submissive side. He strongly identifies with the clean side and he feels that is who he should and wants to be. On the other hand there is a side or part of himself that has an own identity. This side/part scares him because it controls him, it makes the clean side disappear and it can seriously harm other people.

It is thus understandable that he asks the essential question "Who am I then?". In this question lie his struggles to make sense of this radical split in his nature. He is aware of the discrepancy between his self definition and his self experience. Therefore, his awareness of this dichotomy forces him to review his self definition. It seems as if this dichotomy extends into an existential crisis.

#### 6.2.6.2 Experience of dissociation

There are two basic types of dissociative episodes: those during which he is aware and those during which he is unaware. Episodes of awareness are preceded by a visceral experience that serves as a warning signal. This aware episode is accompanied by a high intensity of subjective discomfort, a feeling of being out of control, a moral sense and observing his behaviour in the second person. However, the unaware episodes are not preceded by an onset warning signal and are merely experienced as a time lapse. It seems as if these are two types of dissociative experiences that differ in severity or intensity.

This reconstruction of themes does not explain why Mr. N. has such dissociative episodes or why he only killed women during these episodes. It does, however, provide a better understanding of Mr. N.'s experiences. This allows us to get a experiential glimpse of what it is like for him to have such dissociative episodes and how he experienced murdering someone.

### 6.3 Discussing themes from Mr. M.'s interview

Despite having been convicted on six charges of murder, he believes firmly in his innocence. He further believes that he has been framed for these crimes. He is a very

persuasive entrepreneur who presents very convincing arguments to prove his innocence. He has a very strong feeling of being abandoned or forsaken by certain individuals and the legal system. He is desperately trying to prove his innocence, but he does not succeed. This causes him to despair. However, he instills hope into his situation by believing that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) may still help him. Even if the TRC should fail, he believes that God is his only hope.

The primary themes from Mr. M.'s data are innocence, being framed, being forsaken, persuasiveness and seeking confirmation. Secondary themes include being an entrepreneur, losing hope, instilling hope, interpersonal caution and suspicion, and seeking confirmation and guidance.

#### 6.3.1 Innocence

From day one he has displayed a firm belief in his own innocence. He believes so strongly in his innocence that he even contested his suitability for this study. He tries his best to convince me of his innocence by giving a detailed explanation of the technical aspects of his court case. This belief is so strong that it provides the hubris to apply for an appeal and legal aid, but in vain.

#### 6.3.2 Being framed

This theme, too, involves long detailed explanations of how he was viewed by the police as the most likely suspect, how he was pointed out to witnesses before the trial and how the witnesses confused his name and appearance. According to him, apart from not committing these crimes, he is not the man suspected by the police.

#### 6.3.3 Being forsaken

This includes previously mentioned themes such as being left to his own devices, the court failing to fulfil its responsibility, his wanting to appeal and losing hope (refer to Chapter Five). He has a distinct feeling of being forsaken by people close to him and by the system. For instance, he was basically abandoned by his biological parents and grew up

in a hostile, reconstituted step-family. His lawyer has forsaken him by not applying for an appeal, the court has failed him by being unjust, nobody wants to help him now and even legal aid has failed him so far. This brings about a feeling of being abandoned and he is gradually losing hope. However, he still hopes to be set free and have the injustice against him rectified.

#### 6.3.4 Persuasiveness

He is very persuasive. He presented very strong and seemingly legitimate arguments against his guilt and for his innocence. He was convincing enough to cause doubt in my mind and to send me back to check the file. A big part of his life outside was being an entrepreneur where he would fix electrical appliances and sell other merchandise. So his persuasiveness is a skill that he used to his advantage while he was still outside.

#### 6.3.5 Seeking confirmation

This is a very strong theme. He constantly seeks confirmation of the listener's understanding. This theme is so strong that it seems to be entrenched into his verbal communication style as a type of verbal mannerism (refer to Chapter Five).

#### 6.3.6 Secondary themes

He describes himself as a happy person who gets along with other people. He does not see himself as a criminal and other people too know him as a good person. On an interpersonal level he seeks a lot of reassurance and guidance. He comes across as cautious and suspicious of strangers.

At the moment he is scared of losing hope in proving his innocence. He has, however, not given up and he is not ready to despair yet. He overcomes the despair by instilling hope in himself: he believes that he will be set free by either the TRC or God. He states that his only hope is in God who is all knowing and in control of his life.

### 6.3.7 Concluding with Mr. M.

The most central theme from Mr. M.'s data involves his experience of being innocent. It seems as if all the other themes are woven around this central theme.

#### 6.3.7.1 Being innocent

One may interpret his firm belief in his own innocence as a form of delusional thinking. One may even call it a delusion of innocence. In classic terms a delusion may be defined as a fixed, false belief of which you cannot convince the person otherwise. This belief may start out as being "realistic", but later loses track of "reality". This delusion may also be seen as systematic delusion. This means that the delusion is elaborate, well established and thoroughly developed to form a convincing story. However, there are arguments for and against this interpretation.

If he does indeed have a system of delusional beliefs, one needs to consider the function of such a symptom. The first function may be interpreted in terms of his self perception. In terms of his self perception one may say that he needs to maintain the status quo. He may need to see himself as a happy, good person who gets along with others. This is also valid for others' perception of him. So he may have developed this system of deluded beliefs in order to maintain and protect his self perception.

The second function may be interpreted in terms of his personality characteristics. He has a strong tendency to be dependent in relation to other people. This means that he relies strongly on interpersonal feedback, guidance and acceptance. As long as he is perceived as a good person who has been unjustly persecuted, he may be able to elicit the necessary interpersonal feedback.

To say that he is delusional seems like an easy way out: simply pathologize him. Although the base line assumption of this study is to believe that the people are guilty as charged, one has to give him the contextual benefit of the doubt. Given the South African jurisprudential and political history, it may be possible that he is indeed innocent. However, it may be possible, but it seems highly unlikely that an innocent man may be

framed and convicted on six counts of murder.

However, the intention is not to declare a retrial, but rather to focus on his experience, which is that he experiences himself as being innocent of these crimes and that he has been treated unjustly by the legal system. For him this experience is real and causes despair.

This reconstruction of themes does not explain why Mr. M. killed people or why he believes so strongly in his own innocence. However, an attempt is made to explain the function of the symptom (system of delusional thoughts). It also provides a better understanding of Mr. M.'s experiences. This gives us an experiential glimpse of what it is like for him to be convicted of murder and to be abandoned.

#### 6.4 Discussing themes from Mr. D's interviews

With Mr. D. there are two strong emerging themes. The first is that of being religiously moralistic while the second theme is that of cognitive impairment. Another strong theme is that of being interpersonally dependent. Secondary themes include being childlike, little emotional flow and the importance of family life.

Mr. D. is a dependent, childlike person who attributes value to family life and his religious-moral principles. He depends on good interpersonal feedback.

##### 6.4.1 Religiously moralistic

This category is constructed from previously mentioned themes such as: moralistic, religious messages, being the good Samaritan and that people must listen to him (refer to Chapter Five).

I have combined these themes into one, because they are closely linked. He is moralistic in a religious (see Chapter Five) and social sense. In a social sense he prescribes how people should live their lives. His communication style is very prescriptive and he regards

his opinion as authoritative. Therefore, people should listen to him, because he has important messages. He tells the people what is right and wrong, and what they should and should not do. This social moralism later flows into the religious moralities. Here he prescribes to people to walk along the straight and narrow and he warns them of the consequences for not doing so.

#### 6.4.2 Cognitive impairment

This category is deductively constructed from the following, previously mentioned themes: perseveration, peculiar verbalizations, loose associations, tangential thinking, numerical omissions, speech/thought pressure and intellectual striving (refer to Chapter Five).

Cognitive impairment is a very wide category. There are various types of cognitive functions that may be impaired, such as cognitive focus, reasoning and concept formation. Therefore it is necessary to specify which cognitive functions may be impaired. The themes give an indication of the type of cognitive impairment.

The most prominent impaired cognitive function is thought processes. Thought processes are divided into two categories, namely establishing cognitive focus and maintaining cognitive focus. Perseveration is a sign that the person struggles to establish cognitive focus. In other words he has a problem in focusing his attention. His inability to maintain cognitive focus is indicated by peculiar verbalizations, loose associations, tangential thinking, numerical omissions and speech/thought pressure. This means that he has problems with concentration. So in short one may say that Mr. M. has impaired attention and concentration.

His added intellectual striving may be an indication that he is aware of his cognitive impairments and that he tries to compensate.

#### 6.4.3 Being interpersonally dependent

The combination of the following themes culminated in this category: being overly



friendly, submissiveness, dependence and seeking confirmation. These themes are explicated in Chapter Five and do not require further explication.

#### 6.4.4 Secondary themes

Family life is very important for him. He speaks about his own family, asks the researchers about their family lives and places emphasis on the maintenance of a good family life in general. He has a rather childlike quality that gives him a boyish type of charm. However, he displays very little emotional flow.

#### 6.4.5 Concluding with Mr. D.

Despite the presence of cognitive impairment, one cannot make any definite further causal link. Cognitive impairment, such as impaired attention and concentration, may be found in various mental and psychological disorders. There are no indications of a psychotic process. This suggests that the cognitive impairment may have an organic, rather than a psychological base. Therefore it is suggested that Mr. M. should be neuropsychologically evaluated to determine the extent and exact nature of his cognitive impairments.

Despite this, there is no obvious causal link as to why he committed serial murder. It would be a jump in logic to say that he committed serial murder because of his cognitive impairment. Many people suffer from impaired attention and concentration, but do not commit serial murder. However, the data helps us to uncover more about him as a person and helps us to understand his experiences better.

### 6.5 Discussing themes from Mr. C.'s interviews

The most central and encompassing theme is that of being addicted. His metaphor of addiction draws a direct parallel between a cocaine addiction and his own experience. This metaphor serves as a framework for reconstructing the themes into a meaningful whole and has given us a metaphor for an individualized understanding of serial murder.

These tangent points include most of the primary themes: cocaine addiction metaphor, learning process, risk taking behaviour, excitement seeking behaviour and feeling out of control. Secondary themes include self perception, being submissive, suspiciousness, hyper-vigilance and apathy (refer to Chapter Five).

#### 6.5.1 Cocaine addiction metaphor

In the reconstruction of these themes the secondary themes are given first to give a brief description of who Mr. C. is. The cocaine addiction metaphor will then be built on further in terms of primary themes.

##### 6.5.1.1 Secondary themes

He is an introverted person who does not easily speak about himself. He regards sexuality as private and he does not hate woman. He is interpersonally submissive. He displays very little emotional flow, even during his detailed accounts of the rapes and murders. When he speaks about the murders he comes across as very apathetic, formal and detailed. He speaks very uncertainly, haltingly, in a roundabout way, slowly and ponderously.

##### 6.5.1.2 Learning process

Excitement seeking and risk taking behaviour forms an integral part of this category. He grew up bored and alone. This boredom started as a child and extended into adulthood. He has learned that he can escape his boredom by engaging in risk taking behaviour through which he obtains excitement. The risk taking behaviour contains an element of surprise which provides the excitement. To obtain excitement became as commonplace as any other task and eventually it became habitual. He became addicted to the excitement and eventually he could not break this addiction.

If the metaphor of addiction is extended to his actual murders and rapes, it seems to make sense. People who use drugs refer to the state of being under the influence as being on a "trip". Such a "trip" may be classified as a "good" or "bad", depending on the

experienced effect of the "trip". One may say that Mr. C.'s first "trip on cocaine" (murder), was a "bad trip". This first experience of killing another person was so intense that the behaviour was accompanied by a mild form of dissociation. He indicates this by saying he did not think, he only acted. He experienced it as emotionally draining and this first experience was so negative, that he took two years before he committed his second murder.

He did learn important lessons from the first murder. He learned that: he is capable of murdering; he can get away with murder; he desensitized himself to murder; and that he should use a more impersonal way of murdering people (for example instead of strangulation he should shoot them).

In this metaphorical sense, he too is a "drug addict" who is addicted to excitement - an "adrenaline junky". Excitement provides him with an adrenaline rush. As a child he learned how to break out of the boredom by stealing money from handbags. These lesser activities (mild drug) gradually became insufficient to provide adequate excitement. Eventually he had to find activities that would provide more excitement and satisfy his addiction (stronger drug). He may have found this more intense excitement in his initial line of work as a police official. However, later this too became insufficient to provide the necessary excitement and therefore he turned to more exciting activities, such as prowling, breaking and entering, joy riding and eventually rape and murder (cocaine).

#### 6.5.1.3 Feeling out of control

He wanted to stop this process of addiction, but he could not control it. He had the following options: stopping out of own free will, turning himself in to the police or committing suicide. However, he did not have the strength or courage to use any of these options. That is why he was relieved to be arrested, because this external intervention was certain to break the addiction. This could be compared with the type of intense event a cocaine addict needs to stop.

### 6.5.2 Concluding with Mr. C.

Mr. C.'s data provides a first person description of the experience of committing serial murder and insight is gained into the lived world of somebody who commits these crimes.

He desperately needed to escape from his mundane existence. This was successfully achieved by creating excitement for himself. This basic process which leads to addiction is learned over a long period of time. His behaviour was reinforced with positive secondary gain and therefore it was very difficult to break the habit.

Insight is thus gained as to how he learned the behaviour of eventually committing serial murder. However, this does not explain why he chose serial murder as the ultimate excitement seeking behaviour. Questions remain as to why he could not escape his boredom through legitimate excitement seeking behaviour. To obtain the adrenaline rush he could have turned to bungee jumping, cave diving or some other form of exciting recreation.

However sensationalistic it may sound, it may be said that Mr. C. killed people for recreational purposes. It was not about the sex or the power, but about escaping from his boring life.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the results have been discussed and further conceptualized to arrive at a thematic understanding of each person. In the following chapter the theoretical implications inherent to the discussion will be discussed.

## Chapter 7

### Results: theoretical implications

#### 7.1 Introduction

The above mentioned discussions have important implications in terms of the current literature understanding of serial murder. Therefore I will briefly discuss the tangent points between the literature study and the current discussion.

#### 7.2 The psychoanalytic theory

The psychoanalytic literature differentiates between ego-syntonic and ego-dystonic behaviour. The literature indicates that serial murder may also be divided into these two categories. From the discussion of the results it seems as if both ego-syntonic and ego-dystonic behaviour were reported.

Mr. N.'s murders were ego-dystonic. This is illustrated by his reactions in court when he saw the crime scene evidence. His despair regarding the ego-dystonic behaviour even led to a failed suicide attempt. In the case of Mr. C., the first murder seems to be ego-dystonic, while the following murders were more ego-syntonic. Both Mr. N. and Mr. C. had dissociative experiences during the murders, which is indicative of the ego-dystonic nature of such behaviour (Leibman, 1989).

However, Mr. M. displayed ego-syntonic behaviour. His delusions may be described as ego-syntonic, because they fit in with his self perception. This strong belief may in turn be a defense mechanism against the unacceptability of the murders. If this is true the murders may have indeed been ego-dystonic, because they directly oppose his self perception. Mr. D. seems to display a similar dynamic as Mr. M. His behaviour during the interviews is ego-syntonic, because it fit his self perception of being a good person.

However, the fact that he never speaks about the murders and his strong moral condemnation of crime may be a defense against the unacceptability of his murders. It may be said that both Mr. M. and Mr. D use reaction formation as a defense mechanism.

Mr. N. experiences two types of dissociative episodes that differ in intensity or severity. Within this frame dissociation is viewed as a defense mechanism which serves the purpose of protecting Mr. N. against ego injury. This means that the perceived threat of the situation may unconsciously determine the intensity of the defense mechanism. In other words, if the threat is not too intense he may be aware of, but not in control of his reaction. In terms of his ego functioning he would split up into two different parts. This emerging "other part" serves the purpose of providing him with resources which protect him. This may be called splitting, which is a very pathological, though effective, defense mechanism. However, if the threat is too intense his unconscious would not even allow him to be aware. His unconscious seems to remove him from the situation while the "other part" of him takes care of the situation. In this way he is saved from the traumatic experiences.

The defense mechanism of dissociation and splitting may be indicative of Mr. N.'s inadequate ego functioning and ego integration. This may reflect on the nature of his primary object relation with his mother. This could indicate that this first relationship was not safe and nurturing enough to accommodate an integration of his ego functions.

From the above it seems that both ego-syntonic and ego-dystonic behaviour have been found in this study. It seems that varying degrees of dissociation may occur during the act of murder. Thus, dissociation may vary from person to person, or even for a single individual. However, dissociative experiences were only found in two of the four people. Therefore this cannot be generalized to all people in the sample or to all people who commit serial murder. This is in contrast with the literature which reports sublimation and projection as the main defense mechanisms in people who commit serial murder (DeHart & Mahoney, 1994). The defense mechanisms used by the people in this sample ranged from reaction formation (Mr. M. and Mr. D.) and dissociation (Mr. N. and Mr. C.) to splitting (Mr. N.) and denial (Mr. M.).

### 7.3 The psychodynamic model

One of the few similarities between the four people is that they all display, in varying degrees, dependent characteristics. This dimensional placing within the frame of personality disorders has specific psychodynamic and theoretical meaning.

The literature suggests that the personality development of people who commit serial murder is dimensionally placed within the cluster B personality disorder range. However, the sample in this study suggests that the personality development of these four people rather lies within the range of the cluster C personality disorders, more specifically within those of the dependant personality characteristics.

Mr. N.'s intense dissociative experiences need closer inspection. Dissociative experiences are much more commonplace than dissociative disorders. However, his dissociation seems to transcend the mere dissociative experiences and may even be classified as a "disorder". It is not within the jurisdiction of this study to make a differential five axis diagnosis. However, Mr. N.'s experiences closely resemble the criteria for certain forms of dissociative disorders, for example dissociative identity disorder, depersonalization disorder or dissociative disorder not otherwise specified.

From Mr. M.'s discussion we see that he struggled with serious abandonment issues. This may be seen as a reflection of the abandonment he may have experienced in very early childhood. The primary object relation with his mother was severed at the age of two. In terms of personality formation, such abandonment may contribute to his dependent character traits.

### 7.4 Learning theory

Individual behaviour may also be explained in terms of the social learning theories, namely the conditioned conscience theory and the social learning model.

#### 7.4.1 Conditioned conscience

Mr. C.'s dissociative experiences were far less intense and less central in his experience than in Mr. N.'s case. According to this explanation, the failure to demonstrate ordinary social conditioning may point to profound isolation and alienation in childhood (DeHart & Mahoney, 1994). This may manifest symptomatically in what Mr. C. refers to as a "boring life". Mr. C. grew up as an only child. The only way he could escape his boring life was to physically create stimulation through risk taking and excitement seeking behaviour.

He knows the difference between socially acceptable (right) and unacceptable (wrong) behaviour and by transgressing the social norms he created excitement. On the one hand his gradual conditioning process taught him that he can get away with risk taking behaviour and transgressions. On the other hand he grew accustomed to transgressing the social norms. One may conclude that he became desensitized to the transgression of the social norms.

Thus, although he experienced the first murder negatively, he seemed to be much more used to transgressions than Mr. N.. This may explain why he did not experience such intense dissociation during his first murder. However, with Mr. N., it was different. Mr. N. has a strong moralistic atunement and he does not have the same desensitization with regard to the transgression of social norms. Thus, his level of subjective discomfort seems to be much higher than that of Mr. C. and therefore he may have had more intense dissociative experiences.

#### 7.4.2 Social learning model and psychosocial explanation

This model places great emphasis on the modelling of behaviour during childhood. Mr. M. grew up in a family characterized by violent and criminal behaviour. In terms of the social learning model one may say that he may have modelled such behaviour as acceptable. It may also be that his family's violent behaviour may have disinhibited him, causing him to act out violent behaviour at a later stage of his life.



## 7.5 Themes from the research

The following tangent points were found with themes from the research of Ansevics et al. (1991):

- tenuous societal adjustment (Mr. M. and Mr. D. both have prior criminal records, and Mr. C. and Mr. N. are loners);
- puritanical attitude towards sex (Mr. N. displays this in his strong dislike of people whom he regards as sexual deviants); and
- reported rape prior to murder (in Mr. C.'s case he reported several cases where he raped the woman before he murdered her)

Tangent points with other researchers include:

- absent father figure during childhood (this is true for both Mr. C. and Mr. M.) (Holmes & DeBurger, 1989, p. 99);
- an abused childhood, characterized by deprivation, and unfair, harsh and inconsistent punishment (Mr. M. grew up in such a household and Mr. N. reported sexual abuse from a family member) (Holmes & DeBurger, 1989, p. 99);
- being introverted, shy and unable to establish healthy peer group contact (all four subjects fit this description to a certain degree) (Levin & Fox, 1985, p. 56);
- an inability to maintain meaningful and lasting relationships, socially and/or sexually (Mr. N. is divorced, Mr. M. has literally no friends or relative with whom he has a good relationship, and Mr. C. broke off his engagement) (Leyton, 1986, p. 36);
- self-centredness is displayed in their enjoyment and indulgence of the media sensation which followed their apprehension (Mr. C. followed the investigation of his murders in the media and was amused by media reports about him, after his arrest, and Mr. D. indulged in the attention provided by the research) (Leyton, 1986, p. 73); and
- a charming, "normal personality" and a marked absence of hallucinations and gross pathology (this applies to all four subjects) (Leyton, 1986, p. 150).

## 7.6 General systemic approach

In the literature survey a person who commits serial murder, is referred to as the system's index patient (IP), as is the case in family therapy. System, in this sense, also refers to the larger system (society) or smaller sub-systems (community and/or family).

There are various ways of looking at the behaviour of any given IP in relationship to his system(s): a) what is the function of such behaviour in that person's system, b) what happens within that person's system(s) that necessitates such behaviour, and/or c) what is the person trying to convey regarding his system(s).

Mr. C. reported misconduct since early childhood and this misconduct extended into adulthood. He grew up as an only child in a family that may be described as detached. He described his life as boring and alone. The system (family) seemed to lack stimulation, hence excitement. With detached parents and no siblings he then acted out this lack of stimulation by engaging in risk taking and excitement seeking behaviour.

Another explanation may be that: a) through his behaviour he shifted the focus away from possible family problems, b) as a "problem child" his behaviour acted as a cohesive force which kept the family together, or c) his behaviour was an attempt to seek his parents' attention.

When this behaviour extended into adulthood, it seems as if he still takes responsibility for protecting his family: he takes full responsibility for his behaviour and denies that his parents may have contributed in any way to his behaviour.

His violent and murderous behaviour may also be a comment on the lack of stimulation/excitement in the larger system (society): he still needed to provide his own stimulation. In a similar fashion he took responsibility for the larger system (society): due to his violent behaviour the system labelled him as a "serial killer" and thus he provided the system with macabre stimulation.

Mr. M. experienced that the larger- and sub-systems had both abandoned and persecuted him in various ways: he was abandoned by his biological parents and his step-family; he was victimized in his own family system through violence; his lawyer has abandoned him by not appealing against his sentence; the court has abandoned him by not listening to his appeals of injustice during the trial; both the court and the police have persecuted him; and legal aid has failed him.

Mr. M.'s behaviour may also be interpreted from an eco-systemic perspective. His violent behaviour, as an essential part of the larger and sub-systems, may be seen as symptomatic of the dysfunctional nature of the eco-system. Following the eco-systemic premises, the eco-system (family and/or society) may be seen as the basic unit of his survival. Given the hostile and insecure nature of his eco-system he may not have been able to survive in such a system. Serial murder as a radical form of human behaviour may serve the purpose of removing him from the hostile ecology of his system and thereby sustaining his own survival.

According to the cybernetic perspective, for the system to survive it needs to be in a state of equilibrium. There must be a balance between human constructive and human destructive behaviour. Although such violent behaviour may also be seen as a comment on the social order within the systems, it also creates a disequilibrium. In order to survive the system needs to rectify the disequilibrium by removing the extreme behaviour.

Mr. D. is characterized by religious-moralistic messages, which need to be heard. The question may arise: "What message is he trying to bring across by committing serial murder?". Maybe his behaviour is indicative of a normlessness that exists within his systems. Through his behaviour he may have exaggerated the moral-religious crisis to such an extent that the system would have to pay attention to it.

## **7.7 The biological perspective**

During the search for psychological themes from the interviews, it seemed as if neuropsychological themes were prominent, specifically in the case of Mr. D. Thus, there

may probably be some sort of neurological damage involved. This hypothesis is supported by the neuropsychological effects present in the interviews. The dilemma still exists, that is, it does not logically bring us closer to understanding serial murder. However, a possibility exists that neuropsychological factors may play a role in violent behaviour such as serial murder. This possibility warrants further investigation.

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter illustrates that the four people who participated in the research are unique and those reported similarities are only similar in the definition of the theme. Within those themes of similarities however, they also differ. These differences are with regard to the relationship between the dynamic interaction of their life stories, the way of description and the nuances in communication.

It seems as if the intrapsychic models at present provide the most fitting understanding of people who have committed serial murder. However, in order to understand serial murder within a complex framework, such an understanding should not be limited to intrapsychic explanations. The intrapsychic explanation is only one dimension of human behaviour and therefore the other dimensions should also be explored.