

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE : A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE
EXPERIENCE OF ADULT MALE
PERPETRATORS**

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DECLARATION

I, NTOMBIZETHU MAUREEN NDABA, declare that this is my own original work.

Full acknowledgements have been made of sources referred to in this text. This work has not been submitted before for any purposes.

N.M. NDABA.

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ABSTRACT

Sexual abuse of children has been a problem for decades not only in South Africa, but internationally. There is little evidence that any preventative measures are working effectively.

In this study the focus was not on the victim but on the perpetrator of sexual abuse.

The researcher aimed at enabling eight adult male sexual offenders to describe explicitly their lived experience of child sexual abuse. The study used a method in which offenders were asked to describe their feelings prior to, during the process and after sexually abusing the child.

The researcher believed that verbalisation of how it feels to sexually abuse the child would augment the available knowledge about perpetrators.

This information may be used in devising ways and means of minimising the occurrence of sexual abuse. It might serve as a springboard for professional people working with offenders to uncover cognitive skills for sexual offenders to use whenever having thoughts of sexually abusing the child.

Respondents were Blacks, Indians and Whites who had been sentenced and were in treatment programmes either at the Correctional Supervision Centre or at Childline in Durban.

Treatment at these rehabilitation centres was a condition of sentence for all of them. Their ages ranged from 25-48 years. Five of them were married and three were single men.

Svensson's (1986) phenomenological method was used in analysing data. The findings of this study revealed that for these offenders the major contributing factors to this behaviour was a conflictual adult heterosexual relationship and the fact that other females have more than one sexual partner.

Findings also revealed that children are experienced by sexual offenders as being satisfying sexually, non-judgemental, non-threatening and accepting.

These findings were examined in relation to theory, their implications for future research, the strengths and shortcomings of the study were also described.

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CHAPTER ONE

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE : A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ADULT MALE PERPETRATORS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse is international. It is a personal problem, a community issue and a social concern. For many years parents have warned children to "beware of strangers", but recently researchers have suggested that sexual assault by strangers is a relatively rare occurrence. Conte and Schuerman (1987), pointed out that only four percent (4%) of child victims were abused by adults unrelated and not previously known by the child or family. Children are more likely to be sexually abused by members of their own families and by acquaintances than by strangers. Many of us have difficulty understanding how older persons are able to have sex with a child. Such behaviour is generally believed to inflict pain and emotional harm, violate acceptable standards of adult conduct toward children, and be incongruent with how most adults see themselves.

There is nothing in the field of child sexual abuse more perplexing than the question "Why would someone sexually abuse or molest a child"? The current literature and research fail to adequately answer this question. When looking

at the South African context or society, one realises that every woman, be it a child, or an adult is a potential sexual abuse victim. Women and/or girls inhibit their movements, restrict their behaviour for the sake of eluding the rapist's grasp, and younger children are more at risk. It is beyond any reasonable doubt that sexual abuse has negative consequences on the victim per se and such behaviour strikes any normal being leaving him/her with unanswered questions of why do they sexually abuse children? It is also worth mentioning that sexual abuse occur with young boys but there is nothing much that has been documented. Statistics on this sexual abuse is not as high as that for women.

Statistics relating to the number of sex offenders in prison is very helpful in planning service provision, but provide little help in knowing the extent of the problem in the general population. Most researches have focused on individual children, families and women. Information pursued involved identifying child sexual abuse, and ways to identify unknown cases. Chorn (1992) found that mostly aversive techniques have been used in treating and managing the adolescent sexual offenders such as odour aversive therapy combined with penile plethysmography (Maletsky, 1990; Muster, 1992). These technique are designed to reduce sexual arousal to ascertain deviant stimuli, but have not been proven to prevent sexual offending (Marshall, 1990). After undergoing the cognitive-behavioural treatment programme with offenders, Beckett found that most offenders reoffend.

What aspects are absent or de-emphasised by empirical studies? Little is written about the males who have been involved in all these situations and very

little has been done to them except putting them in prison. Where attempts have been made to study the males concerned, conclusions suggest that men concerned are "immature", "inadequate", or psychopathology is present. What notion of maturity, adequacy and normality mean is not discussed in such reports.

It is worth mentioning that a rapist or sexual offender is not always an uninhibited, aggressive psychopath, an imbecile or sex maniac who lurks in the dark alleys. He is in most cases, a friend, an acquaintance, a date or a father. It is also important that we understand that the incidence of child abuse knows no discriminatory boundaries and is affected by many of the prevailing political, social, economic, spiritual in every society and tends to survive despite "the government of the day". Child abuse is not a black problem, a brown problem, or a white problem. Child abusers are found in the ranks of the unemployed, the blue-collar worker, the white-collar worker and the professional. They are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Baptist and atheist (Fraser, 1976).

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim is to conduct a phenomenological study of their experiences, their conscious sexual interests and responses toward children. In other words, the subjectively-lived experience of sexual abuse behaviour is to be explored, in an endeavour to explicate and describe the essential meanings that sexual contact with children has assumed for child perpetrators. This research is an attempt

to fill a gap in the conceptual understanding of adult perpetrators and their abusive behaviour of child sexual abuse.

It aims at finding out what emotions they have prior to, during and after sexual abusing the children. The researcher aims at describing the phenomenon as it appears, rather than within a preconceived framework.

The researcher is of the view that perhaps knowing what leads them to such behaviour by allowing them to describe how it feels to sexually abuse the child i.e. prior to, during and afterwards might work as the springboard in trying to bring the occurrence of this behaviour to a minimum or in trying to prevent it from happening. This study also aims at understanding recidivism in sexual offenders.

1.3 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SEXUAL ABUSE PERPETRATORS

In the literature on sexual abuse perpetrators, a number of controversies are evident:

There is controversy as to why a person finds relating sexually to a child emotionally gratifying and congruent. Why is the person blocked in efforts to obtain sexual and emotional gratification from more normatively approved sources? Why is the person not deterred by conventional social inhibitions from having sexual relations with a child.

Few theories have attempted to address the full complexity of sexual abuse behaviour. Most approaches have tended to emphasise one, or at the most, few

factors, such as deviant patterns of sexual arousal or psychosexual immaturity, to explain sexual interest in children. These "single factor theories" have been inadequate to explain the full range and diversity of this behaviour.

Research, based on populations of incarcerated offenders, treated the problem exclusively as one of individual psychopathology. However, the widespread existence of abuse forces one away from an exclusive focus on theories of psychopathology and towards the possibility that normative factors are at work.

Different theories have been developed to explain different types of molesting behaviour. For instance, distinctions have been made between molesters who prefer boys and those who prefer girls, molesters who have a strong sexual preference for children and those whose interest is more transitory, incest offenders and other kinds of child molesters. According to Finkelhor (1984), there is no advantage to taking one of these dichotomies and creating a separate framework for each side.

There has been little research on the many hypothesised explanations of sexual abuse behaviour, possibly because the extent of sexual abuse had gone unrecognised until the late 1970s. Even in the professional and academic literature there are few references before 1970s and almost none before the beginning of that decade. Why was the topic so neglected? It is difficult to be sure but the likely answer is the simple one: that to most people the sexual abuse of children was unthinkable, intuitively incredible except in the case of a small number of seriously disturbed individuals. If you do not believe that such behaviour is widespread then you will tend not to notice any evidence, or to interpret the evidence differently. Child sexual abuse is, in any case, a secret activity, something that those involved usually do not reveal, whether victim or perpetrator.

All sexual behaviour is relatively secret. Despite the fact that sex is now talked about, in a general way, than it was twenty or thirty years ago, on the whole people do not disclose their sexual behaviour.

The theory which points out that child molesters are persons who themselves were victim of sexual abuse has a long history (Gebhard, 1965; Seghorn & Boucher, 1980). Recent studies found that large number of child molesters reported abused experiences from their childhood. Groth and Burgess (1979) for example, found that 32% of a group of 106 child molesters reported some form of sexual trauma in their early development compared to 3% of a comparison group of 64 police officers.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR USING THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

Phenomenology is the study of people's consciously reported experiences. The phenomenological approach is an attempt to understand people by seeing the world through their eyes. The phenomenologist sees the individual as the product of his own perception. Hence what a person says about himself and his environment must be accepted as the truth of his own subjective universe (Calhoun, 1977)¹. Colaizzi (1973) has argued that in psychology the adoption of the traditional research paradigm of the natural sciences (i.e. the positivist approach) has eliminated human experience from the realm of psychological investigations. He states, "The method of the traditional psychologist that of experimentation, coupled with this peculiar notion of objectivity and the use of operational definitions excludes human experience" (Colaizzi, 1973, p.53). Phenomenology however, recognises human experience as an essential and indispensable component of human psychological phenomena and consequently seeks to explore human experience as it is lived in everyday life in both a

Footnote: *Much of the work using this approach is found in the 1970s due to the popularity of this method at that time.*

rigorous and systematic manner. A phenomenological investigation is, therefore, better suited to a study of the qualitative flow of human experience so that we may gain access to the psychological life of the adult perpetrator, his personal understanding and experience of his conscious sexual interest in and sexual contact with children.

Within the literature on child sexual abuse, many attempts have been made to explain the behaviour of the perpetrators drawing on a variety of theoretical frameworks and frequently employing the notion of causality, in an attempt to explain and predict. While a theoretical framework simply informs the researcher of what to look for (instead of allowing the phenomena to speak for themselves) cause-effect relationships have no place in the elucidating of the life-world since the person and their world co-constitute one another rather than the events in one realm causing events in another (Valle and King, 1978).

As has been mentioned, the complexity of child sexual abuse defies the many single-factor explanations that have emerged in the past two decades.

Phenomenology may do more justice to the depth and complexity of this issue as it explores the human experience and aims at disclosing the structure of this experience in the form of psychological meaning. This is done for the purpose of understanding the phenomena (i.e. ... gaining insight into the psychological life of the perpetrator) and because as Colaizzi (1973, p.28) states. "Without first disclosing the foundations of a phenomenon, no progress whatsoever can be made concerning it, not even a first faltering step can be taken towards it".

It is thus hoped this phenomenological study into the psychological life of adult perpetrators will promote some understanding of the pre-effective life-world of these men and may serve as a platform for further research, and in turn more effective intervention strategies for the adult perpetrator.

The phenomenological approach has been used at Dequesne University and

also in South Africa by Cleaver (1988), "The experience of having one's house attacked and damaged."

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE is any sexual activity with a child who cannot give informed consent to the activity i.e., touching parts of the child, requesting the child to touch oneself, ogling the child in a sexual manner, taking pornographic photographs, requiring the child to look at parts of the body in a way which is arousing to oneself, and threatening the child sexually or otherwise to provide sexual gratification for oneself (Freeman and Heinrich, 1981; Grant, 1989).

Child sexual abuse, unless handled and dealt with can, in some cases, offset such reactions as sexual maladjustment, suicidal feeling, prostitution, substance abuse, abscondment, and a general involvement in delinquent activities. This stresses the urgent need for early intervention and preventative services.

CHILD: According to the Child Care Act (Act 74 of 1983) a child is a person up to the age of 18 years (Grant, 1989). A widely used definition of the abusive relationship in age-differential terms is that devised by David Finkelhor and his Associates at the University of New Hampshire (Finkelhor, 1979) namely:

- ▶ a sexual encounter between a child of 12 years and under with a person of 19 years or over;
- ▶ where the child is under 12 years and the other person under 19 years but at least 5 years older;
- ▶ where a child or adolescent is 13 to 16 years and the other person is at least 10 years older.

SEXUAL: When is something "sexual"? It is most unambiguous when actual contact is involved. But adult nurturant behaviour may involve touching a child's

genitals or other “private” parts of the body. Much of the reported sexual abuse is non-contact in character, i.e. exhibitionism, talking about sexual things in an erotic way, or showing the child pornographic material. Interpretation is required, for example, an adult who allows a child to see him or her naked may or may not do so with sexual intent.

ABUSE: “Abuse” is largely defined by the child/adult or mature/immature dimensions. It does not need to involve violence or any other form of coercion. Violence is, in fact, not usually a part of child sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1990); seduction and enticement are the main means for the adult to achieve control. And those who physically abuse children are on the whole a different group from those who sexually abuse children. A key distinction is that whereas most physical abuse occurs within the family, sexual abuse occurs more often outside the family (Russell and Trainor, 1984).

Sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the sexual pleasure of an adult. In South Africa, the Child Care Act of 1983 defines a child as a person under the age of eighteen years. (This act is currently under review).

Sexual offending is defined as a criminal offence involving sexual behaviour when one party does not give, or is incapable of giving, fully informed consent. This would include such situations as forcible rape and peeping or exposing where the victim obviously does not consent to be involved. It also includes situations where the difference in power between parties is such that one is not in a position to make a truly free choice. This would be the case where one

party is an adult and the other a child. Sex offences can be committed by both male and female offenders upon both male and female victims. However, the preponderance of reported offences involves male offenders and female or child victims (Finkelhor, 1986). For purposes of simplicity and brevity, I would refer to generic sex offender as male and generic victim as female.

It is obvious to anybody that sex offenders are different from other clients i.e. psychotherapy clients in the sense that clients who are in a counselling relationship go into this situation on their own initiative to solve problems that are causing them concern and that they are more or less committed to facing and resolving. On the other hand, most sex offenders go into treatment involuntarily.

PHENOMENOLOGY: "Phenomenology is a method, more properly it is an attitude but not that of a technician with his tools and methods ready to repair a poorly functioning machine. Rather it is one of wonder and respect as one attempts a dialogue with the world - to get the world to disclose itself in all its manifestness and complexity (Kruger: 1979).

The phenomenological researcher enters into dialogue with his subject to articulate his experience as fully and descriptively as possible. In opposition, the natural scientific method of inquiry confines complete understanding by the imposition of quantitative values on the experience. In communicating with the subject the phenomenological researcher attempts to remain open to the disclosure of all aspects of the experience.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the theoretical explanations for sexual abuse of children because without theory research may yield a collection of unrelated facts with little meaning. The researcher will also review empirical research and discuss the recent moves in treatment used in trying to minimise the occurrence of this abusive behaviour.

The first section will focus on the theories that have been outlined by Finkelhor (1986) and briefly incorporate theories by Marshall and Barbaree (1990). The last part of this section will briefly discuss such issues as onset of this behaviour, personality and psychopathology. The next section on relevant research, such topics as the prevalence of child sexual abuse, research into the treatment of sex offenders, research into recidivism, cure and management of offenders and the issues of victimisation and subsequent offending. Recent changes in treatment methodology and procedures will be exemplified in an appendix. The last section of this chapter will focus on the rationale of the study.

Many researchers have avoided speaking to or interviewing sex offenders, but instead have tried to understand them theoretically, from information given by the victim. Gaining information about sex offender exclusively from the victim is problematic, because the victim's experience of sex abuse is different from that of the abuser.

2.2 THEORIES OF SEXUAL OFFENDING

This section will review the theories of why someone would sexually abuse immature children and examine the supporting empirical evidence. The researcher will use the term "adult sexual perpetrator" or "adult sexual offender" or "adult sexual abuser" to refer to offenders.

"Theories of why adults become sexually interested in and involved with children have come primarily from psychoanalytic theory and, later, from sources such as social learning theory and feminism" (Finkelhor, 1986, p.62). What most of these approaches tend to share is that they are "Single-factor". These theories have been inadequate to explain the full range and diversity of sex offenders' behaviour. Most of the theories are categorised as trying to explain one of four factors (as outlined by Finkelhor, 1986):

- (a) why a person would find relating sexually to a child to be emotionally gratifying and congruent, i.e., in the sense of the child fitting the adult's needs (*Emotional Congruence*);

- (b) why a person would be capable of being sexually aroused by a child (*Sexual Arousal*);
- (c) why a person would be frustrated or blocked in efforts to obtain sexual and emotional gratification from more normatively approved sources (*Blockage*); and
- (d) why a person would not be deterred by the conventional social restraints and inhibitions against having sexual relations with a child (*Disinhibition*).

These four factors can be viewed as complementary processes, many or all of which may come into play in the development of one particular person's sexual interest in children. They may also serve to explain the diversity of the behaviour (Finkelhor, 1986).

Each one of these theories will be discussed below.

2.2.1 EMOTIONAL CONGRUENCE

Some theories developed in the 1960's tried to explain that sexual abusers choose children for sexual partners because children have some especially compelling emotional meaning for them. This is called "emotional congruence" because it conveys the idea of a "fit" between the adult's emotional needs and the characteristics of children. This fit is what this theory tries to explain.

One version of this theory holds that sex offenders choose to relate to children because they are at a child's emotional level and they respond to childlike

preoccupations (Hammer & Glueck, 1957; Groth & Birnbaum, 1978; and Bell & Hall, 1976).

On the other hand Marshall and Barbaree (1990) suggest that males innately have a greater capacity than females for sexualised hostile aggression and that the control of this capacity is a product of adequate socialisation in critical periods (infancy, childhood and adolescence).

If this is true, then one gets the impression that social relationships are important to understanding sexual abuse. It is thus important to consider social relationships when treating or explaining sexual abuse.

These (infancy, childhood and adolescence) periods are regarded as crucial periods in one's development. It is important that victims of sexual abuse, children of high risk of sexual abuse, should be taught as early as during their childhood stage i.e. pre-school age: not to engage in sexual behaviour which are frightening or humiliating to their partner; must be taught that this kind of relationship i.e. sexual relationship like all other relationships should be respected by both people involved in it may be this could be done through introducing sex education at schools.

The acquisition of attitudes and behaviours during childhood sets the stage for later development in any human being and in this case for male to respond to the sudden onset of strong desires in socially accepted ways.

Hammer and Glueck (1957) gave the Rorschach, House-tree-person, T.A.T and Blacky picture tests to 200 sexual offenders and concluded that paedophiles feel psychosexually immature and lacking in self-esteem.

Howells (1979) went on trying to substantiate the idea that children have a special emotional meaning for adult perpetrators. Using a technique called the Repertory Grid, he found that issues of dominance and hierarchy were more important in the social relationships of abusers than in those of non-sex offenders, and that one of the salient characteristics that offenders point to in their victims is lack of dominance or power to resist.

According to the above-mentioned researchers sexual offenders get satisfaction of their sexual need at an immature level of sexual development. The question arises whether immaturity of sexual offenders plays an important role to understand sexual activity with children. These points appear to be relevant in understanding adult sexual activity with children but researchers have made broad and unwarranted inferences from empirical findings e.g. from test data. This does not necessarily explain the respondents sexual interaction with children. An immature adult person is expected to behave in a socially accepted manner towards any child. Society holds that an adult should not have any sexual interest in or be involved sexually with a child. Perhaps a phenomenological approach uncovering their feelings or emotions could better explain this abusive behaviour.

2.2.2 SEXUAL AROUSAL IN OFFENDERS

In the 1980s it was suggested that some people have an arousal preference for children. This has puzzled researchers as to whether it is because of frustration during childhood experience, biological factors, because of the influence of pornography or other media that expose children in an erotic light or because these were victims of sexual abuse in their own childhood stage.

This theory looks at such questions in trying to explain the abusive behaviour of sexual offenders.

One general theory is that some people have early sexual experiences with children that condition them when they become adults to find children to be arousing (Wenet, Clark & Hunner, 1981). Special conditions could give rise to such early childhood experiences. One possibility is that the critical experience are those in which some special kind of fulfilment or frustration was involved or it could be those experiences are associated with traumatic victimization.

Other accounts of the origin of sexual arousal towards children have focused on biological factors such as hormone levels or chromosomal make-up (Money, 1961; Goy & McEven, 1977; Berlin, 1982). There are reports of physiological abnormalities among some sex offenders (Berlin, 1982; McAuliffe, 1983) and success in treating them with drugs.

Marshall and Barbaree (1990) emphasise disruptive, violent backgrounds in the childhood and adolescent environments of males at risk of becoming sexual offenders. Herman's (1990) discussion of sexual addiction as an explanation for sexual offending proposes simply that "any behaviour which causes intense excitement and pleasure can become compulsive". As such, sexual addiction is seen as not dissimilar to other addictions, such as alcoholism or pathological gambling. Herman's (1990) discussion resembles Tolpin and Kohut's (1989) discussion of like behaviours (compulsive sexualisation, substance abuse, forced thinking and action) as manoeuvres whose object is compensation and defence of a self-structure which is deficient or weak because of early preoedipal trauma. These researchers seem to be implying that sexual offenders have problems because they are addicted to sexual arousal by children.

2.2.3 BLOCKAGE

Some individuals are considered to be blocked in their ability to meet their sexual and emotional needs in adult heterosexual relationships. Perhaps this is because of conflicts with their mothers during their early stage of development, or because of difficulties in relating to adult females, or because of repressive norms about sex.

These theories presume that normal development would lead a person to fulfill his or her needs with adult peers but for some reasons, in sexual offenders, these tendencies are blocked and sexual interest orients toward children.

In earlier research some offenders are described as having intense conflicts about their mothers that make it difficult or impossible for them to relate to adult women (Hammer & Glueck, 1957; Gillespie, 1964).

The man who finds himself to be impotent in his first sexual attempts, or abandoned by his first lover, may come to associate adult sexuality with pain and frustration and this for him means that the avenue is filled with trauma. The sex offender then chooses children as a substitute gratification (Kinsey, 1948).

The blockage-type theory also suggests a further distinction between developmental blockage and situational blockage. Developmental blockage refers to a person who is seen as prevented from moving into the adult heterosexual stage of development. Situational blockage refers to a person with apparent adult sexual interest who is blocked from normal sexual outlets because of loss of a relationship or some other transitory crisis.

Many studies indicate that male sex abusers may have many problems with adult females. In a study of 200 sex offenders, Hammer and Glueck (1957) report "fear of heterosexual contact" as a common finding. Sex abusers also have been shown to harbour unusual amounts of sexual anxiety (Goldstein, 1973).

The other component of the blockage theme is related to the adult family life of sex offenders. This holds that they experience some disappointment or trauma

in adult heterosexual relationships that triggers the paedophilic activity (Fitch, 1962).

Another blockage theory points out that repressive norms or attitudes about such things as masturbation and extra-marital relationships may be related to paedophilia (Goldstein, 1973). Goldstein (1973) also found that paedophiles reported more guilt or shame than controls from looking at or reading erotica.

This approach considers it important to understand what really blocks these people from “normal or socially accepted” sexual activity with adult females. Preventative measures could be designed taking into consideration the above-mentioned obstacles, if this theory could be substantiated.

2.2.4 DISINHIBITION

Conventional inhibitions against sex with children are overcome or not present in some adults. According to this theory, ordinary control is circumvented among certain sex abusers. Storr (1965) pointed out that some normal men when judgement and self-control have been impaired by brain damage or alcohol, are capable of making sexual advances to children.

Sometimes situational factors, as well as personality factors, are used in disinhibition-type explanations to account for sexual abuse, i.e., when a person

with no prior history of paedophilic behaviour commits a paedophiliac act under conditions of great personal stress, e.g., the stressor being unemployed, loss of love, or death of a relative are viewed as factors that lowered inhibitions to deviant types of behaviour (Mohr , 1964; Gebhard, 1975; Swanson, 1968).

One disinhibition-type theory for which there is support is lack of impulse control. Based on the 200 sex offenders' responses to the Bender Gestalt and Blacky pictures. Hammer and Glueck (1957) identified inadequate control of impulses as another important factor.

“Many studies show that alcohol involvement accompanies sexual abuse, meaning that the offender was an alcoholic and/or drinking at the time of the offense.” (Aarens, M., Cameron, T., Roizen, J., Room, R., Schneberk, D., & Wingard, D. , 1978). They reviewed 11 US and two other empirical studies and found that alcohol was involved in 30% - 40% of cases in most studies. These ranged from a low of 19% in a German study by Wilschke (1965), to an overall high of 49% in a study by Rada (1976).

The studies by Wilschke (1965) and by Rada (1976) also showed that 45% - 50% of offenders had histories or drinking problems (low of 8% to high of 70%). Aarens et al. (1978) conclude from the review of the relevant studies that incest offenders appear to be the most alcohol involved of all sex abusers. •Of all disinhibition theories, the one with most empirical support is that implicating alcohol involvement.

It is better to say that alcohol plays a role in the commission of offences by some groups of sex abusers. Alcohol may have some influence that allows a person to disregard the taboos against child sexual abuse.

2.3 SUPPORT FOR THESE THEORIES

This section reviews empirical research to discover what support exists for the above theories that attempt to explain why adults become sexually interested in and involved with children.

In terms of the above theories research reported by Howells (1981) suggests:

- (a) One study supports "emotional congruence" the idea that children, because of their lack of dominance, have some special meaning for paedophiles;
- (b) Sexual abusers do show an unusual pattern of sexual arousal toward children, although there is no substantiated theory about why this is so;
- (c) A number of studies have concurred that molesters are blocked in their social and heterosexual relationships;
- (d) Alcohol is a disinhibiting factor that plays a role in a great many sexual abuse offences; and

- (e) There is evidence that many sexual abusers were themselves victims of abuse when they were children.

These four theories do identify certain factors or essential elements in at least some perpetrating individuals, but seem to be failing to explain most offending.

Apart from these theories, other researchers look at the following elements in describing this abusive behaviour: onset, specificity, personality and psychopathology.

2.4 AGE OF ONSET OF PERPETRATORS

Such studies become especially important for developing techniques of prevention education.

Hypothetically, the researcher might conclude that the onset of this behaviour will depend on one's environment. This deviant behaviour could start as early as the pre-adolescent stage.

Until recently, a common myth was that paedophilia was an adult disorder and that paraphiliacs were fairly specific in their preferred victims (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Mittelman, & Rouleau, 1988; Abel, 1987; Rouleau, 1990). Abel et. al. (1988) reported that more than 50% of the offenders studied with multiple paraphiliacs had onset of their deviant interest by the age of 18 years. Paraphilias are sexual disorders characterised by specialised sexual fantasies

and intense sexual urges and practices that are usually repetitive and distressing to the person. Similar data have been reported by Groth (1982).

Hindman (1988) reported that close to 70% of her sample of offenders began their offence patterns in adolescence. Thomas (1982) also reported that approximately 50% of the sample of victims studied identified their offenders as adolescence. Abel et al. (1988) reported that the majority of offenders studied had multiple paraphiliacs, and this was also evident in cases of incest that were included.

Data suggest that offenders have an early onset, and many do not limit their offences to one type of victim. In addition, among incarcerated offenders, the level of general criminality may be high. From a clinical standpoint, therapists should be aware that offenders against children may have other paraphiliacs and must target them for appropriate treatment. This may be especially relevant in the case of incest, in which the perpetrator may have a long history of a variety of paraphiliac behaviour.

2.5 PERSONALITY AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF THE ABUSER

Understanding the personality of sexual offenders might be used for the identification of risk factors. Risk factors require cautious handling in order to

avoid specification and perpetuation of stereotypes. Risk factors such as unemployment of men and loneliness are also known to indicate a higher risk to commit sexual offence.

Much of the literature on personality types is of limited value because of the use of nonstandardized instruments or scoring techniques, inadequate control groups, and a mixing of a variety of paraphiliacs in the same group (Levin and Stava, 1987).

Another common problem in such studies is the use of group data that may suggest more homogenous patterns of personality types than actually exist. This is an error frequently found in the interpretation of research using the Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory (MMPI) with sex offenders (Hall, 1986).

The search for the typical sex offender's personality profile has not been successful. What the data do suggest, however, is that child sex offenders present with a variety of personality styles and with a wide range of concomitant psychopathology. Clinically, personality assessment may still have a role in the overall assessment of patients because certain personality profiles may inform the treatment process. For example, the patients who demonstrate antisocial or borderline personality traits may raise different issues in treatment than those with dependent or avoidant patterns (Hall, 1986).

The impact of personality and psychopathology on the treatment process is probably more relevant for informing treatment than the continued search for a specific offender profile (Hall, 1986).

2.6 THE PREVALENCE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

There has been concern and recognition of the fact that a large number of women have experience of sexual abuse during their childhood.

Child molestation occurs with alarming frequency despite strong social sanctions. Such behaviour is believed to constitute a serious risk for children's well-being and further development, psychological, moral and/or physical (Greenberg, 1990). As early as 1984, Finkelhor considered that the problem was under-reported and that the number of acts of child molestation was steadily rising. "Sexually abused children live with secrecy and isolation. Only a small minority ever reveal the abuse during childhood" (Salter, 1988). Various studies report that between 10% - 60% of persons have experienced some form of sexual abuse in their childhood (Greenberg, 1990). How often sexual abuse actually does occur, however, is not a matter of established scientific fact. A study conducted in Cape Town by Levett (1988) reported that of 94 female university students, 44% reported sexual abuse before the age of 18 years.

In South Africa as well as in many other countries, a statistic commonly accepted (although unproven) is that sexual abuse occurs in more than one in ten children, (Levett, 1988)

ten children, (Levett, 1988)

Many questions about the causes of sexual abuse, the effects of sexual abuse, the connection between sexual abuse and a variety of other social problems are being investigated because of increased awareness in South Africa. Prevalence studies in South Africa have not yet given an indication of the extent of the problem.

2.7 RESEARCH INTO THE TREATMENT OF SEX OFFENDERS

The primary rationale for treating offenders usually is considered to be the reduction of future reoffence and therefore the reduction of the number of victims.

Treatment approaches for sexual offenders have become multi-faceted in nature (George and Marlatt, 1984; Pithers, Marques, Gibat and Marlatt, 1983).

Included in the complex inventory of techniques designed to promote and maintain therapeutic gains are numerous procedures that target general lifestyles areas. Inherent in the logic of applying lifestyle modification procedures to the sexual aggressor is the belief among researchers and clinicians that an unbalanced lifestyle leads to a subjective sense of being out

of control (Marlatt, 1983). If an unbalanced lifestyle is present, the lapse-relapse precipitators may produce an individual at great risk for repeat offenses.

To date, researchers have not carried out controlled investigations of lifestyle interventions versus other treatments on populations of sexual offenders. However, an active area of investigation with obvious relevance to these individuals is that of lifestyle interventions with addictive behaviours (Pithers, et al. 1983) and most of this research has targeted exercise training and some form of relaxation training. Retrospective evidence supports the possibly salutary effect of meditation on alcohol or drug use (Benson 1972). Although there is little literature on lifestyle modifications and therapeutic outcomes with sexual offenders, experts in this area agree that this component is likely to be an important ingredient in any comprehensive programme (George and Marlatt, 1983; Pithers, et.al. 1983). There are no published outcome studies for South African programmes.

2.8 RESEARCH INTO RECIDIVISM

The concern with the study of recidivism is to predict who is likely to reoffend. Early studies looked at certain characteristics which were associated with recidivism among perpetrators i.e. Tracy (1963) found that those who had prior arrests for sex offences and those with personality disorders were most likely to reoffend. Fitch (1962) concluded that three factors i.e. a history of previous sex offences, being single, and being young at the time of the offence were

associated with recidivism, but the age at the time of the offence for which the person was originally incarcerated was not.

Meyer and Romero (1980) found only two factors to predict recidivism:

- ▶ a prior arrest for a sex offence in adulthood;
- ▶ a self-reported history of indecent exposure.

They also found that single offenders, young offenders, those with “constricted thought flow,” and those with negative feelings towards their mothers were more likely to reoffend.

Studies over the years on rates of recidivism in respect of sexual offenders indicate that punishment, such as imprisonment certainly does little to help the abuser change his behaviour. Some researchers, theories and practitioners in the field e.g. Van Niekerk : Personal communication, (1998), go as far as to suggest that imprisonment reinforces sexual deviance.

Relapse prevention model with integrated theories has been used to treat sex offenders (George and Marlatt, 1983).

In general, relapse prevention is well suited for the treatment of sex offenders. As a group, sex offenders are known to be at high risk for relapse (Tracy, 1963). Abstinent sex offenders often report strong, seemingly uncontrollable urges to resume deviant sexual activity and lack specific coping skills needed to deal with

these. Critical components of relapse prevention, treatment may provide the offender with insights into his pattern of offending (Marlatt and Gordon, 1985).

The question arises as to why such efforts to prevent recidivism have been fruitless.

Furby (1989) reviewed approximately 55 studies of recidivism with sex offenders. The studies vary considerably in types of offenders studied, length of follow-up, and definition of recidivism. In many of the studies differential rates for child molesters were not provided. Not surprisingly, given the variability in the studies, recidivism rates varied from 0 to more than 50% and of the studies reviewed, there was no clear trend for treated offenders to have lower recidivism rates than untreated offenders.

Recent reviews focusing on contemporary cognitive behavioural treatments (Marshall and Barbaree, 1990; Marshall, Jones, Ward, Johnson and Barbaree, 1991) suggest more positive outcomes.

Data from outpatient programmes indicate recidivism rates ranging from 0% to 17.9% across studies and across types of molesters. Marshall and Barbaree (1990), using official and unofficial records of follow-up ranging from 12 to 17 months, found recidivism rates of 18% for incest offenders, 13.9% for offenders against male children, and 17.9% for offenders against female children.

Untreated cases showed recidivism rates of approximately 21% for incest offenders and 42.9% for both groups of offenders against non-related children.

5-10% of offenders in Childline rehabilitation program reoffend - (Cognitive behaviour program with some psychodynamic and family therapy interventions : Personal communication : Van Niekerk, 1998).

She pointed out that they look at a broader spectrum of factors such as:

- (a) the offense itself;
- (b) ability to manage social and intimate relationships;
- (c) empathy for victim;
- (d) offender's general sexual behaviour.

Few efforts have been made to follow up identified perpetrators over a period of time to find out whether or not and under what conditions they continue to reoffend.

Recidivism studies are helpful in the sense that they can be used as yardsticks in evaluating whether a particular method or treatment is effective or not.

2.9 VICTIMISATION AND SUBSEQUENT OFFENDING

Offenders who can project blame on others and find excuses for their behaviour are blocked from truly recognising the impact their behaviour has on victims. This has implications for treatment programmes. Although studies on this area are limited, some findings have clinical significance and suggest future research directions.

Examinations of the percentage of offenders themselves who are also victims casts doubts on the role prior victimisation has in the etiology of sex offending. Salter (1988), in a review of 18 studies reporting the rate of victimisations among offenders, found varying rates of between 0% to 70%. In general the empirical data suggest that around 30% of offenders report having been sexually abused as children. The empirical data does not support a strong link between victimisation and offending, but there is at least tentative evidence that suggest that those offenders who were victims have a number of coexisting problems that may also have been influential.

Through such knowledge the researchers might be able to help protect the children and minimise the occurrence of this behaviour.

2.10 CURRENT STUDIES AND TRENDS IN THE TREATMENT OF SEXUAL ABUSE

2.10.1 REPORT BY HSRC

What drives a person to sexually abuse a child is a mystery and also a concern for many people. Various studies have been conducted in trying to get an answer to the question, and to show the rate of sexual abuse.

Schurink, Schurink and Smit (1995) published a report (commissioned by the HSRC) on the first national study of crimes against children.

This study was conducted by the HSRC from July 1 to July 30, 1995. Some of its major findings, based on a study of 4606 cases reported to Child Protection Units, were:

- (a) 62% of the children were victims of crimes of a sexual nature;
- (b) as a rule, counselling services and support were not provided to the victim;
- (c) 44.4% received no help and 41.8% were assisted by a social worker;
- (d) 83.5% of the perpetrators were known to the victim;
- (e) despite the fact that offenders (62.9%) generally had a previous criminal record;

- (f) nearly two-thirds (63.2%) of the offenders that could be traced were not tried for offences they committed;
- (g) only 7.4% of the offenders received a prison sentence; and
- (h) crimes against children are increasing at the rate of 28.9% a year.

If the above trend continues, by the year 2000 the Child Protection Units will have to deal with 1 478 110 cases of child abuse.

Researchers did not focus on what meaning this abusive behaviour has for the offenders. Like many other researchers, the focus has been on the victim, i.e. what explanation the victim gives about the offender and whether the victim gets counselling services or not. Description of sexual offenders by the victims may not be helpful in terms of minimising the occurrence of this behaviour.

Allowing the sexual offenders to verbalise their feelings might be helpful for researchers and enable them to design appropriate methods to help offenders.

2.10.2 BLACKLISTING OF SEX OFFENDERS IMMINENT

Presumably, blacklisting might have strong impact on sex offenders, such as losing jobs, etc. There has been recent call from the Child Protection Group to register sex offenders, and the National Department of Social Welfare is currently engaged in moves towards formalising a roll of sexual offenders to prevent the further exploitation of children.

The Sunday Tribune paper dated August 24, 1997, published that the National Department of Social Welfare is currently engaged in moves towards formalising a register of sexual offenders to prevent the further exploitation of children. The KwaZulu-Natal legislature has passed a Child's Commissioner Bill. The Bill proposes to set up a provincial list of "convicted sexual offenders" and allocate broader powers of investigation to the commissioner. If the Bill is passed, it would operate such that once the convicted sexual offender has been released, the onus would be upon him to report to the Children's Commissioner as to details of his whereabouts and movements.

People who live in the particular region may have access to the list via an official request. The question is "..... what about the offenders who had not been convicted and are still potentially dangerous, the probability of him to escape the law still exists?"

Durban's Childline director, Durban region, Joan van Niekerk, stated the idea as being "a waste of resources". She pointed out that the list would be a duplication of information from the Criminal Statistics Bureau. The Department of Welfare allocated R600 000 to get the sexual offenders-register project off the ground.

"We need to make use of the existing bureau in terms of obtaining information about sex offenders and it should also be made compulsory that people's names

be checked against this bureau, where people may be employed in positions which involve interaction with children.” said Mrs Van Nierkerk.

The offender register seems to have problems such as:

- (a) knowing the criteria to be taken into consideration when drawing up the list;
- (b) who will have access to this list and in what capacity; and also
- (c) blacklisting goes contrary to the constitutional rights of the sex offender, (Sunday Tribune , August 17, 1997).

Avoiding communication with sex offenders is the mistake the researchers have been doing for many years and the researcher of this study believes that talking to them is an essential element to understand their behaviour and this might lead to effective treatment programs. *See Appendix A - On Treatment of Sexual Offender (Childline - Durban)*

2.11 RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

Theories are important as a frame of reference but they lack explanatory value to the question of what makes male adults sexually abuse children. It is difficult to understand this abusive behaviour from empirical findings. Conducting a phenomenological study where sex offenders describe their feelings could give us a better understanding of their behaviour. It is important to note that the focus of research in a phenomenological framework is, however, the world as revealed through a transcendental research attitude, an attitude which does

not aim to deny absolutely the existence of the natural world, but which strives to hold in abeyance the natural scientific belief that the world is independent of each individual (Husserl, 1962).

The researcher is required to move from a natural attitude to a transcendental attitude through a process of phenomenological reduction - a process of suspending, or bracketing personal preconceptions and presuppositions by making them explicit.

The aim of this research therefore is to conduct a phenomenological study into the psychological life of adult perpetrators, exploring their feelings/experiences of sexually abusing children. The subjectively lived experience of sexual abuse behaviour will be used to explicate and describe the essential meanings that sexual contact with children has assumed for adult perpetrators.

The next chapter focuses on the methodology of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter focuses on the selection of methodology. It discusses the selection of the participants and describes the design of the project.

3.1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHOD

Todres (1978) explains that phenomenological psychology has as its quest the inter-subjective understanding of human experience and action in its holistic, contextual, given. He proposes that any research must lead to an increased personal and interpersonal understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Giorgi (1983); Kruger (1979); and Svensson (1986) argue that only qualitative investigation and exploration can make meaningful the phenomenon of human experience. The phenomenological approach is based on the contention that in order to be truly rigorous, the presence of the human element in the research situation should be taken into consideration. The phenomenologically oriented researcher seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon as it manifests itself with the least possible imposition of psychological theory or method (Kruger, 1979).

The phenomenological approach does not assume that we understand psychological reality but it seeks the life world of a subject (Cleaver, 1988). Svensson (1986) points out that when meaning is not defined in advance but considered to have to be justified on an empirical basis, the research is descriptive in a fundamental sense and its aim the is description of meaning.

The question of the reliability and validity of this method has been dealt with. Kruger (1979) for instance, states that the rigorous procedure of explication must be made publicly so that research may be replicated by another researcher if so desired. He states that the validity and reliability of the research will not depend only upon the reliability of the results but rather on the reappearance of various essential themes which initially lead to greater intersubjective understanding of the phenomenon concerned.

Todres (1978) reflecting upon the validity of the phenomenological approach, states that it is valid insofar as it calls for the comment of all people who have to share experience.

It should be noted that the aim of the phenomenological researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon as it appears, rather than indulging in attempts to explain it within a pre-given framework. The operative word in phenomenological research is "describe" (Giorgi, 1986). According to Van den Berg (1972), "This is the basic principle of all phenomenology: the investigator remains true to the facts as they are happening". The

phenomenological researcher is thus wary of theoretical observations and accepted opinions lest, prejudging that which has yet to be fully known, he fails to be faithful to the phenomena as they appear,(Van den Berg 1972).

“It is phenomenologically unsound to establish a method that must be used that is prior to and independent of the phenomenon to be investigated. The problem of methodology cannot be considered in isolation, but only within the context of the phenomenon to be investigated and the problem aspect of that phenomenon”. (Giorgi, 1971, p11).

It is the unique demands of the problem which indicate the method rather than the method which limits the problem. When the problem changes, then the method must also change, or at least its inappropriateness for the problem as it then presents itself must be recognised. (Romanyshyn, 1971).

Phenomenological research is concerned with the rigorous, systematic and methodical description of the subjectively lived meanings that phenomena have for people. Phenomenological methods must be reflexive in nature and intent in order to remain faithful to their purposes; that is, to explicate the essential meaning of the targeting experience, Kruger (1979) notes that the procedure outlined below should not be viewed as a specific methodology in relation to a particular phenomenon.

For the phenomenologist, only that which has its base in naive is real; therefore, only that which revealed or disclosed as pure phenomena is worthy of attention. It is evident that the description of the psychological life of the adult molester, elucidated from the above-mentioned data-gathering technique qualifies as being “worthy” of attention.

The steps to be followed constitute specifically applicable procedures which are congruent with the general principles of phenomenological research. This promotes the emergence of an essential description of the phenomenon without distorting the essential meaning of the original data. This, coupled with the researcher’s “creative insight and empathic engagement” with the data should result in a “truly illuminating phenomenological description” of the original data (Ivey, 1991, p.4).

When conducting research in psychology conceived as a human science, it is imperative to realise that the design is not centred around a subject-object relationship but rather around a subject-subject relationship (Kvale, 1973).

3.2 SUBJECTS

To investigate the issues listed above, the study was undertaken to gather the accounts of the adult male perpetrators of sexual abuse upon children.

In order to gain access to subjects for the interviews, the researcher approached the convenors of two therapeutic groups held in Durban for adult male molesters above the age of 21 years.

The Child and Family Treatment Centre and the Correctional Supervision Centres cooperate in providing treatment groups at their respective centres.

Criteria for the selection of subjects at these centre are as follows:

- (a) Subjects were sentenced to Correctional Supervision in terms of Section 276 (1)(h) of the Criminal Procedures Act (Act 5 pf 1977, amended Act 122 of 1991).
- (b) Subjects were all sexual offenders.
- (c) For all of them, treatment was a condition of the sentence. They had no option but to attend the programme for the period of their sentence.
- (d) The subjects are not incarcerated during this period of treatment.

Phenomenology has interests in the quality of the subjective experience rather than its generalizability (Kruger, 1979). Unlike quantitative research, the sample size in a phenomenological research should be small. Koning (1979) suggests approximately 5 as an acceptable sample size for qualitative research. It is therefore preferable to have fewer subjects and conduct a deep and

profound analysis, broadening our understanding of subjective human experience, then to make superficial observations about a large sample.

There were sexual offenders attending the treatment programme. The individual unstructured interviews were scheduled with each of 8 adult male respondents, i.e., four Blacks, two Whites and two Indians, who were:

- (a) motivated or indicated a willingness to participate in the projects through their participation and attendance in the rehabilitation programmes.
- (b) prepared to discuss their sexual offence with the researcher.
- (c) residents of the central Durban area who could be reached by the researcher after hours.

According to Kruger (1979), there are four important selection criteria for subjects who are to participate in this form of research: that is, individuals who:

- (a) have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched;
- (b) are verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to the researched phenomenon;
- (c) have the same home-language as the researcher, since this will obviate the possible loss of subtle semantic nuances owing to the need to translate from one language to another (Levy, 1973). The present

researcher did not abide by this criterion, as available subjects were from different races. The interviews were conducted by the same researcher in English or Zulu according to the home language of the interviewee.

- (d) express a willingness to be open to the researcher.

3.3 THE INTERVIEW

According to Kruger, "questionnaire-completion schedules tend to result in responses of a distant and highly reflective nature, whereas, the spoken interview allows the subjects to be as near as possible to their lived-experience, does not preclude the possibility of dialogue during the early phase of research and does not entail the inhibiting effect of the process of writing on spontaneity of expression" (1979, p.151).

The advantage of the non-directive interview is its flexibility, which allows the researcher to grasp more fully the subject's experience than would be possible through the implementation of a more rigid methodological technique, which yields little understanding of the experiential world of the subject. The interview as opposed to questionnaire renders a richness of data, subjects tend to edit their responses less and this allows the researcher access to the subjects' nuances of speech and gestures, providing a fuller account of the subjects' feeling (Valle and King, 1978).

In order to facilitate data gathering, Kruger (1979) notes that rapport should exist

between the researcher and the subjects, and that the researcher should create a situation in which the subject can feel relaxed and where anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed. To establish an open, facilitating relationship with subjects, the researcher visited therapeutic group sessions as an observer for a few days prior to collecting the required data.

As a reassurance of confidentiality, subjects were not required to complete a Personal data Form to provide the researcher with biographical data. This was also done to encourage subjects to express their true feelings.

It was made clear that their responses would be recorded and may be quoted verbatim but that they would not be identified by name. Transcripts of the interviews would not be made available to the Convenors of the groups and would not constitute a part of the record of any individual participant.

Arrangement were made for the researcher to meet with each of the prospective interviewees to ask them for their cooperation in agreeing to be interviewed. Since most of them were employed researcher made appointments for interviewees to coincide with the dates of their visits to the supervisor.

The research interview should be open-ended and conducted in an informal, nondirective manner, with the interviewer attempting to influence the subject as little as possible. If the researcher fails to understand a particular point made by the subject, it is imperative that clarification be sought, with the proviso that leading questions be avoided.

On the date of appointment, the subject saw the supervisor first. It is procedural that the convicted sexual offender avail himself to his supervisor at the Correctional Supervision Centre once per month. After presenting himself to the supervisor, the prospective interviewee was made aware that he was to see the researcher in one of the therapeutic rooms which was prepared for this purpose.

During the first 10 minutes of the session, the writer introduced herself, explained briefly the nature and scope of the research and then the interviewee was asked to participate in this project.

The researcher emphasised that the information gathered would be used in trying to help others i.e., could be used in finding out preventative measures or cognitive skills that could be of help to any person with thoughts of having sex with a child.

Before posing the questions to each interviewee, the interviewer pointed out the following:

- (a) One's right as an interviewee to decline participating at any time if he likes;
- (b) Reassured confidentiality and that the identity of the participant would not be reported;
- (c) Thanking him for accepting to participate.

3.4 FOCUS OF THIS RESEARCH

The problem that was researched for this study was defined as adult male's lived experience of child sexual abuse.

The researcher conducted tape-recorded interviews to allow for subsequent transcription. The stimulus question was asked:

"Could you describe your experience of sexuality abusing the child, the emotions you felt just prior to abusing the child, how you felt immediately after the abuse, how you are feeling right now about sexually abusing the child, emotionally and otherwise"?

The semi-structured interview using a schedule was used (See Appendix B). Each interview lasted for about 35-40 minutes.

The interviewee was to verbally express his feelings with little intervention from the interviewer. Intervention was done only to clarify some matter or to ask the interviewee to elaborate on a particular point.

At the end of each session with each interviewee, the interviewer wrote short notes based on:

- (a) the interviewer's subjective impression about the interviewee;
- (b) whether he was defensive or not;
- (c) whether he was agitated or not;
- (d) the tone of his voice.

At the end of each session, the interviewer thanked each participant. Each participant understood that the session was not part of the therapeutic session.

The convenors of the therapeutic group were aware of which individuals participated in this research project, and also were aware of the research procedure that was followed. This enabled the convenors to be alert to any discomfort or distress arising after the research interviews. The convenors reported to the researcher that as far as they were aware none of the individuals showed any concerns subsequent to the individual interviews.

3.5 REFLECTION

The interviews continued as arranged :

- (a) all interviews were tape-recorded as planned;
- (b) they were completed as scheduled;
- (c) all interviewees co-operated well although they seemed reticent to talk during the first 5 to 10 minutes of the session, agitated, some were

defensive, i.e., they reported that they sexually abused children when they were under the influence of liquor.

Some of the respondents seemed relaxed once the interview was underway. This was inferred from their sitting posture and the way in which they talked freely.

- (d) The interviewer was very aware of the sensitivity of the topic and tried to be non-judgemental to their responses.
- (e) Eye-contact was not maintained with the interviewer by most of the respondents.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA ORGANISATION

Miles and Huberman (1994), suggest that data may be organised and analysed as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity:

- (a) **Data Reduction.** This refers to the process of selection, focusing sampling, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions. The data reduction or transforming process continues after fieldwork, until a final report is completed.
- (b) **Data Display.** This is an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action.

- (c) **Conclusion Drawing and Verification.** From the start of data collection, the qualitative analyst is beginning to decide what things mean, is noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions.

The present researcher will follow the procedure of describing the protocols used by Svensson (1986) in addition to the above.

The steps taken in the analysis of data are delineated as follows:

3.6.1 HOLISTIC GRASP

The first reading is to enable the researcher to get a feel for the completeness of the experience. Also vitally important in this phase is for the researcher to be aware of his own preconceptions and to be aware of them so that they will not distort subsequent interpretation. That is, in the initial reading of a protocol, the researcher should bracket personal preconceptions and judgements and try to remain faithful to the data. After achieving a holistic sense of the protocol, it is read again (if necessary, repeatedly) with a more reflective attitude. In order to prepare for further phases in which a more exacting analysis is required.

The repeated reading of the protocols assists the researcher in retaining a sense of the wholeness of the data despite its dissection in subsequent phases.

The audiotapes were transcribed into writing verbatim. The purpose of this was to enable the researcher to get an idea of the overall experience of the subjects, as reflected in the interview, without looking at the specific themes.

3.6.2 EXTRACTING NATURAL MEANING UNITS (NMU's)

The second step involves the distinction of the protocol into Natural Meaning Units. Each unit, termed a Natural Meaning Unit (NMU) may be defined as "a statement made by the subject which is self-definable and self-delimiting in the expression of a single, recognisable aspect of the subejcts experience" (Kruger, 1979, p. 153). In other words, each NMU expresses a single, recognisable aspect or theme of the total experience. These NMUs should be numbered and written down in the third person, using the subjects' own phraseology as much as possible in order that the data may "speak for itself". The Natural Meaning Units are rephased, using as much of the language of the subject as possible.

This is based on the premise that the NMU's have meaning for the subejcts in their articulation of feelings, attitudes and perception.

As some of the interviews were conducted in Zulu, the statements were to be carefully translated into Enlgish. This meant that the researcher had to be careful in the translation so that the meaning behind each statement was not lost. As these units were written down all repetitions and statements found to be irrelevant were eliminated. The researcher was however, careful not to interpret the statements but describes the statements.

3.6.3 EMERGENCE OF CLUSTER OF CATEGORIES OR THEMES

Themes or general trends are detected. Related categories are brought together to form a cluster of themes for all subjects. The clusters of categories formed or existential dimensions. Ivey (1991) notes that this stage is concerned with integrating and synthesising themes into a psychological meaningful essential description or definition of the relevant phenomenon. It is upon these themes that the description of the experiences of adults sexually abusing children is based.

As a way of checking, the categories were checked against the NMUs to ensure that the statements were a true reflection of the NMUs. Secondly, all the themes or clusters of categories were checked by going back to the categories to ensure that all the categories had been included.

The next chapter will focus on the emotions verbalised by sex offenders i.e. the emotions they experienced prior to, during and after sexually abusing the child. Such emotions may enhance our understanding of why they perform this behaviour and also they are important for the design of any treatment method.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents qualitative descriptions of the male adults experience of sexually abusing children. All the steps described under 3.5 in the previous chapter were carried out in the analysis and various themes emerged. This discussion of the results follows those themes. The results are not being interpreted, they are merely being described. This is in line with Svensson's (1986) argument that in phenomenological research, the data must not be interpreted since there is the danger of contamination by the researcher's own biases. This chapter will therefore concern itself with a mere description of the results, thus allowing data to speak for itself. During the presentation of results, verbatim examples will be presented. This is based on the belief that often the experiences of the subjects are better captured in the actual words of the subjects than in the process of reporting them, as it is their reality that is being depicted.

It should be noted that because of the phenomenological nature of the study, the results cannot be assumed to be representative of all possible respondents. A different set of male adults may well have expressed different experiences from

those presented here, and the data reported here must be interpreted with that caution in mind.

4.1 THE OVERALL IMPRESSION

The overall impression gained by the researcher, referred to by Svensson as “holistic grasp” is three-fold:

- (a) It was clear that many of the adult sexual offenders experienced interpersonal problems such as difficulty in relation to their partners, families, community and children generally. These adult sexual offenders appeared to be anxious, inadequate individuals who felt insecure and expected rejection and failure in adult heterosexual advances. Children appeared to be easy targets for them.
- (b) They also experienced feelings of remorse for what they did. Most of them blamed themselves for their actions, and felt embarrassed and did not want to think or talk about them.
- (c) On the other hand, others justified their behaviour by pointing out that they were drunk at the time and did not know what they were doing. Among those who pointed out that they were drunk, some justified what they did by pointing out that they did not do any penetration and therefore the child was not hurt.

4.2 THE THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE SUBSEQUENT ANALYSIS

Following the procedure described by Svensson (1986) the researcher identified six themes within the responses:

- ▶ inadequacy
- ▶ feeling satisfied and not threatened by the sexual partner
- ▶ feelings of empowerment and control
- ▶ feelings of depression
- ▶ feeling rejected by partners
- ▶ stressors

Each of these themes is discussed below, and direct quotations from the responses are used to illustrate each theme.

4.2.1 INADEQUACY

Inadequacy seemed to be one of the features that characterises the respondents' lives when wanting to have sex with female adults. They reported feeling embarrassed when they do not satisfy their partners sexually. For these men it is clear that they cannot face their limitations positively. Resorting to children by sexually abusing them seems to be a way to prove their manhood.

A sense of adequacy is felt when sexually abusing children (as compared to adult women sexual relationships) and feelings of satisfaction are experienced. Children are considered to be non-judgemental and submissive.

"I feel that I discharge very quickly when having intercourse with my wife".

"My girlfriend sleeps with many other men and when I am with her my stick does not stand and she will end up holding it and put it in herself. That makes me feel embarrassed. I do not like her anymore because of her behaviour ... she is like a dog."

"My one (wife) complains a lot about how I do it. She does not get satisfied even for one day. Sometimes I feel like she is sick."

"She like sex, I don't satisfy her sexually ... she told me straight."

"Of late when I am with my girlfriend I get no erection at all. I'm not the only man. We are many. It means one of them has done something to her that prevents an erection of penis from the man trying to sleep with her. That is why I do not have an erection when I am with her. That is not natural for the man. The penis should stand whenever there is a woman next to you and if not one feels bad and humiliated."

4.2.2 FEELING SATISFIED AND NOT THREATENED BY THE SEXUAL PARTNER

It was clear that most of the offenders had enjoyed having sex with children (girls) because they are non-threatening to them. Children make them feel satisfied all round. Sexual offenders feared rejection from their adult girl-friends and/or wives. Children do not complain about their sexual performance. They do what they are told to do. Children's virginity make men feel even more satisfied i.e. sexually and emotionally. An adult-child sexual relationship was viewed by the respondents as satisfying and non-threatening.

"My blood was so hot and I was very eager to sleep with the child. I knew before doing it that I was going to ejaculate very quickly. My blood was just boiling hot. This is an unforgettable moment to me. It was so nice and I was so happy and satisfied afterwards."

"It is so satisfying to have sex with the child because if I ejaculate very quick it is not a problem with her and there are no complaints about my quick ejaculation."

"I don't feel anxious when with the child. The child is so naive to understand what is going on. I feel better and satisfied when with the child than with my girl-friend."

"My child was too young to understand what I was doing and that alone is satisfying."

"Children's 'cakes' have never been touched. Once such thought crosses your mind you become happy and satisfied even before you do anything."

"She wanted me to sleep with her. It was not for the first time to have sex with me. I know she has been sleeping around with other men and received money out of it. Her granny runs a shebeen and that's the only source of income."

It was clear that although most of the men were not at some stage comfortable to disclose such information, they did have some pleasant memories about abusing children sexually. It made them feel great and, for some of them, they were experiencing such feelings for the first time in their lives.

4.2.3 FEELINGS OF EMPOWERMENT AND CONTROL

Power seemed to be another factor characterising the lives of these sexual offenders. Children appeared to them to be easy targets because they are vulnerable and powerless. Children are depicted as mentally and physically powerless. It was clear that adult female sexual relationships are a source of frustration to them. The men feel threatened by their complaints whereas it is a different situation when they are with children. They feel empowered and in control of the situation. "Manhood" to them is to have power and be in control.

"I was drunk but I remember that for the first time I could control the situation. The child was in pain, I do not deny that, but I was in control."

"When everything happened I was drunk but I felt like I was on top of the world. The child feared me but could not do anything about what was happening."

"Children are too young to understand this and also too powerless and that alone means something. Girls of our age go around giving everybody the "cake" and they also talk too much about how you "eat" her in bed. Children's "cakes" have never been touched."

"Other babies are so tuned up with this thing. The last one made me very happy, although I was a bit shocked when she held my "boy" into her vagina but still I was the one running the show."

4.2.4 FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION

Depression was another factor with the respondents, particularly after being caught and convicted. Feelings of remorse, shame and regret tended to haunt them daily. They reported being withdrawn, feeling guilty about what they had done and also feeling hopeless. They could not avoid thinking about the incidents. The fact that people do not accept what they have done affects them emotionally and otherwise. They reported that they had lost interest in previously enjoyed activities.

"I have not been drinking since that day. I don't go to watch movies anymore ... I have done a disgusting thing."

"I know everybody does not like me especially around their children. This is killing me and I don't think they will ever accept me for what I have done."

It seemed what contributed more to their state were feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness associated with knowing that there was little they could do to change what other people and their wives were thinking about them. These people do not see the way to reconciliation and reinstatement of themselves. They live with ongoing feelings of guilt.

"I have done it and I know this is a stigma that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Sometimes when I think about what I did, I feel embarrassed to ask my wife to make love to me."

"My uncle and my aunt led me to do what I did but now I'm left alone with this incident haunting me."

"Attending the rehabilitation courses does help in a way but I don't think I will ever have strength to face people without any guilt feelings."

In addition to the psychological symptoms described above, the subjects also experienced other physical symptoms commonly associated with depression. They reported consistent sleep disturbances and loss of appetite.

"I can't even sleep at night. I go on thinking with no answers to what I'm thinking about."

"I do not feel like eating most of the time. I eat to keep myself alive."

4.2.5 FEELING REJECTED BY PARTNERS

Subjects were also worried about being rejected by their partners. Release from the jail was seen as good, but on one hand not a happy occasion because they were scared of losing their loved ones and facing the world. They accepted that their behaviour had been inappropriate, but to them the ongoing rejection was too much to bear. Losing their loved ones, such as wives and relatives, was unthinkable. They felt that their life now was different altogether, which was frustrating.

"One does not have freedom in jail. We feel bored most of the time but sometimes it protects us from the community and more importantly from our loved ones. As I'm speaking to you I am not on good terms with her (wife). Anything is possible. I do not think I will be able to save this marriage."

This rejection had negative consequences on the subject's self-esteem.

"I always sit and think if anyone could ever have interest in me."

"I know my girl-friend won't forgive me for this so what is the next move?"

4.2.6 STRESSORS

The subjects reported experiencing stress which was stemming from factors such as:

- (a) fear of the reactions of others and stigmatization;
- (b) uncertainty about the future.

4.2.6.1 Fear of the Reactions of Others and Discrimination

The subjects reported feeling extremely anxious about telling the truth to their family members especially their wives, friends and girl-friends.

Although they were convicted for this crime, they reported that they still could not tell the truth about it. They were concerned about making things worse if they admit to having committed the offence and also not being understood. It is obvious that they are aware that they are living with a deceit or a lie.

"My wife believes that I did not do the offence and I want it to be like that. She must not know the truth because that means losing her."

"It is difficult to live with these thoughts and it is worse to disclose such horrible information. Although I'm not married, but telling the truth about what I did is unthinkable."

"I haven't told anyone. My mother is so cheeky I can't start by telling her something of this nature when I haven't told my boyfriends."

With regard to informing others rather than close family members, the subjects' fears revolved around being discriminated against.

"Another person would be afraid of getting close to me if they knew I did it."

Although the subjects considered it best not to reveal the incidents to their loved ones, at the same time they voiced difficulty in keeping the knowledge to themselves.

4.2.6.2 Uncertainty

Uncertainty about the future was a major stressful factor to the subjects. The fact that they would ever be forgiven for their behaviour seemed to worry them so much.

"It is difficulty to know what somebody is thinking about. My wife is always quiet and it is difficult to know where one stands."

"To have the dignity I once had is what I want more than anything. I keep telling myself that maybe one day this stigma will vanish and I will be considered as a human being again."

4.3 INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS

From the abovementioned themes it is clear that there are similarities and differences emerging from them:

... Sexual offenders believed they cannot satisfy their loved ones sexually. They then become embarrassed about it. Feelings of guilt, hopelessness, withdrawal i.e. not enjoying activities they used to enjoy, thinking about rejection by loved ones and community appeared to haunt them daily. This made them powerless and unable to control the situation.

...Contrary to the above, other themes revealed that what they had done had made them able to take control of the situation and have power over the child. They felt good about it.

Prior to the incident, these adult male sexual offenders were eager for what was about to happen. They couldn't control their emotions. They felt on top of the world when they sexually abused the children. They felt empowered and in control of the situation.

Feelings of guilt, shame and rejection were experienced afterwards, perhaps only after conviction.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings will be discussed in relation to the literature review and findings of other researchers. Themes to be discussed are listed below, as the main themes emerging from the qualitative analysis reported in Chapter 4.

5.1 EMOTIONAL CONGRUENCE

Immaturity of sexual offenders in terms of sexual development was not evident, but more important was inadequacy, frustration that contributed to the abuse of children sexually. Children appeared to be gratifying emotionally and otherwise.

The theory of emotional congruence appeared as a theme that characterised the lives of the eight sexual offenders. Children appeared to have some compelling emotional meaning for them. It appeared as though the adult perpetrators experience their sexual contact with children to be emotionally satisfying. This appears to be conveying the idea of a “fit” between the adult’s emotional needs and the child’s characteristics (Finkelhor, 1984, 1986). Groth, Hobson and Gary (1982) note that a molester, as a result of emotional deprivation, or even overprotection, remains emotionally involved with himself as a child or his likeness. He attempts to give the love he misses or wishes he had had to a child who resembles himself.

Hite (1981) and Gebhard . (1965) note that certain themes in male socialisation and male culture make children appropriate or emotionally congruent objects for sexual interest. This socialisation places the male as being dominant, powerful and being the initiator in sexual relationships. Thus men prefer to relate to partners who are younger, smaller and weaker than themselves (Salter, 1988).

A sense of low self-esteem was experienced by perpetrators, evident in their feelings of powerlessness, inferiority and inadequacy. These findings are also evident in the research of Groth et al. (1982) and Panton (1978). It is possible that sexually relating to children is emotionally congruent as it enables the perpetrator to feel powerful, dominant and in control.

5.2 FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY

Another theme experienced by perpetrators engaged in a conflictual adult heterosexual relationship was that of sexual inadequacy, rejection and emotional distance, suggesting that adult heterosexual problems may play an important role in the occurrence of sexual abuse behaviour. This has also been documented by Gebhard (1965). It was noted that these offenders became sexually aroused by children because of the frustration they encountered in their adult sexual relationships with females. None of the eight respondents was the victim of sexual abuse in his childhood stage, or had any fantasies of having sex with the child. One of them was the victim of a disruptive, violent background in his childhood through adolescent stage putting him at a risk of becoming a sexual offender (Marshall and Barbaree, 1990).

No one in this study reported having had early sexual experiences with children that had conditioned him when he became an adult to find children to be arousing as suggested in one theory by Wenet, Clark and Hunner (1981, pp 149-150).

It appeared to be very humiliating and embarrassing when they do not satisfy their partner's sexually. This sense of inadequacy was evident in all the eight subject protocols. To these sexual offenders, it was clear that they felt undermined by their adult partners being unreassuring. They only achieved satisfaction and had a sense of adequacy when sexually abusing children. The fact that children were non-judgemental, appeared to make the adults feel themselves to be sexually adequate.

Another frustration was that certain men appeared to be sexually incompatible with their wives or girl-friends. This was evident from their protocols when they pointed out that their wives or girl-friends complained when they reached the orgasm or ejaculated quickly. What was also evident from this theme was the fact that their loved ones did not remain attached to one man, i.e. they had more than one sexual partner. This caused sexual problems. For instance, one sexual offender pointed out that whenever he was with his girl-friend, there was no erection.

According to this offender it was because whoever was sleeping with her had put “umuthi” (traditional herbs) to stop other men sleeping with her. To this man this situation whereby the man does not get a penile erection is an embarrassing and annoying situation. This is not seen as a normal situation. He believed that there should be penile erection whenever a man is with the woman, and if not one’s “manhood” is finished.

It appeared that these men believed in the importance of sexual adequacy and when being challenged about their performance they became frustrated. It was evident from their protocols that adult women challenged their sexual performance. Men’s socialisation and culture places them in a position where they believe they should initiate sex and women should do as the men want.

It appeared that sexual frustration, inadequacy and rejection led to the offender associating adult sexuality with pain and suffering, resulting in him seeking contact with children as a substitute gratification (Greenberg, 1990).

5.3 SEXUAL AROUSAL

Sexual arousal has been viewed as a response that can be conditioned under the right set of circumstances. Many theories which have tried to account for adult sexual arousal to children have relied on tenets of social learning theory (Howells, 1981 and Horton, et al. 1990). Drinking involvement and sexually abusing children was evident from the protocols of two subjects and through a

process of conditioning , this could facilitate and perpetuate sexual arousal to children (Howells, 1981).

The thoughts about the child's virginity also play a role in causing the offender to be sexually aroused by the child. This was evident from the protocol of one subject. It appeared that because of the child's virginity, the child is viewed as being a willing and responsive participant by the offender, who desires and enjoys sexual contact with an adult. Howells (1981) speculated about how a process of "attributional error" may play a role in creating sexual arousal to children. Children elicit strong emotional reactions in many people, reactions usually labelled "parental" or "affectionate", but the molester appears to mistakenly label these reactions as sexual and then acts accordingly toward children. In addition, the child's desire for an emotionally intimate relationship with an adult is assumed, by the molester, to be an indication of the child desiring sexual contact, thus further reinforcing the molester's sexual response.

Finkelhor (1986) suggests that certain socialisation experiences may prompt an individual to label any emotional arousal as a sexual response. It is possible that as a result of frustration, fear and rejection encountered in the adult women sexual relationships, evident in most subject protocols, the offender mistakenly labels his emotional arousal to a child seeking emotional closeness as sexual interest. He then acts accordingly, taking a child as a willing participant.

Groth (1982) notes that the strength of the experience facilitates a conditioning

process. He also suggests that children have compelling emotional meaning for the molester in that sexually relating to children enables the molester to attempt to overcome the effects of some childhood trauma. By victimising a child, he masters the trauma he suffered, and through "identification with the aggressor", he combats his own feelings of powerlessness by becoming the powerful victimizer. In this study, one subject needed the relationship with the child in order to overcome the sense of humiliation and powerlessness experienced during childhood through to the adolescent stage. Although sexual victimisation is not a theme drawn from the subject protocols, physical abuse by relatives from the paternal side, along with emotional deprivation and feelings of powerlessness, was experienced by some respondents during the childhood period.

In viewing the meaning that sexual contact with children has assumed for the perpetrator, it is evident that children are experienced as being accepting uncritical and non-threatening; feelings which are in contrast to those experienced in adult heterosexual contact. In addition, the perpetrator experiences himself as being sexually adequate through his sexual contact with a child, frequently as a result of his self-perceived ability to arouse sexual pleasure in the child.

5.4 DISINHIBITION

Rush (1980) noted that sexual inhibitions are lowered by the social approval of patriarchal authority, encouraging the molester to view children as controllable and sexually accessible. The perceived sexual accessibility of the child was evident in the subject protocols. This could be the result of the offender's perception of the child being a willing and responsive participant and this being facilitated by certain social and cultural elements which weaken inhibitions: like the tendency to sexualize children in the media and the moral permissiveness in society (Mrazek, 1984). A lowering of inhibitions through the use of alcohol at the time of sexual contact with a child was reported in three subject protocols. Gebhard (1965) and Kempe and Kempe (1984) documented this in trying to explain why conventional inhibitions against having sex with children are overcome or not present in the molester.

The molester experiences his sexually abusive behaviour as being obsessive and compulsive, frequently engaging in opportunity-seeking and risk-taking behaviour in an attempt to fulfill his desire for sexual contact with children. It appeared that at least three of these offenders used alcohol as an explanation to attempt to justify their behaviours.

5.5 FEELINGS OF REJECTION

Another theme that characterised the lives of these offenders was the feelings of being rejected. They feared losing their loved ones and facing the world.

Attending rehabilitation courses appeared not to be helping them with this fear of losing their loved ones. This has not been helping them deal with this feeling but they are expected to deal with the emotional consequences of their behaviour on their own. Not being accepted by the community for what they have done and their sexual partners had serious consequences on their self-esteem.

These offenders had to deal not only with the emotional consequences of their behaviours but also with the fear of losing their loved ones. This feeling appeared to be unbearable to them. The negative reactions of their loved ones and the community had seriously affected their self-esteem. They felt unaccepted, unlovable, had lost their dignity and manhood and had low self-esteem.

5.6 FEAR OF REACTIONS OF OTHERS AND DISCRIMINATION

Another theme that characterised the lives of these sexual offenders was the fear of reactions of others and discrimination. They appeared to be very anxious about telling the truth to their family members about what happened. To them telling the truth was going to make things worse. They also pointed out the fear of not being understood. In South African studies, e.g. (Strebel, 1992; Kaerstedt, 1991) fear of not being understood specifically, seems to be the dominant reason that withholds people from informing others. The offenders in this study too, voiced their fears of not being understood by their loved ones. To them, informing others was seen as

risk taking. They preferred rather to live with the deceit than disclosing the truth and they pointed out that it was difficult keeping it to themselves.

Both married and unmarried offenders were continuing to live with this deceit. It appeared that by telling the truth, they might be discriminated against even worse. They were concerned about not having anybody in their lives once people knew the truth. The emotional consequences of their unacceptable behaviour and fears of rejection by loved ones and reactions was unthinkable and overwhelming to them.

5.7 DEPRESSION

Depression was one of the emotional consequences of sexual offenders after committing the offence. It was evident from the protocols that although they enjoyed having sex with children they did not feel good about it afterwards. They felt guilty when thinking about what they did. This depression also could be attributed to the many losses that they confronted.

Some of these are:

- ▶ loss of certainty about the future;
- ▶ loss of sexual expression (Bisset and Grav, 1992)

With regard to the loss of certainty, offenders anticipated that they would not be forgiven for what they had done and that they would live with the stigma forever,

and lose their dignity forever. There was uncertainty about what their loved ones i.e. wives or girl-friends were thinking about. This uncertainty is somehow interfering with their daily lives and planning.

5.8 FEELINGS OF EMPOWERMENT AND CONTROL

Another theme that characterised the lives of these sexual offenders was the feeling of empowerment and control they experienced when sexually abusing children. It was evident from the subject protocols that the adult-child sexual contact made them feel empowered and having control over the situation. Socialisation and culture of men, especially from the South African context has placed boys and men as having power over girls and women. The situation contrary to this appeared to be unacceptable to them.

Interestingly, feelings of denial were not directly or openly expressed. All respondents confessed to having committed the offence but some of them tried to justify what they had done.

Having discussed the findings of this study, and focusing on the theme of power and control sexual offenders enjoyed when having sex with children, it was evident that the socialisation of men within the South African context does contribute to the abuse of women and girls sexually and otherwise. One study on childhood sexuality done in South Africa in 1995 revealed that sexual activity takes place within a context of unequal power relations, with boys having power over girls. Girls have very little power in the negotiation of sex and sexual

experiences are different for boys compared to girls. Sexual relationships for girls are related to “being loved, gaining materially, gaining experience, as well as forced into it [National Progressive Primary Health Care Network (NPPHCN), 1995].

From the study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal region, a 10 year old indicated the following point “What happens after you have accepted him? He wants to have sex with you” (NPPHCN, 1995). This indicates that from as young as 10 years old, girls learn to be compliant and learn that to be assertive is to be unladylike.

The South African culture, especially the African culture is highly patriarchal with most of the power, control and authority in the hands of male figures. This ideology calls for unquestioning female obedience to male domination (Magwaza, 1994). According to O’Donohue and Geer (1992), this authority entails exploitation of women and children by men in order to maintain the status quo. In post-pubertal Black African girls this has been expressed in pseudo-consensual relationships dominated by subtle sexual coercion and overt violence (Magwaza and Shezi, 1994).

A fact related to male dominance is the male control of resources that can be used as incentives for pseudo-consensual sexual relationships. Magwaza and Shezi (1994) found that a significant number of girls had consented to sex with older men in return for access to resources such as transport and money for

basic necessities. This was also evident in the study from one subject's protocol whereby the child sleeps with older men to get money in return.

When men's dominance is challenged, especially in bed, they feel frustrated, threatened and powerless without any control. This attitude has been evident from almost all the subjects in this study.

It is clear that amongst other contributing factors, the different socialisation of girls and boys within the South African context is one of the important contributing factors to assuming that men have more power and control in bed.

Boys' sexual identities in turn position them differently in relation to power. Boys are socialized into a sexual identity which assumes power and control over female sexuality. The socialisation of boys within a powerful sexuality results in girls' sexuality being constructed within a realm of powerlessness (NPPHCN, 1995; Vargo & Makubalo, 1996).

Most of the sexual offenders, although they were from different cultural groups, appeared to have experienced similar problems sexually. Although they enjoyed having sex with children, they all had remorse feelings afterwards. They all appeared to have no intentions to re-offend. Most of them reported to have had what might be considered a "normal upbringing" with the exception of a few whose upbringing and conditions of living were said to be adverse.

CHAPTER SIX

EVALUATION OF THE STUDY, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

In considering the discussion in the preceding chapter it must be borne in mind that understanding sexual abuse is a dynamic and developing venture that cannot as yet be slotted into a specific theoretical framework.

It follows from this that we cannot yet specify with precision the components of an effective programme of treatment and rehabilitation for offenders. Sexual offenders should not necessarily be considered pathological, but in some cases they may be merely symptomatic of a pathological society.

Unless the whole community starts to involve itself with this problem, there is not much hope for a better future.

The present findings suggest the need for further research into the perceived experience of adult male sexual perpetrators.

Specifically, future research should focus on the bonding the child experienced with his parent(s). Although this study gives some confirmation that offenders interact with children because children have special meaning for them in terms of representing weak, non-threatening objects, more such studies are needed.

The emotional need to relate to children, and the translation of this emotional need into sexually abusive behaviour (indicates that one is sexually interested in, and sexually aroused by children) warrants further explanation.

It is not sufficient for us to know the extent of child abuse and the nature of the acts perpetrated. Attempts to address the problem should be advanced by the findings of qualitative studies which enable researchers to examine the thoughts and perception of the perpetrators.

It is possible that certain people are experiencing problems with the advancement of adult sexual relationships but not all of them engage in sexual abuse behaviour. Therefore, this warrants further research into how "blockage" predisposed certain people to interact sexually with children.

The socialisation of boys which facilitates power and control over female sexuality needs to be taken into consideration and investigated. Other areas of great importance to be researched are when a single-parent has to raise a child under poor conditions of little or no supervision, and also unemployment and household conditions of poverty.

6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

It should be borne in mind that the present findings were obtained from a sample of eight male adult sexual offenders. Their experience of sexually abusing children cannot be generalised with any degree of confidence to adult offenders in general. Kruger (1979) notes that phenomenology is interested in the quality of the subjective experience rather than its generalizability. This study focused on a small number to broaden the understanding of subjective experience, rather than making observations about a large sample.

In addition, Ivey (1991) notes that self-reflection is an important quality in the subjects if they are to adequately and insightfully convey their subjective experience of child abuse behaviour, in order that the essential meanings of such behaviour be made descriptively explicit. Finkelhor (1986) notes that the study of sexual abuse is not an easy task as the subjects have a vested interest in not divulging the matters of most interest to the researcher. While taking this into consideration, this phenomenological study into the experience of adult offenders endeavours to promote some understanding of the pre-reflective life-world of these men.

Another limitation of this study relates to most phenomenological research. It is the limitation of this research method that it cannot make use of subjects who cannot adequately articulate their experiences.

In this study, all the subjects were articulates as the researcher had taken this issue into consideration when selecting the subjects. In so doing the researcher eliminated some less articulate subjects whose input into the study could have been very useful.

When interviewing the subjects, it was sometimes difficult for the subjects to express themselves. The researcher understood this realising that they were talking about an emotionally charged subject, and arranged the interviews accordingly.

Although this method claims to be an unstructured approach, the mere fact that it uses explicit guidelines in the analysis of data to be followed one step after another, means that it is also to some extent a structured approach.

Besides all of these limitations of this method, unlike quantitative research, phenomenological research does give the phenomenon under investigation the first priority rather than this being secondary to an already established methodological framework. This implies that the researcher doesn't prejudge any particular phenomenon nor see it through any given perspective merely because previous knowledge about that phenomenon exists.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Realising that this type of approach focuses on a small number of subjects which makes it difficult to make generalisation, more of such studies are needed focusing on their experiences of sexually abusing children. Future researchers could also make use of the phenomenological approach to complement the information obtained from other approaches.

There are basic services that are essential to sexual offenders, such services like rehabilitation programmes. These services are based on sound principles but they need to be supplemented and refined in the light of research. Rather than having these programmes offered in specific centres, like the Correctional Supervision centres. Such programmes could also be placed in the community setting.

A major problem faced by the offenders afterwards was to face the community about what they had done. The community, according to what these respondents said, appeared not to be interested in them anymore. Therefore, community-based programmes might be helpful. These can be useful tools in treating the offenders, whereby not only psychologists and/or therapists will be involved with sexual offenders but community agencies will be part of the treatment team. All parties involved will share information with respect to progress and problems encountered.

These community-based programmes should focus on:

- (a) factors at home that are likely to put children at risk to sexual offending later in life;
- (b) teaching of moral values such as reasonable boy-girl relationship, legal rights for everybody;
- (c) rehabilitation and resocialisation programmes geared towards the notion of childhood and what is appropriate in developmental terms;
- (d) run programmes geared towards controlling convicted sexual offenders' behaviour ;
- (e) structured recreational components;
- (f) life skills training and counselling.

These programmes should involve the following people:

- (a) victim-offender mediation
- (b) family members of the victims and offenders
- (c) people at risk to sexual offending and children at risk to be victims of sexual abuse
- (d) sexual offenders

6.4 CONCLUSION

The challenge to the future researchers and planners, is how to formulate standards and programmes that will assist the community to function effectively in a changing country.

The criteria to be used in any intervention purpose should be: intervention for whom, for what purpose, and under what conditions.

Intervention programmes should be based on principles identified by research, and be subjected to ongoing formative evaluation.

Once again, it should be noted that sexual abuse is a personal problem, a community issue and social concern. Therefore, these men need help from the community and not just from a particular single institution. Prevention of sexual abuse should be one of the major targets of the community.

The respondents in this study appeared to be confronted by similar problems which led them to sexually abuse children. The community needs to try and address these problems and work out programmes that will promote prevention and rehabilitation.

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APPENDIX A

2.7.3 THE TREATMENT OF SEX OFFENDERS AT THE CHILDLINE (DURBAN)

Another set of issues not usually discussed in the literature is whether the availability of offender treatment allows the child protective system and legal system more flexibility in dealing with the problem of sexual abuse. For example, is it possible that more victims would come forward if they felt the offender would receive treatment rather than incarceration? Does the availability of treatment make it more likely that offenders would confess rather than deny their offences, therefore not subjecting victims to the potential traumatic aspects of the legal system? This is not to imply that legal system has to be traumatic for victims, nor does this negate the fact that for some victims, punishment of offenders may be therapeutic. However, the lack of offender treatment could reduce the options available to the criminal justice and child protective services systems in dealing with certain cases.

According to Van Niekerk (1998), the initial approach to the offenders is the acknowledgement of the abuse. This process is called "a construction confrontation". Why acknowledgement of abuse?

- (a) For the protection of the child/children from continued abuse.
- (b) Protection of the child/children from appearing in the court.
- (c) To help the offender move into a position of acknowledging his behaviour openly so that work on change can begin.
- (d) To clearly label the abusive behaviour as damaging to the child, the family, and offender himself, and community as a whole.
- (e) To move on into assessing the possibilities for treatment for the child and the offender.

2.7.3.1 THEORETICAL APPROACH

Van Niekerk (1998) pointed out the following points about the treatment of sexual offenders:

- ▶ treatment of sexual offender need to be long-term, a team approach, multi-modal (individual, group and family therapy) and not limited to any single intervention theory and strategy. The causes of the abusive behaviour are multiple and complex and therefore, the therapist need to adopt a variety of therapeutic approaches to effectively deal with these factors.

The following theoretical approaches are used in this institution:

- ▶ psychodynamic therapy
- ▶ behaviour therapy

- ▶ reality therapy
- ▶ rational-emotive therapy

Van Niekerk pointed out that although reality therapy is an old approach, they still use it because it emphasises the issues of personal reality.

In group therapy they focus on certain themes and use them on several consecutive sessions. They are returned again when the need arises, such themes are:

- (a) learning to talk about the offensive sexual behaviour openly in the group;
- (b) dealing with distortions of thought and rationalisations that enabled the offender to “break through” the taboo of involving children in sexual activity. These include faulty beliefs such as “I didn’t hurt the child because the child did not protest”. The child enjoyed it because I made it pleasurable for the child, therefore it can’t be wrong”. “It happened to me as a child and I am OK”;
- (c) exploring and understanding childhood and early adulthood experiences and possible even the offender’s own abuse experiences in order to understand and deal with their influence on the present self and functioning.

- (d) understanding the impact of the abuse on the offender's victim/s and developing empathy for the child;
- (e) understanding the impact of the abuse on other relationships e.g. the relationship with the spouse of the offender;
- (f) working on developing more adequate and appropriate communication patterns and styles. Many offenders and their spouses struggle to communicate even about basic concerns and feelings;
- (g) working on self-esteem. Most offenders have many problems in the area of self-esteem that reaches beyond the abusive behaviour;
- (h) understanding sexual needs - one's own sexuality and the sexuality of other is an essential focus;
- (i) developing an understanding of the abuse cycle and relapse prevention - the more immediate events that contribute to specific abusive acts, and learning how to deal with "trigger" events and feelings in a way to prevent reoffending;
- (j) learning how to re-establish patterns of relating in the immediate family;
- (k) the development of social skills and awareness is a theme that may be

very important for the offender, particularly the single person, who struggles against loneliness and isolation" (pp 11-13).

3.3.2 PROCEDURE

THE CONTRACT

Offender need to be firmly contracted into treatment and Childline Family Centre has developed a group contract that include clauses providing interalia for:

- ▶ limited confidentiality for the therapist;
- ▶ a strict requirement and commitment to confidentiality in respect to other members of the group and what they share in the group;
- ▶ no sexual offending behaviour whilst in treatment;
- ▶ commitment to openness
- ▶ abstinence from drugs and alcohol for 24 hours preceding each group.

The contract is signed and witnessed in the group and renewed at the beginning of each year.

THE THERAPEUTIC MILIEU

The setting in which therapy is conducted is kept relaxed and informal in order to facilitate participation and sharing. First names are used in order to protect identities in the groups but if offenders feel comfortable to share identifying information about themselves in the group this is not vetoed.

FREQUENCY OF CONTACT

Offenders are seen approximately once a week depending on the need of each individual. Work is extended to dyads and the entire family.

Van Niekerk pointed out that at the end of each year they evaluate each treatment programme used. Evaluation includes not only sex offenders but family members like the spouse are evaluated. Questionnaires are the tools used for evaluation.

APPENDIX B

Posed question in English and Zulu:

“Could you describe your experience of sexually abusing the child, the emotions you felt just prior to abusing the child, during the process, and how you felt immediately after the abuse, how you are feeling right now about sexually abusing the child, emotionally and otherwise?”

“Ake uchaze ngemizwa yakho lapho unukubeza ingane ngokocansi, imizwa owaba nayo ngaphambi kokuba uyinukubeze ingane, imizwa yakho ngalenkathi sewuyinukubeza ingane, imizwa yakho emva kokuyinukubeza, uzizwa unjani njengemanje ngokunukubeza lengane, emoyeni wakho njalonjalo”.

The procedure that was followed after posing the question is as follows:

“Take your time. You can start wherever you like in answering the question”.

During the interview, the interviewer used phrases such as:

“Could you tell me more about that” or

“Could you explain that to me?” In order to encourage the subjects.

Translated verbatim into Zulu:

Ungathatha isikhathi osidingayo. Ungaqala lapho uthanda khona ukuphendula lombuzo.

Lapho ucwaningo luqhubeka, umcwaningi wabe esebenzisa lamabinzana ukukhuthaza abavivinywa ukuba baqhubeke nokukhuluma.

“Ungachaza kabanzi ngalokho okushoyo”.

“Ungachasisisa kabanzana, uthi ukulula ngalokho okushoyo”, noma

“Ungangichazela ukuthi uqonde ukuthini.”