THE DOUBLE BIND BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN FEMALE SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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SUMMARY

This study is an attempt to investigate the way in which female survivors of childhood sexual abuse made sense of their experiences. Three participants were interviewed and the relevant themes that emerged from those interviews were coded and reported. The study was conducted from a qualitative perspective that was grounded in social construction methodology. The survivors' individual constructions of meaning at the time of their sexual abuse, their introduction to the social constructions of meaning about child sexual abuse and the double bind between these constructions are reported. The survivors' narratives are representations of the positive way they constructed meaning about their experiences as a way of coping. Their stories are also reflections of the confusion they experienced when introduced to the social constructions of child sexual abuse that differed from the meaning they attributed to their experiences. The study is a representation of the double bind that the difference between the individual and social constructions of their child sexual abuse created for them.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie is 'n poging om die wyse waarop vrouens wat as kinders seksueel gemollesteer is, sin uit hulle ervarings gemaak het. 'n Onderhoud is met drie deelnemers aan die studie gevoer, waaruit relevante temas gekodeer en gerapporteer is. 'n Kwalitatiewe studie, wat gegrond is in die sosiale konstruksie metodologie, is gedoen. Die individuele betekenisse wat die vrouens ten tye van die seksuele mollestering daaraan geheg het, hulle inleiding tot die sosiale konstruksies aangaande die seksuele mollestering van kinders en die dubbelbinding tussen hierdie konstruksies van betekenisse word weergegee. Hierdie vrouens se narratiewe is weergawes van die positiewe manier waarop hulle sin en betekenis aan hulle ervarings geheg het, as 'n manier om dit te verwerk. Hulle verhale reflekteer ook die verwarring wat hulle beleef het tydens hulle kontak met die sosiale konstruksies aangaande die mollestering van kinders, wat verskil van die betekenisse wat hulle daaraan geheg het. Die studie is 'n weergawe van die dubbelbinding wat die verskil tussen hulle individuele konstruksies en die sosiale konstruksies van betekenisse aangaande die seksuele mollestering van kinders vir hulle gebring het.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"There is a final major option for psychological inquiry
favoured by post-modern thought. Within the modernist
era, the scientist was largely a polisher of mirrors.
Post-modernism asks the scientist to join in the hurly-burly
of cultural life - to become an active participant in the
construction of the culture" (Gergen, 1997, p.27).

1.1   OPENING REMARKS

Finding meaning is a central concern of everyone touched by child sexual abuse (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988). Children want to make sense of the experience by answering questions like "why did it happen?" and "why did he do it?" In the process, children who are sexually abused develop basic assumptions, theories and patterns of action in order to cope with their own emotions and the outside world (Miltenburg & Singer, 1997). Jehu, Klassen and Gazan (1986) show that many women in therapy who were sexually abused as children hold certain beliefs associated with the experience that appear to contribute to disturbances in adulthood.

During their research, Mize, Bentley, Helms, Ledbetter and Neblett (1995) found that the issue of language was discussed time and again. They recognised that there was no universally understood meaning vis a vis language, that is attached to the experiences of incest and disclosure that all survivors speak. For this reason a space for multiple voices and multiple meanings must be created. This research is an attempt to add to these multiple voices and meanings.

Children who are not sexually abused develop their own theories and patterns of action about their sexual experiences gradually, with the help of adults. In this process a "co-construction of meaning" develops between caretaker and child

(Miltenburg & Singer, 1997, p. 42). They further indicate that a child negotiates the meaning of emotions and learns the culturally accepted forms of expression in the relationship with the parent. Sexually abused children don't have this privilege. They are forced to decide how to view reality and how to act in life threatening situations. The reason may be found in the thinking errors that the sex offender transmit to the victim (Salter, 1995). Some of these thinking errors include paradoxical statements and double messages. The victims, in turn, construct meaning from the perpetrator's statements and messages in an effort to make sense and find meaning about their sexual abuse experience.

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

This investigation is an exploration into the conflict between individual constructions and social constructions of meaning about child sexual abuse. It explores the difference in the survivor's attribution of meaning and society's attribution of meaning to the experience of childhood sexual abuse. An attempt to describe the way in which individuals and societies use language to construct meaning from sexual abuse experiences is made. The conflict between individual and social constructions is conceptualised as a double bind, from which a choice of meaning is difficult to make.

A qualitative approach to research is used in this study. The purpose of the study is to discover meaning. The discovery of meaning is possible from a qualitative research approach, because qualitative researchers aim to understand reality by discovering the meanings that people in a specific setting attach to it (Schurink, 1998c). In this study, the specific setting refers to child sexual abuse. It seems also appropriate to choose a qualitative approach from within a social constructionist epistemology. The researcher takes a post-modernist stance in order to move away from linear cause and effect explanations of phenomena and move closer to the discovery of constructed meaning in the rich and multiple ways survivors of sexual abuse make sense of their abusive experiences.

Data was gathered by ways of in-depth interviews with the co-researchers. It wouldn't have been possible to do this research and interviews without a relationship of trust between the researcher and the co-researcher. These trusting relationships between researcher and co-researchers developed due to the researcher's involvement as a minister of religion or as intern counselling psychologist with the co-researchers.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

In Chapter two, the researcher presents the epistemological context for this research. An attempt is made to integrate pre-modernistic, modernistic and post-modernistic knowledge as social constructions. The emphases is on the way in which societies construct meaning in different ways and how these different meanings can become part of a person.

In Chapter three, the results of a literature survey on child sexual abuse is presented. Pre-modernist, modernist and post-modernist views on child sexual abuse are grouped together.

Chapter four reflects the socio-linguistic context of this study. A description of the role language plays in the construction, co-construction and social construction of meaning is given. The different constructions of meaning is further conceptualised as double bind communication.

In chapter five, the researcher explains the approach to the research and methodology.

Chapter six is a presentation of the research results. The co-researchers are introduced and the research results is grouped in terms of their pre-modernistic, modernistic and post-modernistic relevance.

In <u>chapter seven</u> the researcher draws on some conclusions, evaluates the study and points to future recommendations for research.

1.4 TERMINOLOGY

The terms "construction" and "construct" could both be used as a noun or as a verb. In this study, the terms are used as verbs. The construction of meaning refers therefore to the active process a person engaged in, to construct or to make sense of his or her situation. Kelly (1963) referred to people as scientists who take part in the development of a useful model to cope with their worlds. Berger & Luckmann (1966) expanded on this notion by adding the role of society and relations with others in the process to construct meaning. When these terms are used as nouns, they refer to the "construction" or "construct" as a thing, while their use as verbs, refer to the process (or work being done) that leads to meaning.

Another set of terms that need clarification beforehand, are the terms "sex" and "gender". Gross (1996) shows to the distinction between the to constructs that will be applied in this study. The word "sex", usually denoted by the terms **male** or **female**, refers to some biological fact about a person. The biological differences between the two sexes are mainly in concern with their genetic make-up, and reproductive anatomy and functioning. The word "gender", usually denoted by the terms **masculine** and **feminine,** refers to the social or cultural interpretations of the two sexes that are embedded in gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender role identities. The differences between the two genders are mainly in concern with what are culturally accepted or expected from a man or a woman.

CHAPTER TWO

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

*"From time to time, it is useful to remind ourselves that there
are entire nations in which people live out their lives without
benefit of either Prozac or counselling" (Efran & Heffner, 1998, p.100)*

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Atwood (1997) indicates that all societies understand and evaluate everything
according to worldviews. These worldviews shape the attitudes people have,
incorporate new knowledge, dictate the form of their methodologies, and act as the
context through which they process all knowledge. They determine the measuring
techniques to be used for a better understanding of people's behaviour and the
reality they construct as the world they know.

Berzonsky (1994) shows that a person's worldview, his/her personal views of basic
philosophical issues such as ethics, knowing and existence, are significantly
correlated with their intellectual style and personal ratings. Conventional and
conforming individuals hold a mechanistic worldview, but in contrast, individuals who
view reality and themselves in terms of a dynamic, organic worldview, believe that
they play an active role in constructing their personalities; they are characterised by
intellectual efficiency, psychological-mindedness, imaginitiveness, purposiveness
and autonomy.   Personal epistemological assumptions may play a critical role in
research contexts. This means that researchers will apply their epistemological
assumptions to the research that they are doing, which in turn will influence the
methods and outcome of the research.

Pre-modernistic, modernistic and post-modernistic approaches to knowledge are regarded as personal and social constructions people live by in everyday life. Pre-modernism, modernism, and post-modernism represent three different time periods in which society constructed knowledge. Social constructionism is therefore used as a metatheory, incorporating different models of knowledge from these different time periods.

Many people and families entering the consulting room construct their lives around religious beliefs (pre-modernistic), scientific evidence (modernistic) and have a story or narrative (post-modernistic) to tell about the way these constructions make an impact on their lives. Psychologists and researchers should therefore make room in their approach to cover as many as possible relative constructions that people grasp as knowledge in their lives.

In order to construct an epistemology that integrates different kinds of knowledge, the relevant definitions will be presented. A historical overview of western psychology and an explanation of social constructionism as an epistemological context for this study will follow this.

2.2   DEFINING RELEVANT CONSTRUCTS

Social constructionism is the view that many of the abstract quantities, people's relations according to these, and the relationships of everyday life, are human made processes and contexts into which they have been born, or into which they can gain access by their credentials in society (Owen, 1992). Berg and De Jong (1996) state that social constructionism is a metatheory about people's interpretations of the world and their experiences. It encompasses other theories about how and why people have particular cultural, social and personal meanings.

The roots of social constructionism are found in the sociology of knowledge instigated by Marx and Mannheim (Owen, 1992). These theorists contend that it is no accident that what people think is directly related to the economic base of the

mode of production in which they are involved within society - their social existence determines their consciousness. Social constructionism was born out of the relation between beliefs and identifiable recurring patterns of social behaviour. The content of people's consciousness and the mode of relating they have to others, is taught by their culture and society, thus all the metaphysical quantities that are taken for granted are learned from others around them. In this way, people actively co-construct their own and others' experiences when they meet with them. The strength of social constructionism lies in its awareness that personal constructs occur in a social context (Magadla, 1996).

2.2.1 Social construction discourse

The scientific approach in this study is social constructionism. Bruffee (1986, p.773-774) shows that social constructionism is also referred to as "new pragmatism" or "dialogism". It is important to mention that social constructionism in not a theory in the sense of a body of laws or causal process theory, but must be regarded as an approach (Launer, 1996), a lens (Hoffman, 1992), or a stance (Andersen, 1992; Holmes, 1994). Kotze and Kotze (1997) prefer to call this approach a social constructionist discourse. The term discourse refers to a process of conversation through which meanings are constituted as well as a systematic and institutionalised way of speaking and writing. Discourse is making sense through the use of language.

Hoffman (1992) indicates that "social construction theorists see ideas, concepts and memories arising from social interchange and mediated through language" (p. 8). Social constructionism argues that knowledge is socially constructed (rather than discovered) and that validity is measured by congruence with shared understanding (Bohan, 1990). Kuhn (in Bruffee, 1986) agrees with this description by saying that entities normally called reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on, exist as community-generated and community-maintained linguistic- or symbolic entities. Such knowledge is inevitably influenced by the social context in which it derives.

2.2.2 Language and social construction discourse

Social constructionist theorists see ideas, concepts and memories being co-constructed or co-created (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988) with social interchange (Kotze & Kotze, 1997) and mediated through language (Hoffman, 1992). Language is seen as more than just a way of connecting people, people exist in language, where meaning and understanding are derived from the logic of symbols, signs and the grammatical structure of language (Kotze & Kotze, 1997). Meaning and understanding comes about in language (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

From a social constructionist point of view the focus is not on the individual person but on the social interaction, in which language is generated, sustained and abandoned (Gergen & Gergen, in Kotze & Kotze, 1997). Language constitutes people's lives, which they understand through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning and organisation to their experience (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992).

2.2.3 Narrative as social construction discourse

Kotze and Kotze (1997) indicate that language; discourse and narrative are intertwined concepts. Narratives refer to the stories of people's lives and are described by White and Epston (1990) as the experiences of events in sequences across time in their lives. It is experienced in such a way as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them. Dominant narratives in society (stories society tell and live over and over again) could become part of a person's life, shaping and constituting it, while others (alternative stories) become a part of a person's life but never become part of a shaping narrative. These alternative stories become subjugated knowledge (Kotze & Kotze, 1997).

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2.2.4 Constructionism vs. Constructivism

Constructionism is mainly represented by the work of George Kelly (1963) with his modernistic theory of personal constructs, Berger and Luckman (1966) with the social construction of reality and Gergen (1985) with his emphases on the texts that create identity. The work of Kant, Witgenstein, Maturana, Verela, Piaget, Von Glasefeld and others (Berzonsky, 1994; Held, 1995; Balbi, 1996; Sargent, 1997) represent constructivism.

Constructivism is a school of thought assuming that constructs are shaped as the organism evolves a fit with its environment, and that the construction of ideas about the world takes place in a nervous system that operates something like a blind person checking out a room (Hoffman, 1990). Kotze and Kotze (1997) add that Constructivism developed from a biological and individualistic vantagepoint.

The terms social constructionism and constructionism are used interchangeably (Kotze & Kotze, 1997), referring to the process in which people construct meaning in their lives. These approaches place far more emphases on social interpretation and the intersubjective influence of language, family, and culture and much less on the operations of the nervous system as it feels its way along (Hoffman, 1990).

Although the two terms, constructivism and constructionism are used interchangeably, they must not be confused with one another. Gergen (1985) notes that constructivism is used in reference to a form of perceptual theory related to Piagetian theory, while the term constructionism refers to a process of social interchange.

2.3 HISTORIC OVERVIEW

"In art, philosophy and the humanities, the current age has been described as post-modern" (Kvale, 1997, p.1). Many writers (Smith, 1993; Edgar, 1995; Ozment, 1995; Barker, 1996; Euben, 1997) divide the history of Western civilisation into three

distinct time periods - the pre-modern, modern and post-modern. Vorster (1999) describes these time periods as macro-paradigms in which people think in specific and different ways.

In each of these periods a unique set of cultural, religious, political and philosophical ideas prevailed and dominated society. The term "post-modernism" implies that it follows a time of "modernism" which follows a time of "pre-modernism". Traditional (romantic) approaches or pre-modernism, modernism and post-modernism represent three different historical time periods, each with a unique approach to what the "truth" is and how knowledge is gained.

2.3.1 The pre-modernistic time period (knowledge *revealed* by God)

Mcloyd (1997) refers to the pre-modernistic approach as the traditional approach to knowledge. In these times people lived in small rural communities. They lived according to strict moral guidelines mediated by religion and myth. In Biblical times and the following ages, prophets, priests, pastors, and the Church constructed knowledge. The Church developed a sophisticated theoretical framework that specified the causes of disturbance (sin), a model of healthy development (stages in the road to salvation), and a set of techniques for applying these principles in individual cases (e.g. cleansing rites, sacrificial rites, casuistry).

Different religions evolved their own versions of these ideas. The dominant discourse prevailing in those times was the idea that everything is controlled by metaphysical forces - which religious groups called God (Vorster, 1999). These pre-scientific principles still exist in many epistemological paradigms around the world. Sperry (1988) emphasises the tension between science and religion that still prevails in these post-modern times and argues for an integrative approach between the pre-modernistic and modernistic paradigms.

Narramore, Carter and Fleck (1979) describe the different ways integration between theology and psychology could take place. There are, however, as these writers

indicate, a few barriers to integration. Barriers from a Christian theological perspective are:

1. A Christian's rejection of the naturalistic explanations of psychology
2. A Christian's difference with secular psychology's view of the human being
3. A Christian's rejection of the deterministic emphasis of psychology
4. A Christian's concern with personal responsibility
5. A Christian's differences with a secular view of sex
6. Theology's heavy emphasis on cognition and the Christian's tendency to remain aloof from strong emotions, especially intimacy and aggression

Barriers to integration from psychological perspective are:

1. The psychologist's superficial understanding of Christianity and selected negative experiences of it
2. The psychologist's effort to establish a professional identity that is separate from philosophy and religion on the one hand and medicine and natural sciences on the other
3. The psychologist's rejection of certain Christian presuppositions
4. Realities of time

Narramore et al., (1979) indicate that contenders against the integration of theology and psychology build on the assumption that there is an inherent conflict between psychology and religion. This conflict is described in three ways, namely,

1. that of revelation (theology) **versus** rationalism and empiricism as the only valid epistemology (psychology);
2. perceiving religion's negative effect on mental health by creating dependency, inflexibility rigidity and bigotry (psychology) **versus**

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perceptions of psychology's breaking down of needed inhibitions and removing valid guilt (theology); and

3. that Psychopathology is only treatable with therapy (psychology), with no room left for spiritual solutions (theology) **versus** maladjustment stemming from sin with no need for psychotherapy, but only for spiritual counsel or advice (theology).

To the contrary, integration of theology and psychology can be attained in three ways, namely,

1. by an attempt to find good psychology in religion or to find the psychology of religion - exploring the common ground between theology and psychology,

2. by treating the concepts of psychology and theology in ways that parallel each other - isolating the two realms as separate entities correlating and aligning certain psychological and theological concepts, and

3. by integrating theology and psychology in the assumption that God is the author of all truths (from theological perspectives) or by accepting that religion is an integrative force in personal living, personal adjustment and maturity (from psychological perspectives) (Narramore et al., 1979).

2.3.2 The modernistic time period (knowledge *discouvered* through science)

The time period described as modernism shifts the focus from a religious to a medical-scientific framework (Mcloyd, 1997). As religion gradually diminished in importance, psychotherapy grew out of the medical profession that was based in science and a relationship between doctor and patient, and slowly slotted into the space left by religion.

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Atwood (1997) indicates that modernist epistemology derives from Newtonian physics that assumed that there is an objective reality waiting to be discovered. This reality can be discovered through reason, science and scientific method that are, according to the Newtonian paradigm, superior means for arriving at truth and reality. Language can be used as a credible and reliable means of access to that reality (Bloland, 1995). Greenwood (1992) postulates that psychological science, for most of the recent history, has been based upon this empiricist account of science and explains behaviour in terms of cause and effect.

Traditional psychological approaches like, among others, Psychoanalytic-, Adlarian-, Existential-, Person-Centred-, Gestalt-, Interpersonal-, Behavioural-, Cognitive-, and Systemic therapies, adhere to a modernist approach. These approaches are, according to Atwood (1997), based on the following assumptions:

1. there is an objective reality and it is knowable
2. there can be models of normalcy
3. the therapist (scientist) is an expert
4. the therapist (scientist) is a diagnostician who does assessment
5. the therapist is transparent, in that the therapist is a toneless sounding board
6. the client (object of research) has one self, not very malleable
7. symptoms are caused by the pathology which is located in the self
8. change is an either/or process
9. a client is dependant on the therapist to fix future problems

Although modernism became the macro-paradigm of the time, McLoyd (1997) reveals that features of traditional, pre-industrial, pre-modern forms of healing still prevail. These earlier forms of healing do not disappear, they do not conveniently fade into the background so that modernistic therapies are left alone in the foreground, but communities keep on employing rituals, religious healing,

confessionals and so on. Instead, older traditions become re-discovered and re-invented, live on and compete for legitimacy.

2.3.3 The post-modernistic time period (knowledge co-constructed)

Bloland (1995), Gergen (1994a) and Gergen (1997) relate the new thought of post-modernism as a critical reaction to modernist thought. The reaction followed mainly because laboratory experiments and their reliance on a mechanistic model of human functioning, their alienating treatment of the subject and their control of outcomes lend themselves to traditions that many might find otiose. Discontent with the positivist-empiricist program for accumulating behavioural knowledge is becoming increasingly apparent and the struggle for a new science is beginning (Gergen, 1982). On the other hand Silverman (1996) indicates that post-modernism began a new polarity with modernism.

These new post-modern thoughts emerge from the "impasse" of modernist conceptions of knowledge (Gergen, 1994a, p.30). The paradigm shift indicates a shift in the emphasis on the *product* to the emphasis on the *process* (Gosden, 1995). Post-modern knowledge (i.e. social constructionism) will therefore not deliver new theory as a product, but will be a description of the processes from which individuals and society construct knowledge. Gergen (1995) describes post-modernism as humanism, a humanism developing from individual to relational humanism.

Atwood (1997) indicates that the reaction was sparked by Einstein's relativity theory and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle that pulled the certain, predictable reductionistic universe out from under us. Post-modernism as a perspective borrows extensively from the definitions and concepts of post-structuralism, represented by linguists Jaques Derrida and Michael Foucault, philosophers like Lyotard and Baudrillard, Rosenau, Habermas (in Gergen, 1994a; Bloland, 1995). It focuses on the indeterminacy of language, the primacy of discourse, the decentering and the fragmentation of the concept of self, the significance of the 'other', a

recognition of the tight, unbreakable power and knowledge nexus, the attenuation of a belief in meta-narratives, and the decline in dependence upon rationalism (Bloland, 1995).

Pre-modern	Modern	Post-modern
Collective, family-oriented way of life	Individualistic	Awareness of 'relational' self
Self defined in terms of external factors: importance of 'honour'	Autonomous, bounded self: importance of 'dignity'	Fragmented, 'saturated' self
Belief in religion	Belief in science	Belief that knowledge is socially constructed
Moral certainty	Moral relativism	Search for moral frameworks
Static society	Commitment to 'progress'	Fear of anarchy and chaos
Localised forms of political control	Nation state	"Global village'
Agricultural work	Industrial work	Information-processing work

Table 2.1 The key characteristics of pre-modern, modern and post-modern cultures (McLoyd, 1997).

The dominant discourses that evolved from the post-modernistic approach to knowledge are second order cybernetics, constructivism and social constructionism (Kotze, 1994). According to Atwood (1997), therapists who adhere to a post-modern stance adhere to the following assumptions:

1. reality is socially created through social interaction
2. the client defines what is normal
3. the role of the therapist(scientist) is to collaborate with the client to co-construct new stories that hold new possibilities

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4. the client is the diagnostician who does assessment

5. the therapist is transparent in attempting to keep all biases and assumptions out of the therapy arena

6. the client has many selves

7. the client is having a problem in living. The problem persists because the client doesn't know how to fix it.

In Table 2.1 a summary of the key characteristics found in pre-modern, modern and post-modern cultures is given.

2.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION DISCOURSE AS A POST-MODERN APPROACH

Post-modern thought replaces the conceptualisation of a reality independent of the observer with notions of language as actually constituting the structures of a perspectival social reality (Gergen, 1997). Post-modernism is thus a reaction to modernism, with one of the most important differences indicating that there are no rational solutions to society's problems (Ritzer, 1997). Post-modern thought rejects linear, chronological thinking because of their assumption that things rarely, if ever progress in a simple linear manner. This assumption opens the possibility for post-modern theory to be relativistic and open to the possibility of irrationality (chaos).

Smart (in Ritzer, 1997) articulates three fundamental positions taken by post-modern social theorists. *Extreme post-modernism* poses that there has been a radical rapture and modern society has been replaced by a post-modern society. *Moderate post-modern* thought poses that while a change has taken place, post-modernity grows out of, and is continuous with, modernity. A third approach in postmodernist thought sees modernity and post-modernity as engaged in a long-running relationship with one another, with post-modernity continuously pointing out the limitations of modernity. Thus, they can be seen as alternative perspectives, not successive time periods.

While the first two approaches to post-modernism eventually leads to the rejection of modernism, the third leaves room for integration and ways to use modern and post-modern knowledge and psychological models in psychological practice. Ritzer (1997) suggests that any social phenomenon can be analysed from the point of view of both modern and post-modern theory.

Ritzer (1997) gives a six-point breakdown of what post-modern theory entails:

1. Post-modern theory is defined largely in terms of the things to which it is opposed.
2. They reject the idea that there is a single grand perspective or answer.
3. They accord more pre-modern phenomena such as emotions, feelings, intuition, reflection, speculation, personal experience, custom, violence, metaphysics, tradition, cosmology, magic, myth, religious sentiment, and mystical experience.
4. Post-modern theorists reject the modernistic tendency to put boundaries between such things as academic disciplines.
5. They reject the reasoned style of modern academic discourse.
6. Post-modernists devote their attention to the periphery instead of focusing on the core of modern society.

Richardson and Fowers (1997) indicate that post-modern thinkers want to restore a sense of being embedded or contextualised in a historical culture or praxis. These acknowledge the fundamental truth that all our beliefs and values are strictly relative. This relativism leads to the view that there are no moral absolutes, because all values must be evaluated relative to their surrounding culture. Constructivism, constructionism and social constructionism are proponents of these thoughts.

2.5 THE PROCESSES IN CONSTRUCTIONISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

According to Kelly (1963) people come to know the world by placing their own interpretations on it. People construct models of the world, which can be used to anticipate what is likely to happen and thus guide their behaviour. They make hypotheses of what they think they see. Kelly (1963) indicates that people are capable of construing their experiences in as great a variety of ways as their wits will enable them to contrive. The fundamental postulates of personal construct theory entail:

1. A person's processes are psychologically channelled by the ways in which she anticipates events.

2. A person anticipates events by construing their replications.

3. A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs.

4. Each person characteristically evolves for her convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs.

5. People differ from each other in their construction of events.

6. A person's construction system varies as she successively construes the replications of events.

7. The variation in a person's construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose range of convenience the variants lie.

8. To the extend that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, her processes are psychologically similar to those of the other person.

9. To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another she may play a role in a social process involving the other person.

Gergen (1985) argues that the terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges between people. The result is that psychological process differs markedly from one culture to another. Reports and descriptions of a person's experiences are therefore nothing but linguistic constructions, guided and shaped by cultural and historically contingent conventions of discourse.

Berger and Luckman (1966) describe the process of social construction that includes the routines and mechanisms for socialisation and the means for maintaining the definitions of the reality on which the system is based. Atwood (1996) and Atwood (1997) shows that an individual's reality is maintained by developing a personal sense of self that is congruent with the social constructions. Individuals who repeatedly confront a task or situation relevant to their lives develop habitual ways of dealing with it (social routines). Each individual interaction involves processes of reciprocal accommodation and negotiation, with individuals making frequent attempts to disclose their own subjective reality and grasp each other's realities. The social constructions that have survived over time and have become standard are called institutions.

Personal and social constructions are reciprocal processes maintained by interpersonal experiences through the use of language, or what Goolishian and Anderson (1987) call languaging. Williams and Burden (1997) indicate that construction processes take place in an interactionalist framework. The socially constructed meanings are opaque, meaning that the ways they are constructed are invisible to people (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Children experience the world they are born into as their sole reality, accepting it as non-problematic, requiring no explanations; they neither challenge nor doubt it. Atwood and Seifer (1997) shows that the process of socialisation leads to the internalisation of socially constructed meanings. A person's reality is maintained by developing a personal sense of self that is congruent with the social constructions.

People attempt to match or reject their own personal constructs against the dominant social constructions. A dialectical (paradoxical) relationship develops between the individual realities and the social constructed meaning if the constructs are incongruent with one another. Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988) indicate that these paradoxes arise because every representation conceals at the same time as it reveals. These paradoxes in constructions, called difference by Derrida (in Atwood, 1997), shake people's conventional thought, revealing meanings that are present but obscured in the dominant social view. Atwood (1996) and Atwood (1997) calls these obscured views the ever present but lurking shadow scripts, while White and Epston (1990) refers to them as subjugated knowledge.

Williams and Burden (1997) developed a social constructionist model of the teaching-learning process. In this model they indicate that social interactionism emphasises the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks, and provide a view of learning as arising from interactions with others. Since learning never takes place in isolation, the model also indicates the contexts in which learning takes place. The four key sets of factors influencing the learning process are *teacher, learner, tasks and contexts*. The author adopted this model for the use of psychological and research purposes (Figure 2.1). Changing Williams and Burden's (1997) influencing factors to *individual, society, construction and contexts*, the model is presented in figure 2.1.

This model reflects the social interactionist approach to the psychologist-client process. Williams and Burden (1997) note that each individual construct his or her own reality and therefore learns different things in very different ways even when provided with what seems to be very similar learning experiences. On the other hand, society selects constructions that reflect the beliefs they hold about a particular construct. Individuals interpret these constructs in ways that are meaningful and personal to them as individuals. The client pays a central role in this model, because of the emphasis and importance of what she brings to the therapeutic process as an active meaning-maker and problem-solver (Williams & Burden, 1997). The interaction between society, psychologist and client is

emphasised by this model and portrays the dynamic, ongoing process of meaning construction. The construction of meanings is therefore the interface between the society and the individuals.
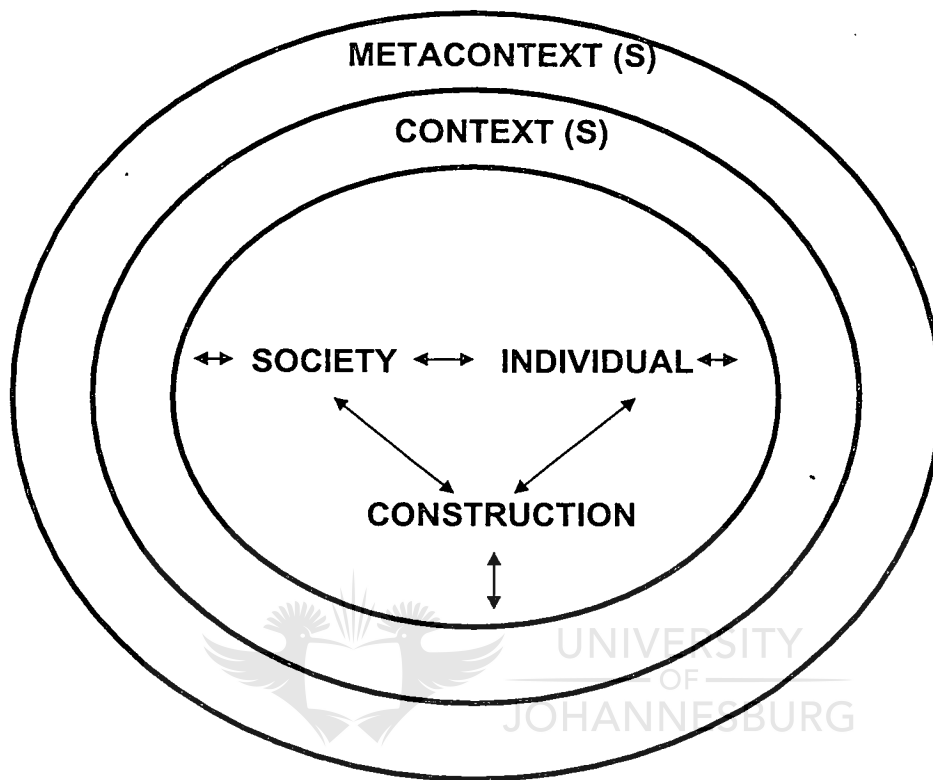
Figure 2.1 A social constructionist model of the psychologist-client process. (Williams & Burden, 1997).

2.6   INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE FROM DIFFERENT HISTORICAL CONTEXTS.

People constructed their realities with different types of knowledge from different time periods in historical contexts. Constructions that survived over time are called institutions. The meaning of constructions differs from time to time and culture to culture. Gergen (1994a) indicates that although traditional (modernist) research practices can make a valuable contribution to a constructionist approach, they are

highly constricted. A constructionist (post-modern) orientation therefore substantially expands the agenda.

Whitehurst and Crone (1994) makes mention of three important orientations for integration, namely,

1. even though the process of constructing scientific knowledge is strongly affected by human, social, emotional and cognitive processes, it also involves matters of fact that <u>cannot be ignored</u>,

2. social constructionist accounts of science can be accepted as <u>descriptive</u> without being prescriptive, and

3. although it can't be proved that belief systems, including positivism and social constructionism, are true or false in the larger sense, belief systems have<u> differential consequences</u> for technological changes of the type that are valued by persons with severe impairments of communication.
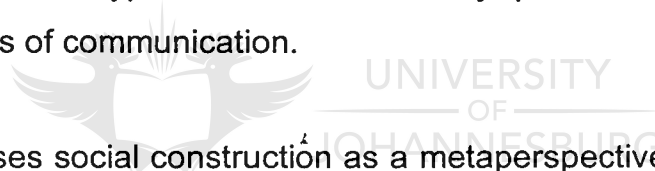
Laird (1993, p. 77) uses social construction as a metaperspective and indicates that the lines between constructs as "knowledges", "systems of belief", "passions" and "religions" are fine ones. Greenwood (1992) supports the argument to use social constructionism as a metatheory and indicates that *realism* and *social constructionism* appear to provide the most detailed alternatives to traditional empiricism. This implies that constructions in pre-modernist, modernist and post-modernist contexts can be examined critically from a social constructionist metaperspective. Flaskas (1995) argues for an approach that allows for understanding of the subject as an external reality (modernistic knowledge) and hangs on to it, while the post-modernistic challenge tackles the recursive possibilities of the world and the subject and the space in-between.

Using social construction theory as metaperspective makes it possible to include pre-modernistic knowledge as religious beliefs, modernistic knowledge as a discovered reality and post-modern knowledge as constructed reality that have

become institutions people live by in everyday life. These Institutions that are social constructions that have survived over time and have become standard (Atwood, 1997), can therefore be explained as follows:

1. Religious beliefs are social constructions, because they have survived over a very long time and are institutionalised in the different religions about the world (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc.).

2. Scientific discoveries are social constructions, because they have also survived over time and are currently institutionalised in explanatory- and applicatory models in psychology (Psychoanalysis, Behaviourism, Gestalt Therapy, Systems Theory etc.).

3. People construct their own realities which they institutionalise as narratives and social constructs (Grand Narratives, Social Constructions in political-, educational-, judicial terms, etc.). These three types of knowledge, coming from different historical contexts, could be integrated as social constructs (called institutions) portrayed in figure 2.2.

Pre-modernistic knowledge
(Religious beliefs)

Modernistic knowledge
(Reality is discovered)   INSTITUTIONS

Post-modernistic knowledge
(Reality is constructed)
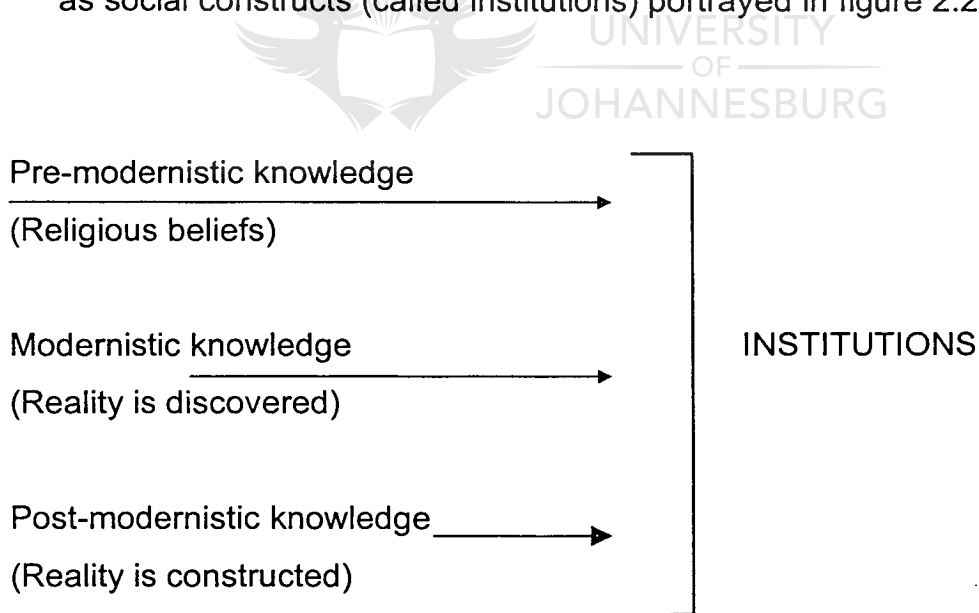
Figure 2.2 The integration of knowledge as social constructions.

Deconstruction, *democratisation* and *reconstruction* are the three most significant overtures to propel science and therapy from the margins of cultural life to the centre

of its pursuits (Gergen, 1994a). Deconstruction refers to the process wherein all the presumptions of the true, the rational and the good are open to suspicion - including those of the suspicious. Democratisation refers to the process wherein the range of voices participating in the consequential dialogues of the science is expanded. Reconstruction refers to the process wherein new realities and practices are fashioned for cultural transformation.
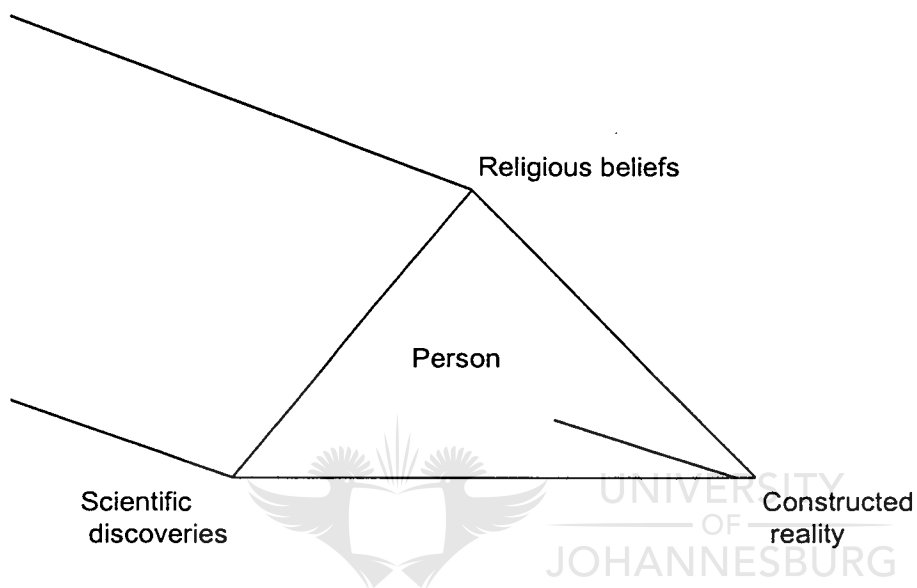
Figure 2.3 An integrated model of different epistemologies.

People use social artefacts, tied together by metaphor and narrative that are historically and culturally bound in the process of relating (Gergen, 1994a). White and Epston (1990) makes mention that people give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experiences. From a constructionist standpoint, the properties of well-formed narratives are culturally and historically situated (Gergen, 1994a). People use pre-modernistic, modernistic and post-modernistic knowledge as construction material to build their lives on. A model presented in figure 2.3 indicates the different constructions a person builds his/her life on.

2.7 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION DISCOURSE AND SCIENCE

2.7.1 Metatheoretical Assumptions.

Gergen (1985) indicates that social constructionist enquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live. On a metatheoretical level the theoretical assumptions of social constructionist science are according to Gergen (1985) and Gergen (1994a):

1. What people take to be the experience of the world does not in itself dictate the terms by which the world is understood.

2. The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people.

3. The degree to which a given form of understanding prevails or is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on the empirical validity of the perspective in question, but on the vicissitudes of social processes.

4. Forms of negotiated understanding are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally connected with many other activities in which people engage.

5. Language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationships.

6. To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life; such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves.

2.7.2 A Social Constructionist view of man.

Kelly's (1963) personal construct theory adopts the basic assumption that each person is a scientist whose *raison d'être* is to develop an increasingly useful model

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to enable her to cope with the world. Silverman (1996) makes mention that people co-construct their own reality because they are embedded in a social context. Man, thus has the freedom to create alternative explanations of the world.

This could be done because man is a creative creature with the capacity to abstract meaning from the environment. Therefore, Berger and Luckman (1966) describe man as a social product and society as a human product. Harré (in Bruffee, 1986) argues that "the self" is a social construct. A person's inner world is a construct coloured by the past, and the past is a construct coloured by the inner world. A person's reality and definition of self are socially constructed: ethnicity is integrally involved in the process (Greene, Jensen & Jones, 1996).

Social constructionism contends that the self (personality) is constructed in relation with others. The self is a misnomer, because a person can not be regarded out of context, but rather as people who are in a world of others (Owen, 1992). People are not individuals in the sense that they are alone and isolated or distant and separable by others, but, like points in a flux, within a field of human forces which pull and push the individual in different directions. They take in influences by others and send out messages to others of how to be taken. People create their sense of inner lives or selves through speaking that occur within joint activity and larger forms of social and spoken life. Thus, intentions, memories, motives, perceptions, emotions and other cognitive entities are not objective and finalised, but are in the process of construction as a function of a person's sense of how she is placed in relation to others within varied discursive circumstances (Shotter, 1997).

Human **thought** and **emotion** are located on a continuum between public and private displays (Harre, in Owen, 1992). Individual minds are created by making private that which was public. Knowledge and belief systems are consequently regarded as collective. Emotions are played out as though on a stage. Appraisals that mediate emotions (such as guilt and shame) have their origin in social interaction, rather than simply in processes that occur within the construing individual (Mascolo, 1994).

People are regarded by social constructionists to be at some level consciously aware of the choices they are making about the type of emotional display they may say or feel they have no power of controlling. People seem to be consistent in the type of **behaviour** they display in accordance with the social rules and ethics of the clan or tribe to which they belong.

Emotions, cognition and behaviour form part of a power play between participants in a drama. Emotions are socially made conventions of appropriate behaviour, which are easily recognisable to members of that social set. The display of Psychopathology is made in order to put duress on others to rebalance power, or move in transition to a socially different place (Littlewood & Lipsedge, in Owen, 1992). The common assumptions of human behaviour shared by proponents of constructionism are:

1. humans actively participate in the construction to the reality to which they respond,
2. cognition, affect, and behaviour exist in an interactive system,
3. life-span development is important, and
4. internal cognitive and affect structures such as core ordering processes, deep structures, meaning systems and narratives are important in maintaining and changing behaviour (Franklin & Nurius, 1996).

2.7.3 Social Constructionist view of the world.

A person's conception of reality consists of the meanings she has given to her interpretation of the world. Meanings are co-constructed in the dialogue between two people (or more) in which ideas are exchanged. Through conversations with numerous people over a lifetime, a person's reality continually evolves and is reflected in the stories (narratives) they tell, which allow them to organise and make meaning out for their lives (Greene et al., 1996).

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Berger and Luckman (1966) define society as a human product and an objective reality. A world outside of man does exist, but what man constructs as his world is different from what the world is. There are however no absolute truths and no absolute realities (Atwood & Seifer, 1997). Gergen (1994a) describes social constructs as mere artefacts of what reality is. Therefore social constructionists must be suspicious of all attempts to establish fundamental ontologies - incorrigible inventories of reality.

Social constructionism views discourses of the world not as a reflection or a map of the world, but as an artefact of communal interchange (Gergen, 1985). Von Glaserfeld (in Atwood & Seifer, 1997) indicates that reality is experiential and therefore an outgrowth of how people subjectively interpret the world. Accurate descriptions of an independent reality as theoretical propositions are dismissed as unintelligible, because reality cannot be compared with our descriptions or concepts of it (Greenwood, 1992).

2.7.4 A Social Constructionist view of science.

Gergen (1994a) describes the emergence of social constructionism view of science from social critique. He indicates that Max Webber, Max Scheler and Karl Mannheim started the scholarly movement as a genesis of scientific thought for the emergence of social constructionism. These writers were concerned with the cultural context in which various ideas take shape and in turn influence both scientific and cultural practice.

Mannheim's propositions bear significance as the clearest outline of assumptions for scientific practice, namely:

1. theoretical commitments may usually be traced to social origins,
2. social groups are often organised around certain theories,

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3. theoretical disagreements are therefore issues of group conflict, and

4. what we take for knowledge is therefore culturally and historically contingent.

It was eventually Berger and Luckman (1966) who effectively argued against objectivity as a foundation stone of science and argued to replace it with a conception of socially informed and institutionalised subjectivity (Gergen, 1994a). In the mid-1970's Barnes and Bloor (in Gergen, 1994a) proposed that virtually all-scientific accounts are determined by social interests such as politics, the economy, professionals and others. To remove the social from the scientific would leave nothing to count as knowledge. Gergen (1994a) goes on to describe knowledge as a communal possession.

In a constructivist paradigm the scientist adopts a relativistic ontology, a subjectivistic epistemology and a hermeneutic, dialectic methodology. Realities are multiple mental constructions (many different people do the constructing), socially and experimentally based, local and specific. In the study of these realities, inquirer (subject) and the inquired into (object) are fused and findings are created by the process of interaction between the two. The methodology relies on individual constructions elicited and refined hermeneutically, and compared and contrasted dialectically, with those of others - all these carried on with a view toward reaching consensus on at least some constructions (Stotsky, 1993).

A **Relativistic Ontology** means that all existence has meaning only with its relationships to others (Reber, 1995). Owen (1992) postulates that relativism suggests that there are parallel universes of experience for people of different ideologies that give rise to separate realities, sets of truths, knowing and personal experiences. What people know is determined by their ideas, so that their view of reality is something constructed in their minds, invented by them. People can therefore only know views or perceptions of reality. People's ideas thus determine what they know (Speed, 1991).

Human knowledge is ultimately interpersonal (Neimeyer, in Held, 1995). When people co-construct the same view of reality through language (Berger & Luckman, 1966) that views of reality become social constructions and could be carried by an institution. In this view other people's ideas co-determine what we know. As multiple realities come into existence in different social contexts, a relativistic ontology is excepted. In line with social constructionism White and Epston (1990) shows that people's lives are guided by dominant internalised discourses, called grand narratives. Hoshmand and Polkinghorne (1992) describe the different approaches to knowledge as alternative social constructions.

A **Subjectivistic Epistemology** depicts a sense that the fundamental nature of knowledge can only be experienced internally, privately by the individual, and that the experience cannot be publicly known but only inferred (Reber, 1995). Bohan (1990) indicates that the human sciences cannot be objective. What is known, is constructed by individuals and society and is therefore subjective.

All knowledge is regarded as subjective or relative, that reality is a function of the knower, and that there is no single truth but only views of reality (Held, 1995). Each person distorts in experience the true nature of independent reality, thus constructing some reality or non-reality uniquely as a function of his or her own linguistic constructions. Social constructionists say that knowledge is relative to each social, cultural or linguistic group of knowers. In this way reality is constructed in groups as a function of their common, consensual linguistic constructions. This process allows communication of shared understanding as a function of the social, rather than the uniquely personal construction of non-reality (Held, 1995).

A **Hermeneutic and Dialectic Methodology** is essential in gaining knowledge from a social constructionist perspective. Both constructionism, from its Latin root *constructio -onis (to put together, build)* (Postma, 1975) and hermeneutics, from its Greek root *hermeneuo (to explain or interpret)* (Arndt & Gingrich, 1979) signify

interpretation (Silverman, 1996). Both these terms postulate that it is in the nature of the mind to construct the world and give meaning to it.

Hermeneutics means interpretation (Richardson & Fowers, 1997) and was concerned with the interpretation of Biblical scriptures (Gergen, 1982). Contrary to modernist methodology, knowledge of truth cannot be gained through observation (Bohan, 1990), but is rather constructed and interpreted. The validity of this knowledge is measured by congruence with shared understanding and influenced by the social context in which it is derived. This implies a thorough social relativity in interpretation (Gergen, 1982).

Hermeneuticists believe that historical truth is elusive and that the analytic situation permits only a "narrative truth" (Spence, in Silverman, 1996). People interact, whether with texts, narratives, or external reality and interpret these interactions from within their symbolic, social-cultural vantagepoints. This emphasises human uniqueness of individual narratives in that they assigning meanings, interpreting events and constructing life narratives, excluding a search for universal beliefs.

People's lives are viewed as texts, which lend themselves to multiple interpretations (Legg, 1997). Words and language are metaphoric descriptions that forge people's understanding of reality and provide the scientist with relevant clinical knowledge to interpret (Silverman, 1996). Baudrillard (in Frosh, 1995) define interpretation as that which sets meaning free by remaking connections with latent discourses. Looking through, beyond or beneath what is immediately observable, to uncover the integrating mechanisms which represent the cause, explanation or meaning of the surface image is called interpretation (Frosh, 1995).

Dialectics denotes a form of reasoning examining the relation of an idea and its opposite (Gergen, 1982). Opposing or contradictory ideas ultimately lead to transformations in thought. In the hermeneutic-interpretative methodology, dialectical thinking has been employed not only in the analysis of social science

metatheory, but also in research. It can be used as a method of understanding and as a device for describing patterns of action across time.

2.8   CONCLUSION

Integrating different and sometimes contradictory knowledge as social constructions makes it possible for the researcher to use whatever explanatory and applicatory models are available in the masses of fragmented information from pre-modernist, modernist and postmodernist rubrics. The important part of research is to listen and use the constructs that the client brings to the fore and interpret those constructions as relevant for the process of constructing knowledge and change. The scientist and therapist must therefore be on the alert to make a clear distinction between her own constructions and that of the participants in the research.

CHAPTER THREE

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

"... child as 'innocent'; child as 'seductress'; child as 'unliberated';
child as 'fantasiser'; child as 'home wrecker'; child as 'self-protector':
all these are roles set by adults for children to fill"
(MacLeod & Saraga, 1988).

3.1   INTRODUCTION

"Many cities all over the world are the loci of various forms of violence" (Gilbert, 1996, p.873). Violence is an escalating phenomenon that permeates people's lives and in many cases changes it forever. It breeds on itself, for today's violence is the seed from which tomorrow's violence will grow. Muntarbhorn (1994) indicates that the increasing violence committed against children world-wide is one of the most disturbing issues confronting children's rights today. Child exploitation, where children are used as instruments or victims of violence, includes the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Child sexual abuse, which includes rape and incest, are also considered to be various forms of sexual violence committed against children (Gilmartin, 1994).

Child sexual abuse only began to appear on the mental health agenda during the mid-1970's. Since then, the flood of cases researched by various professionals in psychology, sociology, nursing, psychiatry, paediatrics, social work, criminology, law, counselling psychology, ministers and elsewhere are of variable quality (Finkelhor, 1986b). Inadequate samples, oversimplistic research designs, conflicting definitions and unsophisticated analyses are a major drawback in available research. Finkelhor (1986b) indicates that shame and the stigma surrounding child sexual abuse, make victims, offenders, and their families not to be eager and co-operative research subjects.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to review the literature on child sexual abuse. The content will be focused on defining child sexual abuse, the epidemiology, etiology and sequelae of child sexual abuse, survivors of sexual abuse and their families and relationships, revictimisation, coping and the social construction of child sexual abuse.

3.2   DEFINING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Gilmartin (1994) shows that there is general confusion and mythology surrounding the subject of sexual victimisation. Literature on rape, incest and child sexual abuse is replete with contradictions and misinformation due to the variety of historical and contemporary definitions and explanations of these phenomena, as well as the change in knowledge about these issues during the last twenty years.

Controversy with regard to the definition of child sexual abuse exists. Barnett, Miller-Perrin and Perrin (1997) illustrate the problem of definition with different examples, varying from walking naked in front of your children to having intercourse with a child. They indicate however that in defining child sexual abuse, it is important to consider firstly, what behaviours are defined as *sexual* and secondly, under what circumstances do sexual interactions become *abusive*.

Defining this construct depends therefore on the social constructions of the time. Wurtele and Miller-Perrin (in Barnett et al., 1997) show that any definition of child sexual abuse is dependant on the historical period in question, the cultural context of the behaviour, and the values and orientations of specific social groups. In fact, during some periods, a few societies did not view these types of interactions as wrong or harmful, but as "appropriate" and, in some cases, even "healthy" for children (Barnett et al., 1997).

The definitions of child sexual abuse will be grouped together within the different time periods they occurred (pre-modern, modern or post-modern). In conclusion, a

definition from a social constructionist perspective will be adopted for the purposes of this study.

3.2.1 Pre-modern or traditional approaches to child sexual abuse

The earliest indications of child sexual abuse are found in religious books such as the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an. These pre-modernistic approaches describe child sexual abuse (with the specific focus on incest and adultery) as a "sin", for which corporal punishment was inflicted (Mcloyd, 1997).

The Hebrew word "galah" is used in the Old Testament and literary means, "to uncover nakedness" (Holladay, 1971, p.60). It was used as a synonym for sexual intercourse, particularly in relationships that cannot be regarded as marriages (Harrison, 1980). According to Leviticus 18 and 20, the locus classicus for incest in the Holy Bible (Bible Society of South Africa, 1983), sexual acts with family members were prohibited and perpetrators were stoned to death. Marriage age in New Testament times was 18-24 years for a man and 13-14 years for a girl (Förster, 1964). In terms of current definitions, sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of 18 would be considered as child sexual abuse (Crime Information Analysis Centre, 1999a).

According to Islamic belief a child could get married, but no sexual activity was allowed until the physical maturity of the child. The word "adultery" is used to describe sexual acts that were not allowed by Islamic laws and traditions. Perpetrators will be held accountable before Allah for their sinful deeds. Sura 16:31-32 in the Holy Qur'an (Ali, 1946) prohibit these acts against children and regards crimes against their lives as one of the greatest of sins.

In ancient Greece, however, homosexual relations between an adult man and adolescent boy past the age of puberty was commonplace and tolerated (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1992). However, sexual contact with boys under the age of puberty was regarded as illegal.

3.2.2 Modernistic definitions of child sexual abuse

Modernistic definitions are definitions that strive for terminological precision and marking the boundaries of meaning for terminology, as the high goal of science (Reber, 1995). These boundaries could be set in terms of nominal, formal, real, enumerative, operational, reduction sentences, tautological or circular procedures. Browning and Laumann (1997) indicate that researcher's definitions of sexual abuse have varied considerably. Emery (in Barnett et al., 1997) mentions that most definitions of child sexual abuse are **operational definitions**, defining a concept in terms of the methods used to measure that concept. These operational definitions might focus on a number of criteria, including the nature of the act, the physical or psychological consequences of an act, or the intent of the perpetrator. The following definitions give an indication of the variety in approach to child sexual abuse.

Gilgun (1994) defines child sexual abuse as an **abuse of power**, whereby an older or more powerful person takes advantage of a child for the purpose of sexual gratification. This definition focuses on the superior knowledge, authority, manipulation and intimidation on the part of the perpetrator and the compliance by the child victim. For the perpetrator the experience is an intense, highly erotic, highly gratifying sexual pleasure, while the experience for the child is confusing, with short- and long-term trauma. Children are often unable to interpret the meanings of sexual behaviour.

The National Centre on Child Abuse and Neglect (in Barnett et al., 1997) defines child sexual abuse as contacts or interactions between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. This definition approaches sexual abuse in terms of **adult-child sexual contact**. Sexual abuse may be committed by a person under the age of 18 when that person is either significantly older than the victim or when the perpetrator is in a position of power or control over another child. This definition incorporates four key

components that are generally regarded as essential in defining child sexual abuse, namely that :

1. it is broad enough to include intrafamilial (i.e., incest) and extrafamilial abuse,
2. it includes physical contact and non-contact activities,
3. it emphasises the exploitation of adult authority and power to achieve the adult's sexual ends, and
4. it addresses the age or maturational advantage of the perpetrator over the child.

Definitions from a **clinical** perspective are directed by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) published by the American Psychiatric Association (1994). Five categories of abuse and neglect are specified, including sexual abuse of a child. This classification is used when the focus of clinical attention is sexual abuse. The diagnosis of child sexual abuse is full of pitfalls (Kaplan, Sadock & Grebb, 1994). This might be the reason why problems related to abuse and neglect are so vaguely described as "severe mistreatment of one individual by another through physical abuse, sexual abuse, or child neglect" in the DSM IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p.682).

In some cases definitions attempt to **structure various and related terminology** used in the literature. Gilmartin (1994) uses the term *sexual abuse* to refer to "all unwanted sexual acts involving bodily contact committed by nonfamilial adults who are at least five years older than the girls or the adolescents (i.e., sixteen years of age or younger) that they assault" (p.19). She uses the term *incest* for "unwanted sexual acts involving bodily contact which are committed by family members and others who have parental type of roles or are in positions of trust. When she refers to all girls, adolescents, and women who have experienced rape, sexual assault, sexual coercion, child sexual abuse, and/or incest, she employs the inclusive term of *sexual victimisation.* Although the term 'unwanted' is used to indicate social, lega:

and scientific non-consent to sexual acts with minors, it must be kept in mind that the minor would sometimes be in a position to 'want' these acts to happen.

It seems that various umbrella terms, like *sexual victimisation* (Gilmartin, 1994), *coercive sex* (Masters et al., 1992), *child victimisation* (Barnett et al., 1997) and *crimes against children* are used. Various types of acts involving abuse and neglect are categorised under these terms. Types of child abuse indicated by Mabusela (1994) are political abuse of children, socio-economic child abuse, traditional and cultural child abuse, sexual child abuse, abandoned children and child victims of divorce, child prostitution, child trade and child pornography, child victims of gender discrimination (the girl child). Categories of sexual abuse include rape, genital intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, analingus and anal intercourse, genital contact including manual touching or penetration, breast contact or simulated intercourse, and sexual kissing, intentional sexual touching of buttocks, thigh, leg, covered breasts or genitals (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986a; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986b) and many others. These acts could be actual or attempted and inflicted with or without force.
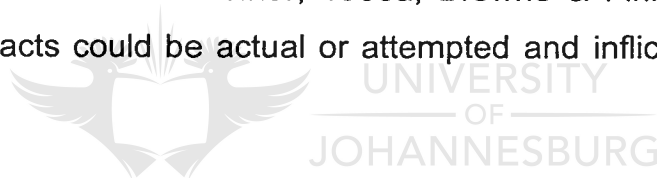
Legal definitions for the purpose of legislation indicate specific criteria and descriptions of illegal acts as crimes against children. In South Africa child sexual abuse is prohibited by The Sexual Offences Law, 1957 (Act No. 23 of 1957). Section 14 (1-3) of this law describes rape, sodomy, incest, indecent assault, public indecency and statutory offences as child sexual abuse (Crime Information Analysis Centre, 1999a). In terms of the South African law, someone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child.

Kelly (1988) indicates that the most widely used definition of child sexual abuse among professionals is attributed to Kempe and Kempe (1984). However, this definition actually stems from Schecter and Roberge (in Kelly, 1988) in 1976. They define child sexual abuse as:

"The involvement of developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual actions which they cannot fully comprehend, to which they cannot give informed consent, and which violate the taboos of social roles." (p.19).

Gilmartin (1994), Ensink (1992) and Peters, Wyatt and Finkelhor (1986) show that most modernistic/scientific definitions centre on topics such as the child's age at the start of the incident, the type of sexual events or acts involved, the coercion applied the age difference between child and perpetrator, or the interpersonal context.

3.2.3 Post-modern definitions

Modernistic definitions with shared assumptions, starting points and arguments that developed within a very old set of discourses within European culture of sex, men, women, children and incest, have been criticised and challenged by Feminists since the early 1970's (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988). These Feminists describe sexual abuse in terms of three key elements, namely the betrayal of trust and responsibility, the abuse of power, and the inability of children to consent. Kelly (1988) suggested that it is important to include the child's subjective experience as part of the definition of child sexual abuse. She argues that abuse is not defined by what happens, but by how it is experienced. Defining child sexual abuse from a feminist perspective depends on what women and girls experience as abusive and they should therefore be listened to.

Another post-modernistic approach to child sexual abuse comes from the **constructivist** and **social constructionist** perspective. In this approach the definition of child sexual abuse is determined by personal and social views of what is regarded as sexual abuse (Barnett et al., 1997). These definitions take shape when child sexual abuse is recognised as a social problem. Any definition of child sexual abuse from a social constructionist perspective is dependent on the historical period in question, the cultural context of the behaviour, and the values and orientations of

specific social groups. The social constructionist perspective gives helpful insights into why sexual abuse is sometimes condemned in some cultures but not in others.

In terms of different personal constructs, Gilmartin (1994) indicates that different meanings could be attributed to the experience of sexual abuse. That could be an indication why some victims of child sexual abuse can grow up to live happy and healthy productive lives as survivors of child sexual abuse, while others are caught up in burdening long-term consequences of the abuse. She shows that younger children might sometimes not perceive the sexual encounter as abusive, while older children who are more aware of sexual behaviour could perceive the sexual encounter as abusive.

In conclusion, postmodernist definitions of sexual abuse could never be static, because it depends on different experiences and constructions of people and societies. Feminist, constructivist and social constructionist approaches to sexual abuse are relative, and left to the victim or society to define what they regard as sexually abusive. For the purposes of this study the following definition of child sexual abuse is conceptualised by the researcher:

Child sexual abuse is a relative experience of inappropriate sexual activity, not expected by society to happen between an adult and a child, that result in relative consequences, depending on the personal and social constructions of that sexual experience.

This definition includes the following aspects of sexual abuse:

1. It allows for differential personal constructions of sexual abuse by what the child experience at the time as an inappropriate sexual activity.

2. It allows for differential social constructions of sexual abuse by what sexual activity society doesn't expect to happen between an adult and a child.

3. It allows for differential outcomes in terms of the meaning attached to the experience of sexual abuse.

The usefulness of a social constructionist definition like the above, lies in its applicability to individuals who and societies that regard different actions as sexual abuse and ascribe different meanings to what sexual abuse is. Such a relativistic approach to what can be defined as child sexual abuse by a society leaves room for difference and negates universality in the definition of child sexual abuse.

3.3   EPIDEMIOLOGY

International work on child sexual abuse is based on Article 34 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (in Karlen, 1994) which reads as follows:

"State Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, State Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

1. the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;

2. the exploitive use of children in prostitution or any unlawful sexual practices; and

3. the exploitive use children in pornographic performances and materials" (p.170).

Finkelhor (1993) indicates that the epidemiological research on child sexual abuse includes a wide range of studies. These studies include random sample surveys that were done on **national level** in the United States, Canada, Sweden and the Netherlands, as well as on **community-wide level** as surveys of student populations and case-control designs. Indications in the epidemiological literature

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are that child sexual abuse is not rare (Finkelhor, 1993). There are no identifiable epidemiological factors that exclude any age, gender, social status or other subgroups from the prevalence of child sexual abuse. Although the statistical indications vary from study to study, Gilmartin (1994) concludes that these indications show that sexual victimisation of girls, adolescents and women have reached epidemic proportions. Prevalence estimates world-wide ranged from 7% to 36% for women and 3% to 29% for men (Barnett et al., 1997).

Official estimates in the United States of America indicates that reports of child sexual abuse have increased dramatically since 1980 (Barnett et al., 1997). It's not clear if this increase indicates an increase in child sexual abuse. It seems likely that the occurrence of child sexual abuse is not increasing but rather that child sexual abuse is reported more. This might be due to better legislative procedures and increases in public and professional awareness. The latest report in the United States of America indicated that 11% of all child abuse cases involved child sexual abuse, a number of approximately 330 000 children. Kaplan et al., (1994) makes mention that 150 000 to 200 000 new cases of child sexual abuse have been reported in the USA.

Blume (1990), Fantuzzo (1990) and Finkelhor (1993) reveal some estimates from various epidemiological studies in the USA that can be summarised as follows:

1. Over 80% of the perpetrators have been found to be the child victim's primary caregiver.
2. The average age of child victims was 7.27 years in 1986.
3. Girls are at higher risk for child sexual abuse than boys are.
4. The risk for sexual abuse increases at pre-adolescence.
5. Social class, racial and ethnicity distinctions don't indicate higher risk factors.
6. Children who don't live with one or both their natural parents are at greater risk for abuse.

7. Children with poor supervision or who were emotionally neglected, and physically or psychologically abused are at greater risk of being involved in sexual contact with an exploitive adult.

8. Incest is the most common and most serious form of sexual abuse.

It is not clear whether the growth in reports of child sexual abuse in South Africa indicate an increase of child sexual abuse or an event more widely reported and spoken about. Mabusela (1994) indicates that child sexual abuse is steadily on the increase. An Interpol survey in 1994 found that South Africa has the highest incidence of reported rape in the world (Marshall & Herman, 1998). Levette (1989) did a study among South African university women students 43,6 % of respondents reported experiences of contact (47,5%) and non-contact (52,5%) sexual abuse or harassment before age 18 years. Repeated experiences of sexual abuse were reported by a significant number of respondents (25 out of the 61 respondents). These experiences occurred before age 13 (39,3%), from age 14 to 18 years (54,1%) and at an unknown age in childhood (6,6%). None of the women reported that they were unaffected by the sexual abuse and none of them had reported the abuse. Strangers were implicated in 65,6% and family members in 13,1% of the reports. The remaining 21,3% involved other people known to the victim.

A National study of crimes against children was conducted by the Human and Social Research Commission (HSRC) in South Africa from July 1994 to June 1995 (Hallamby, 1997). The results indicated that 62% of the children in the 4606 reported cases were victims of crimes of a sexual nature. In all the reported cases, 83,5% of the perpetrators were known to the victim, and 35,3% of the crimes were committed in the child's own home, while 23,7% of the crimes were committed in the offender's home. Results in the study further indicated that crimes against children are increasing at the rate of 28,9% a year. If this trend continues, by the year 2000 the Child Protection Units will have to deal with 1, 478 110 cases of child abuse.

Reports by The Sowetan (Sapa, 1999a) and The Pretoria News (Staff Reporter & Sapa, 1999) quote child sexual abuse statistics prematurely released on a police conference on crimes against children as follows:

1. Statistics indicate that 14225 children were raped in the first 11 months of 1998, a figure that doubled since 1994.
2. Some 3451 children were indecently assaulted.
3. A number of 679 children were sodomised and 171 fell victim to incest.
4. Overall 33 827 crimes against children were reported.

The above police figures, dating back to 1994 shows a sad and sorry picture of the increasing tide of reported violence against children. The official police report (Crime Information Analysis Centre, 1999b) on crimes against children in South Africa for 1998 is given in Table 3.1 and for sexual crimes against children in Table 3.2. It is presented as a reflection within the different Provinces of South Africa and the number of cases reported.

| PROVINCE | CASES REPORTED: JAN - DEC | | | | |
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
EASTERN CAPE	538	406	361	376	291
FREE STATE	133	158	155	181	162
GAUTENG	454	584	422	411	309
KWAZULU-NATAL	266	336	280	295	217
MPUMALANGA	72	139	180	154	172
NORTH WEST	68	83	128	104	101
NORTHERN CAPE	101	194	93	87	112
NORTHERN PROV	265	300	187	260	251
WESTERN CAPE	781	705	509	500	468
TOTAL	2723	2905	2315	2368	2083

Table 3.1 Cruelty towards and ill treatment of children (excluding sexual offences, assault and murder (Crime Information Analysis Centre, 1999).

PROVINCE	CASES REPORTED: JAN - DEC				
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
EASTERN CAPE	59	59	124	99	73
FREE STATE	84	57	70	45	40
GAUTENG	217	163	88	48	58
KWAZULU-NATAL	103	94	50	70	103
MPUMALANGA	23	21	29	32	15
NORTH WEST	56	64	34	40	22
NORTHERN CAPE	32	11	26	24	18
NORTHERN PROV	26	14	25	18	31
WESTERN CAPE	187	183	134	161	114
TOTAL	787	666	580	537	474

Table 3.2 Intercourse with a girl under the prescribed age and/or female imbecile (Crime Information Analysis Centre, 1999).

The above statistics indicate nothing more than a higher tendency to report cruelty towards, and ill-treatment of children in provinces such as the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and the Western Cape and for sexual crimes against underage girls in Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal and the Western Cape. These statistics are no indication of the real numbers of child abuse and child sexual abuse. Reasons for not reporting such crimes are varied and uncertain.

The statistical situation is confusing, as there is not yet any consensus among social scientists about the scope of sexual abuse (Peters, Wyatt & Finkelhor, 1986). Many problems hampering estimations of the true scope includes the secrecy and shame surrounding the problem, the criminal sanctions against it and the young age and dependant status of the victim. These factors inhibit disclosure and discourage voluntary reporting. Any statistical indication is often considered an underestimation of the true prevalence of child sexual abuse (Peters, Wyatt & Finkelhor, 1986). This might be true of the statistical reflection in South Africa as well.

3.4   ETIOLOGY

3.4.1 Causes of child sexual abuse

Why do some individuals sexually abuse children?   The causes of child sexual abuse are attributed to psychological-, family-, structural- and socio-cultural factors. Barnett et al., (1997) indicate that experts have developed theoretical formulations which focus on individual and system variables, including the victim, perpetrator, an abusive family, and society. Explanations for the causes of child sexual abuse were primarily given from psychoanalytical theory, but recently from social learning theory and feminism as well (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986).

(a) **Psychological models** focus on intrapersonal and interpersonal theories of causation (Barnett et al., 1997). Psychodynamic theories, for example, explain child sexual abuse in terms of poor impulse control and sexual frustration as driving forces from within the perpetrator (Gilmartin, 1994).   Social learning theory shows that people have early sexual experiences that condition them to find children arousing to them when they become adults (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986).

Paedophilia is regarded to be the pathology associated with child sexual abuse (Carson & Butcher, 1992; Gilmartin 1994; Kaplan et al., 1994; Barlow & Durand, 1995). Children have compelling emotional meaning to paedophiles and make them feel more powerful in contrast with their own immaturity and low self-esteem (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986). The diagnostic criteria for paedophile in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) are presented in table 3.3.

Taking action on their urges paedophiles usually explain their actions by rationalisations that they have educational value for the child, that the child derives sexual pleasure from them, or that the child was sexually provocative (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Salter (1995) describes these rationalisations as thinking errors used to justify and minimise their behaviour.   Fixated paedophiles refer to molesters who show signs of an infantile personality and are unable to relate

to adults, while regressed paedophiles refer to perpetrators who relate to peers, but under stress regress and use children to meet their needs (Gilmartin, 1994).

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1em;">

1. Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 and younger).

2. The fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

3. The person is at least age 16 years and at least 5 years older than the child or children in Criterion A.

   Note: Do not include an individual in late adolescence involved in an ongoing sexual relationship with a 12- or 13-year-old.

Specify if:

Sexually Attracted to Males

Sexually Attracted to Females

Sexually attracted to Both

Specify if:

Limited to Incest

Specify if:

Exclusive Type (attracted only to children)

Non exclusive Type

</div>

Table 3.3 Diagnostic criteria for Paedophilia (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

The traits associated with this behaviour are feelings of vulnerability, dependency, inadequacy, loneliness or cognitive distortions. Finkelhor and Browne (1986) lists difficulty relating to adult females, disturbances in adult sexual or romantic relationships and repressive norms about sex as indications of causing sexual

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abuse. He also indicates that lack of impulse control, senility and mental retardation increases the risk of being abused and of being an abuser.

Researchers (Gilmartin, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1994) explain that adults who were themselves sexually abused in childhood have a high chance of repeating this pattern of abuse. This explanation is criticised extensively for three reasons:

1. girls are predominantly more victimised than boys are, but the perpetrators are predominantly male. If this explanation is correct girls should predominate as perpetrators.
2. studies show that one third of perpetrators are repeating the pattern of abuse, and
3. why then are many people not repeating the pattern of child sexual abuse (Gilmartin, 1994).

(b) **Family of origin and parenting** seems to be the most popular socio-psychological explanation, indicating dysfunctional families or family-systems as a cause for child sexual abuse (Gilmartin, 1994; Barnett et al., 1997). Belt and Abidin (1996) show that more and more research include parenting context as part of the study of abuse. Perhaps abuse is a simple extension of the parenting environment within which it occurs. Finkelhor and Baron (1986) indicates that growing up in a dysfunctional family is the most powerful risk factor for both intrafamilial and extrafamilial sexual abuse. Brock, Mintz and Good (1997) support this theory.

Carson, Gertz, Donaldson and Wonderlich (1992) show some unique characteristics of incestuous families. These characteristics include patterns of enmeshment and a lack of self-differentiation in the family, invisible loyalties and triangulation among family members, boundaries in the family are ambiguous, rigid or diffused, and levels of trust are limited. In their study of the family-of-origin and family-of-procreation of victims of child sexual abuse, Carson et al., (1992) indicate that the patterns of most victim's family-of-origin may be passed on to the next generation.

Mothers have been blamed for sexual abuses from two sides; firstly, for poor marital relationships or infrequent marital sex with their husbands, increasing their sexual frustration and driving them to seek satisfaction elsewhere in the family, and secondly for poorly protecting the victim from the offender (Barnett et al., 1997). Critique from feminists like Blume (1990) emphasises that this is confusing the real issue and minimising the importance of the real culprits. A mother's role is only contributing to the vulnerability of the child by withdrawing and becoming unavailable and should not be considered as a cause for child sexual abuse. A father might distance him from his wife to reduce the tension in his marital relationship and turn his sexual and emotional attention to his daughter (Barnett et al., 1997). A cause for child sexual abuse should therefore be related to the father who abuses his power and not to the withdrawing mother.

(c) Feminists were the first to indicate **structural causes** of child sexual abuse and defining it as a real social problem (Gilmartin, 1994). Kelly (1988) shows that reluctance by social structures (e.g. the government) to define child sexual abuse as a social problem can contribute to the problem. Muntarbhorn (1994) sees cutbacks in financial and other priorities that deprive children from basic protection against exploitation, especially for poor countries, as structural causes of child sexual abuse.

(d) **Social and cultural** elements are also included in literature as part of the etiology of child sexual abuse (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986b; Gilmartin, 1994; Barnett et al., 1997). These elements focus on the broad context of society and community forces that play an etiologic role in child sexual abuse (Barnett et al., 1997). The globalisation of child sexual abuse and exploitation is no longer confined to the boundaries of a state, a nation or a community, but is becoming increasingly trans-national, with cross-frontier implications (Muntarbhorn, 1994). The role of syndicates (Masters et al., 1992; Muntarbhorn, 1994) and child pornography via the internet (Van der Linde, 1989; Knowler, 1994; Mikkelsen, 1996; Pieters, 1998; Smith, 1999; Verster, 1999) is more and more implicated in this regard. The exploitation of children via the internet is starting to become an international social problem, setting

difficult regulating and policing tasks for governments around the world (Willmer, 1994; Al-Issawi, 1997; Sapa, 1999b). Social problems such as poverty, break-up of families, discrimination, urbanisation, child prostitution, organised child-crime business, sex tourism and street children contribute to child sexual abuse (Karlen, 1994).

Social and cultural elements are explained by social learning theories, that ascribe child sexual abuse to conditioning and modelling patterns that are presented in societies and cultures (Gilmartin, 1994, Barnett et al., 1997). Particularly men, can learn that these actions of abuse are acceptable. Gelles and Strauss (in Gilmartin, 1994), have developed a model, drawing from social exchange and social inequity theories. They posit that:

1. people will use violence (sexual abuse) against family members when the reward (e.g. immediate release of anger and increased power, control and self-esteem) outweighs the costs (e.g. detection and punishment), and

2. sexual and intergenerational inequalities within the family (e.g. difference in physical ability, status, and power) make it a breeding ground for violence (and sexual abuse).

Male sexual socialisation and sex-role socialisation stems from the view that females are the property of males, while children are almost universally seen as the property of their parents (Gilmartin, 1994). Some fathers assume that this includes the right to sexual access, particularly to their daughters (Russell, in Gilmartin, 1994). Socials attitudes portraying the gender inequality and extending the minority role to children, evolved through history and still prevails today (Barnett et al., 997). As a result men have subjected both minority groups (women and children) to sexual abuse. Faulty paternal models of sexual abuse sets poor examples for their sons, which they follow (Carson & Butcher, 1992), while the shared context of ritualistic abuse, done in groups, normalise and reinforce the idea that sexual abuse for many newcomers are acts that are acceptable (Finkelhor, in Gilmartin, 1994).

The escalation of sexual exploitation figures internationally are mainly caused by the most destructive form of child labour occurring today, when children have to sell their own bodies to sexual deviants in order to support their families (Karlen, 1994). She indicates that sexual exploitation of children takes place on a large scale and on a commercial basis in many countries, as part of an international sex tourism industry. In South Africa evidence prevails that many children who were sexually abused become child prostitutes, an industry difficult to stop, because the community keeps it going (Coetzee, 1998). Masters et al., (1992), Gilmartin (1994), Muntarbhorn (1994) and Barnett et al., (1997) indicate that the production of child pornography, selling of children, child prostitution and the exploitation of children in international sex rings are ways in which society contributes to the problem of child sexual abuse. Poverty in many countries contributes to the 'supply' side of the child sex industry, while the reasons for the 'demand' side of the industry are not explained by it. Muntarbhorn (1994) goes on to indicate that big spending on arms and national budgets, with too little money left to curb crimes against children, manifold discrimination and lax law enforcement are some of the reasons the global escalation of child sexual abuse prevails.
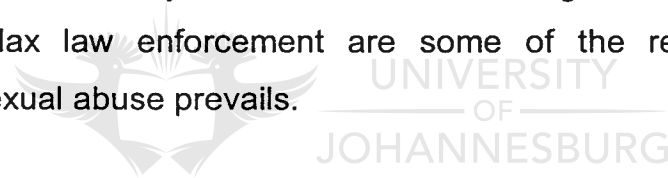
Child sexual abuse is further caused by social and cultural elements such as discrimination against children, people living in a sub-culture of violence that breeds violence and cultures accepting violence against children (Barnett et al., 1997). Three powerful forces, also prevailing in South Africa, contributing to the powerlessness of children are patriarchy, authoritarian cultures and the apartheid legacy of violence and oppression. The lack of services in poor communities makes a further contribution to the prevalence of child sexual abuse (Marshall & Herman, 1998). Russell (1997) and Landman (1998) link these allegations of patriarchy, authoritarianism, violence and oppression to religious consent, especially in Protestant Calvinism. These writers indicate that religious consent is probably due to a misunderstanding of the man's position as head of the family.

3.4.2 Children at risk

Finkerlhor and Baron (1986), Gilmartin (1994), and Barnett et al., (1997) indicate that the following children are at greater risk of becoming victims of child sexual abuse:

1. Socially isolated female children who have few close friends or who have many unmet needs.
2. Children described as passive, quiet, trusting, young, unhappy or depressed and needy.
3. Children with strong needs for attention, affection and approval.
4. Children between eight and 12 years (the mean age at onset of sexual abuse is 10 to 11 years for girls and 11 years for boys).
5. Parental absence and unavailability of parents (because of employment, illness or disability and living without their natural parents) puts a child at greater risk of sexual abuse.
6. Children with poor relationships with their parents and poor relationships between parents.
7. Living with parents with alcohol, drug abuse and emotional problems.
8. Stepfather families, in which a stepfather lives in relation with stepchildren. Some writers (Blume, 1990; Salter, 1995) regard sexual abuse by a stepfather as incest, because of the close relations within the family. They regard the relation of trust and closeness in the father-daughter relation to be important and not only the genetic tie between father and daughter.

3.4.3 Patterns of abuse

Different elements indicating patterns of child sexual abuse have been captured by research. Children are more likely to be abused by someone they know, than by a stranger. On the one hand, parents are reluctant to notify authorities of the abuse,

due to reasons of fear that they might be regarded as bad parents, the shame and stigma attached to child sexual abuse and the notion that such incidents are family matters. On the other hand, children don't report the abuse either, because they fear retaliation from the abuser or blame from others (Nevid, Fichner-Rathus & Rathus, 1995).

The child initially trusts the abuser. Force is seldom necessary to gain the compliance of a child, because of a child's helplessness, gullibility and submission to adult authority. Most children are sexually abused only once, but those being abused by family members are more likely to suffer repeated acts of abuse. Genital fondling is the most common type of child sexual abuse and intercourse occurs only in a small percentage of cases. Repeated abuse by a family member commonly follows a pattern that begins with affectionate fondling during the pre-school years. It progresses to oral sex and mutual masturbation during the early school years, and then to sexual penetration during pre-adolescence or adolescence (Nevid et al., 1995).

3.4.4 Offenders of child sexual abuse

Many people picture child sexual abusers as strangers or "dirty old men" (Barnett, et al., 1997, p.79). The real picture is that child sexual abusers come from every social class, and from all kinds of families and cultures; they are brothers, uncles, baby-sitters, friends, strangers, grandfathers, stepfathers and fathers (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988). There is still disagreement with the definition and terminology of offenders. "Child molesters", "Child abusers" and "Paedophiles" are terms often used (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986, p. 89). These two writers prefer to use the term 'paedophile' in a broad inclusive manner for any person who has had sexual contact with children, while sexual abuse and child molesting indicate the actions and evidence that the state of paedophilia exists.

In an effort to understand the offender in child sexual abuse different approaches were followed. Contributions range from compiling a **psychological profile** of the

offender (Peters, 1976), to a **symptoms and trait** approach (Dominelli, 1989; Blume, 1990; Nevid et al., 1995; Salter, 1995), an attempt to integrate **multifactor explanations** (Araji & Finkelhor, 1986; Finkelhor, 1986b) and a conceptual framework by Gilgun (1994) focusing on the **roles played** by child sexual abuse perpetrators.

With the help of extensive psychological testing Peters (1976) tried to compile a series of characteristics and personality traits shared by men who were convicted of child sexual abuse. He divided all sex offenders into four groups on the basis of the crime they committed. These groups include assault (rape and statutory rape), paedophilia (corrupting the morals of minors), exhibitionism and homosexuality (sodomy). His research indicates that paedophiles are less anxious and confused about sexual-role identification than rapists are, but they are less self-assertive, and more passive and submissive than rapists are. Exhibitionists are less anxious about their bodily structure and function than paedophiles, but tend to be more withdrawn and isolated under stress.

Peters (1976) indicates that all offenders in his research share the following characteristics:

1. They started their marriages as passive, emotionally dependent husbands, trying to please their wives as providers and became eager for the approval of their dominant spouse, but regression occurred when the wives seek their emotional support under pressure situations. Frustrated by the lack of response from their husbands they refuse sexual relationships with them and seek emotional fulfilment elsewhere, eventually separating from them.

2. These husbands start drinking and sexually molesting girls who are under their authority and not able to reject them.

3. None of the respondents were psychotic or displayed overt psychopathological symptoms.

4. Most of them were classified as having passive-aggressive personality disorders.
5. They experience their wives as unfaithful and therefore turned to an available child for gratification.

Psychological testing fails to identify sexual offenders reliably (Salter, 1995). Frequently there is nothing wrong with sexual offenders, other than aberrant sexuality, which they usually deny. Barnett et al., (1997) describe feelings of vulnerability, dependency, inadequacy, loneliness and cognitive distortions, low self-esteem, anger and hostility, poor problem-solving skills and emotional dependency as offender traits.   They experience stronger deviant sexual arousal than non-offenders do. The mean age for offenders of child sexual abuse is 32½ years, but the indication is that a significant number of offenders are under 18 years and adolescents. Most perpetrators are male and in most cases known to the victim.

The occurrence of multiple-paraphilias shows that perpetrators don't specialise in a specific type of sexual abuse, but offences like voyeurism and exhibitionism and others might co-occur. Although research indicates that most rapists also commit other non-sexual offences, child molesters less frequently engage in other antisocial behaviours (Nivid et al., 1995).

In their description of types of abusers, Nivid et al., (1995) indicate that not all child abusers are paedophiles. Some molesters are opportunists and turn to sexual abuse under stress and lack of sexual outlets. Blume (1990) distinguishes between an Authoritarian Perpetrator (who abuses his position of power over a powerless wife and children, asking no-one's permission to do what he wants) and a Timid Perpetrator (who is timid and unassertive, weak and ineffectual in relation to his demanding wife and turns to the only person in the house from whom he can derive a sense of power; a child). Salter (1995) makes distinctions between Sadistic versus Non-sadistic Offenders. Sadistic Offenders inflict pain on their victims as part of their arousal pattern, justifying their actions with thinking errors (the child is worthless, the child enjoys the pain, and the child deserves the punishment). Non-sadistic

Offenders fantasise about the child's need for him, making the thinking error that the child is a willing partner.

Salter (1995) indicates that research also shows that sexual offending is a highly compulsive and repetitive behaviour, resulting in recidivism and prior histories of sexual offending. It should therefore be approached as a planned action stemming from a deviant cycle of interlocking series of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that culminate in sexual assault. Although offenders claim that the sexual abuse "just happened", research reveals that extensive planning and grooming is more the norm (Salter, 1995, p.44). She developed a model (Figure 3.1) explaining the components of the deviant cycle thinking errors in child sexual abuse.
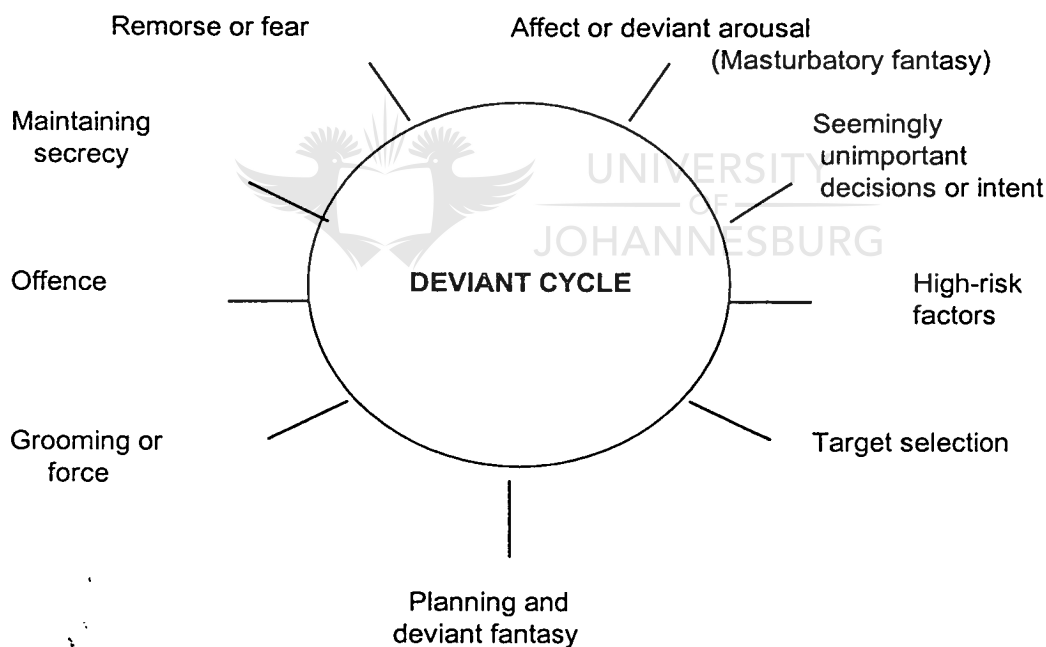
Figure 3.1 Deviant cycle of child sexual abuse (Salter, 1995)

The circular explanation in figure 3.1 indicates that deviant experiences of child sexual abuse serves as reinforcement for later actions of sexual abuse. The cycle starts with:

1. an affective state (such as rage, anxiety, depression or boredom),

2. a chronically distorted deviant arousal pattern with masturbatory fantasy (like the touch/sight of a child or sexual activity with a child or violence) and

3. an antisocial attitude in which the offender is willing to use anyone or anything for sexual gratification and fulfilment of his need to have power and control over others. Offenders then take high risks (seemingly unimportant decisions) to put themselves into places where they have access to potential victims. For rapists it could be getting into a car, driving around, looking for a victim, while molesters have to find an arena where they can legitimately have contact with children and require power over them. They gain access by ways of vocations or avocations, adult relationships, physical and emotional proximity. In their actions rapists want to isolate their victims, while molesters groom their victims (Salter, 1995).

The next step in the deviant cycle is the selection of a target. Rapists choose their victims through opportunity and calculating chances of getting caught, while molesters choose their victims by preferred characteristics like build, age, etc.. In the fourth step the deviant fantasy is planned. Next the victim is manipulated (by grooming) or coerced (by force) into sexual activity. Thereafter the offence is committed. Maintaining secrecy is an important aspect of the deviant cycle. Secrecy functions as a buffer to avoid legal and social consequences of the offence. Silence and secrecy are maintained by bribes, treats and exploitation of trust. Offenders manipulate the child by convincing her that secrecy is also best for her as well as for her family. The last element of the deviant cycle is guilt, remorse and shame. These feelings reinforce a second cycle to start all over again (Salter, 1995).

Barlow and Durand (1995) introduce a linear model explaining the development of paraphilia. Their model correlates with the deviant cycle of Salter (1995). A schematic representation of the model is given in figure 3.2.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Early inappropriate sexual   │
│          associations or            │
│          experiences (some          │
│         accidental and some         │
│             vicarious)              │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────┐                    ┌──────────────┐
│   Possible   │                    │   Possible   │
│  inadequate  │  ────→ ▼ ←────     │  inadequate  │
│ development of│         │          │ development of│
│consensual adult│        │          │appropriate social│
│arousal patterns│        ▼          │ skills for relating to│
│              │                    │    adults    │
└──────────────┘                    └──────────────┘
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │  Inappropriate sexual   │
        │  fantasies repeatedly   │
        │     associated with     │
        │ Masturbatory activities and│
        │   strongly reinforced   │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │   Repeated attempts to  │
        │ inhibit undesired arousal│
        │  and behaviour resulting in│
        │   (paradoxical) increase in│
        │     paraphilic thoughts,│
        │   fantasies and behaviour│
        └─────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │       Paraphilia        │
        └─────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 3.2 Development of paraphilia (Barlow & Durand, 1995, p.456).

Finkelhor (1986a) argues for a multifactor approach in explaining the offender's actions. He proposes the factors to be emotional congruence, sexual arousal, blockage, and disinhibition. In this model he integrates all the aspects of offender behaviour the previous two models explained.

Gilgun (1994) wrote an article on the different roles that perpetrators of child sexual abuse could play. He identified seven different roles placed on a continuum from no sense of closeness to a deep sense of closeness. He named the roles perpetrators play as: Avengers, Takers, Controllers, Playmates, Lovers and Soulmates. **Avengers** are sexual abusers that like to inflict pain on the sexual body parts of their victims or cause emotional pain to them. Their focus might also be to hurt the person who loves the child. **Takers** approach their child victims as if they are commodities to be used and then discarded. They simply take what they want, with no concern about the consequences of their behaviour. **Controllers** are offenders who bargain for what they want. They want to control the actions of their victims by bargaining for sexual favours. **Conquerors** approach their victims using various ploys to get the children to become sexually involved with them. They pose as buddies, playmates or lovers acting age-appropriate to the development of the children. They use seduction and pretence to conquer their victims. **Playmates** view themselves as peers of their child victims. Sex becomes only one of the fun things they do together. **Lovers** appear to be infatuated or in love with their victims. They view the child victim as an equal partner and perceive themselves to love partners to their victims. **Soulmates** are offenders who confuse themselves with children. They are drawn to see themselves in their child victims. They develop identity confusion between themselves and the child.

Dominelli (1989) argues that Radical Feminists contest for long and severe sentences for offenders, while judicial and Justice Departments argue for sex offence trials to be more victim-friendly (Liebenberg, 1999). Paradoxically long sentences reinforce male dominated patterns of power in prison, a discourse feminists are trying to change.

3.5   SEQUELAE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Research with regard to the symptoms–of child sexual abuse list numerous psychological, behaviour and social difficulties, but there is as yet no evidence for any consistent set of symptoms that could be viewed as a "post-child-abuse-

syndrome" (Runtz & Schallow, 1997, p.211). Indications of a paradox, that many victims of child sexual abuse suffer immediate and/or long-term negative consequences, but not all victims experience significant problems as a result of their abuse (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986b; Ray & Jackson, 1997) do exist. This paradox can be explained by either taking a pathogenic or a salutogenic approach (Stümpfer, 1990) to the sequelae of child sexual abuse.

3.5.1 Immediate and long-term effects

Immediate effects refer to the initial impact at the time when sexual abuse occurs and up to two years after termination of the abuse, while long-term effects refer to the later impact on the person as time goes on (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986b). Literature shows that immediate effects include fear, anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, aggression and sexually inappropriate behaviour, (Finkelhor, 1990; Mold, 1991) and interpersonal problems (Brock, Mintz, & Good, 1997). Long-term effects include depression, self-destructive behaviour, anxiety, feelings of isolation and stigma, poor self-esteem, difficulty in trusting others, a tendency towards revictimisation, substance abuse, sexual maladjustment (Finkelhor, 1990; Mold, 1991). The most damaging experiences are associated with involvement of the father figure as perpetrator, genital contact, and force as methods of abuse. When families are unsupportive to the victim, the outcome is likely to be worse (Mold, 1991). Research shows that the impact of sexual abuse is more severe when abuse is of longer duration, of greater frequency, when greater force and more serious acts are involved, and when the perpetrator is an individual close to the victim (Ray & Jackson, 1997).

Research also indicates the variables that have a limiting effect on the consequences of sexual abuse. Runtz and Schallow (1997) summarised variables like parental warmth, social support, family functioning, support and belief from the non-offending parent, cognitive processing of the abusive experience and the search to find meaning. Tsai, Feldman-Summers and Edgar (1979) show that emotional responses evoked at the time of the incident mediate later adjustment. Other

variables that influence the severity of sexual abuse are the age and gender of the child, severity of penetration, frequency and duration of the abuse, relationship with the perpetrator, number of perpetrators, lack of maternal support, force, time elapsed since the last incident and the child's attitudes and coping styles (Kendall-Tuckett, Williams, and Finkelhor, 1993), family functioning (Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, DaCosta, Akman & Cassavia, 1992), type of sexual act, disclosure of the incidents, parental reactions and institutional response (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986).

3.5.2 Physiological effects

Browne and Finkelhor (1986a) mention sleeping- and eating disturbances as a result of sexual abuse. Pregnancy is shown to be the consequence for 11% of sexual abuse victims. Other physical problems are extreme muscle tension, nervousness, anxiety attacks and dissociation. Blume (1990) describes the physiological after-effects as a "war with the body" (p.191). Victims experience their bodies as the subject that got them into trouble. This could result in self-hate, shame, ugliness and alienation, separation from her physical self as a separation from pain, discomfort and embarrassment.

Any form of touch can be frightening, angering and painful for victims of child sexual abuse. Many victims start dressing extremely modestly or immodestly, and while some try to overprotect their bodies, others suggest sexuality. Victims can contract sexual transmitted diseases, ovarian cysts and other gynaecological problems. Gilmartin (1994) mentions that immediate physical injury to body parts could be traumatised by infections. Other symptoms could be sudden weight gain or loss, urinary tract infections and headaches.

3.5.3 Emotional effects

Molested children experience a negative emotional reaction such as depression, self-esteem, guilt, withdrawal and/or loss of self-esteem, fear and phobias, anxiety and anxiety disorders, anger, hostility, loneliness, dissociation and hysterical

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symptoms (Tsai et al., 1979; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986a; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986b; Blume, 1990; Beitchman et al., 1992; Green, 1993; Briere & Runtz, 1993; Gilmartin, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1994; Lawrence, Cozolino & Foy, 1995; Salter, 1995; Gibson & Hartshorne, 1996). The distance obscures the relation between the insult and the sequelae in time between the two variables. To the contrary, the chronic nature of the abuse and the sequelae may mean that the client never remembers having felt differently (Salter, 1995).

3.5.4 Cognitive effects

Cognitive effects refer to the cognitive processing of the abuse such as causal attributions, feelings of stigma and self-blame and the search to find meaning (Runtz & Schallow, 1997). The abused children develop basic assumptions, theories and patterns of action in order to cope with their own emotions and the outside world. They learn in isolation without help and support from their caretakers to develop an inner logic of the meaning of abuse (Miltenburg & Singer, 1997).

Briere and Runtz (1993) indicate that abuse victims make negative assumptions of themselves (underestimating their self-efficacy and self-worth) and of their world (overestimating the amount of danger or adversity). Negative cognitions develop from psychological reactions to abuse-specific events, stigmatisation, and the victim's attempt to make sense of her maltreatment. Self-perceptions of helplessness, chronic danger and hopelessness regarding the future were also likely to develop.

Browne and Finkelhor (1986b) include a negative self-concept and a negative self-image as part of cognitive effects on child sexual abuse victims. These cognitions have an effect on the psychological and sexual adjustments she has to make in later life (Fromuth, 1986). Blume (1990) mentions amnesia, a process of blocking out some periods in the victim's life and dissociation (splitting), a process of splitting off bad or unwanted events, emotions, and parts of herself. Victims tend to make their memories tolerable, by selecting memories, minimising and rationalisation. Salter

(1995) shows that there are two types of cognitive distortions: process and content and indicate the way victims blame themselves, have a diminished sense of self, centring their thoughts and feelings on others, assuming far too much responsibility and become pessimistic about the future.

3.5.5 Behavioural effects

Behaviour problems as a result of child sexual abuse can be divided into two broad categories, namely, internalising (behaviours described as fearful, inhibited, depressed and over-controlled) or externalising (aggressive, antisocial and under-controlled behaviour) (Friedrich, Urquiza & Beilke, 1986). Hibbard and Hartman (1992) indicate that victims of child sexual abuse show significantly more behaviour problems than those not abused.

The overwhelming behaviour problem for victims implied in literature, is associated with the victim's sexual behaviour - emphasising sexualisation problems; increased sexual behaviour (Friedrich et al., 1986); becoming frigid, confused about sexual orientation, or promiscuous; indicating a decreased sex drive or fear of sex; experiencing less sexual pleasure; becoming homosexual (Beitchman et al., 1992); some experience difficulty in sexual adjustment and functioning in later life (Fromuth, 1986; Greenwald, Leitenberg, Cado & Tarran, 1990); sexually aggressive behaviour and a re-enactment of the sexual victimisation; and, completing the list of sexual problems, compulsive masturbation (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986a; Green, 1993). The immediate effect on child sexuality leads to inappropriate sexual behaviour of the child, open masturbation, excessive sexual curiosity and frequent exposure of genitals (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986a). Green (1993) indicates that there are two contrasting adaptive styles in sexual abuse victims; one seeking mastery through active repetition of the trauma and the other coping by avoiding sexual stimuli. Coetzee (1998) and Simons and Whitbeck (1991) show in their studies that child sexual abuse increases the probability of involvement in child or later prostitution.

Other behaviour problems involve substance abuse, becoming sexual offenders themselves (Green, 1993), conduct problems and poorer performance in school (Hibbard & Hartman, 1992), an increased tendency to suicide (Blume, 1990; Beitchman et al., 1992; Briere & Runtz, 1993), indiscriminate sexual behaviour, bingeing and purging, and self-mutilation (Blume, 1990; Briere & Runtz, 1993), poor impulse control (Kaplan et al., 1994), blaming their mothers, running away from home and falling victim to the sex industry (Blume, 1990). These kinds of problematic behaviour reflect the conscious or unconscious choice of the child to be involved in seemingly dysfunctional behaviour. Rather than to fully experience the considerable pain of abusive specific awareness, the child engages in avoidance behaviour (Briere & Runtz, 1993).

3.5.6 Personality disorders

Although Salter (1995) restrains herself from labelling victims of sexual abuse with pathological names, she acknowledges disturbing characteristics associated with pathology. Other researchers (Green, 1993) maintain that memories of victimisation become integrated in the total personality organisation and become ego syntonic.

More negative personality characteristics are generally reported in child sexual abuse victims in comparison with other non-victim groups, indicating more problematic personality functioning for victims of child sexual abuse (Waldman, Silber, Karp & Holstrom, 1997). In the current literature only three personality disorders are associated with child sexual abuse, namely **Multiple Personality Disorder** (Blume, 1990; Beitchman et al., 1992; Briere & Runtz, 1993; Green, 1993; Gilmartin, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1994; Salter, 1995), **Dissociative Identity Disorder,** or dissociation (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986; Beitchman et al., 1992; Briere & Runtz, 1993; Green, 1993; Gilmartin, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1994; Salter, 1995), and **Borderline Personality Disorder** (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986; Blume, 1990; Beitchman et al., 1992; Briere & Runtz, 1993; Green, 1993; Gilmartin, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1994; Salter, 1995). Diagnostic criteria for these personality disorders are formulated in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Gilmartin

(1994) adds non clinical metaphors to the above, which highlight the shattering of the "spirit" (p.147) that can occur during and after particularly severe cases of incest or child sexual abuse, called *soul murder and the shattering soul.*

3.5.7 Psychopathology

In most research and literature Psychopathology is indicated as a major consequence of child sexual abuse. **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** is shown to be the most common of all pathological reactions to abuse (Tsai et al., 1979; Finkelhor & Browne, 1986; Blume, 1990; Briere & Runtz, 1993; Fenton, 1993; Green, 1993; Yama, Tovey & Fogas, 1993; Gilmartin, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1994; Salter, 1995; Rodriques, Ryan, Vande Kemp & Foy, 1997). Other disorders associated with child sexual abuse include **Anxiety Disorders** (Green, 1993; Yama et al., 1993), **Hysteria** (Green, 1993), **Schizophrenia** (Blume, 1990), **Eating Disorders,** including Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia and Compulsive Overeating (Blume, 1990; Gilmartin, 1994; Salter, 1995) and **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder** (Blume, 1990; Gilmartin, 1994; Salter, 1995). Diagnostic criteria for these personality disorders are formulated in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

3.5.8 Effects on social functioning

The after-effects of child sexual abuse include difficulties at school, truancy, running away from home and early marriage by adolescent victims (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986b; Finkelhor & Browne, 1986). Briere and Runtz (1993) suggest that child sexual abuse is associated with lasting alterations in social functioning. Examples include having fewer friends during childhood, less closeness with their parents than when they last lived with them, less satisfaction with their present sexual relationships, poor social adjustment and feelings of isolation, fear and distrust of others, difficulty in forming and sustaining intimate relationships with others, re-creating abusive relationships, and difficulty with sexual intimacy. Interpersonal problems include difficulty in relating to both women and men, conflicts with their

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parents and discomfort responding to their own children, difficulty in trusting others that include reactions of fear, hostility and a sense of betrayal and difficulty in later parenting (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986a; Fox & Gilbert, 1994).

Different studies indicate **revictimisation** as a significant experience in child sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1986a; Beitchman et al., 1992; Wyatt, Guthrie & Notgrass, 1992; Green, 1993; Dixon, 1998). Victims of child sexual abuse are likely to become victims of other abusive acts or betrayals.

3.5.9 Effects on development

Sexual development is a natural, necessary, and complex process that begins at conception and continues throughout the life cycle (Tharinger, 1990; Masters et al., 1992). Sexual socialisation takes place in the family and it includes acquiring behaviours and attitudes concerning sexual behaviour. In families where child sexual abuse occurred, sexual socialisation has been inappropriate, ineffectual and dysfunctional. If children are left without the support of behavioural prohibitions, and without norms or positive examples, they will face additional difficulties in development (Peters, 1976). If they grow up with the example of sexual abuse as normative sexual behaviour, they could integrate that skewed norm in their development.

Downs, (1993) and Gilmartin (1994) indicate that several experts suggest differentiation between infant's and children's responses to child sexual abuse because age and developmental level mediate how they respond to sexual abuse. The victim's age at the time of abuse is a predictor of the impact of the abuse (Downs, 1993). **Infants** could only react in pre-verbal ways like failure to thrive, withdrawal, fretfulness, feeding disturbances and clinging behaviours. Reaction of **toddlers and pre-schoolers** often include thumb sucking, scratching and picking behaviours, immaturity, self injurious behaviour, enuresis, speech problems, conduct disturbances, anxiety, , withdrawal, hyperactivity, difficulty separating from parents, disturbed sleeping patterns, inappropriate sex play and/or showing and

understanding sexual activity that is well beyond their years. Children in **middle-childhood** exhibit symptoms of depression, nightmares, anxiety, hostility, sleeping disturbances, concentration difficulties, fears, phobias, eating disorders, impaired functioning socially and/or at school, low self-esteem, somatic complains, running away, unruly acts or delinquent behaviours, substance abuse and pseudo-mature behaviours, suicidal ideation, antisocial behaviour, multiple- or borderline personality disorder and psychotic states (Cole & Putnam, 1992; Gilmartin, 1994). Silverman, Reinherz and Giaconia (1996) show that children sexually abused before age 18 revealed distinct profiles of problematic functioning at age 15 and 21.

Developmental, psychoanalytical, social learning and cognitive theories address the effects of child sexual abuse on development (Tharinger, 1990). **Developmental theories,** view children in different stages with issues salient to each stage having to be resolved. Child sexual abuse results in failure to complete developmental tasks in the sexual domain. Sexual stimulation and preoccupation with the sexual relationship are believed to disrupt the accomplishment of age-appropriate developmental tasks (Tharinger, 1990). From Psychodynamic perspective children are experiencing a form of sexual stimulation for which they are developmentally unprepared. This disastrously disrupts their normal sexual development. Abused children are forced into a premature phallic or genital stage of psychosexual development and prior developmental needs go unaddressed (Tharinger, 1990). **Social learning theory** maintains that the perpetrator trains the victim to act in certain prescribed ways, resulting in exaggerated or inappropriate sexual activity. **Cognitive theory** proposes that the child who is sexually abused perceives the abuse as inappropriate and exploitative and feeling little support, internalises a self-view of being bad or unworthy (Tharinger, 1990). These theories conceptualise different ways to explain the developmental effects of child sexual abuse. The emotions, cognitions and behaviours of victims in reaction to their sexual abuse become clear. These theories provide possible goals for therapeutic interventions and point to possible preventative measures that must be taken for future development of the victim. In all, these theories can be used as prediction tools to determine future stumbling blocks and interventions for development.

Research findings on the impact of child sexual abuse on sexual functioning shows that child victims become preoccupied with sexual matters, increase masturbatory activity, make a sudden rush into heterosexual matters, have despair over the inability to control sexual urges, contract venereal diseases, can become pregnant at a young age, develop impaired feminine identification, develop sexual delinquency, promiscuity, homosexuality, prostitution and turn to the molestation of younger children (Tharinger, 1990). Other indicated symptoms are precocious sexual play, knowledge of sexual matters inappropriate to age and development level, confusion over and concern about sexual orientation, and overt sexual acting out. These symptoms have implications for the victim's self-concept (attributing negative self-labels) and peer relations (associating with inferior peer groups of lower status than before the abuse). The trauma of child sexual abuse may accumulate progressively as the victim matures through later developmental stages (Downs, 1993) keeping the victim trapped in the effects of her sexual abuse experience. Individual characteristics of the victim, environmental resources and the quality of personal interactions the child is exposed to can mediate the outcome (Augoustinos, 1987).

2.5.10 Finkelhor and Browne's model of traumagenic dynamics

Finkelhor and Browne (1986) propose a model, postulating that the experiences of child sexual abuse can be analysed in terms of four trauma-causing factors, called the **trauma dynamics**. These include traumagenic sexualisation, betrayal, powerlessness and stigmatisation.

1. *Traumagenic sexualisation* refers to a process in which a child's sexuality is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion as a result of the sexual abuse. The child learns to manipulate others through sexual behaviour to get their needs fulfilled. This can happen by means of gifts, privileges, attention and affection. The impact on the child

results in confusion about identity, norms, sex and love and aversion to sex or intimacy.

2. *Betrayal* refers to the dynamic in which children discover that someone on whom they are vitally dependant has caused them harm. They realise that a trusted person whom they loved, has manipulated them through lies and misinterpretations about moral standards. The psychological impact is associated with grief, depression, mistrust, anger, hostility, and other reactions to the betrayal.

3. *Powerlessness* is a disempowerment that refers to the process in which the child's will, desire, and sense of efficacy are continually contravened. Their bodies get invaded by force or trickery and the child feels unable to protect herself. The psychological impact includes anxiety, fear, a lowered sense of efficacy and the perceptions of the self as a trapped victim.

4. *Stigmatisation* refers to the negative connotations of badness, shame and guilt that are communicated to the child about the experiences and that then become incorporated into the child's self-image. The child gets blamed for the events and others react with denigrating actions. The impact results in guilt, shame, a lowered self-esteem and a sense of differentness from others. The victim is then stereotyped as damaged goods.

This framework serves as a systematic understanding of the effects of sexual abuse. The traumagenic dynamics are seen as the links between the experience of sexual abuse and the widely noted sequelae of sexual abuse (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986). The circularity of this model implies that the eventual stigmatisation the victim experiences, becomes, in itself, a new traumagenic experience for the victim.

3.6   SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Secure and meaningful interpersonal relationships form part of the maturely functioning adult (Cole & Putnam, 1992). These writers indicate that both deviations in the intrapsychic processes of defining, regulating, and integrating aspects of the self, and deviations in the related ability to experience a sense of trust and confidence in relationships have a negative effect on the development of interpersonal relationships. Child sexual abuse therefore disrupts the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships.

Gilmartin (1994) summarises the long-term interpersonal problems reported among adult survivors of sexual abuse as follows: difficulty getting along with others; problems in relationships, particularly with achieving and /or sustaining intimacy; dissatisfaction with current relationships with lovers, husbands, family members, and friends; difficulty parenting; and sexualised and/or conflicted relationships. These problems reflect the tremendous difficulties many adult women experience when they attempt to get close to and/or trust someone. The difficulties in interpersonal relationships include reactions of fear, hostility and a sense of betrayal (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986a). Barnett et al., (1997) append to these problems the difficulty of trusting others; poor social adjustment; social isolation; feelings of isolation, alienation and insecurity; and difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships.

3.6.1 Defining the construct "survivors" of sexual abuse

Blume (1990) chooses to call a child exposed to sexual abuse a "victim", while she chooses to name adults who experienced sexual abuse as children "survivors". On one level the term can be applied simply because the woman is still here after enduring a childhood of horror. On a deeper level she is a "survivor", because a "victim" is characterised by passive helplessness and is seen with pity. But in "survivors" there is strength, dignity, resilience and entitlement of respect. To continue to call her a "victim" is to insult her by overlooking the victory of her survival. It should be noted, however, that not everybody becomes a survivor of

sexual abuse. The mere notion that revictimisation occurs, is reason enough to keep in mind that some individuals could stay victims for a huge part of their lives.

3.6.2 Revictimisation

Revictimisation refers to the notion that individuals who have been sexually abused as children could also be sexually abused in later life as adults. An operational definition by Wyatt, Guthrie and Notgrass (1992) captures the essence of revictimisation as at least one incident of sexual abuse in both childhood and adulthood. Dixon (1998) indicates that definitions and studies of revictimisation focus mainly on the linear cause and effect approach, which assumes that child sexual abuse cause further sexual revictimisation.

Women who have been sexually abused in childhood appear to be vulnerable to revictimisation in later life (Green, 1993). Beitchman et al., (1992) and Dixon (1998) summarises the findings of various research showing the relation between child sexual abuse and revictimisation. Revictimisation is experienced in different ways like sexual abuse, rape, and ending up in a relationship with a physical abusive husband who batters her (Salter, 1995).

Explanations for the occurrence of revictimisation vary between theoretical models that focus either on intrapersonal factors (suggesting the corrosive effect of sexual abuse on the self-esteem, making survivors of sexual abuse conspicuous targets for exploitive men) and interpersonal factors (forcing victimised children out of the house and into high-risk situations for wife abuse or rape) (Finkelhor, in Beitchman et al., 1992). Russell (1984) points to the social judgement that survivors asked for the abuse by acting in ways that send sexual cues to men as an explanation for revictimisation.

Effects that are directly linked to sexual abuse during childhood (like emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physiological effects) and those indirectly linked to sexual abuse during childhood (like lifestyle and social discourses) are combined by

Dixon (1998) to conceptualise a more holistic explanation of revictimisation. However, Salter (1995) warns that researchers and clinicians should be careful in assuming that disturbance is an effect only relating to the sexual abuse during childhood. Current difficulties found in survivors of sexual abuse could also be an effect of the revictimisation. In explaining the effects of sexual abuse she advises that both the child sexual abuse and later revictimisation should be kept in mind.

3.6.3 The memory debate on sexual abuse

The fact that many individuals forget episodes of childhood sexual abuse is well-established (Bremner, Krystal, Charney, & Southwick, 1996). Memory retrieval in adult survivors of sexual abuse sparked a resent debate (Melchert & Parker, 1997) that has implications for therapy, the legal process and research.

Phelps, Friedlander and Enns (1997) suggest that therapists could underestimate or overestimate the likelihood that a client has been sexually abused. Researchers asked to provide expert testimony in legal cases regarding both childhood memories and delayed memory in adults found very faulty beliefs about memory held by clinicians and expert witnesses. Allegations that false memories of abuse were "implanted" by therapists sparked part of the controversy (Courtois, 1995, p.297). Leavitt (1997) emphasises that the mere fact that memories are recovered makes them induced and nonfactual. Lebowitz, Harvey and Hermans (1993) makes mention that memory problems could have an impact on the complicated, sometimes contradictory research findings with regard to sexual abuse.

Understanding the relationship between sexual trauma and memory loss was initially focused on the remembrance of sexual abuse experiences of survivors, but recently, Rubin (1996) awakened thoughts on the faulty memory of perpetrators due to denial, lying, secrecy, behavioural re-enactment and alcohol-induced blackouts. The memory problems are also referred to as false memory (Enns, McNeilly, Corkery & Gilbert, 1995), delayed memory (Briere, 1995; Courtois, 1995), dissociative

amnesia (Bremner et al., 1996), faulty memories (Rubin, 1996), and repressed memory, (Barnett et al., 1997).

Cloitre, Cancienne, Brodsky, Dulit and Perry (1996) indicates that researchers have frequently suggested that adults who have experienced childhood abuse (sexual abuse) may cope with the trauma by engaging in selective forgetting of information associated with their abuse experiences. Siegel and Romig (1990) describe memory problems regarding the experience of sexual abuse as a learned coping mechanism that might lay dormant for an undetermined length of time before symptoms emerge. Secrecy, coercion and the likelihood that the perpetrator was a known and trusted person can lead to the suppression of memory as a means of emotional and psychological escape, because the child might experience a lack of access to external resources for physical protection and escape. The result is that many survivors of sexual abuse may never remember some abusive incidents and memory retrieval is by no means warranted in every case involving sexual abuse (Siegel & Romig, 1990).

Trauma plays a key role in the disruption of memory processes (Parks & Balon, 1995). Traumatic external factors influence memory processes to the degree that some cognitive processes are slowed, the accessibility of information is limited, and the range of years a person could draw information from is restricted. If the duration of the trauma was lengthy, it could be posited that patients with poor recall of childhood events might continue to have limited recall even after therapy.

Explaining the incidence of poor memory regarding child sexual abuse is mainly found in neuropsychology (Bremner et al., 1996). Research has shown that traumatic stress can result in long-term changes in brain regions involved in memory. Neuropeptides and neurotransmitters released during stress can also modulate memory function. Enns et al., (1995) indicate that children might experience memory loss because the hippocampus (associated with memory) does not reach maturity until the third or fourth year of life. Van der Kolk and Saporta (in Enns et al., 1995) postulate that primitive modes of information processing are more

readily available to individuals during traumatic events, meaning that information is more likely to be stored and organised as sensory, motor, or iconic images, and linguistic or verbal memory may be suppressed. Other concepts such as stress sensitisation, fear conditioning, and failure of extinction also provide potential explanations for delayed recall of memories of childhood abuse (Bremner et al., 1996).

A major contribution to the memory debate was rendered by Enns et al., (1995). These writers give a feminist perspective on the debate and demonstrate how the debate has been advertised as a scientific conundrum while, at the same time, it has operated as a political issue (Briere, 1995). On the scientific end there is not enough research done to answer questions regarding delayed memory. Briere (1995) indicates that there might never be the *one* study that will resolve this controversy. On the political end there might be a backlash against people (especially women) who speak out against powerful others and who force society to confront its own violence (Briere, 1995; Enns et al., 1995).

There is still a great need for public education, improved professional training, and involvement in legal and professional policy making so that abuse survivors and those who assist them are not marginalised and ultimately neglected (Enns et al., 1995). Briere (1995) concludes that the delayed memory debate is largely an issue, where data will not matter much, and social dynamics will determine whatever outcome prevails. In this way the debate is linked with the social construction of sexual abuse, in which society and their associated institutions determine the outcome with regard to child sexual abuse. Courtois (1995) pleads for a middle ground in the complex false memory or delayed memory debate. She advocates the finding of an acceptable middle ground by applying scientific standards to academic and practitioner endeavours and encouraging, even requiring, cross-fertilisation across and between disciplines. Enns et al., (1995) also pleads for the co-operation between academics and clinicians to integrate research and clinical perspectives on delayed memory in sexual abuse survivors.

3.7 FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

3.7.1 Family-of-origin dynamics

Sexual abuse happens in all types of families, regardless of economic, educational, social, cultural, or religious backgrounds (Heitritter & Vought, 1989). Ensink (1992) shows that most studies pay attention to the **family-context** in which sexual abuse manifests itself. Risk factors associated with the family of origin and child sexual abuse are presented by Barnett et al., (1997). These factors include spouse abuse, living in a divorced home, having an unhappy family life, a poor relationship with parents, parents in continuous conflict, living in a family with a stepfather or without a natural father, the mother is employed outside the home, the mother has not completed high school, the mother is disabled or ill, and a history of sexual abuse of the mother.

The **family dynamics and characteristics associated with sexual abuse in the family** have been studied with great interest (Carson et al., 1992) and from different perspectives (Ensink, 1992). The typical family in which sexual abuse occurs has rigid boundaries with regard to outsiders. Family members on the other hand are mutually dependent on one another and are enmeshed (Carson et al., 1992; Ensink, 1992). Appropriate boundaries lack between members of the family and between generations (Ensink, 1992) and may present as ambiguous, rigid or diffuse (Carson et al., 1992). Children are involved in role-reversal with their parents and could therefore become sexually involved with the parent. Emotional deprivation may enhance the possibility of sexual abuse and the emotional contact surrounding the sexual abuse could be the only source of nurturance to fulfil the child's longing for affection (Ensink, 1992). Carson et al., (1992) indicate that these families also present limited levels of trust, effective communication, self-differentiation, and loyalty.

Ensink (1992) shows that there are two **types of families** identified in which child sexual abuse occurs, namely the "normal appearing family" and the "chaotic family" (p.59). Normal appearing families present well-functioning characteristics to outsiders, but with parents who lack the ability to nurture each other adequately. The result is that the mother turns to the daughter for emotional and household support, while the father turns to the daughter for sexual and emotional support. Children turn to each other for emotional support. MacLeod and Saraga (1988) postulate that such a family functions on two levels, firstly, on a 'surface action' of the roles and relationships which can be observed in the family, and secondly, on a 'depth-structure' of underlying needs and emotions. In dysfunctional families the surface action of the family does not satisfy the underlying needs of the family members. In chaotic families individual family members and the family as a whole functions marginally, with problems ranging from alcohol abuse, and instability to a low socio-economic standing. Children in these families are left to raise themselves, without adult supervision. They are therefore vulnerable to all sorts of abuse inside and outside the family.

3.7.1.1 Family dysfunction models

Within models of family dysfunction, child sexual abuse is viewed as a symptom of a dysfunctional family system. Beitchman et al., (1992) summarise the different elements contributing to the family in which child sexual abuse takes place to becoming dysfunctional, as being single-parent families, families with high levels of marital conflict, family members with presenting psychopathology like depression, substance abuse, and violence between parents and siblings. In a study comparing sexually abused women from functional and dysfunctional families with non-abused women from functional and dysfunctional families, Brock et al., (1997) found that living in a functional family, or at least having the perception that the family is functional, serves as a protecting factor for abused or non-abused women. Abused women in dysfunctional families reported the highest levels of distress in measures of depression, anxiety and interpersonal relationships. It is also apparent

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that researchers and clinicians don't assume that all survivors of sexual abuse will view their family of origin as dysfunctional.

Proponents of the family dysfunctional approach, tend to hold mothers responsible for the abuse. They blame them of poor marital relationships or infrequent marital sex, driving their husband to seek satisfaction elsewhere in the family (Barnett et al., 1997). Ensink (1992) describes the role of a mother's emotional neglect of her daughter as a contributor to child sexual abuse. Girls having poor relationships with their mothers turn to others for affection. Some men might respond with sexual feelings to these acts of the girls and translate these sexual feelings into sexual acts. More recent theories view the mother's role in the context of *contributing* to a child's vulnerability, rather than being *responsible* for the abuse. Mother's are therefore seen as being co-victims rather than co-conspirators in child sexual abuse.

3.7.1.2 Feminist models

Feminists tend to criticise the models describing dysfunctional family systems as explanations for child sexual abuse (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988). They indicate that these models stem from powerful men who describe women as actively withdrawing, being punitive and depriving men of their conjugal rights, while describing men as if they were children, more frequently passive, aroused by what others do to them, or spontaneously acting and in need of control. Consequently these models blame the women in the relationship as the problem and not the men, who in actual fact are the perpetrators (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988).

MacLeod and Saraga (1988), arguing from a feminist approach to child sexual abuse, expose and contest the family dysfunction approach to child sexual abuse extensively, especially for their tendency to "mother blaming" (p.36). They contest that the reasons and explanations from family dysfunctional approaches should much rather give indications of high levels of abuse of women. They have a greater opportunity to engage in child sexual abuse than men do, but in actual fact they do

not. It is men who are the predominant perpetrators and should take the blame for it (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988).

3.7.1.3 Family roles

Blume (1990) accentuates the responsibility of parents to fulfil their roles and not to pass these roles on to their children. She indicates that it is not a child's responsibility to take care of a parent, it is the parent's responsibility to take care of the child. The child's position in a family is to be needy, demanding, questing, imperfect and growing. It is not the child's responsibility to fix a parent's feelings of rejection, or to comfort emotional needs of a parent or to take responsibility for their inability to handle problems.

Ensink (1992) ascribes these mentioned dynamics as the parentification of a child, where the child becomes a substitute for one of the parents. In the context of sexual abuse, the daughter becomes a "mother substitute" (Ensink, 1992, p.60). He further indicates the type of relationship that precedes sexual abuse, described by some survivors of sexual abuse as intense emotional contacts and by others as brute denigration. To the father, sexual activity with his daughter seems a logical extension of the mature female responsibilities this daughter already has. He distinguishes between two types of parentification, namely, emotional parentification (when the parents confide emotional problems to her and expect help and advice from her) and household parentification (when the parents confide household problems to her and expect her help and advice on them). Marshall and Herman (1998) mention that parents should rather teach their children that they have the right to refuse any touch that might feel uncomfortable or intrusive, even if that person is father or mother.

Ray and Jackson (1997) found in their research that families might also serve a **positive role** in the event of child sexual abuse. They mention that considerable evidence indicates that a supportive family environment may serve as a buffer against the negative impact of a variety of stressful events in childhood. Support for

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this approach from Fromuth (1986) shows it is not the sexual abuse that make adjustments difficult for the survivor, but rather the lack of parental support - a characteristic of the home of the sexually abused.

Two models describe a family's support. Firstly, the **main effect model** of social support, postulating that support provides a sense of regularity, stability and engenders positive emotions. Secondly, in contrast with the first, the **stress-buffering model**, proposing that social support operates through the provision of necessary resources, by enhancing the abused child's perceived ability to cope with stress, or by offering solutions to problems. Research results indicate that both these models have valid claims and demonstrate that positive family characteristics have direct beneficial effects on the adjustment of victims of child sexual abuse (Ray & Jackson, 1997). To the contrary, Carson et al., (1992) mentions the claim intergenerational family theorists make, namely that family patterns tend to move from one generation to the next unless members of the younger generation, especially parents, make a conscious effort to change these patterns and are successful in doing so. Parallels should therefore be expected between survivors' current relationship with their family-of-origin and their family-of-procreation along such dimensions as fusion and individuation, triangulation, intimacy, and personal intimidation.

3.7.2 Current family and relationships dynamics of the sexual abuse survivor

DeYoung (1994) mentions that survivors of sexual abuse tend to be overwhelmed, encumbered, or oppressed in their roles as wives and mothers. In her research on the conflict between their perceived roles as wives and mothers, DeYoung (1994) found that the conflict between these perceived roles was moderately high. In another study, Belt and Abidin (1996) found that a complicated relationship exists between early parenting, abuse experienced in childhood, and subsequent marital relationships. Women's perception of even relatively minor levels of abuse may be predictive of their later reports of marital conflict.

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A woman's ability to sustain healthy company with lovers requires the ability to establish and maintain solid friendships, while friendships require the ability to know, accept and love herself. These abilities are learned in a relationship with the child's experiences of acceptance and nurturing attention of her caregivers. Children who are sexually abused might not receive these attentions and their ability to form relationships with others could therefore be impeded (Blume, 1990).

3.8 RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS OF SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS

Different women choose different types of relationships after childhood sexual abuse experiences. Tsai et al., (1979) show the different variables related to differential impacts on psychosexual development and functioning in adult women who are survivors of sexual abuse. Some of these variables include the age at the time of the sexual abuse, stronger negative feelings associated with the sexual abuse and a higher frequency and longer duration of the sexual abuse. Blume (1990) indicates that a survivor's relationships can at the same time be her biggest problem, greatest need, and best hope. By this she means that a survivor can find safety and care to nourish her life if she lets her partner, but she often experiences problematic relationships. The result of sexual abuse is therefore often skewed relationships that lead to further abuse.

3.8.1 Trust as a theme in the relationships of sexual abuse survivors

An outcry from a feminist point of view over the abuse of trust (MacLeod & Saraga, 1987) and the betrayal of trust (Dominelli, 1989) shows the extent to which the misuse of power by men wasn't recognised in child sexual abuse literature before the 1960's. Although most families establish acceptable boundaries for handling the sexuality of their children and adults take responsibility to maintain these boundaries, sexuality still causes anxiety and embarrassment for many people (MacLeod & Saraga, 1987). These writers indicate that men disregard these essential boundaries about sexuality and explain child sexual abuse as an abuse of male power over children, similar to sexual and other violence against women. For

this reason the family can be a very dangerous place for both women and children; no place to be a haven of comfort and love. To the contrary it becomes a haven where trust is broken and sacrificed (Blume, 1990).

Blume (1990) declares that trust lies at the core of all healthy relationships. Trust is learned during childhood in an environment that provides a nurturing climate of warmth and kindness. A context of consistency wherein the child can learn what to expect from others is necessary. The child needs to develop reliability on her caregivers (parents) so that she can count on them to do what they say they will do. Their respectful treatment of the child is of utmost importance. Trust helps the child to decide with whom to pursue relationships and who to avoid.

Salter (1995) indicates that the relationship between the perpetrator and victim of sexual abuse is not without trust, but forms a central part of the perpetrator's interaction with his victim. Some perpetrators feel that trust is an important part of the relationship with his victim, in that it decreases the chance of exposure. Some even rely exclusively on trust to maintain secrecy of their sexual abuse and use the manipulation of trust as a powerful weapon against the suspicions of others. Finkelhor and Browne (1986) show how the survivor of sexual abuse eventually realises that she has been betrayed by a trusting person, manipulated through lies and misinterpretations of what has happened. This betrayal is a discovery that someone on whom she was dependent has caused her harm. Finkelhor and Browne (1986) concluded that depression so widely noted in survivors of sexual abuse, might in fact be part of an extended grief reaction over the loss of trusted figures.

Many women report interpersonal difficulties after being sexually abused, particularly in the areas of developing and maintaining intimate relationships and trusting others (Gilmartin, 1994). Blume (1990) shows how sexual abuse sacrifices trust and leaves the survivor eventually with a burden, that behind the appearance of loving relationships lies something different that is not safe at all. Survivors' reactions to relationships with regard to trust are concealed in the all-or-nothing principle

regarding trust. Left with no framework for trust, no knowledge of what it means or how it develops, the survivor of sexual abuse might trust someone, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. She might trust everyone, in an attempt to have the relationship she never had. She might trust all the wrong people, or she might trust no one.

Interpersonal problems reflect the tremendous difficulties survivors of sexual abuse experience when they attempt to get close to and/or trust someone (Gilmartin, 1994). According to Kelly (1988), distrusting men in relationships is not a dysfunctional reaction, but is described as part of the survivor's active and adaptive attempts to cope with the reality of sexual abuse.

3.8.2 Attachment as a theme in the relationships of sexual abuse survivors

Attachment has been construed as a biologically based bond between an infant and a caregiver that assures the infant's survival and was developed into a theory by Bowlby (in Anderson & Alexander, 1996). It is regarded as an important part of the family system (Stevenson-Hinde, 1990) and provides the child with a secure base from where the world is explored. The attachment figure serves as a source of security in situations that involve anxiety or fear. The child's seeking and maintaining of proximity to the caretaker, as well as resisting and protesting separation from the caretaker, were, according to Bowlby (in Anderson & Alexander, 1996), important for survival as well as the child's motivation for survival (Erickson, Korfmacher & Egeland, 1992). Alexander (1992) and Alexander (1993) indicates the importance of the internal working model - a mental construction that forms the basis of the personality - as part of Bowlby's theory. Early experience with the attachment figure leads the child to develop expectations about:

1. the child's own role in the relationship (worthiness of getting other's attention vs. unworthiness of getting needed attention) and

2. others' roles in the relationship (trustworthy, accessibility, caring and responsive vs. untrustworthy, inaccessibility, uncaring and unresponsive.

Alexander, Anderson, Brand, Schaeffer, Grelling and Kretz (1998) indicate that Ainsworth and her colleagues identified three types of attachment, namely secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and resistant attachment. A fourth type was identified by Main and Solomon (in Alexander et al., 1998), called disorganised/disoriented attachment. Cole and Putnam (1992) show that secure attachment in infancy predicts later childhood social competence, development of identity and self-knowledge, and the quality of adult relationships with their partners and children.

Secure attachments refer to strategies in which available and accepting parents help their children learn to tolerate negative affect while maintaining their positive engagement with others. **Resistant attachment** is characterised by the child's approach-avoidant, angry behaviour aimed at increasing proximity to the caregiver in a clinging dependant manner and by the caregiver's inconsistent responsiveness and role reversal. **Avoidant attachment** is characterised by the child's detachment, affective neutrality in the relationship and compulsive self-reliance, and the parent's insensitive and/or rejecting behaviour. In **Disorganised/ disoriented attachment** the child exhibits no coherent coping strategy in emotionally laden situations, because the attachment figure is simultaneously the source of, and the solution of, the child's anxiety (Alexander, 1992; Alexander, 1993: Anderson & Alexander, 1996). Resistant-, avoidant- and disorganised attachment could be categorised as insecure attachments (Alexander 1992; Alexander, 1993; Styron & Janoff-Bulman, 1997).

Researchers have demonstrated the continuity of attachment into adulthood and have identified four adult attachment strategies (Alexander, 1992; Alexander, 1993; Alexander et al., 1998). **Secure attachments in adults** (comparable to secure attachment in children) is associated with self-confidence, trust, comfort with both

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positive and negative feelings, comfort with closeness, and a history of warmth and support in parents. **Preoccupied attachment** (comparable with resistant attachment in children) is associated with confusion, anxiety, dependency, jealousy, and worries of being abandoned or unloved. **Dismissing attachment** (comparable with avoidant attachment in children) is associated with discomfort with intimacy, lack of self-confidence, hostility, loneliness, and a history of rejection by mothers. **Fearful attachment** (comparable with disorganised attachment in children) is associated with social inhibition, lack of assertiveness and a combination of avoidant and preoccupied traits (Alexander, 1992; Alexander, 1993; Alexander et al., 1998).

Alexander (1992) and Alexander (1993) mention that the idea of the internal working model is particularly applicable to the study of sexual abuse, in that it could help to explain both the long-term interpersonal problems and the disturbances of sense of self observed in abuse survivors. He argues that sexual abuse is often the result of insecure attachments. Family dynamics of sexual abuse families and those of families with insecure attachments correspond. He also notes that the variety of long-term effects observed in sexual abuse survivors can be systematically related to the symptoms and behaviours that are observed in different types of insecure attached adults. In a study, Alexander (1993) found that insecure attachment and especially fearful avoidant attachment predominated among survivors of sexual abuse.

Styron and Janoff-Bulman (1997) make mention of the evidence that maltreated children in comparison with those not abused, are more likely to be insecurely attached. Insecure attachment is associated with a variety of psychological concerns, like lack of empathy, hostility, anti-social behaviour, impulsivity, passivity and helplessness. They note further that early attachment relations form a prototype for further relationships through the life span, and that insecurely attached children, will be more likely to be insecurely attached adults. In their research, Styron and Janoff-Bulman (1997) found that sexually abused survivors report less secure childhood and adult relationships than their non-abused counterparts.

Alexander (1992) shows that insecure attachment of the parent, produces insecure attachment of the child, while the insecure attachment of the parent precedes the onset of child abuse. He notes that the following themes are associated with the different types of attachments:

1. **Rejection** is associated with avoidant attachment in the child. The avoidant child feels unwanted and unloved, while the avoidant parent turns away from the child and becomes physically and psychologically unavailable. The avoidant father could be authoritarian, emotionally distant and arbitrary, with the view that their children are their property and should fulfil their needs. Avoidant mothers might be physically absent (due to work demands and responsibilities) and psychologically unavailable (due to depression, illness or other disabilities) because of factors beyond their control.

2. **Role reversal and parentification** are associated with the resistant pattern of child-adult attachment. Parentification might set the expectation in the parent and/or child that certain roles should be taken to fulfil the other's emotional and sexual needs. Such a situation opens the possibility for child sexual abuse.

3. **Fear and unresolved trauma** are associated with the disorganised attachment pattern. Chaotic family dynamics associated with alcohol abuse and the suppression of the possible abuse of the parent as a child, could lead to sexual abuse of a child in the family. The non-abusive parent could be disoriented about the knowledge of the abuse, and while becoming engulfed by the fear of the family's disintegration, she might not hear her daughter's plea for help.

Insecure attachments directly influence intimate relationships, both with a partner and with the survivor's children (Alexander, 1992). **Preoccupied survivors** (the resistant child grown up) idealise partners associated with a negative perception of

themselves and become entangled in a desperate or manic love style with them. Disappointment and even revictimisation could be a consequence of these relationships. **The dismissing survivor** (the avoidant child grown up) would be more likely to become socially isolated, but manifest a strategy of compulsive sexuality in which the anxiety of close emotional relationships are avoided without cutting off contact with others.

Fearful avoidant attachment was found by Anderson and Alexander (1996) to be significantly related with dissociation. Adults who were fearful and had unresolved issues about attachment, presented as though they were frozen and lacking in a sense of personal agency or efficacy. Alexander et al., (1998) found in their study that fearful avoidant individuals were less likely to be in a committed relationship. Their interpersonal avoidance might prohibit them in altering their attachment to becoming involved with a supporting partner. On the other hand fearful avoidant and preoccupied individuals may be more likely to choose relationships that confirm their negative views of themselves. These individuals are more likely to be avoidant, self-defeating and present borderline tendencies.

Erickson et al., (1992) indicate that the internalisations made within a primary relationship result in expectations which in turn influence and guide a person's behaviour in future relationships, including a parent's relationship with her child. Disruptions in the survivor's ability to negotiate psychologically safe relationships can be healed by replacing feelings of isolation with an increased capacity to feel connected with others (Lebowitz et al., 1993).

3.8.3 Intimacy as a theme in the relationships of sexual abuse survivors

Gilmartin (1994) indicates that many girls and women who experienced sexual abuse find difficulties in their interpersonal relationships, particularly in the areas of developing and maintaining intimate relationships and trusting others. Moss and Schwebel (1993) propose the following definition of intimacy:

"Intimacy in enduring romantic relationships is determined by the level of commitment and positive affective, cognitive and physical closeness one experiences with a partner in a reciprocal (although not necessarily symmetrical) relationship" (p.33).

Weingarten (1991) defines and describes intimacy from a social constructionist view as follows:

"Intimate interaction occur when people share meaning or co-create meaning and are able to co-ordinate their actions to reflect their mutual meaning-making. Meaning can be shared through writing, speech, gesture or symbol. In the process of co-creating or sharing meaning, individuals have the experience of knowing and being known by the other. Intimate interactions can happen with one or more people, in actual or imagined encounters. Refraining from meaning-making and providing, imposing, rejecting, and misunderstanding meaning are associated with non-intimate interaction. Repeated intimate interaction may produce an experience of intimacy, while repeated non-intimate interactions usually interfere with or inhibit relational patterns that lead to the sharing or co-creation of meaning" (p.294).

Both these definitions focus on the element of closeness and the meaning or reaction an individual draws from the closeness. It is clear that intimacy doesn't imply sex. To the contrary, Gilmartin (1994) explains that survivors of sexual abuse might have great difficulty determining when, how and/or why to engage in intimate relationships, and issues such as affection, intimacy and closeness get confused with sex.

Blume (1990) sets the prerequisites for a woman's intimacy as a deep, honest, loving, aware relationship with herself, the ability to take responsibility for her feelings and vulnerability. These prerequisites are difficult for survivors of sexual abuse, who use these requirements as blocks for intimacy (by preventing closeness)

and as distractions from their own feelings. Vulnerability, intimacy and dependence, combined with sexuality, restimulate the sexual abuse conflict and can easily become a replaying of the sexual abuse. The partner could suddenly be attacked for selfishness, impositions, neglects, and abuses, even if there are none present.

Salter (1995) explains that the intimacy experienced and learned during sexual abuse is typically of a heightened and enhanced sort, built carefully by the offenders for whom the child's love is both the gatehouse of access and a guardpost against disclosure. These offenders, who mean only harm, sometimes work harder to establish intimacy with the child then anyone else. The discovery that the offender misused them is more than dismaying for the survivor, who is left with a permanent distrust of intimacy. Intimacy of any sort, even with their own children, may set up an affective flashback for the adult survivor, sufficient enough to activate her defence mechanisms of avoidance and dissociation.

3.8.4 Sexuality as a theme in the relationships of sexual abuse survivors

The impact of early sexual abuse on later sexual functioning has been researched extensively (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Green (1993) indicates that most clinical studies of women who had been survivors of sexual abuse and incest, describe various types of dysfunction in their current sexual relationships. However, sexually abused children are not affected equally, and many factors serve to mediate or to buffer the impact of sexual abuse on their sexuality (Tharinger, 1990).

Developmental views on the impact of sexual abuse on developing sexually, proposed that sexual abuse results in the failure to complete developmental tasks in the sexual domain (Tharinger, 1990). Sexual stimulation and a preoccupation with the sexual abuse relationship disrupt the accomplishment of age appropriate developmental tasks. Children who are sexually abused lack the opportunity to follow a normal course of psychosexual development.

Browning and Laumann (1997) compare two models describing the long-term effects of sexual contact between children and adults. The **psychogenic perspective** conceptualises sexual contact between adults and children as a traumatic event, generating intense affect that must be resolved. The result of the traumatic experience can lead to a twofold reaction towards their sexuality. Some engage in compulsive sexual behaviour, while others withdraw from sexual activity. The more severe the sexual contact, the more adverse the sexual dysfunction will be. The **life course perspective** conceptualises sexual contact between adults and children as a culturally inappropriate experience of sexual behaviour that increases the child's likelihood to engage in an active, risky sexual career through adolescence and adulthood. Inappropriate eroticisation of the child leads to the prediction that their first sexual experience as adolescents will be at an early age. These early conditions of sexual activity could set the stage for a sexual career marked by teen pregnancy, multiple sexual partnerships, an increased risks of forced sex and the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (Browning & Laumann, 1997).

Sexuality has an erotic function and it concerns gender identity (Blume, 1990). The erotic function - sex - involves the entire person; physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. It includes feelings, culturally accepted behaviour, relationships, society as a whole and a sexual history. Throughout the child's life, sexuality should be addressed in age-appropriate ways, answering the child's needs. The sexual climate serves as the context in which sexual education takes place. Tharinger (1990) shows that sexual socialisation takes place within the family. She describes sexual development as a natural, necessary, and complex process that begins at conception and continues throughout life. Behaviours and attitudes concerning sexual behaviour in general, and specifically towards each gender, are acquired. Sex-role behaviours and attitudes are learned and adapted to. Physical processes related to hormonal changes are understood and adjusted to.

Sexual abuse in a family leads to inappropriate, ineffectual and dysfunctional sexual socialisation (Tharinger, 1990). Sexual abuse teaches too much sexual activity ahead of its time. Sex is never sex to the child, because it is introduced ahead of

time and against her will. She also learns that she can win approval from men with her body, to find power in seductiveness. Eventually she learns that relationships and sexuality are synonyms, that relationships all become sexual (Blume, 1990).

The highest rates of sexual disturbance were found in studies examining father-daughter incest or abuse involving penetration (Beitchman et al., 1992). Browning and Laumann (1997) indicate that the eroticisation of the child (a process where the child cognitively links specific acts to sexual arousal) and the social form it takes, may include vulnerability to subsequent sexual experiences that, in turn, determine adverse effects in adulthood. Tharinger (1990) distinguishes between the effects on the sexuality of **child victims** and **adult survivors**.

Effects on the sexuality of child victims include a preoccupation with sexual matters, confusion about sex, increased masturbatory activity, a sudden rush into heterosexual matters, despair regarding the inability to control sexual urges, venereal disease, pregnancy, impaired feminine identification, sexual delinquency, promiscuity, homosexuality, prostitution, and the molestation of younger children (Tharinger, 1990; Gilmartin, 1994). Effects associated with sexuality difficulties in adult survivors include high levels of specific sexual dysfunction (e.g., difficulty with arousal, vaginismus, and flashbacks from a touch or sexual activity), as well as emotional problems related to sex (e.g., sexual guilt, sexual anxiety, and low sexual self-esteem) (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986; Tharinger, 1990). Other effects include frigidity, promiscuity or sexual addiction, dissatisfaction and an inability to enjoy sex (crying after orgasm), negative attitudes towards sex, homosexuality, an impaired motivation to be sexually active (loss or avoidance of interest in sex), becoming a prostitute, a variety of orgasmic disorders, pain during intercourse, confusion regarding sexual identity and sexual norms and sexual standards, re-victimisation, a strong aversion to, or need for, certain sexual acts, rigidity in their sexual role to either be the sexual aggressor or the passive recipient, sexual abuse of others, alienation of their own bodies due to arousal during the abuse (some see it as a form of self betrayal), anger and distrust of their sexual responses (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986b; Beitchman et al., 1992; Gilmartin, 1994; Salter, 1995).

3.8.5 Type of relationship survivors of sexual abuse engage in

Although a study by Gibson and Hartshorne (1996) indicates that survivors of sexual abuse tend to socially isolate themselves, almost all survivors follow the grand narrative or social construction that everybody should have a partner. Different women choose different types of relationships as survivors of child sexual abuse. However, Blume (1990) indicates that the survivors' ability to establish relationships are corrupted. Briere and Runtz (1993) describe the way survivors of sexual abuse end up with disturbed relatedness to others, seeing themselves as unworthy of relationships with people they consider good and healthy. Skewed relationship patterns leave her trapped in the distortions of the roles she plays in her relationships (Blume, 1990).

In their research findings of the relationship between child sexual abuse and adult loneliness, Gibson and Hartshorne (1996) show that survivors of child sexual abuse tend to isolate themselves. The inability to trust a significant other person, the tendency to isolate themselves, and the tremendous difficulty survivors have to develop and maintain close relationships (Courtois, in Gilmartin, 1994), leads to the fact that a disproportionate number of women who were sexually abused as children remain **unmarried**.

Briere and Runtz (1993) report that survivors' difficulty with sexual intimacy is often reflected in a history of multiple, superficial, or brief sexual relationships that quickly end as intimacy develops. Survivors are therefore prone to episodes of frequent short-term sexual activity with a number of different partners. These frequent sexual contacts may offer distraction, excitement and avoidance of perceived emptiness for some survivors or act as temporary relief for the abuse related emotional pain they have to deal with. Salter (1995) supports the notion that relationship addiction, in which a survivor goes through a series of intense, unstable, and volatile relationships, may function as a distraction. Women who were sexually abused as children are likely to have disrupted marriages with multiple separations and

divorces (Finkelhor et al., in Gilmartin, 1994). Many survivors will therefore end up in various **short-term relationships**.

Although Fromuth (1986) concludes that studies reveal contradictory results with regard to the rate of homosexuality among survivors of sexual abuse, Beitchman et al., (1992) conclude that there may be a small but significant increased rate of homosexual activity among women who have been sexually abused in childhood. Blume (1990) is adamant of the fact that homosexuality is not an after-effect of child sexual abuse. Gilmartin (1994) supports the fact that sexual abuse doesn't cause lesbianism with various research results. Blume (1990) indicates that the majority of survivors remain heterosexual and that there is no evidence to conclude that homosexuality is caused by a history of child sexual abuse. There are, however, survivors of sexual abuse who pursue **homosexual/lesbian relationships**, but this also occurs with women who haven't been sexually abused.

Simons and Whitbeck (1991) indicate that a number of studies found that female prostitutes have a higher incidence of early sexual abuse than women do in general. There are two ways that sexual abuse might facilitate involvement in **prostitution**. Firstly sexual abuse may affect the probability of prostitution *indirectly* by increasing the probability of participation in a deviant street culture and illegal activities. These are often runaway children who attempt to escape parental abuse, but who are easily absorbed in a street-culture of prostitution once they need a way to support themselves. Secondly, sexual abuse may *directly* affect the probability of prostitution by survivors of sexual abuse, by fostering attitudes about themselves and the act of sex to facilitate the selling of sexual favours.

Blume (1990) contrasts that although survivors of sexual abuse often experience problematic relationships, it is possible that caring, safe relationships can nourish their lives if they let it happen. It seems that a supportive and understanding partner could contribute to her having a **long-term relationship**, but not without a great deal of problems. Although the beginning of the relationship might be satisfactory, the later stages of the relationship may become problematic in terms of closeness, trust

and intimacy (Blume, 1990; Miehls, 1997). Sexual abuse survivors learn that that in order to maintain a long relationship, they must give to and be everything the other person wants. A bad relationship may be tolerated by them, because it is safer than abandonment (Blume, 1990).

Survivors of sexual abuse are likely to be engaged in relationships with older or more powerful people, relating to the relationship with her older, more powerful abuser (Blume, 1990). They also partner with individuals who collude to avoid intimacy, who are demanding and who further traumatise them (Miehls, 1997). The **partners** of sexual abuse survivors are, however, hidden victims (Blume, 1990) or secondary victims (Reid, Mathews & Liss, 1995) of sexual abuse. They tend to be in a particularly helpless situation, on the one hand being unable to speed up the recovery of their survivor partner and on the other hand they cannot meet their needs at the expense of the survivor partner (Blume 1990).

Chauncey (1994) grouped seven areas of concern that were raised by the partners of sexual abuse survivors, together. These concerns were:

1. *Conflicting needs* - Partners struggle to balance their own needs for attention, nurturance, or autonomy and their wish or need to help the survivor.

2. *Difficulties with closeness* - Partners express feeling hurt, frustrated and puzzled in their attempts to be physically and emotionally close to their wives/girlfriends. They felt shut out by the survivors.

3. *Difficulties with spontaneity or unpredictability* - Partners felt that their spontaneity provoked memories in their abused wives/girlfriends that remind them of their abuser's unexpected actions of surprise. They find it hard and frightening to cope with this difficulty.

4. *Anger, guilt, shame* - Partners express feelings of anger, guilt and shame over the difficulties of getting their own needs met. They

would not express these feelings in front of the survivors. They would however express their anger towards the perpetrator more openly and justified in front of the survivors.

5. *Sexual relationship* - Partners find the lack or infrequency of sexual intercourse difficult in their relationships. The survivors' difficulties and fears during intercourse also made an impact on them.

6. *Survivor's improvement* - Partners were concerned with the length of time it will take for the survivor to work through the trauma of their sexual abuse and felt helpless and sometimes hopeless about the possibilities of change.

7. *Relatives* - Partners were confused whether to disclose their knowledge of the abuse to the perpetrator or other relatives (including their own children) or not.

3.9 COPING AS A PROCESS OF SURVIVAL FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Negative effects of childhood sexual abuse often persist into adulthood (Coffey, Leitenberg, Henning, Turner & Bennett, 1996). Jumper (1995) found support for the hypothesis of a positive relationship between childhood sexual abuse and impaired adult psychological adjustment. Runtz and Schallow (1997) point out that recent studies found a number of cognitive, developmental, familial and environmental factors that serve as protective factors to mitigate the effects of abuse-related stress. Both coping and social support are related to the adjustment of survivors of sexual abuse.

Concepts central to the understanding of the response to and coping with trauma are approach, avoidance (Roth & Newman, 1993), repression and disengagement (Coffey et al., 1996). **Approach strategies** facilitate cognitive and emotional apprehension of an event. In this way the necessary information is gathered to take action and provide an opportunity for affective release. Approach strategies can lead to the assimilation and resolution of trauma into an integrated self-structure, but

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could also increase the experience of negative affects, potentially to a dysfunctional level (Roth & Newman, 1993). **Avoidance,** on the other hand, minimises the emotional impact of the event by protecting the individual from becoming emotionally overwhelmed and dysfunctional. It can facilitate a sense of control, but can also screen out the information that leads to productive action (Roth & Newman, 1993). Coffey et al., (1996) mention research that found avoidant or emotional-suppressing coping strategies that were associated with poorer psychological adjustment in survivors of sexual abuse. **Repression** of traumatic experiences may leave the survivor of sexual abuse vulnerable to trauma-related symptoms (Roth & Newman, 1993). They become used to methods like wishful thinking, and the use of substances such as drugs and alcohol as coping strategies related to abuse victims (Coffey et al., 1996). **Disengagement methods** of coping with the distress associated with sexual abuse are used more often than with other stressful life events. Coffey et al., (1996) found that victims of sexual abuse use disengagement strategies in coping with the distress, because a greater sense of secrecy, shame, embarrassment, stigma, and powerlessness is associated with sexual abuse then with other stressful events. The desire to escape and avoid painful negative feelings prevails under such circumstances.

Morrow and Smith (1995) present a model explaining the process of survival and coping with childhood sexual abuse (see figure 3.3). Resulting from their research, Morrow and Smith (1995) identified two **causal conditions** related to sexual abuse. The first of these conditions are cultural norms of dominance and submission, violence, maltreatment of women, denial of abuse, and powerlessness of children, that forms the bedrock on which sexual abuse was perpetrated. The second condition is the different forms of sexual abuse, ranging from innuendoes and violations of privacy to rape and incest.

Two **phenomenae** resulting from cultural norms and forms of sexual abuse are reported by survivors of sexual abuse, namely,

1. being overwhelmed by feelings victims experienced as threatening or dangerous and

2. experiencing helplessness, powerlessness and lack of control.

Furthermore, Morrow and Smith's model (1995) includes the **context** in which survival and coping strategies develop. The context focuses on the different experiences in terms of the sensations experienced during the abuse as well as the frequency of the abuse, the intensity, duration and the characteristics of the perpetrator. These contextual variables influence the extent and ability to be able to cope with or survive the abuse in later life.

Context			
Sensation Frequency Intensity Duration Perpetrator characteristics			

Causal Conditions	Phenomena	Strategies	Consequences
Cultural norms Forms of sexual abuse	Threatening or dangerous feelings Helplessness Powerlessness Lack of control	Keeping from being overwhelmed by threatening and dangerous feelings Managing helplessness, powerlessness and lack of control	Paradoxes Surviving Coping Living Healing Wholeness Empowerment Hope

Intervening Conditions			
Cultural norms Family dynamics Other abuses Resources Victim age Rewards			

Figure 3.3 Theoretical model for surviving and coping with child sexual abuse (Morrow & Smith, 1995)

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In addition to the context of abuse, the model incorporates **intervening conditions** as influential variables to the outcome in coping and survival. Intervening conditions include cultural values, family attitudes, values, beliefs and dynamics, the age of the victim, the presence of other abuse, rewards accompanying the abuse, and outside resources. **Strategies** for survival and coping with child sexual abuse as adults are linked with the phenomena that evolved from the causal conditions. The two strategies are

1. keeping from being overwhelmed by threatening and dangerous feelings, and
2. managing helplessness, powerlessness and lack of control.

These strategies are conceptualised in figure 3.4.

Keeping from being overwhelmed by threatening and dangerous feelings	Managing helplessness, powerlessness and lack of control
• Reducing intensity of feelings • Avoiding/escaping feelings • Exchanging more for less threatening feelings • Not knowing/remembering experiences associated with feelings • Dividing feelings into manageable parts	• Resistance strategies • Reframing abuse to give illusions of control • Attempting to master trauma • Controlling other areas of life • Seeking confirmation or evidence of abuse • Rejecting power

Figure 3.4 Surviving and coping strategies of survivors of sexual abuse (Morrow & Smith, 1995)

Although the strategies that are implemented keep the survivors from being overwhelmed by their feelings and aid in the managing of their helplessness, powerlessness and lack of control, it comes with a price - the **consequences** of their strategies. These consequences include living fragmented and paradoxical lives, surviving and coping to do their best, to live through the long process of healing, to be empowered and to strive with hope towards wholeness (Morrow & Smith, 1995).

Another model conceptualised by Roth and Newman (1993) focuses on trauma themes. They argue that the survivor must first come to understand the emotional impact of the trauma, in order not to be preoccupied or driven by negative feelings. Secondly, they must grapple with the 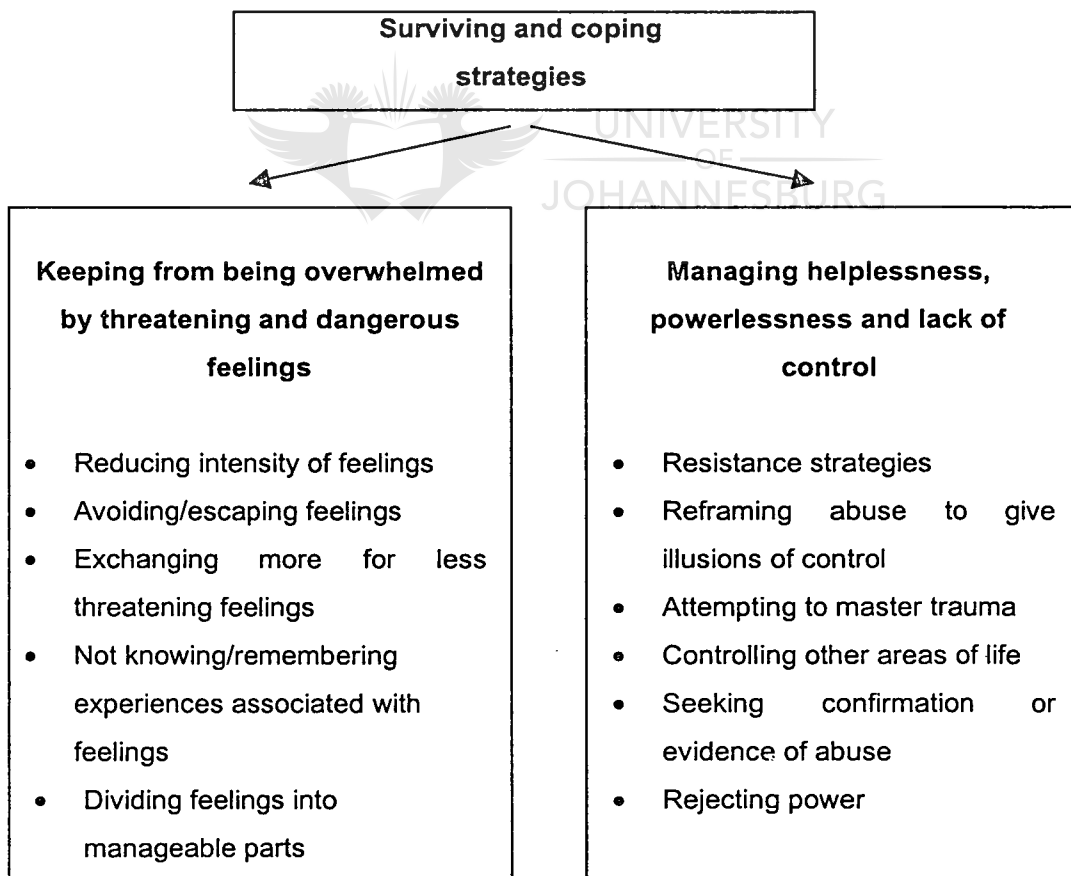meaning of the trauma, until an adaptive resolution is achieved. The survivors' understanding of the affective categories of abuse (helplessness, rage, fear, loss, shame, and guilt) and the schema categories of abuse (fundamental beliefs of the world, self, and others) can be challenged or invalidated by a traumatic event. Invalidation of the survivor's beliefs leads to a compensatory search for meaning. The construction of a modified belief system that assimilates the traumatic experience is required. The consequence could be an adaptive schema resolution, accommodating a belief system that incorporates the trauma and permits realistic coping with and enjoyment of life, while recognising its limitations. The consequence could also be a maladaptive schema resolution, maintaining a chronic state of negative affect and provide an overly restrictive and biased way of relating to the world (Roth & Newman, 1993).

Individuals that are faced with severe traumatic experiences are often unable to undergo a coping process and could find it difficult to integrate and recover from the trauma without therapeutic treatment (Roth & Newman, 1993). A Stage-by-Dimension Model of recovery from sexual trauma developed by Lebowitz et al., (1993) describes a three-stage process of recovery from severe trauma. The first stage of recovery focuses on the establishment of **safety**. The second stage entails an active in-depth exploration of the traumatic experience,

uncovering the **memories** of abuse in a process that **integrates** the traumatic experience rather than a catharsis. The process involves a period of intense grief and **mourning** when the survivor contemplates the full extent of her losses. The third and last stage focuses on a **reconnection** with others to establish mutual, non-exploitative peer relationships. Klein and Janoff-Bulman (1996) indicate that a greater emphasis on others was uniquely part of the coping strategies of sexual abuse survivors.

3.10 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE

A Social constructionist view of human behaviour is found and elaborated in complex interpersonal practices as they are anticipated and perceived (Levette, 1988). Through language, certain views are perpetuated in a particular cultural context. Sexuality is socially constructed (Kritzinger, 1995). Social and cultural factors focus on the broad context of society and community forces that play a role in child sexual abuse (Barnett et al., 1997). Social attitudes (e.g. the inequality of men and women perpetuated through history by the patriarchal system), male socialisation (processes associated with the socialisation of masculine sexual traits like being attracted to sexual partners who are younger, smaller, and more vulnerable than themselves), and child pornography (media portrayals of children) are factors contributing to child sexual abuse.

Although literature rarely specifies the content sexuality is constructed of, Kritzinger (1995) points to the fact that power plays a significant role in the construction of sexuality, especially the "doing" (p.194) of sex. The sexual abuse of girls is acts of dominance expressed through sexuality. Men routinely use violence against women and use sexuality as a way of 'doing power' over women. Marshall and Herman (1998) note that men created a society with institutionalised power for themselves, a domestic hierarchical structure that places them at the head, rather than by the side of their female partner. The subjugation of women in society is upheld under, among others, the protection of religious institutions and structural legislation. It is through

shared patterns or discourse that the formations of power are perpetuated (Levette, 1988).

Kritzinger (1995) indicates that sexual abuse is not just a problem regarding the abuse of male power through sexual violence, the problem is more related to the constructions of sexuality. Sex and sexual desire are constructed to be the eroticisation of subordination. Heterosexual sex involves male power and female subordination. Although the majority of humanity is heterosexual, Masters et al., (1992) show that it is no guarantee for sexual happiness. Personal and cultural values determine sexual conduct and therefore the outcome of sexual experience.

It took some time and effort, however, to redefine sexual abuse as a social problem (Kelly, 1988; Kritzinger, 1988; Dominelli, 1989; Barnett et al., 1997). All of these writers indicate the effort of feminist and social constructionist work and claims making as important contributions to define sexual abuse as a social problem. Barnett et al., (1997) describes the claims from many sociologists that social problems are socially constructed. As with any other social problem, sexual abuse was only recognised as a social problem because society recognised it as a social problem.

Dominelli (1989) shows the role feminists played to shift public concerns over sexual abuse from the private domain into the public social arena. Feminists also played a role influencing societal definitions of sexual abuse (Barnett et al., 1997). Although definitions differ among individuals, sexual abuse will only be regarded as sexual abuse if that society regards a particular sexual action as abusive. This social constructionist point of view explains why sexual abuse is condemned in some societies but not in others. Sexual abuse might therefore be a social condition in some societies, but not regarded as a social problem as such.

Masters et al., (1992) indicate that new trends towards sexuality bring considerable change towards sex differences, child-rearing practices, masculinity and femininity, and what society defines as appropriate gender role behaviour. Hare-Mustin (1994)

argues that the dominant discourses in society support and reflect the prevailing ideologies about sexuality in that society. She name three dominant discourses about sexuality as:

1. **the male sex-drive discourse**: This discourse describes women as the object that arouses men's sexual urges. Men are therefore expected to be pushy and aggressive in seeking to satisfy these urges. Women become the objects of men's sexual drive. Women are open targets who could be subjected to sexual abuse as a reminder of their subordination and vulnerability.

2. **the permissive discourse**: The permissive discourse holds different meanings for men and women. To men permissiveness means open sexual access, while for women it means pressure to accede to men's urging for sexual activity. In this discourse women are coerced to meet men's needs by labelling reluctant women as up-tight, teases or as frigid. Women must therefore be compliant with men's initiatives. This discourse leaves women as open targets for sexual abuse indicating that they have no right to deny men's initiatives.

3. **the marriage-between-equals discourse**: The power of male domination and the consequent female subordination is only tolerable if it masks a substantial part of itself. The discourse of equality therefore regards men and women as naturally so different that they cannot be compared. Marriage-between-equals is a discourse that conceals the extent of male domination and female subordination.

3.10.1 The role of institutions in the social construction of sexual abuse

1. Educational institutions.

In a child's relationship with his or her parents, the child learns the meaning of emotion and the culturally accepted forms of expression. This enables the child to develop the ability to adapt playfully and flexibly to new social situations and a feeling of continuity of identity. In spite of different social situations, the child is always recognisably present through his/her input. Children who are sexually abused, don't develop these abilities gradually, but are forced to decide how to view reality and how to act in life-threatening situations (Miltenburg & Singer, 1997).

Levette (1988) declares the ideas of children and child development that prevail, as social constructions. She agrees with Vygotsky (Levette, 1988) that all human individuals, whether child or adult, are components of shaped or shaping social processes. Dominant discourses about childhood tends to fall into characteristic patterns, described by Levette (1988) as follows:

1. Children are passive recipients of external forces of socialisation or adversary that shape or deform them in a number of ways.
2. Children represent an essential innocence, an inherent goodness that lies at the core of all people. They are the most natural humans and yet unspoiled by society.
3. Children are individuals in whom a process of built-in organic unfolding, following an age related natural developmental blueprint, takes place.
4. Children possess inherent cognitive hardware to learn logical and rational functions and develop the capacity to operate in the environment in increasing sophisticated ways.

The context in which children are first introduced to sex is responsible for numerous distortions in their later life (Blume, 1990). Society teaches them about sex,

struggling with its attitudes towards the natural experience of sexuality, teaching embarrassment, guilt, and shame along with sexuality. Children learn the pleasurable sexual activities and those not pleasurable step by step, distinguishing between sexual and non-sexual acts, and making decisions about pursuing or prevailing from those sexual activities. Children who are sexually abused vary from this ideal development and do not engage in sex of their own will. The result could be a child's re-action of adult sexual behaviour approved or expressed by an adult in its early development (Levette, 1988)

It is a societal expectation that the mother should protect the child (Schechter in Dangor, 1992). However, Marshall and Herman (1998) indicate that society teaches a lot of discipline in their child-rearing practices in statements like: "Listen to your father" and "Obey your elders" (p.44). Thus, society teaches their children to blindly accept this power and unquestioningly obey authority, while these 'fathers' or 'elders' could be the sexual abusers. Adults usually bully children into obedience with statements like: "Do as you are told" and "Because I say so", or " It's for your own good" (Kritzinger, 1988, p.83). These approaches to children show to their broader position in society that makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse. It also shows the way in which society refuses to listen to them generally and thus fail to hear about abuse.

Russell (1997) describes the position children who are sexually abused become trapped in, with the metaphor of a prison. Due to their general social position as children they are incarcerated. They are trapped by laws that make it illegal for them to leave their homes without their parents' permission. They are trapped by economic dependence. They are trapped by values that consider children to be the property of their parents and value that honour family privacy over the well being of the children in an abusive family. They are also trapped by sexist values that dismiss parental physical violence as discipline and, in the case of sexual abuse, blaming the victim for allowing it.

2. Religious institutions.

Religious institutions have played an important role in the prevalence and support the absolute power that adults enjoy. The demand of religious teachings that children should 'honour their parents' are interpreted to mean that children have no right to question the treatment they receive from adults (Marshall & Herman, 1998).

Although child sexual abuse is condemned by religious institutions, male dominance is still presented as 'headship of the house' or even as part of God's 'punishment over sin', described in Genesis 3 verse 16 of the Holy Bible (Bible Society of South Africa, 1983):

> "And to the woman He said: '.... and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Religious institutions can't be blamed for child sexual abuse, but put men into a favourable position to misuse their power to commit sexual abuse.

3. Legal institutions.

Sexual offences by and against children are regarded as a pressing concern and priority in Legal and Judicial systems (Hallamby, 1997). Reporting child sexual abuse to the Child Protection Unit of the South African Police via 'Childline', Child Rights and The National Programme of Action for Children are actions instigated by law to clamp down on child sexual abuse (Ewing, 1997; Van Niekerk, 1997). Speeding up sexual offences trials and making them less of an ordeal for victims could contribute to a more victim-friendly system that reduces insensitive and inappropriate treatment of victims in court (Liebenberg, 1999). Van Niekerk (1997) indicates that there is little meaning in the statement "Children are our country's future" (p.24), if it is not reflected in the protection provided to them by law.

Janko (1994) shows that the ways in which society understands and defines child maltreatment are closely linked to the ways child welfare systems interpret and respond to the legal definitions of child maltreatment. Therefore, children who are sexually abused are removed from their homes and placed into foster care (Janko, 1994; Russell, 1997). Taking the child into care when disclosure of sexual abuse takes place makes the child feels responsible for being abused, therefore feminists demand that the man leaves the family home (Dominelli, 1989). The social construction of child sexual abuse as a social problem of epidemic proportions seems to drive and increase the explosion in foster care placements. However, children in foster care are at high risk of being sexually revictimised and treated as 'public property' by men who find girls who were sexually abused sexually interesting (Russell, 1997).

Salter (1995) points to another problem with regard to the legal system. The law doesn't recognise the notion that perpetrators rather than the family are responsible for crimes, therefore incest offenders are regarded as less dangerous than other child sexual abusers and continue to enjoy shorter prison sentences, and to return to the community earlier than other abusers. Lenient response to male violence by the police and judicial system appears to sanction this position towards male perpetrators (Marshall & Herman, 1998). Judicial bias is evident when women are blamed for being at the wrong place at the wrong time, or for dressing inappropriately. Men receive the message that they indeed have power to commit acts of abuse. Police often minimise assault of women or sexual abuse, calling it a "domestic problem" (Marshall & Herman, 1998, p.45).

The role of many sexual abusers as breadwinners makes intervention and justice difficult (Russell, 1997). Families cannot afford to loose their main or only source of income provided by the perpetrator if he is imprisoned. Therefore they will sometimes be reluctant to report sexual abuse by the breadwinner. Another problem is that mothers often side with their husbands to cheat their daughters of justice because of the stakes involved of losing an income. Sometimes society pressures

the victim to withdraw their case against a perpetrator as his conviction can result in a loss of income.

4. Media.

It is widely recognised that the media is a powerful agent in the production and reproduction of dominant discourses and people who have access to newspaper, magazines, television and fictional texts are particularly influenced (Levette, 1988). The media contributes to the discourse of female control relative to the dangers of sexual abuse. On the one hand the news of sexual abuse is focused on sensation to stimulate potential readers in buying their products, while, on the other hand it contributes to the escalation of fear and anxiety about their sexual vulnerability. Kritzinger (1988) describes the images used by the media as a way to emphasise the child's youth and passivity. The abused child is usually represented by an anonymous figure sitting limp and despairing with her head in her hands, or a brother and a sister gazing wistfully from behind a window, or simply by a broken doll.
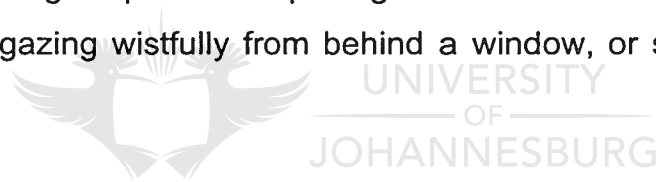
Child pornography portrays children as sexual models (Barnett et al., 1997; Kritzinger, 1988). It is a form of media that stimulates sexual interest in children, and depicts children in sexually explicit acts. In some instances, children might not even know that they are posing for pornographic purposes - they may actually pose with teddy bears or dolls (Masters et al., 1992).

3.10.2 Social constructions of the sexual abuse act

Sexual abuse, especially incest, is a major social taboo (Dominelli, 1989). There is a growing preoccupation with the extent to which child sexual abuse occurs in western society (Levette, 1988). Currently in South Africa there is, what can be called a moral panic about children and sexual abuse. Mabusela (1994) describes South Africa as one of the most violent countries in the world, putting sexual abuse into the

context of an abusive history of colonialism and apartheid laws, that lead to the acceptance and internalisation of violence for many.

Enns et al., (1995) indicate that sexual abuse occurs within a social culture that denies or minimises the wide-ranging implications of sexual violence. It is done by underestimating its frequency, viewing abuse merely as the consequence of dysfunctional family systems, citing adult revictimisation as evidence that the client's long-term pathology contributed to child sexual abuse, or labelling disclosure as distortions or exaggerations of reality. Survivors usually internalise these myths and attitudes that contribute to shame, self-blame, and increased use of dissociation. Sexual abuse is an enactment, not of human nature, but of socio-cultural forces (Sanday, 1981).

Masters et al., (1992) depict society as people who train and encourage females to be victims of sexual coercion and males to victimise females. Sanday (1981) found in his study of the socio-cultural context of rape, that rape is part of a cultural configuration that includes interpersonal violence, male dominance, and sexual separation. Rape is interpreted as the sexual expression of those forces in societies where the harmony between men and their environment has been severely disrupted. In rape prone societies, where the incidence is high, rape is seen as a ceremonial act, or an act by which men punish or threaten women, while in rape free societies, it doesn't occur.

Dominelli (1989) refers to researchers who show that sexual abuse is an issue intimately connected to society's definitions of masculinity (as an aggressive force) and femininity (as a passive, subjective force), and occurs in relationships of trust covering social ties and blood ties. Power and control, depicting male dominance is currently the discourse that is prevalent in feminist and social constructions literature (Levette, 1988). Sexual abuse is a way in which men sabotage and plunder social groups other than their own, and may also attempt to imprint or brand their women and children by sexual exploitation as an expression of their power and dominance over them. Female subjectivity is also instigated by dominant discourses,

professional or common, which repeatedly orient women to the possibility of sexual abuse or assault (Levette, 1988). Sinclair (in Dangor, 1992) shows that endorsements from social institutions are major contributions towards women remaining in violent and sexual abusive relationships. These endorsements include the following: women belong in the home, are less competent than men, are less likely to succeed in the work place, should defer to the dominance of their husbands, and should be the primary emotional support of the family.

Salter (1995) refers to the most chilling aspect of child sexual abuse as its invisibility. There is a massive bulwark of socially constructed constraints which securely trap women and girls within a web of silence (Levette, 1989). The purpose of the silence could be self-protection to avoid the aspects of stigma, but silence also safeguards the perpetrator. Mabusela (1994) indicates that child abuse was for a long time a silently accepted crime in South Africa. For the majority of children, child abuse was a family secret, which was more or less acceptable.

3.10.3 Social constructions with regard to the victim

Women who were sexually abused as children often hold distorted beliefs arising from their experience, contributing to mood disturbances such as guilt, low self-esteem, and sadness (Jehu et al., 1986). In a study done by Wood, Maforah and Jewkes (1996), Xhosa adolescents' constructions of sex, love and violence show awareness of power differentials, inequities and double standards operating within constructions, but resistance was complex in the extreme, because of male violence and the immediacy of peer pressure.

Domination of male sexuality was indicated by women's availability for constructions of love, indicating that sex is part of being in love. Peers contribute to constructions of women's availability for sex as part of group membership and consequent isolation and rejection by the group if she doesn't have sex. Sexual abuse was reinforced by constructions of silence as an appropriate response to forced sexual activity and women's subjection as an escape of physical violence (Wood et al.,

1996). Peters (1976) indicates that children usually feel that the abusive authority figure can do no wrong and accept the attentions as a favour that flatters them. While they are children, women are taught to be passive, seductive and coy (Masters et al., 1992) and are viewed as sexual objects in patriarchal societies (Foucault, 1979). A female in a sexual coercion is therefore ill prepared to act against it and usually ends up blaming herself and feels guilty instead of taking more positive action.

Social constructions with regard to the victim of sexual abuse vary to a great extent. Popular explanations from Freudian understandings of children, accuses children of fantasising about sexual abuse, lying about long-term sexual abuse, and asking for it by seducing the men who abuse them (Dominelli, 1989). Dominelli (1989) also notes influential experts who endorsed the blaming of women through their writings, and claimed that a man deprived from his conjugation rights, may turn to the nearest available source for gratification, a dependent child. Levette (1988) describes the blaming of women as part of the stereotyped ideas and myths that attribute responsibility to women when they are sexually abused.

Threatening or negative experiences can be perceived as the cause of emotional trauma (Levette, 1988). Social constructions pointing to the expectation of negative effects as a result of childhood sexual abuse, lead to heightened fear and anxiety in women and is regarded by Levette (1988) as a means to subjugate women. Darkness, isolation, certain public areas and odd looking men represent society's associations with sexual assault and women may become fearful or anxious while approaching such situations.

Probably the most prevailing social construction is that children who were sexually abused are viewed as "soiled goods" (Armstrong, in Dominelli, 1989, p.300) or "damaged goods" (Sgroi, in Kritzinger, 1988, p.80). Levette (1988) notes that girls and women who are seen as damaged and different will be likely to assume such roles, that could eventually lead to their revictimisation (Kritzinger, 1988; Dixon, 1998). Dixon (1998) indicates that this construction leads to the idea that women

abused as children no longer deserve respect and protection. They have lost their virginity and are therefore not preferred candidates for marriage. Various writers (Kritzinger, 1988; Levette, 1988; Dominelli, 1989; Bozalek, 1996) ascribe this social construction to the discourses of childhood innocence and childhood protection.

Childhood innocence refers to the long term of dependency for emotional support, money and physical resources the child has in relation to her parents or caregivers. The dependence increases the child's powerlessness and vulnerability. Innocence is used to deny children access to certain types of information, contributing to their powerlessness. They might also be seen as sweet and uninformed, not yet soiled by society. This innocence increases the vulnerability of children to be sexually abused. Children who are sexually abused loose their innocence and might be labelled enticing Lolitas, nymphets, or prostitutes luring men into sexual activities. On the other hand, the concept of childhood protection refers to the notion that children are powerless and need therefore to be protected. In their bid to protect the weak, men's role as protectors could easily be misused as a reason for engaging in sexually abusive acts. Abusive men describe their acts of abuse as for the child's own good, and preparing them for the sexual roles they must adopt in womanhood.

3.10.4 Social constructions with regard to the perpetrator

In South Africa perpetrators of child sexual abuse are referred to as paedophiles and criminals in the Sexual Offences Act, (Act no. 23 of 1957). However, there are numerous cases of a blind eye being turned to the sexual crimes of men because of their political affiliation, religious standing or affluence in the community (Marshall & Herman, 1998). It might also be expected that the accused perpetrator will be judged as less responsible for an incident of sexual abuse to the extent that the characteristics of the victim can be cited as an alternative and plausible explanation of the incident (Macrae & Shepherd, 1989).

Males account for the predominant perpetrators of sexual abuse (Nevid et al., 1995). Males are socialised into seeking younger and weaker

partners they can easily dominate, leaving the door open to develop sexual interest in children and adolescent girls that leads to sexual abuse. Boys learn that society expects them to be aggressors and to "manly" seduce their prey by persuasion or trickery (Masters et al., 1992, p.439). They are taught that girls don't know what they want and when they say 'no' they mean 'yes'. They learn that uptight and unhappy women only need "a good lay" (p.439). Given this context, men could easily mistake various forms of sexual assault as the approach of an active and aggressive lover.

Dominant discourses with regard to the perpetrator of child sexual abuse shifts the blame from men to women, claiming that men who are deprived of their conjugal rights may turn to the nearest available source of gratification, a dependant child (Dominelli, 1989). Mabusela (1994) points to the conventional perception that child abusers are "dirty old men" (p.178). This perception is misleading as perpetrators are usually males with responsible jobs and a person whom the child usually trusts. Levette (1988) indicates that most white women hold the idea that sexual assault and abuse is associated with greater stigma and trauma if the perpetrator is a black man.

South Africa is an enormously patriarchal society (Marshall & Herman, 1998). Russell (1997) associates patriarchal and authoritarian societies with potential misuse of power by men. She points out in her study of sexual abuse survivors that men in a Calvinistic approach to their role as fathers tend to be sexually abusive. Landman (1998) ascribes this tendency to a skewed message that could be taught by Calvinism.

3.11 CONCLUSION

The diversity and differences of information within child sexual abuse research and literature is a clear indication that integration of the masses of results and information is necessary. That seems unlikely due to the sometimes opposing results from research. In spite of the difference and uncertainty of ever getting

congruent information on child sexual abuse, the constructions over time have changed dramatically.

Epidemiological studies and literature show the magnitude of the prevalence of child sexual abuse and that it is already established as a social problem. Etiological studies make it difficult to show specific causes, with the implication that prevention and curbing strategies are difficult to introduce. Diversity in world-wide definitions of child sexual abuse conclude that a social construction approach to child sexual abuse could serve as an umbrella term for pre-modernistic, modernistic and post-modernistic definitions. A symptom approach to the sequelae of child sexual abuse should be integrated in a conceptual framework that is provided in the traumagenic dynamics (figure 3.2).

It is the discursive realities that constitute the social context, the ideologically saturated fabric, within and against which, child sexual abuse and its consequences must be evaluated (Levette, 1988). The social context, however, is built up of knowledge from pre-modernistic, modernistic and post-modernistic social constructions that influence the everyday talk about child sexual abuse. The varied ways of thinking and attributing to the phenomenon of child sexual abuse is as many as there are societies that co-construct meaning through language and experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

LANGUAGE, CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING AND THE DOUBLE BIND

" Children progressively construct a representation of the language of their
community. And they do so on the basis of the evidence provided
for them in conversation with more mature members of that community"
(Wells, 1986, p.44).

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Deceptive communication is a characteristic of paternally incestuous families and families of sexual abuse (DeYoung, 1994). This brings the role of language into play in the study of sexual abuse. Socio-historical context and linguistic convention circumscribe the formation of knowledge and what could be rendered as truth (Bohan, 1993). Truth and knowledge is thus bound to its situatedness and the linguistic forms that shape it. Smith (1992) indicates that human beings are seekers and creators of meaning. Each culture provides its own comforting answers to the questions of self and the world, providing the frames of meaning for individual lives.

The role of language is that of mediator between person and world, helping to shape the constructions about the world (Hirtle, 1996). The development of post-modern thinking has led to a renewed interest in the notion of language (Lyell, 1998) and the role language plays in relation to society (Wardhaugh, 1998). Social support, mediated through engagement in language and conversation, plays a significant role as mediator of adult adjustment following childhood maltreatment (Runtz & Schallow, 1997).

4.2   SOCIOLINGUISTIC THEORY

Language is what the members of a particular society speak. The knowledge that speakers have of the languages they speak, is the knowledge of rules and principles and of the ways of saying and doing things with sounds, words, and sentences. This knowledge is a communal possession, shared by people who use it to communicate with one another. Sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationship between language and society with the goal of a better understanding of the structure of languages and of how languages function in communication. In the sociology of language the goal is to discover how social structure can be better understood through the study of language (Wardhaugh, 1998). Sociolinguistics study the interplay of linguistic, social and cultural factors in human communication (Wolfson, 1989).

Jerry Fodor presents an individualistic semantic approach to language and contends that language of thought is innate (Watson, 1995). He proposes that people be born with a hypothetical language (mentalese) that is predisposed to be triggered by certain perceptual inputs without alteration over time. In this view, the meaning of linguistic expressions is determined by the content of the mental representations that can be used to express them. In turn, mental representations derive their content from the causal relations they bear to entities in the world. This approach focuses on the relations between the material environment and the minds of individuals (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995). He argues that thoughts are the primary bearers of meaning, and that natural language gets its meaning because it expresses thoughts (Watson, 1995).

Contrary to Fodor's approach, is the claim that the structure of a language influences how it's speakers view the world. This view is associated with the communitarian linguistics of Edward Saphir and Benjamin Lee Whorph (Wardhaugh, 1998). Their ideas build on the hypothesis (The Whorphian Hypothesis) that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. Each individual's conceptual scheme is structured by the linguistic practices of his or her

community (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995). They believe that people's metaphysical pictures of the world come from their culture via the language that they speak. Language is therefore primary and thought, mind, identity and worldviews are shaped by it. This means that a person can't construct meaning if a word for it doesn't exist in a certain culture, like in certain African languages, there isn't a word for "rape".

Wittgenstein (in Bakhurst, 1995) contested that a logically private language is impossible. The mind is therefore not a self-contained world of thoughts and experiences, of which the person alone is directly aware. Language is social in kind, governed by public standards of correctness. As a social practice, language has no fixed meaning outside the context in which it is used (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995).

Vygotsky (in Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995) considers language to be the most crucial of all mediational means to attain the internalisation of social forms of activity. His thesis is that people learn to use language instrumentally, talking through their tasks with another person and then internalising that conversation as thought (Bruffee, 1986). Language serves as a psychological tool for both thought and communication (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995). He describes a dialectical conception of the relation between language and thought, which appreciates the relevance of our biological endowment as well as the transforming power of culture. He believes that language gets its nature as a meaningful sociocultural activity from the use to which individuals put it, and also that language shapes and transforms the mind of the individual who learns to use it. Words as artefacts (spoken or unspoken) gain meaning on the basis of their history of use. (Watson, 1995).

Polkinghorne (1995) contrasts the approaches of Structuralism (i.e. Piaget) and Post-structuralism (i.e. Derrida) to meaning. He contends that structuralism disconnected the meaning from the world and conceived of meaning as a product of deep, unchanging structures that were manifested in the surface differences of various language systems. Piaget learned that a person's interpretative structures are biologically based and develop as a special form of biological adaptation

between the person and his/her environment. A person's understanding of structures are not inherited or a function of the language system in which the person in reared. Each person for herself constructs meaning systems. Meaning is not static, but is changed through transactions with social and material environments. Derrida teaches that meaning is not expressed directly by the particular words and concepts available to the person, but instead, overflows the limits of his/her linguistic and conceptual apparatus. The understanding of meaning requires metaphoric expression and attention to what is not said as well as to the words spoken by a person. The meaning of a word is not fixed to a concept, but is dependent on the differences within the conceptual system. The meaning of a word is therefore deferred by the context in which it is used, called *differance* by Derrida (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) propose that the modern linguist Ferdinant de Saussure played a key role in the origin of social construction discourse. He conceptualises a fundamental distinction between langue (the system of language) and *parole* (the use of language in actual situations). He explained that people can use language (parole) to mean particular things, but they are, however, constrained in what they say by the universe of possible meanings that is made available by language (langue). Saussure's theory is a conceptualisation that language is constantly and secretly slipping a whole universe of assumptions that will never come to judgement, into people's minds. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) the terms langue and parole refer to discourses and texts.

Berlin (1996) describes a Cognitive-Integrative Perspective based on the notion that humans are fundamentally meaning makers. The search for meaning is not a passive process, picking up, classifying, and storing sensations from the external world. What people know, is rather a result of their active attempts to respond to environmental challenges. Berlin (1996) based his approach on three assumptions:

1. meanings can not be independent of the symbols and rules of the culture,

2. environmental events that effect survival, such as cues signalling physical danger or opportunities for banding, afford similar meanings across cultures,

3. the families, communities and opportunity structures into which people are born, tell and show them what things mean and in the process shape their frameworks for understanding.

The core assumption undergirding the Cognitive-Integrative Perspective is that all of the important meanings in people's lives are a function of the nature of the information that they encounter, and their own patterns or systems for organising these cues. To create meaning, people rely on memory frameworks to organise available cues. These memory frameworks are developed as schematic models through social learning (Berlin, 1996).

Anderson and Goolishian (1992) criticise cognitive and constructivist approaches that define human beings as simple *"information-processing machines"* (p.26). They choose a post-modern approach that define human beings as "*meaning-generating beings"* (p.26). Meanings are created and experienced by individuals in conversation with one another. People live and understand their living through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning and organisation to their experience. It is a world of human language and discourse. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) argue that meaning and understanding come through a process of communication and conversations. Making sense, is therefore a social process (Bruner & Haste, 1987) where the person learns through interactions with others to acquire a framework for interpreting experience, and learns how to construct meaning in a manner congruent with the requirements of the culture.

Berger and Luckman (1966) describe language as the bearer of cultural categories into which the world is divided. They also identify language as the most important sign system of human society. An understanding of language is essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life. Language typifies experiences, and allows a person to subsume them under broad categories in terms of which they

have meaning to that person and the one who is communicated with. Language gives birth to meaning. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) argue that meaning and understanding does not exist prior to the utterances of language, but come into being within language.

In the mentioned approaches to semantics and the study of meaning, it is clear that theoretical approaches represent two contrasting schools of thought with regard to the relationship between language and thought. The one school holds that thought is primary and that language gets its meaning because it expresses thought, while the other holds that language is primary, and that thought is shaped by it (Gross, 1996; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). These two schools differ in their approach on the question if meaning originates in the autonomous individual's mind or in the individual's community. It seems more appropriate to conceptualise this difference as a circular process. Words lead to the construction of meaning, which in turn leads to the construction of new words.

4.3   LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION DISCOURSE

Kotze (1994) points to the dominance of language and the way that meaning is constructed through conversation in social construction discourse. Social constructionism takes language seriously and holds that the human life-world is fundamentally constituted in language. Language helps to construct reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Talking is fundamental to relationships, whether they are starting, getting better, getting worse, or just carrying on (Duck, 1992). All human interactions involve communication (Rieber, 1989). Duck (1992) further emphasises that there is more to human relationships than talk, though. He indicates that communication is the basis for human relating. Every message in communication contains two elements, the content and a message about the relationship between the speaker and the listener. Human communications about relationships, and the emotions they feel in

them, are portrayed by verbal and non-verbal messages (Rieber, 1989; Duck, 1992) and affected by a host of social conventions, norms and rules (Duck, 1992).

Although language is regarded as significant in human relating, Conville and Rogers (1998) indicate that the word 'relationship' didn't appear in any English dictionary prior to 1755. Sigman (1998) postulates that relationships exist in a community's semantic and syntactic space; they are categories of meaning derived from an ongoing social-cultural repertoire. This repertoire provides the underlying logic for the production and interpretation of behaviour, thus, for the relationship that emerges from communication. Relationships also exist within a dialectical tension between the community's standard repertoire for behaviour and each moment of interaction. Rogers (1998) indicates that people offer definitions of the self in relation to others and simultaneously shape the nature of their relationship through communication. These definitions can be accepted, resisted or modified in a process of negotiation.

Fairclough (1995) makes mention of the connection between language and power. Language expresses ideology, power and hegemony. Often language is used to express the underlying power struggle between people in relationships and communities. Language is also used to serve the purposes of the ruling ideology (for instance Afrikaans in Apartheid South Africa) (Verhoef, 1996) and may differ from community to community and subgroup to subgroup in a community (Wolfson, 1989). Chomsky (in Wardhaugh, 1998) presented an asocial account of linguistic theory, ignoring the relation between language and those who use it. To the contrary, though, language and society influence each other in a dialectical way, indicating the constant interaction between speech behaviour and social behaviour (Wardhaugh, 1998). Sexist language, for example, will stem from a sexist society and visa versa. Thus, a sexist society will express itself in a sexist use of language.

4.3.1 Language and discourse

"Discourse" comes from the Latin root *discuro, discurrere* (Postma, 1975; Hare-Mustin, 1994) which means, "to run around". Although the term 'discourse' is used in many different senses, it could for the purposes of this study be narrowed down to refer to "... broad patterns of talk - systems of statements - that are taken up in particular speeches and conversations" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 156). Weingarten (1991) understands discourse to refer to the following phenomena:

1. A discourse consists of ideas and practices that share common values.

2. Any discourse reflects and constructs a specific worldview.

3. There are dominant and subjugated discourses. Dominant discourses contain and constrain what people can feel, think and do.

4. That which is not part of the discourse shapes people's experience as critically as the discourse itself.

5. Discourse evolves. Changes of discourse occur when the collective conversations people have about their lives transform culturally available dominant narratives about people's lives (Weingarten, 1991).

Different and competing discourses circulate in a culture. These discourses have a varying influence, with the dominant discourses having a dominant influence on the language, thought and actions in a culture. These dominant discourses produce and are produced by social interaction, a particular language community, and the socio-economic context (Hare-Mustin, 1994). Language is also considered to be a dominant discourse in society (Kotze, 1994).

Talking, listening and having conversations, are central human activities in which people are engaged most of the time. Even when they are alone there remains a 'constant chatter' in their minds in the form of self-talk and reflection (Augoustinos &

Walker, 1995). Language structures a person's own experience of reality and the realities of those with whom she communicates (Hare-Mustin, 1994). Anderson and Goolishian (1988) refer to this interpersonal process of communication as "languaging" or "to be in language" (p.377). They postulate that it is in language that people are able to maintain meaningful human contact with one another and through which they share a reality. Being in language is a dynamic social operation and not a simple linguistic operation (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Communities construct shared meaning in this way that becomes institutionalised social constructions. These social constructions are found in religious, legal, educational and other institutions.

Anderson and Goolishian (1992) adopt the view that human action takes place in a reality of understanding that is created through social construction and dialogue. In a world of human language and discourse, people live, and understand their living through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning and organisation to their experience. Human systems are language-generating and meaning-generating systems in which communication and discourse define the social organisation. A socio-cultural system is thus the product of social communication, rather than communication being a product of structural organisation.

4.3.2 Language and meaning

Social constructionism is concerned with broader patterns of social meaning encoded in language (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Phenix (in Shepherd & Watson, 1982) observed that human beings are essentially creatures who have the power to experience meaning and that distinctively human existence consists in a pattern of meaning. In this sense, his view closely links with that of phenomenology. Gergen (1994a) describes the traditional view (modernistic view) to ascribe the origin of meaning to the individual's mind, expressed within words and deciphered within the minds of other agents as problematic. The meaning of any construct in use, must depend at least in part on its context (the specific domain of experience within which it is ordinarily applied by someone) (Adams-Webber, 1979; Francella,

1982). Meaning is generated in both a personal and private realm, and in a public and collective realm (Harre, 1982) to construct personal meaning and co-construct social meaning.

Gergen (1994a) maintains that meaning is generated within human relationships. Bruner (1995) argues that the process of meaning making is a convergence of both culture and individual and dependent on intersubjectivity, instrumentality and normativity. Gergen (1994a) considers the following rudimentary stipulations for a relational theory of human meaning:

1. An individual's utterances in themselves possess no meaning.
2. The potential for meaning is realised through supplementary action (a reaction on what is said).
3. Supplements act both to create and to constrain meaning.
4. Any supplement is a candidate for further supplementation.
5. Meanings are subject to continuous reconstitution via the expanding domain of supplementation.
6. As relationships are increasingly co-ordinated (ordered), so do ontologies and their instantiations develop.
7. As consensus is established, so are the grounds for both understanding and misunderstanding.

Meaning and understanding come into being within language and do not exist prior to the utterances (verbal or non-verbal) of language. Meaning and understanding are therefore socially and intersubjectively constructed. Through dialogue (verbal or non-verbal), human systems mutually evolve their own language and confirm its meaning (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). On these grounds Kotze (1994) concludes that language constitutes meaning. To the contrary, people don't arrive at or have meaning and understanding until they take communicative action and engage in some meaning-generating discourse or dialogue to co-construct meaning (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Meaning is constructed through processes of reproduction, conversation and negotiation (Flower, 1994). This includes the construction of

personal meanings that are kept private and secret. Although it is co-constructed, it is not sheared with others.

Meaning and understanding is a matter of negotiation between participants (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). They negotiate their meaning through language expressed in words. Words do more than just name things, they convey complex relations of meaning and meaning is often realised by the words that are both present and absent in conversation (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995). Meaning doesn't belong to a word as such, but belongs to a word in its position between speakers and is realised only in the process of active, responsive understanding (Shotter, 1993). Although there may initially be some lack of understanding between individuals in society, they use conversation as a problem-solving task in which meaning is discovered by negotiation or collaboration. At least some knowledge must be shared knowledge between the negotiators for communication to take place (Robinson, 1988).

4.3.3 Language and narrative

Narrative refers to the telling of stories (Mcloyd, 1997). People arrange their experiences of events in such a way that they arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them (White & Epston, 1990). Gergen (1994a) indicates that the narrative is a chief vehicle for generating meaning. People make sense through their stories, because they offer a personal interpretation of experience in the context of social interaction. These narratives are produced in conversation (Wells, 1986). Language, discourse and narrative are intertwined concepts (Kotze & Kotze, 1997) in which language and metaphors are used to tell the stories.

4.4 LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Post-modernism brought an awareness of connections between meaning, power and language (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). According to Wolfson (1989)

research into language and gender fall into two major categories. The first group has to do with sexism in language. These studies focus on the ways in which users of language demonstrate their different cultural attitudes toward men and women. The second group concerns possible or alleged differences in the actual speech of men and women.

Language and gender refer to the connection, if any, between the structures, vocabularies, ways of using particular languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages (Wardhaugh, 1998). Hare-Mustin (in Weingarten, 1991) states that there are several different discourses concerning sexuality that define what is expected of men and women in relation to each other.

Wardhaugh (1998) indicates that he prefers to use the word *gender* rather than the word *sex*. He postulates that sex is biologically determined whereas gender is a social construct. Academics tend to refer to certain anatomical/biological differences under the title 'sex', and use the term 'gender' to designate the social behaviours and attributes that distinguish men from women and boys from girls (Keyssar, 1995). Gender involves all the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females. These differences are expressed in people's use of language. Although languages themselves may not be sexist or stereotypical, the user may be. Men and women use language to achieve certain purposes, and so long as differences in gender are equated with differences in access to power and influence in society, language differences must be expected.

4.4.1 The use of language in the construction of gender

Men's and women's speech differ due to the different ways in which boys and girls are brought up to fill different roles in the society (Wardhaugh, 1998). Men and women know this difference and behave appropriately. Labouvie-Vief, Orwoll and Manion (1995) show how men and women's development result in gendered imagery in which parts of the mind are symbolised as masculine and feminine. They associate men's development with the heroic journey of a male protagonist - rise,

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victory and ascent to height, mind and spirit. In contrast, feminine development implies defeat, passivity, surrender and descent to organismic depths. However, as cultural discourses change to accept bipolar tension and dialectical balance between the mind's polarities, a re-evaluation of the gendered narratives underlying conceptions of mind and self has ensued.

The gendered self (Coole, 1995) as being masculine or feminine is the result of social construction. The difference in gender was constructed in a patriarchal ideology reflecting power imbalances of male dominance and female powerlessness. Male dominance was the result of the historical creation of male solidarity (French, 1994). Men have power and seek solidarity through the toughness that non-standard varieties of their language seem to indicate (Wardhaugh, 1998). Recently feminists contested the construction of male dominance and set the tone for the development of female emancipation. Radtke and Stam (1994) shows that power and gender are terms so commonly conjoined that their combined invocation has almost ceased to be indexical. Feminists alerted to the fact that gender inequality is not natural, that women speak from unique worlds, and that gender is a cultural incarnation. However, power is both the source of oppression in its abuse and the source of emancipation in its use.

4.4.2 The social construction of gender

According to Wolfson (1989) present day scholars (especially Robin Lackoff) deal with the issue of language and sex in two ways; first in terms of sexism and language, and secondly in terms of differences between the speech of men and women. Language gives expression to cultural assumptions and for this reason it both reflects and reinforces the social order. Lackoff (in Wolfson, 1989) demonstrates how language reflects women's inferior status both by the way they are spoken about and by the way they speak themselves. She indicates that while men's use of language is assertive, adult and direct, women's use of language is immature, non-assertive and hyperpolite.

Society tells its own story about the polarisation of gendered expectations - about how men and women are to feel and behave differently (Sheinberg & Penn, 1991). The social construction of gender starts in childhood when children learn the discourse of difference from diverse media and from the values and practices around them (Keyssar, 1995). It could also be considered to start even earlier than childhood, while the baby is still in the mother's womb and she is preparing for either a boy or a girl.

Children not only learn that there are anatomical differences between boys and girls, but that these differences are meaningful. To the contrary modern approaches to gender show the difficulty to resolve gender issues within the essentialist-constructivist dichotomy. Events such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding and menopause are gathered under a essentialist banner and make it difficult to adopt a rigid social constructionist position. Contrary to this position attempts to preserve differences within the walls of community leaves unclear the relations between biology and difference on the one hand and the role of difference within social constructionism on the other hand (Keyssar, 1995). The debate between essentialists and constructionists continue because of its motivation, the desire for, or the opposition to social change.

Hare-Mustin & Marecek (1988) indicates that the real nature of masculinity and femininity cannot be determined from a constructionist standpoint. Societies construct different meaning to male-female and men-women differences. Psychological inquiry into gender has held to the construction of gender as difference. These inquiries are conceptualisations of the origin of difference, which manifest largely as social and cultural concepts, rather than biological concepts. This approach shows the differences between males and females as culturally and historically fluid (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). She concludes that the construction of gender is a process, not an answer.

Gender is a social product, constituted within a particular set of power relations and hence reflects those power relations (Radtke & Stam, 1994). What is considered to

be feminine and masculine reflects the subordinate-dominant relationship of female and male. When people 'do' their gender appropriately, they act to maintain that relationship. In this sense power is both productive and oppressive, creating and constraining a society's social practice of gender. Kritzinger (1995) describes how sexuality embodies heteropatriarchal norms of dominance-submission. Gergen (1994b) demonstrates the difference in gender roles in cultures by contrasting male and female autobiographies. These autobiographical stories reflect the difference in manstories and womanstories on issues of achievement, attachment, and physicality. This reflection of power as a base for the construction of gender in societies, is also attributed to the existence of sexual abuse in societies.

4.5 LANGUAGE AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Child abuse is a negotiated process (Butler & Williamson, 1996). Marshall (1994) proclaims that perhaps the darkest side of communication is evident when physical violence or psychological abuse occurs. She indicates that these forms of communication are all too common in intimate relationships. Words can hurt - both individuals and relationships (Vangelisti, 1994). One hurtful message can have long-standing effects on a person. Violence and verbal aggressiveness are hurtful messages that usually occur more than once and have implications of immediate and long-term harm to a person. Marshall (1994) further indicates that abuse is not intrinsic to specific behaviours, but it is rather the content of the message conveyed (through language) during interaction that constitutes abuse. This dark side of communication is all too common.

4.5.1 Language and the social construction of childhood

Children who are sexually abused, construct meaning within their social context. Levette (1988) points to the dominant discourses on childhood and children from which society perceives children to construct meaning. She summarises the most readily identifiable models as follows:

1. Children are passive recipients of external forces of socialisation or adversity; these shape or deform them in a range of ways; no account is taken of the child's agentic qualities or the range of strategies or interpretative repertoires likely to be accessible to the child.

2. Children represent an essential innocence, an inherent 'goodness' that lies at the core of all people. They may be contaminated by others to lose this innocence.

3. Children are individuals in whom a process of built-in organic unfolding, following an age related 'natural' developmental blueprint, takes place. The best environment is needed for the best development to take place. If not, the developmental process can be derailed, disrupted or speeded up by particular experiences (like sexual abuse).

4. Children are individuals with inherent cognitive hardware who, having learned certain programmatic logical and rational functions (viewed as foreign), develop the capacity to operate on the environment in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Levette (1988) termed the above mentioned discourses a hegemonic (or dominant) discourse on childhood. Butler and Williamson (1996) contest the current, culturally dominant constructions of childhood to draw on the experiences of children themselves in their study. They argue that the contemporary accounts of childhood constitute a deficit model, whereby children are defined primarily on the basis of their dependence in order to satisfy the unmet needs of adults. According to them, childhood is widely conceived as a state of incompetence relative to adulthood. They draw attention to the unnecessary but pervasive assumption that childhood is not simply quantitatively and qualitatively different from adulthood but more damaging, that it is also, by its very nature, inferior. Butler and Williamson (1996) emphasise that it is also a matter of cultural presumption of the subordinate status of childhood and the relative powerlessness of children to which they want to draw attention.

Their interpretative rules may lead children to assign meaning to their experiences which are quite different from those assigned by adults in their environment, but their interpretations are not necessarily more simple or less sophisticated (Levette, 1988). Levette (1988) postulates that any ideas of children and child development that prevail are social constructions. She indicates that it is also important to recognise the existence and nature of the hidden discourses of childhood. Butler and Williamson (1996) indicate that the subjective meaning given to events by young people themselves were sometimes at variance with what might have been anticipated. Even those circumstances, which would register on any official continuum of abuse as extraordinarily traumatic and serious, often contained meanings for the child that might have been overlooked.

4.5.2 The role of language in the construction of meaning during sexual abuse

There are times when parents feel compelled to invade their children's privacy and then revert to privacy binds or secrecy (Petronio, 1994), putting a restriction on the use of language to reveal information (e.g. on sexual abusive acts). Stafford and Dainton (1994) note that communication between parents and children retains the potential to be damaging to both parents and children. They link two topics (namely, self-esteem and compliance) with the darker side of communication in families and the use of language in parent-child relationships. An accumulation of daily damaging messages may eventually discourage and disconfirm a child's sense of self (self-esteem). These include invalidating remarks - disconfirmations and disqualifiers, labelling and double binds. Parents may also draw from a wide variety of strategies to persuade a child to comply. These strategies include coercion, love withdrawal and induction. Parents tend to forget or ignore the ramifications of the way they talk or simply do not talk to their children.

To be able to understand the role of language in the construction of meaning during sexual abuse, it is firstly important to consider some models that explain the way in which information is processed during a traumatic event such as sexual abuse.

Thereafter an explanation of the way in which the child makes sense about her sexual abuse experiences can be given.

1. Information processing of trauma (sexual abuse)

Hartman and Burgess (1993) present a neuropsychosocial model to explain a victimisation experience. This model surveys the relation between sensation, perception and cognition as a systematic way to provide a framework to study human behaviour and to describe human response to traumatic events. The model operates within a information processing approach to identify how incoming external stimuli or intentialy engendered stimuli enter the central nervous system and eventuate in some kind of final response.

Four models of child sexual abuse help set the stage for a contrasting model of the information processing of trauma:

a) First, Hartman and Burgess (1993) describe the Psychoanalytical Model, in which the over-stimulation of oedipal fantasies is emphasised. Fixation accounts for the dominance of constructs regarding the victim's self, others, the world and intentionality. This model assumes psychological consequences in the deviation of sexual and aggressive behaviours and relationships with others. For the victim the repetition of trauma is symbolic and/or representative in terms.

b) The second model Hartman and Burgess (1993) describe, is the Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome. This model describes the negative consequences of child sexual abuse as a result of the conceptual shifts the child makes regarding the abuser and the action that gives the event a purulent, nefarious air. Initially the child reacts to the protection and nonsexual warmth of the abuser, but the sexual connotation of the act turns the child against

his/her response, while the demands for secrecy initiates the child's sense of shame and responsibility.

c) The third model represents Finkelhor and Brown's Four-Factor Theory (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986; Hartman & Burgess, 1993). Sexualisation, stigmatisation, betrayal, and powerlessness are the four factors that portray the varied responses a child can have towards the event of sexual abuse.

d) The fourth model derives from an Associative Learning paradigm, suggesting that response generalisation is basic to both sexually deviant behaviour and fear responses. The physical and psychological aggressive behaviour of the abuser is associated with personal sexual arousal to pair sexual excitement with exploitive behaviour (Hartman & Burgess, 1993).

The Information Processing of Trauma model (Hartman & Burgess, 1993) suggests that the child processes the sexual abuse experience on a sensory level (the child's basic register of the experience), perceptual level (a classification of the sensory processing), cognitive level and interpersonal level (the organisation of experience into meaning systems). These processes lead to a neurological process in which the information is filtered and related to the process of memory, retrieval and recall. The child's overwhelming response to sexual abuse cause alterations in the limbic system which interacts with the prefrontal cortex, leading to a disorganisation of responses to the sexual abusive act. The child's meaning systems can become compromised to accommodate the repeated sexual abuse by developing a rationale for it that creates an illusion of control and direction. Some children subject themselves to abusive acts though they know that they don't want it or that it is wrong, while recollection becomes fragmented for others. The child's state of passivity, numbness, and automatic movement is sometimes misunderstood by the perpetrator as compliance:
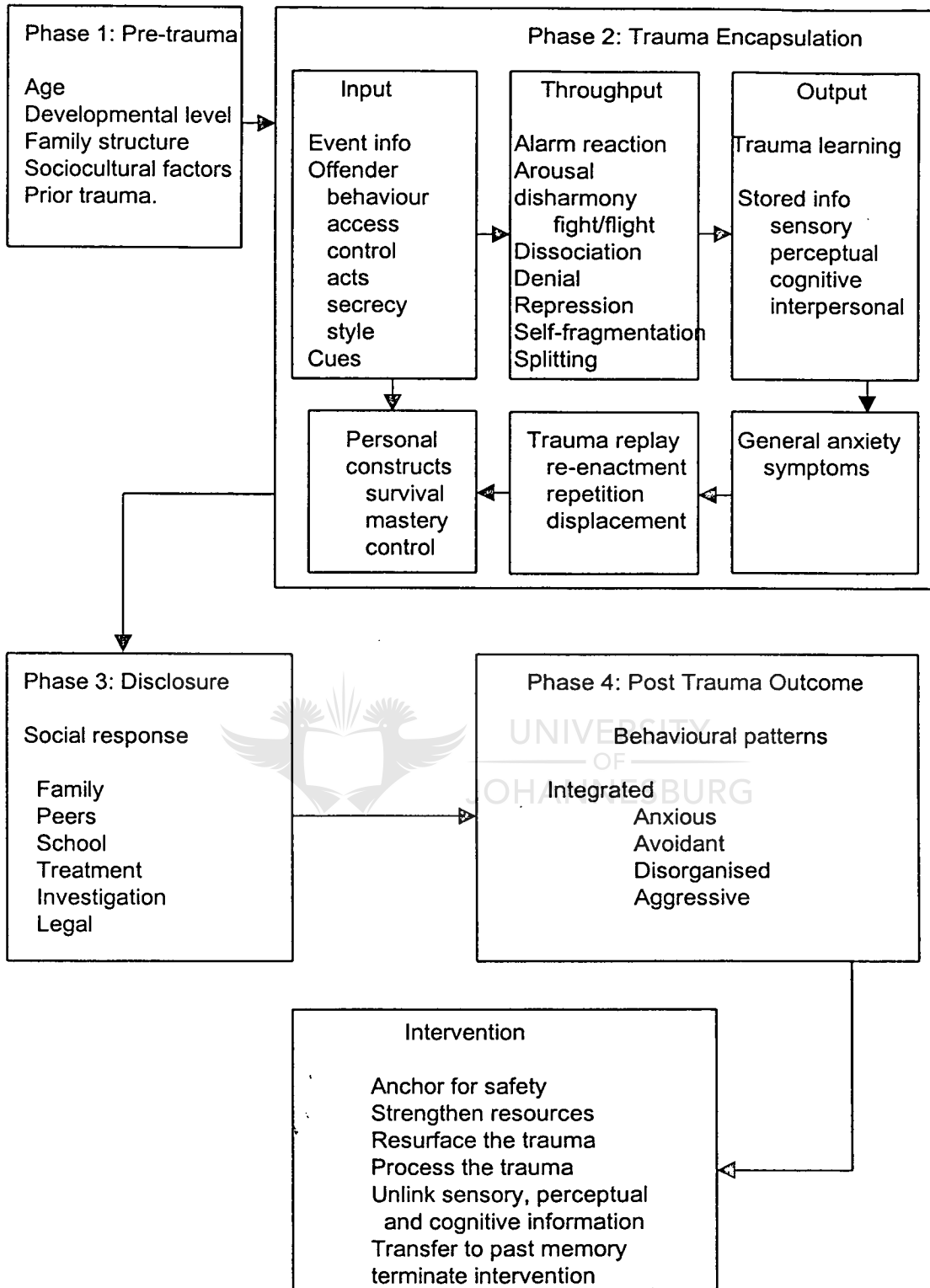
Figure 4.1 Information processing in victims

(Hartman & Burgess, 1993)

In the model in figure 4.1, focus is placed on four contextual phases in the information processing of trauma (Hartman & Burgess, 1993):

a) Phase one - Pre-trauma: This phase considers the individual and social context prior to the sexual abusive event. The variables associated with this phase are portrayed in figure 4.1.

b) Phase two - Trauma Encapsulation: This phase refers to the complex individual and contextual factors impacting on the child. The factors are portrayed in figure 4.1.

c) Phase three - Disclosure: This phase acknowledges that there is a potential for the family and the community to have either a positive or a negative effect on the victim. The dynamics of this phase is portrayed in figure 4.1.

d) Phase four - Post Trauma Outcome: This phase refers to the patterns of responses that are often missed as representing a history of sexual abuse and are likely to be labelled as a form of pathology or mental illness. These patterns are portrayed in figure 4.1.

Hartman and Burgess (1993) concludes that the neurobiological basis of the alarm/dissociative process impedes the development of information processing essential for the discerning of intentionality, personal responsibility (blame), sense of control over events, and trust in others. If this imbalance occurs, the child is restricted in developing cognitive schema to deal with interpersonal intimacy. This results in secondary patterns of aggression and avoidance. These writers contest that it seems as if the child loses the capacity to develop the perceptual or cognitive schema to handle the nuances of interpersonal relationships. The necessary inhibition and discrimination of the child is altered and there is a collapsing of categories that indicate danger.

2. Making sense: The child's construction of meaning during sexual abuse

The nature of people's experiences as well as their coping successes and failures are in part reflected in how they construct their narratives (Klein & Janoff-Bulman, 1996). Miltenburg and Singer (1997) relate the construction of meaning in sexual abuse to the child's ability of inner logic. In a relationship with his/her parents, the child negotiates the meaning of emotions and learns the culturally acceptable forms of expression. The child could then develop the ability to adapt playfully and flexibly to new social situations, on the one hand, and on the other hand she develops a feeling of continuity of identity. The life of abused children is different in this regard. Sexually abused children are forced to decide how to view reality and how to act in life-threatening situations. Children in danger make use of all the means available to them, extending themselves to the limit. They have no space for experimentation with roles and must make decisions about the reality of their situations and what action must be taken.

Miltenburg and Singer (1997) propose the following theses about the construction of meaning in sexually abused children:

a) All children develop basic assumptions about their reality and patterns of action to cope. Basic distrust and insecure bonding is the result of normal psychological functioning in an abnormal or abusive environment.

b) The assumptions become deeply anchored in the personality of the victim.

c) Through inner logic, the child makes decisions about social reality that are based on personal experiences. Children who are sexually abused often don't share this inner logic with other persons.

d) The inner logic often has an enforcing character for the victim and without help the child is unable to see it as constitutive of her own personal theory about reality. They become obligatory slaves of their logic.

e) The decisions of abused children about reality differ from children who were not abused. Sometimes their decisions and inner logic are labelled as personality disorders.

f) The inner logic of abused children is related to survival.

g) The child is confronted with the question of how to cope with her inner and outer world of abuse experiences. They make a basic assumption that the world is a dangerous place to live in and focus on the ability to live/survive in such a world.

h) Children find ways to regulate their emotions and, depending on their developmental level, learn methods to survive.

i) A method of survival is a set pattern of action on which the child, and later adult survivor, will rely on at times of danger, for regulating his/her emotions and behaviour in relation to the outside world (Miltenburg & Singer, 1997).

Attributing meaning to the sexual abuse is a problem facing many sexually abused victims when they are children and later in their lives. Learning to live with experiences of sexual abuse is a condition for victims to set their own goals, to realise them, and to make a future for themselves (Miltenburg & Singer, 1997). Survivors differ in the way that they try to give meaning to their lives. Some survivors do it by bearing witness to the injustice done to them by telling the world, or by helping others in the same circumstances, while others want to have nothing to do with their earlier suffering. The study done by Klein and Janoff-Bulman (1996) indicates that the narratives of child abuse survivors were more likely to be filled with other people, and this increased emphasis on others emerged as a predictor of maladaptive coping. They tend to focus much more on the abuser and relatively less on themselves. Two distinctive construction abilities were identified by Klein and Janoff-Bulman (1996), namely the ability to avoid dwelling on past negative events and over-generalising on those abusive events. These two constructive thinking abilities were strongly associated with less psychological distress, regardless of past experiences.

4.6   LANGUAGE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

The process of meaning making is an event that occurs in the minds of individuals whose cognition is embedded within and shaped by their social contexts and emotional realities (Flower, 1994). Meaning itself is both a social and an individual construct.   Butler (1996) draws attention to the sociology of childhood, in which society is described from the child's point of view.   Although experience of childhood was described from an adult viewpoint, current studies draw more and more on the knowledge constructions of children to acknowledge the maturity and sophistication that children bring to the understanding of their world.   Children's narratives can be used to explore how childhood is constructed and how it is understood by children themselves (Pugsley, Coffey & Delamont, 1996). The social age of the child is relevant to the understanding of the meaning they construct (Shaw, 1996).

4.6.1 Developmental aspects of language in the construction of meaning

It is important to discuss the role adults play in language development of children. Developmental psychology has occupied a position of pivotal importance in informing the culture about the nature of the child (Gergen, 1994a). Wells (1986) indicates that in order to proceed with the learning task, children require evidence about language in use. It is important because child sexual abuse is an experience between a child and an adult, in which the child must make sense through communication and language. Robinson (1988) contests that the ignorance of the types of communication children are exposed to across cultures may have important consequences for the understanding of their language development.

Children depend on their parents and peers to model new patterns of talk and thinking, but as much, they rely on them to provide a scaffold for performance - a supportive structure that extends a child's blurted word into meaningful requests, questions and observations (Flower, 1994). This is usually a process hampered by the adult who manipulates the child into secrecy. The child therefore only constructs meaning with what the adult (perpetrator) is communicating in the process. The

meaning the child attributes to the experience puts the child at risk, because Wells (1986) indicates that the child also needs feedback of the effectiveness of their own linguistic behaviour to test the hypotheses that they are currently using in the construction of their language systems. Misunderstanding between adult and child can be huge, therefore the responsibility is on the adult to compensate for the child's limitations and select meanings so that the child can make sense of them. The child constructs meaning for the sexual abuse with what is communicated ("fed") by the perpetrator.

Snow (1987) summarises the critical period in theories of language development and shows that the development of language is dependent on the maturation of the brain, especially left hemispheric maturation. Theoretical claims point to the hypothesis that varies from the idea that language acquisition stops once this critical period has passed. It shows, however, that language acquisition outside the critical period is different.

During infancy, babies use gaze and vocal behaviours to interact and communicate with adults and other children (Tiegerman, 1993a). When they start to produce and combine words, children use their language's conventional forms and structures (Tiegerman, 1993b). Their earliest intentions to communicate relate to themselves and then make the shift to include others and their cultural environment. Bretherton (1992) shows to the ability of infants to seek and understand another person's interpretations of a situation. By the end of the first year, the infant actively evaluates and assigns meaning to events.

In pre-school years the child experiences a rapid growth in the development of meaning. The development of meaning includes lexical meanings (the meaning of words), relational meaning (meanings that code relationships between people) and contextual meaning or discourse (intersentence meaning). The meanings that children learn are the result of their encounters with the physical and social world and are dependent on their cognitive and social development (Bernstein, 1993a; Tiegerman, 1993c).

During school-age-years up to adolescence the child develops nonliteral meaning to add richness and depth to language by communicating indirectly what would otherwise be communicated directly (Bernstein, 1993b). The richness of meaning is located in the use of metaphoric language, idioms, proverbs, and humour. In addition to the child's linguistic knowledge, emerging metalinguistic abilities enable him/her to decontextualise language and use knowledge to understand language in another mode. Children acquire these linguistic resources to construct meaning. They make sense of the parent-child relationships and try to understand the family context (Kreppner, 1996) especially the family context of sexual abuse experiences.

Children can make sense of what other people mean, because they have access to a wide range of cues that tell them what the context is, what the problem is and what the speaker is referring to (Bruner & Haste, 1987). Children find the introduction of unfamiliar and ambiguous material (such as sexual abuse) in a familiar context (the family setting) highly misleading. It invokes misleading associations and misleading interpretations in the child's mind. In such circumstances it is important to evoke the correct association or interpretative resonance to the child.

4.6.2 The personal construction of meaning
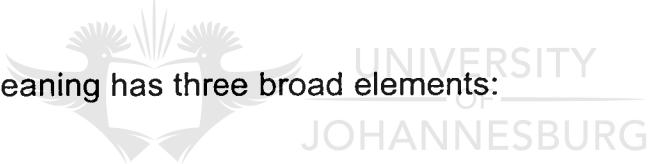
People want to communicate their distress in terms that make sense to them, but not necessarily in terms that make sense to others (Duck, 1994). This approach to a personal construction of meaning rests on the Personal Construct Theory of George Kelly (1963). Although he doesn't use the word 'meaning' (Francella, 1982) he uses the word 'construe' to indicate an act to impose meaning or interpretations upon something or some things. The meaning is not inherent in the thing itself, it is within the person. Personal constructs are thus about personal meanings and personal actions.

Francella (1982) indicates that it is somewhat naive to imply that people ascribe meaning to events within the context of those events. To the contrary, Berlin (1996)

indicates that meaning is not just a matter of passively picking up, classifying, and storing sensations from the external world, but is rather a result of their active attempts to respond to environmental challenges. These opposing views differ on the extent to which the environment influences a person's construction of meaning. While Francella (1982) holds the view that a person construct meaning no matter what the context is, Berlin (1996) holds the view that a person construct meaning in response to the context of the experience.

Berlin (1996) holds to the point that people are not the sole authors of their personal realities. He contests that the meanings they assign cannot be independent of the symbols and the rules of their culture. Secondly, environmental events that affect survival, such as cues signalling physical danger or opportunities for bonding afford similar meanings across cultures. Finally, the families, communities, and opportunity structures they are born into, tell them and show them what things mean and in the process shape their frameworks for understanding.

The construction of meaning has three broad elements:

(a) The *content component,* which refers to the meaning of the word as generally understood in the culture;

(b) the *individual component,* that refers to the speaker's/listener's habitual modifications of cultural codes and individual adaptations of forms of cultural expressions; and,

(c) the *context component,* that refers to an individual speaker's modifications of habitual or cultural codes in particular relational circumstances (Duck, 1994).

White (1991) indicates that people make sense of their experiences through the narrative or the story they have about their lives and the lives of others. These stories determine the meaning that people give to experiences.

Individuals adapt by searching for and constructing meanings that will enhance their sense of security and continuity, and serve their goals (Berlin, 1996). These constructed meanings are a function of their experienced-based cognitive systems for understanding and the nature of the information available to them. Roth and Newman (1993) relate the personal construction of meaning to sexual abuse. Sexual trauma victims may internalise the implicit and explicit communication of their abusers. In a vulnerable state that accompanies abuse, the meaning of the perpetrator's action may become an important part of how the victim comes to perceive herself, particularly when the abuser is an intimate. In an ideal case of coping with sexual trauma, an individual would gradually doses herself with manageable amounts of traumatic material. She would come to both an emotional and cognitive understanding of the meaning of the trauma and the impact it has had on her. As time goes by, this process will lead to a reduction in symptoms and a successful integration of the trauma experience. Individuals who faced severe sexual abuse trauma and survivors of incest find themselves sometimes unable to integrate or recover from the trauma for many years. Lebowitz, Harvey and Hermans (1993) mention that survivors would try to assign a realistic meaning to the trauma and to the self as a survivor.

4.6.3 The co-construction of meaning

People co-construct meaning through language with one another, in a continual interaction with the sociocultural environment (Atwood & Seifer, 1997). The sophists, Buber, Bakhtin, and Volosinov (in Stewart, 1998) agreed that humans co-construct worlds discursively and paradigmatically in oral-aural addresses and responses. They concurred that the human activity of meaning making occurs in speaking-and-listening. Taylor (1995) summarises the work of many authors as converging testimonies to the richly collaborative, inherent co-constructed nature of meaning, turn-talking, and story telling. She emphasises that discursive meaning as dialogic posits that individuals control is an illusion, and that meaning is realised only in the process of active, responsive understanding.

Hermans and Kempen (1995) indicate that the process of dialogical action always involves 'another', internal or external, real or imagined, with whom the acting person is in a process of questioning and answering, with whom is agreed or disagreed. To explore the sharing of meaning systems, the interplay of personal meanings must be identified on the one hand, and the transaction of meanings that occur between two persons through communication on the other hand (Duck, 1994). Verdonik (1988) contests that the nature of co-construction is dialectical.

In their argument for a not-knowing approach to therapy, Anderson and Goolishian (1992) distinguish between the processes of local meaning and local dialogue. Local refers to the language, meaning and understanding that were developed between two persons in dialogue, rather than broadly held cultural sensibilities. A person can make intimate sense out of memories, perceptions and histories through local understanding. Meaning and understanding therefore become a matter of negotiation between the participants. On the other hand, Hermans and Kempen (1995) make a distinction between indirect and immediate co-constructions of meaning. Indirect co-construction shows to the point that other people are indirectly part of the co-construction process, while immediate co-construction shows to the point that both parties co-construct meaning in immediate communication processes.

The role of dominance and social power should not be overlooked in the co-construction of meaning (Hermans & Kempen, 1995). Dialogue is horizontally constructed (portraying equality of power between participants), as well as vertically constructed (portraying inequality between participants). The horizontal co-construction of meaning happens between peers, e.g. child to child communication, while the vertical co-construction of meaning happens between people with more power (dominance) and people with less power (subordinance), e.g. parent to child communication. Interpersonal dominance can take place in one of four different dimensions, namely:

1. interactional dominance (with domination for the one who makes the most initiatory moves),

2. topic dominance (with dominance for the one who introduce a new topic and maintain the perspectives on the topic),

3. amount of talk (giving dominance to the one who talks the most), and

4. strategic moves (giving dominance to the one who says little but give a strategic and influential direction to the conversation) (Hermans & Kempen, 1995).

Personal relationships give meaning (Rawlins, 1998). Meaning doesn't belong to a word as such, but it belongs to the word in a position between speakers (Shotter, 1993). Language also gives an indication of the relationship between the speaker and the listener, because people use language to relate to other people. They express their relation in verbal and non-verbal ways (Duck, 1992). While a relationship is a creation between two people, they are both, to some extent transformed in the process of relating. Personal relationships transform and re-organise meanings, and are therefore not informationally inert (Duck, 1994).

Sharing between people depends on the social use of similarity, the interpersonal process of association, and the doing of inference. The expression of meaning might be an individual act, but the process of reading each other's minds are fundamentally social (Duck, 1994). Shared challenge as a unit of social participation holds promise as an important developmental construct, because it embodies the notion of aspiration, commitment, and discrepancy between being and becoming in a social context (Verdonik, 1988).

Winegar (1988) mentions the importance of children's understanding of social events and the way in which they take part in the co-construction of meaning. Early interpersonal encounters provide occasions for acting, feeling and thinking which are fundamental in their understanding of social events. Through actions, perceptions and representations children's understanding of their social world emerge from their

interaction with others in everyday contexts. In the co-construction process, adults play a leading role in providing information and direction, in order to channel children towards socially appropriate actions and subsequent understanding. Robinson (1988) indicates that the negotiation of meaning is observable during language learning through listening and speaking. The meaning of any word or phrase is discovered by a process of successive approximations. Bruner and Haste (1987) points to the fact that the child does not merely absorb the public concept in the co-construction of meaning. She must reformulate it herself in order to internalise the meaning. Children have to make things unambiguous, or less ambiguous in order to understand them, particularly when they engage in effective discourse.

Relating the concept of co-construction to sexual abuse, Roth and Newman (1993) indicate that victims of sexual trauma may internalise the implicit and explicit communications of their abuser. The meaning of the perpetrator's actions may become an important part of how the victim comes to perceive herself, particularly when the abuser is an intimate other. Dixon (1998) gives an example where the very young victim of sexual abuse might experience the abuse as love, particularly if the perpetrator justifies his actions this way.

4.6.4 The social construction of meaning

Human systems are linguistic systems that simultaneously generate language and meaning (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Communication and discourse define social organisation. A socio-cultural system is therefore the product of communication, rather than communication being the product of organisation. In the communication process, meanings and understandings are socially and intersubjectively constructed. Through dialogue, human systems mutually evolve their own language and confirm its meaning. Evolving sets of meanings emerge unendingly from the interactions of people (Hoffman, 1990). These meanings don't exist in people's minds, but are part of a general flow of constantly changing narratives. Flaskas and Humphreys (1993) indicate that the newer emphasis is on

narrative and the role of cultural meanings and beliefs that underpins human systems.

Social constructionism takes cognisance of the dominant social discourses which contribute to different constructions of reality (Dixon, 1998). As Atwood (1997) and Atwood and Seifer (1997) explain, socialisation indicates the group of processes by which subjective realities and social constructions are brought into congruence. These writers draw their ideas from Berger and Luckman (1966) who initially described the process of social construction. The social world we are born into is experienced by the child as her sole reality. For sexually abused children, the abuse becomes their sole reality, which is neither challenged nor doubted. Identity is built upon the foundation of this family identity. Through socialisation, social constructions are internalised, and as experience is filtered and understood through meaningful symbols, the essence of individual identity is formed. Atwood (1997) indicates that an individual's reality is maintained by developing a personal sense of self that is congruent with the social constructions.

The meaning systems Atwood (1997) refers to, are the complex and unique definitions in each individual that can influence behaviour. They originate in childhood and are maintained by ongoing interpersonal interactions. The meanings that events and behaviours have for individuals are determined by their social position and cultural indoctrination. They are frames of reference for understanding - for making sense. From socially constructed meaning systems flow socially constructed scripts. Scripts are a repertoire of acts and statuses that are recognised by a social group, together with the rules, expectations, and sanctions governing these acts and statuses (Atwood, 1996). The meaning systems of an individual determine the content of their scripts. A person attempts to match her experiences with the available meanings and scripts. In this way, the person learns the language, the appropriate behaviour according to gender, age and culture.

Gagnon (as cited by Atwood, 1997) defines a script as a device for guiding action and for understanding it. It is the plans people have about what they do and what

they are going to do. Scripts are embedded in social institutions and are thus internalised by individuals. Atwood (1997) identifies different scripts, e.g. dominant scripts, non-dominant scripts, alternative scripts and shadow scripts. It becomes a problem for the person if his/her scripts or meanings are incongruent with the dominant social scripts or social constructions (Atwood, 1997). This incongruence could be conceptualised as a double bind.

4.7 LANGUAGE AND THE DOUBLE BIND

4.7.1 Double bind theory

The double bind theory was first introduced by Gregory Bateson (Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1956) and others as an explanation for schizophrenia and was based on the part of communication which Russel (in Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1978), called the Theory of Logical Types. One logical type of communication is to pretend and another is to be true. A person must be able to distinguish between the two types of communication to react appropriately. Double bind communication makes it impossible to distinguish between these two types, because they are given simultaneously by one person. The inner conflict that stems from these two types is called a double bind (Bateson et al., 1978).

The double bind theory was developed further into an explanation for pathology in family systems (Prochaska & Norcross, 1994) and into a therapeutic application of the double bind called paradoxical interventions (Hills, Gruszkos & Strong, 1985). Inger (1993) describes Bateson as a social construction theorist, whose work contributed greatly to the thinking and development of methods in working with families.

Double bind communication is one of the most troublesome patterns of communicating, because it involves two incompatible messages (Prochaska & Norcross, 1994). A double bind describes a context of communication that leads to habitual impasses that people imposed on one another in a relationship system

(Hoffman, 1981). It is in essence a multilevel communication in which an overt demand at one level was nullified or contradicted at another level. Bateson (1978) and Bateson et al., (1978) describe the ingredients for a double bind situation as follows:

1. Two or more persons. One of the two persons is the 'victim' in the double bind.
2. Repeated experience. Double bind communication is not a once off traumatic experience, but a recurring event that could become a habitual expectation for the victim.
3. A primary negative injunction. The injunction can present in two ways, both implying punishment to the victim. The punishment can be the withdrawal of love or the expression of hate and anger.
4. A secondary injunction conflicting with the first at a more abstract level, and like the first enforced by punishments or signals that threaten survival. This injunction is non-verbal and can impinge on any part of the primary negative injunction.
5. A tertiary negative injunction prohibiting the victim from escaping the field. Attachment to the other person makes it impossible for the victim to get out of the double bind communication.

Hoffman (1981) interprets the ingredients for a double bind differently. She describes them as follows:

1. A primary negative injunction, "Don't do that."
2. A secondary negative injunction at another level that conflicts with the first: "Don't listen to anything I say".
3. An injunction forbidding comment and another forbidding the person to leave the field.
4. A situation that seems to be of survival significance, so that it is vitally important for the person to discriminate correctly among the messages.

5. After a pattern of communication containing these elements has become established, only a small reminder of the original sequence is needed to produce a reaction of panic or rage.

The double bind refers to a situation where a person receives two conflicting messages from one other person in an authoritarian position (Reber, 1995). This type of communication and use of language leaves the receiver of the message in a no win situation (Reder, Duncan & Gray, 1993) also called mixed or double messages (Lammana & Riedman, 1991).

Kelly (1963) describes the process of forming individual constructs and personal realities, while Berger and Luckman (1966) describe the process of forming social constructs. The theory of double bind comes into play when, what Atwood (1997) calls the dialectical relationship between personal realities and social constructions exist. It could be interpreted that a double bind exists when a person's individual constructed meaning differs from the socially constructed meaning.

4.7.2 Children's experience of the double bind

Blotcky, Tittler and Friedman (1982) indicate that double bind communications have been credited with exacerbating, directly contributing to, or actually causing various types of childhood disturbances. It is also possible that double bind communication is the result, rather than the cause, of a child's behavioural difficulty.

Double bind messages are damaging messages that carry two contradictory meanings (Stafford & Dainton, 1994). The double bind is neither conflict nor a trauma in any usual sense, but a situation in which no response is possible (Rieber, 1989). These messages are confusing for children, as it becomes impossible to make a choice between these mixed messages sent by a parent. A parent who says "I love you" verbally, but pushes the child away, is sending a very mixed message to the child (Stafford & Dainton, 1994). There is no correct response to a double bind message like this (Kaschak, 1976).

4.7.3 The double bind in sexual abuse

Gonzalez (1988) reported on the double bind factor in male/female relationships. Muehlenhard and McCoy (1991) did a study to explore the sexual double standards and double binds in relation to women's communication about sex. They indicate that the double standards put women in a double bind. Kaschak (1976) is quite adamant that the double bind theory is applicable in describing the experience of women in society.

By applying the basic ingredients of the double bind to sexual abuse, a conceptualisation could be presented. This means that the difference between the meaning that the child attach to the sexual abuse (e.g. "it is father's love for me") and the social construction of sexual abuse (e.g. "it is wrong/a crime to have sex with a minor") puts the child in a double bind. The two "parties" involved are the child and the community. She will constantly be confronted with the experience of difference in meaning. The primary negative injunction is the meaning that she constructed under the influence of the abusing adult ("I care for you", "You are special to me" etc.). It only becomes a negative injunction when she realises that the community attaches a different meaning to sexual abuse. The victim cannot escape the field as she is forced to choose which constructed meaning is accepted. This imposes the tertiary negative injunction.

Kaschak (1976) indicates that there can be no correct response to a double binding message because making a choice within it's confines requires denying part of one's own real and valid experience, literally part of oneself. Sexual abuse survivors have to make a decision between the meaning they gave to the experience and the meaning society constructed. If these meanings differ, she is confronted with a choice that has no correct response. Kaschak (1976) shows that society is replete with double binds for women, in which women learn over time to communicate in a similar fashion and, perhaps even more destructively, to deny real experiences and

instead to perceive any discrepancies as a personal failure. Such a situation is anxiety provocing for the person trapped in it (Smith, 1976).

Double binds are not simply contradictory injunctions, they are true paradoxes (Watzlavick, in Chovil, 1994). Daly, Diesel and Weber (1994) points to the conversational dilemmas in double bind communication which is referred to as a catch-22 (in which an undesirable outcome is likely to result for each response) and avoidance-avoidance conflict (in which a direct response to another's message is always negative).

The negotiated meanings and scripts from this paradox or dialectical confrontation bear significance for survivors of sexual abuse. Finding a meaning is a central concern of everyone touched by child sexual abuse (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988). Children want to make sense of the experience by answering questions on why it happened. In the process, children who are sexually abused develop basic assumptions, theories and patterns of action in order to cope with their own emotions and the outside world (Miltenburg & Singer, 1997). Jehu, Klassen and Gazan (1986) show that many women in therapy who were sexually abused as children hold certain beliefs associated with the experience that appear to contribute to disturbances in adulthood. In their research they used cognitive restructuring to correct these beliefs, with the result that significant improvements were made.

It is already mentioned that sexually abused children are forced to decide how to view reality and how to act in life threatening situations. The reason could be found in the thinking errors that the sex offender transmits to the victim (Salter, 1995). Some of these thinking errors include paradoxical statements and double messages. The child constructs personal meaning in an attempt to make sense, and find meaning in the sexual abuse experience.

When the meaning in an individual's constructs differ from the meaning of society's constructs about sexual abuse, the survivor has to negotiate the difference in some

way. It could be concluded that the conflict between the individual and social constructs could put the survivor of abuse in a double bind.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The use of language in interpersonal communication sets a challenge for any person to investigate the process of meaning and how language is interpreted into messages that make sense. Without the possibility of making sense in communication, there would be no point in communicating with others. Conflicting messages leaves little space to make sense in any process of communication.

Double bind communication can leave a person with the impossible task of making sense from messages that contradict and damage. In this research the way in which survivors of sexual abuse make sense or don't make sense from conflicting double bind messages is explored.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**"Social constructionists have a more
sceptical view of how science operates,
and they will insist that there is always a
moral aspect to research" (Parker, 1995, p.9).**

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Before research on topics like sexual abuse can start, the researcher needs to understand the dynamics of dealing with traumatised victims, and clarify any misconceptions with regard to sexual crimes he might have. He should also consider aspects like intercultural communication, the age of the participants, his own bias, and legal and ethical obligations (Schurink, 1999).

Finkelhor (1986b) points to the fact that research in the field of child sexual abuse poses some challenges for the new researcher. He indicates that research methodology is of utmost importance in this field of study, because the shame and secrecy surrounding the subject makes it a difficult problem to study. Considerations about methodology is hampered by the variety of approaches from different disciplines and methodological traditions. There is no consensus about methodology in the study of child sexual abuse.

Well-designed studies are needed, therefore the researcher needs to consider some of the important concerns like: defining sexual abuse, choosing and protecting participants or co-researchers, creating a design, and selecting instruments for data gathering (Finkelhor, 1986b). One of the most important considerations should be about the ethical problems. Finkelhor (1986b) suggests that they are considered in

advance to implement well-rehearsed plans for handling them. Solutions for the ethical considerations have to focus on confidentiality and reporting, as well as ways to avoid additional trauma to participants. Confidentiality was maintained by the use of pseudonyms for the participants in this research report. The participants in this research are all adults. The avoidance of additional trauma was an important consideration in the way questions were asked during the interviews. An opportunity to reflect on the interviews after they were conducted and an undertaking to make therapy available if the participant would need it, was given. These options were considered as a way to avoid or capture any unnoticed additional trauma the participants might experience.

In this chapter the researcher will present the research methodology that was followed in conducting this research. Firstly, the researcher's choice to conduct qualitative rather than quantitative research is explained. Secondly, an elaboration of social construction research methods will be given. This will be followed by the important topics to be discussed in the research methodology, i.e. the research design, the role of the researcher, the position of the co-researchers, the process of data collection, data analysis and the writing of a report.

5.2   QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative and Quantitative are two methodological paradigms in research rubric, that differ vastly from each other (Schurink, 1999). Quantitative research paradigms represent positivist, experimental and empiricist schools of thought (Creswell, 1994) and take scientific explanation to be nomothetic (Schurink, 1999). The nomothetic characteristic of quantitative research shows to it's aims to objectively measure the social world, to test hypotheses, and to predict and control human behaviour (Schurink, 1999). To the contrary, qualitative research paradigms represent constructivist, naturalistic, interpretative, post-positivist or post-modern schools of thought (Creswell, 1994) and are idiographic or holistic in nature (Schurink, 1999). The idiographic characteristic of qualitative research shows to it's aim to understand

the social world and the meaning people attach to their everyday life (Schurink, 1999).

A qualitative research paradigm will be used in this research in order to come to an understanding of the meaning survivors of sexual abuse attach to their experiences. Parker (1995) describes qualitative research as the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the discovery of the sense that is made. Through qualitative research, an attempt is made to capture the sense that lies within (Parker, 1995). This study is an attempt to show the conflict between the survivor's personal construction of meaning and the society's construction of meaning about their experiences of childhood sexual abuse. Qualitative research is also an exploration, elaboration, and systemisation of the significance of an identified phenomenon (Parker, 1995). The phenomenon that will be explored, elaborated and systematised, is the construction of meaning about childhood sexual abuse. Qualitative research is furthermore an illuminative representation of the meaning of a delimited issue or problem (Parker, 1995). The focus of this research was on the construction of meaning and the conflict it brings survivors of sexual abuse in their attempt to make sense of what happened to them. An attempt to give an illuminative representation of what would otherwise be struggled with in secrecy, will be part of the objectives for writing this report.

The various assumptions of qualitative research can be summarised as follows:

1. Qualitative researchers are more concerned with the process, rather than the outcomes or products of research (Creswell, 1994). The researcher seeks to understand phenomena (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999).

2. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning. This assumption refers to the way people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world (Creswell, 1994), thus idiographic (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999). Meaning is captured and discovered once the researcher becomes immersed in the data

(Neuman, 1997; Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999). An emic perspective of inquiry is used to derive meaning from the participant's perspective (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999).

3. The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994) and concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalisations, or taxonomies (Neuman, 1997; Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999).

4. Qualitative research involves fieldwork and making personal contact with people in the research process (Creswell, 1994). measures are created in an ad hoc manner that is specific to the setting (Neuman, 1997). Reality is therefore regarded as subjective (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999).

5. Qualitative research is descriptive in the sense that the researcher is interested in the process, meaning and understanding gained through words or pictures (Creswell, 1994) in the form of documents, observations or transcripts (Neuman, 1997; Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999).

6. Theory can be causal or non-causal (Neuman, 1997) and often uses an inductive form of reasoning (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999), because the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details (Creswell, 1994).

7. Research procedures are particular, and replication is very rare (Neuman, 1997). Replication is more associated with quantitative research as a means to draw similar results when the same research is done a second time with a different sample. Qualitative research is particular, because the results are expected to differ when done a second time with different participants.

8. The research design is flexible and unique and evolves through the research process. No fixed steps are formulated (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999).

9. The unit of analysis is holistic and concentrate on the relationship between elements, contexts etc. (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999).

Various methods and approaches in qualitative research methodology were developed from the 1900's to the present (Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999). While ethnographic and action research, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological studies, and participant observations, represent various alternative methods of qualitative research (Creswell, 1994; Parker, 1995; Neuman, 1997; Schurink, 1998b; Schurink, 1999), feminist research, realism and social constructionism represent researchers who hold specific perspectives on research (Neuman, 1997).

5.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AS CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH

Parker (1995) identifies two contrasting conceptual foundations that can be constructed to ground qualitative research in distinctive models of the person and the social world. The first is realism and the second is social constructionism. Realism is a philosophical view from which scientists argue that abstract concepts have a coherent real existence and are therefore subject to empirical study (Reber, 1995). Realists argue that any science must operate with adequate models of the objects of the study (Parker, 1995). While realists hold the view that there are underlying structures to be described (Parker, 1995), social constructionists argue that all forms of knowledge , including scientific knowledge, produce images of the world that the operate as if they were true (Gergen, 1985).

A social constructionist view is chosen as conceptual grounding methodology for this study. From a social constructionist view, science is a form of knowledge which creates as well as describes the world (Parker, 1995). Research questions are structured by personal and political interests to explore issues that are hidden. The investigated object (participant) is endowed with the same qualities of reflection as

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the research subject (researcher). Respect for the specificities of each other is part of the exploration as well as the particular meanings that are produced during the exploration of the research (Parker, 1995).

Hoffman (1988) indicates that knowledge is the result of social interaction between people and it is mediated through language in an ongoing conversations between intimates. Research is therefore a process to discover meaning by a process of conversation between researcher and participants. Human life-world is fundamentally constituted in language and language should therefore be the object of study as it plays a central role in the construction of reality (Tere Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). People construct particular versions of their reality and the researcher tries to understand that reality through language and conversation with the participant. The purpose of the research is to represent those realities and the way that meaning is constructed by the participant within that reality. A social constructionist approach to research provides an integration of the context in which the construction of meaning is set. Removing or ignoring the context of an event or social action by the researcher, can lead to distortion of social meaning and significance (Neuman, 1997).

5.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design differ from a quantitative research design in that it doesn't provide a step by step plan to follow. Researchers creates the design during the research process best suited for their projects. Phenomenology and ethnomethodology aim to understand and interpret the meaning subjects give to their everyday lives, following a naturalistic method of study, analysing the conversations and interactions between researcher and participant. On the other hand, symbolic interactionism is also focused on the interpretation of meaning by actively entering the worlds of the participants and observing and analysing the behaviour, meaning and interpretations the participants give to their spheres of living. All three of these qualitative research designs utilise interviewing as a method of data collection (Schurink, 1998a; Schurink, 1999).

In this research a naturalistic method of study is followed, using interviews as a method of data gathering. Naturalistic research implies the minimising of the pre-suppositions with which the researcher approaches the phenomenon that is studied (Schurink, 1998c). Although naturalistic research is closely linked to participant observation in a natural setting, De Vos and Van Zyl (1998) indicate that researchers are first interested in "participant perspectives" (p.279) or the ways in which people usually make sense of or attach meaning to the world around them.

Lyell (1998) conceptualises principles used in different social constructionist research projects, that need to be interwoven in the process of conversation and interviewing. These important principles that need to be applied in social constructionist research include:

1. The research is process-focused.
2. The aim is to construct an event. The event in this research is conversations with survivors of sexual abuse about the conflict between their personal and social constructions of meaning about their childhood sexual abuse.
3. The emphasis of the dialogue between researcher and participant is on the participant rather than on the subject of the study.
4. The researcher is involved with the participants in the co-construction of meaning about their child sexual abuse experiences.
5. The research reflects a process of shared meanings and interpretations from the conversations with the survivors of sexual abuse.
6. The research consists of multiple conversations between the participants and the researcher.
7. The broader context is integrated in the research, for this research the context of South African culture (Lyell, 1998).

These principles were integrated throughout this research process. Kotze (1994) notes that it is important to apply social construction theory (discourse) as research epistemology when doing research from a social constructionist point of view.

5.5 THE ROLES OF THE RESEARCHER AND THE PARTICIPANTS IN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Proponents of social construction discourse provided a basic principle with regard to the role of researcher and the participants. This principle guides the researcher and participants in their specific roles in the co-construction of the research. The principle was formulated by Anderson and Goolishian (1992) indicating the 'not-knowing' position of the researcher. From this position the researcher enters the research process not knowing the meanings constructed by the participants and the conflict between their meanings and society. This principle coincide with the naturalistic approach to this study in which the researcher minimises his pre-suppositions about the phenomenon that is studied. The participants are regarded as the experts about their reality. They enter the research process as the experts on their construction of meaning and the conflict between their individual constructs and the social constructions about their sexual abuse experiences.

The researcher is a man entering the world of survivors of sexual abuse. He doesn't know women's experience of childhood sexual abuse and he doesn't know the way in which these women attributed meaning to their experiences. However, he enters the conversational process with the participants from a position as minister of religion and intern counselling psychologist. He enters the conversations with the participants after trusting relationships were established with them from either his position as minister of religion or intern counselling psychologist. All three participants made contact with the researcher first, with regard to their experiences as victims of child sexual abuse. Without these trusting relationships, this research would not have been possible.

5.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection within a qualitative research design involve three basic considerations, namely,

1. setting the boundaries for the study,
2. collection of information through either observation, interviews, documents, or visual material, and
3. establishing the protocol for the recording of information (Creswell, 1994).

Boundaries for the study were set by way of extreme or deviant case sampling. This type of sampling is used to select participants that are most likely to provide particularly information-rich data (Schurink, 1998c; Schurink, 1999). Three participants were selected and approached to take part in the research. All three participants were selected on the basis of their experiences of child sexual abuse and because there was already contact with the researcher in this regard. Criteria for inclusion in the research, with regard to the extent of the sexual abuse were:

1. multiple incidents of sexual abuse that took place in childhood
2. the abuse took place at a time when they were too young to be informed about sex and their sexuality
3. and their ability to remember these incidents.

Two methods of data gathering were used in this study. A thorough literature search was used to gather information and to compile a literature study on the relevant constructs. Secondly, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the survivors of sexual abuse, to gather the relevant information about the meanings they formulated during sexual abuse and the double bind they experienced between their personal constructed meanings and the social constructed meanings about

child sexual abuse. In the interviews the co-researchers gave their personal narratives, meanings and experiences.

The interviews were tape-recorded by the researcher and transcribed by transcribers who were hired for their services. The necessary permission to tape and to transcribe the interviews was obtained from each participant in writing. Confidentiality was negotiated with all three participants that their identity will not be disclosed to either the transcribers and in the final report of this study.

Questions in the in-depth interview were formulated spontaneously during the course of the conversation between the researcher and the participant. The researcher follows a process of interviewing that includes the planning of the interview (how, where and when), establishing a relationship with the participant, supporting the process of revelation by the participant, arranging clarification of details, and concluding the interview. He asked the participants before the interview started, to spontaneously participate in the interview (Schurink, 1998c; Schurink, 1999). He then introduced the theme on which information is required at the beginning of the interview by telling the participants that the study is about their way of making sense about their sexual abuse. He started the interview with the question: "Tell me the story of your childhood sexual abuse?". "What" and "how" questions were asked during the interview to encourage the participants to say more about their experiences and constructed meanings.

Although Schurink (1998a) and Schurink (1999) suggests that the researcher limits his contribution to the interview to a minimum, Terre Blanche and Durheim (1999) indicate that the constructivist interviewer can never play only a facilitating role during the interview. Instead, the meanings created during the interview are treated as co-constructed between the researcher and the participant and are, furthermore, products of a larger social system for which these individuals act as relays. Constructionist approaches see the interview as an arena where particular linguistic patterns emerge as phrases, metaphors, arguments or stories.

Only one interview that lasted from one to two hours, was conducted with each participant. The participants were interviewed at the location of their choice. The interviews varied from one to one and a half hours. During the interviews the participants were asked to "tell the story of their sexual abuse". Participants were asked questions during the interview to elaborate on the personal construction of meaning and their experience and meanings with regard to the social constructions of sexual abuse. Burman (1995) indicates that interviewing should be concerned with subjective meanings, rather than with eliciting responses within a standard format for comparison with other individuals or groups.

5.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Poggenpoel (1998) indicates that analysis is a reasoning strategy with the objective of taking a complex whole (the narrative) and resolving it into its parts (themes). Although objectivity is much debated, Gabbard (1997) acknowledges that the notion of objectivity has fallen out of favour to some extent. There is however an increasing emphasis on post-modern trends such as social constructionism and intersubjectivity.

Analysis from a social constructionist approach aims to reveal the cultural materials from which particular utterances, texts or events were constructed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Discourse analysis, hermeneutics, content analysis and thematic coding are ways to go about in the analysis of a text. Thematic coding is the chosen method for data analysis in this research. Coding represents the operation by which data is broken down, conceptualised and put back together in new ways (De Vos & Van Zyl, 1998). The researcher's task during the coding process, was to recognise persistent words, phrases and themes within the data for later retrieval (Poggenpoel, 1998). The researcher coded the themes manually, by using different highlighted marks for different themes in the text. Only themes related to the study were selected for inclusion in the final report.

Huberman and Miles' (in Poggenpoel, 1998) approach to data analysis will be followed. They approach data analysis from three linked sub-processes, namely data reduction, data display and conclusions drawn or verification. The following steps were taken in the data analysis for this research:

1. The tape recordings and transcripts were followed simultaneously in order to listen and read through the interviews a number of times.

2. The researcher noted the emerging themes and content and narrowed them down to those relevant and significant to the research.

3. A consolidated list of themes was compiled and clustered together.

4. The themes were linked to the text in order to locate examples of the themes.

5. The themes were reported as part of the participant's narratives and presented in re-authorised versions of their stories told during the interviews.

6. The themes that emerged from the participants were integrated and linked with existing research and theory in a discussion of the research results.

7. Analysis were verified by presenting them to the participants for evaluation and recommendations. This step was taken to enhance authenticity of the research results.

8. Verbatim extracts were used to elucidate each theme and written in a report .

5.8 WRITING THE REPORT

The completion of the full circle of research resulted in the written report (Strydom, 1998). The aim of the report is to present the knowledge and information gathered from the research project is an effective way. This report is an attempt to give a written representation of what happened and what meanings were co-constructed in

a conversation between the researcher and participants. It came to a closing at the end of the report with an evaluation of the study and further recommendations.

5.9   CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher attempted to explain his research methodology. He explains his choice for qualitative research from a social construction point of view. The process and methods used during the process of research were presented and indicates of the manner in which this research was conducted.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH RESULTS

**"Social construction discourse is an attempt
to approach knowledge from the perspective
of the social processes through which
it is created" (Hoffman, 1992, p.8).**

6.1   INTRODUCTION

After the researcher had read through the transcriptions, they were coded to cluster the various emerging themes together. In this chapter the researcher presents a re-authorised version of the participant's stories as they were told during the interviews. Thereafter an integrated presentation of the emerging themes, relevant to this study, will be given. Finally the results will be discussed and followed by a conclusion.

6.2   INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

These are the stories of three women who were sexually abused as children. They are Mart, Chanene and Brandy. All three of them used pseudonyms instead of their real names.

Mart chose her pseudonym so that it couldn't be related to her or her family in any way. She took some time before she came up with the name she chose. Her reason for choosing this name still reflects the theme of secrecy about her abuse and the fear to be exposed to her family, especially her father.

Chanene is a pseudonym this participant chose that could have been her real name. She chose the name, because it was the name he mother originally chose for her as

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a child, but her father turned it down. She was very adamant about the spelling. Chanene's choice of her pseudonym reflects her longing for a childhood that could have been different. It reflects the "other person" within her, the sister she wished for, and the beautiful part of her that sometimes speaks with a small voice.

Brandy chose this pseudonym, because it is her nickname. The only person who knows her by this name is her current boyfriend. Her choice of this name reflects her ability to find peace in a new and trusting relationship. While the rest of her family still denies her childhood sexual abuse, her current boyfriend accepted it and supports her in many ways.

6.2.1 Mart's story

Mart is a 36-year-old Afrikaans (indigenous language of South Africa) speaking woman. Mart chose to have the interview at the researcher's home, where she could speak freely without interruption. She is familiar with the setting, as the researcher had seen her there from time to time as a minister of religion.

<u>Mart's experience of sexual abuse</u>

Mart grew up in a traditional authoritarian home. As a Christian, she was taught to respect her elders. Her father was regarded as the head of the family, whose say was final, while her mother was regarded as the caregiver that had to support her husband with subordinance. The children were expected to accept their authority and to abide by their parent's ruling over matters.

Her father sexually abused her. The abuse started just after the birth of her youngest sister. She was a 13-year-old and in grade seven when her father abused her for the first time. At that time he was working as a representative for a company and had to drive around a lot. His wife couldn't accompany him on his trips, because her youngest daughter was born crippled and needed her constant care. Mart's father asked her to accompany him at night on his various long trips. She tried various

excuses, like washing the dishes, not to travel with him at night. Her mother would then order her to drive with her father.

On these trips he would park the car at the roadside and force her to masturbate him. He would in turn take off all her clothes and fondled with her genitals. She remembers one embarrassing incident very clearly, when he fondled with her while her mother, sister and grandparents were in the car. He left his hand on the gear lever while she was sitting in the middle between him and her grandfather. He sexually stimulated her when he changed gears while talking to the passengers as if nothing was happening. He also used to come into the bathroom while she was busy, forced her to take off her clothes, hold her in his arms and kissed her. From time to time he would lie on top of her, trying to penetrate her. He constantly gave her directions as to what she must do to satisfy him. After the abusive incidents he would buy her presents, chocolates or give her money to buy something for herself.

Mart experienced rejection from her father. Her mother told her that her father rejected her when he got the news that she was pregnant with Mart. She often thought that she should have been a boy. She relates these thoughts to her behaviour at the time of the abuse. She would cut the grass, wash the car, and carry his tools and heavy equipment around for him. She knew that she did a lot of things she believed a boy should do. She describes herself as a "tomboy" at the time. Her parents used to fight about her. Her father would want her outside to help him, while her mother would like her inside the house to help her.

Her father forced her to keep these experiences a secret. He was an authoritarian figure with a short temper that exploded form time to time. He threatened her not to disclose their secret to her mother or anyone else. She was so afraid of him that she complied with his request. He would also forbid her to have any such contact with other boys, because that would be wrong. Once, her mother took her to a psychologist because of her behavioural problems. She remembers drawing people without mouths, which she now relates to the secrecy. Her fear of speaking went beyond these drawings to experiences in class and during Sunday school. When

asked to answer questions or talk in class, she would freeze and couldn't get out a word.

Mart was very uncomfortable with the abusive experiences that happened to her. She was afraid and tended to withdraw when he came close to her. She didn't like the contact and interpreted her experience as being grisly. She resented those experiences and shivered when it happened. Although she wanted it to stop, she couldn't stop or even refuse him, because she was too afraid of him.

Everyday, Mart was afraid on her way home from school. She would wonder what to do if she got home and her mother wasn't there. He often abused her when her mother wasn't at home. She remembers that she used to lock herself in the toilet when she was home alone with him. When her mother gave her news that she would be busy or away from home in the afternoons, she would come up with excuses like she had to do work in the library, not to be home. She would then avoid going home before her mother arrived. In this way she was able to protect herself.

Without a word, he stopped abusing her sexually two years after he started. By then she was 15 years old and in grade nine. She was relieved that it stopped, because she was uncomfortable with what happened.

At one time, while she was still in school, Mart tried to disclose her sexual abuse experiences through a letter to her previous minister of religion. He confronted her father about it, who reacted with fury towards her. He reclaimed his authoritarian position as head of the house and confronted her about her arrogance to disclose things that happened in his house to others. He forbade her to do anything against his wishes and to contest his authority again. It was his way of punishing her and forcing her back into subordination.

The aftermath of her sexual abuse experience

She remembers that her father related differently to her than to her sister. Her sister was his "sunshine girl", while he had no nickname for her. Her sister would always sit on his lap, while Mart couldn't. She would always wonder where his hands were and what he was doing with them. She became fixated on his hands.

Mart describes herself as a "stormy child". By that, she refers to her behaviour at the time of the abuse and thereafter. She projected her anger towards her mother, by throwing her bookcase around in the house, storming out of the house without a word and finding comfort with her dog. Her dog served as a mediator for her need of getting and giving love and attention. Her mother's reaction was an attempt to make her feel guilty about her behaviour. She compared Mart with her sister and accused her of not giving them (her parents) the love and respect that her sister gave them.

Mart ran away from home once. Afterwards she heard that her mother cried the whole night. Her mother cursed her by saying that each teardrop she spilled over her would come back to her tenfold. She never told her mother about the abuse, because she didn't want to hurt her again. From then on, Mart decided to defend her mother instead of hurting her.

Although Mart had some ways to protect herself against incidents of abuse, she reports that her survival was through a difficult learning process. She would hide from her father and she isolated herself from others. She never had relationships with boys in her teenage years and isolated herself from friends. She distrusts all people, especially men. Through therapy she was able to experience some change in order to become more at ease with her current relationship. However, she still experiences anxiety and fear when she enters her bathroom. She is afraid when her husband enters the bathroom with her. Her fear is about him seeing her naked. She indicated that her current husband hasn't seen her naked in their five years of marriage, nor in the bathroom nor in bed. Sometimes she thinks that she might

again end up alone somewhere in a flat in the future. Mart was married three times. Her struggle to sustain long-term stable relationships with her husbands is clear.

Her body, and control over her body plays a huge part in her intimate relationships. She experienced a paradox with regard to her body image. Sometimes she would think she is too fat, and other times she would think she is too thin. When she left school and started to date men, she expressed control over her body in a paradoxical way. Sometimes she would keep men at a distance from her body and other times she would dress or sit provocative and invitingly in front of them. Although she wants control over her own body and expresses it in her own way, she is not able to say "no" to a partner when he requests sex. She would rather choose to lie or fake sleep. When she could pull it off not to have sex, she would feel great and that she is now in control of her body. If her husband makes decisions on her behalf, she gets furious. She immediately relates such incidents to her powerlessness as a child when her father made decisions on her behalf. She immediately feels that she is back in her home where she grew up.

As part of the aftermath of her child sexual abuse, Mart reports severe mood swings from time to time. She would experience a high emotional state at the one moment, followed by a depressed state the next moment. She tried to commit suicide once, and still has suicidal thoughts from time to time. Confronting her child sexual abuse in therapy opened up old wounds for her, but she was more uncomfortable with the effect it had on her relationship with her husband. When she entered home after therapy, he would immediately want to know if it helped. She is afraid to loose control through the re-victimisation she experiences in therapy and at home. She is afraid that the opening up of her experiences might change her into some person that will kill her. Sometimes she does experience herself to be two people. She acknowledged that on some days, she could handle the aftermath of her sexual abuse satisfactorily, and on other days not so satisfactorily.

Mart is currently married to her third husband, who is the first of the three to know about her childhood sexual abuse. She reported that he doesn't understand the

whole story of her abuse. He would not talk about it, but wants to get it over and done with as part of the past that she needs to set straight in a court of law. She is not sure if this is the way that she should proceed. She wrote letters to her mother about the sexual abuse, but never posted them.

She experiences that her husband treats her exactly like her father. He has power and authoritarian control over her. He decides about everything in her life and accuses her of being unfair if she differs from him. She reacts with anger towards him, because she relates his actions to that of her father. Although she loves him very much, and a voice within her says it constantly, she has never said so to him in person.

They recently adopted a baby. Mart is able to give and to receive a lot of love in her relationship with her baby. She knows however, that she and her husband can't present a good example of a loving and caring couple to him.

6.2.2 Chanene's story

Chanene was interviewed at her home where she stays alone with her dogs. She is a 31 year old English and Afrikaans speaking woman.

Chanene's experience of sexual abuse

Her father sexually abused her. He brutally raped her in a ritualistic manner month after month with a knife pressed against her neck. This carried on for two years. She was six years old when he started and eight years old when he was arrested. She describes him as a man who didn't want to work, but forced his wife to give him her monthly salary. He used the money to keep up his alcohol and drug abuse habits. He used his daughter as a bargaining tool when his wife didn't want to give him money. He would rape Chanene until she gave in and handed the money over. At times he would invite his friends to watch him execute his physically and sexually abusive acts. In this way he could demonstrate his power over his family.

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Her father seemed to be a violent and brutal man. Sometimes he would physically abuse Chanene and her mother, hitting them. Once he threatened to throw her from a balcony. He took her by her feet and held her over the balcony. He forced them to secrecy about his behaviour. They felt threatened and kept his behaviour secret. Chanene remembers one time when a neighbour helped them. Her mother told him what happened and her father found out. He brutally attacked her with a knife and kicked her in the stomach. She lost the baby she was carrying. He made Chanene look while he was busy raping her mother. He threatened to kill them if they ever told anyone else. He once tried to gas them. He stabbed his wife a second time, wounding the baby she was then pregnant with. He was born prematurely and lived. He carries a scar where the knife penetrated him in the womb.

She witnessed and was forced to take part in numerous incidents of family violence instigated by her drugged father. She would take part in the incidents to try and defend her mother. She was sometimes stopped violently by her father. Eventually she realised that she was better off keeping quiet and not to resist his attacks. One particular incident made a devastating impact on her. Her father tied her mother's hands and hanged her mother onto a beam in the roof of their house. He kicked and stabbed her. She saw her mother bleeding from her vagina and the consequent abortion of an embryo. Her father left her mother hanging to watch while he raped Chanene. He forced her to watch him on numerous occasions having sex with Chanene until he was satisfied.

The police eventually arrested her father after she told a schoolteacher what happened to her. Chanene was eight years old at that stage. The night before, he assaulted Chanene, bruising her face, breaking her left arm. He raped her and sent her off to school the next day. She and her mother liased with the teacher to get her father arrested. The police arrested him only after he assaulted them again on their return from school. He stood trial, was classified as a psychopath and sentenced. He currently serves a life sentence in a psychiatric institution.

Her mother married again. She accepted her mother's second husband as her father. She describes him as a good person who helped them a great deal to overcome their traumatic experiences. However, when Chanene was 14 years old, she was gang raped by five men on her way home from school. She then decided to become like her brother, because she thought boys didn't get raped. She cut her hair short, learned to walk like a boy, wore boy's clothes and bound her breasts down so that people couldn't see she was a woman. She resembles the same appearance up to this day. She is religious, and will only attend Church wearing a dress.

Chanene had two relationships, but they didn't last. She ended the relationship with her one boyfriend after she caught him with a friend of hers in bed. She got engaged to another boyfriend, but ended that relationship because she wasn't able to commit to an intimate sexual relationship. Since then she never engaged in another relationship.

The aftermath of her sexual abuse experience

Chanene suffers from severe anxiety and appears to be hypervigilant. She lives close to her mother's house. She knows that her response time would be one and a half minutes to get to her mother's house in case her father would arrive there one day. She lives in constant fear that he might return one day to kill them. She has taught herself martial arts as self-defence.

She remembers times of depression. Her biggest agony, however, is her constant loneliness. Chanene reported that she considered suicide on numerous occasions, especially when she felt trapped in her loneliness. Although she wants to become a mother herself, she is not able to trust anyone or tolerate someone holding her, let alone trying to have sex with someone. She has a panic attack whenever a man gets on top of her and has flashbacks of her father when it happened. She is extremely aware of a six to seven year old child within her who constantly ruins her attempts to have intimate relationships.

Sometimes she wishes that she had a sister. She feels hurt if she think about the embryo her father flashed down the toilet. She thought that she could have been a sister to her. She reports that she sometimes experiences herself to be two people: herself and her imagined sister. She would even change her voice when she talks to herself at home and at work. She experiences her own voice to be more like a man's voice, and her other voice, that of her sister, to be more like a woman's voice.

6.2.3 Brandy's story

Brandy is a 22-year-old Sotho (indigenous language of South Africa) speaking woman. The first two appointments with her didn't materialise because of personal and family related problems. She agreed to meet the researcher at her place of work, where she was interviewed during her lunch-hour.

<u>Brandy's experience of sexual abuse</u>

Brandy was sexually abused by a friend of her father from the age of seven to the day he heard that she was expecting his baby at age 15 years. He was a policeman and her father did temporary work at the police station where he was based. He became a close friend of the family. He was married. At times the families would visit each other's homes and they used to stay over on weekends.

Brandy recalled that the first abusive contact happened at the perpetrator's home. He arranged for her to sleep separately from her brothers. She found it strange as they were used to sharing a bedroom at their own home. He came in one morning wearing only his underwear. He exposed his private parts to her and forced her to touch them. His wife called him at that stage and he glared at her with a look she remembered as scary and threatening. Although confused about the experience, she decided not to tell anybody about it.

The next weekend he visited her family without his wife. He came to their house in the early hours of a Saturday morning, woke her up, and forced her to touch his private parts again. This became a regular experience for her. Her father would chase her brothers out of the room and offer their beds to the abuser. He would then enter the room, put his firearm next to the bed and proceed to sexually abuse her. She believes that her father knew about his friend's abusive acts. The sexual abuse gradually developed from exposure and forcing her to touch him into acts where he would undress her and have sexual intercourse with her. She recalls that she bled at first. She also remembered him leaving five rand (South African currency) under her pillow each time he sexually abused her. He would also spoil her in different ways, like buying her presents. He threatened her into secrecy and told her that he would kill her if she told anybody, especially his wife. He bought her silence with presents and other goods he bought for the family.

Brandy accepted what happened to her at that time by giving in to his acts. She let him do whatever he wanted and sometimes she would even ask him to do it. She was the only female in the home and missed her mother very much at that time. Her mother was sick and in and out of hospital. She didn't live with the family, because Brandy's father physically abused her.

Brandy had a relationship with a peer when she was 13 years old. The abuser reacted with rage and indicated to her not to have any sexual contact with this boy. He physically abused her after that. She reported that the abuse didn't affect her schoolwork until she fell pregnant in grade 10 at age 15 years. She didn't realise that she was pregnant. Her teachers explained to her what pregnancy meant and they played a significant role during and after the birth of her baby. She was taken to a nearby clinic, next to the police station where her father and the perpetrator worked. One of the teachers told her father what happened. The perpetrator overheard them speaking and left. Brandy never saw him after that.

She eventually had the baby girl, and cared for the baby under the supervision of her father's girlfriend at the time. Brandy went through tough times with her brothers

and her daughter and ended up one day at a Non-Governmental Organisation asking for help. Through their intervention she subsequently realised that her father's friend sexually abused her. She recalls that her personal troubles started as a spin-off when she realised that she was sexually abused.

Recently Brandy had an experience while commuting by train from home to her workplace. Due to the vast number of commuters, trains are packed and people stand quite close to each other. On alighting from the train one day, her attention was drawn to semen on the bag she was carrying. She finds it fearful and uncomfortable to ride on a train and standing next to a man. She now prefers to stand next to women as a result of this experience.

<u>The aftermath of her sexual abuse experience</u>

Brandy ended in two psychiatric institutions, where she was hospitalised and was treated. She was suicidal and depressed and felt betrayed by her father and his friend who sexually abused her. During the course of the abuse, Brandy experienced fear and confusion. She reported various experiences of posttraumatic stress, where she had flashbacks of the abusive experiences. She finds it difficult to trust others and blames herself for letting the abuse happen without her trying to stop it or speak out against it.

Brandy's reaction towards her child, who was conceived as a direct result of the sexual abuse, was anger initially. She would hit her just as an outpour of anger towards the perpetrator. Through therapy presented to her at the psychiatric institutions where she was treated, she was able to resolve her projection of anger against the perpetrator towards her child. She is currently over protective towards her daughter and reacts to the smallest indication of abuse in a suspicious and anxious way. She is constantly confronted by her fear about the possibility that her daughter could be sexually abused too.

She currently has a relationship with a man, whom she loves dearly. He seems to be understanding and helpful towards her. He knows that she has been sexually abused and tends to be overprotective towards her.

6.3 EMERGING THEMES

6.3.1 Confusion as initial experience of sexual abuse

<u>Mart</u>

Mart initially didn't know what was happening to her.

> I didn't know what he was doing. There was this man, and I didn't think the day when it hit me, that what he was doing was wrong.

<u>Chanene</u>

At first Chanene didn't understand what was happening to her.

> I wondered why my father hurt me and I wondered why my mother became so hysterical. I couldn't understand why my mother didn't try to help me, why he had to put a knife against my throat or what he did down there that was so sore. I couldn't understand it, all I knew, was that it was painful when he grabbed me.

> When he came home and hit and kicked us and called my mother a whore, I never realised what those words meant. But a person can't forget those words, especially not when it was shouted in your face every time.

<u>Brandy</u>

Brandy's first experience of child sexual abuse, left her confused. Initially she didn't know what was happening to her.

> At first it was, I was confused I did not actually know what was going on you know.

> He sort of like was, like showing me his private parts and forcing me to touch them and I was actually saved by his wife calling him you know. He sort of like was like trying to grab my hand and forcing me to touch him and unfortunately for him it did not happen. He went out and as he went out the look that was on his face was so scary you know, it was like 'I did not get you now but I will get you later'. You know it sort of like got a power over me; it was like the first time I ever see such things and the first time it happened. So he left and went to his wife who did not actually realise where he was or what he was doing and there I was left with this confusing thing, of who should I tell or should not tell, and things like that.

> The next Saturday ... he found me sleeping in my bedroom because me and my brothers were sharing a bedroom. They had their bed and I had mine and he woke me up and still did the same thing try to force me to touch him. There again I got so puzzled you know. In the morning I woke up and I was confused, I was actually confused, as I did not know if I was dreaming or if it was real and you know, it was confusing.

Although Brandy was puzzled at first, her perpetrator's actions to isolate her from her brothers gave her some indication that something was wrong. What made it more confusing to her, was her father's participation in the situation. He would also

chase her brothers from the room and invite the perpetrator to sleep in the same room as his daughter, Brandy.

... And then it happened all over and over and over again and all the time he would force me to touch him and all of those things, until the time when he actually you know, like come in and like ... it was also like strange, because my father would allow him to go in the bedroom and he would chase my brothers to go and sleep in the dining room, because we had only 2 bedrooms. He ... then he would go through to his room and I was also like puzzled: 'why are you doing it?' and you know all those things.

... I could not understand that (chasing her brothers out of the room) you know and there was something telling me no this is wrong.

I was, I don't know how to put it. I was like stuck in the middle there you know. I did not know if he was doing the right thing and if my father was doing the right thing by allowing him to do all these things, but at the same time I took it as if my father didn't know, you know. I mean, if you look at fathers, which father would allow his friend to actually go in into his daughter's bedroom without knowing what is going on. He used to like let him go in and take my brothers out you know I was always wondering why that is happening and meanwhile he does not know.

6.3.2 The participant's personal construction of meaning

<u>Mart</u>

Although Mart initially didn't know what was happening to her, she later thought that her experience of child sexual abuse was an everyday normal activity between a father and his daughter.

The times it happened in the car, I thought this is how it is with Chrissy, that is my oldest sister. These are things that a father does with his daughter. It was my responsibility to wait and be available to my father whenever he wants to do it.

Mart thought the purpose of the sexual abusive incidents was educational. When he suddenly stopped abusing her, she thought that she might have learned enough now.

When he stopped, I thought that maybe I am old and big enough now. Maybe he taught me now what I was supposed to learn.

I never spoke to my mother about what happened. As a child, I thought that my father was picked to do this to me, to teach me about life. I approached it in this way.

She believed her father to be a man of his word. He was very convincing both to her and others. She experienced him as a knowledgeable man who could teach children about the truth.

I believed him with all his heart and mouth. Yes, I believed everything that he told me, the children in our Sunday school class hanged on his lips and adored him. He had a way to work with them; he was part of our youth group, and always present among us.

It was in these religious educational settings that Mart experienced her inferiority towards his knowlegeability. His reaction to her wrong answers left her nervous and unable to contest his authority in what he was teaching her, religiously and sexually.

When I say one wrong thing, it was awful. Then he would pester me and make me to be the most stupid child. How can I bring disgrace

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upon him in such a way? But then I learn the thing by heart, but when my father ask me for the answer, I forgot it. Then I couldn't say anything.

In Bible class, when the minister took up the class, my father would sit in as well. The minister would ask us questions one by one. When he asked me, I didn't know the answer. He asked me where the book of Judges was, until today I remember that I couldn't find it in the Bible on that day. When I eventually found it, I shivered so much, that I couldn't read from it. Then the minister got angry and it was the temper of both of them I had to contend with. I knew what I was going to get at home.

Chanene

Chanene tried to construct meaning about her child sexual abuse in three ways. She thought that it was her punishment for something she did wrong, his way of getting her mother's money and thirdly, her way of helping her mother.

> The way he handled her and the things she had to do to satisfy him ... I thought it was my punishment. I probably did something wrong, that is why I got punished for it. I always thought this is how I must be punished according to him. I deserved it. My father and those other men took from me in a wrong way. That is dirty to me.

> ... And you thought he did it to get your mother's money until he is satisfied. He basically used me to get to my mother. He knew that my mother loved me dearly, because she nearly lost me when I was born. He basically used me as a woman. He made me to distrust men.

> Yes, and to help my mother. I had to be strong for her. What hurt me the most, is that my mother had to suffer from this. I was six years old

when I thought of saving my mother. Until I was eight years old, I still believed that it was my responsibility to save my mother from him.

When her mother remarried, these constructed meanings made her plead to her mother not to marry.

I was afraid that the same things might happen once again to me. I cried to my mother and asked her why she took a daddy again. I didn't want another daddy, because they just hurt others.

When she was in therapy during her childhood, the therapist referred to her constructions of meaning as barriers they cannot break.

I even went for 'brain washes' and all that didn't work. One of the gynaecologists (psychologists) or what ever they are called told me that they couldn't understand why they were not able to 'brainwash' me. They said, whatever happened to me was too cruel for me to accept. It is too strong, they cannot break through, and they can't break this barrier.

Brandy

In order to make sense of her experiences of sexual abuse, Brandy did a lot of self-talk. She drew on her trusting relationship with the perpetrator and her father to construct her personal meanings about the abuse. Eventually she concluded that what happened to her was not wrong.

Somehow in a way, I sort of trusted him and I don't know for what reasons, because most of the times he was hurting me, but I was like, I gave a lot of trust in him and also my father.

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You see, most of the things are like secret to people, you know. Like, they don't talk about it you know, and all the time I was like wondering: 'why are they not talking about such things?' you know, and all those things. So, I told myself that nobody is talking about it that means that it is not wrong, because if it was wrong, then somebody would talk about it, you know.

Brandy concluded that her sexual abuse experiences were not wrong. She accepted it as part of the normal everyday life for girls, which they have to keep secret. Something she could even ask for.

I was like also wondering why I was bleeding, if this happened to other girls, you know.

It also came to a stage, where I just gave up and you know. I just let him do whatever he wanted and sometimes, to be honest, I would like ask him to do it you know, because, I actually thought okay. This is happening to other girls because if it wasn't, then I would know about it or they would tell me. So you know, I came to a stage where I gave up and somehow I felt it was the right thing you know.

And from what I gather, I thought it was perfectly normal and happened to everybody and nobody talked about it. It was secret.

6.3.3 The co-construction of meaning between those involved

1. The co-construction of meaning.

Mart

Mart's father never gave her any reasons why he sexually abused her. In their conversations, he did however co-construct meaning with regard to two distinct

themes. The one relates to secrecy about her experiences and the other to sexual contact with boys. Although she never knew why, she accepted his authority in what he was teaching her.

... And he said to me that I mustn't tell my mother, it is our secret and boys mustn't do this to me, it is wrong.

No he never told me why he could do it, while it was wrong when other boys would do it. He just said, what I am now doing to you, you must never allow other boys to do to you.

My father had a vicious temper. I believed what he said to me and I accepted it as the truth. We grew up that way, with the idea that what your father and your mother told you are final and you don't talk back to them. They never asked you why you did something wrong, or to tell your side of the story. You were wrong, that's what shall be done and that's it.
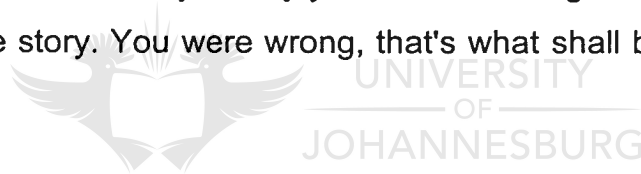
I cannot say no to him. He has power over me and he knows that. He knows that he can do with me whatever he wants to do.

The family co-constructed rules about the interpersonal relationship between parents and children that she didn't like.

When he came home from work, I didn't go out, because we learned that you have to kiss your father and your mother. You kiss them to say hallo in the morning and you kiss them to say good-bye. And when you go to school, they will give you a hug when you came home.

I didn't like it. Chrissy always sat on his lap. I could never do that. I always wondered where his hands were and what they were doing.

Her experience of her father's rejection played a significant part in Mart's conversations with her mother. Although they never spoke about her sexual abuse, Mart related what her mother told her, about her father's rejection of her, to her abuse.

> ... But I assumed that he didn't accept me. My mother also said to me that when she expected me, he said to her that he doesn't accept the pregnancy. He doesn't want this child. He doesn't love her.

> I got the impression that he didn't like me. None of them ever told me that they love me.

> He rejected me. He didn't like me as a child, and that is why he sexually abused me.

Chanene

Chanene's father and mother played a significant role in the co-construction of meaning about her sexual abuse. Her personal construction of meaning depended on their explanations and interpretations of what happened. Her father never told her why he did it. She concludes that it had to with money and she would be used in the process.

> He never told me why he did it. I just concluded that it had to do with money, because he continuously said to my mother 'I want your money' and 'If you don't give me your money, your own will just suffer underneath it'.

> I once asked him why he punishes me this way, because I get hurt. And why can't he like other fathers and mothers give me a hiding, why does he have to punish me this way. He just laughed me out.

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Just before he started with his nonsense, he would say to me that I must keep my mother in check, because one of these days I am to suffer due to her. I always asked my mother what he meant by that. She answered that she didn't know, but it doesn't matter what happened, she would protect me.

Her mother co-constructed the meaning of reciprocal protection. She had to protect her mother from her father's brutality, while her mother would protect her in turn from her father.

I went to my mother and said to her: 'Mom, daddy's got a knife'. Then she said to me: 'Don't worry about the knife, we can handle it'.

I had to protect my mother. I felt that she tried to protect me, I had to try to protect her. I couldn't storm my father and tell him to stay away from my mother. I was too small and had to try to protect her in a different way. The only way I could think off was to keep quiet, and take what was coming my way.

Chanene experienced a double bind in this construction of meaning. On the one hand she had to protect her mother, but on the other hand she was too small. Her reaction to these simultaneous and opposing messages was to withdraw in silence and take the sexual abusive acts that followed.

Brandy

Brandy's father and the perpetrator played significant roles in the co-construction of meaning about her childhood sexual abuse. She confronted her perpetrator for the first time about her experiences when she was 12 years old. He attributed meaning to the experience by describing it as a way in which he helped her.

The time like he told me what he was doing, I think then I was about 12. That is when I started speaking out, you know and there was this girl that was visiting us at home and she was about 7 or 8. I said to him 'you started doing funny things to me when I was the girl's age' and he got angry. He told me, you know, I am lying and all those things. Then I asked him what he was doing and he said 'forget about it' and 'he wanted to help me' and those things.

He became very angry with her when she told him about her relationships with other boys. He forbade her to engage in any kind of relationship with them. She didn't take him seriously, which lead to him physically abusing her.

I was wondering why is he saying this, because he is, first of all he is married and secondly I am not his wife and he keeps on telling me all these things not to do, you know. I just did not actually consider what he said at that time. I don't know why, but I never took it serious. I just told myself that he is talking rubbish, I won't accept what he is saying and then everything started getting worse you know.

In her relationship with him, she thought that she was his special girl for whom he cared very much. It was difficult for her, though, to understand why he kept on hurting her, even run out of her life when she expected his baby, and still could say that he cared for her very much.

And there were times when I would even ask him if he cared and he would say 'yes he does'.

Actually I would say at that time I thought he loved me or something ... somehow I felt that he was the only person that I could trust.

If I could see him and ask him 'why' you know and you know 'why did he also like run away and leave me with such problems and pain and

misery' and you know, all those things, while he told me he cared, you know.

In her relationship with her father, Brandy was also left confused. She made sense about her silence and experience of sexual abuse as a way of protecting him. She had to take what came her way in order to spare him more hurt and pain. On the other hand, she thought he was in on what happened to her.

I did not know if I should tell. What was worse, was what I was thinking about my father, because if I tell, you know, he is going to be hurt that his friend is betraying their friendship and that his friend is doing bad things to his child and I also thought of those things. I was scared also that if I told, I would break their friendship. I had to put their friendship first and put my safety and everything second or let me say that last.

Ja (Yes), you know, like I don't know why, but I could not scream or ask for help. It was like, in a way I could be protecting my father but at the same time being confused as to why he let him in.

2. The co-construction of secrecy.

Mart

Mart's father co-construct the theme of secrecy from the start of his sexual abusive actions.

... And he told me not to tell my mother, it is our secret.

His authoritarian parenting style was very intimidating and he used it to ensure her keeping silent.

My father had a short temper. We grew up with the idea that your father and mother have the say, you don't talk back. No, I never spoke to her about this.

I think that I was so conditioned with "don't tell your mother, don't tell your mother", that these words played over and over in my head. I was too afraid to open my mouth, maybe you could say the wrong thing.

Her father co-constructed the theme of secrecy with her to such an extent that he enforced his power and authority on her. She once tried to disclose the incident to a minister of religion with devastating effect.

He was with the minister away on a coarse. I sat down and wrote to him about the things my father was doing to me. I posted the letter and heard nothing from the minister. I remember that my father came to me, he was as pale from anger. He said to me: "How dare I talk about things outside of his home. His things that happened between these walls are just for us. He accentuated it, what gave me, a child the right to question my parent, especially the head of the house. I believed that he was right and I shouldn't have questioned his authority.

Chanene

Chanene's father enforced the secrecy with the same brutality he sexually abused her.

He threatened my mother that he will kill me like he killed my brother if she say anything. He will kill us. My mother was not allowed to talk about the things he did. She tried once to tell our neighbour, he lived in the flat above us. When he found out, he kicked my mother in the stomach for a long time. She was pregnant with my brother and he came down and we couldn't save him. Then he shoved me in the

corner and he forced me to look how he raped my mother. I saw how he hit and stabbed my mother, while he was sexually busy with her.

Brandy

The policeman-friend of the family that abused Brand sexually enforced secrecy about his deeds by intimidating her.

He would come again and again and go in the bedroom and he was a policeman. He would take his gun, put it next to my bed and get in the blankets. He then ended up telling me that if I tell anybody he would do a very bad thing to me. I would even die, especially if his wife would find out.

6.3.4 Confronting the social constructions of meaning

Mart

Mart's first introduction to the meaning society attached to child sexual abuse came through literature and her association with her peers. At that time she didn't realise that according to society, her fathers actions was sexual abuse and wrong.

I don't know how I got to the realisation that what he did was wrong. I don't know if it was when my mother gave me the booklet. When she started to talk about the things that happen between a man and his wife (sex), I stood up and walked out of the room. One day when I got to my room and opened my wardrobe's door, there was a booklet about "What girls want to know" in my wardrobe. And I don't know if I realised that it was wrong after I read the booklet or not. Nobody told me it was wrong.

> I think when I was still at school, the more I got involved with boys, the more I realised what he did was wrong. More and more I got in the circle that my father said: "No it shouldn't happen this way" and I started to compare things with one another. I compared the things I read and the things he did to me. These two things didn't add up.

Chanene

Chanene found out the social construction of meaning about sexual abuse from a schoolteacher. She learned for the first time that the things he did were in actual fact a crime and not her punishment.

> It happened one day when I talked to one of my teachers. I was badly bruised. She asked me and I had to tell her what my father did. I told her that I deserved it. She asked me why I deserved it. I told her that I was probably naughty in one or other way. Then she said to me 'no', what my father did was wrong and she started to talk to me about it. I went home and asked my mother if it was true and she replied 'yes, but she didn't know how to handle it, what my father is doing is right'. I said to her that I don't understand and asked her to stand with me and the teacher to try and get away from him.

Brandy

Although Brandy was looking for answers from others, she never found them in her younger days. She missed a relationship with a mother figure or any other female with whom she could reflect her experiences. She concluded that society constructed these experiences as a secret.

> I came to a stage where I gave up and somehow I felt it was the right thing you know. At that time we didn't like stay most of the time with my mother, because my father was so abusive and hit her and she

would run away or she would go to hospital. So you know, she was like never there for most of the time. She was either in a hospital ... and there again, I was stuck, with like no female around me to tell me all these things, or for me to ask, or to know about these things.

I had to make sense of it on my own and from what I gathered, I thought it was perfectly normal and happened to everybody and nobody talked about it. It was secret.

Her first realisation that her experiences of child sexual abuse was wrong, came through counselling when she attended at a Non-governmental Organisation in her area. Although her teachers spent lots of time talking to her about her pregnancy and her caring for her baby at age 15, she only realised that society refers to her experiences and condemned it as child sexual abuse at age 19.

Because he (my father) used to like let him go in and take my brothers out you know. I was always wondering why that is happening and meanwhile he does not know. So somehow, when I started doing counselling, that is when I realised that, you know, he knew, because he would not allow your friends to come into your house and then arrange for them, without knowing where he is going to sleep, you know, and all of those things. That made me realise that he knew about it, you know. Then it was going on and on and on, until I went to standard 8 (grade 10) which was in 1992. Then at that time I fell pregnant.

I actually, like joined this organisation South African Stop Child Abuse working with ... and I actually went there because I needed help, you know for me and my brothers. I spoke to this guy and he was helping me and I ended up with them. Then they gave me some pamphlets on how this child abuse starts.

Brandy now refers to her experiences as rape and explained it in a way that made sense to her.

> Ja (Yes), I would say I could describe it anyhow but I know that sexual abuse and rape to me, is sort of like the same thing, because I think what a person feels when they are raped and what they feel when they are sexually abused from an early age I think is the same pain. It is, just when you are small, you don't actually realise that much of what is going on.

6.3.5 The confusing and devastating effect of socially constructed meanings about sexual abuse

The participant's realisation that their personal constructions of meaning differ from society's constructions of meaning about their experiences, created another experience of confusion for them. Their discovery that there were other meanings about their experiences than their personal constructed meanings led to shock for Mart, disbelieve for Chanene and breakdown for Brandy.

Although their personal constructed meanings were skewed, they were able to utilise those meanings as a way to cope with their experiences. The introduction of socially constructed meanings to their experiences pulled the rug from under their feet. Their cognitive coping mechanisms were contested and replaced by a different constructed meaning that left them in a situation they couldn't cope with effectively.

<u>Mart</u>

Mart only realised that what her father did was wrong when she was already working. She described her reaction to that moment as shocking and devastating.

> The day it hit me that the things he did was wrong, I was working, and then everything..., it felt like cold water that was thrown into my face.

... I just know that it was a horrible shock.

I realised that what he did, should be between a husband and a wife. I didn't see it then as child molestation, but I just realised that it was wrong and it shouldn't be that way. It is not proper between a father and his daughter.

I started to lock myself in the toilet when we were alone at home.

I remember the first things that I did. I was still living at home. I tried to flee from him. I avoided all contact with him when he came from work.

Chanene

Chanene reacted with disbelieve when her teacher told her that her father's actions were wrong. She went to check with her mother, who confirmed it. She was confused by this news.

Then she (the teacher) said to me 'no', what my father did was wrong and she started to talk to me about it. I went home and asked my mother if it was true and she replied 'yes, but she didn't know how to handle it, what my father is doing is right'. I said to her that I don't understand.

Brandy

Her introduction to the socially constructed meaning made her realise that her personal constructed meaning about her experiences was wrong. She realised that her father and her perpetrator lied to her and betrayed her. It brought a turning point in her life. This realisation started her problems to such an extent that she needed psychiatric hospitalisation. Brandy coped to some extend with the way she

constructed meaning. Although with difficulty, she could even cope with the baby she had with the perpetrator. The socially constructed meaning of her experiences had a devastating effect on her life and the way she coped with her childhood sexual abuse experiences.

I just looked at those pamphlets and it somehow, sort of like, hit me like a bomb, just exploded as I just saw things clearly. That was when I started breaking down and you know that is when I my situation started.

Only when I knew that it was wrong then the trouble started, while it was happening and I thought that it was normal, it did not do anything to me. It was like, I sort of like felt so betrayed, you know.

Somehow in a way I sort of trusted him and I don't know for what reasons, most of the time he was hurting me, but I was like, I gave a lot of trust in him and also my father. I just felt so like he robbed me or something and that is when I felt so betrayed and then I started to try and commit suicide.

6.3.6 The participant's double bind experiences

The double bind communication identified in the texts of the three participants is tabled. Mart's double bind experiences are tabled in table 6.1; Chanene's in table 6.2 and those for Brandy in table 6.3. Hoffman's (1981) conceptualisation of the double bind is followed to identify the primary negative injunction (associated with the personal construction of meaning), the secondary negative injunction (associated with the social construction of meaning) that conflicts with the first and the tertiary injunction forbidding comment and another forbidding her to leave the field (See chapter 4 for a full description of the double bind).

Primary injunction (Personal construction)	Secondary injunction (Social construction)	Tertiary injunction (Leaving no possible escape)
He told me ... boys mustn't do this to me, it is wrong.	(He sexually abused her).	(Mart's story is full of authoritarian comments from her father, forbidding her to comment or contest his authority about the things he said).
My father was this powerful person, he ruled in our house. He held a high position in church and I believed that he wasn't wrong.	My father lied to me. He was my biggest enemy. He scared me, while he was supposed to protect me.	I didn't thought for a moment.... I was a child, a child believes her father. If your father tells you this apple is red and it is good for your health, you believe him. You eat the apple.
Why did he lie to me? Why did he go on doing to me what he knows was wrong?	On the other hand, maybe he is right. Maybe he is the leading figure. He is the head of the house.	No, I don't think I could ever accept why he lied to me.
He was my father, whom I trusted and believed.	He lied and misused me.	I don't think I can choose either of these two sides.
There are so many times I want to pick up the telephone and scold him. I can't accept him as my father.	He is my father, whom I must respect.	You don't talk back, you say nothing. It was imprinted on us, you keep quiet, what they say is law.

Table 6.1 Mart's double bind experiences.

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Mart's double bind between her personal construction of meaning and society's construction of meaning is clear. She believed her perpetrator and trusted his "educational" instruction, while society taught her that he was wrong, he lied and misused her. Sometimes she couldn't choose either one of these meanings. If she accepts her own attribution of meaning (that he educated her), she also has to accept that his action isn't a crime. If she accepts society's meaning (that he is a criminal), she has to reject the values she was taught about parent-child relationships.

Chanene

Primary injunction (Personal construction)	Secondary injunction (Social construction)	Tertiary injunction (Leaving no possible escape)
... My father, or in actual fact Erron, because I don't see him as my father. No he is not my father.	I know it is wrong in God's eyes, but I can't accept him as my father.	Look I can try to hide it or fight it, but he stays my father in spite of everything he did, he is still my father.
I really want to be a mother one-day; I want to bear a child.	I must have sex to become pregnant.	I can't have sex. Immediately when a man lies on top of me, I panic. The idea, the word sex, means that I must allow a man near me. It means I have to humiliate myself if he lies on top of me.
I choose to be like a boy, because boys don't get raped.	I want to act and be refined like a girl, but then I expose myself to get raped.	I am a girl.

I really want a friend.	But I am afraid that I would hurt him. I once had an outburst and hit my boyfriend. He lost his eye due to my aggression.	I am lonely.
I hate my father.	On the other hand, God says to me that I may not hate.	How can anyone love a person that did these things to you and your mother?

Table 6.2 Chanene's double bind experiences.

Although Chanene easily accepted the social construction of sexual abuse, she experienced a double bind between her own constructions and socially constructed rules about the acceptance of her father, her appearance, sexuality, and motherhood.

<u>Brandy</u>

Primary injunction (Personal construction)	Secondary injunction (Social construction)	Tertiary injunction (Leaving no possible escape)
I still hate him. Every time you think about it, this hatred comes and this pain starts again.	... Even though I know I wanted to forgive him. ...and it is sort of like strange, you know you want to forgive somebody, you know, but at the same time ...	Only if he could tell me why he did it, but I don't think I will believe any reason he gives me.

I am always fighting with these two things, especially when my daughter asks me where is her and who was her father. Kids they sometimes ask, like is her father white and you know all of these things and when ever she sees pictures or she looks at the TV if she sees a white guy she thinks that he is her father,	So it is like you know all the time I have to think will I be able to forgive him and if I do what about her. Does she have the right to know her father or you know all those things.	What is it going to be in the future, what if she asks me how she came into this world, what am I going to say to her you know all those things, and I know that it is going to be hurting and it is going to be painful for her.
Because he (my father) used to like, let him go in and take my brothers out you know.	If you look at fathers, which father would allow his friend to actually go in into his daughter's bedroom, without knowing what is going on?	I realised that, you know, he knew.
I love my daughter very much. The problem is trying to protect her and all the time I am scared for her and scared if it happens, what will I do.	You know, like at first I hated her to be honest you know, I sort of like hated her and at the back of my mind sometimes it pops, I would be so afraid but if she gets hit by a car and dies and all of those things. Those things are in my mind all the time, I don't understand why they are there you know. It came to a stage where I used to hit her so much even for like little things.	I sort of like every time when I looked at her, I was so uncomfortable I just saw him. Because I definitely know, if something like that happens to her, I don't know, but I would have to go to jail or something because I know I am going to a very bad thing. I would even go to killing somebody.

Table 6.3 Brandy's double bind experiences.

Brandy's personal constructions of meaning differ from the social constructions of meaning she came to know. She was able to cope with her abusive experiences, even with her pregnancy and her role as 15-year-old mother. When she was introduced to the socially constructed meanings about sexual abuse, she developed problems that saw her ending up in psychiatric institutions twice. Although she accepted the social construction of sexual abuse, she is still caught up between her personal constructions and what society taught her.

She is also caught up in a double bind between her personal constructed meanings about her hate for him and society's demand for forgiveness. Forgiving him means the end of hate, but she hates him so much that there is no reason she could accept to forgive him. Another double bind refers to the disclosure to her daughter about the identity of her father. She wants to protect her, but disclosure would mean hurting her. She finds it difficult to make a decision on the matter.

Brandy experiences a double bind between what her father did to expose her to such danger, while society teach us that fathers need to protect their daughters. He knew what was happening. Should she reject him as father or accept what he did? A critical double bind for Brandy is related to her daughter's existence. She resembles her father and is a consequence of her sexual abuse. She hated her at first, and knows that she has to love and protect her daughter. If she hated her daughter, she would be like her own father. If she loves her daughter, she loves someone that constantly reminds her of the perpetrator who walked out on her. She is not able to escape either of these double bind messages.

6.3.7 The participant's reaction to the double bind

1. A first reaction to a double bind: confusion

<u>Mart</u>

When confronted with these double bind situations, Mart responded with confusion and difficulty. She found it difficult to discriminate in the double bind between the personal and social constructions of meaning.

> The things I read and the things he did to me didn't add up. I felt sick when I looked at him. I couldn't believe it and I was disappointed.

> I cannot choose whether he is my leader and educator or whether he is a child molester.

> I gave him a cold shoulder from the time I realised he wasn't my father anymore. I kept on looking for a father, and I thought how a father should be. I always wished I had a normal father or a normal life. I asked my mother once why she married my father. I will never marry such a man. My mother never denigrated him. He was simultaneously my father and my enemy. Yes, and when someone denigrated him, I defended him.

> In my heart I would say he is right, but later on I would wish bad things upon him. When he was declared insolvent once, I was glad. When he had to flee from the police, I gave him shelter in my flat.

> When I think back, nothing makes sense to me, because I don't have answers.

I can choose him as my father, but I don't want him as my father. I cannot choose him as a child molester, because of his religious life. I don't want to label the person I see there as a child molester. I cannot ... say I cannot put one and one together. It doesn't matter where he goes, he make such a big impression on people, that they won't be able to believe he did this to me.

Mart used the metaphor of a chain wrapped around her to describe the way she is caught up in the paradoxical and confusing reality of the double bind.

It is frustrating and that is the reason I can't finish therapy. You come to a point where there is so much emotion and so many things coming up, chains that is wrapped around you.

You get what you want and then you reject it. You have a fight with yourself; it is really like two people that is here inside you.

Mart acknowledged that she chooses to react for some time on the one message of the double bind, until she is confronted by the other message. Then she chooses to react to the other conflicting message of the double bind. Thus she oscillates between the two paradoxical messages about the meaning of her sexual abuse.

It happens the whole time, that is why I said I become so tired with this fight inside me.

Mart also seems to internalise her own constructions of meaning, but chooses to express the social constructions that are sometimes conflicting with her personal constructions about her abusive father.

I hate him for what he did to me, and then I would also defend him if someone says something bad about him in a conversation. I would tell

them "no he is not like that', but deep inside I would think yeah, yeah, yeah he is like that.

Chanene

Chanene reacted with confusion towards her double bind experiences and couldn't make a choice in any of those situations. When she realised that society constructed her father's actions as wrong and a crime, she needed to check it first with her mother.

> Then she said to me 'no', what my father did was wrong and she started to talk to me about it. I went home and asked my mother if it was true and she replied 'yes'.

She used the metaphor of a struggle to indicate her reaction towards the double bind experiences.

> It was an awful struggle for me; I don't know how to say it.

> Yes, and it is a struggle. I am basically in the middle.

> I don't have answers. I think about nothing, I am a total blank.

> It doesn't matter how hard I try to block it out for some time, that small girl that become anxious is stronger than I am, she has power over me.

> I can't choose which one I want.

> I can't say, because in one or another way the two are going to clash.

<u>Brandy</u>

Brandy's reaction to the double binds she is caught up in, is with continuous confusion. When she realised that society attributes a different meaning to her experiences than she did, she was unable to understand her situation.

> I sort of did not understand it so well. It was like, why it happened and how could I have let it happen and at the same time you sort of like blamed myself for what was happening and I could not understand how I could let it happen, why didn't I tell somebody or why could I not do something about it, you know.

> You sort of like become puzzled.

> I think that will really be confusing.

> It is like, like I am saying that it is puzzling for me you know. I am always fighting with these 2 things.
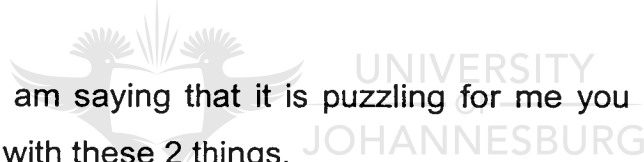
2.   A second reaction to a double bind: projecting double bind communications onto others.

<u>Mart</u>

Mart's reaction to her own confusing and double bind experience also hold that she projects a pattern of double bind communication onto others.

> Sometimes I would let a man kiss me, but then something gives way and I will turn sideways, tell him that it is enough and push him away, just to have control I will ask him to stay away from me.

She realised that she also projects her confused reality onto her son.

I want us to grow up in an open relationship where we meet each other on his level, but I can't show that to him in my relationship with my father. He is going to be just as confused as I am. I hug him, but I don't hug my husband. At this stage our marriage relationship is not right. We present him with the wrong example.

Chanene

Chanene projects double bind communication onto her boyfriends.

> I can't be so unfair to say that I love him, and then on the day we marry I have all sorts of excuses when it comes to sex.

> The one time we tried to have sex. He was gentle with me, but when it came to the point that he had to begin, the moment I got the feeling at the place my father used to hurt me, I froze up. He stopped and lied down beside me.

> When he holds me to tight, I felt I had to get away from that person. He mustn't hold me like that, I can't handle it and I get so tensed that I become aggressive. Then I would knock him away from me.

Brandy

Brandy projects double bind communication onto her boyfriend.

> I would say that they (the sexual abuse experiences) taught me a lot, but at the same time I would say that they really affected my life and I think for life you know. I am with somebody, but like that fear sometimes comes, you know and especially when it comes to having sex with somebody, you know. We would like make love and there

were times when I would feel so scared, but at the same time I would not show it you know or say it. He knows what happened and he sometimes gets so overprotective.

Her projection of double bind messages is also reflected in her reaction to her daughter.

Like last night she had some bruises here (show to upper leg) and I asked her and she said that she bumped her on a metal thing. I did not believe her and I was sort of shouting at her you know. How could she have bumped into something with these bruises? Then she told me no, she did not actually bump. Somebody hit her and I asked her why. She said that she was playing with the car windows, you know and she was like dirtying them and this lady beat her up, you know, but still I was not actually satisfied. All the time when she is with my uncle you know, because she likes playing in her bedroom you know, she would like take her books and do things there and you know and I am still not you know, secure about that.

6.4   DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

6.4.1 Confusion as initial experience of sexual abuse

The narratives of the three participants are rich reflections of their experiences on the way they were sexually abused and the sequelae of their childhood sexual abuse. It is also a rich reflection of their struggle to survive childhood sexual abuse and the difficulties they experience in later life.

All three the participants experienced childhood sexual abuse before they knew anything about sex and sexuality. Therefore they were all confused after their first experience of sexual abuse. They had to make sense about their experiences in

some or other way, in an attempt to get some understanding of what was happening to them.

6.4.2 The participant's personal constructions of meaning

It is evident that, although they sensed that something was not right and that they experienced painful and discomforting events, they were able to construct some positive meaning from it. Mart thought it was an educational event all fathers do with their daughters, while Chanene thought she was helping her mother. Mart and Brandy thought it was normal everyday experiences that happened to other girls as well. Chanene attributes negative meanings to the events as well, thinking that she was punished for something she did wrong. Hartman and Burgess (1993) indicate that the child's meaning system can become compromised to accommodate the repeated sexual abuse, by developing a rationale for it that creates an illusion of control or direction. They developed constructs to cope with what was happening to them.

Their constructed meanings also served as a way to make sense about their confusing experiences. The personal constructions of all three participants reflect the inner logic, to either use deductive or inductive reasoning to make sense. They had the ability of inner logic, referred to by Miltenburg and Singer (1997), to derive some sense from their sexual abuse. The content of the three participants' constructed meanings also reflect on the notion by Berlin (1996), that individuals construct meanings that will enhance their sense of security, continuity and serve their goals. Brandy experienced this sense of security until she found out that her experience was a wrong doing towards her, a crime committed by someone who told her that it was his special way of loving her.

6.4.3 The co-construction of meaning between those involved

The ability to construct personal meaning about their sexual abuse depended on the co-construction of meaning between the victims and their perpetrators. Significant

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others also played a part in their attempt to make sense about their experiences. In order to make sense, Wells (1986) indicated that children require evidence about language in use. Children are dependent on adults to inform them about the meaning of events and their experiences. The co-construction of meaning is a continuous interaction with one another (Atwood & Seifer, 1997) in an attempt to reaffirm the purpose and sense of the experience.

Individual control to the construction of meaning is an illusion and is realised only in the process of active, responsive understanding through dialogue (Taylor, 1995). All three of the participants used information given by their perpetrators and significant others that were involved, to construct meaning about their experiences. Berlin (1996) shows to the importance of others to tell and show children what things mean and in the process shape their frameworks for understanding. The implicit and explicit communications of their abusers were internalised (Roth & Newman, 1993) to co-construct meaning.

6.4.4 Confronting the social constructions of meaning

When they were introduced to the social constructions of meaning about sexual abuse, they were confronted with a different and opposing meaning about their experiences. Although Levette (1988) and Dixon (1998) referred to paradoxes as themes related to survivors of sexual abuse, this confrontation resembles a double bind, from which there could be no correct response (Kaschak, 1976) for the survivor of sexual abuse.

The difference immediately brought confusion and uncertainty about what was true and what was false. Atwood (1997) indicates those social constructions of meaning become frames of reference for understanding and making sense. The participants measure their personal constructed meanings up with their social frames of references. Confusion becomes part of their reaction when they realise the extent of the incongruence between their constructions of meaning and that of society. The process by which the subjective realities and social constructions could be brought

into congruence (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Atwood, 1997; Atwood & Seifer, 1997) became impossible for these participants. This explains the devastating reaction when they were introduced to the socially constructed meanings about childhood sexual abuse that were incongruent with their personal and co-constructed meanings about their experiences.

6.4.5 The participant's double bind experiences

The incongruence and conflict between their personal constructed meanings and the social constructed meanings resembled a double bind. They were caught up in a situation, which made it difficult and impossible to choose either of the constructed meanings.

The primary injunction of the double bind can be associated with their personal construction of meaning. According to double bind theory (Bateson et al., 1956, Bateson et al., 1978; Hoffman, 1981) the primary injunction holds a message implying punishment to the victim, by withdrawing love or expressing hate and anger. The secondary and opposing injunction of the double bind can be associated with the social construction of meaning. According to double bind theory (Bateson et al., 1956, Bateson et al., 1978; Hoffman, 1981) the secondary injunction holds a message that conflicts with the primary injunction, by enforcing punishment or signals that threaten survival.

The participant's reactions to the double bind indicated confusion, with an inability to make a choice between either one of the meanings. Although it is vitally important for the person to discriminate correctly between the messages in a double bind (Hoffman, 1981), the participants are not able to do it. They also presented a tendency to project a double bind communication onto significant others like their own children or their husbands an boyfriends. Double bind theory (Bateson et al., 1956, Bateson et al., 1978; Hoffman, 1981) points to the repeated experience of a double bind. It is not a once off experience, but a recurring event that becomes a habitual expectation and expression for the victim.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The study shows the ways in which victims of child sexual abuse can make sense of their abuse. Children are able to construct meaning about their experiences, although it might differ considerably from the meaning society attributes to their experiences. Mart, Chanene and Brandy expressed a rich variety of constructed meanings about their childhood sexual abuse that conflict with the meanings constructed by society. The incongruence of these two meanings resembles a double bind, leaving them with confusion and an oscillation between two different meanings they live by. In this chapter the researcher presented their narratives and themes expressing the role that different and conflicting meanings played in their struggle to make sense about their experiences as survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Although all three of the participants are survivors of sexual abuse, they are still struggling with various problems regarding their sexual abuse experiences. They could, however, benefit from therapeutic interventions to become true survivors. The re-authorisation of their individual stories might be another step in the direction to break the silence and lonely battle about their experiences. The fact that others will read their stories might leave them with the comfort that they are not alone.

Mart is currently living with her third husband and enjoying a newly found love in her adopted baby. Chanene, still a single woman, is currently mourning the loss of a girlfriend who moved to another town. She is living with her puppies and enjoying the challenge to bring them up as respectable dogs. Brandy is in the process of getting her own family together. She has a trusting relationship with a boyfriend who supports her. Although she still finds it difficult to relate to her daughter, she constantly exalts in her efforts to be a caring and loving mother. Their voices are now part of the growing choir of voices spreading the news that the world is taking notice of what happened to them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Looking at the truths, and nothing but the truths.

7.1   EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate the conflict between the individual construction of meaning and the social constructions of meaning about childhood sexual abuse with survivors of child sexual abuse. This conflict was then conceptualised as a double bind.

The qualitative approach that was grounded in a social constructionist methodology for the study of sexual abuse proofed to be useful. A rich and personalised account could be given about the double bind between individual and social constructions in female survivors of sexual abuse.

The introduction of the participants (survivors of child sexual abuse) in this study, were presented as narratives, telling the stories of their childhood sexual abuse. These narratives serve as the background from which the relevant themes for this study were drawn. These stories told the way in which the participants made sense about their childhood sexual abuse experiences, as individual constructions of meaning. They also reflect the participants' introduction to, and the way they reacted to the social constructed meanings about child sexual abuse. These stories also reflected the experience of a double bind between the individual and socially constructed meanings about their sexual abuse and the confusion with which they reacted to the double bind experience.

This study eventually shows the ways in which victims of child sexual abuse can make sense about their abuse. Children are able to give meaning to their experiences, although it might differ considerably from the meaning society attributes to their experiences of child sexual abuse.

7.2 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

This study was done within a qualitative approach to research. Such an approach helps to give a voice to individuals who take part in research, that would otherwise get lost in statistical and empirical search for universal truths. The participants' stories gave insight into a world of meaning construction, that would otherwise be locked away as the secret and private ideas of the ways in which children make sense about their sexually abusive realities. These stories are representations of their worlds of conflict and paradoxes that were conceptualised as double binds. The methodology used in this study was a useful tool to elicit the richness of these individual stories told by the participants.

The participants were allowed to present information that they regard as secret and private. All three of the participants, like many other survivors of child sexual abuse, were sworn and threatened into secrecy by their abusers. This study gave them an opportunity to present their stories and break their burden of silence about their experiences. Although they used pseudonyms to protect their identity, they had an opportunity to share the sense they made of their experiences and the struggle they still have to make sense of their experiences.

The study was grounded in a social constructionist view. This view gave the researcher the opportunity to gain some understanding in the co-construction of meaning. The co-construction of meaning happened between the perpetrator and the victim of the sexual abuse. All three the participants relied on information from their abusers to make sense of their experiences. This study provide some insights into this process and gave the participants an opportunity to present these co-

constructions of meaning that would otherwise be hidden away from the public domain as secrets.

The study provides some insights into the world of survivors of sexual abuse. None of these insights are regarded as the truth, but as truths presenting the experiences of the participants. They constructed meaning about their reality that holds the truth for them. This research enabled the researcher to adopt a more flexible stance with regard to the construction of meaning about sexual abusive experiences.

From a therapeutic view, this study opened up a new awareness to be more open and sensitive towards children who are sexually abused as well as survivors of child sexual abuse. It emphasised awareness of the double bind between individual and socially constructed meanings that conflict, and the struggle for survivors to make sense about their experiences in spite of the double bind. These stories provide enough reason for caution that anyone within the helping professions cannot assume that the victim or survivor of sexual abuse will make the same sense of their experiences as society has made.

The researcher's account of the participants' narratives and themes was presented to the participants to read and comment on. These comments were integrated in the final presentation of the research results (chapter six). This provided for validation of the narratives and themes presented. This process attributes to the subjective reliability of the information presented.

7.3   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited by time and the impossible task of gathering endless stories about the participant's experiences of child sexual abuse. Although it seemed like the gathering of never ending stories, the participants were interviewed once for the purposes of this study. Therefore countless relevant stories were negated, which could impact more on the richness and fullness of the study.

The researcher's gender and his own constructs also limited the study. The researcher is a man, who interpreted and selected themes from his own perspective. Although this is his account of the participant's narratives and experiences, it is not the only account that could be drawn from the data and the stories presented in the interviews.

Although the participants have articulated diverse meanings, the researcher regards this diversity as a strength of the study, showing the richness and diversity in the construction of meaning by survivors of sexual abuse. It is however regarded as a limitation, but only to those who want to generalise research results to the broader population. The methodology used in this study does not allow for generalisations to that extent.

References by the participants to other individuals involved (e.g. the perpetrators, fathers, mothers and other siblings) could not be verified, and don't need to be verified. The researcher accepted their accounts of the information as their valid and constructed reality.
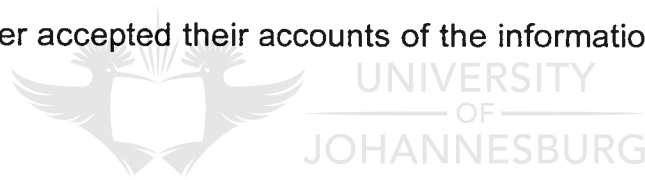
Due to the sensitivity of the subject and the cruelty some of the stories reflected, the researcher had to provide debriefing and help to some of the transcribers of the audiotaped conversations. There is however no way to measure the impact these stories will have on the readers of this study and to provide some form of help to them. The researcher has to rely on the reader's own sense of responsibility to approach professionals if they need to.

7.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on the double bind between individual and social constructions of meaning. There is, however, a magnitude of possibilities to study the dynamics and outcomes involved with regard to individual and social constructions of meaning.

Recommendations for future research would not limit enquiry into the construction of meaning to survivors of sexual abuse, but expand it to any victim or survivor of a crime or individuals exposed to traumatic experiences. Future studies could also involve girls, adolescent women, boys or young men as participants, as the participants in this study were female survivors.

The construction of meaning is an individual and private event that evolves through, and involves, processes of co-construction and social construction of meaning. More studies that reflect these processes could lead to a better understanding of them. More studies about these processes could also impact on more adequate and effective interventions by professionals working with children who are sexually abused or survivors of childhood sexual abuse. More research could also impact on the assumptions and biases professionals hold about the meaning being attributed to childhood sexual abuse.

This study reflects the process of meaning construction by survivors of sexual abuse and the double bind experience when they were introduced to the social constructions of sexual abuse. Future studies could enquire into professional's approach to the problem, the effective dealing with this problem, and various methods of intervention for this problem.

7.5 FINAL COMMENT

The researcher would like to include this research as part of the multiple voices already given to victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In an attempt to break the silence, in which many a person is held captive by a perpetrator of child sexual abuse, these participants spoke the truth about their reality and their struggle to make sense. They add their voices to the many others like them that cry for an end to this horror.

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