The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.
JUVENILE CRIMES IN MALAWI: LIFE-HISTORY NARRATIVES OF MALE JUVENILE OFFENDERS

BY

NDUMANENE DEVLIN SILUNGWE
[SLNNDU001]

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF:

MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
(2007)

SUPERVISOR: ADELENE AFRICA
DECLARATION

I hereby declare, that this work is original and has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. Significant contributions from the works of others have been duly recognised, and acknowledged, through appropriate quotations, citations and referencing.

SIGNATURE
Ndumanene Devlin Silungwe

DATE
May, 2008

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE
Adelene Africa

DATE
May, 2008
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research writing, as the author came to realise, is equally a life-course process; it is full of ups and downs, riddles and obstacles that must be overcome. I am privileged that I did not feel alone through this journey, owing to massive support financially, socially, academically and emotionally from different sources. For this reason, I am indebted to St John of God Brothers (Ireland) and the St John of God Community services in Malawi for the financial support rendered to bring this dissertation into fruition. Special mention is made of Bro. Aidan Crohessy O.H., the Psychiatric Nursing and Counselling Departments staff of the St John of God College of Health Sciences - Dr. Isabella Msolomba, Beverly Van Tomme, Sr. Huguette Ostiguy M.I.C, Thokozani Bvumbwe and Charles Masulani Mwale.

At the University of Cape Town (UCT), I am highly indebted to my supervisor Adelene Africa. Thank you for travelling with me on this journey and for a good-enough supervision even during moments when my emotions seemed to be thrown everywhere. The wealth of knowledge in this study is also owed to my professors and lecturers Sally Swartz, and Pumla-Gobodo Madikizela; but also lecturers Anastasia Maw, Dr. Debra Karminer, Dr. Nokuthula Shabalala, Dr. Mark Tomalinson and Dr. Chioza Bandawe at the Child Guidance Clinic and UCT. Professor Yohannes Louw and Secretary Tanya Hannibal thank you. I am also indebted to Oliver Schenk for the endless discussions on humanity and about humanity, and the challenges that we face as a human race. Those discussions are going to shape my life and I can only hope that most of those can be achieved in our life time.

My wife Thandiwe, what would I do without you? You and the children have been a beacon of hope. My mother Victoria Kabaghe for being a good-enough support; my brother Noah for the academic foundations; Jacqueline Wanjiru Nyange for ideas; the UCT writing centre and the writing centre circle for superb English lessons and research discussions ensuring clarity in grammar; and numerous others that I cannot mention here. Finally I am forever indebted to the owners of these stories. This is their study as much as it is mine.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memories past, in my father Henry, My brothers Dean and Given, my sister Anganile Pain, my sister-in-law Elina and my nephew Stephen. It is also my dedication to my father and mother-in-laws and my sister-in-laws Martha, Judith and Ellen. Their passing between the years 1997 and 2004 left a big hole in our lives. However, this work is also a dedication to our present and future memories in the genesis of Sizwekazi Lusekelo. May you grow up with wisdom and abundant humanism.
ABSTRACT

Juvenile crime is a growing problem in Malawi. International research has focussed on the causes of this type of crime in an attempt to explain and deal with this phenomenon. This study adds to the scholarly knowledge by exploring the life stories of 22 male juvenile offenders currently incarcerated for various crimes in Malawi. Semi-structured life-history interviews were conducted and results are consistent with the existing literature - specifically on risk factors, control theories and life-course theories. This study showed that several factors in childhood and adolescence contributed to the participants' offending behaviour. Participants also made sense of their behaviour by constructing themselves as victims of life circumstances, spiritual and supernatural forces, and an inequitable justice system. Some of these attributional models are uncommon in criminological literature.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover Page</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
<td>iii-iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Juvenile Crimes in Malawi</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>THEORIES OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.0</td>
<td>SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Gendered Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2</td>
<td>Structural Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3</td>
<td>Social Conflict Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4</td>
<td>Social Control Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.0</td>
<td>Intra-Individual Theories</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>Social Psychological Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>Social Learning Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION OF THEORY- THE LIFE-COURSE THEORY OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>EARLY CHILDHOOD</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>The Role of Life Events</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>MIDDLE CHILDHOOD</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1</td>
<td>Gender Roles</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2</td>
<td>Family and Peers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3</td>
<td>Neighbourhoods</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>ADOLESCENCE</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>Family, Peers and Neighbourhoods</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2</td>
<td>The Role of Agency</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1</td>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>The Life History Method</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Research Procedures and Processes</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Institutional Approval and Consent</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Participants Selection</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Interview Setting</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4</td>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.5</td>
<td>Audio-Recording</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.6</td>
<td>Protection of Research Participants</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.7</td>
<td>The Life-Story Interviews</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.8</td>
<td>Data Processing</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The study explores the life histories of male juvenile offenders in an attempt to understand their pathways to crime.

The next six chapters have been developed to deal with different issues culminating in the results and discussions in chapter five. In chapter two the author reviews current literature in the area of crime and delinquency. This is achieved by briefly reviewing selected sociological and psychological theories of crime and delinquency - including some snapshots of qualitative and quantitative study results in the field. Within the sociological tradition, gender theory, social conflict theory, functional theory and control theories are reviewed. Within the psychological theories, personality and biological theories as well as social psychological theories are reviewed briefly. The chapter begins however, by looking at the trends in the area of juvenile crime and delinquency in Malawi vis a vis global literature.

In chapter three the author reconciles information from chapter two, and marries it with life-course-based literature on crime and delinquency, to build a life-course theory that is specifically aimed to describe, explain and interpret life-histories of juvenile offenders in this study. It is an inclusive oriented theory of crime and delinquency. It situates the offender in the life-span context and explores life-events and transitions that potentially predispose the developing individual to delinquent activities. It evaluates individual, social and contextual issues that can explain the reasons that lead some young people to become criminal offenders when others do not - even when sometimes the conditions are the same. The theory also provides answers as to why juvenile offenders interpret their offending behaviour the way they do.

In Chapter four the author discusses the research methodology that was used in this study. The study is situated in the qualitative tradition; hence, the essence of a qualitative methodology is presented followed by step by step processes and procedures employed in the collection of data, transcription and the choice of the approach of analysing the data. The study adopts a life-history qualitative research method, in analysing the data. The rationale for adopting a qualitative method in general and a life-history approach in particular is also explored.
In chapter five, the author uses the theory in chapter three to describe, explain and interpret the life-histories of juvenile offenders, in a systematic life-course fashion. Hence, chapter five explores the results while at the same time making interpretations or discussions. Excerpts of the histories, in form of quotes, are used to complement history summaries in the appendix (A). In chapter six the author presents concluding remarks based on the results and discussions. Further, final recommendations are provided and research limitations suggested.


2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews a range of psychological, sociological and criminological literature which accounts for the phenomenon of juvenile crime. It begins by briefly presenting the problem of juvenile crime and juvenile delinquency in Malawi; it reviews some of the definitional frameworks in the area of crime and delinquency; and it concludes with brief reviews of theoretical frameworks as well as qualitative and quantitative studies in the field.

2.1.1 Juvenile Crimes in Malawi

There is a dearth of statistics to compare the trends of juvenile crimes because the National Criminal Investigation Department (NCID) has recently only introduced a policy for separate criminal statistics pertaining to juvenile offences in Malawi.\(^1\) Prior to 2005, juvenile offending statistics were absorbed into the larger category of male offenders. The department also admitted that general trends of male offending statistics, over the previous years, had been rather blurred. At a global level, the United Nations youth report (2003) corroborates empirical research which has found that young people constitute the most criminally active segment of populations (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Blackburn, 1993; Brannigan, 1997; Hoffmann & Cerbone, 1999; Thornberry, 1995; Moffitt, 1993; Paternoster & Brame, 1997); but compared to a whole criminal population, they have fewer arrest rates than adults (Bartol, 2002).

Low arrest statistics can be considered to be a reflection of some societies’ high tolerance of delinquent acts; in these contexts, acts of juvenile delinquency are perceived as transitional and therefore result in non-reporting to criminal justice systems or are resolved using informal dispute resolution processes available to those societies (Stephenson, 1992). The latter mechanism has been instrumental in explaining the previous lack of arrest statistics for Malawian juvenile offenders. Before 1994, village courts (traditional courts) and approved schools took a primary role in dealing with all juvenile criminal issues (Degabriele, 2001); however given the statutory changes in 1995, which saw the abolishment of traditional courts in favour of formal courts, coupled with the under-utilisation of approved schools, crimes once

\(^1\) Dominie Mario: Regional Child Protection Officer (N), Malawi Police Services- Interviewed in August 2006.
unrecognised are becoming a noticeable phenomenon (Degabriele, 2001; Twea, 2004). The participation of juveniles in criminal activities continue to elicit much research interest and remain a major concern globally (Bartol, 2002; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; UN, 2003).

2.1.2 Definition of Terms

In this study, juvenile criminal activities will be examined via theories of crime and delinquency, which have also been used to explain adult criminality in other respects (Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1993; Farrington, 2003, 2002, 1994; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993).

The concept of delinquency is used and understood differently from country to country and from discipline to discipline (Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1993). Thus Bartol (2002, p.29) describes it as “an impressive, nebulous, social, clinical and a legal label for a wide variety of law and norm-violating behaviour”. Delinquency “is a behaviour against the criminal code committed by an individual who has not reached adulthood” (ibid., p.29). Blackburn (1993, p.10) defines ‘a delinquent’ as “one who has committed an act which would be criminal if committed by an adult, which is defined by a lower age limit varying from fifteen to eighteen depending on jurisdiction”. Within social psychology for example, delinquency is understood to include all behaviours that are against social norms - whether or not requiring police intervention (Bartol, 2002). It can be seen that definitions range from norm violations to criminal acts punishable by law. For the purpose of this study, delinquency is considered to be synonymous with juvenile crime. Thus any behaviour which constitutes a criminal act, and which may result in punishment would fall within this definition.

In this study then, offending behaviour is understood both in the context of crime and delinquency theories, which combine both juvenile offending and adult offending (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Bartol, 2002; Farrington, 1994; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Juvenile crime, juvenile delinquency and juvenile offending will therefore be used interchangeably in this paper to mean: “intentional acts committed by a child and a young person. A child is defined as a person who is under the age of 14, while a
young person in one who is under the age of 18 years\textsuperscript{2}, incarcerated for intentional violation of the state law”. The chapter therefore reviews the relevant literature in this field, drawing on sociological, criminological and psychological theories.

### 2.2 THEORIES OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

#### 2.2.0 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Sociological theories of crime and delinquency use gender, social class and other social-cultural structures in describing, explaining and understanding crime and delinquency (Bartol, 2002; Cree, 1999; Harrower, 2001; Rock, 2002). There are different theories within the sociological framework each emphasising specific elements in its analysis of crime and delinquency (Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). Some emphasise the role of social structures and social institutions, while others emphasise the role of social processes (Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). From the many sociological theories, discussion is focused here on a selected few - namely: gender, structural, functional and control theories.

#### 2.2.1 Gendered Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime

Global statistics show that males tend to commit more crimes than their female counterparts (Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1993; Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002) something that sociologists believe is a result of socialisation (Cree, 1999). Cultural prescriptions require that boys and girls should be socialised in different ways resulting in culturally constructed gender roles and gendered ways of interacting with the world (Rock, 2002). Gender is the only other factor after age, which is pertinent in most criminological research when offenders and non-offenders are compared (Hope, Grasmick & Pointon, 2003). Because of compelling statistics, which show that males commit more crimes than females, some researchers suggest that criminal behaviour has biological roots which are somehow inherent to men (Bartol, 2002; Farrington, 1994). However, from a sociological perspective, crime and delinquency are seen as purely social issues situated in social structures and social processes (Bufkin, 2001;

\textsuperscript{2} Section 2 of the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969, (Cap.26:03) Laws of Malawi
Boys are socialised to be independent, confident and aggressive while girls are socialised to be nurturing, emotional and focused on relationships (Cole & Cole, 1996). Given these differences in socialisation, it stands to reason that boys and girls may respond differently when faced with awkward life situations or stressful life-events. Males tend to express their frustrations by engaging in externalising behaviour (for example, aggression) while females tend to react through internalising behaviour (for example, depression) (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Cole & Cole, 1996). These ways of interacting with the world therefore set a template for how young people cope with life transitions and challenges.

While certain gendered behaviours are actively encouraged and rewarded, unacceptable or non-conformist behaviour is sanctioned. For example, boys are encouraged to actively engage with the world and yet when girls try to behave in this way, they receive harsher sanctions. Thus girls who are not sedate, ‘lady-like’ and well mannered are sanctioned for their ‘wild’ behaviour; these sanctions have the effect of moulding appropriate behaviour (Eschholz & Bufkin, 2003; Kania & Herz, 2002). Parents are also believed to be more vigilant in monitoring their daughters’ behaviour than they do with boys (Hope, et al., 2003); as a result, they sanction their behaviour more than boys - a situation that is believed to lead to high self-regulation in girls (ibid.). These sanctions play an important role in the incidence and nature of juvenile crime. Girls are less likely to engage in violent or aggressive behaviour because it is not in harmony with the gendered expectations.

Where boys do engage in violent crimes, these acts are often underpinned by set ideas about masculinity. For example, Hunter (2004), studying male juvenile sex offenders, found that participants seemed to offend because of their exposure to beliefs that behaving aggressively and violently confirmed real manhood. Thus sexual violence was seen as an expression of masculinity. In the same vein, other researchers have found that some male delinquents who engage in offending behaviour may be doing so to achieve domination and control (Eschholz & Bufkin, 2001; Hunter, 2004). The differences in gendered criminal behaviour based on power and control is also supported by Brannigan (1999).
There are other social institutions that are perceived to be contributing tremendously to the reinforcement of gendered beliefs on criminal behaviour, and one such institution is the media (Dotter, 2002). Eschholz and Bufkin (2001) believe that the media, particularly electronic media, play a very big role in reinforcing male offender stereotypes. Most media often portray offenders, and potential offender identities, as males; hence, the male-offender stereotypes are reinforced leaving a social impression of offending being with the masculine domain (ibid.). The stereotypes and beliefs effectively discourage females from offending, as they tend to be heavily sanctioned when violating gender norms (ibid.). Bufkin (2001) and Eschholz and Bufkin (2001) explored gendered criminal acts in media and how masculine identities were created. Their findings showed that males were often portrayed as perpetrators while females were portrayed as victims of crime and abuse; males were also often constructed as strong while females were constructed as weak in their roles; and violence was often used in films to demonstrate power and control (Bufkin, 2001; Eschholz & Bufkin, 2001).

This, the authors believed, reinforced the concept of strong male/weak female and allowed young male and female viewers to identify themselves with particular gender roles in such films and transfer such roles in their day to day interactions (ibid.). Eschholz and Bufkin (2001) had reviewed some films shown in the United States of America (USA) to find out how perpetrators and victims of media crime were portrayed; and they also wanted to explore the sexes that were likely to be portrayed in the perpetrator-victim roles. They made an observation that in most action films, hero characters were often played by males who tended to violate the law in order to uphold the law; they feared that such images endorsed both the use of physical intimidation and violence as a means to accomplish goals - prompting them to add, "...while the resulting goal in the fantasy of action, the adventure film is triumph of good over evil, a subtle message legitimising violence may also be in place ...some young men who lack alternative role models may use media information as a source for constructing identities - including deviant gender identities" (Eschholz and Bufkin, 2001, p.661).
In essence gendered theories of crime provide insight into statistical differences in rates of crime perpetrated by boys and girls. They also provide insight into the nature of crimes committed, and provide frameworks for understanding these differences.

**2.2.2 Structural Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime**

Structurally-oriented theories of crime and delinquency see juvenile delinquency and offending in general as a sign that society as a whole, or some of its structures, is not working properly (Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). Juveniles are therefore influenced by lapses in social structures or take advantage of the lapses in social structures to engage in delinquent behaviour (Rock, 2002). Lapses or collapses in social control systems are addressed through the sociological theory of anomie, which considers criminal behaviour in general as arising from poorly functioning social structures that have lost their power to regulate the social behaviour of their members (Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). When the structures of discipline are faulty, they normally offer few restraints and lose moral direction (Brannigan, 1999; Chapple, 2005; Hope, et.al, 2003; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006).

It is the mandate of every society to possess organisational, social control and behaviour regulating-mechanisms (Cree, 1999), that are reciprocal of family and society (Rock, 2002). Somehow when this organisational structure crumbles, it creates some kind of a vacuum that leaves members in a state of norm confusion (Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). There are several ways that can lead to weakened social control processes including: wars, poverty, and sub-cultural and counter-cultural groups, that deliberately work against the majority establishment (ibid.). Thus it can be seen that impoverished living conditions, for example, can severely compromise society’s ability to effectively control the behaviour of its members. Many research findings agree that there is a correlation between societies in constant hardships of poverty, and other social problems such as juvenile crime (Blackburn, 1993; Hersen & Hasselt, 2000; UN, 2003). However, not all children from such backgrounds engage in delinquent behaviour (Rebellon, 2002; Wiesner & Silbereisen, 2003). This has led some commentators to suggest that it is the quality of social control that
mediates or mitigates juvenile crime and delinquency (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Rebellon, 2002), hence issues of anomie must always be viewed within a context.

### 2.2.3 Social Conflict Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime

Another theory of crime and delinquency is the social conflict theory (Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). Criminal activities are perceived to be the result of competition for resources – thus impoverished people are more likely to engage in crime as they strive to survive (Bartol, 2002; Cree, 1999; Edney, 2005; Rock, 2002). Families that have no means of making a decent income are seen to be the best candidates to engage in criminal acts, so as to meet their day-to-day needs (Agnew, 1992; Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). Thus criminogenic behaviour within families is perpetuated as parents model this to their children (Bartol, 2002). The idea is that exposure to economic hardships and unhealthy family relations are likely to provide conditions for offending behaviour (Agnew, 1992; Edney, 2005; Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, Miech & Silva., 1999). Consequently, it is believed that economic hardships have the potential to cause a great deal of mental health problems for both parents, and children (Hoffmann & Cerbone, 1999). Families living in adverse socio-economic conditions are prone to psychological and behavioural difficulties including aggression, neglect and abuse (Agnew, 1992; Bartol, 2002; Hoffmann & Cerbone, 1999).

Economic hardships have the potential to re-arrange parent-child control processes; and often, how families respond to these hardships has a bearing on the behavioural adjustment of children (Hoffmann & Cerbone, 1999; Wright et al., 1999). Once parents lose control of monitoring their children, chances are that children would be drawn to delinquent peers (Rebellon, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). However, the relationship between social deprivation and juvenile delinquency is not automatic; there are many children who grow up in extreme poverty who never engage in criminal activities (Etzioni, 1988; Hoffmann & Cerbone, 1999). In these instances, there are certain protective factors which make these children resilient. Non-delinquent children growing up in poverty have been found to have vigilant and effective parents, who posses high monitoring and disciplinary skills (Etzioni, 1988; Cree, 1999; Hoffmann & Cerbone 1999; Rock, 2002). This suggests that weak social control and ineffective parenting, amidst economic hardships, potentially breeds
delinquent juveniles – just like it might well do in children growing up with economically advantaged parents.

Wright and colleagues (1999) conducted a longitudinal study to explore if children from poor families were more likely to engage in delinquency than children from rich families; they concluded that both poverty and affluence had their own advantages and disadvantages in as far as delinquent behaviours were concerned. They found that both low social economic status (SES) and high SES promoted delinquency through various ways (see also-Tittle & Meier, 1990). Three conditions are viewed to be necessary for SES to cause delinquency: in poor families it disrupts parenting roles and leads to negative psychosocial adjustments; in poor families, it increases chances of delinquency by causing enormous stress on young people; and in rich families, it increases children’s feelings of power and beliefs about being above the law (Agnew, 1992; Tittle & Grasmick, 1998; Tittle & Meier, 1990; Wright, et al., 1999).

Rich families take advantage of their status to socialise their children with a sense of power and control; but these children may use this power negatively by showing defiance to social norms (Wright et al., 1999). Delinquency for the rich children is perceived as an unintended negative consequence of being socialised in a socio-economically advantaged family (Tittle & Grasmick, 1998). Thus juveniles from economically stable families, see themselves as above the law; and because their parents have resources, these seem to act as a ticket for them to engage in delinquent behaviours with the belief that they cannot be punished or prosecuted; and if they did, that money and class status would come to their rescue (Tittle & Grasmick, 1998; Wright, et al., 1999).

### 2.2.4 Social Control Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime

So far, the most researched social theories on crime and delinquency are the control theories; their focus is explaining the relationship between social control and self-control, and offending (Brannigan, 1999; Chapple, 2005; Edney, 2005; Hope, et.al, 2003; Jones & Quisenberry, 2004; Nakhaie, Silverman & LaGrange, 2000; Rock 2002; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006). In essence, control theories are social-psychological theories because they marry social and individual characteristics in
describing, explaining and understanding crime and delinquency (Bartol, 2002; Rock, 2002). Juvenile delinquency is seen as a direct consequence of weak, punitive, dysfunctional social structures that result in weak self-control or weak moral development (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990); and consequently, this makes adolescents vulnerable to law violations (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The family is viewed as a central socialisation institution for law-abiding children and when it fails because of poverty, parental separation, divorce, death, neglect or abandonment and family criminality, chances for delinquency become high (Bartol, 2002; Rebellon, 2002; Wiesner & Silbereisen, 2003). The development of a strong self and moral values, are preconditions for resisting offending (Akers, 1998; Chapple, 2005; Edney, 2005; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006).

Using data of over three hundred young adults, Schoepfer & Piquero (2006) found that moral beliefs played a significant role in intentions to offend. However, even in the presence of high moral beliefs and low self-control, other attributes particularly those of peers are shown to influence juvenile delinquency (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006). Neither self-control nor moral beliefs are considered to be enough in understanding juvenile delinquency (Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006).

Also within control theories is the rational choice theory of crime and delinquency, and its proposition that offending is premeditated (Edney, 2005; Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). Not all juveniles are viewed as puppets of social variables; some choose to engage in delinquent and criminal acts (Edney, 2005). Human beings are conceptualised to be born with free will, and choose how to behave (ibid.); so that when some juveniles offend, it is because they have weighed negative and positive opportunities of the offence they engage in (Edney, 2005; Rock, 2002). According to this view potential offenders will, for example, examine the availability of potential witnesses, security, and the demand and supply processes in the case of a property crime (Rock, 2002). The mind of the offender in this case is relevant; all things being equal, the offender fails to resist committing an offence at a time that a non-offender would (Edney, 2005). This conception, where offenders are viewed to be active participants and initiators of social processes, is embedded in human agency (Burr, 2003; Lindgren, 2005; Sampson & Laub, 2005).
Self-control, which can be viewed as a form of human agency, has been researched and found to be a dominant variable in juvenile delinquency when it comes to engaging in crime (Brannigan, 1999; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Jones & Quisenberry, 2004). It has been found that juvenile offenders and non-offenders alike have the ability to recognise crime including its disadvantages; but the difference between the two is that owing to a weak self-control development, delinquent youths are influenced by the desire for immediate gratification (Hope & Chapple, 2002). This disposition towards low self-control and the failure to delay immediate gratification arises from failures in supervision, discipline and informal control in the family during the child’s formative years (Chapple, 2005; Hope & Chapple, 2005; Jones & Quisenberry, 2004; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006). Self-control is believed to remain relatively stable throughout a person’s life (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hope et al., 2003; Jones & Quisenberry, 2004; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006); as individuals move across the life-span, high self-control continue to show itself in age-appropriate conventional behaviours; and low self-control too continue to show itself in delinquent age-appropriate behaviours (Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006).

This position suggests that even as delinquent adolescents graduate out of delinquency in late adolescence (Farrington, 2003; Loeber & Farrington, 1998), because of their low self-control, they are expected to continue engaging in other socially risky behaviours (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). For example, delinquents are considered to engage in acts of theft because sometimes they cannot afford to buy the things they want because they are not earning wages or a salary; but when they grow older and start working, they may stop stealing but instead use risky behaviours like gambling to get more money (Tittle & Grasmick, 1998).

The empirical evidence for low self-control and delinquency are high (Chapple, 2005; Hope & Chapple, 2005; Tittle & Grasmick, 1998; Jones & Quisenberry, 2004; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006); but still, there is admission that not all crimes can be accounted for by this theory alone (Cree, 1999; Rock, 2002). Developmental criminologists, Paternoster & Brame (1997), believe that most offenders require a combination of theories to make sense of their criminal behaviour. Critics are also worried that taking a wholesale approach to self-control theory may thwart
intervention efforts - since the assumption is that low-self control cannot be unlearned (ibid.).

In general, sociological theories of crime and delinquency alone are inadequate in explaining the complex processes involved in the commission of a crime. Putting all the blame on social structures and social processes may lose the role of the individual. It is in this regard that psychological theories are reviewed next.

2.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Psychological explanations of crime and delinquency focus on personality and biological factors, and on internal inhibitions against offending; but they also include environmental factors, especially family influences, peer influences and contextual factors (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1993; Farrington, 1994; Harrower, 2001). Previously, the question that used to dominate the study of crime and delinquency was whether or not it could be explained as something a person is born with or something that is learned in the course of development (Bartol, 2002; Harrower, 2001). However in contemporary studies, such arguments are no longer necessary; as it is generally agreed both nature and nurture impact on whether or not a child engages in criminal behaviour (Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1993; Harrower, 2001). There are a wide range of psychological theories which have been forwarded to explain the aetiology of criminal behaviour. However for the purposes of this study, we will focus on personality theory, social psychological theory, social learning and cognitive approaches.

2.3.0 Intra-Individual Theories

Personality theories of crime focus on how particular personality traits predispose some people to criminal behaviour. The prevailing views in personality theories are that because of certain personal attributes available at birth, some people are more likely than others to become criminals (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Farrington, 1994; Muncie, 1999). As Emler and Reicher (1995, p.26) puts it, “some people are simply born with more developed ‘moral’ capacities (or else the capability to acquire them) than others”. Individuals are believed to inherit certain attributes that make them
vulnerable to criminal behaviour, but sometimes good-environments reshape these people towards prosocial behaviour (Muncie, 1999).

A major problem however in these approaches is to explain how individual differences develop; that is how, if at all, people born with similar traits may develop different behaviours in adolescence and adulthood (Farrington, 1994; Van Velsen, 2001). In order to address this issue, personality theorists consider the role of the environment in shaping criminal behaviour (Bartol, 2002; Farrington, 1994). According to Emler and Reicher (1995, p.27), Eysenck’s theory of crime and personality best explains the interaction between heritable attributes of offending and the environment. For Eysenck (cited in Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Farrington, 1994), all children are born with antisocial tendencies; moral and prosocial behaviour are then shaped by reward and punishment. Thus, while children may be born with temperamental predispositions to anti-social behaviour, the environment plays a pivotal role in whether or not these will become established patterns of interacting in the world.

On the other hand, personality approaches situated in biology focus on how organic damage may predispose children to delinquent behaviour (Bartol, 2002). For example, early neurological insults may cause minor brain damage, which in turn may predispose a child to impulsivity (ibid.). Thus disorders such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are seen as threats to normal development – as it is linked to numerous behavioural problems in childhood and adolescence (Cole & Cole, 1996; Farrington, 1994; Muncie, 1999).

2.3.1 Social Psychological Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime

Social psychological approaches to crime and delinquency are concerned with motivations and attitudes of criminal behaviour, which are thought to be influenced by delinquent families and peer groups (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Blackburn, 1993; Farrington, 1994; Dotter, 2002). During adolescence, the family continues to influence the child’s behaviour; but other social agents, such as peers, emerge to compete with the family (Farrington, 1994). Poor parenting, intra-familial abuse and family criminal history are positively linked to poor moral development, and hence
make children susceptible to developing criminogenic behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Farrington, 1994). As the child reaches adolescence, the peer influence becomes stronger and the pressures to conform increase (Farrington, 1994). In instances where the family of origin is deficient or dysfunctional in some ways, children may perceive delinquent groups to be as surrogate families which provide an identity and a sense of belonging (Akers, 1998; Warr, 2002).

In exploring what motivates criminogenic behaviour, Stewart, Smith, Stewart and Fullwood (1994, pp.17-19) have summarised crime and delinquency into six categories: offending as self-expression (offence is an expression of negative emotions); offending as a social activity (offence is a part of conforming to peer group pressure); offending as a social norm (offence occurs within a culture which condones such behaviour); offending as a coping response (offence is committed because of material need); offending as a life-style (offence is committed in order to satisfy substance use), and offending as a profession (offending behaviour is chosen as a means of making an income). Juvenile offenders will fall in almost all of these categories as life circumstances motivate them to commit various offences.

2.3.2 Social Learning Approaches to Understanding Juvenile Crime

In focusing on learning principles, social learning theories argue that antisocial behaviours are learnt from others and these patterns become entrenched because offenders find these activities to be rewarding (Akers, 1998; Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1993). Learning and reinforcement of crime and delinquency may come from family, siblings or peers (Farrington, 2002; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). Thus deviant behaviour is modeled and children learn from this. The likelihood of the perpetuation of such behaviour is increased when there is no punishment (Muncie, 1999). Thus if peers and families reward criminogenic behaviour, juvenile offenders will continue to perpetrate crimes.

Critics of learning theories point to crimes like fraud and white collar crimes when arguing that these behaviours are not always learned (Bartol, 2002; Cree, 1999; Farrington, 1999). Attributes of aggression in violent crime are also contested as having cognitive and contextual attributes and not just a result of learning (Blackburn,
1993; Hersen & Hasselt, 2000). It is argued that learning theory is very simplistic and
does not consider intra-individual factors which may contribute to criminogenic
behaviour.

In conclusion, psychological theories have several persuasive and convincing
arguments on the aetiology of crime and delinquency. A purely individual
understanding of criminal behaviour however negates the crucial role that society and
social processes play in shaping behaviour in general (Bartol, 2002) and criminal
behaviour in particular. For this reason, combinations of theories seem ideal in
explaining crime and delinquency. It is with this in mind that a life-course approach
has been adopted as a framework for this study.
3 CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION OF THEORY- THE LIFE-COURSE THEORY OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the life-course theory of juvenile delinquency. This review provides a basis for analysing the outcomes of this study. The present study aims to understand participants' offending behaviour in the context of their life histories. Given this objective, it is believed that the life-course perspective is the most suitable to provide an adequate and relevant theoretical framework in which participants' accounts of their histories can be understood.

3.1.0 The Life-Course Perspective

Increasingly, recent research in the area of crime and delinquency is emphasising the importance of viewing juvenile delinquency within the framework of the life-course perspective (Farrington, 2003, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Moffitt, 1993; Paternoster & Brame, 1997; Sampson & Laub, 1993). According to Sampson and Laub (2005, p.12), “life-course theory envisions development as the constant interaction between individuals and their environment, coupled with random developmental noise and a purposeful human agency”. Conceptualised within the criminological framework, Farrington (2002, p.221) writes that a life-course approach “is concerned with three main issues: the development of offending and antisocial behaviour, risk factors at different ages, and the effects of life-events on the course of development... [it] is especially concerned with documenting and explaining within-individual changes in offending throughout life”. Life-course studies have mainly focused on the life-events, life-transitions and pathways that can account for both entry into (and exit out of) delinquency (Farrington, 2003, 2002; Moffitt, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 2005, 1993).

Life-course approaches are sometimes used interchangeably with developmental or life-span approaches (Farrington, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Sampson & Laub, 2005). However, Sampson & Laub (2005) consider true life-course theories to be distinct from developmental oriented theories of juvenile delinquency, in that while life-course focuses its energies on delinquency in general, “the growing tendency in
developmental perspectives on crime, often called ‘developmental criminology’ is to subdivide the offender population and assume different causal influences at different stages of the criminal career” (Sampson & Laub, 2005, p.13) - prompting them to write:

In our view, however, the meaning of development in developmental criminology remains fuzzy and has not been subjected to theoretical interrogation…Although reciprocal interactions with the environment are often mentioned, the typical working assumption seems to be that offenders are following a preprogrammed line of development in a crucial respect—an unwinding, an unfolding, or an unrolling of what is fundamentally ‘already there’... we are not saying that development reduces to biological processes only. Still, while most developmentalists allude to social interactions as real, in the end most embrace a focus that emphasises the primacy of early childhood attributes that are presumed to be stable over the life course in a between-individual sense (pp.39-40).

Thus life-course theory acknowledges different factors at play throughout the life-course; and consequently, juvenile delinquency should be explained by considering various individual and societal factors (Bartol, 2002; Farrington, 2003; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Rebellon, 2002); because, the journey from childhood through adolescence to adulthood is full of ups and downs, challenges and obstacles, that have a power to redirect individual capabilities for better or worse (Bartol, 2002; Dotter, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). The objective of a life-course perspective of juvenile delinquency is to account for these obstacles and challenges, describing what they may be, explaining them, understanding them and where possible intervening on them (Bartol, 2002; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001).

Specific life-course and developmental theories which have dealt with the issue of juvenile delinquency such as Agnew (1992); Farrington (2003, 2002); Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990); Moffitt (1993); Thornberry, 1997 and Sampson & Laub (1993), will be used to inform the framework of this study. The life-course approach is typically divided into the stages of childhood; adolescence; early, middle and late adulthood (Bartol, 2002). While this study focuses on the experiences of juvenile offenders, the life-course approach is still useful – as it provides a coherent framework, to understand participants’ life experiences to date.
3.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD

A life-course study of juvenile delinquency begins with the understanding of early childhood (Cicchetti, & Toth, 1995; Bartol, 2002; Rebellon, 2002); but at the same time, it is constantly aware of the biological factors whose interaction with the environment cause individual differences (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Bartol, 2002). Childhood is seen as the critical period in human development, in as far as human personality development is concerned (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Freedman et al., 1976). Due to individual differences and differences in socialisation contexts, children go on to develop different personalities (Bartol, 2002; Cole & Cole, 1996). Normally, through different individual and social dynamics, children achieve social and sex-roles; thus identities begin to emerge (Cole & Cole, 1996). Children begin to identify with significant people in their lives in the process of identification (ibid.). Cole and Cole (1996, p.383) see identification as: “a psychological process in which children try to look, act, feel and be like a significant people in their social environment”.

It is also during early childhood, and early middle childhood, that children are perceived to develop a fundamental moral framework that will guide them in their entire lives (Freedman et al., 1976). During this time, strong and effective parenting is what leads to the development of self-control (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Cole & Cole, 1996; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). However, this parenting needs to be accompanied with other individual and environmental protective factors for this self-control to take root (Dotter, 2002; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Matsueda & Anderson, 1998). For example, naturally, the birth of a child is supposed to be a happy moment in which expecting parents must plan for the baby and be ready for the child physically, emotionally, socially and economically (Cole & Cole, 1996; Katz, 1999). Thus when children are planned, and parents in relative good health, it is argued that these conditions go a long way in facilitating the formation of a secure attachment bond between the child and its immediate caretakers (Farrington, 2002; Katz, 1999; Rebellon, 2002).

A development of a secure attachment between a child and primary caretakers during early childhood is seen to be a basic foundation on which all future individual behaviours can be understood (Katz, 1999; Rebellon, 2002). According to Coleman & Watson (2000, p.295):
insecure attachment results in negative working models, because the child who is cared for by a psychologically unavailable caregiver presumably comes to believe that he or she is undeserving of love and affection [Bretherton, 1985]. Insecurely attached children, due to their chronic experiences with negative emotions, are especially vulnerable to affective and behavioural problems.

Thus Coleman and Watson's remarks suggest, it is probable, that only within a secure loving environment are prosocial individual potentialities likely to develop; it is in such environments that a child would be likely to learn how to be loved and love back, how to trust and trust back and how to conform to the values of society as well as learn to value human relationships. This is so because the concept of attachment does not just end with child-parent relations; but it is extended to all future interactions. “[It] is not reducible to specific behaviours, but instead represents a very complex socio-emotional systems composed of numerous subsystems, operating interactively to assure survival of the species” (Bowlby cited in Coleman & Watson, 2000, pp.298-299). In this regard, the role that parents play throughout childhood is very important in providing the child with skills with which to interact with the world.

It so happens however, that not all children are born and bred in ideal situations. Some children are born when their parents are not ready for them emotionally and economically (Katz, 1999); others are born in extremely neglectful, abusive and violent environments (Horne, 2004; Widom, 1989); and some may be born with extremely difficult moods (Carr, 1999; Bartol, 2002; Moffitt, 1993). These negative life-events may cause the natural bonding energy between the child and primary caretakers and between the child and the environment to be diminished or disrupted (Bowlby cited in Winnicott 1984; Coleman & Watson, 2000; Katz, 1999), resulting in an insecure attachment - which is a precondition for most of the challenging behaviours including disruptive behavioural problems, attention and hyperactive problems, antisocial behavioural problems and juvenile delinquency (Bartol, 2002; Carr, 1999; Coleman & Watson, 2000; Vermeiren, 2003).

Some researchers have used home disturbances to discuss delinquent potentialities that emanate from a weak childhood bond between the child and family (Katz, 1999; Rankin & Kern, 1994; Rebellon, 2002). In most cases, such studies have also faulted broken homes and their potential contribution to juvenile delinquency. Insecurely attached children are believed to emanate from single-parent as well as violent and abuse prone homes (Rebellon, 2002). In other cases however, the concept of a broken
home extends to all families in diverse hardships (Wiesner & Silbereisen, 2003). Other studies have also indicated that family structure and processes influence the likelihood of later delinquent behaviour (Agnew, 1992; Katz, 1999; Rankin & Kern, 1994; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Moffitt, 1993; Sampson and Laub, 1993). Thus both structure and processes have direct and indirect effects on delinquency, providing both protective roles and facilitating delinquent behaviour (Voorhis, Cullen, Mathers & Garner, 1988).

A family structural issue is to do with the belief that a larger family, as opposed to a small one, may be vulnerable to delinquency through its link with high levels of strain and stress (Agnew, 1992). When a family is large, it may become susceptible to emotional and behavioural problems – as its members react in a dysfunctional manner to diminishing economic resources, due to the ensuing competition (Agnew, 1992; Bartol, 2002; Farrington, 1994). Besides, it is believed that such strain and stress may not only induce aggression and abuse in family members, it also has the potential to induce overly permissive parenting (Farrington, 1994; Widom, 1989). Thus in homes where parents are overly permissive, the development of a coherent rule-structure or self-control is compromised (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Muncie, 1999); A compromised self-control development is a possible precursor to juvenile criminal behaviour and offending in general (Farrington, 1994; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Thornberry, 1997; Muncie, 1999).

In this regard, authoritative parenting is perceived as crucial in controlling and positively shaping immediate gratification potentialities that all children posses at birth (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Muncie, 1999), there by thwarting any possibility of the child developing a delinquent personality. Where socialisation is not effective, it leaves children without any sense of obligation towards society and diminished inhibitions when tempted to offend (Rankin & Kern, 1994; Rock, 2002; Voorhis et al, 1988). According to these models, “the family acts as a buffer against deviant influences by providing a source of basic ties and commitments to the conventional order; parents not only furnish a source of ongoing motivations to conform and normative definitions of appropriate behaviours, they also provide an important coercive function in the supervision and punishment of children's inappropriate behaviours” (Rankin & Kern, 1994, p.495).
Within the family structural model, the successful socialisation of children is believed to be best achieved with both parents - who are genuinely interested in the welfare of their children and who have economic means to attend to their needs (Rankin & Kern, 1994). Previously, most studies have focused on the bond between the mother and child during early childhood (Rebellon, 2002; Katz, 1999); and yet, there is a need for the availability of a father to support the mother as she looks after the child (Winnicott, 1984). The role of a father is thought to be equally crucial in socialising children and particularly so, male children (Farrington, 2002; Katz, 1999). Male children growing up in the absence of the father are believed to be deprived of an identification figure and also the rule-giving model (ibid.); such children can be susceptible to developing a weak moral structure, which is one of the strong preconditions for law violation (ibid.). For this reason, single-parent homes are sometimes linked to juvenile delinquency - normally because the single-parent is overwhelmed by responsibilities, which compromise quality parenting (Farrington, 2002; Rebellon, 2002; Rankin & Kern, 1994). Where quality is not compromised, it seems there are no differences in the behavioural outcomes between children of both-parent homes and single-parent homes (Horne, 2004; Rebellon, 2002).

The life-course literature on juvenile delinquency also differentiates between children who engage in delinquent behaviours early in childhood and those that engage in delinquent behaviours in adolescence (Farrington, 2003, 2002; Moffitt, 1993; Paternoster & Brame, 1997). Normally, early delinquency is thought to be situated in insecure attachments, disturbed home environments, and psychological deficits that are available at birth as well as those that develop as a result of abuse (Moffitt, 1993; Paternoster & Brame, 1997). According to Dahlberg and Potter (2001, p.7), “the biological forces of nature and the environmental forces of nurture are first evident during infancy and early childhood”. Bartol (2002) and Moffitt (1993) are of the view that some children commit acts of delinquency early and later because of some inherent characteristics present at birth which elicit negative reactions from the environment and therefore reinforce, instead of resolving the problem. Sometimes, problematic childhood problems may overwhelm the caretakers (Bartol, 2002; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001) and trigger harsh and abusive parenting, which may ultimately cause children to become aggressive or develop antisocial potentialities (Bartol, 2002; Rebellon, 2002; Moffitt, 1993) and delinquent activities (Bartol, 2002).
Regardless of what individual characteristics the child is born with however, it is the responsibility of a primary caretaker to be ready and available to attend to the child’s physical, emotional and social needs as it is welcomed into the world (Coleman & Watson, 2000; Katz, 1999). From the foregoing, even difficult babies need good parenting to contain their difficult temperaments – if they are to develop positively; and easy babies need to be reciprocated to, in order for their positive emotions to be reinforced. It is when parents are responsive, that the development of self-control and empathy skills seems to be guaranteed (Hao & Matsueda, 2006; Osgood, 2005).

### 3.2.1 The Role of Life Events

Several life events are highly associated with delinquency; often because of the stress they generate and the fact that if they occur, they potentially change several behavioural dynamics of those affected (Agnew, 1992; Butters, 2002). Examples of life events include dysfunctional family relationships, separations, divorce and deaths of close relations or parental figures (ibid.). While it is normal for children to experience some kind of strain and stress in the course of their development (Butters, 2002), where major changes occur in the absence of protective factors, they may have a negative impact on life-course development including leading to the development of maladaptive or offending behaviours (Butters, 2002; Farrington, 2002; Loeber & Farrington, 1998).

In the case where children are growing up in an environment where parents are in perpetual conflicts, children might not only become victims of abuse but these parents are also less likely to adequately attend to the emotional needs of their children – since their time is spent quarrelling (Katz, 1999; Rankin & Kern, 1994); as a result children may grow up with delinquent propensities (Bartol, 2002). Divorce and death are another of the life events. For example, the absence or death of a father is perceived to create a huge financial vacuum especially in societies where men have control over economic resources (Katz, 1999). Economic hardships can be a source of strain, which can cause emotional conflicts and lead to child abuse and maltreatment (Hao & Matsueda, 2006), which is positively linked to delinquency (Widom, 1989). These affect the single-mother’s ability to adequately look after or control children, and this inadequacy in turn predisposes such children to antisocial behaviours (Rankin
However sometimes even when children have good parents, and good social and economic resources, they can still become delinquent because of other trajectories like exposure to delinquent peers and exposure to delinquent neighbourhoods (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001).

3.3 MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

During middle childhood, several changes are taking place emotionally, personality wise, physically and socially (Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999). During this phase, children become increasingly involved with peers of the same sex and begin to master the roles that continue to define them through the life-course (ibid.). From the foregoing, it is probable that middle childhood phase has some similarities with the early childhood phase, but also some differences. During early childhood for example, the process of attachment is restricted to parent-child only and specifically mother-child (Cole & Cole, 1996). In middle childhood, there is a continuity of this bond between parent-child; but it now extends to significant others (Coleman & Watson, 2000; Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999; Nickerson & Nagle, 2004; Weinfeld, Ogawa & Egelan, 2002). This process is important; because once the child succeeds in extending attachment to the society, then a positive emotion develops towards others and their property – as opposed to the possible disregard of other people’s feelings and property that is likely to follow when one’s attachment to society is not strong (Coleman & Watson, 2000; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999; Nickerson & Nagle, 2004).

Other life-events and transitions during this phase, such as poor social economic conditions (Feinstein & Bynner, 2004), divorces and deaths (Hao & Matsueda, 2006) may impact negatively on the child-parent relationship and affect the child’s emotional and social development. During this time in the developmental phase of a child, family hardships and other life-events seem to exert stronger effects on the child’s well being; and prolonged exposure to any kind of hardships may undermine parental socialisation (Butters, 2002; Hao & Matsueda, 2006). Children who experience parental divorce or separation may feel resentment toward their parents, which in turn might increase the likelihood of weak child-parent attachment, and
increase the child’s chances of selecting into delinquent groups (Butters, 2002; Katz, 1999).

Especially for Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), middle-childhood is a sensitive period because it is this time that children develop self-control – which is perceived to be a personal attribute that prevents people from committing crime. Usually, it is dependent upon effective social control and parenting (ibid.). From the above remarks, it may be concluded that life transitions like divorce and deaths during middle childhood may disrupt the socialisation of children and consequently the development of self-control and social control characteristics. In the absence of parental figures to socialise children, an opportunity for them to develop moral skills may be lost and hence predispose them to risky and delinquent behaviours.

3.3.1 Gender Roles

According to McHale, Crouter and Tucker (1999, p.990), “[Gender] role socialisation is a central developmental process of middle childhood”. Children begin to identify themselves with activities and roles that are consistent with their gender, and parents also tend to have an inclination to socialise their children based on gendered roles (Crombie, 1988; McHale et al., 1999). One can therefore argue that in single-parent families, there might be a socialisation gap for children who are growing up with an opposite-sex parent; since they may not adequately socialise the child to the best of the gendered roles. From the control theory of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), this should impact on the development of self-control, and put children at risk of developing antisocial and delinquent behaviours.

3.3.2 Family and Peers

During middle childhood, children become preoccupied with succeeding in their activities and avoiding failure (Erikson, 1963 cited in Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999). Where the child is succeeding, such activities possess reinforcing attributes of the child’s self-concept; and where the child is failing, one may get demoralised and develop a low self-esteem (Weinfield et al., 2002). When children feel that their skills are valued by parents and friends, they grow in self-confidence and self-esteem; in contrast, when they feel that their skills are inadequate, they might be discouraged or
become frustrated (Butters, 2002). Children with low self-esteem may interpret failure as acts of rejection (Bartol, 2002; Werner & Crick, 2004); and because of this feeling of rejection, such children may then select into delinquent groups where they may feel accepted or fit in (Butters, 2002; Hao & Matsueda, 2006; Presser, 2002; Werner & Crick, 2004). The likelihood of this happening increase when there are fewer protective factors for these children (Carr, 1999; Loeber & Farrington, 1998).

### 3.3.3 Neighbourhoods

According to Ingoldsby and Shaw (2002, p.21), “middle childhood may represent a critical developmental period during which children are at heightened risk for neighbourhood-based effects on antisocial behaviour problems”. Poor and highly populated neighbourhoods have for a long time been considered fertile learning settings for offending behaviours (Agnew, 1992; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Research does, “show that the majority of juvenile crime occurs in densely populated urban neighbourhoods, namely those nearest the city centres and those characterised by poverty, low economic opportunity, high residential mobility, physical deterioration, and disorganisation” (Shaw & McKay; Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz cited in Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002, p.21). So far, the possibility of a poor neighbourhood influencing juvenile delinquency is perceived to be even higher for children of dysfunctional parents and family structure (Farrington, 2004, 2002; Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Thus the pathways to juvenile crime are complex.

### 3.4 ADOLESCENCE

Several things work out differently during adolescence compared to those of early childhood and middle childhood. Adolescence is normally a period of substantial development in physical, cognitive and abstract skills (Piaget cited in Cole & Cole, 1996); adolescents begin to posses most of the bio-psychosocial aspects of adulthood even though at the social-interacion level, they are still considered children (Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). It is a phase when young people begin to establish their self-identities (Erikson cited in Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999). But even as they are trying to do so, they still remain under the control of parents (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). Such an independent-dependent paradox sometimes make some adolescents
feel trapped between wanting to control their own destiny, and their parents' determination to still exercise control over them; so that when this phase is not resolved appropriately, it leads to an identity crisis (Erikson cited in Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999). This crisis may show itself in delinquent behaviours – sometimes understood as a form of rebellion against authority (Horne, 2004).

From a developmental model, we can envision adolescents at a phase of unprecedented biological and cognitive changes – which trigger a whole range of social activities never before experienced during the early and middle childhood phases (Farrington, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). For example, the pubertal development makes them leave the sexual dormant phase of middle childhood, and enter the sexual active phase of adolescence (Freud cited in Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999). Some of these biological changes, interacting with environmental factors are crucial in setting the context in which delinquent behaviours unfold (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Bartol, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). For example, according to Matsueda & Heimer (1997, pp.190), “physical and hormonal changes can create impulses, needs, or desires, which trigger role-taking; yet, whether or not such impulses are acted upon is determined by the meaning that adolescents give to such impulses”.

It is important to acknowledge that besides the cognitive attributes of meaning, external factors of culture and history play a major role (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003; Lindgren, 2005). Thus besides psychobiological influences, adolescents begin to construct the world around them based on value judgements - characteristics which they acquire through socialisation (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003). Juvenile offenders should therefore be able at this phase to give meaning to things that they do, including giving reasons to why they do them; because such information or knowledge is readily available in their societies (Burr, 2003). A good example of the interaction between biology and the environment is the case of boys that physically and biologically grow at a faster rate than their chronologically aged peers, who may feel more comfortable interacting with older peers, who are of similar physical size; as a result, they may be more willing to engage in delinquency to gain group acceptance (Bartol, 2002; Stewart et al., 1994).
Over and above a need for acceptance, it may also go with the prevailing social-cultural beliefs or attitudes about age-appropriate/inappropriate associations. From the foregoing, it can be inferred that through every day interactions in their situated cultures, adolescents talk and hear people talk about crime and offenders; they hear and see how people react to offenders and victims; they may be knowledgeable of the social, cultural and historical beliefs, values, stereotypes about crime, and justice systems, which become internalised and incorporated as part of identity.

Further during adolescence is the fact it coincides with entry into secondary school; and increased experience in opposite relationships and heightened participation in peer groups (Farrington, 2002; Hao & Matsueda, 2006; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). Some of these transitions are believed to be highly stressful for some adolescents and cause some of them to experience transitional delinquency or identity confusion (Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). According to Paternoster and Brame (1997, p.55), “as the well socialised youngsters enter high school, most of them experience a strain inducing maturity gap” - a gap that occurs because of identity and role-confusion (Horne, 2004). The psychological and emotional discomfort created by this maturity gap can be relieved by “acts of rebellion, an assertion of independence that adolescent-limited offenders learn from life-course-persistent youths and participate in with the aid and comfort of delinquent peer groups” (Paternoster & Brame, 1997, p.55). Those who normally experience this confusion or a drift into an identity crisis and role-confusion are likely to be those low in self-esteem and self-concept (Farrington, 2002; Hao & Matsueda, 2006; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997); but many overcome all the challenges to achieve a more coherent, more stable identity (ibid.).

The role of family, and particularly the role of parents, is important during adolescence to try and guide them towards the right direction (Besser & Blatt, 2007). If the child-parent issues are not adequately addressed, delinquency may develop (Brandt, 2007). There are many things that may disturb the successful parent-child relations during adolescence, including the stiff competition for the adolescent’s attention that develops among different agents of socialisation like family, peers and others (ibid.). During this phase, adolescents begin to distance themselves from parental authority and begin to identify more with peers (Matsueda & Anderson, 1998; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997) and, “it is not uncommon for adolescents to adopt a
group language, style of dress, and peer support system to establish a separate identity and create some distance from parents and other authority figures” (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001, p.8). Adolescents with weak family control systems and those low in self-concept and attachment are especially vulnerable at the hands of delinquent peers (Brandt, 2007; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Zimmermann & Becker-Stoll, 2002).

3.4.1 Family, Peers and Neighbourhoods

During adolescence, the interplay of family, peer and neighbourhood (environment) are seen as very crucial in preventing or aiding juvenile delinquency (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). The structure of the family and parenting styles are particularly important (Agnew, 1992, Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). Extremely large and overcrowded families predispose members to emotional and economic strain (Agnew, 1992; Loeber and Farrington, 1998), a situation that may cause family members turn to criminal activities to meet certain needs (Agnew, 1992); besides, the competition over resources may socialise family members into aggression and violence (Blumenthal, Neemann & Murphy, 1998; Widom, 1989). In environments of heightened economic hardships parents may transfer their frustrations on children and possibly use coercive and abusive parenting styles to stamp their authority and enforce conformity; this may cause emotional trauma and resentment, which may be exhibited in rebellious delinquent behaviours (Horne, 2004).

A healthy family is considered the most ideal for effective socialisation (Anderson, 2002); and often, delinquent behaviours in adolescents are blamed on family problems (Winter, Davies, Hightower & Meyer, 2006; Winnicott, 1984). Any type of negative family event can disrupt normal development (Sternberg, Lamb, Guterman & Abbott, 2006); however, among the most observable family variables to delinquency during adolescence are broken families, delinquent peers, and neighbourhood structures (Farrington, 2003; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Normally, broken families precede abuse and violence (Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Although family abuse and violence is not enough to explain juvenile delinquency, it is considered to have a great impact on parenting and delinquency (Sternberg et al, 2006). In the absence of other protective factors, children that witness and fall victim to household abuse and violence are at increased risk of engaging in delinquent acts during adolescence.
(Kernic, Wolf, Holt, McKnight, Huebner & Rivara, 2003; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Sternberg et al, 2006; Widom, 1989; Winter et al, 2006). Even more interesting is the fact that boys that directly witness the violence between their parents are said to be more likely to engage in delinquent and aggressive behaviours in adolescence than girls (Sternberg et al, 2006); this is possible because children do not only learn behaviours actively, but they also do so as observers (Kaczynski, Lindahl, Malik & Laurenceau, 2006); and further, girls are believed to internalise their maladaptive behaviour at a time that boys externalises it (Besser & Blatt, 2007; Brandt, 2007; Moffitt, 1993).

The notion of a healthy family also presumes a situation where a child is cared for by biological parents as “research indicates that children are at risk for delinquency if they live in a single-parent family and if they live in areas with high levels of family disruption” (Anderson, 2002, p.575). Several factors predispose single parents to ineffective parenting including the possibility of diminished emotional and material resources (Eitle, 2006; Fite, Colder, Lochman & Wells, 2006). It is also believed that the absence of one parent creates a socialisation gap for the sex or gender of the child whose particular gendered-parent is absent (Anderson, 2002). Thus children will fair well behaviourally when they are raised by same-sex single-parents, than when they are raised by opposite-sex single-parents (Eitle, 2006).

Those advocating for this view, claim that same-sex parents easily identify with the gender-based needs of the same-sex child and are much more likely to competently attend to these needs, than those in the opposite-sex child relations (Eitle, 2006; Wineburgh, 2000). Thus male juvenile delinquency, in a female-headed family, may be a case of failure on the side of the mother to identify with the complexities of being a male-child, and vice versa. It is important however to note that the availability of both parents is not a guarantee for long-term prosocial behaviour of children; the parent-child relations are complex (Fite et al, 2006). A fair view suggests that both child-parent interactions influence each other’s behaviour; but parents need to be emotionally strong and consistent in their response to children’s needs (Muncie, 1999).
Peers

As children enter adolescence, they spend increasingly more time with peers (Lansford, Criss, Prettii, Dodge & Bates, 2003) and the nature of peer relations are different from those in middle childhood (ibid.). This time, adolescents are on a path of establishing selfhood; as a result, they draw psychosocial resources from diverse sources of parents, peers and the media in coming up with a stable self (Bartol, 2002; Cole & Cole, 1996). Children that have established secure attachments with parental figures and significant others are believed to experience a smooth transition into adulthood (Cole & Cole, 1996). In contrast, children with insecure attachment and hence a poor self-concept are likely to face crises – including delinquency, before they can finally find their own identity (Lansford et al., 2003).

Those that enter into juvenile delinquency during adolescence are often considered to do so under the influence of peers that have been delinquent since childhood (Moffitt, 1993); two groups of delinquency are perceived to be active during adolescence: those whose delinquency started early in childhood and those whose delinquency starts during adolescence (Farrington, 2002; Moffitt, 1993). The late starters seem to engage in juvenile delinquency in temporary capacity (Farrington, 2003, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Moffitt, 1993; Paternoster & Brame, 1997). Early starters are considered to have chronic histories of abuse and trauma than late starters, who are often considered securely attached and who can easily step out of delinquency (Moffitt, 1993). To a large extent, both early starters and late starters stop offending by the time they enter early adulthood as more chances for legally accessing resources are created (Farrington, 2002; Moffitt, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 2003, 1993). Those engaging in delinquency due to a poor self-concept normally stop their delinquent act where there are more positive reinforcement strategies to boost their self-esteem (Farrington, 2003).

So far, it is generally agreed that association with delinquent peers is a strong and powerful predictor of offending during adolescence (Farrington, 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Moffitt, 1993). Adolescents with a troubled childhood history are easily influenced into delinquent groups because of weak moral judgements.
(Farrington, 2003; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hao & Matsueda, 2006; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). During adolescence, parents may also easily let children drift into delinquent peers by abdicating their roles as vigilant monitors of the children's behaviour (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Rebellon, 2002). Parents' roles as socialisation agents need not necessary diminish (Rebellon, 2002), because parents who show a combination of strong supervision and positive involvement are the ones that help to protect adolescents against delinquent peers and delinquent behaviour (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Rebellon, 2002).

**Neighbourhoods**

Poor neighbourhoods, those that are overcrowded and with poor structural establishments, are the most susceptible for high rates of juvenile crime and youth violence (Bursik, 2004; Loeber & Farrington, 1998); these contexts are also highly associated with dysfunctional social processes that take place within such communities (Agnew, 1992; Chung & Steinberg, 2006). Urban situated poverty stricken communities may also be characterised by overcrowding, overpopulation and high rates of unemployment, which predispose its members to antisocial or criminal activities (ibid.). Generally, overcrowding and poverty diminishes closer social ties of the inhabitants; and where human emotional bonds are diminished, members may not feel any guilt or remorse to violate norms or laws (ibid.). In states of extreme poverty, it is believed that the strain and stress of the situation result in social control structures losing their authority (Agnew, 1992); so that even parents overwhelmed by poverty may themselves resort to unlawful means of accessing resources and effectively erode their moral authority in the eyes of their children (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Bartol, 2002).

The nature of the neighbourhood environment of an adolescent is also crucial in influencing identity formation (Farrell, Sullivan, Kliewer, Allison, Erwin, Meyer & Esposito, 2006). The social institutions of school for example become central to the lives of adolescents, and constitute a context of identity formation (Farrell et al., 2006; Farrington, 2002). Schools have the potential to serve as a key setting for positive development and yet, where they are located in poor areas with high delinquent activities, they may serve as delinquent learning institutions instead (Farrington, 2002;
Matsueda & Heimer). It is suggested that poorly attached children, most of whom make up a bigger group of juvenile delinquency, come from disadvantaged families and neighbourhoods (Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Sometimes these adolescents just select into delinquent groups, and recruit other vulnerable children (Farrell et al., 2006). While the significance of family, peer and neighbourhood in the delinquent studies are acknowledged, the role of the individual as a meaning maker is also considered (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003; Lindgren, 2005; Sampson & Laub, 2005). This explains the role of human agency which is discussed below.

3.4.2 The Role of Agency

Understanding why juveniles do what they do, and what sense they make of incarceration, is at the heart of this study. It is human nature to try and make sense of events that directly affect personal well-being and the well-being of others. Incarceration/criminal offending makes up such events, which possibly arouse strong emotions and reflections from offenders themselves and those around them. It is possible to consider offending and incarceration in this study as one would consider any health issues like mental illness, divorce, violence and other such problems. Most probable, people ponder as to why they, and make reflections on what may have gone wrong and thoughts about possible remedies. This type of information is normally available in the social domain (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003).

Lupfer, Tolliver and Jackson (1996) for example, found out that when people explain the causes of negative life-events, they often cite individual and extra-individual natural and supernatural causes; such explanations are often prevailing in their culture and beliefs, including religion (Lupfer, Brock & DePaola, 1992; Lupfer et al., 1996; Miner & Mcknight, 1999). Thus far, research shows that juveniles attribute their offending behaviour to a whole range of reasons (Farrington, 2003; Heaven, Rajab & Bester, 1986). This is an ordinary process in an attempt to reduce uncertainty, and help them cope with the emotional discomfort of not knowing (Miner & Mcknight, 1999); locating a cause of an event brings a sense of being in control (ibid.). When juvenile crime and incarceration is considered as life-events capable of causing interpersonal discomfort, then the models of health and illness as applied to African populations may be valid. For example, in a majority of African cultures the concept of health and attributions of ill health is complex (Cocks & Moller, 2002; Swartz,
1998). Explanations of ill health are often linked to numerous other external factors (ibid.). According to Cocks and Moller (2002, pp.387-388), writing on African people's attributions to ill health:

All ill-fortune is blamed on supernatural powers or witchcraft. The concept of chance, or bad luck, does not exist within the world view of most African cultures.... The blame for ill-fortune is generally attributed to a breach of customs and traditions of the ancestors (Longmore, 1958), or to evil spirits who are instructed to do harm by sorcerers or traditional healers at the request of an enemy.

While the emphasis 'all ill-fortune' may be an overstatement, considering that so many Africans may not subscribe to such attributions, the reality seems to be that a majority of them still do. All these issues are at the heart of human agency, a concept that acknowledges human nature to attach meaning to social phenomena (Burr, 2003). According to a life-course perspective, "humans construct their lives within the context of ongoing constraints" (Sampson & Laub, 2005, p.14); this is so because human behaviour, including offending behaviour, is embedded in social, cultural and historical processes (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003; Ferrel, 1999). Some offenders knowingly engage in offending and have an explanation for their offending that is not merely influenced by immediate gratification (Farrington, 2002; Laub and Sampson 2005). The commission of offences and other types of antisocial acts depends on the interaction between the individual and the social environment.

In psychology, agency, "locates the person as a proactive meaning-maker and hypothesis tester, who contributes to one's own life-course" (Wandrei, 2003, p.294). It recognises people as always actively constructing their own social world (Burr, 2003); because, "it is the inductive capacity of the mind to organise or influence its experience in some way from birth" (Rychlak cited in Wandrei 2003, p.294). When offenders clarify about their identities and their moral positions, they are engaging in agency issues (Burr, 2003; Foster, Haupt & De Beer, 2005; Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003). To achieve this, offenders draw upon a shared cultural consciousness, knowledge that enables them to make attributions (Burr, 2003). It is for this reason that juvenile offenders seek to make meaning of their world and themselves by situating events and experiences within a wider social framework of culture and community (Bruner, 1991; Taylor, 2006).
While traditional psychology looks for explanations and analysis of offending behaviour inside the person, the life-course approach considers a holistic view on how the offence has been defined and how the identity of the offender has been arrived at (Lindgren, 2005; Muehlenhard & Kimes 1999). In light of the above, the present study aims to do the following:

a) Explore offending from the offender's perspective in order to find out the individual's lived experience of it.

b) Understand how the offenders' life-histories account for their offending behaviour.
4 CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the author presents and discusses the methodology that was employed in the study, as well as the research procedures and processes. The rationale for adopting a qualitative method in general and a life-history approach in particular is also explored.

4.1.1 Qualitative Research

On the basis of the aims of this study, it was deemed appropriate to use the qualitative research method. The most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research, "is its express commitment of viewing events, action, norms, values etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied, a process which involves empathy and the capacity to penetrate the frames of meaning with which participants operate" (Bryman, 1988, p.61). In this regard, qualitative research methods are different from quantitative methods, which are concerned with statistical interpretation of the phenomena under exploration (Bryman, 1988; Fossey et al., 2002; Flick, Kardoff & Steinke, 2004). It is the goal of qualitative research to be "more in touch with the dynamics that make events happen than the mere identification and analysis of facts about events; it seeks to contribute to the better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features" (Flick et al., 2004, p.3).

4.1.2 The Life History Method

Cole and Knowles (2001 cited in Papathomas & Lavallee, 2006, p.147) define the life history method as: "a research method emphasising the inner experiences of individuals and its connections with changing events and phases throughout the life-course". Life history method examines human lived experiences, both as subjective experiences and inter-subjective experiences influenced by social processes (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Thus a person's life story is understood within particular socio-historical contexts (Bryman, 1988; Gibbs, 2002). In exploring life histories, this method allows participants to talk freely about themselves as they construct and reconstruct their stories within the context of the interview (Bryman, 1988; Dhunpath, 2000). In conducting life history interviews the
aim is to explore the interviewees' life stories in a sensitive manner. While attempts are made to allow the interviewee to narrate the story as freely as possible, the interview is guided by the interviewer such that information about various life stages or events is gleaned. Thus the form of the interviews conducted in this study was semi-structured. This enabled the researcher to explore the life stories of juvenile offenders.

4.2 Research Procedures and Processes

4.2.1 Institutional Approval and Consent

In line with ethical requirement standards in conducting research with humans, several procedures and processes were followed both prior to data collection, during data collection, processing and presentation of results. Approval at the university level ensured that all ethical procedures relevant in conducting such a study had been adhered to in accordance with the university policy on research and also in accordance with the Research Council of Malawi. Access to the prison was negotiated prior to conducting the research by way of letters of intent to the Regional Prisons Officer (RPO) and followed up by the researcher's personal visits to both the RPO and the central prison authority. Research guidelines and procedures to be adhered to were enclosed together with the letter of intent. All communications between the researcher and the prison authority, including research guidelines followed are reflected in appendix (B).

A group briefing to all the potential participants took place within the prison premises, where the purpose of the study was explained as well as a request for their voluntary participation. The Officer in Charge (OC) of the prison suggested that a group briefing about the research be done, so that the researcher could clarify to the group any questions, concerns or misconceptions. The OC feared that initial individual requests for participation in the study, would lead to misinformation being spread amongst prospective participants. In the group context, the aims of the study were explained in great detail. Prospective participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. During the group briefing, the researcher explained that the interviews could stir up difficult emotions and therefore, the option of counselling by a local counselling organisation was made.
Given that this study aimed to explore the life stories of juvenile offenders, appropriate measures were taken to obtain informed consent. Participants, who were eighteen years old, signed their own consent forms prior to the interviews; while the prison's Deputy Officer in Charge (DOC) appended signatures for those who were below eighteen. Where participants were not literate, the consent form was read to them and they were asked whether they agreed to participate. They were then asked to mark the form as a means of agreement. Each participant was asked to keep a copy of his own consent form. Both the authority representative (DOC) and the researcher co-signed indicating consent. Consent forms and research guidelines were prepared in the three languages- English, chiNyanja and chiTumbuka.

4.2.2 Participants Selection

This study recruited twenty-two male juvenile offenders, aged between fourteen and eighteen, incarcerated at a central prison in Malawi. The sample included participants who were already serving a sentence as well as those that were charged but awaiting trial. Due to the very low numbers of juveniles serving a sentence, it was decided to include the awaiting trial offenders as well. The twenty-two participants were convicted or remanded for various offences in the following categories: four for murder (awaiting trial), one for robbery (awaiting trial), one for assault (charged, secured bail but no surety), two for defilement (convicted), ten for house-breaking and theft (convicted), two for escape from lawful custody (convicted), and two convicted for theft and being in possession of an illicit drug respectively. Twelve of them have had ongoing conflicts with the law and seven have had previous convictions with similar or different criminal histories. At the time of the interviews, sixteen of the participants were primary school drop-outs, some of whom could not read; one had finished secondary education and five were continuing with their secondary education at the time of the arrest and continued to do so in prison. The sentences for convicted juveniles at the time of the interviews were between two years and three years. The duration for those awaiting trial at the time of the interviews averaged ten months, from the range of two weeks to three years.
4.2.3 Interview Setting

All the interviews took place in the central prison premises, between the offices and the peripheral prison fence. The prison did not have extra rooms to use for the interviews. The only other room that was available was the warders’ dressing room and the researcher was warned against using it, because warders would move in and out to prepare for their work shifts. Due to lack of space, the only available option was to conduct interviews on the open spaces within the prison premises - mostly behind prison offices.

4.2.4 Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the interview process was upheld although the issue of privacy is debatable. Although the place of interviews was further away from day-to-day prison activities, it was still within the premises so the researcher and participant were able to notice activities going on around them. For example, at a distance, other prisoners would be working at the carpentry shop, other prisoners would be attending to their visitors, and warders would be moving in and out of the offices. In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in all documentation of interviews and results - even though they did not mind using their names. The original interview tapes are securely kept and the researcher is sole person who has access to them. The researcher has avoided providing any of the demographic details which may compromise their identity.

4.2.5 Audio-Recording

The researcher used, with individual consent, a clearly visible mini-cassette recorder with a built in microphone during all the interviews. Any one interview tended to last between one and half to two hours. All the interviews were one-off. Interviews were conducted in two local languages, chıNyanja or chıTumbuka, with which the researcher is conversant. The participants had a choice to use either of the languages. Caution was exercised so that interviews were conducted in a manner and style appropriate to the age and levels of understanding of the participants being interviewed. The data were later transcribed and translated.
4.2.6 Protection of Research Participants

Acknowledging that this study has the potential to both contribute positively to the treatment of offenders as well as harm some of them, precautions were made to protect the research participants as discussed. These precautions included obtaining institutional approval, obtaining informed consent and safeguarding confidentiality. Through narratives, certain insights may develop that may indeed work against the research participants, particularly in the event that the author was forced to reveal their identities. On a positive note, the research has power to induce positive emotions about the participants’ lives.

4.2.7 The Life-Story Interviews

Initiating communication with people can have several challenges, more so when communication is taking place between strangers. Several questions come to mind: how do I start? How is the participant going to respond to the interview? Will they participate or co-operate? These are some of the questions that were going on in the researcher’s mind, mindful that the interview was an inter-subjective interaction (Biesta, Hodkinson & Goodson, 2005). Qualitative researchers must be empathic “as to follow feedback and unpack meanings and to keep an eye on themselves as interviewers, because questions are interventive ... an interview does not just elicit a story already known, but often contributes to a construction of a new account with its own effects” (Burck, 2005, p.241). The researcher therefore went in with an open and empathic personality.

The interview started by asking them to please “tell me about yourself, your life history”. The interview approach adopted was semi-structured. This was important as it gave participants room to decide how they wanted to start, where they wanted to start and when they were ready to finish. Meanwhile, preceding their preliminary storying, the life-story interviews were built around four main areas: (a) a general biographical background (b) offending background (c) experience with the justice systems and (d) future plans or aspirations. The aim was to explore turning points or transforming experiences in participants’ lives and possible effects (Biesta et al., 2005; Bryman, 1988; Flick et al., 2004; Gibbs, 2002; McAdams, 1996). The
exploration around four main areas was not necessarily systematic or forced on the participant.

In the fourteen of the twenty-two cases, the life story started with an account of the offence which had led to incarceration. During the interviews, some participants simply did not know how to proceed following the opening question. The author’s preliminary assessment was that this occurred due to the juveniles’ failure to grasp a broader definition of a life-story as dealt with in their local languages or the possibility that the objective was merely to know about their offending histories. The translation of “tell me about yourself, your life history” seemed to provide a double meaning. On one hand it seemed to be complex for them to grasp, but at the same time it seemed to suggest that ‘your history’ or mbiri yako in both chiNyanja and chiTumbuka meant the bad side of them. A number of them therefore went straight out to talk about their offending, although others talked about their childhood through adolescence. Those who did not know how to proceed from the initial question were instead referred to historical figures of Malawi, and their oral biographical histories, as known by the offenders. Through this, these participants easily related to a structure to which their narratives developed.

4.2.8 Data Processing

Data processing consisted of transferring audio-narratives to paper. The researcher transcribed the twenty-two tapes, in order to bring the researcher closer to understanding the young offenders and their narratives. Data processing took place primarily at two levels: transcribing and translation. The researcher conducted verbatim transcriptions of all the twenty-two life-stories in their original chiNyanja and chiTumbuka languages, the two languages used by participants in the study and with which the researcher is conversant. Considering that this is a cross-cultural research, in the sense that results had to be presented in a language other than the languages of participants, the researcher’s competency in the languages and cultures of participants was significant in understanding the nuances of intercultural communication.
The second level of data processing was to translate the transcripts from the local languages to English. The challenges of translation for cross-cultural research are crucial – mostly because of the implications that it has on the validity of results (Sperber, 2004). Any slight translational flaws may have a detrimental effect on the study results, hence the need for identification and correction of such flaws in the process of data processing (ibid.). According to Sperber (2004, p.125), “the translation process requires skill, knowledge, and experience; [and] because of the unique complexities of cross-cultural research, it is important for ... [researchers]...to gain an understanding of the basic concepts, considerations, and methodological problems entailed....” Since English is only the researcher’s second language, and yet a medium through which the results of the study are communicated, two transcripts were sent to four colleagues competent in the indigenous languages and English. This was done for the sake of multiple verification and comparison.

The researcher noticed that their translations were by and large consistent; nonetheless, there were some marked differences both in language structure and the translation of terms referring to particular emotions. The major difference between the external translations and those of the researcher was the problem of consistency with which emotions were translated. For example, some words like kudandaula zedi/kudandaula chomene or nkhawa would be translated as ‘worrying too much’, ‘anxiety’, ‘worries’, ‘depression’ or ‘frustration’. Further, others chose to be contextual and interpretative in their translation, by grasping what emotion it could be that the participant was trying to express; so that a physiological or somatic expression like mtima wane ukakwera chomene (my heart went up too much) or n’aphya mtima kwambiri (I became very hot in my heart) would be translated as ‘I was very angry’, ‘I was very upset’.

These inconsistencies in translation of emotions were then understood in terms of the literature on translations. According to Dzokoto and Adams (2007), Dzokoto and Okazaki (2006), emotions in Africa are conceptualised differently from the manner they are conceptualised in the western world. Reporting on studies on emotions among Ghanaians, they found that even the word emotion itself failed to have a single translation. They believe that Africans are good at expressing their emotions by using contexts and physical expressions than appropriating names to specific emotions.
Others have so far suggested as impossible, for societies to have names to all emotions; because these are names people create all the time (Burr, 2003; Russell, 1991). With these insights, the researcher made every attempt to pay attention to those words or phrases which seemed to communicate emotions. Care was taken to provide literal meanings as well so as to retain originality in the voices and stories of participants.

4.3 Data Analysis

4.3.1 Life-Course Analysis

In most studies, the presentation of data is usually in the form of statistics or tables, where the analysis is usually made in reference to these statistics, graphs or figures. In this case, the actual data are the participants' life histories and the analysis is made through talking to these histories. The researcher used a life-course analytic approach, uniquely blended with ideas from grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) to suit this chosen technique. The objective is to be able to show what, how and when different life-events affected the individuals in question; and to portray them in a way that helps the reader to infer patterns.

On the basis of the research aims, life-course approach was found to be best suited for data analysis. Just like in grounded theory, the analysis involved moving from raw data to the generation of codes or categories. According to Overcash (2003, p.180), “[life-story] research is not only the stories or accounts contributed by the participant, it is the evaluating and analysing those accounts; systematically looking for themes or other details in the data defined by the researcher in the research methodology”. This position is shared by Foster and others (2005, p.102), “… [life-stories] much as they are sort, do not represent truth, rather they offer us a puzzle to work on- dismantling and re-arranging them to decipher meanings out of them as opposed to accepting them as facts”. And like in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), analysis began before data collection was completed since from the very first-day of interviews, the information had already started generating queries and continued to be this way as data collection progressed.
After the fieldwork period was completed, all the material were reviewed and issues central to the thesis (life events, turning points, crime trajectories and other life issues pertaining to crime and criminal behaviour) were identified and designated specific themes. Through this life-course analysis, the essence is to focus analytic attention on life-events and transitions (McAdams, 1996; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). Life-course theory provides means of linking antecedent events, multiple factors and relational dynamics (Sampson & Laub, 2005). For example, according to Denzin (1989, p.70), "effective life history analysis has been associated with the highlighting of critical incidents, fateful moments, or epiphanies ... interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people’s lives... [this] is an effective starting point for analysing biographical data”.

Once the data was collected through interviews and field notes, categories or codes were developed that resulted in specific themes being generated from the life-histories. Categories in this case were many, where a designation of loose, weak or strong was made. Loose or weak codes or categories were designated when inter-participant comparative frequency of such categories was weak (not common); and strong categories when inter-participant comparative frequency was strong (common). This does not however mean that loose categories had no interpretive value; but rather, the development of themes mostly emanated from strong categories. The identification of strong categories was exhaustive, in that it developed through reading and re-reading of transcripts, field notes and memos (in the language of Glaser and Strauss) and sometimes listening again to the audio-tapes. Through these processes, the researcher became enmeshed in the data enough to create a representation of the critical elements of life through the juvenile offenders’ life-course.

In analyzing the data, the researcher looked for instances in the transcripts that addressed the major research aims, and used continuous coding or categorising to identify emerging themes. Themes represented turning points or trajectories, or other issues arising that helped to understand offending. Coding and categorisation was done using Microsoft Word Processing. Once the themes were identified, still, some seemed loose or incoherent; others seemed to be similar. Consequently, a further
scrutiny on these themes was made resulting in discarding, modification and in other respects combination to come up with more coherent and representative ones. This process within data analysis is not uncommon (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Once a fairly stable set of themes were in place, the most representative quotes were chosen to illustrate each. These quotes are presented in the results section in the translated language of the respondents. Final refined themes included stories of compromised parenting processes and disturbed home environments, poverty, peer activity, neighbourhoods and stories of prison experiences including offending, coping, victimisation and thoughts about the future.

4.3.2 Research Issues

Critics of qualitative oriented studies usually question their validity and reliability and often consider such studies as weak, when compared to quantitative studies (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994). Gergen and Gergen (cited in Overcash, 2003, p.138) argue however, that “life-stories are valid in as far as they are inter-subjective, shared experiences, because whether a description of an event or a telling of a story is valid depends on the context and the culture rather than on an absolute match between word and thing.” There is no any social grouping, be it scientific or otherwise, which can claim to be absolutely objective (Burr, 2003). According to Overcash (2003, p.138), “by the very nature of science, it is the researcher’s role to question a study’s procedures, results and conclusions...by critically reviewing the research conclusions, questions...concerning the population, method of analysis or general procedures.” The most important thing is for researchers to do their work in such a manner that future researchers must duplicate the results (ibid.). For this to be achieved, researchers need to take the responsibility of checking for any gaps that may compromise results and must enter into the research study with an open-mind “because the validity and reliability of a qualitative study is in the consistency of procedures followed” (ibid., p.138). In response to these important issues, it is the researcher’s conviction that issues raised by Overcash were stringently addressed at every level of this study, as such their validity and reliability will have to depend on duplicating these processes.
Another observation is also pointed out to the effect that in this study, no participant refused to participate. The researcher interpreted this as a power dynamic that played itself out perhaps due to a strong culture of conforming to authority, which is encouraged among Malawian cultures (Muula & Chanika, 2004); these attributes seem to influence adult-child positions in interaction. During the group briefing, the prison authority introduced the researcher to the young juveniles as, “this is Mr. Silungwe, he wants to brief you about the study he is doing and he will come to talk to each one of you beginning next week, please make sure you co-operate”. The researcher would not know how his own briefing of voluntarism, freedom to answer questions would have gone to address this early power dynamic. However, while the issue of power dynamics is central in qualitative interviews (Czarniawska, 2004; Swarzt, 1998), participants are thought to be the true interview authorities because they often have a choice on what to say and what to leave out (Czarniawska, 2004).

Finally, much as the issue of translation has been addressed, the concept life history did not have an appropriate translation in the two languages, enough for some young offenders to conceptualise. The word mbiri (history) did not seem to fit in well, specifically because mbiri yako (your history) has a dialectical connotation of arousing both positive and negative categories. One’s mbiri can represent all the bad or all the good things about a person. In the context of a prison, it is the researcher’s view that mbiri yako seemed to automatically arouse offending historying. The alternative concept, and a more direct ‘nkhani yako’ (your story) has too shallow a meaning to symbolise history. If this were to be used at all, it would have needed a qualifier like ‘nkhani yako yonse kuchoka kuumwana’ (your entire story from childhood) - which the researcher felt would be too leading resulting in establishing a pattern or priorities for them. This is why the challenges of an opener “tell me about yourself, your life history” were resolved by calling to an oral history of Malawi’s historical figures, which participants easily related to.
5 CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter emerging themes are presented and discussed in a life-course fashion that helps understand the experiences of juvenile offenders. This will allow for clear and unique comparative plots of participants to stand out. The focus is on common themes, although differences are also explored. As commonalities are discussed, life-events that may have had an impact on the participants’ offending behaviour, as well as their own attributions and experiences, are highlighted.

5.2 Life-Course Themes

A number of themes emerged among the participants that can be compared- both in their early and middle childhood, as well as during adolescence. These include stories of compromised parenting processes and disturbed home environments, poverty, peer activity, neighbourhoods and subjective stories about offending and incarceration including victimisation, coping and optimistic stories about their future.

5.2.0 EARLY AND MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Participants have had diverse childhood backgrounds in terms of the economic status of their families, family composition, family criminal histories, parenting styles and parental presence/absence; they also have had diverse backgrounds in family conflicts in early and middle childhood.

5.2.1 Stories of Childhood and Upbringing

A number of participants had been born to disturbed and unstable family environments, something they accounted as having a negative effect on their upbringing. Sixteen of the participants recounted stories of hardship and instability in their childhood years. These accounts included stories of parental abuse and neglect, parental alcoholism and abandonment. The participants linked these early experiences to their current situations, so as to explain their pathways to crime. The pertinent issue which emerged in these accounts was that a life of crime was somehow inevitable.
For example, Victor found it particularly difficult to talk about his childhood life; for him, he felt that "...I am surviving only because God wanted me to survive...I am told my mother had a psychotic disorder when she conceived me... she wandered with me and fed me on unhealthy foods". Victor felt that these early life events, "...probably make me do inappropriate things like sexually abuse the little girl". He felt that the mother's psychotic illness, and her feeding him on unhealthy foods, and wandering around in hostile conditions without proper food and clothing, had somehow "caused me not to think properly sometimes". Thus in Victor's account, one can see that he viewed his judgement (or lack of it) to be linked to early maternal deprivation. His sexual abuse of a young child was therefore an outcome of his mother's inability to adequately care for him. Thus one can see that as with many of the other participants, Victor does not accept responsibility for his actions; instead he attributes them to early deprivation.

The issue of agency can also be seen in King's account of his early childhood. He explained that he had left the village at seven to stay with his grandfather in the city; "...my childhood had just been fine...things only changed once we had arrived in town...everything was difficult and settling down properly has never been possible since....from the time we arrived, we have been staying only the two of us and my grandfather never really cared much about what I was doing...and I easily went astray and joined other problem children in the neighbourhood....". He linked his offending to early abandonment by his parents. This quote illustrates how the absence of an adequate caregiver may result in the child going 'astray'. The norms and rules which would normally be provided by primary caregivers are non-existent. These sentiments were expressed by most of the participants in the study; as they felt that the lack of boundaries, security, and sense of belonging and appropriate physical and emotional care within their own families of origin created avenues to crime.

Such issues of disturbed home environments, physical abuse, trauma and neglect are closely linked to offending in childhood and adolescence (Farrington, 1994; Moffitt, 1993; Widom, 1989). It is during childhood that children are perceived to develop a fundamental moral framework to guide them in their future life (Freedman et al., 1976); thus many conducive developmental processes were disturbed - effectively predisposing them to a compromised self-regulation development (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The
understanding of these issues is crucial in explaining how juvenile delinquency develops, and where if at all, things begin to go wrong from the moment the child is born. As illustrated above, these issues were identified as pertinent within the life stories of the participants.

Disturbed home environments are used in this regard to discuss the disturbances taking place in the participants’ homes in their totality; which have a bearing on the long-term quality of life of children including: abuse and neglect, parental conflicts, family criminal activities and issues of divorce or separations. Home disturbances have prominently been used to discuss delinquent behaviour emanating from dysfunctional and abusive family relationships (Agnew, 1992; Katz, 1999; Rankin & Kern, 1994; Rebellon, 2002; Smith & Thornberry, 1995). These negative life-events may potentially lead to emotional trauma (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004) and cause the relationship between the child and primary caretakers, and between the child and the environment to be dysfunctional (Coleman & Watson, 2000; Katz, 1999). Emotional trauma along with dysfunctional family life, often result in the child being unable to internalise rules, regulate their feelings and behaviour and develop empathy for others (Moffitt, 1993; Vermeiren, 2003). The success of bringing up children, who are integrated members of society, partly lies in consistent and positive parenting (Rankin & Kern, 1994). If parents are absent or unable to provide this, or act as negative role models, children are more likely to develop delinquent behaviours.

In contrast to the majority of participants in the study, four participants recounted stories of happy childhoods, characterised by adequate care. Interestingly, these accounts challenged notions of the primacy of the nuclear family in providing for the needs of children. Instead these stories highlighted that primary caregivers could range from surrogate mothers within a polygamous family, to brothers who assumed paternal roles in the absence of the father. Tony, for example, grew up in an extended polygamous step-family after his mother got divorced by his biological father. His mother, along with the other co-wives, was solely responsible for discipline and provision. Consequently, Tony was allowed freedom to grow with minimal supervision and restrictions; and was allowed to drop out of school at a tender age, to concentrate on fishing.

A pair of brothers, Clement and Yudo, described their childhood as normal and full of love and care; because, although their father had died when they were very young, their elder
brothers acted in place of their father. Thus it can be seen that in spite of family trauma or hardship, there are other factors which mitigate against difficult childhoods. Loeber and Farrington (1998) refer to these as 'protective factors' within the lives of offenders that may have played a role in preventing them from becoming persistent offenders. These protective factors can then explain why some participants recounted stories which reflect only one offence, as opposed to others who spoke about a history of various offences. Sampson and Laub (2003) suggest that stressful life events are not in themselves automatic routes to problematic behaviour; but also, how people react to these events. The meaning which individuals attribute to these events may therefore mitigate against offending and other maladaptive behaviours. Thus Tony for example, besides the hardship of growing in an extended family with financial difficulties, other psychosocial protective factors in a caring mother, and the realisation of the family difficulties being collective, may have prevented him from engaging in delinquency in early childhood. Most of the psychosocial problems that he faced as a child were not restricted to him alone but seemed to have equally affected his step-siblings as well. While protective factors seemed to have mitigated against the establishment of criminal careers in some of the participants, clearly, these dynamics were absent in the childhood stories of the majority of the participants.

Issues of compromised upbringing in Malawi may not just originate from disturbed home environment - due for example to large families; but, it may also possibly be due to unavailability of the care takers to be vigilant to the needs of their children (Katz, 1999). For example, most participants in the study were largely brought up in half-parent homes - and mostly women, due to divorce, separations or death of one of the parent. In all the cases of parental separation, divorce and death (see Appendix A), women took charge of the parenting responsibilities. The strain and stress endured in appropriately looking after the children may therefore be multifaceted for these women. In Malawi, economic control often lies with men; and in 2004 almost 63 percent of Malawian women were in the category of non-gainful employment (Malawi, 2004). Thus women in such situations, and single, are faced with challenges of being carers and providers. There is always a likelihood that one area would suffer; and often, this could as well be the upbringing. In the midst of poverty, basic needs matter more; this may mean parents compromising on other equally important needs - like the socio-emotional needs, for the sake of survival ones. This best illustrates Vuso's situation where, "my mother worked day and night as a prostitute, she was the only person we depended upon for food; because of her job, it was
difficult to spend time together”. Thus the situation illustrates how Vuso’s mother prioritised basic human needs at the expense of emotional needs.

In the case of Vuso, like other participants with childhood offending histories, deprivation of maternal love took place at a time when other protective factors were unavailable - including for example, other role models which he could use to inculcate in him moral values (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Muncie, 1999). Where parents are not vigilant on the behaviour conduct of their children, there is no role models to stir them towards the right direction; participants related this parental absences and divorces to their going astray. Besides, in the histories of persistent juvenile offenders, the opportunity of experiencing gendered oriented socialisation from their fathers was absent or inadequate, potentially resulting in compromised self-control. It is considered advantageous for boys in their childhood to benefit from the disciplinary qualities that are often associated with male parenting (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Muncie, 1999; Winnicott, 1984).

5.2.2 Stories of Family Economic Hardships

Besides childhood stories of disturbed home environments, abuse and neglect, all the participants’ stories revealed that they had been born and brought up in severely deprived economic situations. Impoverished living conditions, along with the breakdown of the family systems, were cited as contributing to delinquency. This was evident in all of the stories, even those where participants only cited once-off offences. Generally homes deprived of economic resources, combined with reduced parental involvement in their day to day welfare, were linked to some of them choosing an offending path. For example, John felt that his delinquency was somehow unavoidable because, "my mother, who had broken up with my father, could not take care of us...she would just disappear leaving us with nothing to eat...we had to grow up, and this included going into the streets to steal".

John gave an impression that if foodstuffs were available at home, and if her mother was caring enough and providing them with food, he would not have followed an offending path. Responsibility of offending was thus pushed on poverty and the need to survive. Such relegation of offending responsibility on poverty is also evident in another quote by Panji, on how after the death of his basic-needs providing father, "the people I tried to move in with were also struggling economically, and I was like a burden to them...they
chased me out of their homes and I had to find other means of surviving - including stealing". Thus participants linked their offending to deprivation of basic resources, and their need to survive; they saw their offending as something that was normal, because of the situation that they were in.

Thus the participants' life-histories, fit well with the theme of poverty (low socioeconomic status), that has been attributed as one of the major contributors to juvenile crime and delinquency (Agnew, 1992; Loeber & Farrington, 1998); thus the stories of poverty-oriented offending seem to confirm the link that other studies have found in this area thus far. Thus it can be deduced that poverty, particularly the absence of food, may have created survival anxieties in both the participants and caretakers; caretakers may follow unconventional ways just so as they must access survival resources, at other time they may get overwhelmed and resort to emotional abuse and neglect (Agnew, 1992; Butters, 2002; Hao & Matsueda, 2006; Widom, 1989). Some delinquent criminal activities, particularly thefts, have been positively linked to fulfilling a basic need including that of food (Fullwood, 1994).

Economic difficulties induce maladaptive child-parent relations, since parents are likely to busy themselves with activities that look into the physical needs of the family and not the emotional needs (Katz, 1999; Rankin & Kern, 1994) – resulting in socialisation of children that are maladjusted. In this study, women and children seem to be the most affected economically- something that reflects the unequal economic distribution between women and men, where the former are lowly paid and mostly work in non-paying employments; in the case of family breakdown, in the majority cases, women continue to be the sole guardians of children (Malawi, 2004). Fathers have been absent through deaths and divorces; consequently, this has left economic burden on single-mothers, besides having to cope with the responsibility of parenting. These financial and emotional vacuums are the major predisposing and maintaining factors of dysfunctional behaviour – including antisocial behaviour (Agnew, 1992; Carr, 1999; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Katz, 1999).

However, despite the fact that all participants came from economically deprived backgrounds, six participants had offending histories that were incompatible with the rest, as far as socioeconomic status is concerned. Their offending was not linked to their economic hardships and their need to survive; although it was positively linked to
dysfunctional family systems. The issue of agency is therefore manifested here; in that hardships, in whatever form, impact on victims differently and possibly induce diverse reactions (Sampson & Laub, 2005). Further, it is probably in these contexts of stressful economic hardships that those individuals with strong self-control can easily be separated from those of weak self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Thus the fact that others have not resorted to theft, even when they too have survival needs, means that they may have used other conventional means to access these resources at a time that others decided to violate the law to achieve a similar goal.

The incompatible histories were also understood to mean that some protective factors (probably the availability of food or alternative means of access) prevented them from engaging in certain types of crime; but that the emotional stress of home made them emotionally maladjusted, as to exercise restraint when faced with situations that led to their offending. This is best illustrated in the quote from George, who had grown up in poverty and abusive environments, and whose own failure to control his anger resulted in the death of somebody because, “once he did not give me the money I had loaned him and the pigeons he had promised me, I went to his home drunk and confronted him; I then lost my temper and hit him with a log in his head; he died instantly”. Thus poverty was not necessarily a motivating factor to kill the man; but probably anger, that the deceased was not honouring the agreement they had made. This is especially evident in the quote, “I have always engaged in some business to get me some money, so that I can buy things I want and help my grandparents”. Thus poverty did not prevent him from finding other lawful means to survive, which is in contrast with others that took to crime as a survival mechanism.

The likelihood of weak self-control related issues can be illustrated in the case of Micah, for his regret because, "I should not have listened to my friends when they asked me to pursue the soccer hooligans, which resulted in us hitting the man, whose murder I am accused". Micah probably had protective factors of good parents amidst economic constraints; however, his involvement in the criminal behaviour that resulted in a man dying may be understood as his self-control being overpowered by the mighty force of his delinquent peers. Good parenting alone would not be enough to prevent children from engaging in criminal activities, since other institutions of society compete with the family in socialising the child (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001).
5.2.3 Family size

A number of participants were born and brought up in relatively big families, with an average of five; rarely however had the numbers been stable in their families - owing to constant movements of the larger extend family members, in and out of their families; besides, only four participants were consistently raised in one home since their childhood; the rest had moved between places staying with one relative and another. Eleven participants linked their offending to structural issues of the family, mostly deprivation due to competition over resources. This is best captured in Panji's quote where, "...my father had many children from previous wives, and my mother too had married to a family with many children when my father divorced her...when my father died, and stepmother refused me food, and I starved, I just started stealing".

Vuto recounted thus: "Once my father and mother divorced and my mother took all of us to stay with her, many things that I used to access while with both my parents diminished and I became dissatisfied...that is when I started stealing". Patrick was particularly angry with his father who, "because he cannot provide for all of us, he gets very abusive...he gets even more abusive when we go to bed hungry, when he fails through all means to get us food; he uses his anger to scare us from complaining". Thus participants' stories indicated their possible understanding of how family structure contributed to the development of delinquency, through competition over resources or due to deprivation. In this regard, such structures were closely associated with broken homes, emotional volatility and abusive parenting. They understood the structure of family as inducing certain dynamics, which put them on a path to delinquency. When the family is big and financially constrained, ordinarily, there is a possibility that emotional stability of the members will also be affected leading to a state of normlessness and confusion. This confusion potentially leads to maladjusted behaviour including delinquency (Agnew, 1992; Bartol, 2002; Farrington, 1994).

Contrary to the notion of big families being the possible pathways to delinquency (Agnew, 1992), six of the persistent childhood-starting offenders were born in smaller families. However, a distinct feature among them was the absence of consistent parenting, prevailing severe economic hardships, family disturbances, family criminal history and movements between homes early in their childhood. The participants moved between
homes at a time when control issues were meant to be developing (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990); but also when in other instances, these issues were violated in their own homes; there is a possibility that during their movements between places, a chance for consistency in the development of a coherent rule structure or self-control was lost. This may have followed from inconsistent and sometimes conflicting norms as they moved between places and between rule givers. Besides, some have had criminal parents- like in the case of Panji who felt that, “since my father also engaged in criminal activities, may be I have taken after him”. In this case there was a belief of offending behaviour being inherited, something that the participant could possibly do nothing about it.

5.2.4 Neighbourhood and Peers

The majority of persistent and middle childhood starters of juvenile offending came from the poorest of city neighbourhoods characterised by overcrowding and criminogenic activities; neighbourhood was also highly associated with disturbed home environments and delinquent peers. Sixteen of the participants recounted stories of neighbourhood and peers: according to John, “...life is difficult here in town, everything is expensive; the location we are staying is very poor and there are many children whose parents have abandoned them like me... I have three friends that are also inside here in prison...these small children are the ones that make me commit crime...they have been teaching me bad things”.

The commission of crime is being situated in a certain context, a poor setting, where it is taking place exacerbated by poverty. Further, this context is associated with a collapse of parental responsibilities over children, a situation that seems to create other social agents, namely delinquent peers, to socialise the vulnerable child. The delinquent peers are being presented as those that share the history of the child. So far, the influence of peers on delinquent behaviour has been linked to be stronger where already disturbed home environments are also situated in delinquent neighbourhoods (Farrington, 1994; Lansford et al, 2003; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Muncie, 1999).

Many of the participants would be understood as being susceptible to juvenile peers because of problems emanating from the neighbourhood, and the home environments (Winter, Davies, Hightower & Meyer, 2006). Over and above poor neighbourhoods, many
have poor histories of child-guardian relationships and have had parents dying, giving up on them, or being unavailable due to other pressing survival needs. However, it is important to emphasise that several factors are responsible for offending behaviour in both middle childhood and adolescence (Bartol, 2002); and already, the same participants that have blamed their offending on neighbourhoods and peers have also attributed their offending behaviour to several other factors as already found. It would therefore be rather problematic to hold any single view as responsible for their offending.

This is particularly important in understanding participants who grew up in poor, low density rural neighbourhoods, characterised by low social distance and increased informal relations, and yet delinquency developed. Research shows that poor and highly populated neighbourhoods may act as learning settings for future offending behaviours (Agnew, 1992; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Loeber & Farrington, 1998); low density on the other hand is considered to foster informal, personal based relations; and as a result, it is less likely that people will do harm to each other and each other’s property (Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002). Such scenario is illustrative of James, who had grown up in the village all his life where personal relations are very close and informal; yet, James narrated thus, “my parents have complained about me since I was a child...my parents are good Christians and have always wished me well...I did not listen to them and started smoking marijuana and drinking before adolescence...the village courts have intervened on many of my offences but I did not change my violence and stealing; now I am here”.

Thus growing up in the rural village did not in anyway prevent offending behaviour from emerging; thus his offending suggested the interplay of some individual and environmental factors – like indiscipline or disobedience and the influence of drugs. This pattern can also be observed in Chifundo: “I defiled the girl because I was under the influence of alcohol...when I was growing up as a child, I was not myself...I behaved abnormally, I was bewitched to behave in an abnormal way”. These sentiments made participants cast the blame on themselves, while at the same time sounding resigned that this type of thing was bound to happen because of the events beyond their control in their childhood. For Loeber and Farrington (1998) however, such histories suggest how these participants had more risk factors in their lives and few protective ones. Thus where more risk factors are available, individual or environmental, delinquency is likely to happen. This also bring about issues of personality - in that some individuals may just be more susceptible due to
psychobiological predispositions to engage in criminal behaviour than others— all conditions being equal (Bartol, 2002; Moffitt, 1993; Muncie, 1999). Other risk factors however, like poor parenting skills and lack of monitoring of children, poverty and histories of abuse, might equally be the separating factors between peer and neighbourhood factors (Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002).

5.3 ADOLESCENCE

The participants are categorised into two groups: those that have had offending histories since childhood including numerous arrests, and those that have had adolescent histories of offending and arrest for the first time. Eight of the participants have had persistent offending histories since childhood, majority being property crime histories. Five have had previous property offending histories, except it was their first time to be arrested and incarcerated. The remaining seven were arrested and charged for the first time.

5.3.0 Stories about Offending, How They Make Sense of It

None of the participants held a single view in explaining their offending behaviour, arrest and incarceration. All of them held a complex understanding about their predicament— situated in their family, personalities, neighbourhood and peers, and prevailing cultural beliefs; all of them had some consistent ways of explaining not just their offending behaviour, but the mere arrest and incarceration. For example Vuso, one of the persistent childhood offenders, understood his being in prison as a culmination of several things. He felt that, "...the death of my mother had caused a lot of confusion in my life...it made me poor; and it is because of poverty that I started engaging in criminal behaviour...but I normally do not mean to steal...I do not just steal intentionally, I think it is Satan that makes me steal...I am tempted by Satan and I cannot resist...".

John, another of the persistent offenders, understood his offending behaviour as an act of family criminal history, witchcraft, Satan, a curse and peers. He was convinced that, "...my father who is a criminal himself wants me to be like him and he cast a charm on me so that I should never ever stop stealing...my criminal behaviour therefore is all because of witchcraft, it is a curse...I am under the influence of Satan all the time, who makes me steal; and I need to be prayed for...it is Satan who brought me here in prison, God cannot do that". For Victor, his offending behaviour had something to do with his thoughts and
his difficult childhood; as an accident, but also the work of Satan and peers. He recounted: "...to be born to a psychotic mother is likely to have affected the way I think...because I was not cared for appropriately...it was just an accident; Satan cheated me when I saw the little girl wearing a short skirt without pants on...Satan came in my thoughts and said 'defile her'...it was my stupidity to do it".

Thus sixteen participants understood their offending to be situated partly in themselves, partly in peers and partly in socio-cultural influences. According to Master, "I never meant to engage in theft, it is my friends who insisted that I steal money and groceries from my father's store...that is how I became involved in theft...but afterwards, I just found myself stealing...I see it is Satan who makes all this happen; because there is nobody who is happy to be called a thief...something in my heart just feels 'go steal'; and I think it is Satan who makes me feel that way". Alfred sounded particularly confused with his situation because, "...I don't know what is happening to me...I think I am cursed or may be I was just bewitched to behave like this...I know it is all the works of Satan and I just pray for this curse to go; because next time, they might falsely accuse me of murder".

Clearly, the participants' understanding of offending and incarceration is complex and cuts across personality, environment and prevailing cultural beliefs. While in other respects participants showed some kind of remorse and responsibility for their offending- like their stupidity, nonetheless they used other prevailing formulations to explain their predicaments. Thus there was no single factor, which satisfactorily represented their understanding of offending behaviour; within their narratives, this understanding kept on shifting. Thus it was understood that arrest and incarceration induce strong attitudes and emotions, both at individual and society levels, in which offenders are normally positioned (Burr, 2003). Societies have a way of attaching meaning to unfortunate life-events (Burr, 2003; Lupfer, Tolliver & Jackson, 1996), and as such, participants’ understanding of their offending and arrest have likely been influenced by these prevailing social-cultural dynamics (Agnew, 1992; Loeber & Farrington, 1998); those of neighbourhood and peers (Loeber & Farrington, 1998), and those of prevailing cultural and religious beliefs (Burr, 2003; Lupfer, Tolliver & Jackson, 1996; Lupfer, Brock & DePaola, 1992; Miner & McKnight, 1999).
While the juvenile offenders' understanding of their behaviour is not at all in conflict with major research findings on individual predispositions, structural and environmental predispositions, the strong belief in linking their criminal behaviour to a curse, Satan or witchcraft is uncommon in literature. Their unique meaning-making process was thus understood in the context of 'misfortune' or disease, just like other psychosocial disorders have been understood in the African context (Cocks & Moller, 2002; Swartz, 1998). It is understood that their perceptions have been influenced by the socio-cultural dynamics of their development - where misfortunes have multiple diagnostic levels-physical/psychological, cultural and spiritual (ibid). In essence, this is the role of agency at work- where participants are actively attaching meaning to their behaviour as a way of managing their uncomfortable emotions and their world (Burr, 2003).

To this end, their blaming of offending on Satan or witchcraft and their understanding of incarceration as in a supernatural way are likely to have been picked within different socialisation contexts of culture, family and possibly religion. It has already been suggested that areas that affect the bio-psychosocial well-being of most of the African populations, need to take a bio-psychosocial understanding as much as possible (Cocks & Moller, 2002; Swartz, 1998); this is so because of the acknowledgement that in these contexts, diseases - be they physical, social or behavioural seem to call for several levels of interpretation that often go beyond the scientific levels of understanding (ibid.). Whatever interpretation or attribution is made to understand a potentially unfortunate event, it is done with the aim of reducing tension and uncertainty, for preservation of self (Lupfer, Tolliver & Jackson, 1996; Lupfer, Brock & DePaola, 1992; Miner & McKnight, 1999). In essence, an understanding of a phenomenon is done to help the person faced with such situations cope better (Farrington, 2003).

Five participants however, did not understand their incarcerations as acts of witchcraft, or a curse, or Satan. Instead they gave other reasons; but like most others, they felt that it was God's plan that things worked this way. As in Yudo and Pezo, who felt that since they were innocent, it must have been God's plan for them to learn something about life. Thus the understanding of incarceration was in one way or another spiritualised in all the participants, effectively endorsing a being larger than themselves, which was responsible for their day to day lives and possibly coping. Thus again, this was understood to be a learned social-cultural attribution skill (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003).
5.3.1 Stories of Prison Life

All participants shared uniform experiences of imprisonment and incarceration although their coping mechanisms varied. Shared experiences bordered around quality of life, safety and security, and psychological effects of confinement. Participants expressed great concern on what they felt was substandard life in the prison in the areas of nutrition, congestion and sanitation, which predisposed them to infections. Issues of safety and security also extended to their perception of vulnerability at the hands of adult inmates, who preyed on them for sex, using food and money. Thus participants felt that these events were traumatising and made them emotionally insecure and unnecessarily hypervigilant.

Poor sanitation, congestion, poor nutrition and sexual abuse threats made them uncertain about their long-term well-being, and thus made them constantly anxious about their survival. They also feared that their physical health might deteriorate and threaten their very existence. For others, the pain of imprisonment was made worse by the perceptions that their relatives had severed relations, and thus they felt rejected and dejected. Vuso for example thought that, "life in prison is very painful, this place is congested and a danger to our lives...the cell originally meant to accommodate five people is currently accommodating up to twenty people...this is dangerous and it worries me a lot...I am not safe, nobody is...the food here is poor and there are many people suffering from infectious diseases and yet there are no medicines in the prison...I am worried of sexual abuse, because some older men coax juveniles for sex.... My relatives have also abandoned me and nobody visits me; I do not know what to do; I am just alone".

The trauma of imprisonment was also illustrated in Little's expression, "I cry day and night; I cry for myself and the injustice of my friend who stuffed marijuana in my bag... I never in my life dreamed I would come here; this place is hell...this place, older prisoners sexually abuse juveniles and for me, it is my biggest threat ...food is also poor in this place and infectious diseases are rampant...." Thus participants' shared stories gave an indication of the prevalence of critical life-events, which affected their psychological well-being. Sufficient and appropriate nutrition, or the perception of it, is likely to create physiological or psychological balance; and insufficient and inappropriate one or the perception thereof, a physiological or psychological instability. Within the hierarchy of needs, food and safety (physical and emotional safety) are pre-requisites for life's
sustainability (Maslow cited in Cole & Cole, 1996). Thus the participants' shared stories of poor nutrition, congestion and threats to their sexuality indicate their shared survival anxieties in prison- their safety. Quality of life springs from a feeling of security in all aspects of life. Where insecurity is high, emotional difficulties like anxiety and depression, and other maladaptive behaviours are also likely to be high (Carr, 1999).

Besides the shared prison stories, it is important to acknowledge the role of groups in influencing perceptions (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Menon, Morris, Chiu & Hong, 1999). Thus juveniles being a group in prison, most of their stories are likely to be shaped by everyday shared culture and stories - including what may also be truths and myths. Thus it may be easy to share anxieties about stressful life-events occurring in prison, both truths and myths- because of the shared knowledge and shared predicaments (Burr, 2003). This is important because much as homosexuality or fear thereof was raised by everybody, only two said they were approached and refused. The rest spoke of such experiences happening in prison although they had seen none. Whether or not some were victims of this sexual abuse, and did not share due to personal reasons, can therefore not be ascertained. It may thus be suggested that the rest based their narrative prison experiences about sexual abuse, and such other issues on socio-cultural shared attitudes and perceptions prevalent in the prison circles (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003; Ferrel, 1999). However such characteristics, where the group is such a powerful medium of sharing attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, means that for any intervention to have a positive impact and trickle down to everybody equally – with the possible minimum distortions – the a group intervention might be ideal.

5.3.2 Stories of Victimhood

As part of the complex attribution processes of their offending behaviour, all offenders effectively placed themselves in the position of victims; they cast themselves as victims of spiritual forces, witchcraft, peers and family dynamics. However, beyond this passive victimisation, they also recounted stories of how they were active victims of the criminal justice systems of- police, courts and prisons. Some had been victims of the police at the point of arrest and detention, some victims of courts for the delay in hearing their cases, and all of them as victims of what they perceived as inhumane prison conditions. Thus in so doing, the blame on their offending and incarceration was being situated in the environment, and not as their fault. Thus for them, change needed to happen with the
environment that was treating them unfairly; in this way, it is understood that they did not allow themselves to take a deep reflection on antecedents that resulted in their arrest and incarceration.

For example, Little's quote illustrates this feeling of victimhood: "although I was found with marijuana in one of the luggage I was carrying, I told the police that the bag was not mine but belonged to my friend; instead of them using the information I gave them to make an investigation, they went ahead to convict me before locating the whereabouts of my friend...this is not justice...this is wrong". Little's impression was that the police did not do their professional investigative work before they convicted him; and for this reason, he was angry and felt victimised. His reflections or precautionary thoughts around taking possession of the said luggage however are not addressed appropriately.

Mark also shared some similar sentiments when he illustrated how, "police physically assaulted me to get a confession seeing that I was the one found in possession of a bicycle seat". Mark felt that the police abuse was unnecessary and a victimisation. He also felt victimised for the persistent delay in hearing his case arguing, "being on remand is emotionally distressing than being convicted; as a person in waiting, I do not know whether I will be convicted or not and it is distressing to live with this feeling; when judgment is handed down, there is closure and I can look into the future". Thus his victimisation is also situated in the environment.

However more important to this theme is how potential offenders/perpetrators - in the eyes of society - are positioning themselves as victims, thereby creating a paradox. The notion of an offender becoming a victim is always problematic (Foster, et.al, 2005; Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003). According to Foster and others (2005, p53):

The only reason perpetrators portray themselves as victims is to gain sympathy, to seek pardon, to seek empathy with what it feels like to be a victim. They want us to find ourselves in them and yet...I wonder if they themselves do the same for their victims. But probably more than this, they can be viewed as victims of economic deprivation and dehumanising human conditions/trauma. Again, there is no moral appeal for introspection to the reader; as same people we are exempt from such urges. Criminals as experiments show are more often than not, just 'ordinary', normal people.
Thus even though some juveniles were active perpetrators of crimes, their stories of victimisation at the hands of criminal justice systems was understood as ordinary human emotions or perceptions that are expressed when physical and emotional pain is experienced- this despite the fact they probably fail to show such emotions when they hurt others. These emotions were understood as an attempt to share their own pain, possibly with somebody who was independent of the agents of their victimisation, with the aim of inducing either sympathy/empathy, or helping emotions. For Foster and others (2005) and Gobodo-Madikizela (2003), they suggest that even in the stories of those ostracised by society, one is still likely to find other identities. Thus juvenile offenders have feelings and characteristics that may be found in many perpetrators of criminal activities, but also those that may be available in many of the perceived good people in society. Further, the positioning of participants as victims is a purposeful agency process to reduce their own uncertainty (Burr, 2003; Lupfer, Tolliver & Jackson, 1996; Lupfer, Brock & DePaola, 1992; Miner & McKnight, 1999).

So far, the issue of offender victimisation by way of delaying the hearing of their cases has been raised in Malawi (Meinhardt & Patel, 2003; Twea, 2004). It has been a long standing concern that since 1994, offenders have spent longer periods in prisons awaiting trial - something that is not only traumatic, but also a violation of their human rights (Meinhardt & Patel, 2003). The delay in hearing cases, and continued incarceration of juveniles without trial, may possibly lead them to acquiring other more problematic identities due to trauma. The problem may lie with criminal justice systems whose preoccupation is to establish the cause of crimes, and much less in searching for solutions to the causes of crimes and their consequences (Stephenson, 1992).

Further, as a way of advancing the theme of victimhood, all participants in the study actively situated themselves as victims of poverty. All of them had no access to private lawyers because their families could not afford one, an event that led to anger that jails were made for poor people. This is illustrated by Yudo: "you know, our case is not worth conviction at all; its just that we are poor, we have no money and we cannot hire any lawyer to represent us...no one that has money stays in prison for a case like ours...and now we have to wait for government...as we hear, they have no money to hear murder cases; we have no choice but just be here". Another illustration is presented by Patrick: "there is no single juvenile here from a rich family; its only the poor ones here...rich ones
hardly spend a day in prison here, even when their crimes are serious than ours...if there is a rich person still in this prison, that one is either cursed or has problematic relations with politicians; no rich person stays in here”.

Thus juveniles strongly believed that if they had resources and political power at their disposal, even with the charges that had been laid against them, they would have been given bail or acquitted. They thus felt poverty worked against them at a time when affluence worked for others to buy them freedom. There was nothing they could do about it, other than express their anger and frustration at the perceived injustice. Twea (2004) see the increased remanding durations of offenders in prison as the failure of government, which is under-staffed, to deal with the ever increasing backlog of cases, lack of legal representation and also the abolishment of traditional courts. There are few legal practitioners working for government, so that the few that are there are over-stretched and unable to hear all the cases in time. The economic situation of the majority of Malawians incarcerated puts them at a disadvantage to access justice, as most of them are poor and have to wait for when the government is ready to hear their cases (ibid). Thus justice seems to remain relatively a commodity for those that have access to economic and political resources.

Other authors have suggested a different tact to dealing with issues of increased backlog, including the re-introduction in Malawi of Traditional Courts- the customary village courts, which were abolished in 1994 (Kashoti, 2007). Since the abolishment of these courts all offences, criminal or civil, have been diverted to the formal justice systems- hence creating a backlog (Twea, 2004). Another suggestion is the change in incarceration policy, where the nature of crime will need to be considered vis a vis the advantages and disadvantages of imprisonment on the long-term behavioural and emotional development of the offender, and the safety of society (Degabriele, 2001). Criminal justice systems may need to examine adequately issues that affect both the offender prior to offending, as well as addressing in the offenders the implications that they cause on those that are offended (Stephenson, 1992). The re-introduction of traditional courts may help to prevent petty-crime juveniles, as is the case with most of the participants, from being incarcerated together with hardcore criminals who may re-socialise them into a complex criminal personality. Sentencing and incarceration is still often seen as retributive or punishment, other than reformative (ibid); as such, incarceration may only succeed in producing more
angry, aggressive and violent young men – when they have been finally released back into their communities. A change of sentencing policy, through some diversionary measures, may thus help address juvenile offending in a way that is protective and not risking further delinquency.

5.3.3 Coping Stories

All the twenty-two participants used two major ways to cope with the experience of imprisonment and incarceration: acceptance, and appealing or embracing the presence of a supernatural being to see them through the incarceration period. This is illustrated in the quote where Little recounts how, "I cried day and night the first week I came, I cried for the injustice of the police and courts, but life must go on... when you are here, you learn to live through acceptance of the subhuman conditions... but in your normal frame of mind you cannot cope, you have to accept the reality somehow... you cannot be in denial forever... with prayer life becomes bearable... the Bible encourages me because it says that one can be born fine but get astray, and still redeem himself... for me it is this Bible that gives me hope that everything will just be fine." Vuso felt that, "...God is with me; I have been sent to an approved school, it means God is with me and that is why I am here... I just have to continue praying and everything is going to be fine...."

Thus participants linked their continued survival in prison to their own acceptance of the situation they were in, and to a power greater than themselves (God). As Micah had put it, "if you cannot accept that you are here, then you are going to die; denial makes you compare this place with home, this is not good... when you are here you must separate yourself from home completely and take it that you were born here; the rest you must leave to God, pray always and let Him take care of you". Thus continued non-acceptance of imprisonment was perceived as dangerous to both emotional and physical survival. Much as the conditions of prison were poor, one needed to just accept and add the element of prayer and faith, if one was to get out of prison alive. All participants felt that their belief in God's care and protection had increased to the levels not experienced before imprisonment.

Faced with stressful life-events, humans always find some other ways to alleviate the stress, shock and trauma of such events (Burr, 2003; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Sampson & Laub, 2005). Ways of coping with stressful events take different forms – like defence
mechanisms (Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1994; Cole & Cole, 1996), and other ways of escaping situated in everyday life (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003). Thus participants’ acceptance of their predicament may come from the acknowledgement of the reality of the situation, and possibly the conviction that they cannot possibly do anything about it. Their hope in the supernatural powers, especially God, may be a prevalent socio-cultural factor, which they have been socialised into (Burr, 2003). It is likely to be one of the prevailing belief systems that are used to cope with the uncertainty of life or misfortunes (Swartz, 1998).

Such belief systems are a significant challenge where issues of intervention are concerned—especially on psychological or emotional interventions. Considering that a belief in God and prayer is a major coping strategy in prison, does this need to be factored in as intervention specificity? Especially when authors like Cocks and Moller (2002) and Swartz (1998) have discussed about cross-cultural challenges to bio-psychosocial interventions? These issues are probably dilemmatic when considered within the paradigm of traditional psychology, and probably less likely so when considered within the paradigms of health and community orientated psychologies. It would probably be important to leave and reinforce those protective strategies that ameliorate the emotional and psychological well-being of individuals faced with stressful life-events, especially where the introduction of novel ones may predispose them to further emotional and psychological vulnerabilities. The goal of any psychosocial intervention is to achieve wholeness in the way the individual relates with self and others; and where this is achieved in ways that are rather unconventional to science, the focus may need to be on whether or not it is meeting the objective of individual wellness, other than that of science.

5.3.4 Stories of Badness and Goodness of Imprisonment

One would expect to hear only negative attitudes and perceptions about imprisonment and incarceration; but surprisingly, fifteen participants insisted that although the conditions of the prison were inhumane and punitive, they believed these elements were good for personality and behavioural change from offending (badness) to non-offending (goodness). This is illustrated in a sample of quotes; like Chifundo who recounted thus: "this prison is a bad place to live because the food is poor, the place is congested, abuse is rife and it is a threat to everybody's lives …but because it is a prison, for punishing wrong
doers, it is good that things remain like this...because if you make it comfortable, people will be offending knowing that they will not be punished...." Pezo felt that although he met with a lot of distressing challenges in prison, "...my understanding is that this is how a prison is supposed to function...the prison must be punitive; if it is not, then it is irrelevant...."

Nebert put it thus: "painful as the conditions are in prison, I would not recommend any changes...these are the right conditions for one to learn a big lesson and stop oneself from re-offending...anyone that comes twice, second, and third is just a criminal who has gone past change". Thus for participants, it was necessary that true criminals experienced this pain for the sake of change. Real behavioural change would be one that preceded real suffering and pain; because this would serve as a reminder in future, anytime one would be tempted to break the law. Thus for them, lack of suffering and pain (comfort) would act as a reward for one to break the law again. But even as they supported the inhumane and punitive atmosphere of the prison, all of them dissociated themselves of being real candidates for incarceration; armed robbers and killers were perceived to be the true criminals that needed incarceration and prison conditions that they were experiencing.

Not much literature has dealt with life-histories where offenders find the environment of imprisonment both good and bad. Thus this view was disturbing; in that generally, psychological views consider imprisonment to impact negatively on the personality of the individual and particularly the re-adjustment process into the community (Bartol, 2002; Blackburn, 1994; Presser, 2002; Sampson & Laub, 2005; Stephenson, 1992). Imprisonment may cause labelling and stigmatisation (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Presser, 2002). Thus it seems that the participants' views are situated in most criminological literature of the retributive roles of penal systems (Bartol, 2002; Stephenson, 1992). It is also possible that these views, where wrong doers must be punished to facilitate real behavioural transformation, is situated in their social-cultural processes (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003). Much work may still need to happen at policy making levels on the impact of long-term imprisonment, on the identities and personalities of juveniles; and psycho-education on the impact of punishment or aggressive oriented interventions on emotional development may need to be intensified based on what literature show about the impact of punishment (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Bartol, 2002; Stephenson, 1992).
5.3.5 Stories of Hope

When people are faced with stressful life-events, there are numerous psychological consequences that normally follow – including depressions (Carr, 1999); ordinarily, depressive states induce maladaptive ways of looking at the world and interacting with it; they may also lead to feelings of pessimism, helplessness and hopelessness (ibid.). Arrest and incarceration can be understood as a stressful life-event capable of inducing negative emotions about the self, the world and the future. Thus one would expect that with all the probable experiences of arrest, incarceration and possibly the thought around potential rejection and stigmatisation, participants would present a pessimistic view about life after in general and life after jail in particular.

All participants, but one (King), had an optimistic view about getting released and doing well in future. Most of those convicted saw themselves quitting an offending life, going back to school and leading a stable life-style. Their hope and optimism, about being released and living a crime-free future, was being propelled by three factors: (a) seeing former jail mates released and not re-offending, (b) faith in God to see them through, which was complemented by daily prayer and gospel singing and (c) believing in imprisonment as God’s will or plan. Thus participants felt that if others had gone through imprisonment and changed, there was no reason they would fail. This is illustrated in Austin’s quote that, “those that are released give me hope that my time too is going to come and I am going to leave all this”. Like other participants, he also felt that, “God loves me, and I know he has a reason for sending me here, which I do not know yet”. These sentiments were shared by Nebert, who felt that, “God is always present here with me, when I pray and sing, and He watches over me and has plans for me”.

Thus participants’ optimism and hope about the future was mainly linked to spirituality: in that God had not abandoned them; like Yudo who believed, “God has a reason for allowing this to happen, I know he has and this will come clear in the future; all this will end and I will be happy to have learned the lesson”. Thus the coping strategies of God and the images of other being released are presented as the best tools that instil in them hope about the future. However, seven of the participants that have presented hope narratives are those that have re-offended previously and possibly held the same views about positive futures in their previous incarcerations. Thus hope about a non re-offending future may
only be guaranteed to those whose moral structure or self-control has been rejuvenated as a result of incarceration or punishment (Gottfredson & Hirsch, 1990).

6 CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has brought to the fore the nature of juvenile crimes in one of the central prisons in Malawi. Through their life-histories, the results of the study show that several factors in childhood and adolescence contributed to the participants' offending behaviour; this is consistent with literature on juvenile crime (Agnew, 1992; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Farrel et.al, 2002; Farrington, 2003; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Kemshall et.al, 2006; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Paternoster & Brame, 1997; Thornberry, 1997). The majority of offenders' life-histories provide insights of complex life-events, which have been cited by literature as major offending risk factors. These factors include individual factors, poverty, unstable homes and parenting environments, neighbourhoods and peers. This complexity thus confirms the more reason why a life-course model is ideal in understanding problem behaviours.

The majority of participants have had their childhood lives characterised by parental conflicts, separations, alcoholism, physical abuse and neglect; and their childhood and adolescent lives have been characterised by absent parents, poor neighbourhoods and delinquent peers. Such life-events are highly rated as risk factors to delinquency due to their potential, to induce abusive relations in the members predisposed thereto (Agnew, 1992; Widom, 1989). Women and children are situated in this study, as the most economically disadvantaged; and where disturbances have resulted, single-mothers are seen to take the responsibility of custody for the children. Such situations create in most of these families, an unstable atmosphere for the children, and setting them up on a delinquent path. While issues of parental death were evidenced in some members, with others acknowledging the causes as Human Immune Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), some of them did not did not know how their guardians died. However, AIDS is known to be the major cause of rampant orphan cases in Malawi (Malawi, 2004). There is a need therefore on the part of health care providers to acknowledge and start focusing psychosocial care on unstable families especially considering the fact that the majority of women in Malawi are under-employed and the majority are working in jobs that do not generate salaries (ibid).
In the study, participants' life-histories like in most life-course oriented approaches of Farrington, (2002); Moffitt (1993) and Thornberry (1997), have also showed two groups of adolescent offenders: those that have had offending histories since childhood and those whose histories started in adolescence. Principally, the participants' histories have been characterised by poverty, disturbed home environments and absence of role models - especially father figures. Seven, of the early starters were born and bred in poverty stricken and unstable home and neighbourhood environments, some orphaned and hence susceptible to a weak moral development or self-control. However, for some, growing up in similar conditions did not push them into a criminal path. Thus poverty and deprivation alone may not be the most significant risk factors but also the presence of good-enough environment - including caring parenting (Winnicott, 1984), and other protective factors (Loeber & Farrington, 1998).

Further on the results, participants made sense of their offending by constructing themselves as victims of life circumstances, spiritual forces and an inequitable justice system. Thus it has also been found that participants were unable to understand their own offending and incarceration in a clear-cut manner; their understanding of offending behaviour kept shifting dramatically, revealing themes that are commonly sighted in literature; and those that were rather novel to the context of this study. For example, participants’ attribution of their offending to Satan and witchcraft were considered to be cultural specific, just as were their God coping strategies. However, these were further understood within the traditional psychologies, as complex forms of defence mechanisms or externalisation of problems (Carr, 1999; Presser, 2002). Participants’ external attributions were also understood as their lack of self-control (Cree, 1999; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Rock, 2002). While externalisation of offending gave an impression of possible difficulties, which may become evident in working with such participants in traditional psychologies, the origin of such attributional models were acknowledged as emanating from the participants’ cultures (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003); thus acknowledging the possibility that this is one way in which the participants, owing to their socialisation, understand and deal with misfortunes (Cocks & Moller, 2002; Swartz, 1998).
It has also been found that some of the models that participants use to cope with the possible socio-emotional problems of imprisonment are outside the realm of traditional psychology- like religion; which nonetheless seems to be preserving their self from disintegrating. Should such models be encouraged or discouraged - so that traditional orientated approaches can instead be introduced? Religion and prayer has been for participants, the greatest transformation tool in prison, and one that has instilled peace and a sense of hope; how can new approaches come in? Should they come in? If the remarks by Cocks & Moller, (2002) and Swartz (1998) are to be considered, then co-existence of models rather than competition may need to be the route to follow in contexts like these - where models of health are complex. To this end, it is important that intervention methods are evaluated on their strengths to mould a healthy individual (as per World Health Organisation). Psychological models are however important, in that other than just leaving an individual to cope with anxieties through methods that reduce levels of awareness of a problem (defence mechanism), psychological models may need to be combined with such models as religion to facilitate real emotional growth, and letting participants get in touch with the roots of their problematic behaviour - as to begin taking responsibility.

From the results and discussion section, the majority of the juvenile crimes are in the category of ordinary offences, as opposed to the serious and violent offences that have attracted overwhelming studies (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Bartol, 2002; Loeber and Farrington, 1998). Thus although it is premature to conclude, based on the small sample, that the nature of juvenile crimes in Malawi is that of the non-serious-offender category, Degabriele (2001) found that the majority of all incarcerated juvenile offenders in Malawi are petty offenders; and in most cases those that are arrested for murder, their cases turn out to be those of manslaughter. While Degabriele's sentiments may indicate 'non-seriousness of juvenile crimes in Malawi', for a country that has only seen the steady rise of juvenile delinquency in the mid 1990s, these so called petty offences or offenders make for seriousness offence statistics; and probably, this explains why even with these so called petty crimes, custodial sentences seem to be taking priority over other criminal resolution alternatives. Some of the petty juvenile offenders in custody are repeat offenders - a situation which may be creating public or state anxiety regarding the issue of seriousness or a perception of a situation getting out of hand. This because the mere presence of the increasing numbers of juvenile crimes, for a country whose juvenile statistics were obscure prior to 2005, must indicate its seriousness.
Twea (2004) has attributed this increase in custodial sentences to economic difficulties owing to poor people's failure to access justice; but also to the government's over-reliance on custodial sentence and the abolitionment of traditional courts in 1994. This meant that crimes that would otherwise be dealt with in alternative courts are being handled by formal, and yet understaffed courts. It is encouraging however that in recent years, several avenues are being pursued to address issues of juvenile justice (Kashoti, 2007; Mtika, 2007). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with the country's judiciary has been working tirelessly, to have the Malawian Parliament prioritise the Child Care Protection and Justice Bill (Mtika, 2007). This bill among other things is to ensure the protection of both juvenile offenders and victims, speed up the establishment of children's courts and encourage diversionary measures. This is consistent with previous recommendations as per Malawi Constitution, section 42 (g) (ii) " which requires that children should be imprisoned only as a measure of the last resort, and for the shortest period of time" (Degabriele, 2001, p.35). Further, the Malawi Law Commission Special Review has also made proposals for government to re-introduce traditional courts to adjudicate in customary, civil and minor criminal matters - with the aim of relieving the already over-stretched formal courts on justice delivery (Kashoti, 2007). If introduced, the traditional courts' intervention on juvenile related offences will go a long way to provide traditional conflict resolutions, whose psychological and socio-emotional side-effects may not be as traumatic as incarceration.

These issues are vital, especially for a society that seems to be relying more and more on the criminal justice systems to resolve conflicts, at the expense of alternative means. While the criminal justice system has its advantages for some cases, the delay in hearing cases for the pettiest offences, leading to months or years of incarceration, can be described as a violation of fundamental human rights and especially considering that the environments of prison are not conducive - as per offenders' histories. Degabriele (2001) has also expressed concern that magistrates in Malawi, only know how to give custodial sentences but do not check the conditions they are sending their offenders to; although the checking of prisons is not their duty, such a gesture can help them see first-hand, conditions in which they are exposing juveniles. There is a need therefore for criminal legal systems to seriously address the problems that see many juveniles spending longer periods in detention and the need to use detention as a last resort. It may be significant for the magistrates to take an active role in monitoring prison situations so that they can use
the opportunity of diversionary measures more (Degabriele, 2001; Twea, 2004).

It has been disturbing to find participants, in other respects, supporting the very conditions of prison they are opposed to; this attitude has been understood in the contest of the participants' culture, about their perception of the effectiveness of punishment. It is encouraging however to learn that even in the most stressful conditions of prison, they have strengths to accept their situation and hope that the future will be promising.

6.1.0 Research Limitations

Human behaviour is complex; much as the explorations, interpretations and discussions around the life-histories of participants have been made using scientific lens and the researcher's shared cultural contexts of the participants, it is unimaginable to claim that this study is short of limitations. The fact that the study based its histories on the participants alone and not their families means that the issues discussed around their families are those provided in their stories and discussions made in consultation with the literature that explores family dynamics of offending. There is a possibility that narrative studies that combine offender stories and those of their families may yield even better results. Still, the life-course examination of the participants' histories and the volumes of literature from diverse disciplines reviewed should be able to address the gaps that may exist.

A second limitation is the extent to which the sample can be representative of stories of all Malawian juvenile offenders as to comfortably generalise on these results. To this end, the strength is situated more in this study being a qualitative study, which simply presents the stories of participants, other than presenting their statistics. The author therefore believes that in this regard, these can be designated as Malawian juvenile offenders' stories. One important lesson achieved in this study is the social constructionism of knowledge or reality, or what is held as reality or truth (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003); as such, the results reflect the realities of these particular participants. The study has dealt with the life-histories as phenomenological tools embedded in qualitative life-course research. Therefore, the validity and reliability is only dependent upon the reader to ultimately engage and familiarise oneself with the study's processes and procedures.
7 REFERENCES


Rebellon, Cesar, J. (2002). Reconsidering the Broken Homes/Delinquency Relationship and Exploring Its Mediating Mechanism(s) [Electronic Version]. *Criminology*, 40 (1),


Chifundo is sixteen years old and serving a three year jail sentence for attempted rape. He was born in a rural district situated in the northern region of Malawi. He is the fourth born of seven children. He described his family as poor and his childhood as extremely difficult. He was brought up by his mother for the most part of his life; his father migrated to Zambia, where he now works as a driver, when Chifundo was only few months old leaving his mother to work the land. He visits the family whenever he can; otherwise he tries to send some money time and again. As a baby, Chifundo claimed his mother was a victim of emotional and verbal abuse from other women in the village for raising health children even when she was effectively single. Apparently, their children’s clinic records kept showing that their children were malnourished and underweight while Chifundo’s record kept increasing. This caused conflict as other women accused his mother of wooing their husbands to the detriment of their families’ and children’s health. Yet, Chifundo said his mother fed him ordinary food.

Chifundo’s school years were also faced with difficulty. He had learned how to read and write when he was in grade two of primary school. When he was in grade five he became ill and consequently, he claimed he lost all his reading and writing skills. He started to behave in a strange way and he became rather stubborn. He lost interest in school and was becoming extremely agitated to attend. He claimed that he was bewitched as per a sing’anga’s diagnosis (herbalist/diviner); he was told that he had stepped on a charm to make him antisocial; the sing’anga even predicted that he would one day end up in prison. Following this, the entire family moved to Zambia to join the father. However, Chifundo had difficulties adjusting. He felt that his elder brother received more attention because of his good performance in school. This led to constant fights between the two so that within a year, Chifundo was separated from his biological family to stay with a paternal uncle within Zambia.
Chifundo felt rejected. Once with the uncle's family, staying in a relatively poor neighbourhood of Lusaka, he formed closer ties with peers who had dropped out of school opting for street vending. He later also dropped out in primary grade eight, as it was becoming extremely difficult for him to carry on in the face of constant under performance. At that point, he got moved to the next class even when he was failing. He did some welding as a preferable street trade. During this time, his biological family was facing economic hardships since the father's salary could not sustain the entire family; and at the same time, it was impossible to raise enough money for the entire family to return to Malawi. When a paternal grandmother died in Zambia around this time, monetary contributions by relatives staying there to transport the body to Malawi became an opportunity for the whole family to access transport and return home, save for the father who had to return to Zambia after the burial. During this time, Chifundo who had effectively stopped school and doing some farming, mixed with other school dropouts in the village and he had been introduced to drinking. During one of the drinking sessions in the early 2006, he attempted to rape a fifteen year old girl from the neighbouring village and ejaculated on her dress. When the community policing showed up to arrest him the following day, he had no any recollection of the incident. Everything seemed like a bad dream. He was sentenced to three years in jail.

Chifundo blamed his action on the friend's influence to let him go drinking. However he felt a decision to sentence him was harsh and he felt that such an incident did not deserve a criminal sentence, as it would have easily been settled informally between the two families. He claimed that the two families were willing to have an out of court settlement but blamed his imprisonment on women in the village, who had unfinished business to settle with his mother. Women, who abused his mother when he was a baby he said, were instrumental in calling for his imprisonment as a way of punishing his mother. He also felt that the sing'anga's childhood prediction may have come to pass from those that bewitched him. Chifundo's family was unable to afford a lawyer to represent him and like many other juvenile offenders, he had to wait in prison for a long time before the government took him to court.
His main difficult times were the early imprisonment days; being the first time to offend and get incarcerated, he did not want to accept this reality and he spent his early days alienating from others, crying and lacked sleep. The curtailed freedoms, congestion, poor nutrition, rampant infectious diseases, and a threat of sexual abuse are Chifundo’s major concerns in prison. Nonetheless, he has had to adjust quickly and focus into the future. He felt that the harsh experiences of imprisonment were positive in influencing real personal change or transformation, arguing that comfort in prison would probably be defeating the goal to deter offending. Chifundo felt that he had learned his lesson and was optimistic that when time came to be released, he will become a better person with the support of his mother.

8.1.2 Victor: “I was born to a Psychotic Mother”.

Victor is fourteen years old and serving a three months jail for defiling a four year old girl. He is an only child, but part of an extended family of ten step-siblings. His father, a cook at a secondary school institution, used to have three wives. His mother developed a chronic psychotic illness while expecting him, left the marriage and wandered about. When Victor was born, his mother was actively psychotic and she was violent if anybody dared snatch the baby from her. Consequently, she wandered about with Victor; she fed him on whatever she picked up during her many aimless trips. She slept with him in the cold, in the rain and harsh environments and the two hardly got any medical attention. When he was four his mother died and it was then that his maternal grandmother took charge of him. He developed a very close bond with his grandmother, who unfortunately passed away when Victor was seven years.

Following his grandmother’s death, he experienced periods of nightmares, but also vivid dreams of someone promising him a secure future. His step-mother, the only surviving of the three co-wives of his father, went and fetched him from his grandmother’s village to go stay with them. It was the first time he was to meet his father and the extended family. He went on to start schooling and said he developed very good relations with the family. All siblings welcomed him and he felt very part of the family. His father is a disciplinarian but has hands off approach when it comes to helping the family. He spends his money on beer while the step-mother struggles to keep the family together. His step-mother works as a cleaner at the hospital. His parent’s non-skilled professions hardly put enough food on the table. The family has to work very hard on the fields. To ease the family with
responsibility, a step-sister who had just been married in the city took Victor along to stay with them. Since both his step-sister and bother-in-law work, they were impressed with his good behaviour to let him stay with them.

Meanwhile, Victor took a liking in a four year old girl who stayed next door. He said that she was an adorable girl and in the one year that he stayed in the city, he naturally helped the mother of the girl to look after her whenever she went shopping or working. The girl was also fond of Victor and often came around to have Victor play with her. While everybody was at church, early 2005, Victor took advantage of this to defile the girl and threatened her not to tell anyone. He ejaculated outside her vagina. The girl however told his mother and Victor was arrested, found guilty and convicted. Victor felt his troubled childhood may have something to do with the bad behaviour. He also said he got tempted by Satan once he saw that the girl was putting on a short dress and had no panties on. He however felt that he deserved to be punished and did not complain about the sentence. If anything, he felt he needed to thank God for what he saw as a lenient sentence; he thought it could have been worse. He prayed that God forgives him. He still had the support of the family and he hoped to apologise both to his parents and the parents of the child for his shameful act after release. He also hoped to continue with his education in grade seven.

8.1.3 John: “We grew up All Alone”.

John is fourteen years old and remanded in prison for six months for assault and bodily harm. He was born in one of the poor suburban areas of Malawi’s populous southern region. He is the first born of three children. His family later relocated to the north, where John’s father worked as a security guard. John described his family as poor. During his childhood, the family was constantly exposed to a drunken father who physically abused his mother by tying her over to the bed and whipping her with a belt. Although the father never physically abused John, the sight of his mother being beaten left him terrified, and angry. The father-son relationship was further disturbed when at the age of seven; his father deserted the family as a fugitive. John said his father had stolen from the shop he was guarding and hidden the items underground in the home compound. When police came over at their place, they assaulted his father after he refused to confess; and the same night he deserted the family and was never heard of for four years, when John’s mother tracked him down only to be divorced.
When the father deserted them, the family faced enormous economic hardships. Provision of food for the children, quality parental time and school supervision became extremely difficult for a single parent. John’s mother moved to the city where she picked up a night job as an attendant at the guest house and also sold sex to lodgers. During this period, John was exposed to numerous temporary father-figures forming loose, or no emotional or social control bonds; they were his mother’s convenient friends that provided the family with financial support. He felt his mother is the greatest gift he ever had, because she did what was possible for their survival and always explained herself to him on the life-style she was leading.

Meanwhile, long absence from home of the mother and insufficient basic resources started leading John towards a delinquent life-style. He started picking up things at home like money, and by late childhood he had linked up with other delinquent boys and started roaming the streets. When he was eleven, his mother deserted them and because they had already been surviving by their own in the streets they continued to stay by themselves engaging in group petty theft and, with the help of delinquent adults, trickery. After some months news came through that the mother was re-married some hundred kilometres away in the rural area of the north; somebody who knew the place took John and a brother there. However they did not feel welcomed and the step-siblings physically abused and maltreated both them and their mother. At other times the abuse on John was a result of his delinquent activities. He was frequently assaulted and threatened with death; as a result, he fled and walked for two days back to the city. He continued roaming the streets with a group of peers continuing with delinquent acts.

John had dropped out of school in grade five under what he claimed was an urge to make his own money quickly, and the influence of delinquent peers. His offending behaviour goes all the way to the age of nine engaging in violence, vandalism and theft. He had been incarcerated for over five times since he was twelve years and blamed his offending behaviour on the influence of Satan- the devil, and bewitchment. There is always a strong urge to offend that overpowers his inner control. The sing’anga told his mother that John’s offending could not be treated because his father asked the sing’anga previously to work on a charm that would make John a life-long criminal. John, who had been remanded in prison for six months for assaulting and dislodging a street sales lady’s tooth from its socket, was counting on God’s intervention to cure him of the curse of offending. He had
on several occasions been a victim of mob justice for his delinquent behaviour; and at one time, he was abducted into the thick forest by irate people, tied and blindfolded and set on fire with a tyre on his neck and rolled into the forest bushes. Miraculously he survived, but sustained serious wounds and was lost in a thick forest for what he considered to be a month, and survived on wild food before he could find his way out. He was to be admitted in hospital for a long time, and although he knew his perpetrators, he never placed any charges against them as he had no witnesses. Nonetheless, he saw his survival as a sign that God saved him for a purpose, that he was giving him a fresh chance and wanted him to transform.

Although John had been granted bail at the request of the woman he had assaulted, there was no relative to sign the bail papers for him and so he was still being kept in prison until somebody signed them. He was eager to get back to freedom citing constrained freedoms, congestion, poor nutrition and sexual abuse threats by adult prisoners as some of the painful experiences of prison life. He was hoping to be a better person once he was out of jail, but he also blamed negative feedback and labelling from the public as a major hindering block to change; claiming that this attitude pushed him to identify with the delinquent groups because that is where he felt more accepted and belonging. He had never taken pleasure in seeing the people he has offended or stolen from suffer, claiming he had often regretted afterwards for doing it.

8.1.4 Vuso: "I Steal to Survive".

Vuso is sixteen years old and sentenced to two and half years for selling a friend’s DVD player and misusing all the money. He was to serve his term at the reformatory school. He is the second born of two children, his elder sibling being a step-sister. Vuso never knew his father; and his mother, a sex worker, died when Vuso was about six. She passed away of AIDS related complications. Vuso was born in the south, but his mother moved north when he was three years old to stay with her mother. They settled in one of the poor neighbourhoods of the city. Vuso’s grandmother, died when he was twelve.

When the mother died, the bread winner for the family died. Vuso also went through a difficult time, where he experienced nightmares. He was barred from attending his mother’s burial for his age and constantly dreamt the mother asking him to go with her. She said his mother did not want him to suffer. As the economic situation became worse,
his step-sister took him back to south where they stayed with her step-sister’s relatives. Life was difficult yet again and when he was ten, they returned to the north. His sister soon married a soldier while he stayed with his grandmother. He ran away to south again and this time stayed in the streets and at thirteen he returned to the north again only to find out that his grandmother had passed away. He was taken into the care of his step-sister but was soon maltreated by his brother-in-law after she told his step-sister that he was cheating on her with other women. He said this rendered him a victim of verbal abuse and neglect by his brother in-law who frequently told him that he hated him and did not want him in his home.

He felt alienated and lacked peace of mind. Soon he started associating with other rebellious children in the army barracks who were actively engaging in delinquent activities. He had been directly in conflict with the law once, when he was arrested for being in possession of stolen goods. Once the culprit was found, he got released after spending two months behind bars. He blamed his current offending on alienation and maltreatment by the brother in-law. He used the money though on drinking and dishing out to prostitutes. Considering he had no any relatives, he felt his sentencing to a reformatory school for two years was a blessing and God’s will. He hoped to learn a trade so that once released he can become independent. He had no relatives to count on, considering the sister had no power over the husband, and so he had to go and work hard at the reformatory. He felt harsh prison experiences were nothing for him, because he would have to concentrate on his future.

8.1.5 **Panji: “May be I am Like father...”**.

Panji is eighteen years old and serving a three year jail sentence for house breaking and theft. He was born in a remote area of in the north. He is the first born of seven children but identifies himself with multiple loose relations of half siblings from his late father’s multiple marital relations and his mother’s current marriage. His father, a former soldier in the Malawi Army in the late 1980s, was sacked for indiscipline, insubordination and violent behaviour. He then set up his business of a guest house and restaurant, in what Panji described as a mixture of hard work and criminal adventure. He divorced his mother when Panji was five after it was discovered that she was pregnant by another man, Panji’s current step-father and father’s former employer. This divorce immediately made Panji’s father to marry another wife, a situation that led to crucial adjustments in Panji’s life style.
and quality of relations with his parents. Panji was separated from his mother and stayed with his father and the step-mother. His father was always absent from home in his many business trips and during this time, Panji was constantly maltreated, denied food and verbally abused by his step-mother; he lived in constant fear and alienation.

When he was eight years old, his father died after a long illness and his relationship with his step-mother got worse. She developed a great disliking of him and chased him out of the house, accusing him of misbehaving. At times he had to sleep outdoors for not being allowed access into the house. He was both angry and anxious and did not know what to do. His behaviour at school and with friends started taking a turn for the worst. He was moody and argued with other children and teachers. He started stealing from home as the only way to access the basic needs and he was finally chased out of the house. He went to stay with his mother but both his step-father and the step-siblings from step-fathers former marriages did not welcome him. He felt rejected and unloved, but when the mother threatened to quit marriage for the sake of her children, the step-father let him stay.

But delinquent behaviour had by this time taken root and the relations between him and his mother and the step-siblings became irreparable. He continued with theft and became extremely rebellious and disruptive in school and would even threaten to beat the teachers. He used the styles he had copied from Chinese kung fu films to terrorise other children and was soon dismissed and quit school in grade eight. His mother had punished him by whipping until she gave up once she noticed that he would not cry no matter how hard she whipped him. He said he had grown a thick skin from the numerous beatings he received at the hands of mobs and a whip was just nothing. In his numerous offending escapades, he had been almost set on fire and was once thrown into water with his body tied only to be rescued by sympathisers.

Tired of his antisocial behaviour, his mother felt his marriage was in danger and sent him to stay with his grandmother about ten kilometres away. He took advantage of this distance to go burgle people’s houses in his mother’s village, in the cover of darkness, and then return to his grandmother’s home with stolen goods the same night. This arrangement meant that no one suspected him, until he was one night apprehended after breaking into a house and doing away with blankets and suitcases. He assaulted the house’s owner with a knife in what he called a defence action for shouting out for help to catch him. He was
also severely beaten. The friend he had that night had already left with the stolen goods; and he pleaded with the mob to hand him over to police where he would confess of the stolen goods. At the time of the interview, he had been charged for a previous crime for which he was a fugitive and sentenced to three years. His robbery case was yet to be heard and since he had no access to lawyers, he had to wait for when the government would take him to court. Panji thought he may have taken after his father for his antisocial behaviour; stealing for him was the short cut to getting what he wanted. The mother had taken him to a sing'anga to have him treated but it never worked. He said his heart is never at peace if he was not stealing one thing or another. When he started, he thought he was going to do it temporarily but it had gone out of hand. This was the longest he was going to stay in legal detention because previously he was always released on bail for being underage, and that was in his community’s police cell.

This was his first incarceration at the central prison and was finding life very difficult. He feared for his health safety considering multiple infectious diseases rampant in the prison. He feared that other prisoners that were infected with HIV would deliberately infect other prisoners with the virus to share the psychological burden of living with the disease. There was no medicine in the prison and only when a prisoner was critically ill would authorities pay attention and take the prisoner to hospital for treatment. He said they would not act unless one was critically ill because they believed many prisoners faked the illness as a plot to escape. He had come into contact with a dead person in the prison, something that was traumatic and increased his anxiety for his personal safety. He had become used to seeing prisoners die, except it only increased concerns about his own health. Such experiences he hoped would help transform him into a better person if and when he finally got released. He hoped God would help him stop offending, as he may not be able to make it of his own will power.

8.1.6 James: “I am happy this happened now”.

James is eighteen years old and serving a two year jail sentence for theft. He was born and raised in the rural village in the northern region of Malawi. His father and mother, subsistence farmers, are alive and well. His father was polygamous but divorced his second wife long before she died, to get back into active membership of his church which proscribes polygamy. The family is generally poor, working the land but producing little
due to the unaffordable costs of farm inputs. James is a third born of seven children. Although he grew up in a family where his parents showed him love and care, James described his relationship with his parents as poor beginning when he entered primary school. He was a disruptive child who caused problems in school and among peers. He had started school late and besides being older among the class peers, he did not do as well as others. He said that his childhood was surrounded by trouble making children. Early in late childhood he had started practising on illicit drug marijuana, and alcohol; he became increasingly rebellious against parents and school authorities.

When he was in grade five, he was dismissed from his home school together with his two other peers, for being in possession of marijuana and recruiting other young children into using it. They moved on to another school where their problems continued. While in grade seven, James and his friends were dismissed again for drinking. With optional schools located out of reach, James quit and went on to become a full time marijuana user and drunkard. His parents had given up on him and no longer had any say on what he was doing. His drug use led into an increasing amount of violent behaviour and vandalism. He became both a victim of many violent attacks as well as a perpetrator of others. He had once burned down a peer’s house after they had quarrelled while drinking. Irritated that the friend had run away, he followed him all the way home and torched his house; luckily, the friend was not in the house. The case of arson and many other cases against him were often resolved informally by village authorities.

James was now serving a two year jail for stealing a large amount of money from a man they were drinking with; he confessed. He had stolen to ensure a continued flow of money to sustain their drug and drinking behaviour. The friend ran away with all the money as soon as news broke that they were being hunted and consequently, James was convicted for it. James blamed his offending behaviour on the influence of drugs and bad company. He is the only family member with serious antisocial history, although he said he had an uncle who perpetually broke anti-poaching rules and was often in and out of jail for that. He was finding life in prison unbearable and cited diminished freedoms, poor nutrition, health safety hazards as quiet a punishment. He however felt that this experience was probably the best that could happen to him. He felt this was fate; it was God that let it happen to save him before he could become worse. God wanted him to change and wanted to have him experience this discomfort so that he could use the remainder of his years.
wisely. He was almost certain that this was the end of his offending side and was now set on asking for forgiveness from his parents for disobeying them and hoping to settle and do farming.

8.1.7 Vuto: “I became my own Boss”.

Vuto is seventeen years old and serving a two year jail sentence for house breaking and theft. He is the third born of five children. He was born in a district in the northern region of Malawi. His parents - father a carpenter and mother a housewife, moved to the city to seek employment when Vuto was still a baby and settled in one of the poor neighbourhoods of the city. When he was two years old, his father divorced his mother. Vuto had no idea of the reasons that led to his parents divorcing. The two parents continued to stay in the city in the neighbouring townships but all the children remained with his single mother. While his father continued to support the children materially, this was not consistent and in most cases the mother had to bear the burden of parenthood alone. Because of this separation, Vuto and the siblings got to see his father only occasionally. Whenever he visited, his mother would give a report on the behaviour of everyone of them and he would whip them in case he got a report of them misbehaving. As a result, Vuto feared his father and he felt his harsh presence even though he stayed far. He was always cautious not to misbehave for fear of his father’s punishment when he visited next.

When he was nine years old, his father passed away after a long illness. He was devastated because a lot of things changed. Materially and financially, his mother was facing difficulties to look after them and his elder two sisters became increasingly rebellious and later got impregnated. One went on to get married, while the other one gave birth and returned to school. The death of his father suddenly meant that his mother had lost an external object with which to scare them when they misbehaved; consequently, Vuto became increasingly antisocial. He no longer listened to his mother; he would fight back or throw his mother with stones when she dared to discipline him. He also became increasingly disruptive in his grade three in school. Soon he joined a group of trouble causing children and would organise to fight, scare or intimidate other children. They also started practising with theft and shop-lifting, and he had by this time completely lost track of his schooling to gang activities.
When he was twelve, his mother was forced to send him to stay with his maternal grandparents in the village hoping that he would start afresh. However, he said his grandmother verbally abused him and sometimes he was denied food. He had to go to school on empty stomach as a result life became stressful. He continued to steal; but once life became unbearable at the grandparents' place, he run away back to his mother in the city. His offending behaviour had not stopped and he rejoined a group of other delinquent adolescents. He said theft for him became behaviour just like people got addicted to tobacco and alcohol. He did not necessarily need a reason to steal, it just became part of him- he just had to do it. Vuto was currently serving a two year jail sentence for breaking into a house with two of his friends, and doing away with electronic appliances. He had spent six months on remand before his case was finally mentioned; there was no way the family would afford any lawyer. This was his first jail sentence although he had been constantly in conflict with the law.

He hoped that imprisonment was going to be a beginning of the end to his offending behaviour. He felt it was a wake up call and wanted to change for the sake of his young brother, whom he said was on a similar path. He felt that his strength not to steal in prison, where theft of personal property was high, meant that he was doing fine. He also complained of being a victim of the rich and powerful on his current sentence, claiming they stole the items after the owner of the house failed to pay him and his friends for six months, after doing landscaping at his house. He felt the punishment was harsh considering the prison was unsafe, a health hazard and potential place to be victimised sexually by older inmates. He could not commit himself about whether or not he would stop offending, preferring to live by each day. To see himself through the prison, it was better that he saw himself as born and bred in prison in order to save himself from the psychological discomfort.

8.1.8 Nebert: “I will Go and make Peace”.

Nebert is fourteen years old and committed to a reformatory school indefinitely for sporadic thefts. He was born and raised in the rural village in the northern district of Malawi. He is the first born of four children. Nebert was an unwanted child, who was conceived out of a love affair. Once it was discovered that his mother was pregnant, his biological father disowned both his mother and the pregnancy. Consequently, Nebert’s mother was married to another man and Nebert grew up believing that his step-father was
his biological father. He had been christened with his step-father’s name and related well with him. When Nebert was seven, his step-father died and as a result, his mother moved the family into the central district for employment. Without any formal education, she picked up a job as an informal chef in her relative’s restaurant. It was during this time that the ageing biological paternal grandparents, in need of fresh hands to help them around the home, set out to claim Nebert back.

When Nebert was ten years, he was finally told about his biological father and events that led to him being identified with the step-father’s surname. He felt confused but had to come to terms with what he came to know. He also felt excited to learn that his father had migrated to South Africa where he works in the mines, and would be supporting him with all the resources he needed. Two years later he adopted his biological father’s surname and moved in with his grandparents and also spent his holidays between his mother and his grandparents’ place. By the time the family moved to the central district, following the step-father’s death, Nebert had already started associating with problem children. This saw him getting more and more preoccupied with watching videos in informal video houses around the central district. He had to have money to watch his beloved films and soon he started stealing from the house. His interest in school went down and the preoccupation with films led him and friends to play truancy.

Soon, his thieving behaviour went beyond the home environment; and he would steal any chickens roaming the area and sell them for money to sustain their needs. He was also involved in vandalism and gang fights. He broke into a grocery one night and got away with a large sum of money, but as he made away somebody identified him. In the thick of the night, he escaped to the city to avoid prosecution and used the stolen money to book himself some accommodation and buy food. But once the money run out he became susceptible to hunger and consequently went about town stealing from shops and anything he could lay his hands on. He was apprehended after stealing a bicycle, but jumped out of a moving police car into the bush on his way to police station. However, desperate to survive he went on offending, and broke into a car and stole a car radio when he finally got apprehended for the current offence. He was severely assaulted by the mob and also the police for escaping from lawful custody earlier in that year. He was committed to a reformatory school indefinitely and had been waiting for six months to be transferred there. He would love to get released so he could go and make peace with people he robbed.
at home. Although he felt a constant urge to steal in the city, he did it to survive; he was a victim of peer influence he said, and hoped he would desist from such groups in future. The denial of freedoms, infections, poor nutrition and congestion were the worst challenges he had to face in prison. He felt God was going to protect him.

8.1.9 Patrick: “My Home is Hell”.

Patrick is seventeen years old and committed to a reformatory school for eight months for being in possession of stolen goods. He is the first born of seven siblings. He was born in the northern district of Malawi, where the father worked in a stone mine. The family moved to the city when Patrick was ten, where the father worked as a ground labourer at the city’s university. Once his father got laid off from his job when Patrick was twelve, he went on to become a wood and timber seller. His mother is a housewife. The family stays in one of the poor neighbourhoods of the city. He described his family as poor and at other times they would be forced to go hungry and skip meals when the business did badly.

Patrick described his father as a very harsh person, who always used a whip as a disciplinary tool. Patrick feared his father, describing him as a ‘no nonsense man’. Often his aggression was much worse when drunk, as he would behave like a wild animal. As a little boy, he would witness his father come home drunk and physically abuse his mother, as he watched helplessly and cried. This went on for a long-time and as he grew older he also became the target of harsh physical discipline. He felt however that in his case, there were times when he deserved the beatings in order to be on the right path; but there are times when he was wrongly punished, which resulted in increase in anger and a resentful attitude towards his father. Although his father no longer abused his mother, he remained aggressive and potentially violent when drunk, and verbally abusive to the family. His father was always full of anger and aggression, which Patrick felt was a trait from his paternal grandfather who has a strong history of violence. Patrick’s mother is an aloof housewife who conducted her everyday life in accordance with the will of his father.

Patrick’s early school years were smooth until when they moved to the city. He had joined a group of friends that was preoccupied with watching films in the neighbourhood’s informal video houses. As he reached grade seven of the primary school, he and his best friend had started playing truancy from school to watch films. They took advantage of the
often congested classes to leave unnoticed. He said it was impossible for students who did well to afford missing classes or play naughty; but because they were not, teachers did not pay much attention when they missed classes. Unfortunately, at other times, too many students would play truancy which led to Patrick's exposure and his being reported to his parents. He was severely assaulted by his father, drenched in a pool of blood and left for dead. This left him angry and traumatised, but effectively put a stop to any future antisocial behaviour.

At the time of the interview, Patrick was serving an eight month jail sentence for selling a stolen blanket; he was waiting to be transferred to a reformatory school. His best friend had asked him to sell a stolen blanket on the pretext that it was a home item. Once it turned out the blanket was stolen, Patrick was charged of theft after his friend could not be traced. He was severely assaulted by the community police authorities into confessing. He did not have any legal representation and the father had barred any member of the family to have contact with him, for bringing shame to the family. He blamed his stupidity for trusting his friend and being deceived. He said he was a good boy and not a criminal; he took issue with his father, that he still considered him a problem. He was angry at the justice systems, claiming they were bent on persecuting the poor. He claimed that rich people and their children, some of whom committed more serious crimes, spent only a few days before their lawyers bailed them out.

One needed to be strong to survive prison, according to Patrick; it is not a place 'for weak minds' as it can kill. Taking long to adjust, or living in denial was a precondition for poor health. He however felt that although the conditions were harsh, they were none the less right to stir the offender into some life of sanity. If it were made comfortable, he thought, criminals facing difficulties outside would make it a habit of offending. He did not trust in any of the people in prison to see him through, claiming as criminals they had no moral authority to teach him. He trusted in God and prayed often so He could see him through the sentence. He wished to continue with school once he was released.
Master: "Satan the Devil, Makes me Steal".

Master is fifteen years old and committed to the reformatory school indefinitely, for theft. He was born and raised up in the rural village in in the northern region of Malawi. He is a third born of six children. His father, now deceased, was a self-made entrepreneur and his mother is a house wife. Master’s childhood was full of ups and downs. Between the ages of six and ten his parents had separated and re-united for three times, before finally divorcing each other when he was twelve. His parent’s would occasionally quarrel and physically fight. After months of separation, they would reconcile and get together again. He described his parents as strong parents, who once in a while let their emotions take over their rationality. In most cases, he felt his father was unreasonable. During months of separation, sometimes Master would go with his mother and at other times his father would not let the children to go. Whenever he went with his mother, his schooling would get disturbed.

When he was twelve, his mother got divorced and went to stay with her parents. Master stayed behind. His father passed away few months afterwards when he got cut on the head by an axe as he was clearing the fields. The family asked his mother to come back to the husband’s village and look after the children. When the father passed, the family was in dire financial need after the grocery the father was running died. While the grocery was still running, Master’s friends had been coaxing him to steal money. This trend, which had started when Master was ten, had continued until when the time the grocery business collapsed. He now felt responsible and guilty for the situation. Now the family has to work the farm to realise their basic needs and during agricultural season he and other siblings have to cut short of school to work the fields. Currently, he was convicted for house breaking and theft of money from the neighbour’s house in the village. He blamed it on Satan and also his uncle, who had promised to take him to the capital city- a dream of his childhood. He felt listening to him was a work of Satan. Otherwise he was not an offender; he was just someone who easily got carried away. Master was due to be transferred to the reformatory school indefinitely.

He could not speculate about what the future held for him and felt that such an issue would better be left in the hands of God. He however prayed for good health, citing life in prison as rather unpredictable to start speculating about the future. Having been in prison for six
weeks at the time of the interview, he was a victim of teasing from fellow older juveniles and would not be allowed to sleep but just squat. He also cited poor nutrition and rampant infections as a real danger in prison. None the less, he felt these would save as reminders to help him resist offending when and if he was released.

8.1.11 Austin: “Things Have Been Going Wrong”.

Austin is sixteen years old and remanded for two months on suspicion of aiding the theft of a bicycle. His peer had stolen a bicycle from his uncle’s place and fled. And because he was his closest friend, he was apprehended on the suspicion that they collaborated to steal it. While his friend told him he was going to steal the bicycle and flee for being maltreated by his uncle’s family, he denied being party to the theft.

Austin is the first born of two children. He was born in the north but his mother, an informal business lady, moved them to the city following the death of a husband and settled in the relatively poor neighbourhoods of the city. Austin was ten years old when his father passed away. He was a company driver and was absent from home a lot, on official duties. The absence of his father, he said, made him naughty sometimes because he could not listen to his mother. He loved playing and he could not wait for another day to go out and play. However, there were a lot of things that his mother needed him to help and there was always conflict between play and work. Often he would choose play and would get physically punished for it when his father returned on his brief stays.

Once they moved to the city, the social distance between Austin and his mother grew. At thirteen, he had started experiencing with drugs and drinking. He played truancy to go drink. He picked up a habit of smoking. He was in constant conflict with teachers; and once, he physically fought with a teacher in his Form one secondary school and got suspended for it. He never told his mother and continued to play truancy. He would take the school fees and spend it on drugs and girls. When his mother discovered about it, it was after a long time. Most of his peers were now finished with their secondary school and he said because of his misbehaviour, he had to go through classes all over again. He blamed his delinquency on bad peer influence.
Austin has been in conflict with the law a few times already and felt that the current incarceration had more to do with his past than any evidence at all that he collaborated in the theft. He wished he had been taken to court soon, but without any resources to hire a lawyer, he had to wait until the time government took him to court. He felt remand was more psychologically painful than conviction because one was always in limbo, not knowing what would happen. It was the ‘not knowing’ that was devastating. When on remand other convicted inmates give wrong instructions to trick them into getting convicted. He claimed no convict would be happy to have someone walk away innocent while they languished in jail; they were always willing to get more people wear the identity of ‘convict’. Austin spends his time in prison interacting with others and uses cigarettes to relax his mood. Life in prison is difficult and one needed to keep praying to be safe. He hoped that once he was released this time around, it would be his last to see jail. He hoped to continue with schooling. He said he was lucky to still have the support of his mother after all the things he had done.

8.1.12  Tony: “I Had No Reason”.

Tony is seventeen years old and after being remanded in prison for eight months, he was committed to a reformatory school indefinitely for stealing a landline phone set. He was born and raised in the rural village in a central region district of Malawi, until the age of fifteen when he moved to stay with a brother in the city. He is the last born of five children, but a member of a large extended family. His mother was divorced when he was a baby but re-married when Tony was two years old. His father divorced many other women besides his mother. He grew up thinking his step-father was his biological father, until the age of eight. He did not meet his biological father until he was ten and maintains a distant but cordial relationship with him. His step-father has two other wives and several children. His step-father is generally an aloof person to all his children and lets mothers mind the disciplining of their children. Nonetheless, Tony described his relationship with his mother, step-father and the step-siblings as very good. There were equal gains and losses in whatever dynamics played out in the family. For example, because of the size of the family, he and other step-siblings faced the same challenges of lacking school and other economic resources.
As a result many of his step-siblings, including him, did not proceed with school. He dropped out in grade seven and joined his step-siblings help his step-father with his fishing business in the lake. He learned carpentry through apprenticeship at his brother's workshop and ended up working with him. He had made nice friends during this time including friendship with a neighbour, a telephone repair. While accompanying his friend to repair phones, he stole one of the landline handsets. Once the owner asked him about it, he denied stealing it and his customer decided to take this repair friend to police. Somebody who had seen Tony steal the handset exposed him. By this time Tony had already sold the phone handset; he was arrested, remanded and later committed to the reformatory school. Tony could not confess about the phone for fear of being arrested and imprisoned. He said he was not a criminal and no one in the family had ever been arrested for criminal activities. He had no reason at all to steal because he had no any pressing needs, nor was he lacking any basic needs at home. He stole it out of excitement and even after he had sold it, he had nothing in mind to spend the money. He just left the money lying in the home.

Tony believed that Satan- the devil tempted him to get excited and steal the phone. He knew it was wrong the very moment he was thinking about it, but the urge to stealing prevailed over the one not to. Despite the challenges of imprisonment- like congestion, poor nutrition, infections, threat of sexual abuse and curtailed freedoms, he felt his imprisonment was justified. He had no any excuses at all; he deserved to be punished for doing what was wrong. He was especially guilty that even after being asked several times by his friend whether he had taken the phone, he maintained to play all innocent. He was very ashamed with himself, but said he was too afraid to lose his friend's trust. He was certain this was the beginning and the end of offending, citing the dehumanising conditions in the prison as a big life-long bitter lesson. He had experienced abuse by the guards just like other prisoners.

8.1.13  **Mark: “I am not Happy with City Justice”**.

Mark is sixteen years old and remanded in prison as a suspect for a robbery. He was born and brought up in a district in the northern region of Malawi. He is the third born of seven children. Both of Mark's parents passed away- his mother when Mark was eight, and his father, when he was fourteen. His mother passed away after a long illness and his father of complications after being assaulted while drinking. He claimed that both his parents were
bewitched by his uncle. Being the only older child present with his parents, following his two elder siblings’ marriage and relocation to the city respectively, he matured early to take over the responsibility of looking after the younger siblings and taking care of the home during her mother’s illness. When his mother passed away, he had to quit school in grade five to be a full time helper of his siblings and helped his father in the fields.

He described his family as relatively well off. They worked hard to produce enough food, except for years of droughts. He formed very strong relational bonds with both his mother and father. Although he was devastated by his mother’s death, he received significant support from the father and grandfather and the extended relations of the clan. The death of his father was also painful, but he had acquired enormous lessons from him and with the support of his grandfather he soldiered on. He faced challenges to ensure that the siblings were looked after well and had to make strategic plans to ensure availability of basic resources. In late 2005 he travelled to the city, where his elder brother runs a timber business, to solicit some money to buy fertiliser in readiness of the 2006 agricultural season. However when he arrived, his brother would not be able to raise the money because his business was ailing. He joined a friend from home in a bicycle transport business that serves low income people in the city, in order to realise some money to return home. It was during this time that while returning home one night, he stumbled into a bicycle passenger carrier seat and took it home. The following morning he innocently fixed it into his friend’s bicycle and was ready to conduct business, when one day somebody accused him of robbing him the seat. Consequently Mark was arrested.

Meanwhile the police assaulted him with metal rods into making a confession on the where about of the bicycle; he sustained facial cuts and a swollen arm. He did not confess because he did not know anything about it, except that he had stumbled on it on his way home and used it on his friend’s bicycle. Meanwhile, the police also arrested his brother in their hope that the two conspired. The brother denied any knowledge of the stolen bicycle resulting in both of them being charged of robbery as evidenced by the item in their possession, and consequently being remanded in prison. Mark’s brother confessed to him however, of assaulting and robbing a man of his bicycle, and throwing the carrier seat away. They did away with the carrier seat to get rid of easy identification and had since sold the bicycle. Apparently Mark’s brother had pleaded with him to be patient because any witnesses, they were likely to get out when the case went to court. However Mark,
whose seat was found in his possession, was very worried about his future and greatly disturbed by his brother’s way of thinking.

Mark was traumatised at the way the whole incident was handled and the assault at the hands of the police. He had developed a very negative attitude of the city, a place he only visited for the first time, and could not wait to return home forever after release. He felt that this was not a case to get to police with at village level, as it would have been easily negotiated between the two parties to come to some mutual understanding. He felt that city justice worked very differently from how disputes were settled in his community. He was finding prison life stressful and depressing. He dreaded on being sexually abused, considering that this was one subject that every juvenile was scared of in the prison. The congestion of the cells meant that it was very easy to contract the ever growing number of infectious diseases like Tuberculosis (TB), influenza, scabies owing to the highly unhygienic conditions. Prison stripped him of all freedoms and made him feel dehumanised. He had hope in God and prayed that he would be released sometime soon, so he could return home.

8.1.14  Little: “It must be God’s Will”.

Little is fifteen years old and serving a ten month jail sentence for being in possession of marijuana, an illicit drug in Malawi. This after a friend entrusted him with his bag as they were returning to the city from a holiday. They parted ways as the friend took a taxi, while he walked. On the way, he met police officers who smelled the marijuana and asked to check his bag. He was shocked and confused to see the contents in his friend’s bag and any explanations to that effect did not save him. He was effectively sentenced to ten months. He was angry at the police for choosing to ignore the evidence he was presenting and blamed the courts for victimisation.

Little is the second born of two children. Both his parents passed away when he was young. He was brought up by his paternal grandfather and spent most of his childhood years fishing the lake with his grandfather. He blamed his friend for taking advantage of his naivety with the ways of the city to use him as a carrier of drugs. He had no knowledge of the smell of marijuana let alone how it looked like at the time of arrest. It was his first time ever to be in conflict with the law. He felt depressed in prison, and said it needs a significant shift in perception to cope with the conditions. His appetite was bad; he had no
one to visit him as none of his relatives were aware he was in prison. However he said acceptance was gradually setting in as 'you cannot be in denial forever'. He cried a lot in the initial days, but other boys asked him to concentrate on his term and look to the future after the ten months.

He faced several challenges and top on the list were congestion and the rampant infections. The two were a major threat between finishing and not finishing the sentence. There was potential that one would die if his health was not good enough to withstand infections that came with breathing infected air and congestion. Any infection in the face of poor nutrition he felt was enough to threaten his well being. There was no guarantee of medication in prison. He felt for one who had truly offended, these conditions might be justifiable but for an innocent person like himself, they were acts of victimisation. Since there was no any other way, he had to believe in God and prayer and read his bible hoping for the best. As a member of the Believer community, he said such acts were to be considered part of the plan of God for him. He felt he may understand the reasons behind this in future.

8.1.15 King: “So long there is food in here, it's Ok”.

King is fifteen years old and remanded for seven months awaiting his trial for being a suspect of house breaking and theft. He was born in the rural area in the north and moved to the city, with his paternal grandfather when he was seven years. He is presumed to be the first born of three children because when he left the village, his parents had two other children. Since they moved to the city nine years back, they have never returned home again for lack of money for transport. The grandfather had never written home, nor home writing them in the nine years they had left. As a result, King had no idea whether the parents were still alive or not and whether or not his parents had other children. Once in the city, they settled in one of the poor neighbourhoods, as the grandfather picked up a job as a ground labourer. He hardly makes enough money on his job. King generally considers himself as a troubled child since he moved to the city, and was at pains to say for sure what it is that was making him delinquent.

Staying only the two of them, there was very little time they interacted. Long hours of his grandfather’s work meant that there was little monitoring of what was happening in King’s life. Often he did as he pleased and his grandfather hardly enquired of his life. He quickly
became friends with other troubled children in the neighbourhood and quit school in grade five. He started spending most of his time in the street with other delinquent children and practised on shop lifting, smoking marijuana and vandalism. He has been arrested and incarcerated several times since he was twelve years. He felt he was generally a disruptive child and his antisocial tendencies were made worse by his delinquent peers. He would not commit himself about his future but he hoped one day he would lead a normal life. He felt the way the prison was run was perfect- saying it was him that needed to change and not the prison. For him, as long as there was food for the prisoners to survive on, other harsh experiences of the prison were not a problem.

8.1.16 Chad: “Ignorance is Dangerous”.

Chad is seventeen years old and serving a six months sentence for escaping from lawful police custody. He is the fifth born in a family of six. His father passed away of AIDS related complications when Chad was three years old and his mother is a house wife. After his father’s death, he was separated from his mother to stay with his maternal grandparents in the village; and he was put in school there until he was eight, when he rejoined his mother. He formed a very strong bond with his grandparents and faced adjustment problems when he rejoined his mother. He had difficulties to be controlled by her, but through his mother’s physical discipline style he finally came right again. His mother trained him well. She tested him by leaving money and other valuables unattended. Chad would steal them and his mother would confront him and teach him. As a result he did not offend beyond his home environment.

When he was 14, his mother finally handed over to him a television set as per his dying father’s wish. He set up an informal video house in the city neighbourhood and supported himself and his family. He managed between the video show and schooling in grade eight. He came into contact with young people of different behavioural styles in his business including those with antisocial behaviour. During his routine shows, he was sold a stolen item by one of the boys who go to watch the films and soon the owner found out about it. He was arrested and remanded to the police cell. In the cell he found eight older career criminals who were making plans to break it and escape. Ignorant of the law and personally protesting his arrest, he could not resist escaping with the rest once the cell was finally broken. He ran into another city suburb; but tired of living a fugitive life, he returned home and he was re-arrested.
His family has no history of offending. He blamed his own stupidity for escaping because he did not know how the law worked. He thought it was just a simple matter that would be resolved between the two parties. He thought the owner of the stolen item was a bit harsh on reporting him to the police after his items were found and returned to him. None the less, he felt the imprisonment was God’s plan, it was fate. It had to happen this time to strengthen him of any challenges that he was about to face as an adult. He felt the prison was a good example of hell on earth. The denial and curtailment of freedoms, congestion, poor food and rampant homosexual activities were causing him great anxiety. He had been coaxed by adult inmates into giving in to homosexuality but he refused. He was looking forward to going back to school after release. His family and friends were very supportive and empathised with his situation.

### 8.1.17 George: “I am Discriminated Against”.

George is eighteen years old and has been on remand for over a year, for murdering a man in his village. He was born in the rural district in the northern region of Malawi. He is a second born of three children. George never got to know his father who died when he was about four years old. At the age of six he suffered from a life threatening physical infection that left him half deaf and his speech significantly impaired. From then, one has to shout to communicate with him and often leads lip movements to guess on what one is saying. When George was seven years, his mother re-married, to a step-father who was abusive. George and his brothers lived in constant fear. One day, the mother had returned home to find that the step-father had pulled down their house. He was divorcing the mother and she returned home to stay with George’s maternal grand parents. When George was fifteen years old, his mother passed away after a long illness. He was not aware of what the mother died of but could not rule out the possibility of bewitchment.

George described his mother as a very good person, who worked hard to find a cure for his hearing problem and her death left a big gap. However, growing up in an extended family of grandparents meant that they took up the roles of parenting and teaching them better ways of living. The relationship between George and his grandparents is very good, but the neighbourhood victimises his grandparents because of the criminal behaviour of his elder brother. His elder brother, who had since been banished out of the village, was a cause of several criminal activities in the village and elders blame George’s grandparents.
for his criminal behaviour. Following George’s offence, the grandparents were forced out of the village after their home was pulled down.

George never got a chance to attend school because there are no available institutions, in his region, that can accommodate his special needs and so he had to learn to do farming and some small scale business in order to be self-reliant and help his grandparents. Throughout childhood and adolescence, he had not been popular with peers, who often find him difficult to communicate to and instead take him as a mock object. He feels misunderstood and often keeps to himself for fear of being made a laughing stock. However it did not matter whether he interacted or withdrew from peers as either way, he would still be made fun of. In 2005, George was incarcerated for murdering a father of four, a fellow villager and was still being remanded in prison one year after the incident. The deceased owed him money for over six months and had promised to provide him with a pair of pigeons as payments, but he never honoured it even after several reminders. At the time of his death, George had met the deceased at a drinking place and reminded him about the debt, but the deceased was noncommittal. After getting drunk, something George regularly engaged in to preoccupy himself from loneliness; he pursued the deceased at his home and confronted the wife about her husband's outstanding debt. At which point, out of anger, he picked a piece of wood and hit the drunken deceased on the head where he collapsed and was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

George was arrested and mentally examined where it was deduced that he did not have any mental illness, except he was under the influence of alcohol. George considered himself as a very good person whom people exploited for their personal interests by taking advantage of his impairments. Like many juveniles, his family would not afford a lawyer to represent him and was still waiting for government to hear his case. He was finding prison extremely difficult because he did not have friends to talk to and felt alienated. He complained of both physical and verbal abuse by fellow juveniles, congestion in prison, poor nutrition and rampant infections. He did not know what to expect about the future only hoping that he would be released one day and pursue his dream to find a treatment for his ears. He was not a killer and blamed alcohol and exploitation by the deceased which pushed the limit of his patience. He did not see himself offending again in future as it was not intentional and because he had never been a violent person before this incident.
Micah: “I needed not listen to my peers”.

Micah is seventeen years old and remanded to prison for murder. During a soccer match between neighbouring villages, a fight broke up among the players in which he was part. The fight spilt over into supporters. Being a home team, Micah and a whole legion of home supporters pursued the visitors with stones, wood and while others even carried knives and axes. No one was seriously injured. Once Micah and the friends were returning home from pursuing the visitors out of the village, they came across a man of the other village armed with an axe and coming after them. He threatened to kill and managed to grab one of them. As the two fought, they felled each other on the ground, and the man fell on his own axe and sustained an injury to his leg.

Once at the hospital, he was issued with a letter to report the injury to police and Micah and his friends were arrested and taken to the village police, charged with bodily harm and granted bail overnight. After a month following the incident, the wounded man was taken sick and admitted to the hospital where he died. Medical reports had shown that he died of TB; and Micah said that the deceased was generally a sickly looking man. However, relatives of the deceased had non to do with the medical reports and openly insinuated at the funeral that their beloved one’s death was accelerated by the injuries he had sustained at the hands of the young people. Consequently the village police could do nothing but re-arrest Micah and his friends.

Micah, a fifth born in the family of seven, was doing his secondary education during the time of arrest. His parents are alive and well and he has a very strong bond with them and his siblings. They are warm parents. He had no any offending history and neither did his family. He was one of the exemplary children in the village and blamed the entire soccer incident on the group excitement. He thought he had lost his rational thinking to the group which seemed to act on an impulse. He regretted the incident and considered his imprisonment a bad dream. He felt it could also be God’s wish for him to learn something in life, may be that violence was not good. His family was too poor to afford a lawyer to represent him and so he had to wait for the time government will decide on his case; he hoped the police medical reports will save him.
He described prison life as traumatising. A mistake by one prisoner invited violence from the guards on all the prisoners and this he felt, was traumatic for non-violent, well behaved prisoners. Prisoners would be flogged, verbally abused all because one prisoner was caught with marijuana or found with money. He also feared for his health owing to poor hygiene, poor nutrition, congestion and infections. He had been enticed by adult inmates into engaging in homosexual activities but he had refused. Adult inmates used poverty of the young ones to exploit them and sleep with them. He said he had seen one prisoner die for engaging in homosexual activities. None the less, he considered the difficulties in prison as necessary to facilitate transformation; arguing that comfort would not be a deterrent enough to offending. But he felt that government was wasting time sending real criminals to prison because it was only managing to harden them. He wondered what help it was when prisoners convicted for theft, stole more in prison than they did outside. He hoped to carry on with his education after release although he was still continuing with it in prison.

8.1.19 Clement & Yudo: “Awaiting is Torture”.

Clement is eighteen years old and Yudo sixteen and on remand for three years accused of murdering their brother. Three years ago in their rural in the north, their brother was found dead in his matrimonial house with fresh wounds. Clement and Yudo had set out early in the morning, from their mother’s home next to the deceased’s, to run some errands for the family. When they returned at sun set, the community policing headed by their brother in-law, accused them of murdering their brother and fleeing; and handed them over to the area police despite the protest of the family and the community.

Their twenty-two-year old deceased brother had married and divorced twice, abused alcohol and marijuana. He was often aggressive to their mother and the family when drunk and also his friends wherever he was drinking. His confrontational behaviour when he was drunk made him a frequent target of assault by the people he drank with. He drank everyday and often came home in the cover of darkness. And although he had a wife and their home within the compound, whenever he came back from drinking he had to pass by the mother’s home first to shout some insults and demand food. Often he was given food but at other times, when their mother had retired to bed, Clement and Yudo would quickly lock the door, put off lamp lights once they heard him approach and rush to bed to avoid confrontation. Sometimes he would bang at the door and walk back to his house when
nobody opened for him.

On the night of his death, the wife said he had come back home as usual drunk and went straight to bed. In the usual village life of dim lamp lights, the wife had not cared much to check his condition, he also did not complain. In the morning she woke up to do her daily chores but was rather worried when the sun went up and the husband had not awakened. When she went to check on him she discovered something was wrong and he was declared dead when they took him to the hospital. Although he was generally troublesome and antisocial, Clement and Yudo said murdering him was the worst they could ever do to him arguing they were always the first to take him to hospital when he was assaulted. It was coincidental that they went to attend to family matters when the brother died but it had nothing to do with them murdering him. The entire village disagreed with their brother in-law including the police. But the police feared that the community policing may use his displeasure to arrest the two; against him; so he arrested them and hoped they would find a lawyer to get them out of jail on bail. Unfortunately the family is too poor to raise such money.

The two brothers believed the brother-in-law victimised them because they were a stumbling block to him attaining part of the family land. He had immigrated to their village and married their sister and had always wanted a bigger land to grow tobacco. The time of the murder, Clement and Yudo had acquired enough farm inputs to cultivate tobacco and their in-law had asked for some but they turned him down. After their arrest, he took all the inputs and used the land himself, something they believed was behind his framing them against all the evidence from the family and the village. He used his power as chairperson of the community policing to victimise them. Their mother is a widow, following the husband's death when Clement and Yudo were six and four respectively. She lost the use of her right hand five years ago when she sustained a serious fracture which killed her nerves. Clement and Yudo had been the ones running the home and helping the mother; and now that they were in prison, the main victim was their mother.

They come from a family of seven surviving children. Two sisters are married and two brothers work away from home. They considered their long imprisonment unjustified and wrong and disturbed their smooth academic pursuits in secondary school. They believed that because God worked in mysterious ways, he would reveal the purpose of their
predicament. They felt severely victimised and exposed to unjust abuses of imprisonment, including abuse at the hands of guards, congestion, poor nutrition, diseases, curtailed freedoms and threats of sexual abuse. They also blamed the justice system for only being effective for the rich and wondered why it was taking long for their case to be held. Without the access to lawyers like the rich, they said there was nothing they could do but wait.

8.1.20 Pezo: “I Accept this Reality”.

Pezo is eighteen years old and serving an eighteen months jail sentence for escaping from lawful custody. Having finished his secondary education, he stayed with parents in the rural village of in the north. And during this time, his elder brother had been a secretary signing the coupons for distributing free, subsidised government farm inputs to villagers. Pezo’s brother and an elected community chairperson were supposed to be signatories for the coupons, but the trust the community had in the brother let him do all the signing to save time. One day, the brother who was busy in the fields let Pezo do the signing. The distributing committee detected the anomaly of signatures on the coupon; they followed up and Pezo was arrested for forgery.

In the police cell, he encountered a career criminal who took advantage of the heavy rains of the day to break the cell. He deceived Pezo that if he did not escape, he would serve three sentences: forgery, breaking the cell and letting another prisoner escape. So he decided to escape also. When he reached home his parents condemned his escape and warned him of making things more complicated than they were. He chose to flee the village to a relative in the city. However the relative advised him like the parents did, that he was making a potentially simple situation complicated. The relative advised him to go back home and hand himself over to the police. He did, and was charged with escape from lawful custody and sentenced to eighteen months jail. He felt very relieved to have handed himself over to the police and felt it was quiet stupid of him to listen to another suspect in cell. He also blamed his naivety on the workings of the law. He had no knowledge of the processes and all he thought was that he was to be jailed even without a trial.

Pezo is the last born of five children. He has very strong bonds with his parents and siblings. His parents, subsistence farmers, are warm and authoritative. He grew up surrounded by love and care and excelled well in school. There is no history of offending
in the family and he did not take his being in prison as a big thing that would tarnish his image. He said his mind was very clear. However he took fault in the duration of the sentence; saying, even though the magistrate made it clear that it was a warning to the potential escapees of lawful custody, few weeks would have been enough to pass such a message. He blamed poverty that saw poor people without having lawyers to defend themselves as a major injustice.

He considered everything in prison to be tailored around punishment: poor food, poor hygiene, congestion, curtailed freedoms, were all engineered as part of punishment. He felt that what food was cooked and how it was cooked and when they ate and how often, were part of the punishment. Further, one had to be at the point of death to be attended medically for fear that if taken to hospital prematurely one would escape. He felt this was an abuse of human rights of prisoners, especially considering that some were innocent of their charge. He however felt that he had prepared himself for prison the very day he made up his mind to hand himself over to the police. Prison helped him to be more vigilant to potential offending behaviours and he saw his future as very bright. He would want to believe that all this was possible because God allowed it to happen. There was a reason for it, which he may come to know in future. He preoccupied himself with school and hoped to write secondary school leaving certificate again in prison. He said prayer was also one thing that made him strong and optimistic about the future.

**8.1.21 Alfred: “It’s like Staying inside the Egg”**.

Alfred is eighteen years old and remanded to prison as a suspect for house-breaking. He was born and raised in the rural districts in the north. He is the last born of five surviving children. His parents, subsistence farmers, are alive but in their elderly age. Alfred was born a health child but claimed his family had been under constant victimisation by witchcraft. At the age of five, he developed epilepsy, which he attributed to witchcraft. This impacted a lot on the quality of his academic and social life. He would have seizures all over, in class and while playing about. As a result his parents were always very protective of him and he was allowed to quit school in grade five and just be at home and learn other skills. Following what he called mysterious deaths of his two elder sisters, the family moved to another district hoping to escape witchcraft.
They moved when he was fifteen. Alfred concentrated on farming and entrepreneurship. Family misfortunes did not however stop with their relocation. He claimed another of his elder brothers became mentally sick while he got accused thrice of crimes he never committed. He had three times been dragged to police community authorities for offending only for the culprits to be apprehended in due course. He felt his family was either under a curse or bewitched. When he was seventeen, he got married to his fifteen year old wife so she could help him take care of his parents. All other siblings are married and relocated elsewhere and due to his epilepsy he had to stay with his parents. Marriage meant more responsibility and often he was gone for days to source trading items like fish and corn. His absence caused a lot of conflict with his pregnant wife who accused him of cheating on her. He would get angry and aggressive sometimes, but out of respect of his parents’ home controlled his anger.

After their baby girl was born in late 2005, his parent in-laws withdrew their daughter from marriage on the pretext they wanted to see the new-born. His wife had been gone for six months when Alfred was accused of house-breaking. He claimed the snatching of his wife, just like this fourth arrest and incarceration were part of a curse that his family was going through. He has no offending history since he was born and neither was his family. He was innocent he said, and had no any knowledge of the house breaking whatsoever. He was more saddened that he was remanded for six months and his case was not being heard yet. It was a painful wait and since he had no any means to acquire justice, he had to wait until the government took him to court. He had been depressed since he arrived; the conditions of prison were making him contemplate suicide. He was not sleeping well; he was withdrawn and wished he had pills or rat poison to just kill himself.

He had turned to God to help him and he dedicated his time to prayer so that God could cleanse him and his family of any curse and protect him against witchcraft. He felt there was a charm of darkness around his body that needed to be cast out. He was scared that at the rate things were going, he might be framed for a murder in future. Prison was a traumatic experience for him. He felt that being in prison was like being inside an egg, where his freedom was stolen. He had been diagnosed with ulcers and the food in prison was inadequate, inappropriate for his condition and worsened the pain. There was no medicine in prison and so he had to pray to God to relieve the pain. He had not experienced any epileptic seizures for the six months he had been in prison and attributed
it to God, as previously he had at least one every month. He hoped that one day the misfortunes befalling him would stop.
8.2 APPENDIX: B

8.2.0 Letter of Intent to the RPO

St. John of God Community Services

P.O. Box 744, Mzuzu, Malawi
E-mail: sjog@sdnp.org.mw

Tel (265) 332 090
Fax (265) 332 495

The Regional Prison Officer (Fo)
P.O. Box, 79
Mzuzu
MALAWI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH ON JUVENILE OFFENDERS’ LIFE EXPERIENCES

I am writing to ask for permission to carry out a research study with Juvenile offenders convicted or awaiting trial at the central prison. The aim of the study is to explore life-stories of juvenile offenders. Please find enclosed the research guidelines regarding this particular study.

Sincerely,

Ndumanene Devlin Silungwe.
LIFE HISTORY NARRATIVES OF MALE JUVENILE OFFENDERS

I am being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, I would like to explain why the research is being done and what it will involve. I will ask you if there is anything that is not clear or if you have any questions.

What is the purpose of the study?
This study explores life history narratives of male juvenile offenders sentenced or remanded for serious and violent crime. It aims to gain insight into how they understand their violent acts.

Have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do not want to, this will not affect you in any way. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. If you decide to take part you are still free to stop taking part at any time and without having to give a reason.

What would happen to me if I take part?
If you decide to take part, I will ask you some questions about yourself, life events in general, events surrounding your crime, conviction and or remand. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions - I just want to know what you think and how you feel about things. It is likely to take about an hour.

What if the questions upset me?
You can stop the interview at any point, and you do not have to explain why. You can also contact the researcher at any point after the interview, and say that you want certain questions or the interview to be destroyed. If you want to talk to someone about anything which the interview has raised, I have made arrangements to have you attended to. You can also contact the researcher at the addresses provided to you.
and my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

formation about you that this study collects would be kept strictly confidential. The
researcher will not tell anybody who knows you what you said and any information about you will
your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

ong the study, it may become clear that you suffer from distress or difficulties; this may be
d by referral to a counsellor at St John of God. If so, both you and the institution will be
if they wish the referral to be made (this would mean sharing your name with somebody
le the study). Your name will only be passed on if both you and the institution request this.

ill happen to the results of the research study?

results of this study will be published and presented to the University of Cape Town, and
copies also distributed to government departments and non-governmental organisations
provide support to juveniles and their families. Your name will not be identified in any
publication.

s organising and funding the research?

research is being conducted towards a postgraduate degree qualification in psychology
in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. It is
funded by St John of God Community Services, which among other programmes, has
projects that target the youths.

should I take part in the study?

udy should help University of Cape Town to understand more and help formulate positive and
ive approaches of children at conflict with the law as well as identifying and mitigating on-
ctors early through proactive youth programs.

for Further Information

men Devlin Siliungwe (SLNNUUOOU)
artment of Psychology
ity of Cape Town
osch

21) 650 4607
21) 650 4104
devlinsiliungwe@yahoo.com

Ndumanene Devlin Siliungwe
C/o St John of God Community Services
P.O Box 744
Mzuzu
Malawi
Tel. (01) 332 690/495
Fax (01) 334 213
Email: sjog@sdnp.org.mw
MBIRI NDIMOYO WAACHINYAMATA OMWE AYIMBIDWA MLANDU

aphedwa kutenga mbali pakafulufukula. Koma usanamanene ndikufuna, kuti
takozeze cholinga chakafukufukuyu mwatsanetsatane. Chonde khala omasuka kufunsa
sukumvetsa, komanso kundifunsa mafunso panthawi yakafulufukuyu.

Cholinga chakafukufukuyu ndichiyani?
a chaka ndikudziwa umoyo ndi mbiri ya achinyamata amene ayimbidwa mlandu powerunsu
imbedza zamoyo wa. Makamaka ndifuna kudziwa mbiri ndi umoyo wa iwo amene amangidwa
dali pakupindani chifukwa chamilandu yayikulana ndicholinga chofanya kwamaniko magunzo awo
kulongosola kwawo pamlandu umene ayimbidwa.

Ndikuwumilizidwa kutengapo mbali?
kwa iwe kutengapo mbali kapena ayi. Ndipo ngati wasankha kutengapo mbali, palibe iko
kuchitrile. Ngati utatengopo mbali, udzapatidwa pepala ili pomwe pali zefunikila
tinetsatane, ndinso fumu yoti usayinile kuvomereza. Kambiri unyakhalile udzavomereza,
dla ndiufulu osiya ngati utafuna, popanda kukanamidwa kupereka chifukwa chimene
a.

Ndipamhanda ntchikho kutengapo mbali?
wasankha kutengapo mbali, kufranana ndizolinga zakafulufukuyu, ndidzacheza newe
funsa mafunso osiyansiyana okhuda zamoyo ndi mbiri yako, kuphathikizapo mafunso
a zamlandu wako komanso ndende. Cholinga chake siyafuna kunya, kapena kupeza
a okhoza kapena olakwika umoyo wako, chonde sikufunika kuchita kugunizira monga ngati
yesedwa. Ndingofuna kudziwa zamoyo ndi mbiri yako monga monwe iwe mwini ukudziwira
cheza kwathu kudzatenga pafulupifupa maora awiri.

Ngati mafunso andikwiyitsa kapena kundikayikitsa nditani?
kusiya kuyankha mafunso, kapena kusiya kutengapo mbali ndipo sudzakamidzidwa
a chifukwa chake ngati sikufulo. Komanso ukhoza kundifotokozeri zoyenera
edwa muzokambirana zathu. Ngati utafuna chithandizo, maka uphungu, kudzakonzedwa
ngwe la St John of God likuthandize.
insinsi chidzasungidwa ngati nditatengapo mbali?

Zidzakhala zachinsisi koteru kuti ngakhale amene akukudziwa sadzawuzidwa. Zotsatira ufukuyu sizidzawonietsa dzina lako kapananso uko kamene iwe uchokela. Ngati patapezeka ufunda thandizo laiphungu ndinso akuluakululwe amene avemereza kuti ulandile thandizo, po dzina lako (osati nkhani yako), lidzaperekedwa kwam'modzi wa aphungu aku St John of i akuthandize.

zotsatira zake mudzapanga nazo chiyani?


a chanji ndiyenera kutengapo mbali?

ukuyu athandiza kuti timvetze ngati bungwe lamphunziro, mbiri yako koteru kuti thandiza ra lipezeke pakagwiridwe ntchito ndi ana komanso achinyamata amene ali pamilandu, iwo amene akukulabe.

Zanga

nen Devlin Silungwe (SLNNDUO01)
partment of Psychology
ity of Cape Town
osch

1) 650 4607
2) 650 4104
evinsilungwe@yahoo.com

Ndumanene Devlin Silungwe
St John of God Community Services
P.O Box 744
Mzuzu
Malawi
Tel (01) 332 690/495
Fax (01) 334 212
Email evinsilungwe@yahoo.com
8.2.2 Acceptance Letters

THE REGIONAL PRISON OFFICER
P.O. Box 79
Mzuzu
MALAWI

1st August, 2006.

Mr. N. Silungwe,
St. John of God Community Services,
P.O. Box 744,
Mzuzu.

Copy: The Officer-in-Charge,
Mzuzu Prison,
P.O. Box 79,
Mzuzu.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WITH JUVENILES

Reference is made to your letter dated 26th July, 2006 in connection with the above stated subject.

I write to convey RPO's approval for you to conduct your follow-up interview with Juveniles as per your request.

By copy of this letter the Officer In Charge is asked to make necessary arrangements.

[I.L. Mtengo]
AHRMO

For/ REGIONAL PRISON OFFICER [N]
Mr. Ndumalene Silungwe
St John of God Community Services
P.O. Box 744
MZUZU.

CC: The officer In-Charge,
MZUZU prison
P.O.Box 79
MZUZU.

THE REGIONAL PRISON OFFICER (N)
P.O. BOX 79
MZUZU
MALAWI

10th January, 2006

AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MZUZU PRISON

Reference is made to your application for authorisation to carry out a research on “Emotional Experiences of young offenders awaiting trial” at mzuzu prison.

I'm pleased to grant you approval for your research starting from 17th January, 2005 as requested.

By copy of this letter the officer in-charge mzuzu prison is asked to give you the necessary assistance.

This approval is granted on the basis that the findings will be used for purpose as requested (fulfilment of the MSocSc in psychology) and nothing else.

Yours sincerely

C. J. Kainja, ACP
REGIONAL PRISON OFFICER [N]
8.2.3 Samples of Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

LIFE HISTORY NARRATIVES OF MALE JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Use tick box

1. I confirm that I understand why this study is being done and what
   I will be expected to do, and have had the chance to ask questions.

2. I understand that I do not have to take part if I do not wish to, and that
   I am free to withdraw at any time, without having to explain why.

3. I agree that any words I may say during the interview can be used,
   without giving my name, in the presentation of the research. I agree to
   take part in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of caregiver (if the participant is under 18)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Searcher</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2 copies: one for participant, one for researcher (to be kept with records)
chikala

chilolezo

MBIR. NOTAMO WAACHENYAMATA OMWE AYIMBULWA MLANDU

qani nkati nwisinkosi

Ndikutsimikaza kuti ndamvetsa zobungu zakafukukuyu konzerno zembe
likuyena kuchita, kuphathizapo konzenso malunso ngaphakathi
ндамвэта кути ndili ndi ufulo osatengapo mban pakafulufukuyi ungani
ndikuthi, pokuthise ndili ufulula ozapiwana nthawi zinthomwe popanda
akamizidwa kuperekha chifukwa chake

Ndawonereza kuti zonse zembe ndita akukhulu e nthawi yakafukukuyi
khoza kugwintadwa ntchito pokhapokha dzina langa zahikuthinidwamo,
lewoneza kutenga mban pakafulufukuyi.

Langa Sigmetchela Deti

ndipeseza zoka B)

Londiyimila Sigmetchela Deti

zoka zonga ndi zacherela B)

azi Sigmetchela Deti

2 copies, one for participant, one for researcher (to be kept with records)