

Locked in transit: Girls inside the gates of child sex trafficking in South Africa

by

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I declare that “**LOCKED IN TRANSIT: GIRLS INSIDE THE GATES OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH AFRICA**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

(Mrs)

DATE

Acknowledgements

MY ABBA FATHER-As I look back over my life, I see your grace and unmerited favour throughout. Thank you for holding me, even when I doubted. Words cannot express my gratitude.

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Abstract

Despite the growing prevalence and awareness of child sex trafficking within the South African context, knowledge of the trade remains rudimentary. In this study, an exploration of how girl survivors of child sex trafficking within South Africa construct their experiences is provided. Participants included five girl children between the ages of 11 and 17, all of whom had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and managed to escape the trade. All of them were living in a safe house in Pretoria at the time of the interviews. One participant was trafficked into South Africa from Zimbabwe, one from the DRC, one from Lesotho, and two participants were trafficked within South African borders. An ecosystemic framework was suggested to create meaning of the findings, placing emphasis on how participants construct their experiences in terms of the ecological context. Research results reveal a significant difference in the ability of participants to overcome their experiences based on whether they had at least one supportive person from their ecological context before being trafficked. The findings of this study call for interventions to extend beyond the legislative arena. Rather, the legislative arena is seen as one aspect of the entire ecological context of girl children who are vulnerable to human trafficking. This sounds a call for interventions against human trafficking to take a more holistic view and to punctuate at the level of the family system and of the community.

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Chapter 1

Revealing the plot: An introduction

“In their little worlds in which children have their existence, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice.”

Great Expectations, Charles Dickens

1.1. Prelude

The above quote from Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* (1861) encapsulates the essence of what young girls who are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation which is injustice in its purest form. Sex trafficking strips young girls of their innocence and dignity as they are subjected to brutal conditions that most people sometimes never have to face in a lifetime. Young girls who have endured sex trafficking go to bed at night with only injustice as a companion. Despite this, young girls that took part in this study have so finely perceived and felt the injustice served to them and remolded their experience to one that reflects their continued struggle to recast themselves as survivors instead of victims.

While it is recognized that trafficking in humans can occur at local levels, it has international implications as indicated by the United Nations (UN) in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000) (also known as the Trafficking protocol or Palermo Protocol). The Palermo protocol is an international agreement attached to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC)

which came into force on 25 December 2003. The following section provides a brief synopsis of human trafficking globally.

1.2. Human Trafficking: A global picture in brief

The practice of human trafficking has risen to global prominence over the last two decades. Human trafficking is defined as the trade in humans, most commonly for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labour or for the extraction of organs or tissues, including surrogacy and ova removal (Fightslaverynow. Org. Retrieved 2013-11-03). Trafficking is considered a fastest growing and most lucrative criminal enterprise in the world, representing an estimated \$32 billion per year in international trade, compared to the estimated annual \$650 billion for all illegal international trade (Koh, 1999). It is considered to be the third-largest profit-generating organized crime globally, behind the sale of drugs and arms (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2003). The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in South Africa speculated in 2010 that human trafficking will eventually top the list, as unlike drugs and arms, human beings can be re-used and re-sold.

Given that human trafficking is a relatively new practice, knowledge of the trade is somewhat limited. Child sex trafficking, specifically, remains under-researched even though there has been a significant increase in the production of literature in the last two decades. However, the number of studies done across the globe has been limited to date. This is accounted for by various constraints in researching the underground world of human trafficking. One such constraint is the danger implicit in the industry as a whole. A further constraint is the difficulty

involved in gaining access to participants, and the reluctance of participants to talk openly once they are accessed (Molo Songololo, 2000a).

1.3. Child sex trafficking: The definition conundrum

While there has been an increased focus on human sex trafficking in recent years, there is no universally accepted definition of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The term was formally thought of as the organized movement of people, usually women, between countries and within countries for sex work with the use of physical coercion, deception and bondage through forced debt. However, according to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (State.gov. Retrieved 2013-11-03), movement is not an element necessary for the crime. The issue becomes even more contentious when the element of coercion is removed from the definition. Other definitions of child sex trafficking focus on prostitution as the main element that constitutes crime in the practice even though the girl may be a willing participant. Willing and free participation as well as prostitution becomes irrelevant when children are part of the equation. The biggest debate and dilemma around definitions of sex trafficking is whether a whole range of girls that have been tricked into sex trade can be regarded as being trafficked. In addition, it becomes difficult to make pronouncements on willingness if a girl child is involved taking into consideration that she is technically consenting but the law does not take into consideration the fact of her fact as legally binding.

The United States department of state's (2012) annual Trafficking in persons Report estimated that there are currently 27 million people living in conditions of slavery across the globe. Of the people who are trafficked annually, approximately eighty percent are said to be

women, of which fifty percent are minor girl children. In other words, girls under the age of eighteen constitute the vast majority of trafficked persons (United States Department of State, 2005). Various reasons abound that can explain why women and minor girl children are trafficked. Some of the reasons include sexual exploitation, forced labor, servitude, or for the removal of organs. However, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation has been documented as the most prevalent type of human trafficking both within South Africa and abroad (Molo Songololo, 2000b).

Given that girl children are the vast majority of persons who are trafficked primarily for the purpose of sexual exploitation; this study focuses specifically on this population. In addition, particular emphasis is placed on the South African context, as participants have all been trafficked within the South African context. As we will see in Chapter 2 when we review the literature to date, the South African context in which trafficking occurs has many unique aspects to it. Focusing specifically on the South African context allows us to examine the phenomenon of human trafficking in depth as we examine the particular contexts that perpetuate girl children's vulnerability.

1.4. Child sex trafficking in South Africa

In a post-apartheid South Africa, the grounds for child sex trafficking are ripe. While the prevalence of human trafficking is widespread across the globe, South Africa has been identified as a major destination, point of transit, and source country for child sex trafficking. Martens, Pieczkowski and Van vuuren-Smyth (2003) point out that most children that are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation come from and go to all corners of Africa and the world. As

such, it provides testimony to how big the trade is and how difficult it may be to police and contain the practice. To date, research detailing child sex trafficking in the South African context focuses on detailing the modus operandi of traffickers. In a report commissioned by the International Organization of Migration, Martens et al. (2003) explored the modus operandi of the practice of trafficking women and children into South Africa from neighboring African countries as well as from Thailand, China, and Eastern Europe. Molo Songololo (2000a & 2000b) has a similar focus, reporting on the modus operandi of sex trafficking of women and children within the South African context. The modus operandi differs according to different countries but what seems to be common is that they involve deceit, collusion with parents in exchange their children for money and also preying on girls that are in search of a glamorous lifestyle in big cities.

Based on the findings of these reports, the authors conclude by making legislative and policy recommendations for the prevention of the trade and prosecution of offenders within South Africa (Martens et al., 2003; Molo Songololo 2000a & 2000b). UNESCO (2007) published a policy paper on the root causes of human trafficking in South Africa, also making recommendation for legislative measures to be implemented. The International Labor Organization [ILO] (2008) has provided an overview of all types of human trafficking across Africa, and has documented the typical profile of traffickers and those who are trafficked. These studies have been successful in contributing to the understanding of child sex trafficking in the South African context. However, none of them have considered the experiences of the people who are trafficked, leaving our understanding of the trade limited to the modus operandi and

practical aspects of the trade. Let us consider what is known about human trafficking within the South African context.

In South Africa the precise extent of human trafficking is unknown, with various sources providing different estimates (Pharoah, 2006). Martens et al. (2003) estimates that four million people are trafficked worldwide every year. Martens et al. (2003) further estimate that between 850 and 1 100 women and children are trafficked through South Africa each year for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Furthermore, a report by Molo Songololo (2000a) indicates that there are between 28 000 and 38 000 children prostituted in South Africa, and that parents, particularly mothers, are among the primary traffickers of children.

1.5. Rationale

With numbers of girl children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation continuously on the rise, the ultimate aim of all research in the field must be to work toward the united goal of combating human trafficking. Most studies to date have aimed at recommending legislative guidelines (Molo Songololo, 2000a), with the hope of mobilizing political resources toward the prevention of the trade. However, before resources can be adequately allocated, it is necessary to increase the global awareness of just how prevalent the practice is. The ultimate goal of research in the field of human trafficking thus far has been to raise awareness and increase our existing knowledge. As such, most international studies have emphasized the practical aspects and modus operandi of the trade. South African studies have been successful in exploring the contextual factors that make girl children in particular vulnerable to being trafficked. However, these factors have emphasized the conditions that make them physically

vulnerable to being trafficked, with little regard for the psychological and emotional impact of the trade on the victims themselves.

In addition, it is ironic that while most papers within the South African context have emphasized poverty as the leading maintaining factor of human trafficking (Martens et al, 2003; Molo Songololo, 2000a & 2000b), these same reports have emphasized the necessity of legislative guidelines in their recommendations. These legislative guidelines are not aimed at dealing with poverty, which has been suggested as the leading underlying factor, but rather have emphasized the prosecution of offenders. Recommendations that steer interventions to alleviating poverty and other root causes are significantly lacking. While legislative policies are necessary in the fight against human trafficking, it addresses issues at a surface level, and neglects the deeper issues that maintain the context in which trafficking of girl children is enabled. In order to raise awareness and adequately mobilize resources, a more holistic understanding of the trade is needed. This highlights the need to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that maintain the problem, rather than aiming interventions at the surface level of policy alone. In order to deepen our understanding, we need to explore both the structural aspects as well as the emotional and psychological aspects of the girl child's vulnerability.

1.6. Problem Statement

Given that research to date has been limited, and that no previous studies exist that emphasized the impact of being trafficked on girl children, the research question guiding this study is:

“How do young girls who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation construct their experiences?”

With this question as a foundation, the specific aims and objectives of the study are outlined below.

1.7. Aim

South African research on human trafficking and child sex trafficking in particular, have emphasized poverty, gender imbalances, cultural factors, the legacy and history of Apartheid, lack of legislation and family fragmentation as the root causes of child sex trafficking. Recommendations that have been made on studies conducted on child sex trafficking tend to focus more on making legislative guidelines and policies to prosecute offenders. This ameliorative focus is laudable, but there still remains a challenge on how understand and deal with girls who have survived sex trafficking. It is argued in this study, that more focused attention is also needed to consider how trafficking impact young girls psychologically. To do this, we need conceptual lenses that can provide a framework for understanding young girl's capacity for differentiation as a process of change. This will help us understand how the process of change happens and how it can be understood as a means of survival post trafficking.

In order to understand the psychological and emotional impact of being trafficked, this study aims to explore how girl survivors of child sex trafficking reconstruct their life story within the confines of a 'safe house' that they live in. Furthermore, the aim is to explore how they differentiate from the experience. Bronfenbrenner's (1979 & 1989) idea of ecological context, Andolfi, Angelo, Menghi & Nicola-Corigliano's (1983) concept of separation and belonging,

Hoffman's (1981) spontaneous leaps and Auerswald's (1985 & 1987) notion of event-shape-in-time-space are integrated to propose a conceptual structure for understanding differentiation as a process of change among girl survivors of child sex trafficking. Specifically, we aim to describe the various levels of the ecological context that makes girl children vulnerable to being sex trafficked. Whereas previous studies have emphasized the components of the South African context that makes girl children vulnerable, none have considered them through the lens of a holistic ecological context that maintains the practice. The aim is to expand the preexisting knowledge and explore how the ecological context not only maintains the practice, but also makes young girls psychologically and emotionally vulnerable once they are trafficked.

1.8. Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To describe the ecological context that makes girl children vulnerable to being trafficked
- To explore the psychological and emotional impact of being trafficked.
- To explore the mechanisms of survival that they adopt to overcome the injustice they have been exposed to.
- To investigate how time and history factors into the reconstruction of their experience and influence the capacity for change

1.9. Definitions of Terms

With the context for this study explicated, a number of key terms are defined in order to clarify the intended meaning for the purpose of this study.

1.9.1 Child/Girl

In keeping with the South African Constitution (1996), the term children, child, or girl will be used interchangeably to refer to female persons under the age of 18 years. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a child (1979) supports this definition, positing that “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1979).

1.9.2 The Use of “She”

At various points throughout this study, the term ‘she’ is used to refer to an individual. This is due to the fact that this study focuses on girl children. As such, when we refer to an individual in a generic sense, we are referring specifically to the participants in this study, who are all female.

1.9.3 Survivors

Many studies prefer the term ‘victim’ when describing children who have been trafficked. However, implicit in this study is the notion of agency of participants. A pivotal theme within this study is the ability of participants to adapt and to overcome the injustice they have endured. As such, we make use of the term survivors of human trafficking rather than victims of human trafficking throughout this study.

1.9.4 Physically Vulnerable

The term physically vulnerable as used throughout this study refers specifically to the vulnerability of girl children to being trafficked. The issue of what contextual factors make girl

children physically vulnerable is often explored, and refers specifically to the vulnerability of girls to being trafficked.

1.9.5. Psychologically and Emotionally Vulnerable

The term psychologically and emotionally vulnerable refers to the vulnerability of girl children once they are trafficked. In other words, what are the conditions within their ecological context that make them physically and emotionally vulnerable to the experiences they encounter when they are trafficked as well as after they are trafficked.

1.10. Navigating Your Way Through This Study

In Chapter 2, an overview of the existing literature on human trafficking will be provided. This will serve to provide the context for the study, as the current results will later be situated within the broader context of previous research.

The theoretical framework for the study is presented in Chapter 3. The epistemological assumptions underlying the research question are explored, and the theory guiding the study is also discussed. In constructing this lens, the emphasis on the ecological context through which child sex trafficking is enabled emerges.

Once the theoretical lens has been constructed and the context for the study is set, the research design and methods employed in this research are discussed in Chapter 4. The assumptions of Grounded Theory will be explored, as well as the practical aspects that guided how the study was carried out. It should be noted that the assumption of the grounded theory

method is that research is an iterative process in which the emerging results serve to refine the direction of the study. As such, the theoretical lens through which the study is seen was constructed after results emerged. Moreover, the research question was refined as the process unfolded.

The research results are presented in Chapter 5, providing extracts from interviews to ensure the validity of the study. In Chapter 6, the meaning of the research results is interpreted in light of the theoretical lens and literature review provided in Chapters 2 and 3. Lastly, a meta perspective of the study in which we consider the implications of the findings, as well as strengths and limitations of the study is adopted in Chapter 7. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for future research are also made.

Chapter 2

Setting the Context: A Review of Current Literature

2.1. Introduction

The aim and objectives of this study were introduced in the previous chapter and an outline of what is to follow was provided. In this chapter the aim is to provide an overview of the literature on child sex trafficking. It can be argued that child sex trafficking occurs in local contexts. However, the South African context in which child sex trafficking occurs cannot be viewed outside of the broader international context. This review of the literature will therefore explore both global and local contexts and provide brief review of the major trends that emerge from the literature.

The discussion begins with the challenges around the search for an internationally accepted definition of human trafficking. When this foundation is set, the focus narrows down to a review of the contextual factors that enable child sex trafficking in South Africa and abroad. The aim is to provide a thorough discussion about the context that makes girl children vulnerable to human trafficking in South Africa. This will serve to highlight the gaps in existing literature, and sounds the call for a study on child sex trafficking of girl children in the South African context.

2.2. Human Trafficking Defined

There have been numerous debates over how human trafficking is defined, many of which are still ongoing (Pharoah, 2006). The controversy over this matter exists for a number of reasons, particularly when children are involved. Some arguments have been made for the

inclusion of all forms of child abuse in the definition of child sex trafficking. Others have argued that human trafficking only refers to those who have been tricked, transported, and trapped (NPA, 2010). Negotiating a position within these extremes has numerous implications in terms of how human trafficking is dealt with. Although child abuse exists in various forms and in epic proportions, there is evidence of a growing need to allocate sufficient resources to deal specifically with the problem of human trafficking. A lack of differentiation between child abuse and human trafficking poses the risk of a lack of specific procedures to effectively deal with cases of child abuse and human trafficking. On the other end of the spectrum, if the definition of human trafficking is limited to those who are “tricked, transported, and trapped” (NPA, 2010), the risk is that many cases of human trafficking would be excluded from the definition.

It is evident from the above that coming to a mutual agreement on the definition of human trafficking has posed numerous challenges. However, in the year 2000, the Palermo Protocol provided the first internationally accepted legal definition of human trafficking, with Article 3 of the protocol defining it as follows:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or removal of organs

The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation... shall be irrelevant where any means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power have been used.

The recruitment, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered ‘trafficking in persons,’ even if it does not involve threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability.

“Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age. (p. 2)

This definition serves to provide an understanding of human trafficking that is both broad enough to include various forms and circumstances of trafficking without including all forms of abuse. The definition highlights a number of essential features of human trafficking. Firstly, human trafficking is seen to include actions such as recruitment, harboring, transportation, and receipt of another person. This can be for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labor, servitude, other forms of slavery, or organ removal. The tactics involved in the trade range from violent means of coercion to more subtle means of luring victims to ‘willingly’ give consent. However, consent is deemed irrelevant when any means of threat, force, coercion, deception, fraud or abuse of power are used. In situations that involve children, consent is deemed irrelevant even when such measures are used. Furthermore, the definition extends beyond an act of trafficking, and includes any underlying intention of exploitation or deception of one person by another (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2007).

While this definition is sufficiently inclusive of various forms of human trafficking, the focus of this study is on the trafficking of girl children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Implicit in the Palermo Protocol’s (2000) definition is the emphasis on the vulnerability of children in particular. Any exploitation of this vulnerability that either forces a child into prostitution or lures them to ‘consent’ by preying on their vulnerabilities is considered a form of human trafficking. For the purpose of this study, the Palermo Protocol’s (2000) definition of human trafficking will be adopted, with particular emphasis on the girl child. In the case of the

girl child, whether she consented to the sexual exploits or not is deemed irrelevant. In other words, 'consent' by the girl child does not necessarily imply willingness to participate in prostitution. With this understanding of what human trafficking is, we shift our focus to the studies that have previously been conducted on human trafficking.

2.3 Child Sex Trafficking and Legal Frameworks

The impact of the Palermo Protocol has stretched beyond the provision of an acceptable definition of human trafficking. Providing a definition of human trafficking that can apply universally and that is clear paves the way for the allocation of resources to combat the trade. UNESCO (2007) has suggested legal guidelines for the prosecution of human trafficking, with the aim of establishing a framework for joint international attempts of governments and policy makers against human trafficking. This implies that the goal should be to work together to allocate sufficient resources to combat the trade. However, establishing a legal framework that would see a decrease in human trafficking requires that countries first acknowledge human trafficking as a problem. This is not a simple task, as denial about the problem is widespread (NPA, 2010). The denial by government officials that human trafficking exists in their country poses a challenge, as it directly has a bearing on the probability of implementing legislative measures and allocating sufficient resources to combat the trade. Raising awareness then, is fundamentally ineffective without buy-in from policy-makers. Within the South African context, a number of legislative advances have been made as awareness of the trade increases.

2.3.1 Steps toward a liberated society: the advances in South African legislation

A number of legal instruments have been promulgated internationally and locally in an

effort to combat child sex trafficking. In order to understand the significance of the political advancements South Africa has made since the implementation of democracy in 1994, it is important to understand the numerous legislative measures that have been set in place and how they intersect. Instruments of significance include the Bill of Rights of the South African constitution (1996), the Palermo Protocol (2000), the Children's Act 38 of 2005, , and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Bill, which is yet to be ratified.

2.3.1.1 South African Constitution. South Africa made history in 1994 when the first democratic election ushered in the spirit of a liberated society. The democratic ideas of the country that South Africa emphasized highlighted the importance of human rights. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution (1998) makes specific pronouncements on matters pertaining to children's rights. Specifically, it states that every child has the right:

(1b) to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment

(1d) to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation

(1e) to be protected from exploitative labor practices

(1f) not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that

- are inappropriate for a person of that child's age

- place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development

While this piece of legislation covers the protection of children in general, it does not refer explicitly to the practice of human trafficking. As such, human trafficking was not

documented as an illegal activity before the signing of the Palermo Protocol in 2000.

2.3.1.2 Palermo Protocol. In the year 2000, South Africa made a significant step toward the fight against human trafficking. The government signed the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person, especially Women and Children (also referred to as the Palermo Protocol). The signing of this protocol obliges South Africa to criminalize trafficking in persons, prosecute traffickers, and implement measures to control trafficking at borders. In addition, South Africa committed itself to providing protective measures and assistance to victims, to train law enforcement officials, and to provide education to victims and the general public. On 25 December 2003, the Protocol came into effect within the South Africa context. Since then, South Africa has seen a number of steps taken toward implementing preventative measures against human trafficking. Although trafficking is far from being eradicated, the legislative measures in place within South Africa have arguably been a step in the right direction. Let us consider the current state of the legislative arena within South Africa. Supplementing the Palermo Protocol, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 became the first piece of legislation to criminalize human trafficking activity within South Africa.

2.3.1.3 Children's Act 38 of 2005. The Children's Act of 2005 serves as a supplementation to the Palermo Protocol, making provision for the criminalization of child trafficking, and defining it as follows:

<p>(a) Trafficking in persons means the recruitment, sale, supply, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of children, within or across the borders of the Republic [of South Africa]—</p> <p>(i) By any means, including the use of threat, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of a child; or</p> <p>(ii) Due to a position of vulnerability, for the purpose of exploitation; and</p> <p>(b) Includes the adoption of a child facilitated or secured through illegal means.¹⁴⁴</p>

In addition to the criminalization of the act of human trafficking, the Children's Act (2005) states in Article 6 that "State Parties shall make provision for the protection of children against trafficking, as well as for the assistance of victims who have been trafficked" (p. 204). This includes access to appropriate housing, counseling, medical care, and education or employment opportunities. However, South African legislation lacks proper channels and procedures to deal with victims of trafficking, and the principles found in legislation often do not translate into practice (U.S. Department of State, 2012). The Criminal Law Amendment Act 32 of 2007 took the possibility of practical intervention one step further.

2.3.1.4 Criminal Law Amendment Act 32 of 2007. The Criminal Law Amendment Act 32 of 2007 serves to criminalize human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Child sex trafficking offenders in South Africa are currently prosecuted according to this Act. The Act imposes a life sentence of imprisonment for the offense of trafficking humans for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, the Act states that any person who has been trafficked may not stand trial for any crimes committed under the trafficker (Criminal Law Amendment Act 32, 2007). Although this is by no means sufficient to prevent human trafficking, it is certainly a step in the right direction. Furthermore, the Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons bill has not yet been promulgated, but is a work in progress.

2.3.1.5 Hanging in Limbo: Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Bill. The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill started being drafted in 2003. However, to date it is still being reviewed, with the hope that it will be promulgated in the near

future. The bill would make all forms of trafficking illegal, including the enslavement and exploitation of children and adults. In addition, it would provide for appropriate channels for providing support to victims of trafficking; something that South Africa is desperately in need of. Victims of human trafficking would be given the right to health care and compensation by the Department of Social Services, whether the victim is a South African citizen or not. Finally, the bill would provide for international collaboration and law enforcement improvement programs that are aimed at equipping law enforcement officers to adequately deal with human trafficking (Bardine, 2010).

While the implementation of legislative measures to combat trafficking are seen as a vital aspect of human trafficking with the South African context, there are other factors that come into play. Legislation is not always played out according to the proposed script. Rather, there are numerous factors that pose a challenge to the implementation of legislation.

2.3.2 Evaluation of South African Legislation: Exploring the loopholes

While the Criminal Law Amendment Act 32 of 2007 serves to criminalize the act of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, human trafficking for other purposes is not provided for in South African legislation. Furthermore, while South Africa has made some advances toward the criminalization of human trafficking, this does not always translate into the prosecution of offenders. Despite the commitment that accompanied the signing of the Palermo Protocol in 2000 (UNESCO, 2007), South Africa remains on a Tier two level in terms of the Protocol. This means that the South African government is not fully compliant with minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims' Protection Act (2000), but are making significant efforts to

come into compliance (U.S. Department of State, 2012). To date, only two cases have been prosecuted under the provision of a human trafficking statute. The first was sentenced to life imprisonment, and the second was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment for his trafficking crimes. Besides these cases, all other cases of trafficking in South Africa have either been prosecuted under other provisions such as rape or assault, or have gone unpunished (U.S. Department of State, 2012). While South Africa makes advances toward the implementation of comprehensive legislation against child sex trafficking, this does not always translate into the prosecution of offenders.

When considering the current prevalence of human trafficking in South Africa, it becomes clear that despite initiatives to prevent human trafficking, girls in particular are not being adequately protected from this form of exploitation. This is due to various challenges. Many women and girls are afraid of law enforcement, and police officials lack proper channels and the necessary resources to deal with victims of human trafficking. Martens et al. (2003) reports that victims are often treated as refugees due to a lack of legislation, and are deported as a default. This does not help the situation, as victims are sent back to the very same environment that made them vulnerable in the first place. In addition, many of the shelters in South Africa that provide refuge for victims require South African identification before she is allowed to enter (Martens et al., 2003).

A further challenge that prevents legislation from being carried out is bribery and corruption amongst police officials. Many police officers fail to pursue cases of human trafficking, and default to deporting victims as an escape. In other cases, police officers give

criminals a chance to evade being caught by tipping them off (U.S. Department of State, 2011). Molo Songololo (2000a) reported accounts of one gang leader commonly paying police fifty rand when members of his gang were arrested, and they were released without charge.

Furthermore, NPA (2010) attributes the limitation of preventative measures to two problems in the South African context. The first challenge is the limited understanding of human trafficking across the board. Research by the NPA (2010) revealed a limited knowledge of what trafficking is, and showed that it is often confused with smuggling in a number of sectors. The second challenge relates to false perceptions. Since prostitution is so closely related to the trade, many believe that all prostitutes are willing, with little consideration given to the fact that many of them are trafficked. Perhaps the biggest challenge to raising awareness relates to discomfort and fear around human trafficking. Human trafficking is a dangerous business, with much discomfort amongst officials. Some researchers were only granted interviews on the condition that anonymity was guaranteed (NPA, 2010). The limited awareness of human trafficking coupled with false perceptions means that adequate resources are not being allocated to combatting the trade, and so the cycle continues in a perpetual manner.

Clearly there is a need for more comprehensive legislation that will prohibit all forms of human trafficking. In addition, there is a strong need for legislation to translate into practice. This is a work in progress, and South Africa continues to make advances toward legislation that aims at preventing and combatting the trafficking of persons. Yet in spite of the fact that many studies have comprehensively highlighted the shortcomings of legislative measures to prevent human trafficking, the limitations of the legislative arena must be taken into account. The

legislative arena only constitutes one level in the contextual layers that make girl children vulnerable to human trafficking. What is more is that the status of South Africa's legislation against human trafficking is intertwined with the sociopolitical and historical arenas that define the South African context.

2.4 Historical-Political Contexts

The emphasis of many studies on the legislative arena points to the fact that human trafficking takes place within a particular sociopolitical and historical context. South Africa's sociopolitical and historical arena is complex and intertwined. One of the most significant influences might be seen as Apartheid. The scars of the Apartheid era are freshly felt amongst the South African people, resulting in inter-racial hatred as well as a hierarchical order of economic standing and status along racial lines. Since black people were previously denied opportunities to high-quality education and top-end jobs, the current situation sees the majority of black South Africans living in conditions similar to those of the apartheid era (Molo Songololo, 2000b). While these ideological notions have been challenged along racial lines, there are questions over how much of an impact these challenges have made within the South African context. It is not a disputed fact that various transformations have occurred within South Africa; the argument is rather that the spread has been uneven, with perhaps only the minority of black South Africans having climbed to a significantly higher economic status (Molo Songololo, 2000b).

The influence of the apartheid era extends beyond socioeconomic status. This is made

evident by a study by Martens et al. (2003), who highlight the prevalence of wealthy white South African men as exploiters of poor black children from Lesotho. These men went beyond exploiting the children for their own sexual satisfaction, but also degraded and physically and verbally abused them (Martens et al., 2003). A forensic psychologist specializing in sexual crimes reported that these tactics pointed toward a desire for revenge and retribution following the demise of the Apartheid system (Londt, 2003; Martens et al., 2003). However, the historical and political contexts do not exist in isolation. Rather, they are directly intertwined with the socioeconomic context of South Africa.

2.5 Socioeconomic influences

A closer look at the international literature reveals that human trafficking is influenced largely by the broader context in which people exist. Most international studies have highlighted the role of the socioeconomic arena in the maintenance of the trade. One of the most repetitive threads throughout literature is the role of poverty in fuelling the human trafficking trade (UNESCO, 2007; Molo Songololo, 2000a; Martens et al., 2003).

2.5.1 Poverty

Although many other factors play a role, poverty has been attributed as the most prevalent factor that puts children at risk for child sex trafficking, with most children coming from poor backgrounds (UNESCO, 2007). On a global scale, Molo Songololo (2000a) reported that half of the world's population was living on less than \$2 a day in the year 2000, while others earned up to \$1.1 trillion in that year alone. It is evident that the disparity between rich and poor is growing, with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. As the poor get poorer, the

vulnerability of children from these situations increases significantly (Molo Songololo, 2000a).

Within the South African context, poverty has been attributed as the most significant contributing factor to human trafficking (Martens et al., 2003). While poverty alone is not sufficient to produce victims of human trafficking, it creates conditions that make those living in conditions of poverty susceptible to exploitation. This contributes to the creation of a context in which human trafficking can flourish (Martens et al., 2003). Molo Songololo (2000a) reports that in the year 2000, 61 percent of children living in South Africa were living in poverty. In 2003, it was reported that this number had increased to 75 percent. Whatever the precise number is, the fact remains that poverty, unemployment, and inequality are continually on the rise in South Africa (Save the Children, 2003). The poor socioeconomic circumstances in which these children live makes them vulnerable to exploitation from adults and they are easily drawn into prostitution, drugs, alcohol, and crime as a means of survival (Adepoju, 2005).

On the opposite end of the spectrum is South Africa's relevant economic prosperity. Despite the prevalence of poverty in South Africa, South Africa's GDP is about four times greater than other parts of Southern Africa, and represents approximately a quarter of Africa's GDP. This relative economic prosperity makes South Africa an ideal destination for human trafficking from poor neighboring countries (UNESCO, 2007, p 10). Yet despite this apparent economic prosperity, the discrepancy between rich and poor in South Africa and the contradiction between poverty and affluence are two sides of the same coin that promotes an influx of traffickers. The creation of the sex industry in turn fuels the demand for prostitutes, and ultimately it is the children from poor socioeconomic backgrounds who are most vulnerable to

traffickers who need to provide a supply large enough to meet the increased demand. This becomes a self-perpetuating cycle, which is largely fueled by the perception of South Africa's economic prosperity, coupled with the increasing awareness of the economic disparities that exist between the rich and the poor.

2.5.2 Economic disparities

Many children who come from poor socioeconomic backgrounds are becoming increasingly aware of the divide between rich and poor, and are becoming dissatisfied with their standard of living. Under the lure that a better standard of living is attainable, young women reject the life of domestic servitude in their home environment and migrate in search of a better lifestyle. Disappointed by the difficult conditions they encounter elsewhere, their vulnerability is increased as they are forced to turn to desperate means of survival. It is then that they often fall prey to the deceit and lure of traffickers, ultimately becoming bound by the chains of modern-day slavery (UNESCO, 2007).

2.5.3 Lack of education coupled with unemployment

When the family is fighting for survival, children are often required to contribute to the family income from as young as five years of age (Adepoju, 2005). This means that the education of children is forfeited. This becomes a vicious cycle in which the lack of education results in limited employment opportunities in the formal sector. On another level, the lack of education coupled with unemployment not only perpetuates the circumstances of poverty, but it also sees families and children with no choice but to become dependent on others who lure them with false promises of education and employment opportunities abroad (Martens et al., 2003).

Children from such families who are fortunate enough to be educated often do not complete school for similar reasons.

2.5.4 School dropout rates

School dropout rates were reported to be 35 percent between 1990 and 1995. It was only in 2006 that education up until Grade 9 became compulsory in South Africa with the introduction of the South African Schools Act. When a child reaches Grade 9 they may be as young as thirteen years old, where many of them opt to leave school in search of work. In addition, legislation does not always translate into practice, and some children are required to contribute to family income before they reach Grade 9. This is particularly common amongst girls, as boys are seen as having higher earning-potential, meaning that families often opt to educate boys with the income that girls are required to earn. When education levels of families are low and they exist in poor socioeconomic conditions, they often do not have access to knowledge and information about the dangers of human trafficking.

2.5.5 Lack of knowledge and information

Despite increased global efforts to increase public awareness of human trafficking practices, public knowledge remains low in large segments of the population. Many of the most vulnerable portions of the population live in poverty and do not have access to mass media. This means that while public knowledge may be increasing in urban areas, rural areas often remain ignorant (Martens et al., 2003). Those who are aware of the risks often believe that it cannot happen to them, and accept false offers of employment at face value. In addition, the increase of global awareness has made it more difficult to lure women in urban areas who are more aware of

the risk of human trafficking. This has seen traffickers moving to more rural areas where education is lacking and circumstances desperate to find their victims (Martens et al., 2003). When it comes to the recruitment of children in particular, little awareness exists about the subtle tactics used to lure children into sex work, resulting in many children disappearing from their homes without a trace (Martens et al., 2003).

While socioeconomic influences, and particularly the prevalence of poverty is largely related to the maintenance of child sex trafficking, socioeconomic influences have various secondary effects that further perpetuate the existence of the trade. Johannesburg is considered the financial capital of Africa, and this perception of wealth further fuels the prevalence of child sex trafficking with South Africa.

2.6 Border politics, sex tourism industry, and traffickers

With increasing numbers of migrant refugees entering South Africa, coupled with the perception of the glamorous lifestyle and political and economic stability on offer, South Africa is being increasingly viewed as a 'hub' for human trafficking. Although pictures of poverty and struggle often portray the reality of the situation in South Africa, it is the perception that has the strongest influence. When traffickers come to South Africa based on this perception, they fuel the industry, which in turn allows them to make high profits (UNESCO, 2007). Human trafficking is reported to be the third largest profit-generated organized crime activity globally (UNICEF, 2003), behind the sales of drugs and arms. In the year 2000, trafficking was said to comprise between fifteen and eighteen percent of Thailand's GDP (Lim, 1998). In 2005, the U.S Department of State estimated that profits of human trafficking are between seven and ten billion

U.S. dollars annually (U.S. Department of State, 2005). Although these are only estimates, the fact remains that human trafficking is a highly lucrative industry. In addition, humans who are trafficked can be reused and resold, unlike drugs and arms (UNESCO, 2007), and it has been speculated that the industry may overtake the sale of drugs and arms in profit (NPA, 2010). The profitability of sex trafficking is directly related to the prevalence of the sex tourism industry across the globe and within South Africa. The sex and entertainment industry is worth billions and is constantly growing. Tourism in the Western Cape contributed fourteen percent toward South Africa's GDP in 2005 (Molo Songololo, 2005). Growing tourism sees an increase in sex tourism, leading to an increased demand for prostitution. The availability of vulnerable children to traffickers means that the industry is constantly growing, which in turn increases the demand for prostitutes (UNESCO, 2007). With the increased demand for prostitutes, employers of sex workers are pressured to provide a constant supply of women in order to maintain the success of their business. High turnover rates in the industry can make it difficult to negotiate demand and supply. When voluntary prostitutes are not readily available, they turn to agents and traffickers to provide them with their supply (Molo Songololo, 2000b).

The supply of trafficking victims is largely fueled by globalization, which perpetuates the dissatisfaction with living standards and makes the world more accessible than it has been before (UNESCO, 2007). Globalization has seen borders becoming more permeable and migrating patterns increasing, particularly amongst women and children. In addition, it has made the search for a better life abroad an attainable reality. Job opportunities are easily sought, resulting in victims moving unknowingly to trafficking locations. Not only so, but globalization has made networking amongst traffickers easier, as well as the movement of slaves across borders

(UNESCO, 2007). In situations where opportunities of migrating toward better living conditions are not present, families are forced to find alternate ways of surviving. In many cases, this translates into using children as a source of income, rather than educating them.

Coupled with the rise of globalization, porous borders along with political and economic instability across Africa has contributed largely to the influx of migrants into South Africa. Corruption at the border posts is often a factor that allows migrants into South Africa. The incapacity of officials to handle the enormous numbers of people coming into the country through unmonitored borderlines compounds this issue (UNESCO, 2007). This means that girl children are easily transported across borders into South Africa where they may be sold (Molo Songololo, 2000a). It appears then that the political arena indirectly incentivizes perpetrators of human trafficking.

When considering the sex trafficking industry, the profile of the trafficker takes centre stage. The lucrative business of child sex trafficking is enabled through a particular context, and studies have revealed a particular profile of those who are likely to be traffickers of girl children.

2.6.1 Trafficker profile

In terms of the general profile of a trafficker, ILO (2008) reports that most human trafficking involves international crime syndicates. Organized crime networks involved in human trafficking include a range of role players such as recruiters, taxi drivers, persons to receive victims and so on (ILO, 2008). In addition to international crime syndicates, Molo Songololo (2000a) identifies other means through which children are recruited for sex trafficking. In some

cases gangs recruit children and force them to work in the sex industry. In other cases parents force their children into sex work from either their own homes or the homes of sex exploiters. Still other cases see recruitment done by an extended family member or a family acquaintance. This is usually done by means of abduction, deception, or coercion. Other cases see children trafficked into the sex industry by other children already in the industry. Furthermore, it is common for teenage girls to be lured by offers of employment and education in the hospitality or film industry (Molo Songololo, 2000a and Martens et al., 2003).

Molo Songololo (2000a) reports that traffickers often include parents, relatives, teachers, mini-bus drivers, adult sex workers, strangers, gangs, and foreign nationals organized in gangs and syndicates. It is difficult, however, to pinpoint a specific nationality or profile of a human trafficker in South Africa, as they vary so broadly. It often depends on who is being trafficked and where victims are coming from. It appears to be a common practice for men to traffic women from their own country of origin. In other cases women are trafficked by members of their own family and clan (Martens et al., 2003). This may be due to the relatively easy access to these girls and women, as well as the fact that a girl or woman may trust somebody from her own community more readily than a foreigner. However, this is not always the case, as many instances have been reported of women and children being trafficked by traffickers of a different nationality. Under the subjugation of such traffickers, girl children are likely to experience particular circumstances.

While socioeconomic factors have been attributed as the largest contributing factor to human trafficking, it does exist in isolation. Rather, socioeconomic factors are intertwined with

many different arenas in the world of human trafficking. While a large portion of South Africa's children exist in poor socioeconomic circumstances, not all of them are equally vulnerable to human trafficking. In order to account for this difference, we must consider other factors.

Socioeconomic factors might be seen to infiltrate the cultural practices and core belief systems of many families who live in poverty. These influences perpetuate the vulnerability of girl children in particular to child sex trafficking. Given the understanding of the sex industry, tourism, and traffickers that fuel the trade, the attention shifts to the role of culture in maintain child sex trafficking.

2.7 Cultural Influences and Belief systems

In many African cultures, children are seen as economic assets and are required to contribute to the income of the family. From around the age of six years, children become integrated into the productive aspects of the family. This is particularly so for girl children. The patriarchal nature of many African cultures means that girl children are often sold for income that is used to educate boy children. Parents are more likely to invest in members of the family who have a higher earning potential, which increases bias against girls (Adejopu, 2005). These cultural practices increase the vulnerability of girl children in particular, who are often sold or trafficked by their own parents.

Specific cultural practices such as *lobolo* also serve to contribute to the vulnerability of young girls to trafficking. Coupled with circumstances of poverty, a family might see a young girl as a burden, and give her to an older man in marriage in exchange for *lobolo* (the price the man pays to the brides family). According to a report by UNESCO (2007), it is common practice

for these men to traffic their young “wives” for the purpose of sexual exploitation to generate income from her. If the girls are not trafficked by their husbands, then they often run away in an attempt to escape marital stress. Since they cannot return to their families for support, they are left to fend for themselves, which exposes them to the deceit and exploitation of traffickers (UNESCO, 2007).

A further cultural practice that introduces complexity when considering culture and child sex trafficking is known as *Ukuthwala*. Originating from the Xhosa culture, *Ukuthwala* involves the abduction of a young girl by a man who intends to marry her (Condit, 2011). After she is abducted, the man enters into negotiations with the girls family to arrange for marriage. Changes in socioeconomic and political conditions within South Africa have lead to changes in the practice. While the traditional is intended only for girls who have reached puberty, girls as young as eight years old have been reported to be abducted in the name of *Ukuthwala*. If girls object they are often beaten. If the girl’s family does not want to enter into negotiations, it is common practice for the man to rape the girl as a threat to the family (Condit, 2011).

It must be noted that within traditional African culture, these practices are by no means viewed as a form of slavery. Rather, practices such as *lebolo* are seen as a ritual in which the two families of the betrothed come together and negotiate acceptance of the “other” into the family. Some women may even see these practices as a form of support from their families and economic stability from their husband, who must be able to provide for her. However, while these practices may hold value for traditional African people, consideration must be given to the underlying presumptions inherent in these rituals, which in some cases serve to perpetuate the

practice of modern-day slavery. For example, the higher the level of the woman's education, the higher the price of *lebolo* that her betrothed must pay for her. In other words, the value of the woman increases as she is more educated. Despite the intention of the ritual to bring two families together, the notion of the woman as a commodity cannot be overlooked as an underlying discourse reinforced by a patriarchal society. Coupled with the desperate socioeconomic and volatile historic and political conditions that define a post-apartheid South Africa, these practices have become somewhat corrupted, and are being used as a means of justification for unjust practices against girl children. In light of this, it might be argued that girl children are carrying the brunt of the burdens of South African society, which are by their very nature complex and multi-layered.

Given these considerations, cultural beliefs can be seen as playing a pivotal role in maintaining the practice of human trafficking. While in some cases the link is explicit, the influences of these cultural practices may be seen to extend beyond the direct link of the girl being sold by her husband. It is not that traditional practices such as a *lebola* and *Ukuthwala* maintain human trafficking per se, but rather that practices such as these are embedded within a patriarchal culture which views women as a commodity, or as someone who exists to serve a function for men. Women and children in turn are stripped of their rights in the name of a cultural practice, which has ultimately been distorted (Condit, 2011). On the other end of the spectrum, the liberalization of social and cultural mores has also contributed to the maintenance of child sex trafficking.

2.7.1 Liberalization of social/cultural mores

South Africa has come a long way from the stigma that was attached to prostitution in the apartheid era. Since 1994, South African society has shifted toward more liberal attitudes pertaining to human rights. This, along with the accompanying relaxation of police interventions against prostitution, has the potential to increase the ripe grounds of South African soil as a hub for human trafficking and prostitution. While trafficking and prostitution are not synonymous, there is a vital connection (UNESCO, 2007). The liberalization of social and cultural attitudes is linked to the decrease of the stigma of liberal practices such as prostitution. As such taboos become more acceptable within society, it may be hypothesized that the prostitution industry grows. As the industry grows, the need for a supply of girls increases, thus perpetuating the vulnerability of girl children to being sex trafficked.

2.7.2 Preference for young girls and sexual exploitation

It is evident from the above that belief systems are central to the creation of demand for child prostitution. A common belief exists within South Africa that having sexual intercourse with a virgin will cure HIV/AIDS (Adejolu, 2005). This increases the demand for sex with young girls, who are more likely to be virgins than older women. Moreover, there is also the common belief that young girls are less likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS than older women. The diminished risk of contracting HIV/AIDS from young girls increases the demand for young female prostitutes, thus perpetuating the vulnerability of girl children to being sex trafficked (Adejolu, 2005). While perceptions around HIV/AIDS create a preference for young girls, there are many other factors that contribute to this preference.

One sexual exploiter from the End child prostitution, child pornography & trafficking of children for sexual purposes foundation [ECPAT] (1995) interviews attributed his preference for young girls to their vulnerability and desire to please. When compared with older prostitutes, who were described as “whores who use fowl language”... ‘hardened’...and ‘do not care’, young girls were described as ‘fresh’. In addition, the perception of one sexual exploiter in the ECPAT (1995) study was that since these girls were from countries where their fathers and brothers commonly had sex with them as children, and pregnancy by the age of twelve was not uncommon, he did not view his actions as sexual exploitation. The same sexual exploiter reflected on his perception that a girl is a woman at twelve years, and is old by 28.

Another sexual exploiter told ECPAT (1995) researchers that he prefers young girls because they are easier to manipulate into doing what sexual exploiters want. Other factors that increase the preference for young girls than adult prostitutes is the fact that young girls do not typically negotiate their own price, resulting in their price being cheaper. Young girls are also less likely to insist on the use of a condom. In other words, the naivety of children makes them even more vulnerable to sexual exploiters. Furthermore, the gender imbalances implicit within South Africa society further serve to disempower girl children.

2.8 Gender imbalances

Gender relations are largely constructed through socialization. Societal norms, coupled with the attitudes of primary caregivers are primary determinants on how we learn to relate to others along gender lines (UNESCO, 2007). The patriarchal ethos that underlies South African society has resulted in the common perception that women and children are possessions whose

purpose is to serve the interests of their owners. At times this translates into parents neglecting the rights of their own children and viewing them rather as income-generating assets. On a different level it translates into a sense of entitlement around sexual activity, with the perception that women and children are there for the pleasure of men (UNESCO, 2007).

While a number of significant advances have been made in terms of gender imbalances since 1994 in South Africa, the prevalence of patriarchal dominance continues to exist to a large degree, contributing to the vulnerability of women and children to human trafficking. In a male-dominated society, women and children are often viewed as inferior to men and are subject to violence, exploitation and abuse. While the South African constitution (1996) promotes equality of women's rights, societal and cultural norms often discourage women from actively pursuing this (UNESCO, 2007). However, as women are becoming more educated, they are starting to question their own subjugation to men, and are becoming increasingly liberated. On the other hand, along with this liberation, women are starting to leave their support structures in search of independence, and this is often the very factor that makes them vulnerable to traffickers. Martens et al. (2003) reports that women who leave home are made more vulnerable to traffickers, as they are often forced to rely on others to assist them in their search for independence, exposing them to the trap of deception. While patriarchal values still dominate to a large degree, women have become more liberated than they have ever been before in South Africa, with many women migrating in search of better opportunities.

2.8.1 Feminization of migration. History saw the migration of men in search of employment opportunities on a large scale, whereas women were required to concern themselves with the

home environment. These practices were largely enforced by patriarchal values. However, the movement toward women's liberation and equal rights has seen an increased number of women being mobilized to seek better opportunities across borders. Women are increasingly leaving their homes behind and moving across borders. This makes them vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking, as they are desperately in search of an opportunity at a better life, and therefore vulnerable to the exploits of traffickers (UNESCO, 2007). It becomes evident from the increase in the number of women who migrate that cultural norms have become liberal enough to allow women a degree of freedom they haven't experienced before. However, the liberalization of women is a reflection of a greater underlying liberalization of societal and cultural norms. In addition, the family plays a pivotal role in contributing to the prevalence of child sex trafficking.

2.9 Family Influences

The family context is an arena that has a direct influence on girl children. The first detailed case recorded of sex trafficking was of Jullienne Jacquiman from Belgium, who was trafficked to South Africa by her sister and her sister's fiancé (Van Heyningen, 1984; Martens et al., 2003). Human trafficking emerged from the vulnerability of a girl within her family system. Today, families still have an enormous influence in the vulnerability of girl children to human trafficking. The fact that children fall prey to traffickers so easily highlights their vulnerability. This vulnerability is increased as the vulnerability of their parents' increases. Parents are responsible for the protection of their children. However, the desperate poverty in which they find themselves fuels a situation in which many parents do not have the means to provide for or protect their children against exploitation (Adejolu, 2005). Families from rural areas often sell their children to traffickers under the false allure of better educational opportunities. Other

parents give their children up for an informal adoption to these traffickers, and have little contact with them afterwards. In other words, sometimes families are deceived, while others sell their children willingly or force them into sex work themselves. Those who sell them willingly do so as a desperate means to gain financial income for the rest of the family. Girls may be seen as the last “possession” that can be sold, in which case the decision to sell these girls is made consciously by their families (Martens et al., 2003).

It might be argued that at the heart of the broader South African context is a breakdown in the nuclear family. A study by the Martens et al. (2003) found that children who were recruited from Lesotho all came from broken families, and had previously been subject to both physical and sexual abuse by their families. Economic difficulties have forced many Africans to migrate, seeking work away from their homes. This along with increasing urbanization has added to the disintegration of the family system in South Africa. In addition, the sexual exploitation of children for monetary gain is regarded as an urban practice (Molo Songololo, 2000a). It is clear, however, that this practice has infiltrated a more vulnerable rural population in South Africa.

A further challenge is the difficulty in gaining support from family members after being exposed to sexual exploitation. This further perpetuates the girl child’s vulnerability. Many victims of human trafficking report that their families would reject them if they knew they had engaged in prostitution (Molo Songololo, 2000b). This serves to further prevent them from accessing any support structures, and keeps them trapped in the trade with nowhere to turn for support. Yet beyond the inability of families to support their children, we see that in many cases

of human trafficking, family and extended clan members are directly responsible for the trafficking of girls. This means that the influence of the family on the perpetual vulnerability of girl children is both an indirect as well as explicitly direct phenomenon.

2.9.1 Recruitment by family and clan members

Refugees from neighboring countries often recruit sex workers from their countries of origin. In some cases a woman will be recruited by her own clan members who have come to South Africa in search of employment. This raises the issue of dual roles. Perpetrators can also be seen as victims of poverty and xenophobia. When they are faced with brutal conditions of unemployment and xenophobia, they turn to illegal activities such as sex trafficking. They are a vulnerable population who prey on an even more vulnerable population of women and girls (Martens et al., 2003).

The role of clan members who traffic their own clan often extends to breaking the will of the victim. If a girl shows reluctance to participate in sex work, the clan member will initiate them by raping them. This serves to expose the girl to sex work as well as to break resistance by dehumanizing the girl. When girls are trafficked by their own clan members, escape becomes virtually impossible due to the extensive network of the clan. In addition, since the clan is the closest thing these girls have as a support structure, they become dependent on these men for both livelihood and survival (Martens et al., 2003).

We see that in some cases it is the presence of certain family members that exposes girl children to trafficking. However, in other cases, it is the absence of family members that makes

them vulnerable. While some are recruited directly by their own family members, other recruited because they do not have parents to protect them. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the South African context emerges once again here, as we consider how this impacts the family system in which girls exist.

2.9.2 The intersection between HIV/AIDS and child sex trafficking

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa has seen many children orphaned. Child-headed households are a common phenomenon in the South African context, with older children becoming responsible for the care of younger siblings after parents die. Family poverty is compounded by the loss of an income coupled with medical and funeral expenses. This increases the vulnerability of children who are forced to find a means of income. They are often shunned by remaining family members due to the stigma of HIV/AIDS, and are forced to leave school in order to adopt the role of caregiver. With little education, skills or resources, girls become even more vulnerable to traffickers, and ultimately to HIV/AIDS. When girls contract HIV and fall pregnant, they give birth to children with HIV, and the cycle in which parents are lost is perpetuated (UNESCO, 2007).

What emerges from the above discussion is that the family in which girl children exist is a large contributing factor to the vulnerability of children to traffickers. The family and the circumstances in which the family exists make children vulnerable through various means. While in some cases it is through desperate circumstances, other cases see families making children vulnerable through more direct means, such as sexual abuse.

2.9.3 Sexual abuse of children. A participant at the NASEC Conference stated the following:

“By sexually abusing our children we are creating a generation of prostitutes. Whenever a person sexually abuses a child, he will either give her candy, food, or money. This causes the child to put value to his or her body. When she becomes a runaway and/or gets hungry, she will turn to prostitution” (Msezana, 1996).

South Africa has been labeled the ‘rape capital of the world’ (Dewey, 2013). What this means is that statistically girl children in South Africa have a high probability of being raped at some point in their lives. In many cases the perpetrator is a family member of the child. When a child is exposed to sexual abuse once, the verbal and physical attacks on them by their perpetrators serve to weaken them psychologically, making them more vulnerable to subsequent abuse (Martens et al., 2003).

An exploration of the context in which trafficking occurs has served to set the stage upon which we will view the experiences of girl children who have been trafficked. With the emphasis on the context in which trafficked girls exist, we shift our focus to the individual girl child. The context in which she exists largely determines not only what she experiences, but also how she experiences it. This study is concerned with precisely that; how girl children experience being sex trafficked. Although no studies have exclusively focused on how girl children have experienced child sex trafficking per se, some studies have documented what happens to them once they are trafficked. These accounts have been provided as a means to gain insight into the context of girl children when they are in the trafficking world.

2.10. Child sex trafficking through the eyes of the survivor

While a vast amount of literature on human trafficking exists, the documentation of first-hand accounts by survivors of child sex trafficking has been largely limited. Most of the focus has been on the structural aspects of child sex trafficking, with little regard for how girl children themselves experiences the underground world. However, before considering the world of child sex trafficking through the eyes of the girl child, it is important to understand precisely who these girls are likely to be.

2.10.1 Profile of Trafficking Victims

A report by Martens et al. (2003) indicates that the profile of those who fall victim to human trafficking varies significantly. Victims range from children to adults, male and female, previous sex-workers and virgins, from rural and urban, educated and uneducated backgrounds. One of the most common variables of these victims is an environment of impoverished socioeconomic circumstances. However, it is estimated that of the 27 million people living in conditions of slavery across the globe, approximately eighty percent are said to be women, of which fifty percent are minor girl children (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

The research conducted by Molo Songololo (2000a) reports that female children who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation range from four to seventeen years of age. According to Molo Songololo (2000a), many girls who are trafficked in South Africa have left home either in search of work or to escape difficult circumstances. Others commonalities included a desire a career in modeling or acting, giving into peer pressure, and a desire for branded clothing and social status. Girls who live in an area with high prevalence of gang

activity were also found to be more vulnerable, along with girls who have been previously abused, who come from broken families, and who are expected to provide for their families financially (Molo Songololo, 2000a). Given that we know who these girls are likely to be, let us consider what they are likely to experience once they are trafficked.

2.10.2 Initiation into the Trade

Once girls find themselves on the inside of the trafficking world, the reports of what they experience are brutal. It is common practice for girls who are engaging in sex work for the first time to receive some sort of “initiation”, which most often involves being raped and sometimes beaten (Molo Songololo, 2000a). Some girls are forced into homosexual activity and group sex, as well as to use sexual aids and take hard drugs. Unprotected sex is also common, and some children are used in the production of pornography (Martens et al., 2003). Many victims eventually start to “consent” to the sex work in the hope that their contract will end quickly (Martens et al., 2003). However, in most cases the possibilities of earning their freedom is virtually impossible, and working conditions are brutal.

2.10.3 Working Conditions

Molo Songololo (2000b) provides an overview of some of the typical working conditions that those who have been trafficked are subjected to. These include living in a house where only sex workers are housed, and being under 24-hour surveillance. Most girls are housed in houses according to their region or country of origin. They are driven to and from work by their agent and given no money or travel documents.

In order to pay off their debts, they are often compelled to work for up to 18 hours per day, and

to work double shifts. If they are late they incur fines. Fines may also be incurred for breaking rigid rules in quasi-military settings. These practices serve to maintain the power and control that traffickers have over slaves. Not only do they enforce compliance, but they ensure that the trafficker is able to make sufficient profit from the slave. This is largely related to the incurrence of debt by girls once they are trafficked (Molo Songololo, 2000b).

2.10.4 Debt Incurrence

A common trend that is evident throughout the literature (Martens et al., 2003; Molo Songololo, 2000a; Molo Songololo, 2000b; and UNESCO, 2007) is that of debt incurrence. Historically, a slave would be bought by her owner, making the owner responsible for the slave for life. In contrast, modern day slavery, or human trafficking, does not require an agent to purchase the slave as a possession, but rather as a commodity to be used to extract income. This means that when a girl falls into the hands of traffickers, she is given a debt that she is required to “pay off” in order to attain her freedom. Those who purchase slaves do not take on any responsibility for the slave, and slaves are required to cover the costs of their living expenses with their earnings. Molo Songololo (2000b) reported that while Thai agents who smuggle women and girls into South Africa may expect R60 000 repayment, Bulgarian syndicates often require R120 000. The debt incurred by girls who are trafficked is always large enough to cover the expenses the trafficker incurred by transporting the girls, as well as any additional costs such as accommodation and living expenses. If the girl was bought from another person, this too must be re-paid by the girl through sex work. Once the debt is payed, the girl is required to produce profit for the trafficker (Molo Songololo, 2000b). Furthermore, it is not uncommon practice for traffickers to increase the debts of their slaves. Slaves often incur additional debt as a punishment

for minor “offenses”, such as being late or not wanting to work. The debt owed to traffickers might further be increased in order to cover their costs of housing and food. As a result of these increasing costs, slaves may never be able to make enough to cover their debts and “buy” their freedom. In rare circumstances when a girl does manage to pay off her debt, there is a high probability that she might be sold to another organization just before her debt is paid, where she incurs a new debt and is required to start paying it all over again (Molo Songololo, 2000b). This means that while girls are under the illusion that they may earn their freedom by paying off their debt, this is an unrealistic attainment. Even if girls are able to pay off their debt, they will inevitably incur more, which serves to keep them trapped in the industry. Beyond the incurrence of debt, there are many other tactics that traffickers use to keep their girls bound within the trade.

2.10.5 The Invisible Chains That Keep Them Bound

While prices for trafficked girls reach thousands of dollars, the economic desperation of the South African context is reflected in the low prices that girls are sold for. Sexual exploiters pay between ten rand and 150 rand to traffickers for access to girls’ bodies (Molo Songololo, 2000a). Girls are not entitled to their earnings. This serves to keep them dependent on their traffickers, and creates no room for the development of independence or for escape. In some cases they get to keep very small portions of their earnings if any. They are forced to accept as many clients as their traffickers say, and are forced to “go the extra mile” to satisfy customers. In some instances, they are forced to use drugs. They are not given freedom to move about, and are forced to work through the night, resting only in the day. One victim reported that they were told when to sleep, when to wake up, and what they can and can’t eat (Martens et al., 2003). If they do not comply, violence is used as a means of coercion.

Violence is often used as a means that traffickers use to exert control. Acts of violence may include torture, inhumane treatment, involuntary servitude, debt bondage, forced abduction or forced pregnancy (Molo Songololo, 2000a). In addition to the explicit use of violence to exert power over victims, subtle tactics are often used to manipulate girls into doing sex work. Girls may be given luxury items that they are not used to, or taken to “fancy restaurants” such as the Spur or Steers, or to get an ice cream. This treatment is usually better than what they are accustomed to at home, and they are subtly manipulated into consenting to sex work (Molo Songololo 1, 2000). Other forms of coercion may include beating the girls, giving her sex lessons, or reselling her when her performance in the brothel is unsatisfactory. In other cases, the girl and her family may be threatened with violence should she refuse to cooperate (Martens et al., 2003).

2.11 Taking a Meta-Perspective

The discussions provided in this chapter have served to emphasize that child sex trafficking is enabled through a particular context. In order to complete the discussion, a meta-perspective will be adopted in order to step back and see precisely how the pieces of the puzzle fit together. Given the limited knowledge we have on human trafficking, most international reports have had the purpose of raising awareness by exposing the common trends found in the underground world of human trafficking. Similarly, South African literature has served the same purpose, with many of the trends being similar to international trends. What these trends ultimately point to is that human trafficking is enabled through a particular context. By emphasizing the context that makes girl children vulnerable to being trafficking, studies within

South Africa and abroad have had the united aim of raising awareness and reducing denial. While many of the contextual factors and trends that emerge are similar within South Africa and abroad, the context that defines each country is inevitably unique. Therefore it might be argued that we must consider what is relevant to the context with the aim of raising awareness and reducing denial in the South African context specifically. It is not that governments deny the existence of human trafficking, rather it is that they deny that it exists in their country.

While the international literature has focused primarily on the shortcomings of the legislative context, South African studies have been successful in illuminating the multiple layers of society that contribute to human trafficking. While many similarities exist between the trade across the globe and within South Africa, the context in which trafficking is enabled inevitably varies from country to country.

Molo Songololo (2000a) posit that girl children are made vulnerable to trafficking with a particular context. South African studies have served to emphasize the various levels of such a context, from the legislative arena to the influence of the family in which the child exists. Figure 2.1 below provides a model of the various contextual levels that enable child sex trafficking within the South African context. It should be noted that many of the factors on each contextual layer overlap, as each of the factors are intertwined.

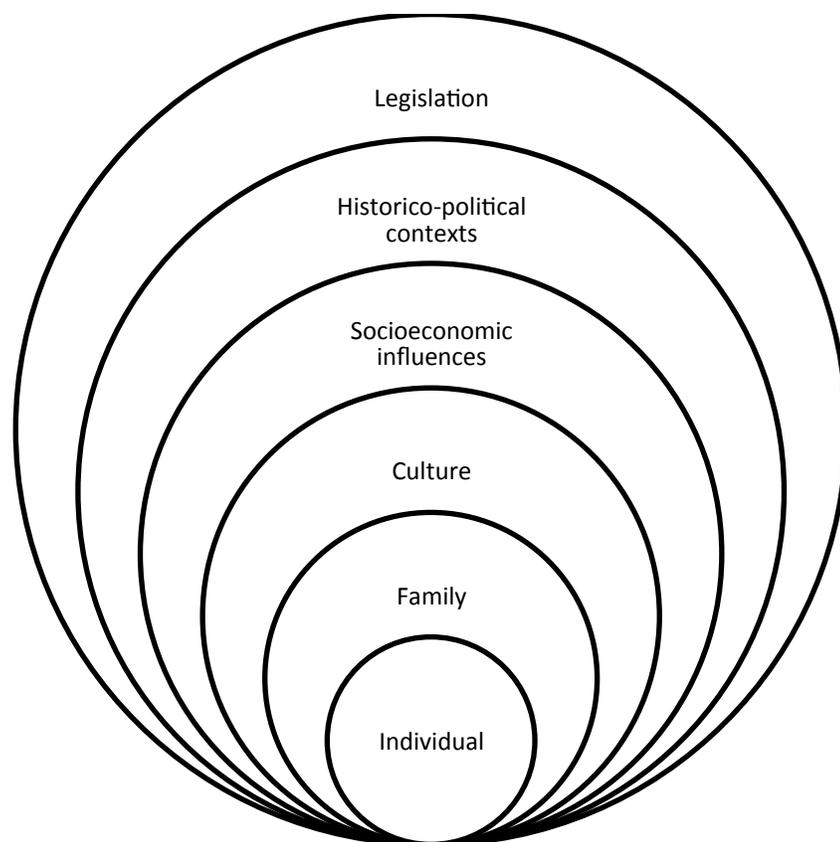


Figure 2.1.

Levels of Context that Perpetuate the Vulnerability of Girl Children to Child Sex Trafficking

2.12 Looking Toward the Future: A Conclusion

In this chapter, an overview of the literature to date on human trafficking has been provided. This has served to set the context of human trafficking upon which the remainder of this study will unfold. While no previous studies to our knowledge have researched how girl children construct their experiences of being child sex trafficked, this chapter has served to provide an understanding of the most prominent issues within child sex trafficking in South Africa. We have considered the controversial matter of providing an acceptable definition of trafficking, and how South Africa has subscribed to the Palermo Protocol's definition. We have considered who is typically trafficked and who typically does the trafficking. This has served to set the stage for the discussion of the various factors within the South African context serve to enable the wide practice of child sex trafficking. These factors range from legislation and the political arena to the role of the family in making girl children vulnerable.

What emerged from this chapter is that human trafficking is a complex phenomenon with multiple layers. The fundamental aim of research in South Africa and across the globe has ultimately been to raise awareness of the trade in a joint effort to combat the trade. This study has the same goal. By raising awareness of how girl children experience trafficking, and how the context in which they exist perpetuates their emotional and psychological vulnerability, our aim is that we will add to the global campaign of increasing awareness of all aspects of the trade.

Chapter 3

Constructing a Theoretical Lens: Context, Context, Context!

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, a conceptual framework that grounds the study is presented. In light of this study, the tenets of an epistemology that privileges context provides the foundation on which a conceptual frame for this study is built. It is posited that a focus on context creates a transformation in thinking that makes it possible to see things as interrelated to the settings in which they take place. To explicate the epistemological ideas of context, an overview of ecosystemic epistemology, which is based on cybernetic principles, will be provided. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model of human development provides a mold through which the building blocks for the conceptual underpinnings of this study is understood. The idea of an ecological context is central to the framework adopted in this study. This view of ecological context will be operationalized by bringing together Auerswald's (1987) concept of ecological event-shapes in time/space; Andolfi et al's (1983) continuum of separation and belonging in the family system; and Hoffman's (1981) notion of spontaneous leaps. The underlying epistemological assumptions that served as a guide in the construction of this theoretical lens will be discussed next.

3.2. Context, Truth, and Post Modernism

The research question of how girl children who have survived human trafficking construct their experiences implies that reality is not fixed and objective, but is constructed. In line with this, the epistemological assumptions of postmodernism underpin this study. The postmodernist movement emerged from the belief that the modernist tradition was insufficient to

understand the world (Carr, 2006). Modernism preceded postmodernism, positing that an objective truth exists and is waiting to be objectively measured by scientific and empirical investigations (Carr, 2006). In contrast, postmodernism questions the very notion of an objective truth, and views truth as a construct rather than an objective and knowable reality. While it accepts the notion of a world that exists, it rejects the idea that it can be truly known. Rather, the truth about the world is seen as something that is constructed through language in a social arena (Carr, 2006).

In line with postmodernism, Maturana and Varela (1987) suggest that universal truths give way to a multiverse of realities or understandings of the world. Simply put, it can be said that truth exists within the eye of the beholder. The implications of this perspective are that people are seen to generate meaning (Lax, 1992), and in doing so, construct the world in which they live according to their understanding of it. In other words, postmodernism advocates for the existence of multiple and relative realities that are created when meaning is attached to certain events. These events take place within a particular context (Sey, 2006).

The words of Bronfenbrenner (1979) adequately encapsulate the underpinning epistemological foundation upon which this study is designed. He posits that “The child’s evolving world is truly a construction of reality rather than a mere representation of it” (p.10). This quote is based on the postmodern assumption of multiple realities, where each individual is seen to have a different lens through which they perceive and construct the world. For example, postmodernism would say that within a family of five, five different families exist, because each person has a different perception of the same family. Similarly, each individual is seen to interact

differently with the family according to how they perceive the family. In essence, postmodernism adopts the view that reality is a construct that is constructed through a particular lens. Social constructionism expands on this notion and emphasizes the social arena and the role of language in constructing reality.

3.3. Reality as a Construction: Social Constructionism

In line with the postmodernist tradition, social constructionists hold the belief that truth is constructed rather than discovered. However, rather than being constructed individually, it is seen as a co-construction that takes place in a relational context. This happens through language and conversation. It is only through conversation with others that meaning is generated and attributed to events (Carr, 2006). Furthermore, language is seen as the medium through which reality is constructed, as it is through language in conversation that meaning is shared.(Gergen, 2004). In essence, social constructionism posits that an individual's construction of reality cannot be viewed outside of the social context in which they exist (Gergen, 2004).

Following on from this, all behavior is seen to arise from the meanings that are ascribed to experiences (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). While real events do occur in life, it is our interpretation of these events that shapes how we respond to the world around us (Lax, 1992). According to Anderson (1992), “we do not relate to life itself, but to our understanding of it” (p. 61). Similarly, it can be said that we do not relate to people themselves, but to our understanding of them. If we consider the example of the family of five in which five different families exist, social constructionism posits that the individual does not interact with the family per se, but rather with his/her subjective construction of the family. This means that each individual family

member will interact differently with the family, as dictated by their unique understanding of the family. Such understanding can only be brought about through language, as language is the medium through which we reveal ourselves to others (Lax, 1992).

3.4. Cybernetics and Cybernetics of Cybernetics: An Ecosystemic Framework

The notion of social constructionism draws our attention to the relational domain, as it is within the shared space between individuals that reality is co-constructed and meaning is shared. This emphasis on interpersonal space calls our attention to the relational context in which people exist. Ecosystemic psychology serves to further highlight the influence of the relational context.

The emergence of ecosystemic psychology was influenced by various disciplines, and largely originated from the work of Gregory Bateson's anthropological work on cybernetics (Bateson, 1972). Cybernetics is the study of how organisms interact with one another, and it places central emphasis on systems. Based on the principle of interrelatedness amongst living organisms and their systems, Bateson (1972) posits that people cannot be seen in isolation. Rather, ecosystemic psychology posits that every person's behaviour is related to the behaviour of every other person's behaviour within a particular system. Bogdan (1984) thus refers to a system such as a family as an ecology of ideas, meaning that a person's behaviour is shaped by her perception of the system and the members in the system. It is on these perceptions that we are seen to act, and our actions in turn determine and maintain the behaviour of other members of the system in a circular manner (Bogdan, 1984). This is in line with social constructionism's emphasis on person-in-context. The individual can only be viewed within the context in which s/he exists. Behaviour is seen as shaped by how the individual shapes or constructs reality within

the ecological context. The emergence of ecosystemic psychology shifted the focus to the interpersonal context in which human behaviour is situated. This shift is central to this study, in which girl children are viewed within a particular context. In addition to the shift of cybernetics to the relational domain, ecosystemic theory distinguishes between cybernetics, or first order cybernetics, and cybernetics of cybernetics, or second order cybernetics.

3.4.1 First-Order Cybernetics

First-order cybernetics moves away from a linear perspective of causality, and considers patterns of interactions in relationships. The context takes central position, as an individual is seen as situated within a particular relational context, which in turn influences the behavioral responses of all parties in a circular manner. From a first-order perspective, the observer of the system is seen as objective and external to the system being observed. The emphasis is on the observation of interactional patterns that occur circularly. While this is a useful shift that considers the importance of context, this perspective does not take into account the influence of the therapist's interactions with the system. Rather, the therapist is seen as removed from the system (Keeney, 1983).

3.4.2 Second-Order Cybernetics

Second-order cybernetics goes one step further. Sharing the notion of interconnectedness within a system, it posits that it is not possible for the observer to observe objectively and from outside the system (Keeney, 1983). This is because reality is seen as something that is constructed. What this implies is that any truth the observer observes about the

system is constructed through the preconceived framework of the observer. By simply observing the system, second-order cybernetics posits that the observer inevitably influences how the system is seen. Anything that the observer observes reflects the observer as much as the observed (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). As such, the term “participant-observer” is used within second-order cybernetics.

What this implies is that we, the researchers are seen as participant-observers. While we endeavor to understand how girl children construct their experiences of being trafficked, we cannot avoid imposing our own framework on how we understand the results of this study. We see our role as participants-observers who are not objective, but rather participate in co-constructing how participants construct their experiences. In describing the system, we are inevitably participating in constructing it. We are seen as co-constructors of meaning and truth, along with participants. In a similar way, you the reader, cannot *not* participate in how meaning and truth are constructed as you interpret this study through your own subjective lens. As such, we are all seen as participant-observers who are not outside of the system we are observing.

It should further be noted that ecosystemic theory is seen as a meta-theory. At a philosophical level it can be seen as a way of thinking about our thinking (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). The purpose of introducing ecosystemic theory here is to draw the attention of the reader to underlying assumption of this study; that individuals cannot be viewed in isolation. Rather, they are seen to exist within a complex relational context consisting of various levels. Every interpretation made about the world is done so through a particular lens, and this lens is shaped by our interactions with various levels of the relational domain in which we exist. A broad range

of ecological contexts, in turn, influences the relational domain. Thus, while the relational domain might be seen as the most significant level of context for the individual, this cannot be seen in isolation. Rather, the entire ecological context in which a family exists ultimately impacts on the individual-in-context. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the various levels of the ecological context in which a person exists.

3.5. Context, Context, Context: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Given the emphasis on the individual-in-context, it is important to emphasize the fundamental importance of the role of various contextual factors in shaping how reality is constructed. Building on the foundation of ecosystemic psychology, Bronfenbrenner (1979) pioneered a shift from the view of development as an individual dynamic to viewing it as situated within a specific context. His Ecological Systems Theory emphasized the notion that the individual and his/her context are interrelated, and the individual cannot be understood as an individual entity without considering the influence of the person on the context and the context on the person ((Bronfenbrenner, 1989). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) understanding of individual-in-context, behavior is seen as shaped by a person's interactions with his or her environment. It follows that the parameters of behavior are defined by a person's ecological environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model, which developed from Ecological Systems Theory, a person's ecological context consists of various systems or levels. These include the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem. The

individual is seen as situated in the center of these contexts. This is illustrated below in Figure 3.1.

The Microsystem constitutes the immediate influences on the individual, and include contexts such as the family, school, community, peers, and church. Bronfenbrenner refers to the microsystem as "...a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations...in a given fact-to-face setting with particular...features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement..." (p. 39). In other words, the microsystem consists of all the direct interactions the individual has with other subsystems in her immediate environment.

The Meso system comprises the interactions of subsystems in the microsystem. For example, the mesosystem would be comprised of interactions between the school and the family, or the church and the community.

The exosystem is made up of subsystems that do not directly interact with the individual, but that influence the individual nonetheless. These may include friends of family, mass media, child welfare services, parent's workplace, and neighbors. The exosystem consists of all the interactions between these subsystems and subsystems in the microsystem. For example, an interaction between the child's parent and the parent's workplace do not directly influence the child, but have a secondary influence.

The macrosystem is the broader layer that constitutes the attitudes and ideologies of the culture that directs interactions in the micro-, meso-, and exo-systems. It includes all the broad

factors which influence the other levels, including belief-systems, bodies of knowledge, and resources available.

The chronosystem refers to the element of time, and includes all the changes that have occurred over time that have influenced the individual. These may include changes in the family structure, socioeconomic status, the political environment, and place of residence.

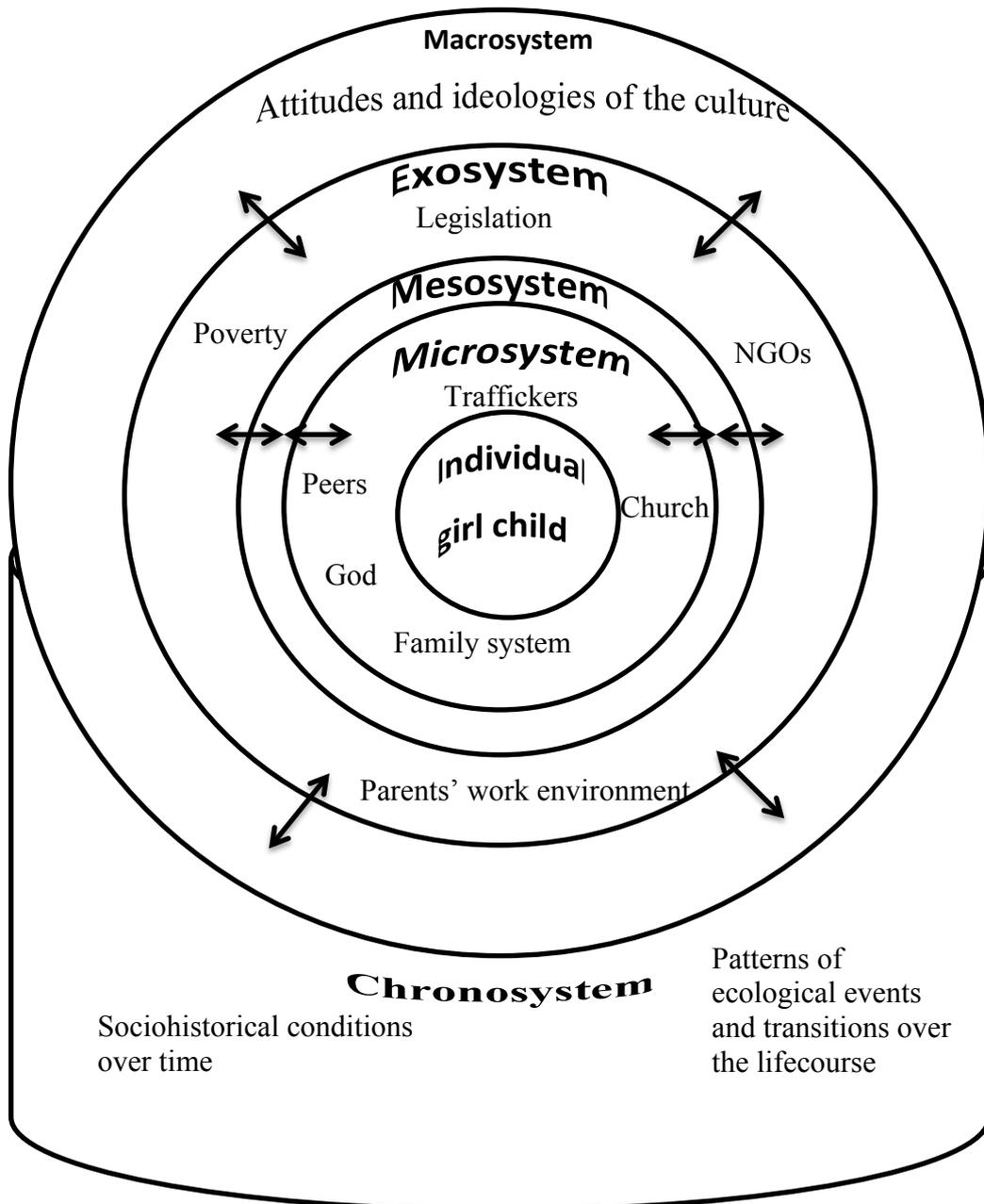


Figure 3.1

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

The emphasis on context leads us to the understanding that the way in which an individual constructs her experience cannot be seen in isolation. Rather, Bronfenbrenner emphasizes the importance of multiple layers of contextual influences on the individual. These range from the individual's inherent characteristics to the broad and indirect influences of changes in the sociopolitical arena over time. Linked with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) chronosystem, Auerswald's (1985) theory serves to expand our understanding of how reality is constructed within the parameters of the ecological context.

3.6. Expanding Context: Auerswald's Ecological Event-Shapes in Time/Space

Auerswald (1985) posits that the role of the ecosystemic therapist is to discover the ecological event shape in time/space in order to understand which events lead to the current behavior of the individual. An event shape is comprised of those incidents that occur in various ecological contexts, and that affect what the person is saying in the here-and-now. These incidents in turn, are seen to constitute the current narrative or story of the individual (Auerswald, 1985). When the therapist tracks the event-shapes in time/space that underlie the current behavior, an ecological story emerges (Auerswald, 1987). This story illuminates various elements of the person's ecology.

The way in which participants construct their experiences then, is seen to consist of various ecological events, which ultimately comprise the ecological event-shape in time/space. According to Auerswald (1987), the process of understanding the event-shape involves making use of a narrative story to extract the key incidents that comprise the event shape. As this process progresses, common ecological elements

start to emerge as pertaining to current behaviors. Ultimately, the event-shape consists of the core events from various contexts that lead to the current behavior of participants. What this means is that the person as viewed in the here-and-now has arrived at this point by various influences of the ecology over time. If we apply this idea to this particular study, we see that the narratives or stories that participants construct at the particular time of the interviews are constituted by various ecological factors that have influenced their constructions over time. It is this very point that encapsulates the essence the conceptual framework of this study. Rather than viewing the interviews of participants in isolation, it is pivotal to pay attention to the ecological contextual factors that have contributed to shaping how participants construct their experiences of being trafficked.

According to this understanding, when participants in this study tell their stories about being trafficked, they construct an ecological event-shape in time/space. Various events that occurred over different times within different levels of the ecological context must be considered. In line with this understanding, interviews sought to explore various contextual aspects that contributed to the ecological event-shapes in time/space as constructed by participants. The stories girl children told served to construct the ecological event shape in time/space.

It should be noted that the terms “stories” and “narratives” are used interchangeably and rather loosely. Within the context of of Auerswald’s (1987) ecological event shapes, the terms stories or narratives are simply intended to mean the stories that participants shared us about their lives. Inherent in the telling of these

stories we find the ecological events that serve to construct an event shape in time/space.

With this understanding of the ecological influences on the construction of the girl child's experience, we move our attention to the influence of the family system. Andolfi et al. explores the influence of the family system on the girl child in terms of a continuum of separation and belonging (1983).

3.7. From Existing as a Function to Differentiation: Andolfi et al.'s Continuum of Separation and Belonging

Andolfi et al. (1983) discusses the processes of separation and belonging within the family system. He describes the necessity for the individual to differentiate as well as to maintain cohesiveness to the family system. Differentiation is described as "self-expression of the individual" (Andolfi et al., 1983, pp. 4). However, the individual, as s/he exists within the context of the family system, is seen as serving a particular function for the family system as a whole, and this function serves to ensure cohesiveness of the family system. In other words, the function that the individual serves is intertwined with his/her dependence on the family system. Differentiation only occurs when the individual is able to separate from the family system and develop independent functions, while simultaneously belonging to the family system (Andolfi et al., 1983). Menghi (1977) expands on the conditions in which such a process might take place.

Menghi (1977) posits that in order for an individual to develop her own identity, she must be allowed to experiment with serving different functions within

the family context without losing the cohesiveness of the family system. However, in family systems where diversity is not tolerated amongst family members, family cohesiveness is maintained at the expense of individual autonomy, and the individual is denied the ability to separate and develop a unique identity (Andolfi et al., 1983). When this occurs, the individual exists only as a function of the family system, and never as an individual (Andolfi et al., 1983). The individual may only perform the function that the family system requires of him/her, and is prohibited from performing individual functions. If, for example, the family system requires that the child adopt adult responsibilities, the child will strive to fill this function as a means of maintaining the relationship with the person who is very important to him/her. Over time, this becomes the single function that the person performs across various relational domains (Andolfi et al., 1983).

Andolfi et al. (1983) further posits that when an individual exists only as a function of the family system, the meeting of each other's needs is never reciprocal. Rather, the individual who exists as a function learns to ensure that the needs of the other is met through the function that s/he serves, while his/her own needs are never met (Andolfi et al., 1983). This escalates into a perpetuating cycle, where the individual's needs are never met, and so the individual never learns to express his/her needs, and so they are never met and so on. Eventually the person learns that whenever s/he shares a relational space with another person, s/he is there only to serve the function of meeting the needs of the other person (Andolfi et al., 1983). This means that while the notion of existing as a function of the family system develops within the family context, it eventually becomes so rigid and fixed that it extends to various other relational domains. In other words, if children learn to exist as a

function of a relationship in their family of origin, the possibility of them existing as such in every other relationship is high. However, this is not a fixed and rigid process. Rather, opportunity for change, or for making a “leap” as Hoffman (1981) refers to it, is always a possibility.

3.8. Possibilities for Change: Hoffman’s Spontaneous Leap

Hoffman (1981) describes the process of change within an individual or a family system. She refers to the moment in which the change occurs as a “leap”. A leap is considered a form of transformation, or a “sudden appearance of more functionally organized patterns that did not exist before”. According to Hoffman (1981), all living systems have the inherent capacity to make a leap, given the right circumstances. As long as the context in which the living system exists remains stable, the patterns of interaction can remain the same. However, when the context changes, it demands that the individual develop new patterns of behaviour. When there is a drastic change in the environment, Hoffman (1981) posits that the system will either break down, or make a spontaneous leap to a new level of organization that can deal with the change in the environment. The process of change largely involves the feedback the person receives from the environment when she displays different behaviour. If a positive response to the new behaviour is received from the environment, the person is likely to continue with the new behaviour, thus making a spontaneous leap and evolving to a new level of organization or behaviour. If, however, the environment responds negatively to the new behaviour, the person is likely to go back to the old patterns of behaviour and break down (Hoffman, 1981).

What Hoffman's notion of a spontaneous leap implies is that although girl children who are sex trafficked may come from a rigid family in which they exist only as a function, the environment in which they exist changes when they are trafficked. Not only does the context change, but it changes dramatically. At this point girl children may either breakdown or make a spontaneous leap in which they develop effective ways of coping. The difference depends largely on the presence of agency.

3.8.1 Understanding Agency: The Capacity for Change

Hoffman's (1981) notion of spontaneous leaps draws our attention to the idea of agency. Agency is understood as a person's ability to behave independently and to take the initiative to adapt their behaviour in order to achieve a goal. Essentially, it is the ability of an individual to make an individual choice (Barker, 2005). It inevitably involves the ability to take responsibility for one's actions and to move beyond the perception of oneself as a victim of circumstances with no control. Implicit in the ability of girls to make a spontaneous leap is the presence of agency. That is, in order to make a spontaneous leap, a certain level of agency needs to be present in the individual. When considering how girl children construct their experience of being trafficked then, we must consider the influence of the ecology on the development of agency, which is seen as a prerequisite for a spontaneous leap. The question to be asked then is how the ecological context prepares girls who have been trafficked to develop agency and to make spontaneous leaps? This will be answered in the discussion section of this study.

3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, the epistemological assumptions of postmodernism and social constructionism have been explored as an underpinning philosophy of this study. This exploration drew our attention to the existence of multiple realities, as well as to the social arena in shaping how reality is constructed. Following on from this, we turned our attention to the thread that runs throughout this study: context, context, context! Ecosystemic theory was explored as a meta-theory that shifts our understanding of individual behaviour as stemming from intrapsychic process, to the interpersonal arena. Second-order cybernetics was explored in line with this, positing that the findings of this study are co-constructed by both participant and participant-observer. With this as a foundation, we explored some specific theories, including Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, Auerswald's ecological event shapes in time/space, Andolfi et al.'s understanding of existing as a function of the family system, as well as Hoffman's notion of spontaneous leaps. This was then linked to the notion of personal agency as the process of change was described. All of these theories serve to set the context for the remainder of this study. Rather than viewing the individual as an isolated entity, we will emphasize the individual-in-context. We will further emphasize how the individual's ecological context influences the way that they construct reality. In Chapter 6 we will make specific reference to the Authors and theories outlined in this chapter to assist us in understanding how participants construct their experiences in light of the ecological context in which they exist. With the emphasis of the ecological context as a backdrop for this study, the following chapter will discuss the research design and methodology that guided the research process.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methods

4.1. Introduction

In previous chapters, the context for this study was set as we constructed a theoretical lens and reviewed the literature on human trafficking to date. In this chapter, the focus shifts toward an exposition of the research methods employed to guide the research process and answer the research question. A qualitative approach to the research process was adopted for this study and will be described in terms of its relevance in guiding the research process. Grounded theory will be discussed as a research method, and the implications of employing this method will be explored in terms of participant selection and sampling strategy, as well as data collection and processing. Finally, consideration will be given to issues of reliability and validity in the research process, as well as issues pertaining to ethical responsibility.

4.2. A Qualitative Research Design

Given that the aim of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of how survivors of child sex trafficking construct their experiences, a qualitative research approach to research was adopted. This is in line with the epistemological assumptions of postmodernism and social constructionist as outlined in Chapter 2. According to Stufflebeam (2008), Egon Guba first introduced a qualitative paradigm in 1978 as an alternative to the widely accepted quantitative paradigm. In contrast to the quantitative approach that strives toward an objective outcome, a review of Guba's work by Stufflebeam (2008) suggests that total objectivity is an unrealistic ideal. Rather, a qualitative stance takes into account the interactive and subjective processes of participants in the study, as well as the subjective understanding of

meaning that the researcher attributes to participants' experiences. The emphasis of qualitative research hangs on the lived experience of participants, rather than on cause-effect relationships or predicting events as in quantitative research. Thus, the aim of qualitative research is to explore various issues in terms of depth, openness, and detail (Durrheim, 2006). In other words, qualitative research moves away from the analysis of cause-effect relationships, and endeavours to understand how people make sense of their lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

In addition, contrasting the objective stance of a quantitative researcher, Stufflebeam (2008) posits that while the researcher should make every effort to reduce personal bias, the primary emphasis should be on *fairness of reporting*. Fairness of reporting requires that multiple realities are accommodated, and consequently, that research findings represent a variety of perspectives (Stufflebeam, 2008). Moreover, qualitative research is founded on the principle of inductive theory construction. This means that research findings are not anticipated, but rather emerge from the data as research progresses. This requires the researcher to move beyond the so-called "neutral" and scientific approach of quantitative research and to get more deeply involved in the process of that which is being researched (Stufflebeam, 2008).

4.3. From Realism to Relativism

Within the qualitative framework, there are multiple ways in which a researcher may approach the research. The approach largely hinges on how reality is viewed. Within the boundaries of qualitative research exist two ends of a continuum. On the one end is realism, and on the other relativism.

Realism assumes that reality is stable and external, existing “out there” waiting to be discovered, and that there is a universal truth. Research methods are accordingly designed to understand phenomena the way they really are. The research results emerge from what is understood to be an objective lens of reality, and research is seen as a rigorous and systematic science.

In contrast to realists, relativists advocate that there is not such thing as a single universal reality, but rather that multiple realities exist. Knowledge is seen as a construction that is created and influenced by a subjective observer. This implies that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower, as it is through our own personal biases that knowledge is filtered and reality is constructed (Ballinger, 2006). How we come to attribute meaning to the world is implicitly linked to how we understand ourselves and others (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Given the assumptions of postmodernism and social constructionism, which are employed in this study, the notion of relativism is seen as congruent with the research process. It follows that a relativist ontology served to guide the research process, as participants were seen to construct reality through language.

The relativist assumption that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower draws attention to the impact of the researcher on the researcher outcomes. The mere presence of the researcher in the research arena is seen to influence the setting, making it an unrealistic ideal to research people’s uncontaminated experiences (Murphy & Dingwall, 2003).

The context for which the research process is set to take place inevitably influences the outcome of the research. Finlay (2006) calls attention to the relationship that the researcher develops with participants. While it may be an unrealistic ideal to avoid contamination of the research results, the implementation of certain measures can serve to minimize such contamination. Self-reflexivity is one such measure that the researcher can use as a gauge of how the research setting is being influenced. By becoming aware of how the researcher influences the research results, she is able to reduce the effects of this influence (Murphy & Dingwall, 2003).

The results presented in this study then, cannot be seen as a true reflection of the construction of participants' experiences. Rather, participants' experiences are seen as a subjective construction as they tell their stories, and are then reconstructed as the listener interprets them. Each time the story of a participant is heard by a different person, it is reinterpreted through a new subjective lens. This means that new meaning is assigned to experiences. The question that must be asked then, is whether we can ever truly know how participants experience their reality. From the relativist position and the social constructionist assumptions, we posit that the best we can only know how they construct it through language.

With these assumptions in mind, postmodernism and social constructionism appear to be congruent with a qualitative framework. These perspectives advocate for the exploration of unique constructions of reality, and are accepting of the possibility of multiple realities, to which context is central. The emphasis on understanding meaning in qualitative research further indicates the goodness of fit with social constructionism, which posits that meaning is created through language. In keeping

with the qualitative approach and the relativist lens, we would like to invite you, the reader, to give due consideration to the way in which our own subjective interpretations influence the research process, as well as how your subjective lens alters the meanings of the stories. With this in mind, let us consider the research design that guided the research process.

4.4. Research Design: Grounded Theory

In accordance with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of qualitative research as outlined above, grounded theory method was used to guide the process of data collection and analysis. Grounded theory aims to facilitate a process of discovery, with the end goal being the generation of theory (Willig, 2008). Initially, the researcher is unaware of what themes and theories will emerge from the research process, but theories emerge from the data as data analysis proceeds. Given that the grounded theory method is an inductive approach, the analysis of data is seen as an iterative process, moving back and forth between data collection and analysis. Research findings are allowed to emerge from the ground up, rather than being manipulated to fit into a preconceived framework.

In addition, Grounded Theory is a dynamic approach, through which the research process and findings are constantly evolving (Willig, 2008). Rather than attempting to impose any preconceived ideas or assumptions on the data, a grounded theory design allows data to emerge and evolve as participants use language to construct their experiences. Furthermore, grounded theory implies that data is allowed to “speak for itself”. As findings emerge from the data, the researcher is guided in the continuing process of data collection. In grounded theory, the emergence of new

concepts serves to direct and refine the focus of the research as it continues. This implies that the research question may be redefined as the research process progresses and new information gives new direction to the process. In the grounded theory method, data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously, and the iterative process continues until the researcher reaches theoretical saturation (Babbie & Mouton, 2000).

Grounded theory as traditionally designed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (In Willig, 2008), was founded from within a realist ontological position. From this perspective, the researcher is seen as a witness to particular phenomenon, which would then be described. However, arguments can be made against this ontological assumption. For the purposes of this study, grounded theory will be applied with a relativist ontology, with the role of the researcher being that of participant-observer. Although the researcher may act as a “witness” in one sense, relativism argues that an observer cannot *not* participate. In acting as a witness, the researcher inevitably influences the way in which participants respond, and consequently on the research findings.

With this as a foundation, the researcher is viewed as somebody who participates in the construction of experience and meaning. The researcher observes participants’ constructions of their experiences, and constructs her own understanding of these experiences. Research findings then, are seen as subjective, as they are filtered through the interpretations of the researcher. Therefore, although the research findings will produce “theory” about the phenomenon of child sex trafficking, this

theory is not seen as objective, but rather as a subjective understanding of the participants' constructions of their experiences with child sex trafficking.

One of the criticisms of this approach may be that the subjective nature of the research cannot obtain validity in research findings. However, qualitative research does not aim to attain an objective or scientific understanding of a phenomenon. Rather, it seeks to attain an in depth understanding of lived experienced. In contrast to this criticism then, this study is based on a contextual understanding of the lived experiences of participants as they construct it, rather than imposing an objective reality onto their realities. With the above as a guiding framework, let us consider the steps that were taken in the research process.

4.5. Participant Selection: Convenient Sampling

In Chapter 3, the definition of child sex trafficking was discussed. For the purpose of this study child sex trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transfer, receipt or harbouring of any child under the age of 18 for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Palermo Protocol, 2000). The process of participant selection entailed seeking participants that satisfied the definition. We were able to gain access to participants through our involvement at a safe-house for girl children classified "at-risk". We were involved as a part of the practical component of the Masters training program in Clinical Psychology at the University of South Africa. The term "at-risk" is understood as any girl under the age of eighteen who had been exposed to circumstances that perpetuated their vulnerability to child prostitution. While some of the girls at the safe-house had been involved in prostitution voluntarily, a number of

them had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. For this reason, convenient sampling was used to select participants.

The first step in selecting participants was to review each of their files containing historical information. This served to determine which of the girls at the safe house fitted the definition child sex trafficking. Since the safe house only accommodated girls under the age of eighteen, all of the girls were potential candidates according to their age. In addition, the study did not aim to interview only girls of South African descent, but rather girls of any origin who had been trafficked within the South African context; whether the trafficking was in-country or across borders. For this reason, all of the girls who had been sex trafficked were deemed suitable candidates for the study. After reviewing the files of the 12 girls at the Safe House, we discovered that 6 girls were potential participants for the study.

4.6. Getting Past the Gatekeepers: Negotiating Entry

Before data collection could commence, we embarked on the process of gaining permission from the gatekeepers of the organization to conduct the study. Given the young age of participants coupled with the sensitive nature of their experiences, gatekeepers were concerned that a research process may have negative consequences for the psychological well-being of the girls. Our primary involvement with the organization was in a therapeutic capacity. Gatekeepers were concerned that research efforts would be counter-therapeutic. A process of negotiation commenced whereby gatekeepers granted us permission to conduct research on condition that we conducted it in such a way that provided therapeutic benefits to participants.

In order to honour the request of the organization and to avoid any harm to participants, we spent a considerable amount of time strategizing. It seemed that the best way to go about the research process was to use our therapeutic capacity to first develop a strong relationship with participants before conducting interviews. Given the extended time frame we have had to work with these girls, we decided to spend six months in a therapeutic role where our purpose was to develop strong rapport with them outside of any research activities. Once we determined that the girls felt safe with us and a relationship was developed, we started to approach the possibility of conducting research with them.

The rapport we developed with the girls meant that they were more likely to be comfortable in sharing their experiences with us. On the other hand, this posed the ethical challenge of dual relationships. According to the Health Professions Act (1974) which serves as a guide for psychological activities, dual relationships occur when one person adopts more than one role with one other person, and these roles may impact on the other roles. For example, a clinician should give consideration to the impact of acting as a therapist to somebody who they are friends with, as this is likely to contaminate the therapeutic relationship. In many cases, the therapist is encouraged to adopt only one role when working with a client, in order that she may act in the best interest of the client. In the case of this study, we were faced with the challenge of dual roles. On one hand we was acting in a therapeutic capacity, while on the other hand we were researchers. Negotiating both roles simultaneously poses a number of challenges. However, in order to be ethically responsible, consideration needed to be given to the best interest of participants.

Rather than view our dual roles as an ethical dilemma, we viewed it as beneficial to all parties involved in the research process. Participants expressed a difficulty in talking about their experiences, yet a simultaneous need to express themselves and share their experiences with somebody whom they could trust. By spending 6 months developing a therapeutic relationship with participants, the research process was defined in a specific way. Rather than adopting the clinical role of researcher who was interested in gathering information and leaving, the process of research was much deeper. It involved getting to know the girls and sharing their pain with them. When the time came to start with interviews, we explained in detail to participants that our intention was to conduct research with them. We use the word with them rather than on them, because the process of research was as much their process as it was ours. We made it clear to them that our intention was to share their experiences with them. As such, the lines between our role as researcher and therapist were blurred. The process of collecting data was a continuation of the therapeutic process that had commenced six months ago. Participants were happy to share their stories with us, as it served not only to gather information, but as a source of empowerment for them. Participants were given an opportunity to reflect on the research interview, and each of them described the therapeutic value in sharing their stories with someone who they trusted and felt safe with. Many of them reflected on the realization they had made during the interview on their own strength and their own values. Many of them had never shared their experiences with anyone before, and reported feeling like a burden had lifted at the end of the interview. In addition, once the research interviews had been conducted, the therapeutic process continued for a further 6 months, before we handed over to new students from the University of South Africa. Supervision was an integral part to the research process, as we

constantly made use of self-reflexivity to give due consideration to how our actions might impact on participants.

4.7. Data Collection

After explaining our plan to gatekeepers, we received approval to conduct the research. Furthermore, we needed to gain ethical clearance from the University of South Africa. A number of ethical forms were filled in explaining precisely how the research would be conducted, and ethical clearance was granted by the institution.

Once we had developed a safe relationship with the girls at the safe house, a number of them were identified and invited to participate in the research process. We explained to them that participation was completely voluntarily and that they were in no way obliged to participate. We further explained that if at any time they wished to terminate the research process, they were at liberty to do so. We explained that any information revealed in the interviews would be kept strictly confidential, and that every effort would be made to ensure their anonymity. Participants were given consent forms where these terms were explained to them in writing, and each of them signed the forms voluntarily. Consent was also obtained regarding permission to record the interviews and then transcribe them verbatim. All of the participants agreed. Once this had been done, the process of data collection began, following the guidance of the grounded theory research method.

As a research method, grounded theory starts with the identification of various categories and draws links between them in order to construct the experiences of participants (Willig, 2008). Once participants were selected based on their

background information, they were invited to participate in unstructured interviews. According to Murphy and Dingwall (2003) the qualitative interview is aimed at exploring participants' definitions of their experiences. In order to allow for a description of participants' to emerge, unstructured interviews were selected. Rather than making use of a semi-structured interview that uses a number of open-ended questions to guide the interview, unstructured interviews were selected so as to allow for maximum flexibility in the interview. The aim was to allow space for participants to guide the interview as their stories emerged. We were of the opinion that a semi-structured interview might hinder this process. This approach was in line with grounded theory, which advocates for an inductive nature, and allows theory to be generated from the ground up. As such, the researcher is required to enter the research process with as few assumptions and preconceived ideas about the research findings as possible. As research findings emerged, so did the process of data collection.

A further need for unstructured interviews revolved around an ethical issue. Each participant showed a different level of psychological and emotional strength. In order to be ethically responsible, we needed to be sensitive to the needs and vulnerabilities of individual participants. While some participants were able to cope with talking about more sensitive issues, other participants might have encountered psychological damage if confronted with the same type of questions. Each participant needed to be approached differently. We spent the first six months in the field determining how best to approach each participant. We needed to allow for flexibility in the interviews as we negotiated our way through difficult terrain. We further needed to follow our therapeutic instincts carefully when negotiating when it was appropriate to probe and when it was necessary to avoid a sensitive topic. In addition,

we wanted to allow them to construct their own experiences, without prescribing to them what they should talk about according to our own preconceived ideas. Unstructured interviews also allowed for interview questions to be transformed as themes started to emerge from the data. This allowed flexibility in the study, and was true to the inductive nature of a grounded theory research design.

Unstructured interviews were recorded with an electronic device, and were later transcribed by us. As such, confidentiality was ensured in that no other parties were given access to interviews. Once they had been transcribed, they were stored in a locked electronic file, and recordings were destroyed. While interviews were being conducted and transcribed, new information was emerging as data analysis took place. This served to guide the rest of the data collection.

4.8. Data Analysis

Due to the open-ended nature of Grounded Theory, data collection and analysis necessarily occur simultaneously in an iterative manner. Emerging themes and categories serve to guide the continuation of data collection. The Attride-Stirling model of thematic network analysis was used to code and organize themes. The Attride-Stirling model was developed in response to a need for more data analysis tools that could be used to systematically organize data in a clear manner. Thematic analysis is merely a way of organizing data, with the ultimate objective of eliciting the covert themes that lay dormant within a text (Attride-Stirling, 2001). While this concept is not new, it is the organization of the themes that differentiates this particular model of thematic network analysis. By organizing themes into networks, themes can be structured in such a way that depicts the rich meaning that is hidden in

the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Themes that are extracted from the data are presented in a thematic network that summarizes and visually displays the main themes of a text (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The Attride-Stirling model of thematic network analysis organizes data into three types of themes; basic themes, organizing themes, and global themes. Basic themes constitute the lowest order premises hidden in the text. When viewed in isolation, basic themes do not provide much insight into meaning in the text. Rather, basic themes start to make sense only when they are correlated with other basic themes, which are grouped into organizing themes. Organizing themes constitute a group of basic themes, and the organizing theme is the principle assumption of the group of basic themes. As such, they represent more abstract principles that are extracted from the basic themes. The role of organizing themes is to cluster together to highlight a global theme, which represents an overview of the fundamental metaphors that can be found within the text. Global themes serve to extract meaning and provide an interpretation of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). They serve as a summary of the main themes in the text (basic and organizing themes), as well as provide an overarching interpretation of the text. An illustration of the networks is provided in Figure 4.1 below.

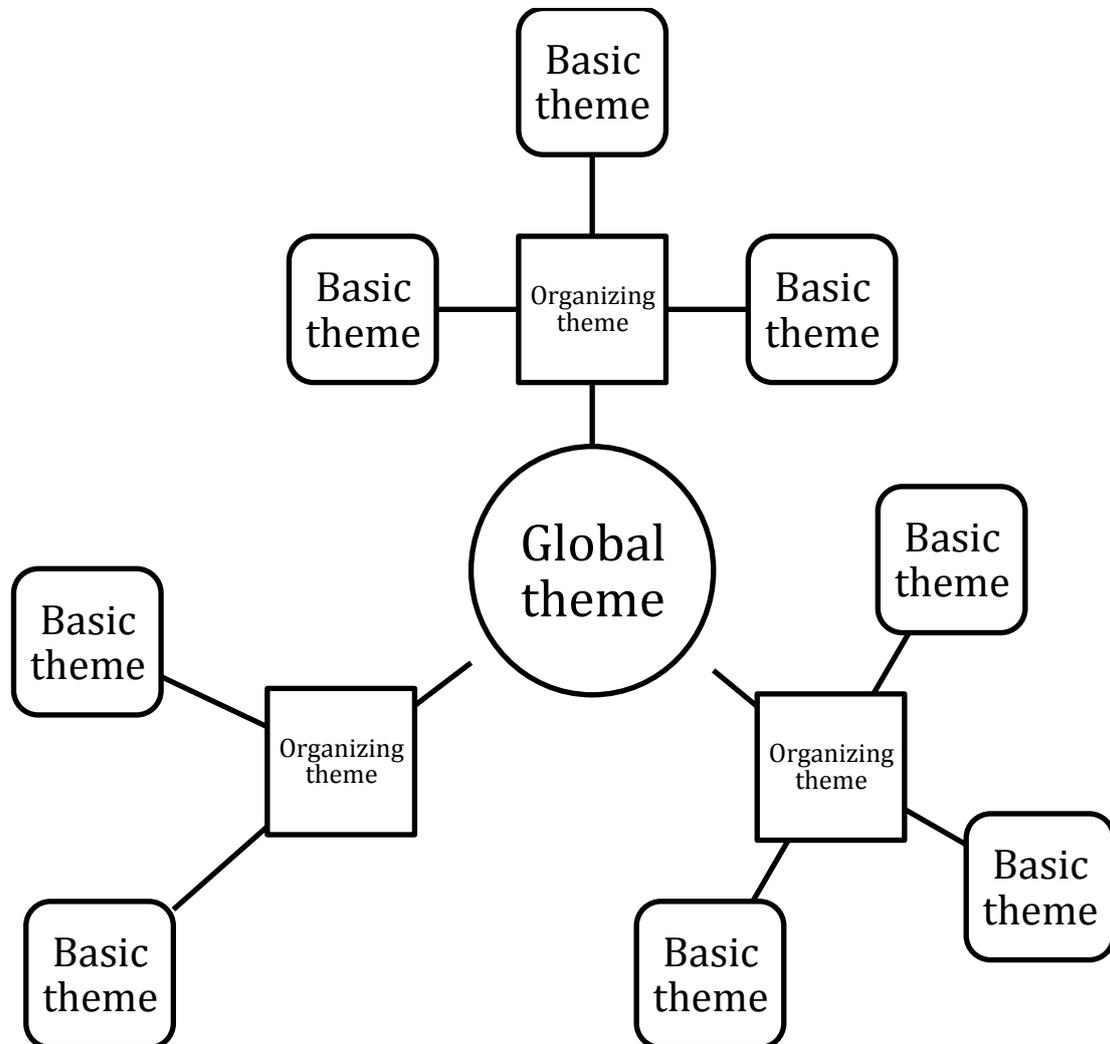


Figure 4.1

Attride-Stirling Model of Thematic Network Analysis

It is important to note that thematic networks are only a representation of the data analysis. They serve to make explicit the themes that emerge from data analysis. Once a thematic network has been organized, it serves to make illustrate the interpretation of the text, but it is not the interpretation per se. Also important to note is that the different levels of themes are not arranged in a hierarchy, but emphasis is placed on the interconnectivity of global, organizing and basic themes, which amplify the meaning of the subcategories of themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The Attride-Stirling model of thematic network analysis takes place in three stages, namely, reduction and breakdown of the text, exploration of the text, and integration of exploration. Each stage is comprised of a number of steps, which are outlined below.

4.8.1 Stage 1: Reduction and Breakdown of the Text

The first step in this stage involves coding the data. This involves dividing the text into meaningful clusters (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The process of coding entails marking certain sections of the text as they relate to different themes that recur throughout the text (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2008). While there are numerous ways of coding, I selected to arrange abstracts from the text into basic categories by color coding sections that were similar and then cutting them out and arranging them in groups. This served to create a visual organization of the common threads that ran throughout the text.

The second step in this stage is identifying themes. Themes are extracted from the clusters that have been coded. By re-reading the coded segments, underlying

themes that are common are identified as themes. According to Attride-Stirling (2001), themes should be discrete and should capture sets of ideas that recur throughout various sections of the text. The themes that emerge should provide a broad summary of the repetitive themes in the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Once themes have been identified, the third step in this stage is to construct thematic networks. Themes are arranged into groups that represent similar concepts, based on the content of the text extracts. These grouping constitute the basic themes of the network. Basic themes are then rearranged into organizing themes. Basic themes are grouped together and an Organizing theme is extracted by extrapolating the main issue that underlies the group of basic themes. Organizing themes are then clustered together to form a global theme, which is induced by naming the main assumption underlying the group of organizing and basic themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Once the process of inducing basic, organizing and global themes is complete, the researcher continues by creating a thematic network of the themes. Themes are visually represented in a web-like illustration. The final step in this stage is to ensure that the data from the text supports the themes that have been extracted, and adapting the network accordingly (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

4.8.2 Stage 2: Exploration of Text

Once the first stage of data analysis is complete, the researcher continues with an exploration of the text. The first step in this stage involves describing and exploring the thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The purpose of this step is for

the researcher to reach deeper levels of thematic abstraction from the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The researcher starts to describe the thematic networks, making use of text abstraction to support the explanation. In doing so, the researcher starts to weave a tapestry that reveals the underlying patterns in the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This step ultimately merges the data and the interpretation thereof, and the thematic networks not only serve to ground the researcher's descriptions, but also to make them clearer for the reader (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The next step in this stage is to summarize thematic networks. After the thematic networks have been explained in depth, an overview is provided of the main points underlying the networks. The aim in this step is to make explicit the core themes that organize the thematic networks, and to emphasize any patterns that emerge from the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). While this step may seem repetitive of the previous step, Attride-Stirling (2001) posits that by restating the themes and patterns explicitly, they become more clear and succinct for the reader, thus giving more meaning to the thematic networks as well as the data.

4.8.3 Stage 3: Integration of Exploration

The final stage in this process involves integrating the exploration of themes discussed in previous stages by providing an interpretation of the patterns that emerged (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The aim of this stage is twofold. Firstly, it brings together the information and meaning that was explored in the thematic networks, and secondly, it explains the patterns and structures that arose from the text in terms of relevant theory. In this stage, the patterns and structures that are explored are related back to the original research question, and a final argument that is based on the

interpretation of text extracts is presented in terms of the research question (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Having outlined the process of data collection and analysis, the focus now moves to issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research and to ethical issues pertaining to the study.

4.9. Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

There has been much debate around the relevance of the issues of reliability and validity within a qualitative framework. While some feel that reliability and validity are quantitative constructs only and therefore irrelevant to qualitative research, others maintain that these constructs cannot simply be discarded (Golafshani, 2003). However, producing research that is considered to be valid and reliable in some respect is fundamental to any research project. Whereas quantitative research defines reliability as the consistency of research findings over time, and validity as whether what was measured is what was intended to be measured (Golafshani, 2003), a qualitative paradigm requires a different perspective. Reliability and validity in qualitative research essentially relate to the quality of the research findings (Golafshani, 2003). In order to ensure a high quality of research findings, it is necessary to consider issues relating to reliability and validity, regardless of whether the paradigm is quantitative or qualitative.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose a shift from the terms reliability and validity, to considering the “trustworthiness” of a qualitative study. Trustworthiness,

they propose, entails four aspects, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to how congruent the research findings are with reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Maritz and Visagie (2011), the research should be found credible by the constructors of multiple realities. This requires the researcher to be as open as possible throughout the research process (Maritz & Visagie, 2011). Given the lens of social constructionism, which views the results of this study as a co-construction between participants and the researcher, I constantly made use of reflection throughout the research process, clarifying that my understanding of their meaning was accurate and acceptable to them. In addition, credibility was ensured by the inclusion of direct quotes from interviews with participants when discussing the results and emergent themes of the interviews. While the view that reality is a social construction and multiple realities exist, it is an unrealistic ideal to expect that the absolute meaning of participants can be portrayed. However, every effort was made to allow for participants to clarify the interpretation of their meaning. Given the social constructionist lens, while the research results are seen as credible, the meanings of participants' constructions are inevitably altered through my own subjective lens, as well as through your subjective lens. As you read about their constructions, you interpret what you read through your subjective lens, and in doing so the meaning of their constructions is altered.

4.9.2 Transferability

Transferability centres on a description of the specific context in which the research findings are applicable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to transferability as the process of measuring the applicability of the research against a particular standard. This standard is deemed satisfactory when the findings of the research can be repeated in another context, given that the two contexts have goodness of fit. Given that no other research has been conducted on how girl children who have been trafficked construct their experiences within South Africa, the notion of transferability proves challenging. However, in order to enable the comparison of the research finding to various context within South Africa, I have provided a detailed description of the data in order to sketch the context of the study. Additionally, I have provided a thorough description of the research design and methodology. This will ensure that other researchers are able to replicate the study should they wish to transfer the findings to another context.

4.9.3 Dependability

Dependability correlates with the notion of reliability, which questions whether the results of the study are replicable (Shenton, 2004). In order to ensure dependability, the researcher must constantly be aware of changes that occur in the phenomenon being studied or in circumstances, and must make adaptations to the research process accordingly (Maritz & Visagie, 2011). In order to satisfy this criteria, all aspects of the research process have been described in detail. The methodology involved in a grounded theory research design follow the assumption that data collection and analysis are iterative and occur simultaneously. The implications of this are that adaptations were constantly being made to the researcher process as new

findings emerged from interviews. The inductive design of grounded theory implies that research processes were continuously evolving according to new information that emerged from interviews.

4.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the researcher's ability to demonstrate awareness of his or her own predispositions and remain as objective as possible (Shenton, 2004). In order to ensure this, the results of the research should be able to be confirmed by other parties. Furthermore, triangulation is a method that is used to ensure confirmability. Triangulation entails comparing many sources of information with one another in order to confirm or disconfirm potential findings or themes (De Vos, 2005). In order to ensure confirmability, I made use of constant comparison of my research findings with other sources that have documented experiences of child sex trafficking victims to correlate findings. Although no such literature exists within the South Africa context, I made use of literature outside of the South African context. In addition, participants were asked to confirm the meaning that I attributed to their narratives, and this served to guide the thematic network analysis. Where participants disagreed with the ascribed meaning and themes, adjustments were made accordingly. In addition to considerations of reliability and validity, ethical considerations must be given attention, particularly given the sensitivity of the research topic.

4.10. Ethical Considerations

While every effort has been demonstrate ethical responsibility throughout the research process, an explicit discussion around ethical issues in research will serve to bring clarity to the ethical arena surrounding child sex trafficking and research. Maritz

and Visagie (2011) refer to ethics within a qualitative framework as “personal accountability on different levels and with different stakeholders”. Many systems thinkers draw a distinction between first and second order ethics. While first order ethics generally involve a set of principles that serve to guide the researcher toward good ethical conduct, second order goes beyond a set of guidelines and makes use of an internal moral value system for guidance. Ethical issues ultimately relate not only to the researcher acting in the best interest of participants, but also to the researcher considering the potential impact of his or her actions on participants. Neither first or second order ethics are seen as superior to the other. Rather, in line with the ecosystemic framework of this research, a both/and approach is adopted. For the purpose of this study, both first and second order ethics are seen as fundamental to the research process.

From a first-order Amdur (2003) suggests the following guidelines for good ethical practice.

4.10.1 Respect for Persons

Respect for persons indicates the rights of participants to self-determination and autonomy in the research process (Amdur, 2003). This means that participants are able to maintain personal agency in the research process. In other words, participants are to made aware that participation in the research process is completely voluntary, and that they may conclude their involvement at any time. Moreover, participants are to be informed of the purpose for which the research is being conducted, and how the results of the research will be used. Information should remain confidential, and anonymity of participants should be ensured (Amdur, 2003).

In accordance with this principle, participants were verbally informed of their rights pertaining to the research process, and that participation in the research process was completely voluntary. The privacy and confidentiality, as well as anonymity of participants, was ensured by the destruction of audio recordings after verbatim transcription of the interviews. In addition, pseudo names were used for participants, and identifying information was changed in order to protect their identities.

4.10.2 Beneficence

According to Amdur (2003), the essence of beneficence involves “do(ing) unto others as you would have them do to you”. Researchers should make every effort to ensure that participants gain from the potential benefits of participation in the research process.

In order to implement this concept in the proposed study, we made every effort to create a supportive context for participants in which they could share their narratives with me. This was done by spending six months with participants with the aim of building rapport and co-creating a safe context. In addition, the research process was aimed at not only eliciting the narratives of participants, but also at accentuating the strengths of participants, who were seen as survivors. Narrative therapists argue that by sharing narrative, people ultimately redefine their narrative, and this can lead to positive outcomes. Every effort was made to set the context for the redefinition of participants’ narratives. Thus, interviews with participants served to empower them. Human trafficking is a dangerous trade, and victims are prevented from speaking out about it at all costs. This has resulted in participants feeling

silenced and disempowered. By creating a platform in which they were able to make their voices heard for the first time, participants were empowered. Furthermore, they served as an example for others, who might also be empowered by hearing their experiences.

In addition, by conducting this research, awareness is amplified about the prevalence and impact of child sex trafficking on girl children. As argued in the literature review, increasing awareness at a societal level is the first step toward fighting human trafficking.

4.10.3 Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence refers to avoiding harm of participants (Amdur, 2003). Due to the sensitive nature of this study, a strong possibility for psychological harm existed. However, an equal possibility for psychological gain existed through the empowerment of participants. Throughout the research process, I was extremely sensitive to the potential impact of the interviews on participants, and every effort was made to avoid psychological harm to participants. During interviews I provided a space of containment, and after interviews, a process of debriefing was conducted by asking participants to reflect on the experience of sharing their story with me. All participants reported that it was a positive experience for them, and some of them reported that they had gained insight into their own strengths through the interview process.

The above guidelines are in line with first order ethics. Second order or relational ethics, moves beyond the measures in place to avoid harm befalling

participants, and gives consideration to the implications of the research to all readers. Throughout this document I have reflected on ethical issues as they have arisen. The ultimate aim of second order ethics is to consider the potential impact of your actions on others. Having developed a strong relationship with participants prior to the research process, I was able to give careful consideration to the complex ethical issues that arose. For example, given the brutality of the exploitation that participants has experienced in being trafficked, and given the vulnerability of their age, I needed to consider the impact of confronting them with issues that they were not yet ready to deal with on an emotional level. This meant that I needed to strike a fine balance between eliciting information as a researcher, while simultaneously reflecting on how a particular question might impact them. I needed to be sensitive to their sensitivity, and certain questions and probing needed to be avoided with certain participants at various times.

In addition, while we existed as researchers, our primary interest was in creating a context for participants in which they could be empowered. In our endeavour to do so, we were purposeful in conducting the interview in such a way that created a context for them to hear the strength of their own voices. Allowing these girls to speak out for the first time was an important by-product of the research process. Many of them had been silenced by their traffickers, and were afraid to speak about their experiences. By creating a platform in which they were able to speak about their experiences for the first time, many of them were empowered.

4.11. Conclusion

In this chapter, an overview of the methods used in the research process has been provided. In line with the research question, which aimed to understand how participants construct the experience of being trafficked, a qualitative approach to research outlined. Congruent with the epistemological assumptions of post-modernism and social constructionism, as outlined in the previous chapter, a Grounded theory method was adopted for this study, with emphasis on the iterative nature of such a method. Furthermore, the research process was described in detail, including the processes of participant selection, data collection and data analysis. Finally, factors of reliability and validity in qualitative research were discussed, as well as the ethical implications of the study. This chapter has concluded the stage of setting the context for the research study. As such, the following chapter will present an overview of the results that emerged from the research process.

Chapter 5

Research Results

5.1. Introduction

Having laid a theoretical foundation for this study and provided an overview of the research design and guiding methods, the focus now moves to the presentation of the research results. Results will be presented in the form of thematic networks, consisting of basic, organizing and global themes. The discussion will begin with an overview of the global themes, which will in turn be deconstructed to understand the organizing and basic themes as they correlate with and constitute the global themes. Each level of themes is viewed as interrelated, and themes are not intended to be seen in a hierarchical manner. This chapter primarily offers a presentation of the results of the study, while the next chapter will follow with a discussion of the results.

5.2. An Exploration of Thematic Networks

Table 5.1 below provides an overview of the global themes, organizing themes, and basic themes that emerged from the data.

Table 5.1

Overview of Global-, Organizing-, and Basic Themes

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme
Perception of the world as a hostile and unsafe place, resulting in disconnection from others	Self-sufficiency	Given adult responsibilities as a child
	Self-isolation	Difficulty relying on others
	Hostility toward others	Rejection and betrayal by family members
		Avoidance of vulnerability
		Lack of trust
		Manoeuvring for distance in interpersonal relationships
		Co-creation of a hostile environment
		Anger and hatred toward others
Existing as a Function of the family system	Self-sacrifice	Guilt
	Living with contradictions	Punitive moral voice
		Justification of others' behaviour
		Putting on a façade

	<hr/> <p>Internal Conflicts</p> <hr/>	<p>Denial of true emotions</p> <hr/> <p>Living in a world of fantasy</p> <hr/> <p>Forgive but not forget</p> <hr/> <p>Good versus evil</p> <hr/> <p>Unmet need for love and acceptance, thus seeking it elsewhere</p>
<p>Spontaneous leaps and Agency</p>	<p>Taking steps toward overcoming</p> <hr/> <p>Creating connections with others</p>	<p>Learning and growing from the past</p> <hr/> <p>Education as a gateway to a better future</p> <hr/> <p>Changing narrative</p> <hr/> <p>Sharing pain for the first time</p> <hr/> <p>Getting support from a family member</p> <hr/> <p>Connecting with God</p>

5.3. Global theme 1: Perception of the World as a Hostile and Unsafe Place, Resulting in Disconnection From Others

A fundamental thread that lay implicit within the narratives of participants was a tendency to emotionally disconnect from others. Rather than develop a sense of closeness in interpersonal relationships, they preferred to define their relationships with others by means of distance.

The network that arranges this theme can be seen in Figure 5.1 below. The themes that organize this global theme include self-sufficiency, self-isolation, and hostility toward the self and others. These are presented below, along with the basic themes that constitute them.

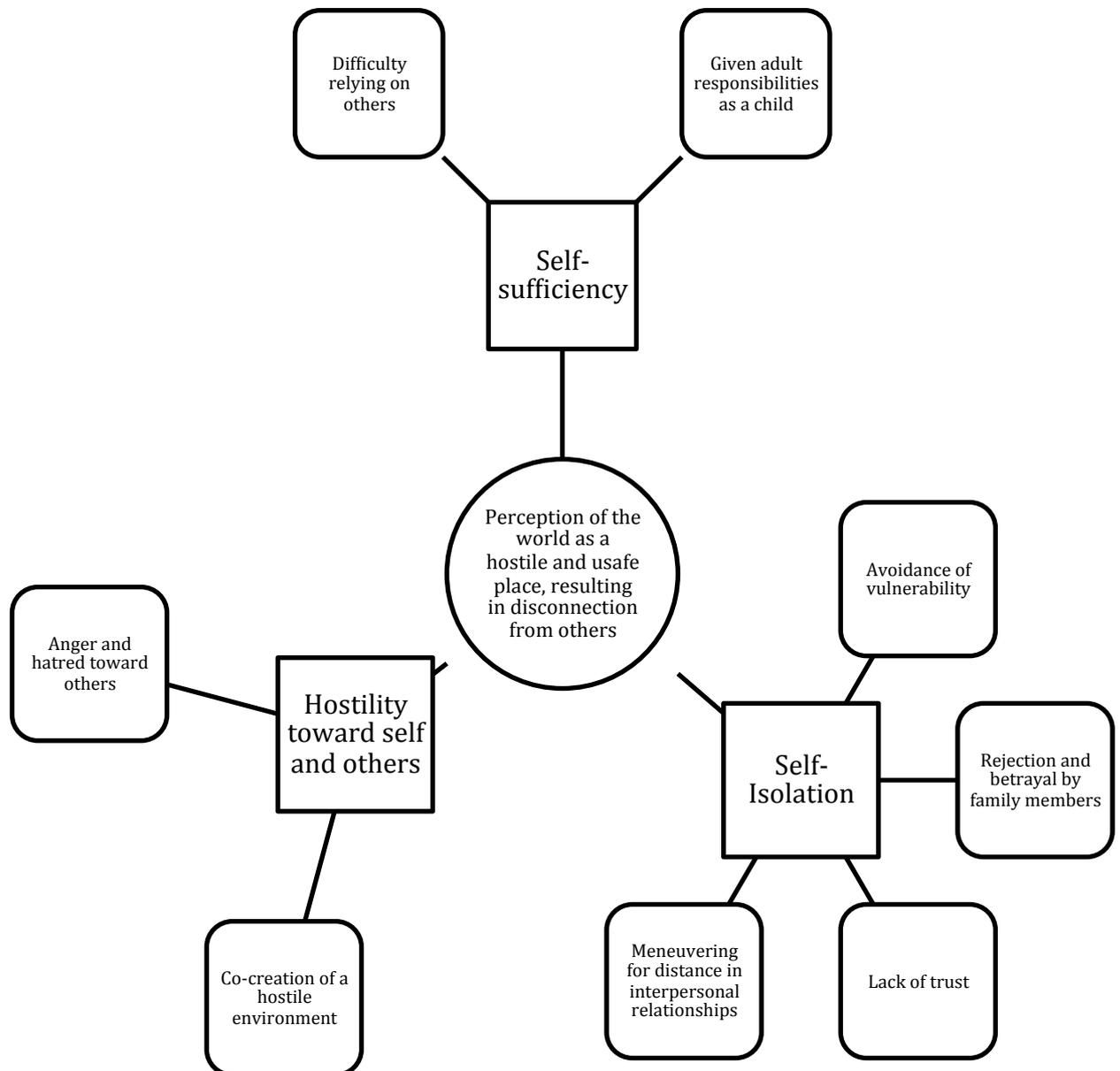


Figure 5.1.

Global Theme 1: Perception of the world as a hostile and unsafe place, resulting in disconnection from others

5.3.1 Organizing Theme 1: Self-sufficiency

A common thread underlying the tendency to disconnect from others in interpersonal relationships seemed to be related to the need to become self-sufficient. The ecological context in which participants existed created a context that did not allow for them to be dependent on caregivers to fulfil their emotional needs for connectedness and belonging. As a result, they learned to become independent and self-sufficient as a means of self-preservation. The ecological context gave them feedback that others are unreliable, and the only way to survive is to rely on oneself.

“I get my strength from myself. I became strong when I was alone with no family around and no one to take care of me. I have to take care of myself. I cannot think about the past, but I must think about my future. I have to think what if I don’t get an education, what is going to happen to me...tomorrow, maybe I am alone again and then I have to make my own way...I am the only one who can be strong for myself.”

(Participant A)

Within the organizing theme of self-sufficiency lay two basic themes.

5.3.1.1 Basic theme: Given adult responsibilities as a child. When adults are unable to fulfil their responsibilities as caregivers to their children, children are left to fill the gap. For participants in this study, this meant taking care of younger siblings, making sure the household chores were done, and at times, some of them even expressed a need to ensure that the emotional needs of parents were taken care of. These responsibilities were constructed as a burden. Many participants did not only have to deal with the lack of reliable caregivers, but they also had the

responsibility of having younger siblings relying on them to provide the needs that caregivers did not.

“I started raising my little brother at the age of 10...they would leave me, go to casinos. Go the whole day there, and I had to remain behind and take care of the baby” (Participant B)

What this implies is that economic factors contribute to the need for children to assume adult responsibilities in the household. While parents are out attempting to gain financial income, children are left to fulfill the household responsibilities.

For other participants, it became evident that the boundaries between parent and child had become blurred. Rather than receiving care, one participant felt that she had to protect her caregiver. This resulted in this participant putting her mother’s needs above her own. She describes her reluctance to share her emotions with her mother because she felt that her mother had enough burdens to carry. Ultimately, she plays the role of the parent in the relationships with her mother, and becomes self-sufficient so as to avoid adding to the stress of her mother.

“...this thing with my father abusing her, I felt like my best friend is getting hurt and then I have to put my problems on top of her, and I just left talking to her...she tells me about my father, and the home, and my brother running away from home and all that, so I just left her and didn’t really tell her how I feel, because she had enough problems of her own.” (Participant C)

This extract paints a picture of the ecological context that reinforces the need of girls to become self-sufficient. It seems that the family system in which they exist

impact not only on them, but also on other family members. In the above extract, the home environment was such that the girl's brother felt the need to leave. Furthermore, the complete lack of support that this girl received from her family system served to reinforce her need to become self-sufficient.

5.3.1.2 Basic theme: Difficulty relying on others. A further thread underlying the construct of self-sufficiency relates to the inability to rely on significant others for support. Parents failed to provide for the basic needs of participants; both physically and emotionally. Participants received the message that others are unreliable, and as a result developed the need to be independent and self-sufficient.

“My mom has never done anything good for me in my life. She was never there for me. I could never talk to her about my problems, because she didn't care about them and she would just make it worse...when I told her that my uncle raped me, I only told her because she was beating me, and I thought it would make her stop. But she beat me even more after that, and she told the whole family that I was lying... then my uncle says “yes I did rape her, but now I'm changed”. So they said because he is a family, my mom didn't go to the police to report it.” (Participant D)

On another level this extract reflects the dynamics implicit within the ecological context. The rape of the girl by her uncle is concealed; perhaps to protect the integrity of the family. Paradoxically, the integrity of the family is protected at the expense of the girl, who has the expectation that her mother would protect her individual integrity. The message the family system sends to the girl is that she cannot rely on her family to protect her. Instead they choose to sacrifice her for the integrity

of the family name. What she in turn learns is that others are unreliable and cannot be trusted. In order to preserve herself she must become self-sufficient and learn to protect herself.

Participants also talked about the failure of parents to provide for their basic need for adequate clothing.

“...it was an obligation for her to spend time with us. We never got anything for our birthdays. I had to wear a skirt to school in June. It was freezing. I had to wear a skirt. I had to wear short socks. I didn’t even have a jersey. It was all traumatic.”

(Participant B)

In this extract one can question whether this is a case of neglect or whether economic factors play a role. We do not know whether the mother chose to neglect her child or whether she could not afford to provide these things for the child. The ecological context is constructed as one of neglect. The girl perceives the inability of the mother to provide for her as a cruel act, and as a result learns that she cannot expect her mother to provide for her.

One participant describes how her mother chose her stepfather over her, and failed to protect her against the accusations of her stepfather.

“...he started gaining power over my mom. Seeing that he could tell my mom to do things and she would follow him...he would blame me for everything. And my mother would back him up. Instead of standing up for me, and saying this man is wrong, she wouldn’t do anything about it...then my mother wouldn’t even come to see us, because he said so.” (Participant B)

“My mother said: ‘if she [commits suicide] it is not my fault. Let her die’...so that hurt me the most...because I couldn’t even speak to my own mother anymore. Whenever I would try to speak to her she would shut me out”. (Participant D)

5.3.2 Organizing theme 2: Self-isolation. The second organizing theme that emerges from the construct of the world as a hostile and unsafe place, resulting in disconnection from others is that of self-isolation. Participants showed a tendency to isolate themselves from others, which amplified the disconnection in interpersonal relationships. Despite the consistent expression of a desire for close relationships, developing close relationships was challenging for participants. Many of them showed a tendency to isolate themselves, and could not allow others to get close to them or to know them.

“...I can’t get the love, respect, and honor and care that I want, so rather I do it myself. Rather I be my own best friend. I would pile up these things inside. I would bottle up my emotions. I shut everyone out. When I’m out there I would pretend that I was this happy child when I am not. I would pretend that everything is okay when I am not.” (Participant B)

The basic themes that constitute the theme of self-isolation include the rejection and betrayal by significant others, the avoidance of vulnerability with others, an choice to not trust others, as well as a constant manoeuvring for distance in interpersonal relationships.

5.3.2.1 Basic theme: Rejection and betrayal by significant others. A further theme underlying the construct of self-isolation relates to the rejection and

betrayal experienced from family members that participants trusted and relied upon. The experience of betrayal and rejection by those who participants relied upon for protection and safety communicated to participants that existing in an isolated vacuum is the only sure way to avoid rejection and betrayal. In turn, from the ecological context created, participants learn that the only way to avoid such rejection and betrayal is to avoid depending on anyone else.

One participant describes the relationships she had with her uncle who used her to make pornography and prostituted her from his home where she was living. This participant had accompanied her mother from her country of origin to her uncle and aunt's house in South Africa. The day after they arrived, her mother left unexpectedly and without explanation. The girl did not know where the mother had gone or why she had left her. A short time after her mother left, her uncle started to traffic her. The girl seemed to believe that her mother had been in trouble with the authorities and left her with her uncle and aunt because she believed she would be safe with them. However, it did not turn out that way. Rather, what the girl experienced was the ultimate betrayal of trust by her own blood line.

"I thought of him like a father. I even used to call him father...later I realized that what he was doing to me was wrong" (Participant A)

This same participant describes her aunt with whom she was living as someone who she trusted would protect her against her uncle. However, instead of offering her support, she was beaten by her aunt and kicked out of their house after revealing to her aunt that her uncle was selling her for sex.

“...I went to my aunty where she was working and told her about [what my uncle was doing to me]...then my [other] uncle phone her...the one in Algeria. And then my uncle told her about me and the husband-what he is doing to me. And then my aunty say to him “no the way he lives with [Participant A] is like a child and I don’t think he can do those kind of things. If [Participant A] has to accuse us and the family, I think they have to come and fetch her, she can’t live with me”, and stuff like that. And then in the morning I didn’t go to school...and then she says “I think your mom must come and fetch you. You have to go back home, but I don’t know where she is. You have to go back home by yourself then, I can’t keep you again. And she beat me, and after that she locked me inside the house and she left. So I decided to call the police.”

(Participant A)

In this case, the ecological context was such that the girl learned that trusting others comes at a cost. She learns that living in a world void of close relationships was a way to prevent such betrayal and ultimately preserve oneself. Furthermore, she is sexualized by her uncle and has lost the innocence of her childhood, but is not yet an adult. She is cast out and rejected by her own bloodline, and no longer has any place where she belongs. In other words, the ecological context forces her into a relational vacuum, where she lives alone and must fend for herself. Another participant describes the explicit rejection she experienced by her mother, which reiterates the notion of being an outcast and learning to exist in a relational vacuum.

“My mom said: ‘if [Participant D] will die or get sick or something like that or something happens to her then don’t call me. This is not my child”. (Participant D)

“I said to my mom: ‘you are not acting like you are my parents. It’s like you adopted me.’

My mom said: ‘even if I knew I was pregnant with you, I would have done an abortion long time ago’.” (Participant D)

5.3.2.2 Basic theme: Avoidance of vulnerability. While all of the participants expressed a desire for closeness and intimacy in interpersonal relationships, they simultaneously avoided becoming vulnerable with others. Vulnerability is seen as a precursor for a close interpersonal relationship, and without ever showing vulnerability, creating a close and intimate relationship is difficult. This served to isolate them from others as they avoided creating any intimate relationships with others. This in turn, perpetuated the cycle of existing in relational vacuum.

“Like every night I couldn’t sleep, I go to [my friend] and talk to her...but I didn’t go deep into my lifestyle” (Participant C)

While this participant expresses a need for support from her friend, she avoids “going deep” and revealing her true emotions. Rather, she avoids showing any vulnerability and in doing so avoids revealing herself. Rather, she defines the relationship by means of emotional distance, and avoids creating a sense of connectedness. Thus, the pattern of self-isolation is perpetuated.

“Like I only like this one girl. Her name is Promise. I only love her...because she is tall like me. We have the same color. Sometimes we look alike...but when I’m stressed, I don’t tell her. I pretend. But she tells me about her...she doesn’t know about my life. She only knows that I was living in Joburg with my aunty and then I came here...because if I tell her about my deep problems then she will tell other people.” (Participant A)

In this extract what emerges is the conflict between the desire to be vulnerable and to create a deeper connection with other, but at the same time an inability to trust others. In a world that is constructed as untrustworthy, the choice to avoid vulnerability and in turn closeness in relationships is the price that is paid for survival. Girls have experienced that trusting those closest to them resulted in betrayal, rejection, and even exploitation. As such, the lack of trust and avoidance of vulnerability is the ultimate survival tactic.

5.3.2.3 Basic theme: Lack of trust. The avoidance of vulnerability largely overlaps with the lack of trust in others. Participants described their inability to be vulnerable with others as directly related to the inability to trust others. They expected that if they shared their secrets and their vulnerabilities with others then they would face betrayal. In anticipation of betrayal, they chose not to trust others with their vulnerability.

“This other time I had a journal I used to write all my emotions in there, because I couldn’t trust anyone anymore because I was thinking to myself that everyone would take advantage of me being vulnerable like they had taken advantage, so I couldn’t share anything with anyone. I was like a closed book. I used to have this other friend, we were very close. But she started leaking stuff to other people, so we drifted away, which at that time nothing really mattered any more.” (Participant B)

Participants also showed difficulty trusting that romantic partners would remain faithful to them.

“I keep thinking that he is going to cheat on me. Because if I can do something bad then he can too...I thought he was cheating on me with my aunt. My aunt told him

that I said they were kissing one day. And I was angry and said to her that she should have come to me first and not gone to him.” (Participant D)

5.3.2.4 Basic theme: Maneuvering for distance in interpersonal relationships. A further common thread in interviews with participants was behaviour in interpersonal relationships with others that can be defined as manoeuvring for distance. Given the emphasis of the ecosystemic framework outlined in Chapter 2, the interpersonal arena takes centre-stage. Within a systemic framework, all behaviour can be seen as a manoeuvre for self-preservation (Andolfi et al., 1983). In the case of participants, their behaviours can be seen as a strategy to create distance between themselves and others. This served to protect them from the potential harm that interpersonal relationships threatened. Behaviours such as hiding their true emotions from others and at times being rude were means that participants used to create distance between themselves and others. This theme largely overlaps with the inability to be vulnerable and to trust others.

“I don’t let the others know when I am upset or sad. I just pretend that everything is fine and make them think that they don’t get to me. I don’t even tell my best friend when I am sad. I rather keep it to myself and pretend that I am happy” (Participant C)

“I have that short temper...sometimes I don’t answer people properly. Or sometimes I don’t smile at school and I’m just quiet...and they’ll be like “you’re rude and you have attitude” (Participant A)

5.3.3 Organizing theme 3: Hostility Toward Others

One of the factors that created disconnection in interpersonal relationships related to the theme of hostility. The underlying narrative seemed to be that attack is the best form of defence.

“I hate everyone who lives here. They don’t be nice to me. If someone talk to me they only say ugly things. When someone want to talk to me, I just tell them to fuck off and leave me alone.” (Participant C)

5.3.3.1 Basic Theme: Co-creation of a hostile environment. Participants seemed to go from one hostile environment to another. As they entered the system at the safe house, they experienced the hostility of the context, and in turn responded with hostility. This resulted in a co-creation of a hostile environment, as a cycle of hostility was created. This perhaps fits with the ecological context constructed in previous extracts. If the family system is unpredictable and untrustworthy, then it follows that others are also constructed as untrustworthy. The hostility girls show toward others may be seen as a means of creating distance from others, who pose a threat if they are allowed to form a relationship with girls.

“And even when I came here it was nice on the first but then after then I didn’t start liking it because these girls in here, every time when I’m...even if I do something wrong, I do a small mistake...they like shouting at me or they tell me bad things that remind me of home...and now I hate them.” (Participant D)

“Participant C said to me ugly things, so I said to her: “when you are sleeping I am going to kill you” (Participant E)

5.3.3.2 Basic theme: Anger/hatred toward others. Many participants displayed signs of anger and hatred toward other people. While some were overt about this, it was more subtle for others.

“...I started closing this thing inside of me. I started piling up. I developed a lot of anger and hatred inside of me, which wasn’t very good because I even thought of doing stuff that I wasn’t capable of doing”. (Participant B)

“I just say “you know what? Tonight, if everyone sleeps, me I just wake up to going to kill someone...” (Participant E)

“...she said sorry to me, and I said it’s fine, but I did not forgive her. I hate everyone who lives here.” (Participant D)

Some participants were less overtly hostile and showed signs of being passive aggressive.

“...whatever happens to me, it will also happen to someone else who do that to me. Like they say what goes around comes around...I will be nice to that person, because they will pay for what they did to me.” (Participant C)

5.4. Global Theme 2: Existing as a Function of the System

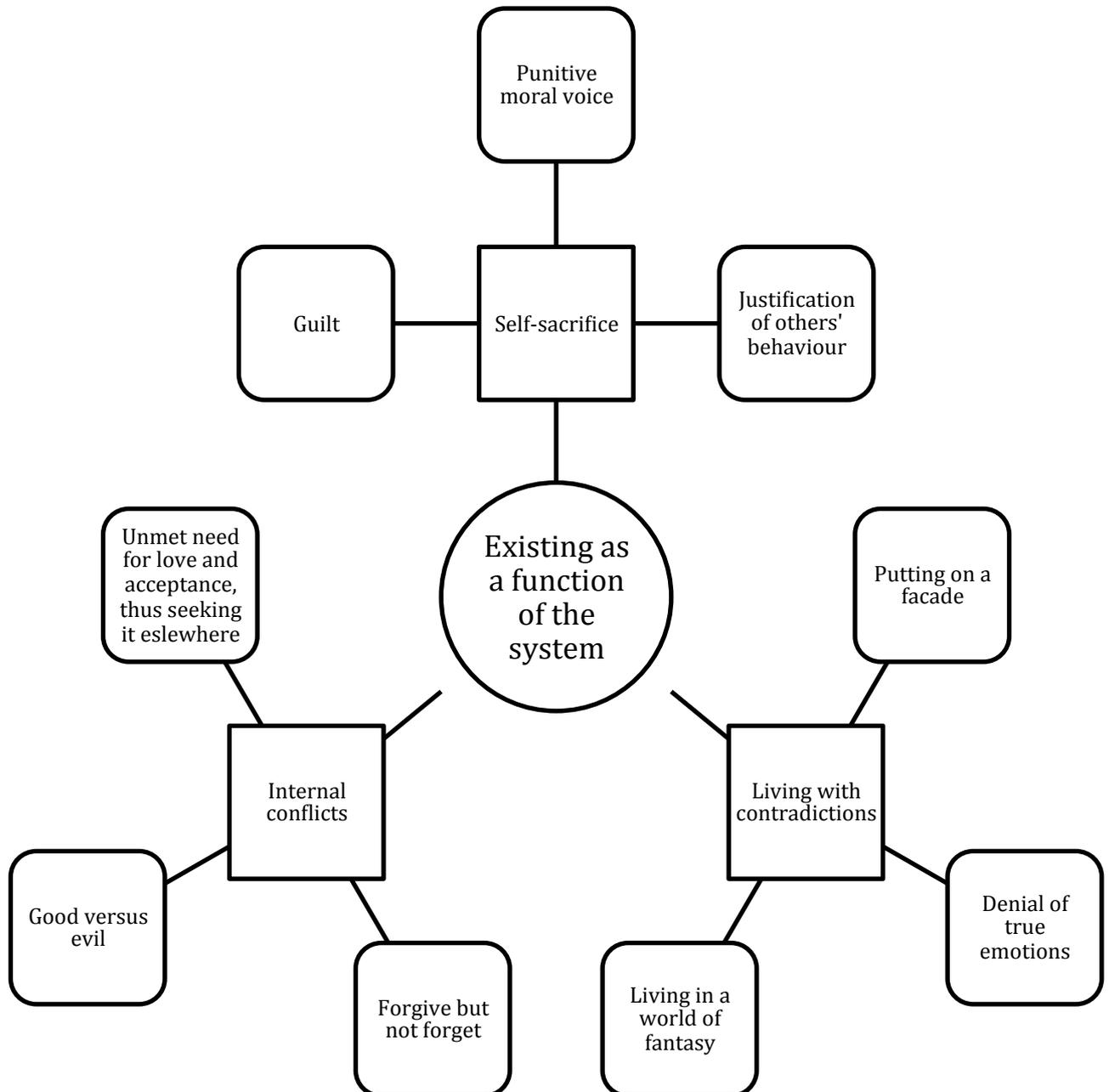


Figure 5.2.

Global theme 2: Existing as a Function of the System

5.4.1 Organizing Theme 1: Self-sacrifice

A common theme that emerged from the narratives of participants is that of self-sacrifice. Participants seemed to have an inability to express their emotional needs and seek to have them met. Instead, they commonly pretended that their own needs did not exist, and rather sought to gratify the needs of others. This often required the sacrifice of self. Self-sacrifice was described as originating from the family of origin, and later spilling over into other relational domains. In the family system, girls learned that in order to survive, they were not able to express their own needs or to request anything from the family system. In order to gain belonging from the family system, they were required to serve the needs of the family, often at the expense of their own needs. This is a means of survival, firstly within the family system, and later in other relational contexts.

“...family means that someone else comes first before me. Even if I have to give my life for someone, I would do it...because to me it’s like how God sacrificed his life over me. That means I can also do it. Give my life over someone else.” (Participant C)

“...well it was once when I realized I can sacrifice myself for someone else...there was a robbery in my house...and the I said ‘before you kill my mother, kill me first, because she is the one who gave life to me’...because it feels bad to me because how can my mother sacrifice her life over me, because she is the one who gave life to me.”
(Participant C)

“Yeah, I pretend...they always treat me badly, but in the end if they say I have to do something I’ll do it for them.” (Participant E)

“I’ll do anything to keep [my boyfriend] happy. If he wants sex, then I will give him sex, even if I don’t want it, just as long as he is happy...” (Participant D)

“Even if he cheats on me, I am going to forgive him. Even though he beat me, I forgave him.” (Participant D)

“Even though he did that bad things to my mother and all that I think he loves her, even though he beat us all.” (Participant C)

Participants show great tolerance for being treated badly by others. This may be a function of being undifferentiated (Andolfi et al., 1983). In order to survive within the family system, they were required to exist only to serve the needs of the family system. Any form of differentiation risked being outcast from the family. Participants often came from families in which they were abused, and as such learned to be forgiving of the abuse and exploitation. If participants did not show forgiveness to significant others who abused them, they would risk losing the relationship and would lose the only form of support they have. Participants thus seem to protect relationships with significant others at all costs, even if this means they have to put their own needs aside.

5.4.1.1 Basic theme: Guilt. A common theme that was related to self-sacrifice was that of guilt. Participants seemed to carry a lot of guilt for the things they believed they had done wrong.

“...after the suicide I started taking all the blame. I thought that maybe I am the one who is doing harm, I would analyze the situation, and look out...maybe try to analyze

it more carefully to see what I and done wrong. And I wouldn't see anything."

(Participant B)

"My pastor said to me: '[Participant D] that thing of having a boyfriend, I don't like it...[Participant D] if you want God to use you, you have to stop what you are doing (having sex with her boyfriend).' But I am not ready to give up my boyfriend."

(Participant D)

5.4.1.2 Basic theme: Punitive moral voice. An underlying conflict emerged between the pain they feel from the rejection of their families and the punitive moral voice, which seems to be an internalized voice of God telling them what they *ought* to do. This message of what is "right" contradicts their true emotions. It prevents them from acknowledging their true feelings of anger and pain, and from expressing themselves adequately. Rather, they are convinced that they should follow the voice of God, regardless of the cost to them.

"...even though I am deeply hurt by my family, I must still forgive them, because I am a Christian and God says I must forgive. Even if I'm not going to forgive them they are still my parents, they are still my family, and because I am a Christian, the bible says nobody is perfect. We all do mistakes you know. But sometimes it still hurts. You know, why will my mom do this and this to me?" (Participant D)

"...if someone wrong you, you must not fight. There is no shouting. Even if I hate you, I must love you. Because God says." (Participant E)

On another level this may be seen as a strategy of accepting the hostile world in which they live as a means of lessening the impact and making survival easier. There seems to be a split between the internal self and the moral voice of God. Living

according to the moral voice serves to disqualify their hostile emotions, and it is perhaps easier to exist in a world that they do not have these emotions. It seems to be a way of accepting the difficult situation, which lessens the struggle.

5.4.1.3 Basic theme: Justification of others' behaviour. Participants showed the need to justify the behaviour of others who had wronged them. By justifying the behaviour of others and finding a possible reason for being treated badly, girls make it easier to cope with the pain of the rejection and betrayal they experienced, particularly by other family members. If there is a reason for the behaviour of others, then it means they were not rejected because of some deficiency, but rather because the person who rejected them was perhaps not coping themselves.

"I am thinking that [my mother] had this empty void that she needed to fill after my father's death, and that is why she started treating me this way." (Participant B)

"Maybe she left me because she was afraid that she couldn't run with me, or maybe she left me because she was afraid or stressed. I just hope that she is alright."
(Participant A)

5.4.2 Organizing Theme 2: Living with contradictions

Living with contradictions emerged as a major organizing theme of existing as a function of the system. The ecological context in which they existed gave them feedback that expressing their true emotions does not serve the family system well. On one level participants would express their true feelings, but on the surface they would deny these feelings and actively avoid allowing others to see their true feelings. Rather, they make a conscious effort to pretend that their feelings were the opposite of

what they really were. This is perhaps a way of dealing with the ambivalence and conflict inherent in their family environment.

One participant says about her mother who abandoned her into the hands of her trafficker:

“I am really angry and hurt that my mother could just leave me like that. I don’t know if I can ever forget the pain she caused me, to be abandoned like that.” (Participant A)

Later in the interview the same participant disqualifies her previous feelings by justifying her mother’s decision to abandon her, saying:

“I just hoped that she is fine wherever she is...maybe she was afraid, because if something was going to happen to her, and I wanted to be there and then she decided to run and leave me with my aunty”. (Participant A)

Another participants expresses the hurt she feels when she perceives hatred toward her from others, by saying:

“...some people really do hate you. They hate you in a kind of way, like even they can find something for you to get into trouble, and that is what hurts me the most. And I also hate them.” (Participant C)

She later disqualifies her pain and hostility toward others by saying:

“...I just show them love.” (Participant C)

5.4.2.1 Basic theme: Putting on a façade. One of the ways that the incongruence emerged was through the tendency of participants to put on a façade and pretend that things were better than they actually were.

“I shut everyone out and I started lying to everyone. I pretended that I was this happy person, but really I was not.” (Participant B)

“I like them outside not inside. On the inside I hate everyone who lives here, but on the outside I love them all.” (Participant E)

Another participant makes her incongruence explicit by saying:

“...if you love someone then someone else will love you. Even though you hate this person, but you have to show some love to them. Even though they hate you or you hate them, even if you don't talk to each other, but just show them love.” (Participant C)

5.4.2.2 Basic theme: Denial of true emotions. Participants seemed to have difficulty acknowledging and expressing their emotions. Many of them described their tendency to rather bottle their emotions up or pretend they didn't exist.

“Well I learned to take the past and just leave it behind and move on, even if I do talk about the past my heart feels pain but I am pretending not to feel that pain anymore because it is tough. So I can't feel the pain anymore, but deep down I do feel it.”
(Participant C)

“...but I don't tell her how I really feel. I just pretend like everything is fine.”
(Participant B)

5.4.2.3 Basic theme: Living in a world of fantasy. In some cases participants displayed such a deep level of denial of their true emotions that they created a fantasy world for themselves in which they could escape the real world and its problems. One girl describes her spiritual experience at the age of eight.

“I was a devil worshipper...in Grade 3 my friend was running and fell and broke her neck, and died on my lap...the devils that were in my friend went into me...I started to see my friend and her devil world every night...I left my body...when I get there, it’s like dead people and demons...I met the devil boss...she promised me powers...they told me I have to kill my aunt.” (Participant D)

“Then one day, I started having this vision. Before a person dies I started to have a vision, and there was coming a point where I said you have to wake up and pray for this and this and this, for accidents and stuff like that.” (Participant D)

“When I’m sleeping sometimes, a voice came to me and says “[Participant D] wake up, you have to pray, because some of the demons are taking children, are using young people, young people like us...” (Participant D)

In some cases they seem to advocate responsibility for their hostility by attributing it to the devil.

“You know what devil come to me and say? ‘[Participant E] you can do this. Go and take knife and you can kill someone’.” (Participant E)

5.4.3 Organizing Theme 3: Internal Conflicts

Internal conflicts emerged in the narrative as ambivalence toward significant others. Participants expressed a desire for closeness on one level, but disqualified this

desire on another. Various conflicts emerged. One such conflict was between the pain they feel from the rejection of their families and the punitive moral voice telling them what they should do.

“...even if I’m not going to forgive them they are still my parents, they are still my family, and because I am a Christian, the bible says nobody is perfect. We all do mistakes you know. But sometimes it still hurts. You know, why will my mom do this and this to me?” (Participant D)

“...If he leaves me I am going to kill myself” ...If we break up then there will be stress for a while but I will get over it...” (Participant D)

A further conflict emerged as the difference between thinking with ones head and thinking with ones heart. This seems to reflect a failed attempt to make sense of emotional experiences, which were too overwhelming.

“...because sometimes I was not thinking about these things with my head, I was thinking with my heart. Because sometimes I can just break down because of the past. That is why most of the time I don’t want to think about the past, but now, at least I am cool with it...” (Participant D)

One participant described the conflict she experienced between craving the affection of her trafficker and simultaneously feeling betrayed by him.

“At first I did not believe that what he was doing was wrong, because I told myself that he loved me like a child. I liked it when he loved me because he was like the only father I ever had. But later I realized that what he was doing was wrong.”
(Participant A)

A further inner conflict emerged through the message of “I trust you but I don’t”. This may be due to an unpredictable and ambivalent family context; a context which is described as one which is supportive and loving at times, but punitive and harsh at other times. An unpredictable environment creates ambivalence and internal conflicts for participants.

“well I still do trust [my father] but not that much. Because sometimes if you share your story with someone he’ll get mad and angry because something is troubling him but you don’t know what.” (Participant C)

5.4.3.1 Basic theme: Forgive but not forget. One of the strongest internal conflicts that became evident was the ability to forgive those who had betrayed participants, but a simultaneous inability to forget. All of the participants explicitly described the difference between forgiving and forgetting the hurt induced by another. This can also be seen as a survival instinct. While forgiving reduces the burden of the bitterness carried, forgetting means risking the potential of being hurt again as before. In order to preserve themselves, they must remember how people hurt them in the past, as this is the best way of avoiding falling into the same trap.

“...my mom...I think about what she did to me, but I act like nothing happened. I have already forgiven her, but my heart says “don’t forget that your mother did this and that to you” (Participant D)

“...because it is like I still have this hatred, like why you did this to me? But when [my mom] comes I act like nothing has happened. I already forgive her, but forget, it’s hard.” (Participant E)

“But if I’m going to find out that my boyfriend is cheating on me, and he comes and tells me again, I’ll forgive him. I’ll forgive him, because um...inside the relationship you have to trust each other, be there, support each other neh. But nobody is perfect obvious. Because if somebody does a mistake and if he or she apologizes to you, you have to forgive him or her. I’m going to forgive him. But I will never be able to forget, and the trust will never be the same...” (Participant D)

5.4.3.2 Basic theme: Good versus evil. A conflict between good versus evil emerged as central to how participants constructed their experiences. This conflict seemed to be internalized, as reflected by a constant fluctuation between having “evil” feelings, but wanting to overcome these with “good” actions.

“[The devil boss] said to me: ‘you have to kill your aunt because she is a Christian and every time she is praying, she is destroying our world’. (Participant D)

After being on the dark side, the participant describes how she was exorcised and started to believe in God and she became good.

“I hate my mother, but because I am a Christian now I must forgive her. I pretend like everything is fine when she comes.” (Participant D)

“You know what devil come to me and say? ‘[Participant E] you can do this. Go and take knife and you can kill someone’... ‘but God says there is no fighting. You must not fight, even if someone is nasty to me.’ (Participant E)

5.4.3.3 Basic theme: Unmet need for love and acceptance, thus seeking it elsewhere Participants expressed a strong need for love and acceptance from family

members and loved ones. However, they described this need as mostly unmet. Eventually many of them started to seek it out from other sources.

“They treat me this way, even though they’d re claiming that they love me, but then the way they are treating me is not okay”... ”you can have anything in the world, but as long as you don’t have love you are not completed. Because with love you can overcome every tough obstacle you have to overcome” (Participant B)

“I went to him because he was the only person I could tell my heart to...because its not like I don’t love my mom, but this guy, he was there for me when my parents regretted me.” (Participant D)

“This guy knocked on my door and told me I should come with him, so I did. I had talked to hum once before and he seemed nice.” (Participant A)

This phenomenon of seeking love in other places when they do not find it in the family system is one of the most significant contributors to making girls vulnerable to being trafficked. The participants who were not trafficked by a family member were trafficked by a man that they sought acceptance from. When they do not receive love and belonging from their family system, they seek it elsewhere, and predators are able to take advantage of this.

5.5. Global Theme 3: Spontaneous Leaps and Agency

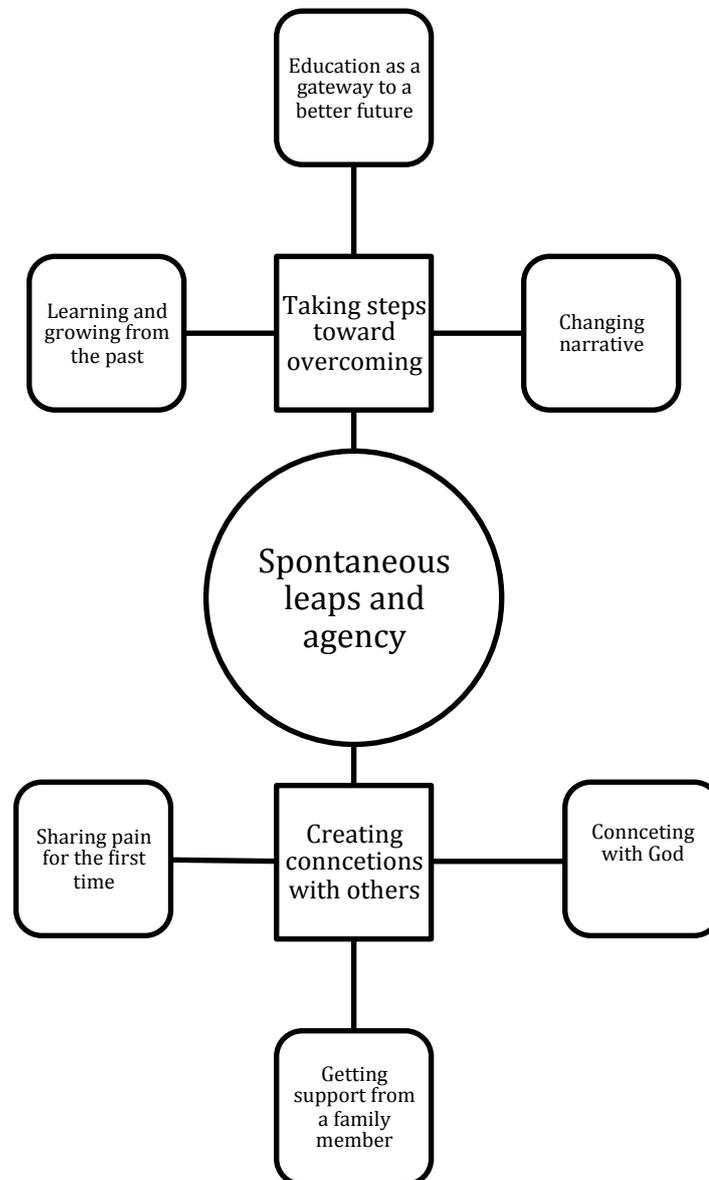


Figure 5.3.

Global theme 3: Spontaneous leaps and agency

5.5.1 Organizing Theme 1: Taking steps toward overcoming

Despite the challenges faced by participants, they expressed a desire to overcome their difficulties and to make something of their lives. Many of them were determined to forget about the pain that their past held and to look toward the future, which was often seen as holding potential for defining a new way of life for them. The decision to shut out the past and live in the present was a survival tactic for many.

“...because I can choose to forget the past and move on. I don’t want to be stuck here forever.” (Participant A)

“What is the point of staying in the past. I can’t change that, but I can change my future. I do not have to live with my family abusing me anymore.” (Participant B)

“I don’t really think about what happened. I just think about what I am going to do with my life now that I am here.” (Participant C)

5.5.1.1 Basic theme: Learning and growing from the past. Despite the desire to forget the past and live in the present, some participants were able to reflect on their past experiences and reflect on the insight they developed into the consequences of their previous decisions. In spite of the pain they expressed, they were able to find ways to learn from previous experiences and to grow from them.

One participant reflects on the destruction caused by her decision to be promiscuous.

“...[my parents] would accuse me of having many boyfriends and stuff. Then sometimes I would spend the night with many guys, so that I could prove a point to them...so that I could also hurt them the way they were hurting me...but then I

realized I can't carry on my life like this. I am ruining my reputation here by doing what they are saying I am doing...I am not hurting them, instead I am making them happy by hurting myself." (Participant B)

In this extract we see a conscious choice to change her life script, from a script of abuse to one of overcoming. She breaks the cycle of constantly being hurt by choosing that she will no longer hurt herself.

"Now I can show love to people. I used to hate people, but then I thought 'maybe if I am kind to others someone will be kind to me.'" (Participant C)

5.5.1.2 Basic theme: Education as a gateway to a better future. Getting an education was of central importance for every participant. Despite poor living conditions at the safe house, they expressed gratitude for the opportunity to go to school. Education was seen as a fundamental aspect to creating a different future for themselves.

"I felt education is the only way that would take me out of this situation. I had to stay focused at that time. I had to pass...I would think of my baby brothers. Who is going to take care of them?" (Participant B)

"that is why I now want to concentrate on my books, so that I can get a better future...I want to prove them wrong, because in my family, they curse me, they say..."you are going to have the worst future"...and that is why I am touching my books, so I can have a better future." (Participant D)

"I think it's fine that things are bad for me because I am going to school. I just want to go to school." (Participant A)

5.5.1.3 Basic theme: Changing narrative. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to reflect on their experience of being interviewed. What emerged was the sense of an evolving narrative. By sharing their stories participants were able to give a voice to their pain, and in doing so, many of them developed insight into their own strengths and qualities, as well as how much they had grown and how far they had come. Furthermore, the evolving of narratives was evident in some interviews as participants reflected on how their own thought processes and attitudes had shifted over time as they strived toward overcoming their difficulties.

“But sometimes to talk about hard things can help me. I feel a lot better now. I feel like that’s what I really needed, because although it was painful, I realized that I am actually stronger than I thought I was.” (Participant C)

“This conversation...having to share my story again...I realize the strength that I have has really extended. And I’m also glad that right now I could take about almost anything that is happening in my life. I have to say that I’m glad I had to talk about it to a person like you, because other people, when you talk to them, you don’t even have the energy, because they give you this energy like you burden them with your troubles. And I think where do I fit in and all of that. So having a person who shows understanding and who offers you an ear it’s really amazing.” (Participant B)

“...the more you talk the more you get free. So it is good for me to talk, because that is when I realize how far I have come.” (Participant D)

5.5.2 Organizing Theme 2: Creating Connections with Others

Despite the global theme of creating disconnection in interpersonal relationships, participants consistently displayed the desire to overcome their

difficulties, and develop a meaningful relationship with another person. Some of them were able to take the risk and develop a close relationship with another person. When they were able to do this, the connections they created with others acted as a catalyst to their growth.

“I realized that I can’t shut everybody out anymore. I couldn’t fake it anymore. I needed to have someone to talk to. Even if that person was going to betray me, I needed someone. So I looked for someone I thought I could trust, and eventually I found Thandi, and I told her. We are very close now. Actually without her I don’t think I would have survived here.” (Participant B)

“I couldn’t trust anybody, but I knew my uncle from Algeria was always there for me. So I call him sometimes when I feel bad, and he helps me to feel better.” (Participant A)

One participant developed an enmeshed relationship with her boyfriend after her family rejected her.

“...He is my everything...he was the only one there for me. I could not live without him. I will do anything to make him happy.” (Participant D)

“I only love Nolwazi, because she is the only one who understands [Participant E]. She is the only one who loves me, and I love her.” (Participant E)

5.5.2.1 Basic theme: Sharing pain for the first time. Participants who had shared their stories and the pain implicit in them with others referred to this experience as a relief of the burden they carried alone. Many of them reflected on this as a significant step in the direction toward their own healing and growth.

“It is painful to talk about these things. But when I talk about it I feel better.”

(Participant C)

“I felt that she was a person I could trust. So I told her what happened to me, because I thought she could understand. And afterwards I felt so relieved.” (Participant B)

“When my cousin came here I was so happy. Because all the others they hate me, but she understands me. So I can talk to her about everything, and she doesn’t hate me.”

(Participant E)

5.5.2.2 Basic theme: Getting support from a family member. Participants who received support from a family member seemed better equipped to overcome the difficulties they faced. Participants who had not support from any family members developed pathological coping strategies such as psychosis.

“Actually [my uncle] was the pillar of my strength.” (Participant A)

“So I waited until it was Monday so I can go tell my friends at school or go tell one of the teachers at school about it. When I arrived there I told my friend teacher, so the teacher told me to tell my mom, but then I couldn’t tell the teacher that I don’t know where my mom is and stuff like that. So the teacher says “you must tell your mom, you must not hide it”. (Participant B)

“I couldn’t tell my aunty, so I phone my uncle-my mother’s brother. He was in Algeria then he went to Dubai. I told him about it and he was angry. He also told me to tell my aunty, otherwise he is going to phone my aunty and tell her, because he is not happy with that, and he is not sure if I must live there if they are hurting me. So I

say I will try to tell my aunty. He says “do not try. Tell her. You must not hide it, you must tell her”. (Participant A)

“I told [my teacher] everything. I had no option because she was like “I’m not leaving until you tell me what is really happening”. I told her everything. She was like “I can’t bear this. I can’t sit here and look at you being traumatized like this. Being emotionally and physically hurt like this.” (Participant B)

“...and when I came by my house with the police, my mommy said she was looking for me all over.” (Participant C)

5.5.2.3 Basic theme: Connecting with God. Participants describe their relationship with God as a factor that they were able to draw strength from. Even those participants who were incapable of developing close relationships with other people were able to develop a relationship with God. Participants constructed God as someone who was able to protect them and help them when others failed.

“...as I was raised up, I grew up with the thought that there was only one God, and that is the God I have to worship and no one else.” (Participant B)

“Prayer was the only thing that kept me going. My faith in God had kept me going for such a long time, because I thought that I am not alone.” (Participant B)

“I was praying to God, help me with these things. I believe in God. Whatever happens, god will protect me.” (Participant D)

“If you do something wrong, you can’t say God forgive me, but you can believe God help me.” (Participant E)

“If I’m walking I can pick up the money. It’s God give me the money.” (Participant E)

“I saw if you don’t believe in God nothing will happen. Like now, I keep on asking God to change my mothers and fathers lives, and it’s actually happening right now. So I think God is answering my prayers.” (Participant C)

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, an overview of the themes that emerged from the data has been presented. Themes have been organized into thematic networks consisting of basic, organizing and global themes. Three global themes emerged from the constructions of participants’ experiences. These included the perception of the world as a hostile and unsafe place, existing as a function of the system, and spontaneous leaps. Each of the global themes constituted organizing themes, which were developed from basic themes. In the next chapter, the global themes presented in this chapter will be expanded on in an attempt to make sense of participants’ narratives in the context of child sex trafficking.

Chapter 6

The Grand Finale: Making Meaning of the Research Findings

6.1. Introduction

In Chapter 5, the results of the study were presented. The data from interviews that depict the research findings are interpreted and analysed in this chapter. The data from the interviews is analysed in relation to the theoretical/conceptual lens and literature review presented in Chapters 3 and 2 respectively. This means that the ecological context of the participants is fundamentally reemphasized during the process of making meaning out of research findings. Before integrating the essence of the results, the global themes are considered in more detail.

6.2. Making meaning: an exploration of global themes

In order to extract meaning from the global themes reviewed in Chapter 5, a discussion of the three global themes that emerged will follow.

6.2.1 Global Theme 1: Perception of the World as a Hostile and Unsafe Place, Resulting in Disconnection From Others

Within the constructions of participants' experiences, we find a tendency to define interpersonal relationships by means of distance with others. However, if we consider the broader picture inherent in the stories of participants, we see this tendency emerging from learned patterns of behaviour that ultimately stem from interactions with the family system. In other words, the girl child's interactions with her family of origin before she was trafficked spills over into her current interactions with others. This points to Auerswald's (1985) notion of ecological event shapes in

time space. Participants describe their interactions with others in the here-and-now in terms of the interpersonal disconnection they experience. However, this is implicitly linked to previous aspects of their ecological context. In other words, their previous ecological context has contributed to the current definition of the event shape. This has occurred within a particular relational space and over a period of time. Ultimately, the various elements of their ecology serves to define the current event-shape, or how they construct their experience in the here-and-now. In the family system, girls lived in a relational vacuum, as they were unable to form safe and trusting relationships with other family members. From this context they learn to construct the world as an unsafe and hostile place. As a means of self-preservation, they create emotional distance in interpersonal relationships, which too are constructed as unsafe. Underpinning the tendency to disconnect from others seems to be a construction of the world as a hostile place and others as untrustworthy. In a hostile and unsafe world, girls tend to create distance in interpersonal relationships as a way of protecting themselves from the harm that might befall them in close interpersonal relationship.

Despite the tendency to define relationships in terms of interpersonal distance, girls paradoxically showed a desire for belonging in interpersonal relationships. While this may appear to be a contradiction, it perhaps points to the underlying internal conflicts that girls showed between wanting closeness in interpersonal relationships but struggling to attain it. This is directly linked to the tendency of girls to cut themselves off from their own emotional needs. They desire belonging, but because of their tendency toward self-preservation, they avoid trusting others enough to create a close relationship. Rather, they deny their own emotions and put on a façade, thus keeping relationships as a surface level. At the same time, they

ensure that they meet the needs of others in interpersonal relationships, as this is how they learn to gain acceptance and belonging. Andolfi et al. (1983) understands this in terms of existing as a function of the system.

6.2.2 Global Theme 2: Existing as a Function of the Family System

Andolfi et al. (1983) refer to the process of differentiation in the family system in terms of separation and belonging. While separation and belonging can be seen to exist on a continuum, many participants seemed to be closer to the side of belonging, and were willing to sacrifice separation to attain it. What we see from the results is that according to the rules of the game in the family system, girls were not allowed to differentiate if they wanted to belong (Andolfi et al., 1983). If we recall Andolfi et al.'s (1983) theory as outlined in Chapter 3, this phenomenon can be explained as follows. When the family context does not tolerate individual autonomy, the child learns to sacrifice her own needs for the sake of the family system. What she gains out of this is belonging. In order to belong in the family, the child must exist only with the function of serving the family's needs, and she may not develop any autonomy. If we expand on this idea, we might consider what happens to an individual when a dysfunctional context is created by the family system. When the family system is striving for survival in the face of poverty and deprivation, and parents have not had their own emotional needs met, it becomes difficult for them to meet the emotional needs of their children. Children soon learn not to be an extra burden to the family. Rather, they must fulfil a function if they are to belong. They learn to put aside their own emotions and eventually to bury them deep inside. Soon they find a role to fill that serves the interest of the family and allows them to belong, but they are never allowed to express their own needs. Instead of the healthy process

of differentiation, participants seem to develop an internal conflict and behave accordingly.

From the results in the previous chapter, it is evident that participants learned to sacrifice themselves and deny their own needs for the sake of the needs of other family members. If they could meet the needs of other family members, they might gain the belonging and acceptance they seek. Every other need becomes secondary to this pursuit; sacrificing the self in order to satisfy others, thus gaining acceptance. Andolfi et al. (1983) says that they exist only as a function of the family system, and not as an individual with individual needs. Later on, it becomes evident that girls learn to exist as a function of all relationships. Their function is to sacrifice themselves and to mask their own emotions in order that they may fill the function others need them to fill. When they sacrifice their own needs, what they gain is belonging, but at the expense of separation and differentiation. They learn to meet the needs of others, but they never learn to acknowledge their own needs. We see this in the ability of participants to sacrifice themselves, as well as in the underlying conflicts implicit in their narratives. Paradoxically, while participants desire belonging, they tend to create distance in interpersonal relationships. This may be a by-product of the internal conflicts and incongruence they have learned. While they make every effort to deny their own needs and emotions, their true emotions inevitably arise in interpersonal relationships through means such as hostility toward others. In addition, the fact that they exist only as a function means that relationships with others lack an element of authenticity, and remain shallow and disconnected.

A closer look at this theme reveals that girls seem to split their world into two parts in order to deal with the conflict they experience. This split seems to entail a moral world versus the internal world. On the inside many participants express feelings of hatred toward others, yet they disqualify this by the moral voice of God who tells them how they ought to behave. Some participants create a fantasy world for themselves as an escape. In this world evil is contained. In the real world God is available as a source of protection to them, but only on condition that they obey the moral voice instructing them on how to live. We might hypothesize that this splitting of good and evil is isomorphic to the ecological context in which they exist. On the one hand they are raised with a belief system that God wants all people to do good to others. Most of the time this belief system is rooted in the family system, as it is the parents who take girls to church and expose them to this religion. Yet despite being taught that one must do good to others, what they experience is contradictory to this message. Many of them are neglected and abused by their parents, thus predisposing them to being trafficked by others. They are told to be “good” yet what they experience is “evil”. The internal conflicts they develop are a response to the ambivalent contexts they live in. Perhaps the development of a fantasy world is a means of surviving the existence of evil. The fantasy world contains the evil and separates it from the real world, in which God exists as a hero to save them. This results in many girls pretending to be good, but at the same time holding emotions that they cannot show to the world. When they cut themselves off from their true emotions, it perpetuates the distance they create in interpersonal relationships. Once again the conflict emerges between the desire for belonging, yet the creation of separation. Their ecological contexts did not allow them to learn how to be vulnerable and create intimacy in relationships. Rather, it taught them how to preserve

themselves at all costs. It taught them how to separate themselves from their true emotions through various survival tactics. By serrating themselves from their own needs and desires, they come to exist only as a function of the system in which they exist. In other words, they exist only to fulfil the needs of others in relationships. This is the only way they have learned to gain acceptance. As long as they exist as a function, they cannot differentiate, and so the cycle perpetuates itself.

In the face of the immense challenges girls described, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships, they simultaneously displayed an ability to overcome. What they described are factors that acted as a type of buffer against their challenges. They appeared to have moments where they would describe points of distinct growth. Hoffman (1981) explains this as a type of “spontaneous leap”.

6.2.3 Global Theme 3: Spontaneous Leaps and Agency

Despite the immense difficulties participants experienced in the aftermath of being trafficked, a fundamental difference seemed to emerge in the ability of individual participants to cope with their experiences. Some participants were able to make spontaneous leaps and to overcome some of the challenges they faced, while other participants did not show the same ability. Some participants showed the ability to reflect on their past experiences and what they had learned from them. These participants showed a strong desire to overcome their struggles, and were able to take active steps toward this goal. They were able to take responsibility for their own lives, showing a sense of agency. They were able to overcome their tendency to disconnect from interpersonal relationships and were able to take the risk of being vulnerable with others. In doing so, they were able to create a meaningful interpersonal

connection with another person. When they were able to do so, girls made what Hoffman (1981) refers to as spontaneous leaps. These girls did not see themselves as victims of injustice. Rather, they were able to transcend the experience of injustice and were able to make a decision to overcome. When the desire to overcome their challenges was present and they were able to connect with others, they described feeling relieved, even if just for a moment. Essentially, the group of participants was split into two subgroups; those who made spontaneous leaps and those who did not. A deeper exploration of the differences between these two groups reveals a simple yet profound finding.

6.3. Main Finding

The global themes discussed above can all be seen as intertwined. A closer look at the results reveals a tension in how differentiation happens for different participants and the capacity for spontaneous leaps. While all of them showed elements of the global themes, i.e. the perception of the world as a hostile and unsafe place, resulting in disconnection from others, existing as a function of the family system, and spontaneous leaps and agency, the extent to which these elements exist varies significantly. That is, all participants experienced the world as a hostile place and showed the tendency to disconnect from others. However, participants A, B and C displayed agency and were able to reflect on this tendency as something that occurred in the past and something they were overcoming. Participants D and E did not share such insight. In addition, all participants described their desire for belonging at the expense of separation, or how they existed only as a function of interpersonal relationships. However, the stories of some participants included the ability to start to develop a sense of autonomy and to differentiate while still maintaining the sense of

belonging. Similarly, all participants described some form of a spontaneous leap in which they had grown. However, some participants showed the ability to make spontaneous leaps that they described as a significant turning point in their lives. Others did not describe the same experience, and remained stuck in the injustice of their experiences and the isolation they created for themselves. For ease of reference, these tensions are categorized into two distinct groups in terms of all of the global themes. The categories are displayed in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1.

The emergence of tension around spontaneous leaps

Global themes	Group 1 (Participants A, B, and C)	Group 2 (Participants D and E)
Perception of the world as a hostile and unsafe place, resulting in disconnection from others	Showed a tendency to disconnect from others	Showed a tendency to disconnect from others, but were able to overcome this and create meaningful connections
Existing as a function of the system	Existed as a function of interpersonal relationship; gained belonging at the expense of differentiation	Existed as a function of interpersonal relationships, but were later able to differentiate while still belonging
Spontaneous leaps and agency	Showed a limited desire to overcome. Connection created with God a source of strength, but served to perpetuate their disconnection from others and their inability to differentiate. Saw themselves as victims and showed little sense of agency.	Showed a strong desire to overcome, and were able to create meaningful connections despite their fear of vulnerability. These connections became the turning point, and they started coping better with their experiences. Saw themselves as having agency and were able to make empower choices to change their behaviour.

With the evidence of the difference between the two groups of participants, we must naturally ask what accounts for the differences between one group and the other. In order to do so, let us consider the ecological context that shapes the ecological event-shape in time/space (Auerswald, 1985). In other words, we are interested in understanding how differences in the individual's story might be accounted for by a difference in the individual's ecological context. An exploration of the ecological context will assist in providing a clearer understanding.

6.3.1 Integration of Findings: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Context

Inherent of each of the participants' stories we see a common thread pointing to the influence of the relational domain. Many of the themes that emerged relate to interpersonal challenges, and the understanding of the ecological event shape in time space draws our attention to the influence of the ecology. Participants inherently construct the ecological context as they tell their stories. That is, we cannot claim to understand their ecological context outside of what they have told us. When we consider how we might use the stories of participants to construct a picture of the ecological context, we are drawn to a significant observation. The initial observation of the results as laid out in Chapter 5 is that many of the basic, organizing and global themes pertain to the interpersonal arena, and not necessarily to the experience of being trafficked. This is because when we asked them about their experiences of being trafficked, they told us about their families. They told us about difficult relationships they had encountered in their families before they were trafficked, and they told us about challenges they were experiencing in interpersonal relationships after being trafficked. As such, the global themes that emerge from the results punctuate at the level of the relational arena. More specifically, the influence of the

family system takes central stage. However, the family system cannot be considered as an isolated entity. Rather, the family system must be considered as a family-system-in-context. This warrants an exploration of the ecological context that contains the family system. The broader ecological influences have a significant influence on the family system, and as such have an indirect but vital influence on the individual girl child who is trafficked. Let us consider the various levels of the ecological context, as displayed in Figure 6.1 below.

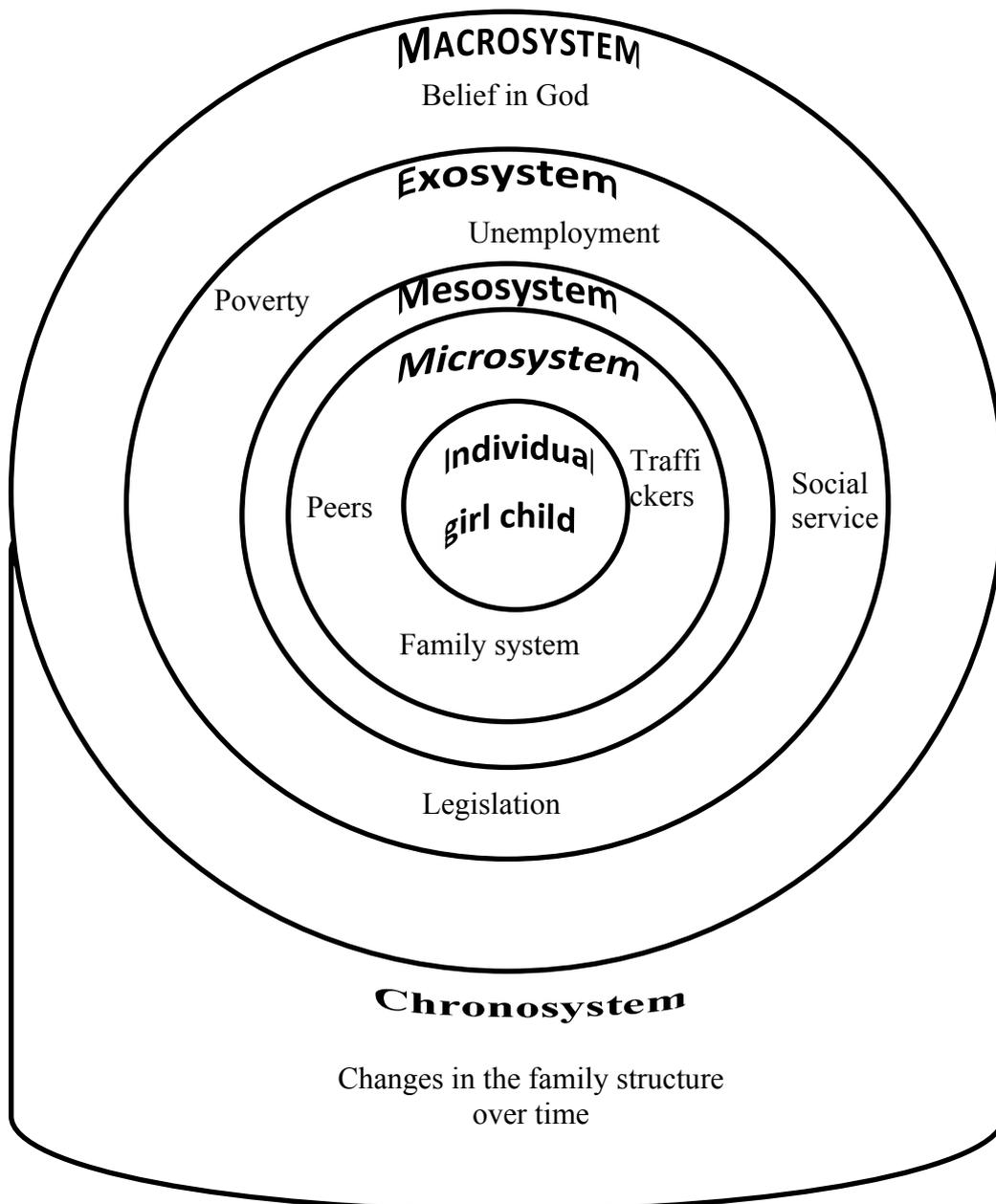


Figure 6.1.

Ecological Contexts that Influence the Psychological Vulnerability of Girl Children who are Trafficked

On the level of the exosystem, we see a common theme of poverty and a lack of employment in parents. In the findings on this study, we see the secondary influence of poverty on children who are neglected as a result. It is this neglect that makes many of them vulnerable to being trafficked by outsiders. We see many stressors for the family, from alcohol abuse to domestic violence, which perpetuates the vulnerability of girl children. Parents leave children at home to fend for themselves. They fail to meet the need for love and belonging of their children, thus making them vulnerable to finding it from traffickers who offer it under false pretence.

In the mesosystem we see how these stressors impact on the family system as the family interacts with the larger environment. In turn, parents are struggling for survival, and are unavailable to play the role of parents adequately. This sees children learning to exist as a function and suppress their own needs. This makes it difficult for them to create a sense of closeness in interpersonal relationships. They learn that they world is hostile and people are untrustworthy, and as a result they isolate themselves even further. Without the ability to draw on social support structures, the ability of girls to overcome their struggles is significantly impaired.

At the level of the macrosystem we see that belief systems such as the belief in God acted as a source of support for participants. We see the significance of the resources available to participants and how the access to resources assisted some of them with coping. God is viewed as a hero that protects them and looks out for them. From this, they gain a sense of belonging in a world in which they are outcasts.

On the chronosystem we see the influence of legislation and the shortfalls thereof as outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2. Legislative measures fail to protect these girls from being trafficked. More importantly, we see that changes in the family structure over time caused distress for participants. This is directly linked with the microsystem and the influence of the family system.

If we focus on the level of the microsystem, we see the most significant difference between the two groups emerge. While there are many ecological factors to consider in the stories of participants, what emerges is the influence of the family system on how girl children construct an ecological event shape (Auerswald, 1987) in the here-and-now after being trafficked.

6.3.2 Accounting for the Difference in the Two Groups

With the understanding of the ecological context in which participants' exist, we are now in a position to understand the difference found between the two groups. What emerges from the findings is that the individual differences observed can be attributed to a difference in the ecological context. If we listen a little deeper still to the stories of participants, we hear a very subtle yet significant difference. Those participants who never had a significant other as a support structure in their family context seemed to fall into Group 1. They developed coping strategies described above, such as disconnecting from others and existing only as a function of the system. These participants also seemed to develop a fantasy world in which to exist, perhaps as an escape from the harsh reality of the real world. On the other hand, participants who experienced a supportive family member in their family system developed the same internal conflicts as other participants, but were later able to

overcome these and develop more adequate coping strategies. These participants described their ecological context as one in which they learned to create disconnection in relationships in the context of the family system, but in the context of one relationship that introduced some difference, they were able to redefine relationships in terms of closeness rather than distance. In addition, these participants described their ecological context as one in which they were required to exist as a function; to belong at the expense of separation or differentiation. However, they also described a relationship with one person in which they were allowed to be who they wanted to be, without having to fulfil a function.

It might be hypothesized that such a relationship in the ecological context served to prepare the grounds for the development of agency. This correlated with these same participants showing a sense of agency and making significant spontaneous leaps after being trafficked. They were able to create a close interpersonal connection with at least one other person. This connection in turn, became a significant source of support in the venture to overcome the challenges they faced and to move forward. The difference between the two groups, therefore, is ultimately attributed to the presence of one person in the individual's family system with whom they were able to form an authentic connection. This later translated into the ability to form authentic connections with others, which enabled them to overcome many of their challenges.

If we hypothesize about this finding from a theoretical perspective, we see that the conditions created by the ecological context serve to prepare the grounds for participants to cope with stressors later on. According to Hoffman's (1981) theory of

spontaneous leaps and the process by which these occur, girls who were able to make a spontaneous leap may have already begun expanding their role repertoire. In the context of the relationship with a supportive family member, they seem to have been empowered to make independent and empowering choices. Moreover, they seemed to be able to learn how to create a connection with another person, and the feedback they received was that although the world may be seen as a hostile place, it is possible to create a safe and trusting relationship with another person. The feedback they received when they risked being vulnerable with this person was that an interpersonal relationship not only has the potential to be safe, but it can also be an immense source of strength and support. These girls were then able to show agency when they made the decision to overcome their tendency to isolate themselves from others and to form a connection with another person. It was this ability that seemed to make the most significant difference in the ability of girls to overcome and to make spontaneous leaps.

6.4. Putting the Findings into Perspective: Fitting the Findings with Existing Literature

While the findings of this study are significant, viewing them in isolation would sketch an incomplete picture. Rather, moving toward an integrated understanding of the ecological context in which girl children are made vulnerable requires a consideration of the research findings in terms of previous research. A review of the existing literature in Chapter 2 reveals that girl children are made vulnerable to sex trafficking through a particular context. However, this study serves to expand our view of the term vulnerability. Previous studies have focused

exclusively on the physical component of girl children's vulnerability, with little regard for the psychological aspects of their vulnerability.

6.4.1 Expanding our Understanding of Vulnerability

While the existing literature explores the factors that make girl children physically vulnerable to being trafficked within the South African context, the results of this study point to factors that make them psychologically vulnerable once they are trafficked. Rather than seeing these two aspects as separate, we suggest that it is equally important to have an understanding of both. It is not sufficient to understand the context that makes girls physically vulnerable to being trafficked alone. Nor is it sufficient to understand what perpetuates their psychological vulnerability once they are trafficked. In order to gain a holistic understanding of human trafficking, we must understand how the ecological context makes girl children vulnerable on a physical, psychological and emotional level. We must understand the full impact of the ecological context before girls are trafficked, while they are trafficked, as well as after they are trafficked if they are fortunate enough to get out. Let us consider the ecological context of girl children who are trafficked both from the perspective of previous studies as well as from the perspective of this study.

A picture of the ecological factors explored by previous studies that make girl children vulnerable to child sex trafficking is depicted in Figure 6.2 below.

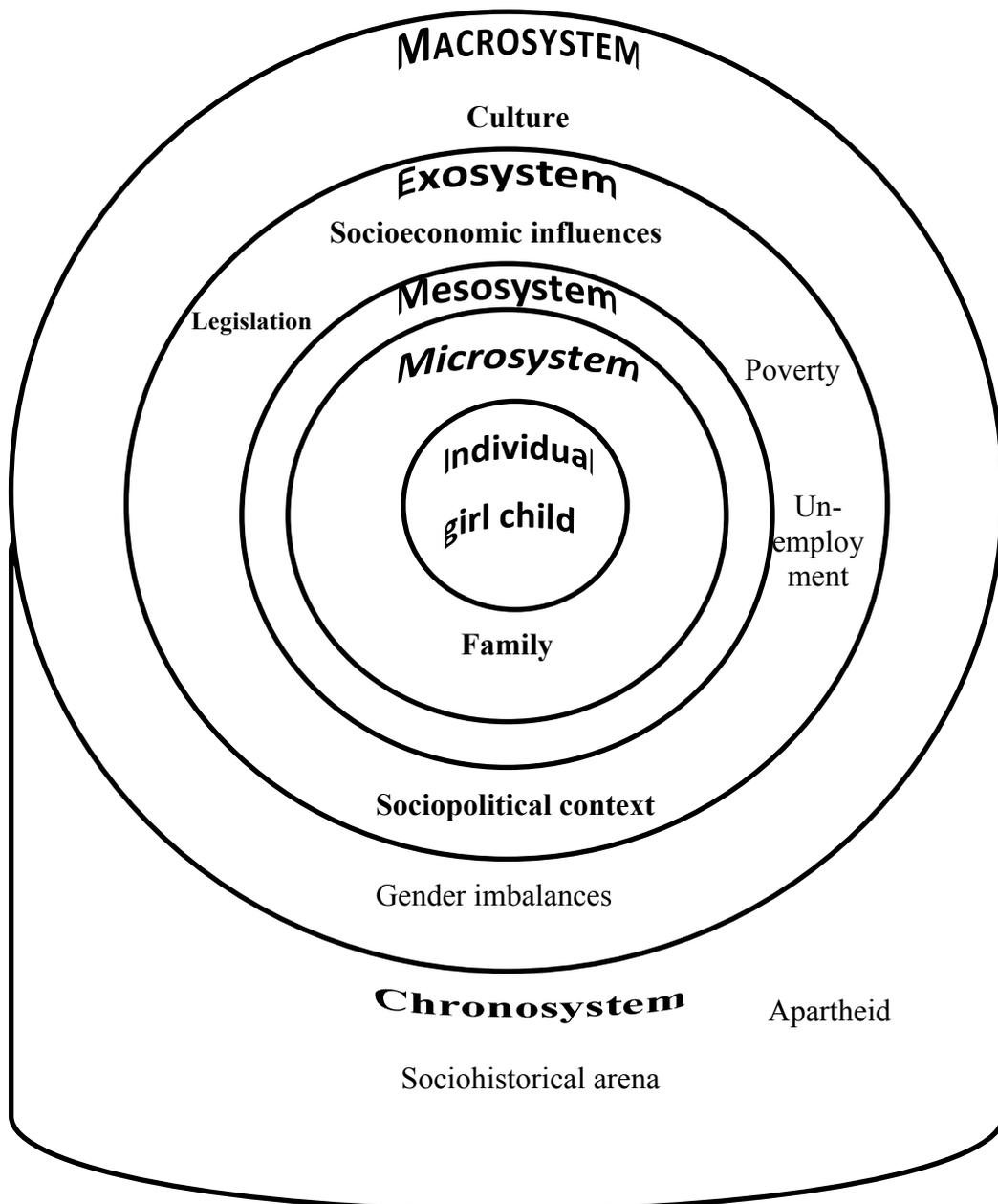


Figure 6.2.

Ecological contexts that make girl children physically vulnerable to being trafficked

If we compare this figure with Figure 6.1, what emerges is that many of the ecological factors that make girl children physically vulnerable overlap with factors that make them psychologically vulnerable.

6.5. Completing the Picture: Expanding our Understanding of Ecological Factors that Make Girl Children Vulnerable

Previous research serves to document the ecological context that makes girl children physically vulnerable to being trafficked. What the literature suggests is that all of the levels of the ecological context play a role. However, most studies in South Africa and abroad have had the primary goal of recommending legislative guidelines. In addition, poverty has been attributed as the leading contributor to human trafficking. As such, we see that while these studies have considered a broad range of ecological influences, they have punctuated primarily at the macro- and exosystems. In other words, the implicit belief has been that if we can intervene at the level of legislation and of poverty, we will significantly reduce the physical vulnerability of girl children to human trafficking.

If we consider the findings of this study, what emerges is a similar picture to the one sketched in previous studies. All of the levels of the ecological context contribute to the psychological vulnerability of girl children who are trafficked. However, given the findings of this study, it can be argued that it is the influence of the family system that has the most significant impact on the girl child in terms of her psychological vulnerability. All other levels of the ecological context are seen as having a secondary and indirect influence on the girl child through their influence on the family system. As such, for understanding the ecological factors that perpetuate

the psychological vulnerability of girl children who are trafficked, we punctuate primarily at the level of the microsystem. Specifically, the family system is seen as a central context in perpetuating the psychological vulnerability of girl children who are trafficked. An integrated perspective of the ecological context that makes girls both physical and psychologically vulnerable are seen in Figure 6.3.

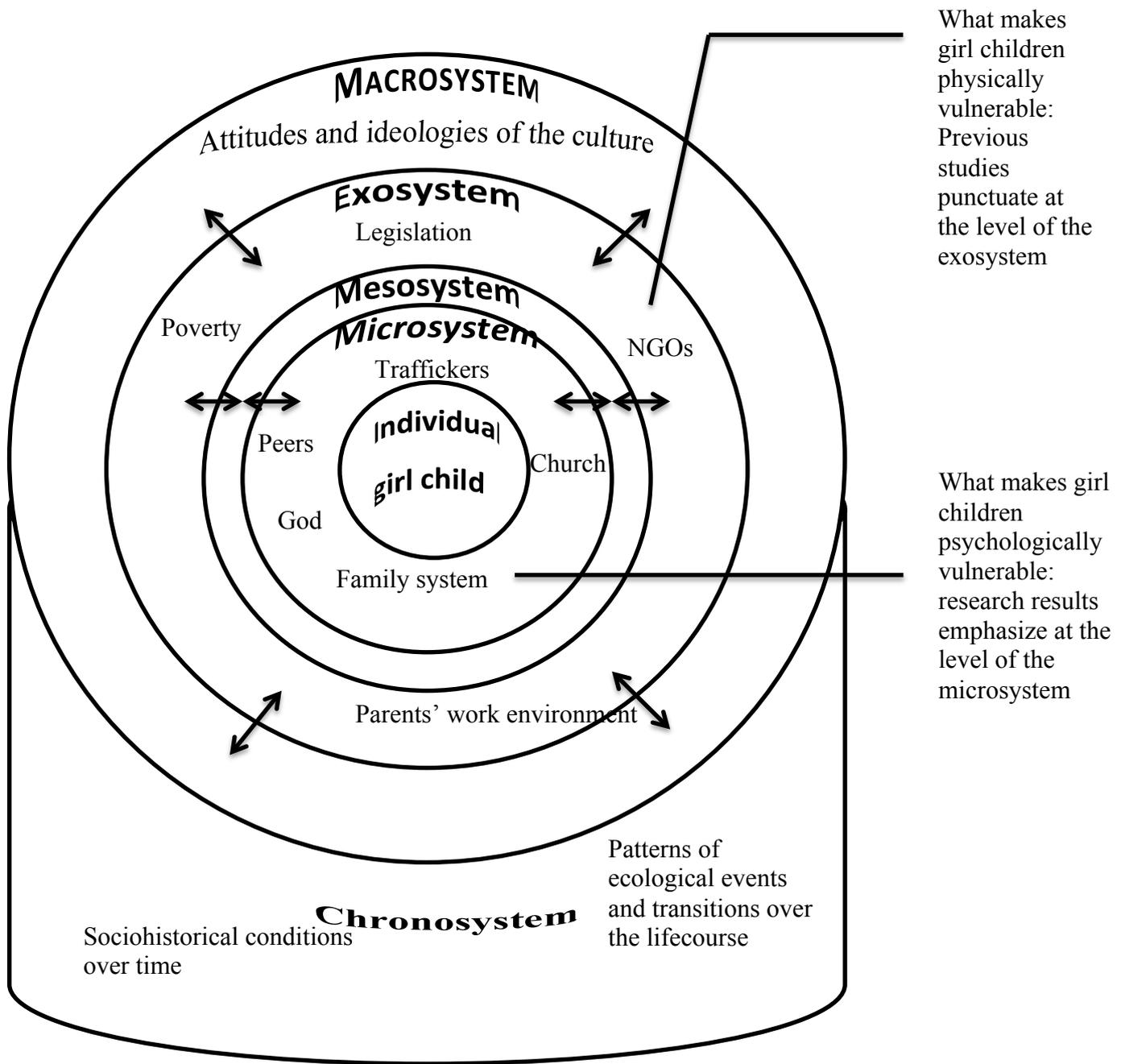


Figure 6.3.

Ecological Contexts that Make Girls Physically and Psychologically Vulnerable

The above figure provides an integrated perspective. In order to understand the vulnerability of girl children to human trafficking, it is necessary to understand that vulnerability comprises a physical as well as a psychological aspect. What emerges from Figure 6.1 is that many of the ecological factors that make girl children physically vulnerable overlap with the ecological factors that make them psychologically vulnerable.

6.6. Conclusion

It is clear that human trafficking is not a simple practice. Rather, its complexity runs deep, and there are various levels at which we can punctuate. While legislation in South Africa has been implemented, we cannot attempt to combat human trafficking by punctuating an intervention at only one level. There are multiple layers embedded in the fabric of our society that culminate to create a context for human trafficking, all of which are intertwined with one another. Understanding the fullness of the complexity of such factors is beyond the scope of this study. However, when considering the results of this study within the context of previous research, what emerges is a need for various role players to work together in the fight against human trafficking. It is not sufficient for interventions to be punctuated at the level of legislation or poverty, nor is it sufficient to only punctuate at the level of the family. Rather, an attempt to reduce the physical and psychological vulnerability of girl children calls for an integrated intervention that considers various levels of the ecological context.

Chapter 7

Closing the Curtain: Considering the Implications of Findings and Making Recommendations

7.1. Summary

Across the globe, the united goal of all research has ultimately been to raise awareness of the trafficking trade. This study has joined that aim, and has expanded the body of existing knowledge of child sex trafficking. Chapter 6 saw this research reach a crescendo as the findings of the study were interpreted through the theoretical lens constructed in Chapter 3. Moreover, the results were interpreted in the context of previous research findings. What emerged from the research findings is that ultimately it is the family system that contributes to the psychological vulnerability of girl children. This finding is evidence enough that while previous studies have aimed primarily at recommending legislative guidelines, this is an inadequate intervention in itself. Rather, Chapter 6 served to expand our understanding of the vulnerability of girl children to include both a physical aspect as well as a psychological aspect. While the theoretical implications of the findings were discussed in Chapter 6, practical implications of the findings are presented in this chapter along with conclusions reached. Furthermore, limitations of the current study are presented and recommendations for further research made.

Within the South African literature, there is an implicit thread that points to the fact that girl children in particular are made vulnerable to sex trafficking by a particular ecological context. This study has served to explore the ecological context and to expand our understanding of the factors that make girl children vulnerable to child sex trafficking. This study made a call for exploring the psychological and emotional

world of girls who have survived sex trafficking. A grounded theoretical approach revealed that disconnection and fragmentation of the family system provide the conditions that perpetuate the psychological vulnerability of girl children. The implications of these findings are that changing legislation in terms of human trafficking is necessary but perhaps insufficient to combat the trade. Rather, there are various role players with a part to play, and various levels at which to pitch an intervention. While the agenda of many researchers to suggest legislative guidelines with the aim of preventing human trafficking continues, this study serves to sound the call to develop intervention strategies at the level of the family and of the community. Such interventions may see families coping better with ecological stressors, thus enabling them to provide some form of support and interpersonal connection to children. According to the findings of this study, creating a context in which such interpersonal connections are enabled would significantly reduce the psychological and emotional vulnerability of girl children who are at risk of being trafficked.

One of the strengths of this study relates to the research design. A qualitative framework allowed participants to construct their experiences without any confinements. Within the framework, Grounded theory was used as a method due to the fact that to our knowledge, this topic has not been researched before. As such, the initial research question and aims of the study were intentionally broad. Grounded theory allowed for the research process to be directed by the findings of the data as they emerged. As such, we see that from the initially broad research question of how girl children construct their experiences of being trafficked, the importance of understanding the psychological aspects of girls' vulnerability was able to emerge. It further allowed for the emphasis on the ecological context to emerge. It should be

noted that given the grounded theory design of this research, the process was inductive and iterative. Rather than following a logical sequence, the process required that we move back and forth. In other words, once research findings started to emerge, we were required to go back and reconsider obvious literature and the theoretical lens through which we viewed the results. The development of the theoretical lens and the emphasis on the ecological context was ultimately shaped by the results of the study. It was the iterative process of grounded theory that allowed for this process to unfold as such. Should we have followed a logical sequence, a theoretical lens may have been selected based on preconceived ideas rather than be directed by the research findings. This process has ultimately led to a richer and more comprehensive understanding and integration of the results with previous literature and with the theoretical framework. We therefore posit that grounded theory was an adequate choice for guiding this study, and it ultimately impacted on how the parameters in which results could emerge were drawn.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study pertain to the limited sampling and generalizability of the study as well as the limitations of existing literature within the South African context with which to compare findings.

A further issue that arises is the extent to which participants were able to be open and honest about their experiences. The ability of participants to be honest about their experiences inevitably impacts on the validity of the study. Not only so, but we further had to question the impact of such interviews on participants from an ethical perspective. Girl children who had been made so vulnerable and experienced severe

trauma were at high risk of becoming re-traumatized through interviews. The nature of the topic is extremely sensitive, and much caution had to be taken to avoid probing participants on a level that would become harmful.

Research in the field of human trafficking to date has largely been restricted due to the difficulty in gaining access to participants. Moreover, once researchers are able to gain access, many of the participants are still under the influence of traffickers and therefore fearful of speaking out about their experiences (Molo Songololo, 2000a). The opportunity to access participants for the purpose of this study was presented to us through a practical placement during Master's training. However, due to the sensitive nature of the trade and the vulnerability of girl children, negotiating entry was a challenging process. Gatekeepers were initially reluctant to allow us entry into the system, and this had to be carefully negotiated. Moreover, once access to participants was gained, the sensitive nature of what they had experienced made trust a challenging issue to negotiate. Girls were reluctant to trust us and to talk openly about their experiences. These issues made conducting research within the environment particularly challenging, as we were required to negotiate numerous ethical challenges while simultaneously gaining the trust of participants and keeping gatekeepers satisfied.

7.2.1 Theoretical and Methodological Limitations

The topic of child sex trafficking can be viewed from numerous conceptual frameworks. It might be argued that child sex trafficking is a moral issue, and therefore issues of morality are integral to a discussion on the topic. However, given the choice of the theoretical framework within this study, issues of morality were

excluded, the grounded theory method that guided this study allowed the conceptual framework to develop "from the ground up", and as such, morality was excluded. Rather, emphasis was primarily placed on the ecological context in which participants exist.

While the strengths of this study largely lie in the research design and methods, the limitations are also found in the research design. A qualitative framework emphasizes the uniqueness of participants' lived experiences. While this serves to generate an understanding of how they construct their experiences, it may not necessarily be generalizable to a broader population. In addition, the sample of participants was limited in this study. Gaining access to girl children who have been trafficked has been highlighted as a major challenge in research on human trafficking. This is due to the danger associated with the field, and the reluctance of girl children to talk to researchers if they are accessed. For the purpose of this study we were able to gain access to girl children who had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation through a safe house, the number of girls who fit our inclusion criteria was limited, thus limiting the number of participants to five. The implication of this is that findings may not necessarily be generalizable to other populations as is ideal.

Because convenient sampling was used and all participants were of African decent, results of the study cannot necessarily be generalized to other countries in which contextual and cultural circumstances of child sex trafficking may differ. However, it may be argued that regardless of racial and cultural origin as well as circumstances surrounding trafficking, victims may still share some commonalities in their experiences. Further research is needed to determine exactly how cultural and ethnic

backgrounds influence the way girls construct their experiences of sex afflicting and the consequent effects on their psychological vulnerability.

7.3 Looking Toward the Future: Recommendations for Future Research

Given the insights gained from this study, a number of recommendations for future research emerge. In order to continue developing the existing knowledge of human trafficking, a number of research directions may be taken.

Firstly, it is recommended that increased multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral collaboration be implemented. That is, improved communication networks between policy makers. The collaboration of NGOs who provide shelter, academic institutions, and health care providers would serve to facilitate a more integrated program for adequately meeting the needs of girl children who have been trafficked, academic institutions, for example, could make places of shelter part of their community engagement projects, so as to provide health care services to girls who have been trafficked.

Furthermore, in light of the theoretical limitations of this study, it is recommended that future research on child sex trafficking be explored from the perspective of moral development.

It is further recommended that studies include boy children in their participant sample. Most of the research to date has been conducted on girl children. This is largely due to the difficulty in gaining access to participants. It is also recommended that research explore how girl children who have been sex trafficked in different

countries construct their experiences, and whether differences in the ecological context lead to a difference in findings.

The findings of this study call for interventions that are aimed at the level of the family. While governments within South Africa and abroad are working toward implementing more adequate legislative measures against trafficking, interventions at the level of the family and community have been given inadequate attention; the results of this study sound a call for communities to unite in the support of families. Where certain cultural factors were shown to perpetuate the vulnerability of girl children to trafficking in Chapter 2, cultural practices such as *Ubuntu* can see the uniting of communities in support of families that are struggling to cope.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the research conducted by Dianne Everitt, a Masters student in Clinical Psychology at the University of South Africa. The title of the study is “Locked in Transit: Girls Inside the Gates of Child Sex Trafficking in South Africa”.

I acknowledge that I have been informed that

- Participation is voluntary and without compensation.
- Information obtained during interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher and quotes from the transcripts may be used in the final research report
- My personal particulars will remain confidential and my name will not be used in the final research report
- All matters discussed during the interviews will remain strictly confidential between the researcher, myself, and the researcher’s supervisor
- I am under no obligation to participate in this research, and that if, at any time, I decide to withdraw from the study I am at liberty to do so
- The final research report will be made available to public access
- If at any point during the research process I feel uncomfortable, I may inform the researcher of my discomfort and may discontinue the interview

Signed

Date

