

# **Criminality and Psychotherapy in Forensic Mental Health**

A hermeneutic exploration of the literature around the  
metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender

*(Meeting the monster)*

**OLAKUNLE AJAYI**

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## **Abstract**

Violence is ubiquitous and widely acknowledged as part of the human experience. It is present at a global level with wars and genocide, but it is also present at a more personal level in the form of violent criminality such as murders and sexual violence. Violence captures our attention in a way few things do despite the horror, terror, and tragedy it brings with it. As a society, when we hear of horrible acts of violence, it can evoke intense reactions and can lead us to view these violent perpetrators as monsters.

Using a hermeneutic methodology and a hermeneutic literature review method, this study explored a wide range of literature around the metaphor monster. The purpose of the inquiry was to find out what the literature reveals about this metaphor in relation to the violent offender within the context of psychotherapy and the forensic arena, and how this could help increase our understandings as well as enhance psychotherapy practice with this population.

The findings from this study revealed the complexity of the human and monster construct. The findings also revealed manifestations of the monster within us, society, and its structures. It was proposed that there is a monster within us which as a society we attempt to negate from our awareness by projecting our badness and unacceptable parts onto the violent offender. Furthermore, the findings pointed to the idea that the metaphor monster is symbolic for the dehumanisation of the violent offender. That the conscious or unconscious perception of violent offenders as monsters can influence how we relate to them

This study invites us to locate our positioning as it finds a relational model in the metaphor monster. The study argues that the metaphor monster is a useful metaphor to understanding violent offenders and our relationship with them, and with ourselves in relation to them. It is my conclusion that although further research is needed to investigate the symbolic significance of the metaphor more extensively, this study provokes thought, challenges 'black and white' thinking, and contributes to the body of knowledge in the discipline of psychotherapy with regard to violent offenders.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements) nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O. Ajayi', is shown within a rectangular frame.

**Olakunle Ajayi**

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## Chapter Overview

In **Chapter 1**, I define the concept of crime and violence in the context of this study and introduce my research topic – *Criminality and psychotherapy in forensic mental health*. I outline four themes that collectively inspired my interest towards the research topic. The themes provide a contextual background for the study.

**Chapter 2** is a preliminary literature review. I begin with a brief history of psychotherapy in forensic mental health and psychotherapy treatment of violent offenders. Next, I set the stage for the research study, as I discuss ideas within the context of psychotherapy and the forensic sphere. Following this, I outline the aim of my research and my research question.

In **Chapter 3**, I identify my chosen paradigm. I put forward hermeneutic methodology as my research methodology and explain my rationale for its appropriateness for the study. This chapter also introduces the hermeneutic literature review method as my research method.

In **Chapter 4**, I present the findings of my research study by exploring the literature. The findings highlight key insights regarding my research question

In **Chapter 5**, I discuss the findings of my study, as I focus on three main themes. In this chapter I also discuss the implications of the findings for the discipline of psychotherapy, the strengths and limitations of the study, and ideas for further research. I conclude by offering my final thoughts of the study.

**Terminology:** In this study I have generally utilised the masculine noun ‘man’, and pronouns ‘he’ and ‘his’ in reference to human beings; male and female. Although I recognise the significance of words and consider them very important, I feel it would be very cumbersome, untidy and wordy to say “man or woman” or “he or she” or “his or her” each time.

# Chapter I

## Introduction

The concept of crime is far from simple; rather, it is a complex, conflict-ridden, and amorphous concept, one that can often generate intense and passionate debate (Reiner, 2016). To call an action a crime is to register disapproval, fear, condemnation, and judgement. From a legal perspective, crime is generally described as an infraction of, or violation of, criminal law and thus punishable by law (Reiner, 2016). On the other hand, a moral conception of crime argues about what should or should not be regarded as a crime. Although the legal based notion of crime and the moral based notion of crime may overlap to some degree, both are not equivalent (Reiner, 2016).

Part of the complexity regarding the concept of crime is in the notion that it encompasses both violent and non-violent crimes. The person who commits murder has committed a crime, and the person who avoided paying his tax has also committed a crime. In this study, however, the focus is on violent crime; thus the word *crime* and its various word-endings is used in the context of violent crimes (except where explicitly stated).

Violence is another phenomenon that is rather complicated and has generated confusion and debate in literature (Yakeley & Meloy, 2012; Zahn, Brownstein, Jackson & Boyne, 2015). How violence is explained or defined may vary from one person to another or from one society to another. Furthermore, what is considered by one person as violent may not necessarily match the legal definition of violence in his society, and vice versa.

This suggests that there is an element of subjectivity in how violence is defined. Yakeley and Meloy (2012) made the point that some authors do not clearly distinguish violence from aggression or anger or rage and other related terms. Zahn et al. (2015) contended that the definitions of violence in the literature often have the element of behaviour in common.

The behaviour literally or symbolically involves the threat of, or use of, force (Zahn et al. 2015). It is also worth noting that violence may differ in amount of force, type of injury, in terms of intent, whether or not it was consciously or unconsciously motivated, and whether or not it was an act of commission or omission (Benedek, 1993; Zahn et al. 2015).

Furthermore, Zahn et al. (2015) categorised two types of violence; predatory and moralistic. Predatory violence uses force in an acquisitive manner, while moralistic violence is the type of violence that is used as a form of social control (e.g. police, self-defence). Zahn et al. believed that given the complexity of the concept of violence, it may be futile to attempt to establish a general theory of violence.

Consequently, in this study, I adapted the definition of violence used by Yakeley and Meloy (2012). Violence is thus defined in the context of this study as a consciously or unconsciously motivated act that constitutes an attack on the body, where the actual body is breached, and physical and psychological injury/harm or ultimately death is inflicted upon another. The act often holds unconscious symbolic meaning, though the meaning may not be available to the mind of the violent person.

Taken from New Zealand's Crimes Act 1961, examples of violent crimes for the purpose of this study include: 'sexual violation' (rape and unlawful sexual connection) and 'homicide', that is, the killing of a human being by another person either directly or indirectly by any means whatsoever, this includes 'murder' and 'manslaughter'. From a legal perspective, an offender who is guilty of manslaughter is different from an offender guilty of murder. The difference here is intent. The one who is guilty of manslaughter was judged not to have malice aforethought (Blom-Cooper & Morris, 2004).

I also include 'kidnapping', 'aggravated robbery', as well as some assault offences; such as 'aggravated wounding or injury' and 'aggravated assault'. I am excluding 'common assault' and 'robbery', violence against animals, violence against property, among others, and discounting them for the purpose of this study<sup>1</sup>. It is from this understanding of violence we define and identify the violent offender.

The violent offender population is a diverse and complex group despite offenders having violence as a common feature, and this can have significant implications from a psychotherapy perspective. For example, Stein (2007) studied the experiences of individuals who committed violent offences whilst in a dissociative state. Alvarez (1995), Bateman and Fonagy (2000), and Taylor (2015) looked at violent offenders with personality disorders; e.g. psychopathic

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on violent crimes and their description from New Zealand jurisprudence see the Crimes Act 1961

personality, anti-social personality. Sohn (1995) looked at violent offenders with psychotic illness.

Cordess (1996) emphasised that those whose violence arose as a result of a psychotic experience should be distinguished from those whose actions do not stem from a psychotic experience but can be attributed to their personality. However, there are those who have psychosis and a personality disorder, which is referred to as dual diagnosis. Then, there are those offenders who may have committed violence in the context of substance use, for example alcohol (Rice & Harris, 1997), and those violent offenders who may have a personality disorder, psychotic illness, and a substance use problem.

Another area in which the complexity of the violent offender population is indicated, from a psychotherapy perspective, is in the kind of violent act committed by an offender. Davies (1997) for example looked at the psychotherapy treatment of rapists. Bailey and Aulich (1997), Taylor (1997a), and Zachary (1997) explored the treatment of murderers. There are also those offenders who murder only children – child murderers.

A further complexity emerges from the distinction between individuals who have a proclivity to violence and engage in it indiscriminately, versus those who may have inadvertently committed violent acts. I should also note that some authors have categorised violence into two different modes. From an attachment perspective, Meloy (1992) described two types of violence; *affective violence* (violence which is provoked and emotive) and *predatory violence* (violence which is pre-meditated and goal-orientated).

Glasser (1998) proposed *self-preservation violence* (triggered by danger) and *sado-masochistic violence* (sexualisation or libidinisation of violence). According to Glasser, these two types of violence are differentiated by noting the relationship to the object (victim); where in the case of the former, there is no personal significance to the victim other than the perceived dangerousness. Other dichotomies of violence include; *defensive* versus *malignant* (Fromm, 1973), *reactive* versus *predatory* (Catlett & Parr, 2011); *hot* versus *cold*, and *hostile* versus *instrumental* (Bushman & Anderson, 2001).

Rather than following an existing taxonomy in relation to violent offenders, this research uses the hermeneutic process to explore the literature around the metaphor of monster, with the purpose of increasing and expanding my understandings in the context of psychotherapy. This

process will be discussed more extensively in chapter three. I will now present my understanding with regard to how I came to my research topic, as I provide an account of my personal and professional journeys.

### **1.1. Beginnings**

Long before I began my research, I was drawn to the idea of developing my understanding around psychotherapy with people who have committed a violent crime(s), those described as *violent offenders*. I was not absolutely certain as to what I wanted to explore or understand better, nor did I fully understand my strong inclination towards it. Nevertheless, I was willing to engage with this interest and travel the journey. Broadly speaking, my research interest comes under the umbrella of *Criminality and psychotherapy in forensic mental health*. Forensic mental health is a term used to describe the interface between the law and the courts and mental health (Rogers & Soothill, 2012).

Furthermore, the term forensic mental health captures and reflects the multidisciplinary landscape of practice within forensic mental health services (Sullivan & Mullen, 2006). Forensic mental health services provide assessment, or assessment and treatment, to individuals who have been involved with the law or the courts. These individuals may be located in inpatient hospitals, the community, or prison facilities (Mullen, 2000; Rogers & Soothill, 2012).

### **1.2. The Past and the Present**

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past” (Faulkner, 1951, p. 92).

The above quote suggests that the past has a way of remaining in our present lives. Faulkner (1951) seemed to infer that our past never dies but continues to exist. Whether or not we forget our past, it is always there. Similarly, the theory of psychotherapy strongly subscribes to the notion that our present is driven by our past experiences whether or not we are aware of it. In essence, it is impossible to separate ourselves from our past. This research study, which is located in the field of psychotherapy and forensic mental health, was not conceptualised in a vacuum. It speaks to a multitude of experiences from my past, and my present. Essentially, it reflects my journey at a personal and professional level.

Reflecting on how this study was connected to my life’s journey was enlightening, but it was also painful because of some of the unpleasant feelings and memories that were evoked. There

are four main themes I consider significant and relevant to briefly write about to provide a context for my research study. The themes include: *inner childhood experience and my grandmother (maami)*; *spiritual journey and the Christian faith*; *journey into the world of psychotherapy*, and lastly, *journey into the world of forensic mental health*. I should note, however, that these themes are by no means exhaustive of my entire life journey which extends beyond the scope of this study.

#### **1.2.1. Inner childhood experience and my grandmother (maami)**

In my childhood, feeling isolated, feeling different, feeling like an 'other' were common experiences. My inner world was mostly one of despair and anxiety. There were many occasions when I felt lost and unloved, hoping that someone would find me. My late grandmother continuously found me, and I saw her love as unconditional. I called her 'maami', which literally means 'my mother' in *Yoruba* language. Indeed, she was motherly. She was empathic, consistent, reliable, and calm. She acted as a container (Bion, 1962), and provided the holding environment I needed (Winnicott, 1960). I grew to trust her and, whenever I felt lost, I knew she would find me. Many times, I have considered that my path in life would have been much different without her. It is my view that she saved me from a life that may have been filled with chaos and turmoil. My late grandmother modelled empathy, compassion, tolerance, and resilience; and, I must add, so did my mother, who had to carry the burden of solely supporting the family following the passing of my father.

#### **1.2.2. Spiritual journey and the Christian faith**

I was born into the Christian faith and during my childhood years my family and I attended several Christian denominations; Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, Pentecostal, amongst others. As a child I remember being compelled to pray and attend Sunday school, where I was taught the values of love, faith, obedience, healing, transformation, compassion, forgiveness, grace, and mercy; although I was also told conflicting stories of a jealous and punishing God from the Old Testament Bible.

As I reflected on this research topic, I was reminded of a biblical scripture where Jesus intervened in a situation that involved a woman who was about to be stoned for disobeying a law. Jesus stated: "he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.... neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more" (Book of John 8:7-11, King James Version). In this

scripture, Jesus, in preventing a horde of people from stoning a woman to death, prompted the horde to introspect. The woman had committed an act against the law (in those days) that was punishable. Inherent in this story are the themes of law, crime and punishment, but also the values of grace, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, empathy, and hope.

These values and others were supposed to guide my interactions. I was taught I was expected to be perfect like Jesus Christ, without any flaw. If I was hit on the right side of my cheek, I was not to retaliate, but to turn the other cheek. I was not to be angry nor was I to have bad thoughts. I found it impossible to achieve all these expectations. I did not turn the other cheek, I was angry when I felt provoked, I had bad thoughts, all of which was considered sinful and ungodly. Consequently, I was left with feelings of guilt, shame, badness, fear, and condemnation because of my inability to live up to the 'perfection' I thought was expected of me.

After years away from the Christian faith, I returned in my late teens, and began my own spiritual journey. This time, it was my choice to walk this Christian path. I reacquainted myself with the teachings and doctrines I was taught as a child; however, I now had the sense and capacity to question and be critical of them. This led to increased understanding and acceptance of who I was – with all of my flaws and imperfections.

### **1.2.3. Journey into the world of psychotherapy**

Over five years ago, I began the journey into the world of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychotherapy by enrolling into a training programme. For the purpose of this study, I will use the term 'psychotherapy'<sup>2</sup> to refer to psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychotherapy. Prior to joining the programme, I had little to no knowledge about psychotherapy. Through my journey I have been intrigued by the many theories concerning the human mind and human motivations and behaviour, proposed by prominent psychoanalysts such as, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Heinz Kohut, Wilfried Bion, Donald Winnicott, and others.

My psychotherapy training provided a different prism from which I could examine myself as well as my experiences. It provided a new way of looking at the world around me as well as a lens

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<sup>2</sup> Some authors suggest that there is a difference between psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychotherapy (Symington, 1996). However, for the purpose of this study, the word psychotherapy denotes both psychoanalytic approaches and psychodynamic psychotherapy. The three terms are used interchangeably in the course of this study, so as to maintain the integrity and the nuance of the literature used. It should be noted that other forms of therapy, such as cognitive behaviour therapies (CBT), dialectic behaviour therapy (DBT), and counselling etc., are not regarded as psychotherapy in this study.

from which I could examine others in relation to myself, and vice versa. I was no longer solely captivated by the external world but became more interested in my inner world and that of others. It became more apparent that what was seen on the outside, was not necessarily a reflection of what was on the inside. I could no longer ignore the subjectivity and relativity of the human experience.

The journey into the world of psychotherapy also wrought a curiosity in me to make meaning of not only conscious processes, but also unconscious processes and motivations. It led me to understand that at times there is something 'beneath the surface', that there is something 'hidden', something 'covered'. Most significantly, psychotherapy revealed the potent transferential and transformational power of relationships, for example, the therapeutic relationship between a therapist and a client. I came to understand that the relationship between the therapist and the client, was the foundation for psychotherapeutic engagement, and without it psychotherapy will be ineffective.

#### **1.2.4. Journey into the world of forensic mental health**

My journey into the world of forensic mental health began over a decade ago as a mental health nurse in a forensic hospital. My early experience of working in a forensic hospital was significant as it was there I felt a strong desire and connection to the offender population. It was a connection I could not shake off. In the years I have practised as a mental health nurse and a psychotherapist across a variety of forensic settings (inpatient, community, and prison), I have observed much closer the lived experience of violent offenders.

I have also had opportunities to listen to their stories and experiences, and read accounts of their violent crimes and acts. Their childhood narratives were often filled with repeated emotional, psychological, physical and sexual abuse and violence, which evoked within me, feelings of sadness, empathy, and compassion. On the other hand, feelings of revulsion, fear, and anger were evoked in me when I listened to the horrific violence some of these individuals inflicted on their victims.

Some authors have argued that perpetrators are also victims and should be seen as such, a reality that is often ignored when we view violent offenders (Cordess, 1996; Motz, 2008). This notion of the violent offender as a perpetrator and a victim suggests that the 'wounded' becomes the 'wounder', as a wounded past leads to a wounding future. Miller (2002) articulately



stated that what children experience in their earliest days has consequence for society. Also, in his book entitled *Violence*, Gilligan (2000) argued that the early experiences of violent offenders communicated to them that they are not loved; however, I wonder whether it also communicated to them that they should not love others.

Welldon (1997) believed that there is extreme pain and despair lodged in the minds of violent offenders, and that they try at any cost to avoid confronting it. Welldon (2015) explained that the lives of most violent offenders have been characterised by lack of love, abandonment, and abuse, and that they have felt completely rejected from the beginning of their lives. Likewise, Fishman (1978) reasoned that it is difficult to imagine anyone in our society who endures more pain than violent offenders, whom are rejected by their families, society, and themselves. Both Fishman and Welldon recognised the experiences of isolation, rejection, and anguish that the violent offender endures; experiences which I have also observed in the years I have worked with offenders.

## **Summary**

Each of the four themes discussed above has had a significant part to play in contributing to my embarkation on this study. Through my childhood experience, I became familiar with the experience of pain, rejection, and isolation. However, I also experienced empathy, compassion, and love. In my spiritual journey, powerful feelings of guilt, shame, badness, and fear were pervasive; yet I also encountered healing transformation as I searched for meaning in later years.

However, it was not until I entered the world of psychotherapy that I began to understand myself better, as I made a greater sense of my past experiences. The questions in my mind that had no answers for many years now had plausible explanations. The world of psychotherapy also raised new questions, as the voyage to understandings continued. Significantly, my journey in the world of psychotherapy increased my capacity to understand others better, which helped me to better connect with others. As did the world of forensic mental health, through which I had the opportunity to work with a group of people, who at a conscious or unconscious level, I felt experienced pain, rejection, isolation, and badness. I often saw a partial reflection of myself through them, as I pondered upon our similarities and differences, asking myself why they are where they are, and I am where I am.

However, explaining my motivation and providing a contextual background for this study was not the sole purpose of outlining the four themes. It was also my aim to articulate my historical background and be open about my prejudices, some of which I was not conscious of prior to this study. It was my intent to be open about the values I hold, such as; empathy, compassion, hope, and change. The disclosure of personal and professional elements of my life, although difficult and exposing, I consider to be particularly important because I employed a hermeneutic methodology in this research, which takes into account the researcher's bias. This methodology will be discussed in more detail in chapter three – *Methodology and Methods*. In the next chapter I present a literature review on psychotherapy in forensic mental health and set the stage for my study, as I outline the aim of this research and my research question.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced certain key concepts and how I came to the research topic. In this chapter, I will start with an overview of the history of psychotherapy in forensic mental health followed by psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders. I will then discuss ideas within the context of psychotherapy and the forensics sphere as I construct my research argument. Following this, I will outline the aim of this research and my research question.

#### 2.1. Historical Overview of Psychotherapy in Forensic Mental Health

For a long time, many social science disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and criminology, have sought to understand the phenomenon of crime and violence and those who carry it out, sometimes with the goal of preventing it or, at least, minimising its occurrence (Cordess & Cox, 1996; Englander, 2007). Psychotherapy is also no stranger to criminality.

Freud (1916), the founder of psychoanalysis, wrote a brief paper titled *Criminals from a sense of guilt*. This classic paper was one of the few times Freud specifically wrote on the subject of criminality (Cordess & Cox, 1996; Valiér, 1998; Welldon & Van Velsen, 1997). He put forward the argument that some criminal acts emanate from a sense of guilt, which preceded the criminal act, and this sense of guilt, he hypothesised, originated from the *Oedipus complex*<sup>3</sup>.

Freud (1916) wrote:

Paradoxical as it may sound, I must maintain that the sense of guilt was present before the misdeed, that it did not arise from it, but conversely – the misdeed arose from the sense of guilt. These people might justly be described as criminal from a sense of guilt. (p. 332)

What is significant here is that Freud (1916) seems to be locating the basis of criminal actions in the unconscious, and that the criminal act is a product of an intrapsychic conflict. He appears to be suggesting that certain criminals, due to an overwhelming sense of unresolved unconscious

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<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud introduced the concept Oedipus complex. It refers to a child's unconscious desire for the opposite-sex parent, thought as a necessary stage of psychosexual development (phallic stage). The stage draws our attention to murderous impulses and incestuous desires, and the feeling of guilt. Freud considered that the child's identification with the same-sex parent is the successful resolution of the complex (Waddell, 2002). Interestingly, this stage somewhat coincides with Erik Erickson (1963) psychosocial development stage called initiative vs *guilt*.

guilt, use crime as a means to punish themselves to relieve their guilt (Levinson, 1952).

However, Freud admitted that his hypothesis did not explain all criminal acts. He further wrote:

Among adult criminals we must no doubt except those who commit crimes without any sense of guilt, who have either developed no moral inhibitions or who, in their conflict with society, consider themselves justified in their action. But as regards the majority of other criminals, those for who punitive measures are really designed such a motivation for crime might very well be taken into consideration. (Freud, 1916, p. 333)

It would seem that Freud wanted it to be known that he was not naïve to think that all criminal acts were motivated by the unconscious, but that some individuals perhaps had what could be considered a damaged and destructive super-ego which permitted them to act criminally or violently against others (Levinson, 1952).

Since Freud, there have been several other psychoanalytic theorists who have hypothesised about criminal behaviour. A popular theory emerged in psychoanalytic circles situating the root of adult criminal and violence behaviour in childhood experiences of emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, and other kinds of childhood traumatic experiences (Bowlby, 1946; Catlett & Parr, 2011; Gilligan, 2000; Menninger, 1968; Miller, 2002). In essence, the conceptualisation of criminality and violence within the field of psychotherapy broadened beyond Freud's (1916) *guilt theory*, with contemporary psychotherapists locating adult criminal behaviour and violence within the context of early childhood experiences.

Glover (1960) succinctly noted that crime is a "problem of human behaviour having its roots in early life" (p. 24). Edward Glover and other psychoanalysts, such as Wilfred Bion, Melanie Klein, John Bowlby, and William Gillispie, unlike Freud, had the opportunity to treat individuals who had committed criminal and violent acts (Valiér, 1998), all of whom were based in the United Kingdom (UK). The UK has thus claimed to be the vanguard of psychotherapy treatment of individuals who have committed crimes (Welldon, 2015).

According to Valiér (1998), the emergence of psychoanalytic explanation to criminal behaviour in the UK early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the use of psychotherapeutic methods to treat violent offenders, and changes in mental health care and the administration of justice. The journey began in the UK with the establishment of the *Tavistock Clinic* in 1920, which provided talking therapy based on psychoanalytic theory to young offenders (Glover, 1960).

Then, in 1931, the *Association for Scientific Treatment of Delinquency and Crime* was founded, with the aim of assessing and treating individuals with anti-social behaviour (Glover, 1960). The *Association* was renamed in 1932 and was called the *Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency*, and again renamed in 1951 to the *Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency* (ISTD) (Cordess, 1992; Valiér, 1998). This institution is now called the *Centre for Crime and Justice Studies* (n.d.), a name that was adopted in 1999.

Furthermore, in the early 1930s, the *Psychopathic Clinic* was established, an offspring of the ISTD. The Psychopathic Clinic was the forerunner of the current *Portman Clinic*, which offers specialist long-term help for children, young people, and adults with disturbing sexual behaviours, criminality, and violence (Welldon & Van Velsen, 1997).

In the UK, Edward Glover was perhaps the most influential figure in the development of psychotherapy treatment of offenders (Cordess, 1992). He contended that crime may be a “manifestation of disorder in human relations” (Glover, 1960, p. 3) and believed offenders could be treated with psychotherapy. Glover was the chairman of the ISTD for many years and was involved in the founding of the organisation as well as the Psychopathic Clinic (Cordess, 1992; Welldon, 2015).

Another notable mention is Maxwell Jones, who founded the *Henderson Hospital* whose treatment principles were based on psychoanalytic theory (Jones, 1952). Prior to the closure of the Henderson Hospital in 2008, the hospital treated individuals with severe personality disorders, those considered at the time as psychopaths (Welldon, 2015). There is also *Grendon Prison*, a therapeutic prison in the UK for violent offenders. The treatment approach used in this therapeutic prison is psychoanalytic, similar to the one used at the now closed Henderson Hospital (Catlett & Parr, 2011).

Other countries such as Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and some parts of the United States (US) have also employed and advocated for a psychoanalytic approach to treating offenders (Adler, 1982; Gilligan, 2000; Hoffman & Kluttig, 2006; Menninger, 1968; van der Berg & van Marle, 1996). For instance, in the US, Karl Menninger (1968), one of the most influential psychoanalytic minds in the field of criminality, publicly took a stance for a psychotherapy approach towards offenders.

Menninger (1968) argued that offenders should be considered as mentally ill patients and proposed, like Glover, that offenders could be treated rather than punished. It is worth noting that this position of treatment as opposed to punishment continues to generate strong and passionate debate in many circles in society, although some favour both treatment and punishment (Catlett & Parr, 2011; Gilligan, 2000).

## **2.2. Modern-day Forensic Psychotherapy in Europe and its Objective**

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in 1991, a group of psychoanalysts and psychotherapists, whilst attending an international conference of Law and Psychiatry, came together to form the *International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy* (IAFP), with the goal of fostering an understanding of what psychotherapy could offer the forensic field (Welldon & Van Velsen, 1997). A few years after the IAFP was founded, the discipline of *forensic psychotherapy* was established and recognised as a profession in the UK, with the Portman Clinic offering *Forensic Psychodynamic Psychotherapy* training to clinicians who wanted to practice forensic psychotherapy (Norton & McGauley, 2000).

According to Welldon (1997), one of the founding members of the IAFP, forensic psychotherapy is the progeny of forensic psychiatry and psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Cordess and Cox (1996) explained that the practice of forensic psychotherapy is based on Freud's body of clinical and theoretical knowledge. Although the IAFP is still rather small and developing, it seems to have had some impact at a national level in a few countries, particularly in Europe, such as, the UK (where its main office is located), Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Sweden (IAFP, 2012). In New Zealand, however, despite having representation in the IAFP (2012), I believe the discipline of forensic psychotherapy is not well established and has limited to no influence at a national level.

In forensic psychotherapy, the psychotherapist uses the *violent act* as a vehicle to understand the psychology of the offender. The notion of using the violent act to gain understanding of the offender's inner world has been described by Welldon and Van Velsen (1997) as one of the features that makes forensic psychotherapy different from other branches of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Further, it seems to me that the greater emphasis on the inner world of the violent offender is what makes forensic psychotherapy different from forensic psychiatry.

According to Welldon (2009), the objective of forensic psychotherapy treatment is to help the violent offender acknowledge responsibility for his acts and thereby to save both him and society from the perpetration of further crimes. Psychotherapy treatment helps “to locate responsibility, by means of understanding, within a person rather than in the environment” (Welldon & Van Velsen, 1997, p. 4). Motz (2008) explained that the awareness and understanding of the *act* acquired by the offender enables him to gain control over and manage his destructive or violent impulses, thoughts, and feelings.

Thus, one of the functions of the psychotherapist is to help the patient know more and help him unearth unconscious motivations in relation to the violent act, both cognitively and affectively (Cordess & Williams, 1996). It is, therefore, not surprising that most of the literature in relation to psychotherapy treatment of the violent offender place a strong emphasis on the violent act with a primary focus of reducing the risk of recidivism, so as to protect society. (Cordess & Cox, 1996; Welldon & Van Velsen, 1997; Yakeley, 2010). I will now discuss the psychotherapy treatment approaches for the violent offender.

### **2.3. Psychotherapy Treatment Approaches for the Violent Offender**

A review of the literature concerning psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders revealed three main approaches, namely; group-analytic psychotherapy or group psychotherapy, individual psychotherapy, and therapeutic community. The literature showed that these treatments may be stand-alone or used collectively in the treatment of a single violent offender (Hoffman & Kluttig, 2006; Knabb, Welsh, & Graham-Howard, 2011; Welldon, 2013; Woods, 2014; Yakeley, 2010). I will now briefly discuss the three approaches.

#### **2.3.1. Group psychotherapy**

Yakeley (2010) contended that group psychotherapy is particularly different to other types of group interventions because it is without a “pre-determined focus, task, or structure, and it is concerned with unconscious group processes and aims for long-lasting personality change rather than symptom relief” (p.153). Unlike other group interventions that may last for weeks or a few months, group psychotherapy is long-term and could possibly last for several years.

Woods (2014) emphasised how group psychotherapy offers a space for experiencing and thinking about relationship with others. This would seem advantageous to violent offenders who,

according to Welldon (1997), struggle with thinking and having a place for others in their minds. Similarly, Yakeley (2010) suggested that group psychotherapy may be better for violent offenders who have a limited capacity to be psychologically minded and who show concreteness in their thinking process.

There are other reasons why group psychotherapy may be an appropriate treatment choice for violent offenders. Yakeley (2010) explained that violent individuals may feel safer in group psychotherapy than in individual psychotherapy because they may feel more contained. In group psychotherapy, they do not have to feel isolated or alone in their problems. Woods (2014) noted that violent offenders in group psychotherapy get to see the value of sharing their experiences with people with similar experiences, and may experience a reduction in shame and the sense of isolation that may have burdened them for a long time.

### **2.3.2. Individual psychotherapy**

In individual psychotherapy, the psychotherapist and the violent offender work together to help produce genuine and long-lasting internal change in the life of the offender. Although this form of psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders is less cost-effective than group psychotherapy (Welldon & Wilson, 2006), it may be the most appropriate for some violent offenders. For example, Yakeley (2010) observed that individual psychotherapy would be better suited for violent offenders who were neglected or were not able to experience satisfactory relationships with their parents or care-givers, as they may experience the same experience of not being cared for in a group.

Individual psychotherapy may also be a more appropriate choice for violent offenders who appear to be great in group psychotherapy through showing interest in others. This behaviour or quality may be a defence mechanism that deflects attention away from the offender and his violent acts (Welldon, 2013). Violent offenders who consciously or unconsciously hide themselves, as a way to resist treatment, may also be better suited for individual psychotherapy. This is because it is much easier to limit one's engagement in a group but practically impossible to go unnoticed in a one-one situation.



### **2.3.3. Therapeutic community**

Generally speaking, therapeutic communities are based on the notion that violent offenders experience problems because they have challenges in relating to society (Knabb et al., 2011). These therapeutic communities could either be a prison-type setting or hospital-type setting (Catlett & Parr, 2011; Hoffman & Kluttig, 2006). Examples of therapeutic communities for violent offenders using a psychodynamic approach include, *Grendon Prison*, and the now closed *Henderson Hospital*, both of which I mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Hoffman and Kluttig (2006) stated that the “concept of therapeutic communities implies an active inclusion of group-analysis and care of social relations in in-patient psychotherapy” (p.10). Jones (1952) called therapeutic communities living-learning environments and wrote that “the whole of a patient’s time spent in hospital is thought of as treatment” (p. 53). Norton (1996) noted that this form of treatment helps in the fostering of “maturely dependent psychologically differentiated and sober styles of relating” (p. 402).

The mode of operation of therapeutic communities is one whereby violent offenders use one another to learn, so as to develop healthy and positive ways of relating with oversight provided by psychotherapists and other staff members (Catlett & Parr, 2011). Jones (1952) explained that the community relies on all the human resources available, which includes violent offenders and all the staff. This would suggest that the success of therapeutic communities is dependent on the active participation and collaboration of both staff and violent offenders.

### **2.4. The Debate around Psychotherapy Treatment for Violent Offenders**

There is much debate and controversy around the place and efficacy of psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders. Gunn (1996) has argued that violent offenders need psychotherapy treatment just as much as the people in the community who have not been involved with the law. However, Howitt (2011) observed that the evidence pointed to the view that psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders is ineffective and time-consuming. Quinsey, Harris, Rice, and Cormier (2006) argued that not only are psychodynamic approaches ineffective in treating violent offenders, they could potentially result in making violent offenders more dangerous.

However, in her research on psychoanalytic psychotherapy with high-risk offenders, Taylor (2015) found that there was a reduction in risk as well as psychological symptoms. Furthermore, Gunn (1996) contended that treating violent offenders psychotherapeutically can show that those considered untreatable can indeed be successfully treated. Interestingly, Hilton (1997) emphasised that “patients may be labelled as untreatable with no recognition that it is the limits of our knowledge and ways of working which results in failure” (p.141).

A further debate revolves around the place of psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders versus other treatments such as the utilisation of pharmacological interventions (e.g. psychotropic medication) as well as cognitive and behavioural approaches (e.g. CBT). Due to the predominance of empirical outcome studies utilising these approaches, these treatments are well-funded by most developed nations, including New Zealand, and have left little room for debate on the place of psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders (Knabb et al., 2011). The Department of Corrections in New Zealand, for example have the Special Treatment Unit Rehabilitation Programme (STURP) and the Adult Sex Offender Treatment Programme (ASOTP) for high-risk offenders, both of which are based on cognitive-behavioural modality (Kilgour & Polaschek, 2012).

Hoffman and Kluttig (2006) observed that the focus on evidence-based treatment puts psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders at a disadvantage, as it is unable to compete commercially. Taylor (2015) emphasised that if psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders is to survive, more research is needed into its efficacy and efficiency due to the climate of evidence-based treatment and what works. Welldon and Van Velsen (1997), however, suggested that some of the resistance to psychotherapy treatment for violent offenders is because it is not politically expedient.

## **2.5. Setting the Stage for the Study**

According to Welldon (1997), the nature of the inner world of a violent offender can be very dark, disturbing, and repulsive. This may present the psychotherapist with a therapeutic challenge, as it may evoke very powerful transference and negative countertransference responses (e.g. rage, hate) and, quite possibly, violent thoughts and impulses (Temple, 1996). The psychotherapist may, therefore, unconsciously act-out hostile or seductive feelings the

violent offender may have induced upon him by projective identification (Cordess & Williams, 1996).

Although Weldon (1997) is indicating that the dark inner world might present psychotherapists with a therapeutic challenge, it seems to be more than that; it represents anybody who has any direct or indirect relational engagement with the violent offender. Therefore, the nature of the inner world of the violent offender is not restricted to just the psychotherapist but extends to the Correction staff, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, police, probation, lawyers and judges, and other workers in the forensic sphere, and even to the wider society.

This suggests that the thinking around psychotherapy with violent offenders is relevant beyond treatment of the offender because it has broader implications for other professionals and individuals in society. This point was strongly emphasised at a national level in the UK through a public inquiry into the case of Jason Mitchell, a British man who murdered three people (an elderly couple and his own father) in Bramford, Suffolk, in December 1994 (Blom-Cooper, Grounds, Guinan, Parker, & Taylor, 1996). The panel of inquiry outlined five aspects of risk assessment that may have prevented the murders from happening. One of these aspects was related to the absence of a psychodynamic approach to understanding Jason Mitchell's emotional and personality development (Blom-Cooper et al., 1996). The panel stated that "there was no monitoring of Jason Mitchell's inner life. Indeed, there was a deliberate avoidance of his subjective mental state" (Blom-Cooper et al., 1996, p. 14). It was quite revealing that the panel determined that "Jason Mitchell's inner life was left unexplored by all the clinicians" (Blom-Cooper et al., 1996, p. 16). The findings from the inquiry led the panel to assert that:

The need for psychodynamic assessment is not confined to the relatively small group of patients who are suitable for psychodynamic psychotherapy. Psychodynamic assessment is needed for a wider purpose of contribution to an understanding of the patient's inner world, and the nature of their personal relationships with others, including staff. (Blom-Cooper et al., 1996, pp. 244-245)

What I think is being suggested is that there are broader implications of psychodynamic understanding of the violent offender. Irrespective of the debate about the place and efficacy of psychotherapy treatment, psychotherapy in the form of psychodynamic thinking has the potential to shed new light and be of benefit in helping other professionals and society make meaning of the violent offender. It is this phenomenon that has grabbed my interest as I look

beyond the psychotherapist-violent offender relationship and treatment and consider the wider society, which I discuss in the next section.

## **2.6. Society, the Violent Offender and Psychotherapy**

Welldon (2015) argued that the violent offender's action is not solely against the victim (and I would add their family), but also against society. In other words, the perpetrator's violent attack extends beyond an individual to the broader society and the values and principles held within that society. Consequently, Welldon (1997) argued that society is an important constituent part of the relationship that the psychotherapist has with the violent offender. Conceivably, the victims and their families are somewhat a representative of society in this relationship.

Psychotherapy for violent offenders thus extends beyond the dyadic relationship of the psychotherapist and client; rather, it is a triadic relationship – the violent offender, the psychotherapist, and society (Welldon, 1997) and requires the handling of all three interacting positions. This seems to suggest multiple dyadic interactions and relationships; psychotherapy-society, psychotherapy-violent offender, and violent offender-society.

The third party, society, makes the dynamics of the relationship more complex than the conventional psychotherapist-client relationship, with society having its own consideration, which is often different to the violent offender's interest. In this triadic relationship, psychotherapy's effort to understand the violent act is likely to be perceived by society as condoning (Welldon, 2015) or minimising it, and diminishing the responsibility of the violent offender.

According to Welldon (2015) the culture that society adopts is one of blaming. She argued that the mass media makes it almost an impossible task to understand the inner world of the violent offender and what his conscious or unconscious motivations might be. This does not seem surprising because the act of the violent offender evokes powerful emotions of fear, terror, and disgust in society. Perhaps, this partly explains the lack of willingness on society's part to understand the violent offender, and her desire for the punishment of the violent offender.

Welldon (2015) noted that society views the violent offender and the victim in markedly divergent or opposite ways. The violent offender is marked by his violence act and viewed through that prism rather than the entirety of his person. According to Welldon (1997), society

believes the violent offender to be “products of evil forces” (p. 14) and views the victims as innocent. Welldon (2015) argued that society prefer to juxtapose the violent offender and the victim for the purpose of clarity and simplicity. In Welldon’s (2015) view, the victim in society’s consciousness “is assumed to be devoid of any negative, [or] hostile feelings” (p. 99) while the violent offender is “filled only with hatred” (p. 99). He (the violent offender) is “believed to be evil and thus deserves only punishment” (Welldon, 2015, p. 99). There is little to no concern for his wellbeing as in the case of the victim (Welldon, 2015).

## **2.7. The Monster Metaphor**

In engaging with the literature regarding the three interacting positions (psychotherapy, the violent offender, and society), I was particularly drawn to the dynamic of the violent offender-society dyad. What compellingly emerged for me from the literature, in looking at society’s view with respect to the violent offender, was the broad characterisation and pervasive use of the monster metaphor (Douard & Schultz, 2013; Wardle, 2004), which I have also observed over the years in my personal and professional life.

I was led to reflect on the times I have heard non-professionals, as well as clinicians, characterise or call violent offenders *monsters*. I was reminded of the numerous times I have heard violent offenders, without being asked, say to me “I am not a monster”. In my attempt to now make meaning of this frequently repeated statement, I began to wonder if the monster metaphor captured an internalised image some violent offenders have of themselves. More importantly, I wondered if their statement was a response not just to themselves but also to how they thought individuals in society and society as a whole perceive them. In my opinion, it is of huge significance and worthy of attention when people answer questions they have not been asked. This could be a communication of the person’s inner world.

The literature pointed to the idea that the inability of individuals in society to see beyond the horror of the violent act leads to the perception of the violent offender as a monster, as powerful feelings of anger, fear, terror, hate, and revulsion is evoked in society. According to Douard and Schultz (2013), the use of the metaphor monster is universal in modern culture, and usually implies something wrong or evil. This brings to mind Welldon’s (1997) contention that society views the violent offender as evil.

However, the monster metaphor seems to me to suggest the *embodiment* or the *personification* of evil, of darkness in contrast to an abstract term, such as, evil. In other words, it has the quality of a 'being', indicating something inhuman or unnatural (Douard & Schultz, 2013). Monsters are regarded as irrational creatures that produce fear, and possess predatory instincts (Asma, 2009). They are generally seen as morally abhorrent, emotionless and psychologically gruesome (Asma, 2009; Shildrick, 2002). Beal (2002) wrote that monsters usually stand for beings we project as 'other' or 'not us' in our world.

According to Douard and Schultz (2013) when the metaphor of the monster is used to represent violent offenders we devalue and dehumanise them, thereby reducing our internal conflict when they are treated differently and deprived of human rights. I was thus very struck by the monster metaphor and what it may represent. It became a central theme of my study and raised some questions: What does the metaphor monster say about the violent offender's humanity? What does the metaphor monster symbolise in relation to the violent offender? What does it reveal about us and society? More broadly, what is the significance of the monster metaphor in relation to the violent offender?

## **2.8. Aim of the Study and Research question**

With the above in mind, I was curious to know what understandings might arise when the metaphor monster meets the violent offender within the context of psychotherapy and the forensic field. I was curious to know, is the violent offender human, a monster, or both? This study, therefore, aimed to explore the literature in terms of the intersection of the metaphor monster and the violent offender.

The **research question** thus becomes:

What understandings does the literature reveal around the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender within the context of psychotherapy and the forensic arena?

## **Summary**

In this second chapter, I have presented a preliminary literature touching on some important aspects and concepts in the area of psychotherapy and forensic mental health. This preliminary review has helped lay the groundwork for the aim of the research and my research question,

which I have outlined. The next chapter is a discussion on the paradigm, methodology, and methods used in my study.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology and Methods**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the literature pertaining to psychotherapy in forensic mental health and identified the specific focus for the current study. In this chapter I start by presenting the interpretive paradigm, as my guiding paradigm, and explain the rationale for my choice. Following this, I will outline my methodology, which is hermeneutic methodology, and discuss the various concepts and ideas within it. I also explain why it is an appropriate fit for my study. I describe the research process, as I discuss how I utilised the hermeneutic literature review method. Lastly, I discuss the limitations of hermeneutics.

#### **3.1. My Guiding Paradigm**

There are a range of beliefs that guide any research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Leavy (2014) explained that beliefs about how a study should be approached, what is to be known, who is to be the knower, and how we come to know, serve as the philosophical basis of a study. Collectively, these beliefs combine to form a paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), which Kuhn (1962) described as a constructed world-view through which knowledge is filtered. This worldview assists a researcher in making choices regarding the design of his study (Giddings & Grant, 2006), thereby guiding the research process (Leavy, 2014).

Grant and Giddings (2002) proposed four overarching paradigms (positivist, interpretive, radical, and post-structural) for grouping methodologies. They asserted that methodologies are alike or differ based on their underlying assumptions, values, and worldviews. The interpretive paradigm fitted with my worldview because, unlike the positivist paradigm, it does not take a reductionist or deterministic approach to human experience, but seeks the meaning people attach to the experience in their lives (Grant & Giddings, 2002).

The interpretive paradigm is subjectivist in contrast to the objectivist position of the positivist paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is a more appropriate fit because, personally, I am inclined to subjectivism, drawn to the idea of making meaning or making sense of my experiences and that of others. I often feel intrigued by, and curious about, how a situation can mean one thing to



me and something totally different to another. For example, I could perceive a person was being helpful, while another could perceive the person as being intrusive.

Furthermore, my study is about seeking *understandings* not about seeking *evidence to establish absolute truth*. Schuster (2013) noted that understanding is not about solving a problem, but that understanding helps us see possible problems with the phenomenon we are dealing with. The interpretive paradigm was thus an appropriate fit to address my research question. Again, a positivist approach would have been inappropriate because its main goal is to test hypothesis with respect to cause and effect.

Besides the positivist paradigm, I also considered the radical paradigm. The radical paradigm is consciously motivated by one's interest and bias, and its goal is geared towards changing a situation (Grant & Giddings, 2002). I was internally drawn to the radical paradigm, perhaps due to my longing for some social policy and structural changes within the forensic mental health system in New Zealand.

Despite the allure of change, I was confronted by the view that my knowledge and understanding is limited. Also, the values that I strongly hold, such as; openness, curiosity, empathy, and tolerance, values which were significantly developed during the years I spent training as a psychotherapist, meant that my axiological position was incongruent with the radical paradigm which holds a firm conviction regarding a certain reality (Giddings & Grant, 2006; Grant & Giddings, 2002).

### **3.2. Methodology**

Consistent with the interpretive paradigm, this study is located within a hermeneutic methodology. The term *hermeneutics* was derived from the ancient Greek word *hermeneus*, which means 'to interpret' or 'to translate' (Seeböhm, 2004). The root of the term emanated from Hermes, an Olympian god, in Greek mythology, who was considered the messenger of the gods, but also a liar, a contriver, a schemer (Hoy, 1978). Hermeneutics has been described as the philosophy or the art of interpretation (Grondin, 1994). Gadamer (2008) wrote that its origin is in the breaches of intersubjectivity, and its field of application is comprised of all those situations in which we encounter meaning that are immediately not understandable but require interpretive effort.

According to Ramberg and Gjesdal (2005), the tradition of hermeneutics dates back to ancient Greek philosophy, and has been crucial in the study and exegesis of Biblical texts, as well as the study of ancient and classic cultures. In modern history, hermeneutics is associated with philosophers such as Schleiermacher, Droysen, Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur. The current study is most consistently aligned with the philosophy of Gadamer and Ricoeur as detailed below.

### **3.2.1. Gadamer's hermeneutics**

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was a philosopher of German origin whose magnum opus, *Truth and method*, first published in 1960, changed the theory of hermeneutics and ushered in the field of philosophical hermeneutics (Austgard, 2012; Grondin, 1994). Gadamer was a student of Martin Heidegger, another German philosopher who had made contributions to the theory of hermeneutics and phenomenology. It was Heidegger's contributions to the field of hermeneutics that largely influenced Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960/1995).

According to Wood and Giddings (2005), Gadamer's hermeneutics aimed to enable a new and deeper understanding, as well as interpret experience. Gadamer (1960/1995) believed that *understanding* begins when something addresses us, and that all understanding includes *interpretation*. Wood and Giddings also wrote that in Gadamer's hermeneutics, understanding is always shifting because human beings are thrown into a dynamic, continuous process of interpretation.

However, Austgard (2012) observed that in Gadamer's hermeneutics interpretation does not revolve around the text alone but involves the person doing the interpretation, and his interaction with the world he lives in. In other words, from a Gadamerian hermeneutic perspective, it is impossible to separate the interpreter's experiences, or his history, from the text he is interpreting. Similarly, Smythe and Spence (2012) explained that through our being in the world, the positioning we acquire is interwoven inseparably with our history and culture.

The idea that an interpreter's history is crucial to Gadamer's hermeneutics is underlined in the concept of '*effective historical consciousness*' or '*historically effected consciousness*'. Grondin (1994) emphasised the significance of this concept in Gadamer's hermeneutics, stating that historically effected consciousness "has the status of a principle from which virtually his

[Gadamer's] whole hermeneutics can be deduced" (p.113). Basically, the idea of historically effected consciousness acknowledges that one's interpretations is influenced by the effect of history, and that one is powerless to consciously or unconsciously deny one's historicity (Smythe & Spence, 2012).

The concept of historically effected consciousness was derived from *historical consciousness* (the link between history and consciousness), and Gadamer (1960/1995) thought that historical consciousness was so fundamental that he asserted that "it is to the rise of historical consciousness that hermeneutics owes its centrality within the human sciences" (p. 165). Smythe and Spence (2012) described historical consciousness as awareness of the prejudices governing understandings. In other words, it is being mindful of the preconceptions and presumptions that shape our understandings.

Symthe and Spence (2012) contended that the term *prejudice*, as utilised in Gadamer's hermeneutics, allows for other possible prejudices to be considered, and the recognition of the potential for change and expansion of understandings. The interpreter's prejudice can thus be seen as a hermeneutic tool which helps him gain deeper and different understandings. In Gadamerian hermeneutics, prejudice is therefore considered to be a very important concept.

Notably, Gadamer (1960/1995) critiqued the negative connotation the term prejudice holds in modern times. He explained that it was not until the *Enlightenment* (Age of Reason) that the term attained a negative value. Gadamer wrote that the term prejudice meant a "judgement that is rendered before all elements that determine a situation have been finally examined" (p. 270), not a false judgement or one that is unfounded as it has come to mean in modern language.

Gadamer (1960/1995) believed that the "recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust" (p. 270). This seems to suggest that Gadamer identified prejudice as a condition for understanding. For Gadamer, one must not, and cannot, put aside one's prejudices when one is trying to understand. Rather than ignore one's prejudices, it is important to recognise them and work with them interpretatively (Grondin, 1994), which will help lead to the expansion and opening up of new horizons.

*Horizon* is another important concept in Gadamer's hermeneutics (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014; Wood & Giddings, 2005). According to Gadamer (1960/1995), horizon denotes a "range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (p. 302). A

person's horizon is, therefore, all that he is able to view from where he stands (Wood & Giddings, 2005). Gadamer (1960/1995) noted that a person's horizon could be narrow or could be expanded or there could be new horizons being opened up.

Gadamer (1960/1995) observed that it is possible for a person to have '*no horizon*'. Such a person will be short-sighted and, consequently, will place too much value on what is closest or nearest to him. This would suggest that there would not be a dialogical and dialectical encounter with anything. Therefore, to have a horizon would indicate a dialogical and dialectical, back and forth encounter, where the person allows himself not to be limited to what is closest to him, but is able to see beyond; beyond his theoretical prism. For instance, by engaging with the literature, I anticipate that I will be able to see beyond the prism of my nursing and psychotherapy theory and practice (Gadamer, 1960/1995).

The backward and forward movement is central to the meaning of '*play*' (Gadamer, 1960/1995), and this dialectic and dialogical motion which leads to understanding is the mediating process known as the *hermeneutic circle*. The hermeneutic circle is a concept that was first conceptualised by Schleiermacher, and then developed by Heidegger and Gadamer (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). It is an iterative process with movement from the whole of the text to its parts, and then from parts to the whole of the text (Austgard, 2012; Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014).

The hermeneutic circle refers to the notion that a person's understanding of the text as a whole is established by making reference to the individual parts, and a person's understanding of each individual part is established by making reference to the whole. In essence, neither the whole text nor individual part can be understood without reference to one another, hence the circularity of interpretation (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014; Hoy, 1978; Prasad, 2002).

Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) emphasised that the researcher must be open to the text for the circle to lead to expanded and new horizons. In a similar vein, Grondin (1994) emphasised that it is "only in conversation, only in confrontation with another's thought .... can we hope to get beyond the limits of our present horizon" (p. 124). The *play* that happens in *dialogue* (i.e. dialectic of question and answer) is what leads to the *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer, 1960/1995).

Understanding can therefore be seen as the fusion of horizons (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). Gadamer (1960/1995) stated that it is “in the process of understanding, a real fusion of horizon occurs (p. 307). In the context of this study the encounter is between the text and me. It is through this encounter that a fusion of horizons occurs. Yet, the fusion of horizons is not an indication that I have complete understanding, as one never truly attains complete understanding in the circle of hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960/1995).

### **3.2.2. Ricoeur, and hermeneutics of faith and hermeneutics of suspicion**

Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) was a French philosopher whose body of work included hermeneutics and phenomenology (Ricoeur, 2013). He became a prisoner of war (POW) in Germany during World War II (WWII), and while he was a POW he studied the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers (Ricoeur, 1981). Ricoeur (2013) made significant contributions to the theory of hermeneutics through two important collections of essays, *The conflict of interpretations: Essays in hermeneutics* (Ricoeur, 1974) and *From text to action: Essays in hermeneutics II* (Ricoeur, 1991).

Ricoeur (1981) believed that hermeneutics is the path to philosophical reflection. He argued that reflection cannot escape from the conflict of interpretations if in fact hermeneutics is the path to reflection. According to Ricoeur, the hermeneutics field is internally at variance with itself, hence a dichotomy exists in the theory of hermeneutics. Ricoeur (1970) wrote that “to interpret is to understand a double meaning” (p. 8). It is based on the existence of this dichotomy that Ricoeur theorised the *hermeneutics animated by faith* and the *hermeneutics animated by suspicion*, also known as the *hermeneutics of faith* and the *hermeneutics of suspicion* respectively (Ricoeur, 1970).

The hermeneutic of faith is “construed as the restoration of a meaning addressed to the interpreter in the form of a message” (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 6). It aims to restore the meaning to a text; hence why it has also been described as the hermeneutics of restoration (Gherghina, 2016; Josselson, 2004; Ricoeur, 1970). This positioning of hermeneutics is characterised by a readiness to listen, and respect for the text being interpreted (Ricoeur, 1981). It also characterised by a willingness to absorb as much as possible the message from the text as it is (Josselson, 2004). Josselson (2004) described hermeneutics of faith as a position that aims to re-present, explore, and understand the subjective world of the other, remaining faithful to

messages from the other. The goal is to understand the other, as he understands himself. Thus, it is the hermeneutics of empathy at a conscious level.

On the other hand, the hermeneutics of suspicion is one that sees experience as not transparent to itself (Josselson, 2004); there is something hidden that requires unmasking. Ricoeur (1981) explained that this view of hermeneutics is characterised by scepticism, by a distrust of text. The message is disguised or misrepresented to the interpreter. This view of hermeneutics has been described as the hermeneutic of demystification (Josselson, 2004). According to Ricoeur (1970) this is the hermeneutics that Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud practised. In relation to Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, Ricoeur (1970) believed that all three were 'masters of skepticism'. Ricoeur (1970) wrote that all three looked upon "the whole of consciousness primarily as 'false' consciousness" (p. 33). In other words, they considered the contents of consciousness as doubtful (Ricoeur, 1981). This is the liar or contriver side of Hermes (Hoy, 1978).

It would seem that the field psychotherapy sits within Ricoeur's hermeneutic dichotomy. Psychotherapy practice not only operates from the hermeneutics of suspicion, as in unearthing hidden meanings and interpreting defences and unconscious self-deceptions, but also operates from hermeneutics of faith through its willingness to listen and understand as the other understands. From a research perspective, Josselson (2004) pointed out that the task of hermeneutics of faith is to decode meanings from the text with as little distortion as possible; whereas with respect to the hermeneutics of suspicion, the researcher would be alert to various forms of self-deception within the text, and interpret what lies beneath the text.

### **3.3. Method**

Grant and Giddings (2002) considered research methods as different from research methodology. They described research methods as tools for data collection and data analysis. Leavy (2014) emphasised that the selection of a research method should be in conjunction with the research question. This notion was also echoed by Giddings and Grant (2006) who argued that the method chosen by a researcher must fit with the research question. In view of this, I chose *hermeneutic literature review* as my research method. In my opinion, it is well-suited to address my research question and is congruent with hermeneutic methodology.

### 3.3.1. Hermeneutic literature review method

Generally, literature reviews evaluate and critically analyse existing knowledge regarding a particular research phenomenon (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010; Hart, 1998). According to Garfield (1987), a literature review has great value and influence, and can also constitute a research publication on its own, contrary to just being part of a research publication which aims at justifying the research problem (Hart, 1998). Hermeneutic literature review is seeing literature review as a hermeneutic process, which suggests that there is no final understanding of the literature, but a constant re-interpretation leading to deeper understanding (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010).

Hermeneutic literature review goes beyond simply identifying gaps in literature or presenting pre-articulated knowledge, as its main objective is to “provide context and provoke thinking” (Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 12). In other words, the purpose of using a hermeneutic process to explore literature, is to locate or contextualise the phenomenon being examined, and to help facilitate a thinking and reflective process toward deeper understanding.

The hermeneutic process allows the researcher to be a partner with the text in the journey of thinking (Smythe & Spence, 2012). The process requires an engagement with the literature in an iterative, dialectic and dialogical way, by way of the hermeneutic circle (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010; Smythe & Spence, 2012), which I discussed earlier in the section *Gadamer’s hermeneutics*.

The hermeneutic circle literature review framework I used was largely an adaptation of Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic’s (2010) (see Figure 1).

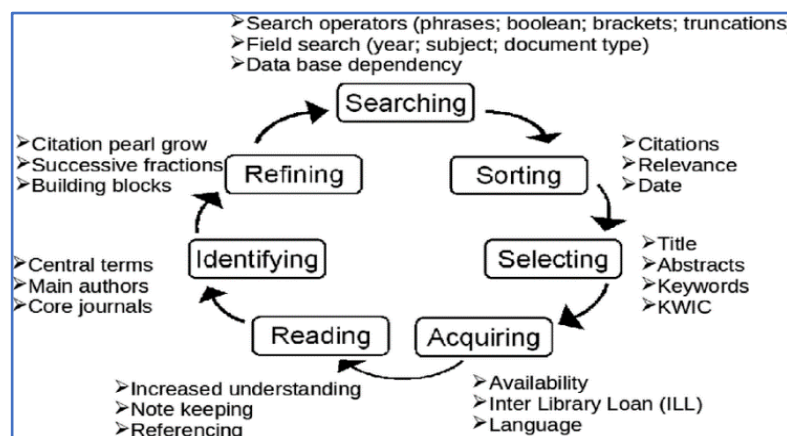


Figure 1: Hermeneutic circle of reviewing literature and techniques associated with different stages of the hermeneutic circle (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010, p. 134).

I also used ideas from Smythe and Spence (2012) to develop my own hermeneutic circle literature review framework. Figure 2 shows the hermeneutic circle framework I used in the development of my preliminary literature review (chapter two), the refinement of my research question, and the ideas and themes that emerged in the final write-up of this study.

The framework includes the following processes; *intuiting, talking, searching, sorting, selecting, acquiring, reading, thinking, writing, and refining*. My view was that Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic's (2014) framework did not adequately capture my personal hermeneutic process; partly because it did not *explicitly* outline some important processes, *intuiting, talking, and thinking*, which interestingly are fundamental to the discipline of psychotherapy. Regarding *thinking*, I acknowledge that the hermeneutic process is generally seen as a thinking process, thus it may be argued that it is needless to include it. However, I considered it necessary to include it in my framework as I will explain later in the subsection called, *Start-stop-start process*.

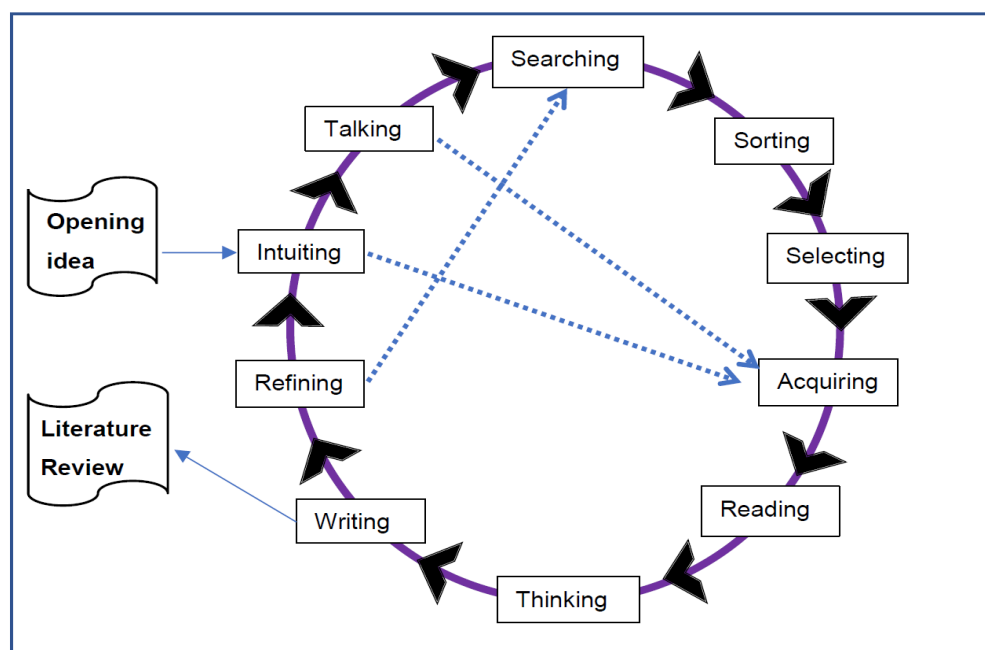


Figure 2: A personalised hermeneutic circle literature review framework

### 3.3.2. Hermeneutic circle as a non-linear process

The hermeneutic process of literature searching was not sequential. It was a non-linear process that required creativity, flexibility, and imagination. Having freedom of thought, and flexibility to traverse within the hermeneutic circle, was advantageous as it led me to relevant literature



which I probably would not have otherwise encountered. For instance, my intuition led me to acquire certain literature, and talking to colleagues about my research sometimes led to acquiring other literature (see Figure 2, p. 30). In the following section, I begin by discussing how I entered the hermeneutic circle.

### **3.3.3. Entering into the hermeneutic circle**

I entered the hermeneutic circle with the research question: “*What place does emotional healing have in the psychotherapeutic treatment of forensic patients?*”. This was the question I presented in my research proposal (PGR1). I came to this question through exploring the literature regarding the place of psychotherapy in forensic mental health. Through my exploration I identified a gap with regard to emotional healing and offenders.

The research question in my proposal began to change however as I engaged in the hermeneutic circle, moving back and forth, from part to whole and from whole to part. As I traversed the hermeneutic circle, new questions arose, which led to my final research question, which I stated in chapter two: “*What understandings does the literature reveal around the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender within the context of psychotherapy and the forensic arena?*”, which led to additional iterations. It is important to note that my description of the processes in the hermeneutic circle framework is not of every iteration. I think attempting to describe every stage in each iteration will be cumbersome and of little value, rather my intention is to demonstrate the fluidity, creativity, and imagination of thought in my hermeneutic process. I will now discuss the various stages of the hermeneutic circle framework.

### **3.3.4. Intuiting, talking, searching, and sorting**

Boell and Cecez- Kecmanovic, (2014) pointed out that having a relevant publication (e.g. monograph) that introduces the researcher to the topic or provides an overview of the topic area and related areas is advantageous and a good point to begin. Using my *intuition*, I began with two publications that I was acquainted with and acquired during my psychotherapy training. The publications were, *Forensic psychotherapy: Crime, psychodynamics and the offender patient* (Cordess & Cox, 1996) and *A practical guide to forensic psychotherapy* (Welldon & Van Velsen, 1997). I thought of these publications as a good starting point.

Cordess and Cox's (1996) publication seemed to me to be somewhat of a forensic psychotherapy 'bible'. It consisted of many papers written by people across several disciplines (e.g. psychotherapy, law, police, criminology, social work, probation, nursing, psychology, and psychiatry). Cordess and Cox's publication was monumental both for its literature content, and because it provided references to other relevant publications, a process known as snowballing. Snowballing was perhaps the most effective strategy I used for finding relevant literature. It is also worth mentioning that the two publications I intuitively acquired for reading were part of a series of publications titled *Forensic focus*, which takes the field of forensic psychotherapy as its focal point. Consequently, I searched for other publications in the *Forensic focus* series and acquired other literature relevant to my inquiry.

As part of my search process, I engaged in several discussions with my research supervisor, clinical supervisors, work colleagues, friends, patients, and others. **Talking** and listening is not a stage in Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic's (2014) hermeneutic framework; however, it was a very important part of my research process. Hence, I thought it was necessary to explicitly mention and include it as part of my hermeneutic framework.

Talking to people and being open and willing to listen to their thoughts and ideas about my inquiry proved immensely beneficial as it allowed my understandings to be confronted and provoked my thinking which led to new insights and questions. I should note here that in this study, both written words and oral words are considered as *literature*, as *text*. Talking was also useful in the sense that some people, particularly my research supervisor and forensic clinical supervisor, referred me to publications relevant to my inquiry.

My search also involved the conventional **searching** using databases. The databases I used included, Google Scholar, Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing (PEP), PsycInfo, HEINonline, Scopus, and Sage. For my initial iteration, I began with keywords such as 'emotional healing', 'healing', 'forensic patient', 'psychotherapy', 'psychodynamic psychotherapy', and 'psychoanalysis'. As I engaged with the literature in the hermeneutic circle, I observed that there were several other terms in literature used to describe 'forensic patients' (e.g. offender, offender patient, mentally disordered offender, mentally ill-offender, mentally abnormal offender, criminal, criminally insane). Some of the terms were slightly nuanced, for example, mentally-ill offender implied an offender with a diagnosis of mental-illness.

According to Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014), when undertaking a hermeneutic research, retrieving small sets of highly relevant literature is more desirable to having larger sets of literature, whose relevance would be difficult to determine. Consequently, I considered it was not necessary to search with all the other terms used to describe forensic patients, but search with the terms I thought were most common, that is, offender, criminal, and forensic patient. It was at this point I chose to use the term 'offender' in my study. As my understanding increased and new insights emerged, I introduced other keywords such as 'violence' and 'monster'; keywords that were not part of my initial search.

As part of my search process, I utilised search operators (e.g. AND, OR, NOT), truncation, and phrases to help limit the set of literature retrieved. For example, I truncated 'violence' to search for terms with multiple endings, and then combined it with 'monster' (violen\* AND monster). I also restricted my search to literature in the English language. Generally speaking, my hermeneutic adequacy, as Smythe and Spence (2012) suggested, was more about "the depth of thought rather than the narrow isolation of a technology driven search" (p. 22).

In **sorting** out the retrieved publications, I used the ranking algorithm provided by the databases. This algorithm displayed the more relevant publications on top, and the less relevant ones at the bottom. Using a function of the database I removed duplicates so as to avoid repetition. I also utilised citations as ranking criteria to identify publications that I perceived were central to my inquiry as suggested by Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014). However, there was one publication, *Psychotherapy as healing* (Barron, 1977), though being relatively old, which I selected in my first iteration, despite being cited only a few times. Furthermore, I remained mindful that using citations was not an effective strategy for identifying more recent publication because it favours older publications (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). Before I discuss the next stage of the hermeneutic process, I would like to briefly write about inclusion and exclusion criteria

**Inclusion and exclusion criteria:** In a hermeneutic framework, inclusion and exclusion criteria are dynamic and unfixed like keywords, as they are subject to change as one's understandings increase and new questions arise. Nevertheless, having an inclusion and exclusion criteria provided a starting point for me; somewhere to begin even though I expected the criteria would change as I progressed. Initially, I included all offenders, however as I progressed I realised I

was interested only in violent offenders, so I excluded non-violent offenders from the study. In this study, I included a wide range of literature across several disciplines. I used literature in English language or translated into English language in areas of psychotherapy, criminology, law, philosophy, journalism, fiction, history, and other sources that I considered pertinent to the phenomenon I was investigating. Smythe and Spence (2012) stated that “literature, which can include anything that provokes thinking on the phenomenon of interest, becomes an essential dialogical partner from which scholarly thinking and new insights emerge” (p. 12). They argued that in the hermeneutic approach to literature review, the term ‘literature’ should include *anything* that engages a person in a dialogical encounter and inspires or stirs up a thinking process, whether it is related to the subject or not.

### **3.3.5. Selecting and acquiring**

Generally, in **selecting** relevant publications, I looked at titles of publications, read abstracts of journal articles, read the foreword and preface of books, and scanned the contents page of books to determine if there were chapters in the book pertinent to my study. Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) also suggested the use of snowballing at this stage, noting that abstracts do not always adequately convey the content of a publication. Consequently, I used snowballing to identify and capture publications that I might have missed.

I **acquired** most of the publications directly through the university library. Although, there were certain literature I acquired indirectly via the inter-loan library service (Bonus+ and ArticleReach) provided by the university. The Bonus+ service, however, presented me with some challenges. For example, sometimes I had to wait for a month for a literature to arrive; as a result my continuity was affected. Another challenge I experienced was that the books that came to me through Bonus+ were lent for a short period, much shorter than the books I acquired directly from my university library. There was only one publication I was unable to access through the library, so I acquired this book by purchasing it online.

### **3.3.6. Reading and thinking**

From my standpoint, the processes of reading and thinking were inextricably linked. These processes represented the nexus between the search process and the development of new understanding. My pre-understandings were constantly challenged as I engaged with the literature.

With respect to **reading**, I began by skimming the literature, and in other cases, I began by reading the introduction, conclusions, or summary of publications. These steps were taken to orientate myself to the literature, which in turn gave me a better idea of the literature, helped me identify literature that was central to my study, and helped me organise the next stage of my reading – analytical reading.

It was through reading, reading analytically a few times, that my ideas evolved, new questions emerged, and understandings expanded and increased. Through reading, I identified new concepts and terms that resulted in new searches and refined searches; then, proceeded to reading again. It was through this analytic reading and increased understanding that I was able to formulate my research question.

It also seems worthy to note that as a result of the expanded understandings gained through reading, I returned to some publications that I read earlier, which I did not at the time identify as core literature. The literature brought fresh and different insights regarding my inquiry; insights I was oblivious to during the initial reading. My experience seemed to echo Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic's (2014) observation that re-reading a literature "may lead to different understanding after further relevant publications are identified, acquired and read" (p. 34). It was therefore not surprising that Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic argued that reading was the most important step for searching.

Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) did not have **thinking** as part of their hermeneutic framework; however it seemed important to me to explicitly include the process of thinking in my hermeneutic framework, although I acknowledge that thinking is a given in hermeneutic research. I believe I had more time to think than I would have had due to an injury, which I will now expand on in a process I have called the *Start-stop-start process*.

**Start-stop-start process:** The hermeneutic process was a very testing and prolonged experience for me, and on more than a few occasions I contemplated terminating the research study. My ordeal began following an incident that resulted in a head injury, approximately a week after I received approval for my research proposal.

In undertaking this hermeneutic research, I experienced what I have called, the *start-stop-start process*. Generally speaking, this process represented the experience of starting my research,

stopping my research, and then starting again, as well as the frustration, agony, and physical symptoms I endured throughout.

I experienced the start-stop-restart process in two forms. What differentiated one from the other was the length of time I had to stop for. The first type had a brief *stop phase*, which could last for 30 minutes or hours. The second type had a longer *stop phase*, which could last for weeks or months. On one hand, the *stops* had a huge impact on my ability to maintain momentum or have any consistency in reading and writing. On the other hand, the *stops* provided *more space and time to think, much more than I would have had*.

The more time I had to think about my inquiry was the silver lining I found in the debilitating injury. It is for this particular reason I included thinking as part of my hermeneutic framework. I thought to myself that the *stops* were not a halt to the hermeneutic process, but a valuable opportunity to extend my thinking journey and in turn expand my understandings. I may never know for certain, but it is my view that I would not have arrived at the phenomenon I investigated if I had not had this injury. In a way, the injury itself became a part of my hermeneutic process.

### **3.3.7. Writing**

As part of my process I had a journal in which I wrote down my thoughts, feelings, ideas, analysis, and questions that arose from the text that I read or discussions I had with others. Writing was helpful to implant ideas in my mind. It also allowed me revisit some of the responses and reactions that occurred for me.

Furthermore, my write-up was continually being revised, as I went back and forth with increased understanding. Understanding the parts gave me better understanding of the whole, and understanding the whole gave me better understanding of the parts, which necessitated changes in my write-up.

### **3.3.8. Refining**

Earlier, when discussing the process of *searching*, I mentioned how I refined my search using keywords that I later came to know represented forensic patients. I also mentioned earlier that I searched for other *Forensic focus* publications relevant to my inquiry. These are examples of the refining searches. The refining stage is when I constructed new searches because of the

emergence of fresh insights and increased understanding. Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) noted that a researcher continually improves understanding of relevant literature and how different literature are related while he is navigating the hermeneutic circle of literature searching.

#### **3.3.9. Exiting the hermeneutic circle – Time constraint versus point of saturation**

The hermeneutic process seemed to me like an endless loop, as I felt I could go on and on. My experience seemed consistent with Gadamer's (1960/1995) notion that understanding is never complete. In research, however, there comes a time when the researcher has to decide to exit the hermeneutic circle.

Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) wrote about the *point of saturation*. They described the point of saturation as the point in the hermeneutic process when more publications would make only a marginal contribution to further understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The question then arises: did I reach a point of saturation? My view is that I did not reach a point of saturation; rather, it was the *constraint of time* that precipitated my exit from the hermeneutic circle. Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic argued that it is not uncommon for researchers to leave the hermeneutic circle due to time constraints, noting that researchers are more likely to reach the point of saturation when the research is not limited by time, which mine was.

Although it was time constraint that necessitated my exit from the hermeneutic circle, it was important that my exit was reasoned. I exited the hermeneutic circle at a point when I was fairly confident in the importance and relevance of my research toward my own personal and professional development as a psychotherapist and forensic clinician. Also, in deciding to exit the hermeneutic circle, I determined that my study would be an added contribution to the vast body of knowledge available in the theory and practice of psychotherapy with respect to violent offenders.

#### **3.4. Limitations of Hermeneutic Research**

Using a hermeneutic methodology encourages a researcher to be an active participant in the process (Smythe & Spence, 2012). This suggests that there is a relationship between what is being researched and the researcher, thus the researcher is not detached from the research (Grant & Giddings, 2002). This point is significant because the hermeneutic methodology allows

me to bring my experiences of working with violent offenders to my research study. Some of these experiences have shaped my understandings and prejudices in relation to violent offenders, as does my culture, values, beliefs, and spirituality. The involvement of my unique historicity thus makes my interpretation my own (Symthe, 2012), and hence the results of the study cannot be simply generalised to a wider population or sample as with traditional systematic reviews.

Interestingly, Grondin (1994) noted that in hermeneutics “our historicity is not a restriction but the very principle of understanding” (p. 111). In contrast, traditional systematic review methods require the research question is fixed before the review process begins and requires rigorous and fixed protocols (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010). Grondin’s statement is arguing that this fixed nature is not a true reflection of understanding, that our understanding is constantly being shaped and reshaped by our evolving historicity, such that any attempt to “fix” this understanding is misplaced.

Similarly, Prasad (2002) noted that a common critique levelled against hermeneutic research emanates from objectivist thinkers, who attack the validity of hermeneutic research. Validity, which is the degree of truthfulness or correctness, and degree to which one is able to transfer findings, is, however, not considered a goal of hermeneutic research. According to Freeman (2011), there is no way to ascertain that an interpretation is correct or incorrect, true or false in hermeneutic research.

Freeman (2011) also explained that understanding hermeneutically requires both understanding and misunderstanding, and that the idea of validation closes the conversation to further understandings. The purpose of hermeneutic inquiry is to provide opportunities for conversation, not to validate understandings. In Freeman’s view, validity in hermeneutics means to trust my own interpretive abilities, as I confront my understandings and open myself up to the ideas and understandings of others.

Furthermore, it has been argued that Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur’s interest in hermeneutics was philosophically driven, not an attempt to establish a research methodology (Grondin, 1994). This would suggest that the theory of hermeneutics intrinsically is not a research methodology or method, but one that can be adapted and applied in a creative and imaginative way, which can be challenging, especially for a novice researcher.



A further complexity which arises from this historicity is the inherent variance in how different researchers implement the method. This leads to a lack of consistency in hermeneutic approach among researchers in contrast to other approaches such as systematic reviews. The results of this is that hermeneutic researchers, especially novice researchers, can spend significant time and energy finding their own methods and procedures with little guidance from the literature. As can be seen in my own process, I did not follow the exact steps of any other researcher, but had to discover and evolve the approach to best fit with my own process and that of the unfolding research.

A contrasting critique of the hermeneutic approach is from a heuristic perspective. According to Moustakas (1990) heuristic inquiry seeks to illuminate and answer a question that has had personal relevance and significance to the researcher, and thus involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery. What Moustakas is describing here, is that in a heuristic inquiry the self of the researcher is readily present, and there is a personal involvement throughout the process. Moustakas also explained that in heuristic research the research question flows out the researcher's inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration. From this perspective, it could be argued that a heuristic perspective would allow a greater ownership of my "historicity" than the hermeneutic approach.

While the heuristic approach would embrace the personal it would not support the interpretive aspect. With the hermeneutic approach I would not rely principally on my own experiences and understandings, but on the understandings of others. I wanted my prejudices and understandings to be challenged and confronted by others. I am at a nascent stage of my psychotherapy development in a forensic context, and I believe it is more expedient that I expand my understandings in the intersubjective sphere through a dialectical and dialogical encounter with literature, as opposed to my own subjective experiences.

## **Summary**

This chapter focused on the theoretical underpinnings and practical processes involved in this study. I identified with the interpretive paradigm and explained why it was well-suited for my research study. I presented hermeneutics as my methodology and discussed some concepts and ideas belonging to the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer and Ricoeur. Lastly, I described

my research process and discussed limitations of hermeneutic research. In the next chapter, I will present the findings of my study.

## Chapter IV

### Human or Monster or Both?

Even the most sadistic and destructive man is  
human, as human as the saint

— Erich Fromm (1973, p. 9).

Plenty of humans were monstrous, and plenty of  
monsters knew how to play at being human.

— Victoria Schwab (2013, p. 289).

### Introduction

Throughout history the term monster has been used as a metaphor in language and culture to symbolise different aspects of human experience. For example, Shakespeare's *Othello* in describing jealousy referred to it as the green-eyed monster, alluding to the perils that may arise as a result of jealousy (Smith, 2005).

Foucault (1999/2003) believed that in modern times, the social construct in Western society is that "monstrosity is systematically suspected of being behind criminality. Every criminal could well be a monster" (pp. 81-82). It is therefore not surprising that in the literature that I came across, these two terms; criminal and monster, were often used interchangeably, a position I have adopted. In this study, however, the metaphor monster is specifically used as it relates to individuals who have committed a crime(s) of violence as opposed to non-violent crime(s).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the metaphor monster is **not** only reserved for those who are diagnostically considered violent psychopaths<sup>4</sup> – i.e. those with a need to exert power and control violently, lack a conscience and feel no remorse, have a higher than average threshold for pleasurable excitement, are grandiose and narcissistic, may lack anxiety, and their sense to

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<sup>4</sup> Meloy (1992) defined a psychopath as someone with a deviant developmental disturbance characterised by a disproportionately large amount of instinctual aggression and the absence of an object relational capacity to bond to another. The revised Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R) which consists of 20 personality and behavioural items developed by Robert Hare is an assessment tool used to diagnose psychopathy (Hare, Harpur, Hakstian, Forth & Hart, 1990). From a psychoanalytic perspective however, McWilliams (2011) noted that the essence of a psychopathic psychology is the organising preoccupation of 'getting over on' or intentionally manipulating others. That it has nothing to do with overt violence or criminality but everything to do with internal motivation.

feel fear is inhibited (McWilliams, 2011). It is argued that a neighbour, a friend, a family member, a spouse could be framed or characterised with the metaphor monster following a violent act. An example of this can be seen in the incidence of the mass tragedy and horrific act of violence which happened in Florida, US, carried out by a young man, 19 years-old. This young man went into his former high school and fired several rounds of bullets, killing 17 people and wounding others. Days later, the family that took the young man into their home said in an interview with a mass media outlet, the *Sun Sentinel*, “we had this monster living under our roof and we didn't know” (McMahon, 2018, para. 3).

Adopting the metaphor monster to characterise the violent offender is, however, not without its ethical and moral challenges. In my case, for instance, prior to embarking on this study I held an ethical and moral stance that it was inappropriate and wrong to characterise another human being as a monster because of the violent act he perpetrated. I would often cringe when I heard it used by others in my profession. However, as I engaged with the literature, my aversion to the metaphor monster softened.

The quotes at the start of this chapter by Fromm (1973) and Schwab (2013) allude to the dialectic *play* vis-à-vis the violent offender as human or monster or both, and how we grapple with making sense of violent individuals, as well as making sense of what about them scares us, horrifies us, disgusts us, and yet, captivates our attention. This chapter presents the findings from my study. In the spirit of hermeneutics, this inquiry looks into the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender, and invites us to a dialectic engagement aimed at revealing meaning, provoking thinking and, in turn, increasing our understanding regarding an aspect of human experience. I will now begin with a discussion on violent perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

#### **4.1. The ‘Monsters’ who Committed Crimes against Humanity**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were several individuals, dictators, such as, Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Joseph Stalin, and Saddam Hussein, who were framed as monsters because of the heinous crimes of violence they committed against others and humanity (Zimbardo, 2007). In the literature Adolf Hitler, who was the Chancellor of Germany and leader of the Nazi Party, is considered as perhaps the most infamous of these individuals for his role in WWII and the Holocaust (the systematic persecution and genocide of Jews), as well as the deaths of

countless people around the world (Fromm, 1973; Kurlander, 2017; Zimbardo, 2007). How is it possible for a man like Hitler, who it is said orchestrated the mass killings of so many people, be nothing but a monster? After all, his capacity for evil and destructiveness, Fromm (1973) noted was not in doubt.

Another man, who had great capacity for evil and destructiveness was Pol Pot, a Cambodian dictator and revolutionary. He was the leader of *Khmer Rouge* (Cambodian communists and followers of the Cambodian communist party of Kampuchea). Pol Pot is said to have been responsible for the genocide of approximately 1.7 million Cambodian people (Zimbardo, 2007). Like Hitler, Pol Pot's actions were considered as *crimes against humanity*, and his evil had no limits.

The notion that a man has committed crimes against humanity seems to me to convey the ultimate representation of the monstrous. Only a monster would violently attack humanity. Is it rational and appropriate that Hitler, Pol Pot, and other dictators like them are framed as monsters for their violence? Yet, were these individuals, up to a point, not regarded as human beings? Should they not be considered as human in spite of their violence?

Hinton (2016), specifically looked at this dialectic as represented in the title of his book *Man or monster? The trial of Khmer Rouge torturer*. Hinton described the court hearings of Kaing Guek Eav aka 'Duch' (see Figure 3), who ran a prison where he tortured and executed over 12,000 people during the dictatorship of Pol Pot. During the Khmer Rouge dictatorship, from 1975 - 1979, Duch was known as a loyal and trusted Khmer Rouge, and later became the chairman of the S-21 (security centre known as Tuol Sleng). However, in the years that followed the Khmer Rouge rule, before he was arrested in 2007, Duch was a teacher, a father of four children, and a widower (Hinton, 2016).

I found Hinton's (2016) account of the Duch's opening remark rather thought-provoking. Hinton wrote that Duch said; "I wish to apologise" (p. 44). I wondered, does a monster apologise? Hinton went on to say that Duch further stated; "I know that the crimes I committed against the lives of those people, including women and children, are intolerably and unforgivably serious crimes. My plea is that you leave the door open to me to seek forgiveness" (p. 44). Again, I wondered, does a monster seek forgiveness?

On one hand, the crimes against men, women, children, old and young that Duch openly admitted to in his trial made me feel repulsed. I sensed the hate towards him, and the fear of him. Perhaps he was a monster, inhuman (Hinton, 2016). On the other hand, Duch in the years after the Khmer Rouge became a teacher and a family man. He offered an apology and expressed a desire to be forgiven. He showed contrition and vulnerability, if his plea were considered to be sincere. One might see these things as an indication of being human. This again raises the complexity of the dialectic between human and monster in relation to the violent individual. So, was Duch (see Figure 3) human, a monster, or both?



Figure 3: Kaing Guek Eav aka Duch during his trial in February 17, 2009. Reprinted from *Man or Monster? The trial of Khmer Rouge torturer* (p. 47), by A. L. Hinton, 2016, Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Reprinted with permission Copyright 2009 by ECCC Photo.

#### 4.2. Are 'Monsters' Human?

The dichotomy of human and monster is one that appears on the surface to be unambiguous. But is it? Douard and Schultz (2013) showed that the violent offender is framed as a monster so as to dehumanise him, to define him as an *other*, as *not us*. His humanity is denied, and he is "excluded from the moral order of being a human person" (Zimbardo, 2007, p. 307). The violent offender is perhaps no longer seen to be human because he has perpetrated what another considers outside the realm of humanness. This, however, raises the question whether the violent act (e.g. murder) that led to the violent offender being characterised as a monster is an inhuman act or a human act. If we assume it is a human act, this then invites us to ask what it really means to be human. Is there a chasm or a congruence between human and monster?

According to Asma (2009) some people believe that having emotions represents a vital element of being human. Therefore, the idea that the violent offender is human may be unacceptable to those who equate emotions with being human. Zimbardo (2007) noted that in an attempt to dehumanise the *other*, there is not only the attribution of animal-like qualities to the person, but there is a denial of the existence of human emotions, there is a denial of his human essence. He called this a form of “emotional prejudice” (Zimbardo, p. 312). Consequently, it could be argued that when a person is perceived to have no emotions because of the violence that was perpetrated, it becomes much easier to frame him as a monster. With certain victims, however, the metaphor monster goes to the level of being made concrete.

The metaphor monster being concretised suggests that the symbolic quality the metaphor holds is lost or perhaps denied in the psychic process of the person calling the violent individual a monster (Campbell & Enckell, 2005). Thus, when the monster metaphor is used as a figure of speech (involving comparison), the person would conclude that the violent individual is *not like a monster, but actually a monster*. It could be argued that the concretisation of the metaphor monster tells us more about the psychic process and the reality of the person labelling the violent offender a monster, and less about the violent offender.

Asma (2009) also discussed the idea, held by some, that having emotions alone is not enough to qualify as human, as animals have emotions too. However, the capacity for empathy is something that separates human from other animals and beasts; that separates human from monster. Empathy in this context is defined as a person’s ability to put himself in the shoes of another (Bolognini, 2004). Therefore, since the violent offender’s act is seen to be without empathy or compassion, he is therefore a monster, and not human. This seems to suggest that being human is to be humane. To have the capacity for empathy and perhaps compassion. To be human is thus equated to being ‘good’.

Fromm (1973) asserted that “even the most sadistic and destructive man is human, as human as a saint” (p. 9). It seems to me that what Fromm is saying is that a person’s humanity or humanness is not determined by his violent actions and therefore the ‘monster’ is human. Fromm also seems to be inviting us to think about how we define humanity, and whether it precludes the monstrous. Similarly, Douard and Schultz (2013) were of the view that the fact is that violent offenders are human beings even though their actions could be described as

monstrous. Fromm and Douard and Schultz it would seem do not link the violent offender's humanity to his emotional essence and empathy or lack thereof.

Another interesting point that emerges from the literature, as it pertains to the characterisation of the violent offender as a monster and not human, is the self-deception or denial that the violent offender is different from everyman - that they are dissimilar to the ordinary person, and that "we" could never be "them". I wonder if perhaps this presents the illusion that the violent offender actually looks like a monster with horns, as we see in the movies. It seems to me that failing to see the 'monster' as human may lead to denying the dangerousness of those closer to us who perpetrate violence, until severe harm is done, and it is too late. Like Schwab (2013) stated "plenty of humans were monstrous, and plenty of monsters knew how to play at being human" (p. 289). Some women may deny the violence of their male partners, and vice versa, and some parents may deny the dangerousness of their children because they are 'not like those monsters'. This begs the question, how quickly do we characterise as monsters those we have no connection with compared to people closer to us? Perhaps a neighbour, a friend, a father, a mother, an aunt or uncle, a husband or wife. .

Statistics in New Zealand highlight that the violent offender may be much closer to most people than they would like to admit. A report from the Family Violence Review Committee (2017) indicated that about 40% of the murders in New Zealand between 2009 – 2015 were committed by a person identified as family. The Committee reported that there were 194 family violence deaths, 92 of those deaths, a product of intimate partner violence. The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse (2017) reported that in 2016 there were 118,910 family violence investigations by the New Zealand Police, and that 41% of frontline Police Officer's time was spent responding to family violence. Also, the New Zealand Police (n.d.) have noted that the majority of the sexual assaults (e.g. rape) committed are perpetrated by people known to their victims, some of which include family relations, friends. or colleagues. An article in the New Zealand Herald (2015) headlined: Most violence is committed by someone you know. It was reported then that the victim in 69% of the cases knew the perpetrator, and in 44% of the cases the perpetrator was a family member.

This point was also highlighted in a novel authored by Sebold (2002b), *The lovely bones*, which was about a young girl who was raped and murdered by her neighbour. I should note that



Sebold (2002a) herself, when she was 17 years old was brutally beaten and raped; and acknowledged that her own experience inspired her novel. In her memoir about her experience, Sebold (2002a) wrote, "in my mind, the rapist had murdered me on the day of the rape" (p. 91). In Sebold's (2002b) novel, the neighbour who raped and murdered the young girl was known to her and her family and although he was considered odd, no one ever suspected he was violent because of his demeanour. Consequently, as shown in the book, there were no alarm bells ringing in the young girl's ears, until it was too late. Perhaps, if he looked like a monster, scary and revolting, she may have avoided him and possibly her fate could have been different; rather he looked like a human person.

Lastly, why does it matter whether the violent offender is perceived as human or seen only as a monster? Zimbardo (2007) says it matters because it influences the way the violent offender is treated. Zimbardo noted it is easier to be callous towards dehumanised individuals, and referred to the experiment designed by Albert Bandura and his students that demonstrated the power dehumanising epithets have in fostering harm against others. In the experiment, labels attributed to a group of subjects unconsciously influenced the way the subjects were treated (Zimbardo, 2007). The experiment seemed to suggest that if the goal is to dehumanise the violent offender, the monster metaphor helps to achieve that. However, if the goal is not to dehumanise the violent offender, then his humanness would need to be acknowledged.

#### **4.3. Violent Offenders as 'Monsters' in Society and the Mass Media**

Asma (2009) pointed out that it is commonplace for individuals who have committed acts of violence such as, murder, domestic abuse, and rape to be branded as monsters by the media and by society as a whole. Douard and Schultz (2013) made a similar observation noting that society is often eager to label as monsters people who have perpetrated violent crimes. Valier (2004) noted that outraged talk about violence causes members of a community to bond together. According to Douard and Schultz, the metaphor monster provides the cognitive basis for solidarity against a dangerous outsider; there is a joining together, a "social unity" (p. 62) to collectively dehumanise and frame violent offenders as monsters.

Kennedy (2000) wrote about this "social unity" and solidarity as it pertains to the violent offender and his framing as a monster. He queried why society is so eager to believe in monsters. In Kennedy's view, tensions, divisions, and changes within the social and economic structure of a

society evoke anxieties in people, and violent offenders serve as a rallying cry, as a means to help bring about cohesion in that society. Interestingly, Kennedy's notion regarding 'cohesion' led me to think about the 'Me Too' movement in the US, a social campaign that first began in 2006 to promote empowerment through empathy.

In 2017, the 'Me Too' movement grew and expanded significantly. Some observers and proponents of the movement have explained that the expansion was due to many women who came out to tell their stories of sexual harassment and assault by men; men whom some in the media have labelled as monsters. Yet, it is conceivable that this social solidarity against the perpetrators of sexual harassment and assaults was in part due to the rising tensions, divisions, and changes within the political and social structure in the US, following the departure of Barack Obama from the Office of the President of the US.

Douard and Schultz (2013) pointed to another possible explanation for the framing of violent offenders as monsters by society. They reasoned that it is not only to exclude the person from the human community, but to ease any anxiety that the violent offender is not so different from us. This suggests that it would be almost unthinkable for some people, who abide by the law of their society, who claim to be righteous and virtuous, to accept that they are no different from the violent offender who has committed monstrous crimes.

White (1923) echoed a similar notion to Douard and Schultz (2013), noting that the attack on the criminal is an effort to rid us of the criminality that resides within us<sup>5</sup>. White wrote:

The criminal thus becomes the handy scapegoat upon which he can transfer his feeling of his own tendency to sinfulness and thus by punishing the criminal he deludes himself into a feeling of righteous indignation, thus bolstering up his own self-respect and serving in roundabout way, both to restrain himself from like indulgences and to keep himself upon the path of cultural progress. (p. 13)

The violent offender, by being made the monster, becomes the "scapegoat for our anxieties about our own deep-seated deviances from normal" (Douard & Schultz, 2013, p. 4). The deviances that we may be too ashamed to admit to ourselves. The thoughts that we have that we sometimes split off from ourselves or that we rationalise. For example, a woman who wishes death or thinks of killing her friend so that she could possess her friend's spouse. The origin of the scapegoat might be found in the book of Leviticus 16:8-10 in the Old Testament of the Bible

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<sup>5</sup> Later in this chapter, the notion of the criminality that resides within man will be explored further in the section '*The Monster Within*'

(King James Version). It is noted that every year an animal, a goat, carries the sins of the people and is cast away into the wilderness to die. This is perhaps not so dissimilar to the violent offender being framed a monster and then isolated from society.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Waddell (1998) described the concept of scapegoating as an active process, whereby a group of people (society) disavows or evacuates unacceptable aspects of themselves, as they locate those aspects in another and then persecute him. This other becomes the storehouse for feelings and thoughts which they cannot acknowledge as part of themselves.

#### **4.4. Mass Media and Media-framing**

Wardle (2004) looked at media coverage of 12 cases of child murders in the US and the UK across three historical periods; 1930s, 1960s, and 1990s. Wardle observed that there was a broad characterisation of violent offenders as 'monsters'. In New Zealand society, there have been multiple instances, in recent years, where the media has also depicted violent offenders as monsters.

For example, the headline *'Self-centred monster' Lionel Patea had a long history of violence* (2017), appeared on the Radio New Zealand webpage. Lionel Patea was a man who it was reported brutally murdered the mother of his child, Tara Brown. Another example was Jason Lee Stroobant, 20 years-old, who was also labelled a monster by the media for the sexual violation and brutal murder of an elderly woman. He was convicted in 2017 and received a life sentence (Leask, 2017). There was also the headline on the NZ Herald webpage, it stated: *Amanda Watt calls for 'monster' Hayden Taylor to remain behind bars* (Men-Yee, 2017), Hayden Taylor had a prior conviction of rape, and was later convicted for the murder of Nicola Rankin. And the list goes on.

Wardle's (2004) observation is significant because of the influence mass media has both on the individual psyche and the collective psyche of society; and, in turn, its consequent effect on social policies and legislation. Douard and Schultz (2013) reasoned that there is an impact on the conceptions of the human experience as a result of the metaphor of the monstrous. They argued that although the feelings of fear, horror, disgust that accompany the metaphor monster are powerful and intense, what affects our lives on a day-day basis is how the term is used as a

source of media framing (i.e. how the media represent a specific topic, by drawing attention to specific issues at the expense of others), public policy and the law.

Hodgkinson, Prins, and Stuart-Bennett (2017) also argued that mass media depictions of the serial killer and the overabundance of true-crimes account that proliferate popular culture is progressively influencing public perception concerning violent offenders. They were of the opinion that these depictions are often melodramatic with the intention of provoking outrage, at the expense of accuracy. In Asma's (2009) view, the media has a simplistic view of the violent offender and have a part in overdramatising the violent offender and closing off real understanding. Asma reported that in a conversation with a judge, the judge said that when media cover crimes stories, they neglect to give attention to the complexities, they dehumanise the violent offender and transform him into a monster.

Although, Hodgkinson et al. (2017), Asma (2009), and others pointed out media framing of violent offenders in Western society, there is evidence that victims of violent perpetrators, using the mass media platform, also readily employ the metaphor monster. An article in *The Sun* reported the account of a female victim of domestic violence. In the article it was reported that the victim said "he [victim's ex-partner] was an absolute monster and it took me months to get over things in the past about him. I hope he rots in a cell" (Monster's history of violence, 2017, para. 5-6).

During the writing of this study, there was a story in the media about a US White House aide, Rob Porter. He resigned from his position as news broke that in the past he had physically assaulted his two ex-wives. An article in the *Daily Mail* reported that one of his ex-wives said that Rob Porter choked and punched her. She stated, "he can go from being the sweetest kindest person to a complete abusive monster in minutes" (Boyle & Crane, 2018, para. 66). These are a few examples of victims telling their stories, speaking of how they experienced their attackers. Perhaps, the metaphor monster is the only way some victims can make sense of the person who violently violated and dehumanised them.

#### **4.5. The Monstrosity of Punishment – Society as Monster**

Valier (2004) opined that in Western societies, violence control and practices within penal institutions unfold in the shadow of monstrosities. In Valier's (2004) view macabre images of violence and the fear it generates become inseparable from the attributed meanings of crime

and punishment, and essential to their symbolic power. Society and the mass media, as mentioned in the previous section, possess an enormous power to influence how the law responds to the violent offender; which can mean the difference between treatment or punishment.

Foucault (1999/2003) was of the view that the dichotomy between treatment and punishment needed to be clearly distinguished in response to the violent offender. In New Zealand, and most Western societies, these two different pathways (treatment and punishment) exist, and a violent offender could go the treatment pathway (hospital) if he is judged as 'mad' or the punishment pathway (prison) if he is judged as 'bad'.

Nonetheless, these two pathways may be viewed as not being mutually exclusive, as a violent offender could receive treatment as well as be punished for his actions. This is the practice in New Zealand prisons, where various forms of treatment (e.g. alcohol and drug counselling, anger management, psychotropic medications, violent offender rehabilitative and work programmes, etc.) are offered to offenders. Correspondingly, some violent offenders who are treated in hospital subjectively experience being in hospital as punishment, an understanding I have come to know through my experience as a forensic clinician. I have listened to a number of offenders express their preference for prison because there is a precise sentence end date, whereas in a forensic hospital the end date is sometimes unknown, which for some is seen as much worse and a psychological punishment.

Generally speaking, victims and society usually call for punishment rather than treatment of the violent offender (Booth, 2015), who by all account is declared an *enemy* (Zimbardo, 2007) by society regardless of whether he is 'mad' or 'bad'. Foucault (1999/2003) wrote; "as a being of a monstrous nature and the enemy of the whole society, should not society get rid of him without calling upon the might of the law" (p. 96). This seems to point to a strong desire by society to punish the violent offender regardless of the law.

The punishment brought upon the violent offender was described as violent by Gilligan (2000). Gilligan described punishment of the violent offender as violence sanctioned and carried out by courts of law and legal authorities. He called it the "violence of punishment" (Gilligan, p. 139). Menninger (1968) called it the *crime of punishment*. According to Foucault (1999/2003), prior to contemporary times (medieval times), punishment was the re-actualisation and re-presentation

of the crime. Hence, if a monstrous crime was committed, the punishment was in kind, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', or perhaps even greater so as to deter future crimes.

Furthermore, Gilligan (2000) argued that from a life and death perspective, the 'death penalty' (capital punishment), which is currently the law in 31 out of 50 states in the US, is just as cruel as murder. Gilligan stated that "a man is just as dead if he is killed by the state as he is if killed by a murderer" (p. 139). What Gilligan seems to be suggesting here is that violence is violence irrespective of whether it is legal or not. By the same token, a monstrous act is a monstrous act regardless of whether it is sanctioned by law.

Gilligan's (2000) argument concerning punishment as violence, led me to reflect on the practice of disciplinary segregation or solitary confinement in prisons, where a person is confined for extended periods without human contact. In my opinion, this practice under different circumstances could be regarded as torture, dehumanising, and monstrous. Take for instance an innocent person kidnapped and locked in a room for days, without sunlight. It is no surprise that some offenders I have worked with, who have experienced this form of punishment, communicated to me that they first experienced auditory and visual hallucinations whilst being confined.

The dehumanising nature of confinement might explain why efforts are being made in New Zealand to improve processes and minimise seclusion practices in psychiatric and forensic hospitals (O'Hagan, Divis, & Long, 2008). Perhaps, just as beheadings, burning humans alive, and other grotesque and cruel punishments in the Middle ages have now been eradicated in Western society, and the death penalty in some, so might current punishments like solitary confinement be brought to an end in the future.

#### **4.6. Violent Offenders as 'Monsters' and Treatment**

Marshall (1996), a psychologist with decades of experience treating sexual offenders opined that offenders should be described neither as monsters nor victims, but considered as any *other client*, as "everyman" (p. 322). Marshall explained that the actions of violent offenders do not make them monsters, a view that is shared by Douard and Schultz (2013) and Fromm (1973). Marshall further noted that clinicians working with violent offenders should have compassion for the person but abhor their actions.

Marshall (1996) argued that “it is quite possible for a genuinely compassionate person, as all therapists should be, to hold these two conceptualisations” (p. 319). In essence, what Marshall is saying here is that having compassion for the violent offender and abhorring his actions are not mutually exclusive. Marshall’s call for compassion for the violent offender seemed to differ to what was proposed by Weldon (1997). Weldon did not talk about compassion for the violent offender, but about understanding of the violent act, arguing that understanding the violent act is not condoning it.

Furthermore, Marshall (1996) emphasised the importance of empathy and having a therapeutic relationship as crucial to the treatment of violent offenders and contended that viewing the offender as a monster was countertherapeutic and counterproductive. He stated that in his experience clinicians who view violent offenders as monsters treat the offenders in a punitive, and dangerously confrontational manner, with little regard for their human dignity; thus rendering treatment ineffective. This seems to be in agreement with Zimbardo’s (2007) view, who, I noted earlier, contended that it is easier to be *callous to dehumanised individuals*, and supported his argument with the experiment undertaken by Bandura and his students.

It follows then that Marshall’s (1996) contention is that a psychotherapist is more likely to act on his negative countertransference of horror, fear, and disgust if he consciously, and I might add, or unconsciously views the offender as a monster. This however raises the question that if a violent offender is perceived as a monster by a psychotherapist, is it possible, or does it matter, for the psychotherapist to have empathy and compassion for the ‘monster’ in order to treat him? It begs the question whether a psychotherapist can treat a violent offender effectively even though he perceives him as a monster?

It could be argued that from a psychotherapy perspective the question is more about whether or not the psychotherapist is capable of becoming aware of, containing (Bion, 1962), and processing the powerful negative countertransference that is evoked in him, and not act on it. Furthermore, it is worth considering whether Marshall’s (1996) view that violent offenders should not be seen as monsters closes the door to a deeper understanding with respect to the monstrous and working with violent offenders in psychotherapy. Consequently, understanding with regard to the phenomenon of the monster in relation to the violent offender remains hidden and ignored in the psychotherapy process.

Another author, and a psychotherapist, Gwen Adshead (2013) wrote about the usefulness of violent offenders constructing “redemption narratives” (p. 13), which she described as the narrative process whereby people come to understand their bad experiences in terms of positive as well as negative outcomes. Speaking on narratives, Adshead went on to say that it is “only by accepting and narrating the monster within can it be transformed” (p. 13). This would seem to suggest that Adshead recognised the importance of meeting the monster, although in her view, the monster is within the violent offender. Here Adshead introduces the notion of the *monster within*. In any case, it could be noted that Adshead’s position contrasts to Marshall’s (1996) view of the clinician distancing himself from the monster metaphor.

I found Adshead’s (2013) view that the *monster within* the violent offender can be transformed rather thought-provoking. Transformed into human perhaps? As I thought of transformation of a monster, my thoughts went to the fairy-tale story of *Beauty and the Beast*, where the beast transforms back into a human being. Does this imply that Adshead is of the opinion that the *monster within* is an anomaly, not part of the violent offender’s humanity? Could it be argued that the monster within the violent offender does not need to be transformed but requires to be integrated into his whole personality? This was an invitation to me to inquire about my final theme *the monster within*.

#### **4.7. The Monster Within**

I would like to begin here with one of Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1886/1966) aphorisms, which cautioned that “he who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze in thee” (p. 83). Nietzsche’s admonition is one that prompts me to think about the evil of which human beings are capable. Take for instance the idea of vengeance or retribution, which a number of victims and their families seek when they have been harmed.

Personally, I recall the desire for revenge that I had when, after being extorted for money, I was brutally beaten and kicked repeatedly by a senior student at boarding school; a desire that lingered for several years. In my personal and work experience, I have come to know people who became violent offenders because they avenged a wrong that was done to them or a family member, committing a violent act that they never thought they would have done otherwise, driven by the powerful emotions of fear and hate. Nietzsche thus prompts me to ask: Is



everyman capable of the monstrous as the violent offender? According to Zimbardo (2007), most people veil themselves under the egocentric biases that create the illusion that they are special. That they are not capable of such evil as perpetrated by some violent offenders.

Smith (2005), however, made the argument that there is a monster in all of us. That every human has the capacity for violence if sufficiently provoked and if certain circumstances (e.g. repeated sexual abuse, physical abuse, loss, etc.) are set in motion. Smith (2005) told the story of Aileen Wuornos, a woman who as a child was abandoned before she was two years old; had a father who committed suicide in prison while he was serving time for raping a seven-year old girl; raised by grandparents who were alcoholics, and physically and emotionally abused her.

At age 11 or 12, she began to prostitute herself, and by 13 she was raped by a family friend; she became pregnant and aborted the child, and her tragic story goes on. Aileen Wuornos later went on to murder seven men and received the death penalty for her actions. A movie titled *Monster* was made about her (Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) noted that according to Wuornos, her murders were acts of revenge. Perhaps, like Sebold (2002a), as mentioned earlier, she felt she was murdered the day she was raped.

Zimbardo (2007) pointed out that most people know themselves only from their limited experiences in familiar situations, and under different circumstances a part they never acknowledged is revealed. Smith (2005) also took an excerpt from Sebold's (2002b) novel to illustrate the capacity for violence in those who perhaps never imagined they were capable of violence. In the novel, Sebold wrote:

Part of me wished swift vengeance, wanted my father to turn into the man he could never have been – a man violent in rage. That's what you see in movies, that's what happens in the books people read. An everyman takes a gun or a knife and stalks the murderer of his family; he does a Bronson on them and everyone cheers. (p. 58)

Sebold (2002a) herself, in reference to the man who beat and raped her, wrote in her memoir; "now I was going to murder him back. Make my hate large and whole" (p. 91). Unlike Wuornos, Sebold did not go on to murder men. Here, we see why Nietzsche (1886/1966) wrote those words of caution. Furthermore, Nietzsche brought my attention to how some viewers react to evil characters who murder, torture, and commit horrible acts, in movies and TV shows. Some viewers feel enraged by the violent acts of fictional characters and feel relieved and cheerful

when those evil characters are punished or killed. Those viewers' equilibrium is only restored when there is retribution.

Consequently, some viewers admire characters who carry out monstrous acts of violence in the name of retribution or 'doing good' for the public. What does this say about those viewers?

Arellano (2015) referred to the admiration that some audiences have towards the character of Dexter Morgan, a self-described monster, in the TV show titled *Dexter*. Arellano invited us to think about how violence could become familiar, and in certain cases acceptable, and I might add encouraged. Clearly, viewers do not actually carry out violent act on others.

Notwithstanding, are the strong and intense feelings, thoughts, wishes and desires for vengeance that viewers experience in works of fiction (TV shows, novels, movies etc.) indicative of the monster within? Equally, are the feelings, thoughts, wishes, and desires for vengeance that victims experience indicative of the monster within?

Dixon (1986) reasoned that our attitude to criminals, particularly murderers, is closely related to the criminal in ourselves. He examined the idea of a person feeling guilty in his heart for a violent act, such as murder, when in fact, the person is innocent of the act. Dixon argued this idea by pointing to the example of Dmitri in the novel *Dostoyevsky's the brothers Karamazov* whom, according to Dixon, despite not having killed his father, felt guilty of the murder because of his long-standing hatred for him.

Perhaps, it is a secondary question whether or not the person carries out the act of killing. The monster within reveals itself in the wish to kill but is not made manifest in reality as most people are restrained by social norms or religious values or the law. However, I should point out that in some people the desire to enact revenge and kill the perpetrator is repressed in the unconscious, therefore unknown to the person. What I am suggesting here is that because a 'good' person is unaware of the monster within him does not mean the monster does not exist.

Reik (1932/1945) also argued that in all of us lies repressed or hidden impulses to murder, and that these impulses are revealed in our desire to find and punish the murderer. Reik wrote:

The horror of the crime, the desire for expiation, the urgent need to find the culprit, all these bear witness to a defence against his own repressed impulses. In the judge, the other legal functionaries, the public and all of us, the same unconscious tendencies that led to the murder are operative. (p. 236)

Ferenczi (1932/1995) made a thought-provoking entry in his clinical diary. Ferenczi writing about his desire to understand the behaviour<sup>6</sup> of a client whom he was seeing in analysis wrote that “I must look for the cause in my own repressed criminality. To some extent I admire the man who dares to do the things that I deny myself” (p.196). What Ferenczi seemed to be suggesting is that there is a criminality within, and that for some people it is repressed and for others, it is not. However, to acquire understanding concerning the criminal mind, or the monstrous mind, the psychotherapist may need to engage with his own ‘repressed monster’, with the monster within.

Ferenczi (1932/1995) shared a further reflection that left me curious and wondering. He wrote; “an interesting idea occurred to me today in connection with this man: I thought that he would physically attack me, and had the idea of carrying in my pocket my revolver that fires warning shots” (p. 196). It might sound unusual and odd to hear that one’s psychotherapist thought about bring a firearm to a psychotherapy session. Is it possible that Ferenczi’s idea of bringing a revolver into a session with a client originated from the repressed darkness within him in response to his hate and fear of the client?

Just as Ferenczi (1932/1995) noted his admiration for the man who dares to do the things he denies himself, Jung echoed a similar sentiment. Jung (1939/1989) stated:

You see, when a man commits murder, he has the advantage of us, because we have all wanted to do that. Once at least, in a moment of affect, everybody has wanted to murder his fellow man, but he could not because he was decent. And then comes that hell of a fellow who dares, and why should he do it when I couldn’t? We are all potential murderers. (p. 453)

Jung was telling us that every person has had the thought to take another man’s life; to murder. He argued that the desire to commit murder is “innate in us: it is in our blood” (Jung, p. 453), and that the only thing that prevents some from acting on this murderous impulse is the reasoning that it is morally wrong.

Costello (2002) contended that Jung’s concept of the *shadow* is related to man’s evil<sup>7</sup>, a view that is also shared by Casement (2006). According to Jung, the shadow is part of the *personal*

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<sup>6</sup> Ferenczi reported that the client cheated him with impudence. Although, his client’s behaviour may be seen as non-violent, it is my view that Ferenczi’s statement is relevant because he was making a broader point with regard to criminality.

<sup>7</sup> The *shadow* is not always evil or negative. Casement (2006) pointed out that the positive side of a person can live in the shadow if more of the positive side is repressed.

*unconscious*<sup>8</sup> and represents all that a person refuses to accept about himself (Casement, 2006). Jung (1970) himself stated that “in Hitler, every German should have seen his own shadow, his own worst danger” (p. 223).

Concerning Jung’s conceptualisation of the shadow, Costello (2002) wrote that “Jung regarded the shadow complex as representing first and foremost the personal unconscious.... The task incumbent upon us is to lessen the shadow’s power through its conscious assimilation, which is precisely what the criminal has failed to do” (p. 49). What Costello appears to be saying, from a Jungian perspective, is that the dark shadow, which is capable of heinous and monstrous acts, is less influential and potent if it is consciously known and integrated in the mind. Stevens (2006) believed that it is important to make the shadow conscious, while Costello (2002) emphasised the need to recognise, accept and own the dark shadow aspects of oneself, including the potential murderous monster that lurks within.

An added complexity which Costello (2002) pointed to was Jung’s idea of the *collective unconscious*. Jung (1970) was of the opinion that the personal unconscious does not completely capture the nature of the unconscious. Casement (2006) stated that the shadow is fused with, or merged with, the contents of the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is the part of the mind that is not a personal acquisition and has not been acquired through personal experience, like the personal unconscious (Hauke, 2006). The contents have never been in consciousness, they are neither repressed nor forgotten. The contents, known as archetypes<sup>9</sup> make up the collective unconscious and owe their existence to a form of heredity (Hauke, 2006). According to Costello (2002), one of such archetypes is the archetype of Evil or Satan or, I will add, the archetypal figure of the Monster.

It would seem that the literature is inviting us to consider what it means to be human as we become aware of the monster within, as represented by the dark shadow and the archetype of monster. Perhaps, we are also being invited to consider the complex relationship within us between the concepts morality and depravity, between the concepts of good and evil, or what we perceive to be good and evil (Jung, 1960). Lastly, it is worth noting that Freud himself theorised the duality of human nature, recognising not only a ‘good’ part, but also a ‘dark’ and

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<sup>8</sup> The *personal unconscious* according to Jung (1970) is personal because it consists entirely of acquisitions deriving from personal life.

<sup>9</sup> Stevens (2006) believed that in Jung’s theory, the archetypes of the collective unconscious provide the basic themes of human life on which each individual worked out his own sets of variations

'evil' part of human personality (Costello, 2002, Fromm, 1973). According to Fromm (1973), Freud's revolution was to make man recognise the unconscious aspect of the mind and the energy which man uses to "repress the awareness of undesirable desires" (p. 79). A deeper exploration of these concepts is well beyond the scope of this study.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender. The complexity of the human and monster construct was explored and the framing of the violent offender as monster in society and by the mass media was also discussed; as was the idea of punishment as violence was discussed. Following this, I examined the notion of the monster within us. In the next chapter, I will discuss my findings and consider the implications of these findings in the discipline of psychotherapy.

## Chapter V

### Discussion and Conclusion

#### Introduction

I embarked on a hermeneutic journey with the quest of exploring the place of emotional healing for violent offenders. In hindsight, and because of my engagement with the literature, I realise that I wanted to argue for a place for emotional healing for violent offenders because it was an area I had considered was not adequately addressed in psychotherapy. The hermeneutic journey however took me through a completely unexpected direction, one that I could never have predicted. I did not envisage that I would arrive at where I eventually landed.

Where did I land? I landed seeking to understand more about the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender, which seemed to some extent antithetical to my initial intention. Through my dialectical and dialogical engagement with the literature, the back and forth motion Gadamer (1960/1995) wrote about, my interest progressed from being largely focused on healing to one around the metaphor monster. I traversed from a quite simplistic view to a more complex, convoluted, paradoxical, and nuanced one, which made me more interested about *meeting the monster*.

Through my engagement with the literature, I came to realise that the monster metaphor revealed understandings not just about violent offenders, but also about victims and their families. It also revealed understandings about us and our society that alarmed and stunned me. Surprisingly, the hermeneutic journey brought me to a place where I began to question constructs and ideas about humanity that I had held for a very long-time. From the findings, I discovered and was reminded that sometimes things are not as they appear.

In response to my research question “*what understandings does the literature reveal around the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender within the context of psychotherapy and the forensic arena?*” three main themes emerged from the findings, namely: *dichotomy of human and monster*; *disavowal of the monster within*; and *dehumanisation of the violent offender*. In this final chapter, my intention is to evaluate and discuss these themes and then draw inferences from the findings. I will discuss the significance of my findings as I outline the implications for the discipline of psychotherapy. Following this, I will discuss some strengths and

limitations of the study, and then conclude by offering my final thoughts with respect to my findings.

### **5.1. Dichotomy of Human and Monster**

A central theme that emerged within the findings of this study was the dichotomy of human and monster. This dichotomy invites the notion that the monster is the antithesis of the human person. If we consider that the human person is the antithesis of the monster then it seems reasonable to ask whether the violent offender is human, a monster, or both? The findings indicate that the answer to this question is complex. Besides this complexity, the findings show that the answer is subject to the meanings and understandings each of us give to experience, and that it is fundamentally ontological.

One of the most enlightening illuminations that emerged regarding this central theme was the contrasting views with respect to what it means to be human. On one hand, the findings showed that being human is often associated with qualities such as vulnerability, the presence of an emotional essence, the capacity for empathy, and the capacity for compassion. That to be *human is to be humane*; to be capable of, and to show goodness. It seems to me that perspective negates the humanness of the violent offender and suggests that it is fair to characterise him as a monster because he has perpetrated a heinous and horrible act, and therefore lacks the qualities of a human person. It further suggests that he is nothing but a monster, which implies that *he is not like a monster, but he is actually a monster*. This position where the metaphor monster becomes concretised (Campbell & Enckell, 2005) in such a manner may be held by some victims of violence who find it difficult to see any humanity in the perpetrator.

On the other hand, the findings suggest that in reality being human is not about being good or the lack thereof, that “even the most sadistic and destructive man is human, as human as a saint” (Fromm, 1973, p. 9). It suggests that violent offenders and even infamous dictators in history such as Hitler and Pol Pot who have committed some of the most heinous and monstrous acts in human history are as human as those who have not perpetrated violence. The inference I make here is that the violent offender’s humanness is not defined by his actions, either violent or not, and though he may be viewed as a monster, he is human, as human as you and I. This perspective appears to be a more biological one.

An interesting and different dynamic that emerged from the findings, as it pertains to the dichotomy of human and monster, was the notion that the violent offender is human because he has a dark part, a monster within. What do I mean by this? Basically, what I think the findings suggest here is that being human is fundamentally about the presence of the good and the evil parts. To be human is to have the conflict of parts. Conceivably, from this perspective one could argue that the violent offender is framed as a monster because there is an outward manifestation of the monster within him.

It seems to me from the findings that the dichotomy of human and monster is a construct that allows us to split good from evil, therein allows violent offenders to be declared as '*not us*'. The dichotomy of human and monster in terms of 'good people' and 'evil people' is inherently deceptive and dangerous because we are often drawn to judging a book by its cover. Schwab (2013) wrote that "plenty of humans were monstrous, and plenty of monsters knew how to play at being human" (p. 289). I also point to the account of a victim of domestic violence within the findings of *Mass media and Media-framing*, who stated that her husband could go from being the "sweetest kindest person to a complete abusive monster in minutes" (Boyle & Crane, 2018, para. 66).

Interestingly, the findings in "Are Monsters Human?" reveal that those we consider *like us*, those we often view as human, such as; a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a spouse, a friend may outwardly manifest the monster within. The findings pointed to the violence statistics in New Zealand where *most violence is committed by someone you know (2015)*, and that the victim in *69% of the cases knew the perpetrator, and in 44% of the cases, the perpetrator was a family member*. As enlightening and scary as these findings may be to some, what feels more alarming and frightening to me is the proposition of the monstrosity within our humanity, which essentially is a repudiation of the human versus monster dichotomy, thus making it a false dichotomy.

**The archetype of Monster:** I was surprised how the findings within the study, as it pertains to the dichotomy of human and monster, brought my attention both to the violent offender and to us. The findings drew me to the idea of the monster within being represented by the *archetype of Evil* (Costello, 2002) or the *archetype of Monster*, which is repressed in the unconscious; the collective unconscious (Jung, 1970). What emerged for me from the findings is the idea that



although we may not outwardly manifest the monster within like the violent offender, the archetype figure of the Monster manifests in other ways. It reveals itself when we watch movies, play video games, and read novels as we cheer when disliked or evil characters and virtual enemies are annihilated and destroyed.

The archetypal Monster may also reveal itself through a victim's thoughts, desires, and impulse for revenge on the perpetrator. The findings of *The Monster Within* highlighted Sebold's wish to murder the man who *brutally beat and raped* her. Likewise, my own experience of been *brutally beaten and kicked* while in boarding school highlighted my desire to enact revenge on my attacker. These examples I would argue reveal the archetypal Monster. Clearly Nietzsche (1886/1966) recognised this archetypal Monster and its potential for an outward manifestation when he said that "he who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze in thee" (p. 83). However, in a victim the archetypal Monster could be inhibited by *social norms, or religious values, or the law*, perhaps the fear of punishment. One could also assume that some victims are impeded by the lack of opportunity to carry out vengeance on the perpetrator.

Because revenge is not likely or possible for the victim, the law becomes the only recourse. The findings point to the victim, their families, and society's strong desire for the perpetrator to be punished (Booth, 2015). We seek punishment for the perpetrator, and do not oppose dehumanising and monstrous punishments, such as, solitary confinement – locking the violent offender in a cell for extended periods, depriving them of sunlight and human contact.

We may also call for the violent offender to be locked up and for the key to be thrown away. This was highlighted in the findings of *Mass media and Media-framing* where it was mentioned that a victim stated to the media, "I hope he rots in a cell" (Monster's history of violence, 2017, para. 5-6). Such punishment I contend would be considered monstrous if inflicted on an innocent person, but for the violent offender, who is not seen as an innocent person society construes it as appropriate and just, and the monstrosity of the punishment is seldom questioned. I will let you imagine what may be society's reaction if it was later discovered that the violent offender was innocent of the crime.

These findings lead me to wonder if punishment, particularly when it is agitated irresponsibly by *media framing* (Douard & Schultz, 2013; Hodgkinson et al., 2017) is another manifestation of

the archetypal Monster at a societal level. I must clearly state here that my wonderings are neither a judgement about the right or wrong of punishment, nor is it a suggestion that victims and their families cannot seek for the most severe punishment against those who have violently harmed them. Rather, my wonderings are intended to shed light to psychic processes and manifestations that may be hidden from our awareness.

What should I infer from these findings? I think it is reasonable to suggest that the monster within is not only manifested in the violent offender, but also manifested in us, and in society. Again, I am inclined to doubt the dichotomy of human and monster, and the polarity of 'us and them', which has created the chasm between society and violent offenders that appears to exist in Western culture. I contend that the dichotomy of human and monster is neither clear-cut nor black and white. The dichotomy of human and monster invites us to think about how we see ourselves and violent offenders, as well as how we relate to ourselves and violent offenders.

I come back to the question, is the violent offender human, a monster, or both? I do not think there is a definitive answer to this question; however my new understanding is that he is human with a monster within, and so are we. My view is that because the violent offender's dark part is manifested outwardly against the law, it leads to him being viewed different from us but, essentially, he is not. He becomes the monster we reject in ourselves or that we deny exists. This brings me to the second theme of this chapter.

## **5.2. Disavowal of the Monster Within Us**

Another significant theme that emerged from the findings of this study is around the difficulty in acknowledging the monster within us. What is being proposed here is that there is a distancing from the dark parts of humanity by society. In the findings of the study, two interesting dynamics in relation to this theme emerged. Firstly, we disavow the monster within us by denying the monster within the violent offender; and secondly, we disavow the monster within us by projecting the monster onto the violent offender.

Freud (1928) it appears was the first person to propose the concept of disavowal or denial as a psychic defence mechanism. Although Freud referred to disavowal as an unconscious process, disavowal in this context is considered both as an unconscious and a conscious process that aims to accomplish the negation of awareness of perceptions of inner and outer stimuli, such

as; feelings, thoughts, impulses, desires, and so on (Bibring, Dwyer, Huntington, & Valenstein, 1961; Jacobson, 1957; Linn, 1953).

If we consider the violent offender as a mirror by which we look at ourselves, our monster is reflected back to us. However, we may choose to deal with this reflection by denying the monster in the violent offender, denying his dark parts. In the findings of *Violent Offenders as Monsters and Treatment*, Marshall (1996) rejected the idea of viewing violent offenders as monsters. By adopting Marshall's position, it seems to me that we are then able to deny the dark part of our humanness, which then indicates that we are not vicious animals capable of horrific acts of violence and should not be afraid of each other. From this perspective, we see the violence committed by the violent offender only as an aberration.

I wonder whether this is why we are encouraged to separate the violent offender from his behaviour. For example, Marshall (1996) argued that we should have *compassion for the violent offender* while we loathe the behaviour. To illustrate this further, I draw from my experience in the Christian faith. Some Christians choose only to see the 'good' in people, attributing the violence to an external entity, the Devil. I am reminded of the numerous times I have heard some in the Christian faith talk about the Devil being responsible for the violent behaviour of a person, implicitly suggesting that being violent is not human. Here, the violent action of the offender is perceived as the Devil's doing, not the man. This perspective helps the Christian person maintain a sense of self-righteousness and the sense of purity in human beings.

The findings however point to a more pervasive dynamic in society; disavowing of the monster within us by projecting the monster onto the violent offender. The findings suggest that we hold a position of self-righteousness and superiority to the violent offender, and unconsciously designate him a scapegoat for our own monsters. The violent offender becomes the *scapegoat monster*, so that we can feel pure. Like the scapegoat in the book of Leviticus 16:8-10 in the Bible (King James Version), he is the sacrifice for society. It is important to mention that in the Bible it is noted that scapegoating was a recurring practice, perhaps it should be expected that every now and then we seek another violent offender on who we can project our monsters.

Waddell's (1998) description of a scapegoat seems to me to explain this dynamic of disavowing the monster by means of projection quite well. In the findings of *Violent Offenders in Society and the Mass Media* Waddell (1998) argued that society *disavows or evacuates unacceptable*

*aspects of themselves, as they locate those aspects in another and then persecute him, who becomes the storehouse for feelings and thoughts which they cannot acknowledge as part of themselves.* White (1923) also emphasised this dynamic in the findings when he noted that:

The criminal thus becomes the handy scapegoat upon which he can transfer his feeling of his own tendency to sinfulness and thus by punishing the criminal he deludes himself into a feeling of righteous indignation, thus bolstering up his own self-respect and serving in roundabout way, both to restrain himself from like indulgences and to keep himself upon the path of cultural progress. (p. 13)

The man who goes to war and kills those he considers as enemies can disavow the monster within himself. He is greeted as a hero on his return a contradiction to the dark part he refuses to accept in himself. The man who fights in a boxing ring and knocks his opponent out cold can also deny the dark part of himself. He is greeted as a champion and his victory may bring him large sums of money.

The soldier and the boxer are not framed as monsters, rather, their violence is framed by society in a positive way. What I infer from the findings is that by disavowing the monster within us we are able to hide from the complexity of our nature and our humanness, maintain the split between good and evil, and therefore dehumanise the violent offender. This brings me to the final theme of this chapter.

### **5.3. Dehumanisation of the Violent of Offender**

The findings of this study reveal the powerful influence inherent in the metaphor monster and its prevalent use in Western society today. The findings pointed to the idea that when the metaphor monster is employed in society it unequivocally symbolises the dehumanisation of the violent offender. Douard and Schultz (2013) noted that the violent offender is *framed as a monster so as to dehumanise him, to define him as an other*. What was surprising to me, however, was the depth and significance of this symbolism.

The findings of *Mass media and Media-framing* revealed that the metaphor monster has the power to negatively influence the way we relate to violent offenders. What is interesting is that its influence may be out of our awareness; that is, operating outside our consciousness. The findings indicated that there is *an impact on the conceptions of the human experience as a result of the metaphor* (Douard & Schultz, 2013). Its influence is, however, not limited to individuals in society, its influence according to Wardle (2004) has the potential to affect

policies, laws, legislation, and funding that essentially determine how a government deal with and react towards its violent offenders. It could perhaps be the difference between building more prisons and building more social housing. Also, it could be the difference between recommendation of harsher sentences and recommendation of psychotherapy treatment.

In the findings of *Are Monsters Human?* it was revealed that the violent offender's *humanity is denied him, and he is* "excluded from the moral order of being a human person" (Zimbardo, 2007, p. 307). It seems to me that he is transformed into a monster in the mind of society, and like the Beast in the fictional story of Beauty and the Beast he becomes a pariah, and a target for hate. The negation of the violent offender's humanness leads to a withdrawal of empathy and compassion for him. It is partly for this reason I believe Asma (2009) noted that we *close off any real understanding, and neglect to give attention to the complexities of his person*.

Douard and Schultz (2013) stated that the metaphor monster makes it possible for the violent offender to be excluded from the human community. I wonder if his exclusion from the human community communicates to him the idea that he is rejected and unloved by all. Therefore, he feels alone in the world, disconnected from society and disconnected from himself. This seems to speak to Fishman's (1978) contention that offenders endure more pain than most because they are rejected by their families, society, and themselves.

I am reminded of the many violent offenders I have worked with over the years who have spoken of feeling lost and dead inside, feeling alone in the world. This is particularly worth mentioning in relation to Māori particularly because they have consistently been disproportionately overrepresented in criminal justice system in New Zealand, in prisons as well as forensic hospitals (Department of Corrections, 2007; 2015). In Māori worldview, *whanaungatanga*, the sense of relationship and connection, is fundamentally essential to the person's place in the world (Durie, 2001). With a sense of disconnection from self, others, and the land the person feels psychologically and socially alienated, which can lead to substance use problems (Durie, 2001) and further violence.

Furthermore, the findings seem to suggest that the monster metaphor induces the notion that the violent offender is void of emotions, void of an emotional life. This reminds me of Gilligan's (2000) notion of violent offenders being "dead souls" (p. 45) which, according to Gilligan, emanated from the violent offender's early life experience of being physically abused, sexually

abused, neglected, and rejected. His view echoes the story of the serial murderer, Aileen Wournos whom I described in the findings of *The Monster Within* as having a very traumatic childhood of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. I wonder if this perceived lack of emotional life allows the violent offender to be treated like a caged animal in a zoo.

The findings of the study indicate that in an attempt to dehumanise the violent offender, there is the *attribution of animal like qualities* to him (Zimbardo, 2007). The findings of the study seem to suggest that the metaphor monster allows for the violent offender's human dignity to be stripped off him. However, because he is viewed as a monster, the violent offender is not just an animal, he is a predator looking for prey, and an enemy (Zimbardo, 2007); an enemy of the whole society (Foucault, 2003). Being an enemy, he evokes fear and the wish to annihilate in the consciousness of society, and perhaps this partly explains why he is related to in a callous, cruel, and insensitive manner even after the law and society say he has paid for his crime.

Looking at the findings that have emerged from this theme, it seems to me that the task of reintegrating the violent offender back into the society appears to be a difficult and problematic goal. Society has rejected him, framed him a monster, and treated him like an animal, and an enemy perhaps to the point where he has internalised these qualities, as he sees himself through the lens of society.

This makes me wonder whether this is partly why some violent offenders I have worked with say they feel out of place and do not belong in society, and why some reoffend so soon after returning into the community. For some of these violent offenders, particularly the repeat offenders, I wonder if at an unconscious level being in prison feels more like home where they are among those who they consider to be like them and can empathise with their inner reality.

From these findings, I have become more aware and curious about the lack of attention given to the dehumanising experiences violent offenders endure. I wonder about our expectation of reducing recidivism and rehabilitating violent offender considering the psychological mark the monster metaphor leaves on them. This leaves me to ponder on Gilligan's (2000) description of violent offenders as dead souls, and the hope that they may one day feel alive again.

#### 5.4. Implications for Psychotherapy

The important question to answer now is of what significance are these new understandings for the discipline of psychotherapy, particularly with respect to violent offenders? What do these new understandings that emerged from the findings mean for my practice?

From a practice perspective, the study calls into question how I and other psychotherapists consciously and unconsciously view the violent offender and to what degree do our perceptions impact our relationship with the violent offender. It also calls into question how much influence society's view of the violent offender influences our treatment approach of the violent offender.

It seems important for us, psychotherapists, to make a conscious effort to assess within ourselves our relationship to the metaphor monster because we may be caught in the web of the dichotomy of human and monster without even knowing it. We may be unaware that we perceive the violent offender as an *other*, as an enemy to be feared and dehumanised.

Perhaps, this is reflective of the current paradigm in psychotherapy for violent offenders, where the central focus is the violent act. The violent offender is assessed, understood, and treated in the context of his violent act (Weldon, 1998; Yakeley, 2010). I wonder if by adopting this seemingly narrow approach we psychotherapists disavow our own criminality, and the monster within us, and may potentially become society's tool in enacting and maintaining the dehumanisation of the violent offender. I am reminded of a number of clients I have worked with who noted the multiple times they have had to talk about their violent act, and how they get tired of talking about it and how they feel reduced to their crime.

I should make it clear that I am not suggesting that the violent act of the offender should not be addressed in psychotherapy, my contention is regarding the narrowness and one-dimensionality of the psychotherapy process when it comes to violent offenders. Interestingly, Freud (1904/1959) stated that one should not allow the morbid condition blind one in making an estimate of the patient's total personality. In this context, the violent act of a patient is considered to be the morbid condition.

The metaphor monster as we have repeatedly indicated symbolises the danger and risk the violent offender poses, and also symbolises his dehumanisation. However, the experience of dehumanisation of the violent offender is an area that appears to be inadequately addressed or

completely ignored. It is possible that some in society may argue that the trauma of punishment and the trauma of being treated less than human should be ignored in psychotherapy, that the primary consideration or only consideration should be the safety of the public.

I would contend that by addressing his dehumanisation, one is able to access the violent offender's emotional life, as the violent offender is held empathically in the psychotherapist's mind as a human person with self-worth and someone to be understood. I wonder if by being thought of and held in the psychotherapist's mind in this way, the violent offender may grow to recognise his humanness with all the dark parts. Hepburn (1992) noted that for growth to happen the client needs to be held in mind. Hepburn further implied that when there is a failure of being held in mind the result is continued disintegration of the mind. I also wonder if by the violent offender being held in mind, he begins to learn to hold the psychotherapist in his mind as well, which could lead to improving in his capacity for empathy for others.

If a psychotherapist decides to address the experiences of dehumanisation that the violent offender may have, it begs the question whether the metaphor monster can be useful in the therapeutic process? I believe that the metaphor monster can be useful on two fronts; addressing the dark parts, the monster within, as well as the dehumanisation of the violent offender. Metaphors are generally thought of as useful tools in psychotherapy because they can be used to examine a person's experience (Tay, 2013) and can be used to help bring unconscious processes to the conscious, and access repressed parts of a person (Reider, 1972). According Eynon (2001), metaphors have a special role in enhancing the communication between the psychotherapist and the client. In fact, Arlow, (1979) argued that psychotherapy is basically a metaphorical enterprise.

The metaphor monster can be a way to help the violent offender process and understand the potential for danger or risk he presents with; the monster within. To be clear, I am not suggesting that the psychotherapist calls his client a monster; neither do I expect that he will call him that. This in my view will be ethically wrong. It might likely be offensive to the client and lead to jeopardising the safety of the psychotherapist. It could potentially provoke some clients to become violent which may result in physical and psychological harm to the psychotherapist.

Rather, I am proposing that working with the dark part of the violent offender may involve helping him to understand the monster within himself. It may also involve helping him to



assimilate and integrate this dark part with his entire personality (Casement, 2006; Costello, 2002). To a large degree, I do not concur with Adshead's (2013) view of transforming the monster within because I am more inclined to agree with the findings that indicate it is universal, and an inherent aspect of our humanness.

Besides its use for understanding the dark and unacceptable parts of the violent offender, the metaphor monster can be useful in helping the violent offender's emotional experiencing as he processes and works through his past and present dehumanising experiences. It could be a tool to help the therapist empathise with the experiences of the violent offender in prison who feels dehumanised because he is locked in solitary confinement and has had no sunlight or human contact, and is repeatedly asked to strip naked and have his body orifices searched, losing his human dignity. Or it may be experiences of abuse from other prisoners and prison guards whom he feels treat him like an animal. Or perhaps the rejection and ostracisation by family and friends who do not want anything to do with him.

## **5.5. Implications for Training**

A case can be made for the need for psychotherapists working with violent offender to become better acquainted with the darker and unacceptable parts of themselves rather than disavow it. Although empathy can be regarded as an intervention in psychotherapy (Bolognini, 2004), as a psychotherapist I have always found empathy a necessary tool to understanding my clients. According to Kohut (1984), no psychology of mental state is possible without the employment of empathy. This begs the question; how can the psychotherapist truly empathise, understand the dark parts of the violent offender if he has no awareness or understanding of the darker parts of himself?

If the psychotherapist is going to meet the monster of the offender, if he is to enter and tolerate the offender's inner dark world, then it seems to me that he should have met his own monster too. Ferenczi (1932/1995) stated in his diary that he needed to engage with his own repressed criminality to better understand his client. Jung (1960) believed in making the shadow conscious and integrating it into one's personality. Training and personal therapy could therefore focus on helping psychotherapists become aware and acquainted with those unacceptable parts of themselves.

This study proposes a model (see Figure 4) that invites psychotherapists to position themselves in relation to the violent offender. Do they see themselves as essentially different from the violent offender, and define him by his crime? He is 'good' and the violent offender 'evil'? The model is also intended to prompt the psychotherapist to ask himself whether any defensive processes are in operation (e.g. denial, projection, identification, scapegoating), as well as what transferences and countertransferences are evoked as he positions himself.

Using the dichotomy of human and monster construct, the model shows that the psychotherapist may position himself separate from the violent offender, where he is human and the violent offender is a monster, or he sees himself as no different from the violent offender, and positions himself alongside the violent offender as human with a monster within. Importantly, I have wondered if the psychotherapist's positioning may vary at times depending on the processes that occur in the psychotherapist-violent offender relationship or the stage of their relationship.

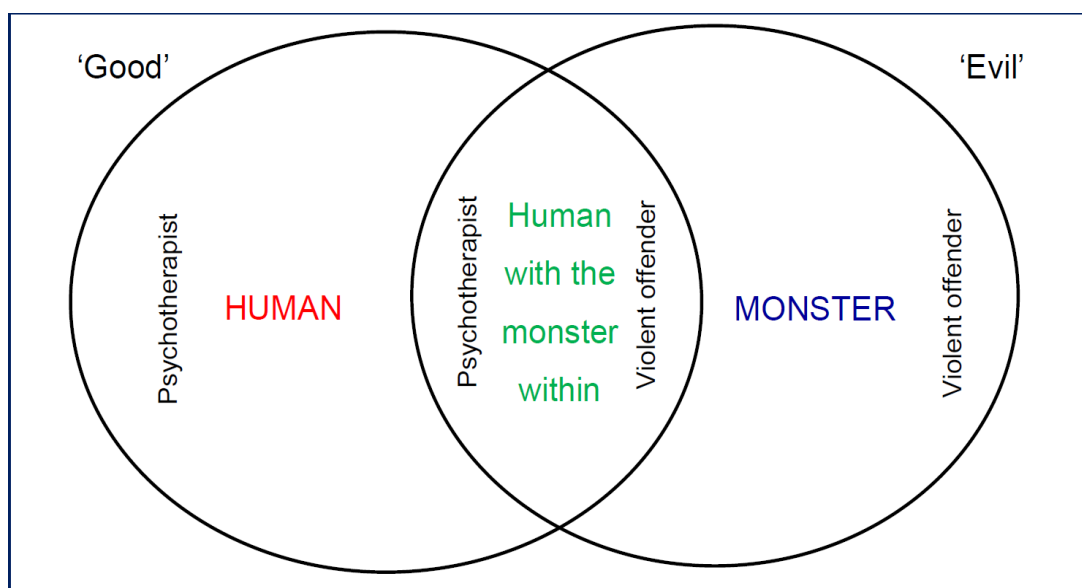


Figure 4: Model of relational dynamic between the psychotherapist and the violent offender

As I reflected on this relational model, I wondered if it would be less appealing to some Christian psychotherapists, who may not subscribe to, and might resist, the idea that they have a monster within. My experience as a Christian informs me that a number of Christians generally believe that they have the Holy Spirit within them. So, the idea that they have dark and unacceptable parts within them that should be integrated into their personality could be seen as heresy. This

therefore presents a challenge for the Christian psychotherapist as it requires a significant paradigm shift.

It is also important to mention the significance of this study with respect to psychotherapy supervision. I think the supervisor has a role in helping the psychotherapist process the transference and countertransference reactions, and the dark parts that may be evoked in the psychotherapist. If unprocessed these dark parts and negative countertransference are likely to manifest, which may lead to emotional burnout, blurring of boundaries, empathy fatigue, and enactments. The supervisor would be required to be a durable container (Bion, 1962) for all the dark impulses and anxieties of the psychotherapist.

## **5.6. Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

Studies generally have strengths and limitations, and this study is no exception. Keeping in mind that understanding is never complete in hermeneutic inquiry this study has undoubtedly furthered my understandings. The study has taken me through a number of horizons in terms of the expansion of my horizon and the creation of new horizons (Gadamer, 1960/1995).

What I mean by this is that it has immensely transformed my thinking around violent offenders beyond what I could have anticipated. It has also changed my thinking about myself and helped me resolve internal questions and conflicts, even though it has also left me with some unanswered questions. I am inclined to believe that another strength of this study is that it will resonate and provoke the thinking of others as it has mine, which fulfils the purpose of hermeneutic inquiry.

A limitation of this study I consider important to mention is that I was only able to explore literature around violent offenders and the metaphor monster that was written in the English language, also having to rely on the translation to the English language of some key texts, as I was not able to go back to the original text. Accordingly, there is a potential gap here because I interpreted the interpreter.

This points to the problem of semantics. Generally speaking, semantics relates to meaning in language. It relates to the meanings that arise from often subtle differences between meaning of words (Saeed, 2009). Words have a way of progressing and changing over time, or meaning something different for cultural reasons, and the sometimes subtle distinctions in meaning can

often lead to inadvertent misinterpretation and confusion (Saeed, 2009). In saying this, sometimes, out of confusion, uncertainty, and [mis]interpretation, new insights and understanding can arise and be attained. Brian Greene (2005) stated that the “process of going from confusion to understanding is a precious, even emotional experience that can be the foundation of self-confidence” (para. 11).

Another limitation that is of significance to mention in relation to this study was the limited time I had. In this study, I was also going to explore the intersection between the metaphor monster as it pertains to the violent offender and the concept of empathy. However, this was not possible due to not having enough time, and my situation was worsened by physical health problems which I mentioned in the *Start-stop-start process* subsection in chapter three. There, I noted that many times I had to stop for short periods as well as long periods. I feel this robbed me of valuable time. However, I have mentioned that the silver lining was it gave me more time to think, which I came to realise was a strength of the method of my study.

Because of the time factor, my supervisor and I agreed that I needed to reduce the scope of my study, a decision I battled with for weeks before finally deciding it was expedient. My inability to fully encompass the method of the second part of the study seemed to be a limitation; however I came to the understanding that reducing the scope would create more room for an in-depth inquiry into the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender. I favoured depth over width which I consider to be a strength of this study.

## **5.7. Recommendations for Further Research**

Importantly, I believe this study has laid the groundwork for an inquiry into intersection of the metaphor monster as it pertains to the violent offender and the concept of empathy, which I noted in the previous section was planned to be part of this study. Although, I was unable to achieve this goal, I maintain it is an important area of inquiry that should be researched. Furthermore, this study raised several questions which require further exploration. However, one of the questions that I strongly think would be exciting to further extend is regarding the relational dynamics between the psychotherapist and the violent offender. Another area worth extending is the use of the metaphor monster in the psychotherapy process.

This study did not make use of the lived experiences of violent offenders in relation to the metaphor monster. A phenomenological approach that utilises a method that involves

interviewing violent offenders might produce significant data that may further enhance our understandings with regard to clinical practice. This study could target Māori offenders who I have noted are disproportionately over-represented in the criminal justice system (Department of Corrections, 2007; 2015). One could ask, how do Māori violent offenders experience themselves, and their relationship with society? Is their over-representation in the criminal justice system indicative of them likely to be seen as other or as an enemy of society?

However, having worked in forensic mental health, it is my view that a phenomenological approach using interviews will likely present with some ethical dilemmas, particularly with violent offenders in prison and forensic hospitals who are typically held against their will. The subjects of the study may feel compelled to participate if they think that there are privileges to be gained or think that they will be punished for declining. Crucially, the researcher will need to approach the data with caution as the subjects' responses may be skewed or false if they feel afraid that they will be incriminated by their words or perhaps they think that there is something to be gained by providing certain responses.

Lastly, I would like to note that throughout the hermeneutic process it became apparent to me that there is a paucity of psychotherapy research with respect to violent offenders in New Zealand. If psychotherapy is to have a place in discussions about policies and legislations, then it is imperative that psychotherapy research is undertaken in the forensic field. In New Zealand, currently, the violent offender treatment programmes provided by Department of Corrections and forensic services are largely based on the cognitive-behavioural model (Kilgour & Polaschek, 2012). This paradigm, although it has been shown to be evidence-based and has increased our understanding of violent offenders, has generally not translated to a reduction in the rate of recidivism for offenders (Lewis, Consedine & Hickey, 2015). There seems to me to be a need to include a psychotherapy perspective in the conversation which would allow more attention to be given to the internal world of violent offenders.

## **Conclusion**

Hermeneutic inquiry is by its nature subjective, encompassing one's historicity, understandings and prejudices, and as such not concerned with objective truth. It is fundamentally a back and forth journey that one traverses with no completeness of understandings, even as I remember the multiple instances of moving back and forth in this study. Therefore, the understandings that

have been revealed to me in this study are by no means absolute, and I do not claim that it explains all. Rather, they are understandings that have emerged from my interpretations which began as I have mentioned before with an intention to investigate the notion of emotional healing for the violent offender and arrived at exploring the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender.

I embarked on the hermeneutic journey with the expectation that my understandings would be confronted and challenged, and for my understandings to be increased with respect to violent offenders. What I did not fully expect was that it would be one of the richest and most compelling experiences of my life. Also, I did not fully anticipate that it would be one of the most challenging endeavours I have ever undertaken. It was in essence a mixed bag of experiences, where I moved back and forth intra-psychically just as I moved back and forth in my writings.

My engagement with the literature revealed to me important symbolic meanings of the metaphor monster in relation to the violent offender, which fulfilled the aim of my research. The themes that emerged from the findings; dichotomy of human and monster, disavowal of the monster within, and dehumanisation of the violent offender, were significant new understandings that provided fresh insights about the violent offender, victims, society, and me. The study I might say exceeded the hopes that I had.

More specifically, the dichotomy of human and monster invited me to think about the relational dynamics between psychotherapists and violent offenders, as well as the relationship psychotherapists have with the monster within themselves. Indeed, through this study I have personally had a meeting with the monster. The construct of human and monster led me to the understanding that the violent offender and we are essentially human with a monster within.

The study proposed that the manifestation of the monster within the violent offender allows a means for us and society to disavow our monster within by projecting it onto the violent offender, which then leads to his characterisation as a monster, and consequently his dehumanisation. Furthermore, through this study, I became conscious of an internal resistance and anxiety within me around the themes, particularly the theme, *dehumanisation of violent offenders*, which in part speaks to the experience of rejection, ostracisation and punishment. I wondered if some readers may perceive attempts to understand the experience of the violent

offender as condoning or excusing violence. It is a message that I do not wish to send; however, I sense that for some this could be the case.

Lastly, I would like to note that the understandings from this study have already begun to be of benefit in my clinical practice, as I feel it has allowed me to be more attuned and connected to my clients. It has led to a deepening and a more trusting relationship between my clients and I, which has made all the effort and time I devoted to this study worthwhile.

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