FAMILY MURDER IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: REFLECTIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

MC Marchetti-Mercer
D.Litt. et Phil. (RAU)
Head of Department: Psychology, University of Pretoria
Corresponding author: mmarchet@postino.up.ac.za

Keywords: family murder; family violence; violent crime; mental health care; psychological services

ABSTRACT

In the late eighties the phenomenon of family murder was closely linked to Afrikaans-speaking families faced with political change and uncertainty. A large study carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) at the time disputed this overly simplistic explanation and proposed a complex interplay of interpersonal and intrapsychic factors reflecting a phenomenon which took place under all population groups. Recent cases of family murder reported in the media have once again posed serious questions regarding possible etiological explanations for this phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa. In this article the author reviews the original HSRC findings as well as exploring social and psychological factors, which may be relevant in present day South Africa. A social constructionist perspective is used as a theoretical framework for understanding the wider context of this type of violence. In conclusion possible interventions, which move beyond the simplistic but focus rather on the social responsibility of mental health professionals are proposed.

OPSOMMING

In die laat 1980s het die opvatting ontstaan dat daar 'n noue verband bestaan tussen gesinsmoord en Afrikaansprekende gesinne wat met politieke veranderinge en onsekerheid gekonfronteer word. 'n Omvattende studie wat op dié stadium deur die Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing (RGN) uitgevoer was, het hierdie oorsimplistiese standpunt bevraagteken. 'n Komplekse wisselwerking tussen interpersoonlike en intrapsigiese faktore, as 'n refleksie van 'n verskynsel wat onder alle bevolkingsgroepe voorkom, is as alternatief voorgestel. Onlangse gevalle van gesinsmoord wat in die media geraporteer is, het opnuut ernstige vrae oor moontlike etiologiese verklarings vir hierdie verskynsel in post-apartheid Suid-Afrika na vore gebring. Die skrywer neem in hierdie artikel opnuut die oorspronklike RGN-bevindinge in oënskou, terwyl sosiale en sielkundige faktore in post-apartheid Suid-Afrika, wat ook 'n impak hierop kan hê, ondersoek word. 'n Sosiaal-konstruksionistiese perspektief is as teoretiese raamwerk vir 'n beter begrip van die breër konteks van hierdie tipe geweld gebruik. Ten slotte word moontlike intervensies voorgestel wat verder as simplistiese verklarings kyk, en eerder op die sosiale verantwoordelikheid van geestesgesondheidswerkers fokus.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980's a large number of family murders were reported in the media focusing on Afrikaans-speaking families. It was speculated that this was a reflection of the uncertainty in the political situation of the time and that Afrikaners, feeling threatened by the upcoming move towards Black majority rule, were killing off their families. This was seen as a last desperate attempt by White Afrikaners to retain some kind of power, namely that over their own families.

Towards the end of this decade the then Department of Health and Development contacted the Human Sciences Research Council and a large-scale national project including a various number of academics from different disciplines took place. It was based on eleven (11) case studies of family murder across the country. The results of this study indicated a complex dynamic of factors, which reflected a phenomenon that did not only touch White Afrikaans-speaking families, as all race groups were involved.

Although the uncertainties of a pre-democratic South Africa no longer exist in the new millenium, there have recently been a number of very violent incidents of family murder (Daily Dispatch, 11 February 2002). Only in the period between January and July 2002 the author identified six (6) cases of family murder reported in the media. Three (3) cases were from the English-speaking White community, one (1) from the Afrikaans-speaking White community and two (2) from the Black community. In all the cases the perpetrator was the father.

In a social context which is regarded to be extremely violent with a high incidence of crime (Pelser & De Kock, 2000:84) and where abuse against women and children has also recently been highlighted, the phenomenon of family murder is once again on the forefront of media and public speculation. While prior to 1994, violence seemed to be mostly politically related, it seems to have made way for more criminal violence (Pelser & de Kock, 2000:80). However family murder has not disappeared with the new political dispensation, again raising doubts regarding its links with a specific socio-political context. The increasing number of cases of this type of family killing continues to baffle not only the public, but also mental health professionals, because of its sheer horror. The phenomenon of a parent taking his or her children's lives and committing suicide thereafter once again raises urgent questions as to its etiology and possible intervention strategies.

In this article the author, who was involved in the original HSRC project, wishes to explore the phenomenon of family murder as it is presently expressed in South Africa by doing the following: Firstly, giving a brief overview of the findings of the original HSRC report published at the beginning of 1991. Secondly, exploring the violent nature of the present South African society and whether this is linked to recent incidents of family murder. Lastly, by proposing a social constructionist perspective in an attempt to understand the complexity of this phenomenon, which has implications for mental health professionals working with families in distress.

THE HSRC REPORT ON FAMILY MURDER

An overview of the results

At the time of the original research project there was no clear definition of family murder. It was therefore decided to formulate an operational definition of what exactly was going to be investigated under the phenomenon of "family murder". The following definition was used, which will also be used for the purpose of this article, namely: "Family murder is the deliberate extermination of the existing system by a member of the family or the intention to exterminate the system ..." (Olivier, Haasbroek, Beyers, De Jongh van Arkel, Marchetti, Roos, Schurink, Schurink & Visser, 1991:44).

The data, which formed part of the HSRC project, was gathered over a period of eigtheen (18) months from 1 April 1989 to October 1990. Information was captured in twelve (12) cases, but one was omitted on account of legal complications. The information was collected by means of structured and open-ended interviews with people that had been involved with the murdered family. These included neighbours, friends, extended family members, teachers, religious ministers, employers and employees. In a few cases some family members, including the murderer, survived and were able to be interviewed. The police in charge of the investigation, as well as medical people, were also interviewed. After

each interview, team members would meet and validate the information gathered.

The data was analysed following the qualitative approach as set out by Taylor and Bogdan (1984). This was a particularly interesting process as the information about the family given to the researchers was in fact merely a representation of people's *own perceptions* of their own involvement with the family as well as a reflection of the nature of their relationships with the deceased family. These descriptions were further contaminated by people's feelings of guilt, anger, pain and bereavement. All these factors had to be taken into consideration before arriving at careful interpretations and conclusions of the data gathered by the team (Beyers, personal communication, 1990).

Although accepting that each family had its own dynamics and behavioural patterns the project attempted to analyse the eleven (11) case studies in order to identify common elements and similarities that provided a context for family murder, thus leaving out the idiosyncratic patterns of each family.

Given the questions that had been raised in the media regarding the racial and cultural characteristics of family murderers, the biographical details were of particular interest. In the eleven (11) cases nine (9) couples were married and two (2) divorced. In eight (8) of the cases, the entire family was wiped out or at least that was the intention. In seven (7) cases, a subsystem consisting of one parent and the children or some of the children, that together formed a very closed-off subsystem within the family, was wiped out.

In the case of the murderer in eight (8) of the cases the father was the perpetrator and in the other three (3) the mother. The majority of the murderers fell in the age group 25 and 35 years old and all of them had achieved at least a high school diploma.

With regard to population groups, three (3) of the families were from the Black population, one (1) was a combination of Black and Coloured, and seven (7) families were from the White population (English- and Afrikaans-speaking) (Beyers, Visser & Marchetti, 1992:5). This in itself was seen as an interesting trend as it highlighted the fact that it was not just a social-political phenomenon restricted to White Afrikaners, but also touched other population groups.

Etiological perspectives

One of the most striking aspects of the research findings was the recognition that family murder is a complex phenomenon, which escapes linear explanations and oversimplifications. The complexity of factors that leads to the destruction of an entire family system is not easily identifiable or quantifiable. The processes leading up to a family murder arise from a long-term history of interactional factors and processes and involve both the murderer, as well as the rest of the family. It is therefore a circular process of violence where each family member is tragically affected. Although the main features identified in the study will now be briefly discussed under separate headings, it is important to remember that all these factors interact in each case of family murder in a highly idiosyncratic manner so as to provide a context for violence.

Features of the family murderer

Mood disorders (83%), and more specifically major depressive disorder (59%), were identified by Roos, Beyers and Visser (1992:28) as the most prominent Axis I syndrome among family murderers. Usually people with mood disorder are at high risk for suicide, yet family murderers experience such a negative affective state that it causes them to destroy the entire family. It appears from this study that certain personality traits and stressors also need to be present so as to set the scene for a family murder to take place.

Some specific personality disorder traits were identified by this research on Axis II (DSMIV classification), especially dependent personality traits. It was furthermore highlighted that certain individual characteristics or interactional styles such as emotional immaturity, impulsiveness and poor problem and coping skills interacting with other problematic contextual factors also led to particular feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Although the use of alcohol may play a role in the aggravation of already existing aggressive impulses and a lack of impulse control, there were no indications in the cases studied that alcohol nor drug abuse played a significant role. (Olivier *et al.* 1991:204)

Family considerations

Van der Hoven (1988:34) argues that although the family is supposedly a haven for security, family members are often more violent towards each other than any outsiders. Family murders are often more common than any other kind of murder.

Gelles and Strauss (1979:552-554) furthermore stress that the family has many patterns of interaction that distinguish it from other systems and provide an opportunity for violence among group members that is not present in other settings. These include the many hours each day during which the family members interact, the wide range of activities in which family members are jointly involved; the demands made by various members of the family who feel they have the right to direct or influence the behaviour of other members, the different ages of the family members and the fact that membership in the family is involuntary for many members.

In applying the systems theory Kratocoski (1988:47) suggests that the violence, which may characterise the family, is due to the intense emotional involvement and bond between the group's members.

All these arguments support the argument that violence can easily take place in the family context, especially if the following factors are taken into consideration:

The functioning of the marital system

The marital subsystem represents the core of a family's functioning and Beyers, Visser and Marchetti (1992:3-7) identified the following aspects in the relationships between spouses:

Communication patterns between partners

The communication style between partners seems to have been ineffective and characterised by superficiality. It also tended to be unclear and full of contradictions between verbal and non-verbal messages. Messages were often communicated indirectly, thereby paving the way for misunderstandings and conflicts.

Emotional involvement between partners

There appeared to have been an emotional neglect between spouses leading the way to a very superficial emotional involvement.

Interactions and definition of roles

Beyers, Visser and Marchetti (1992:6) argue that a diffuse marital system defined the nature of the interactions between the spouses in the cases analysed. In the majority of cases studied in this project, the spouse was in fact more dominant in the relationship than the murderer. It seemed as if the control for power, as well as the conflict and tension alternating between apathy and emotional distance, characterised the interactions between the murderer and the spouse. However, in the end the murderer gained ultimate control by dominating through murder.

It is also interesting to note that in the majority of cases where the father was the perpetrator, the mother took on the role of the family provider (especially financially speaking). The father on the other hand took on the "mothering" role by being the main emotional provider for the children.

Marchetti (1992:480) argues that the parent who kills the children, after having being so emotionally close to them, in fact takes the nurturing aspect associated with parenthood to an almost psychotic extreme, totally out of touch with its nurturing reality. It can almost be termed a case of "deluded motherhood' and resembles the mythical story of Medea.

Features of the nuclear family

As mentioned earlier, very definite subsystems existed between family members, with the murderer and the children forming the strongest one. The family murderer perceives this subsystem as the vital one from which the spouse is excluded. In this instance, there appears to be a nonexistent parental subsystem and an unclear sibling subsystem of which one of the parents is in fact a member.

Features of the extended family

The extended family has an important role to play in the healthy functioning of a family by allowing it to function independently on the one hand, but also by being able to provide it with the right amount of

emotional support on the other hand. This is often needed by our society, which is becoming less and less people-orientated and where people can often feel lonely and isolated.

In the cases studied there seemed to be a considerable amount of enmeshment by the extended family, which was completely overinvolved with the nuclear family (Marchetti & Haasbroek, 1992:12-13). It was almost as if the latter never got the opportunity to develop autonomously. Instead overcritical, overconcerned extended family members were always interfering in the family's matters. However, there were a few instances where the opposite was true and the nuclear family's boundaries were in fact so rigid and impermeable that the family was totally lacking in support. It therefore, seems as if a balance of independence and support was lacking in the cases studied.

Community and social factors

A discussion on the role of the community reflects theories which postulate that interpersonal relations show the consequences of macrophenomena, such as social structure and culture, and that explanations in terms of intrapsychic factors are too limiting to explain violence within the family.

Authors who wrote about the phenomenon in the eighties, prior to the HSRC study, argued that South African society was typically a violent one, where violence was acceptable on the condition that it was used for a just cause (De Jongh van Arkel, 1988:11). Du Toit (1990: 296-298) argued that white Afrikaners possessed a "warped sense of responsibility" as expressed in political guardianship, and this had filtered through to the life patterns of families. These arguments postulated in the late eighties, supported the general view of the time that family murder was a purely Afrikaner syndrome and was very much politically motivated.

Overall the results from the HSRC study did not support the view that family murder is restricted to a specific population or language group. In fact, four (4) of the families were from the Black population. Interestingly enough, one (1) of the cases where a Black mother had committed the murder, was an example of a clash between the traditional values of the Black culture and Western values. The perpetrator was the mother of three children who experienced great feelings of abandonment when her husband took on a second wife. This may have been acceptable within a traditional African perspective, but was at loggerheads with a more Westernised lifestyle (Roos, Haasbroek & Marchetti, 1992:31-35).

In the eighties the role of religious beliefs was also widely speculated upon. De Jongh van Arkel (1985:145) argued that in a certain context the murderer may have taken to extremes the general Christian conviction of mutual responsibility for the family and the right to make decisions on behalf for others. This feeling may have led to an authoritarian inequality in the family. He calls this a scriptural misinterpretation. Du Toit (1990:294) concluded that in many cases this may have led to the "…gruesome right to decide what would be good for their loved ones. This feeling of responsibility for the family seems to be the essential and characteristic feature of the South African family murderer". The cases studied in the HSRC study did not however indicate that distorted religious beliefs influenced the decision to kill the family.

In the final analysis the HSRC findings did not indicate that the larger socio-political situation as such played the most pivotal role. An extensive international literature study carried out as part of the project (Marchetti, Haasbroek & De Jongh van Arkel, 1992:6-10) showed that similar cases of family murder take place all over the world (often just under other names such as familicide, family suicide, family killing and so forth).

However, the apparent resurfacing of this type of family violence in post-apartheid South Africa has raised issues regarding South African society and its violent nature. An Eastern Cape newspaper argued in an editorial following the week-end shooting by a Black policemen of his girlfriend and other people before committing suicide, that "Family killings, spouse and child abuse and rape have blotted this country's peaceful transition to democracy…"(Daily Dispatch, 11 February 2002:8). Consequently the author will now explore the present larger South African context and how it may aid in the occurrence of this type of family violence.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Much has been speculated in post-apartheid South Africa about the rise of violence in the society. The first democratic elections in 1994 were surprisingly violence free after a general panic seemed to have gripped White South Africans who prepared for a possible violent revolution, which they feared would accompany the elections. However, the transformation in general took place peacefully and South Africa basked for many months in the glory of being the "rainbow nation" and of being a democratic society. The first couple of years following the election were very much a honeymoon period in South African society. This was highlighted in May 1995 when South Africa won the rugby World Cup and for the first time in the country's history South Africans from all races supported their country's rugby team, which in the past was seen as a Whites only pursuit. At that time South Africa seemed to have proved that an African country was able to move into democracy without violence.

However as the nineties progressed, violent crime, which seems to have taken over the political violence of the seventies and the eighties, became more and more rife. This will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Although figures are often hard to come by, speculations regarding the increase of crime abound. Hamber (2000:8) argues that "… the experience of being violently victimized in South Africa has almost become a statistically normal feature of everyday life in the many urban and rural settings in South Africa". Many people have accused government of not doing enough to curb the increase of crime, especially in mainly White areas. Hamber (2000:12) comments: "This ongoing fear and anxiety, (is) often spurred on by politicians who want to portray the country as being mismanaged by the current government". Other views highlight the still very large inequality between haves and have nots in this country, together with a massive percentage of unemployment. "Social inequality and enormous deprivation caused by the apartheid system are at the root of most violence in South Africa" (Hamber, 2000:9).

The perceived lack of delivery as far as employment and housing is concerned, is viewed by some as creating a context in which crime is viewed as the only option. Pelser and De Kock (2000:88) argue that "the increase in crime is often attributed to the destruction of social control mechanisms, enormous social and economic disparity, unemployment and underdevelopment…". White South Africans, who often perceive themselves as the main targets of this type of criminal violence, have been overwhelmed with fear and live behind high security rises protecting themselves from what they often see as an attack on themselves and the government's unwillingness to take action. This has led to a large exodus of Whites from South Africa seeking refuge in other countries (Pelser & De Kock, 2000:89). This is especially true of young White South Africans who often leave the country after completing their tertiary education. However, it cannot be denied that violence has always been part of the Black township experience. It could be argued that it is not a question of violence having increased, but rather a question of crime having spilled over in the previously more protected White areas.

Violence in the South African context has taken many forms, from the violent burglaries to the now notorious highjackings and to the very worrying increase of violence and abuse against women and children, which has also recently received much media attention. In December 2001 there was a nationwide uproar after the alleged gang rape of a nine-month old baby.

However the type of violence reflected by family murder is not easily explicable. People are often inclined to cling to unscientific and possibly non-useful terminology when describing the family murderer and the event such as evil, crazy, demented and inexplicable. When family violence increases, much speculation is often reflected in the media as to why people perform these acts of violence on the people nearest and dearest to them.

In February 2002 President Mbeki touched on the phenomenon of family murder in his opening of Parliament speech when he said that the majority of violent crime in this country took place over week-ends and was directed by people who knew each other (Daily Dispatch, 11 February 2002:8). This view is supported

by Pelser and De Kock (2000:87), who cite statistics which show that violent crime against the person mostly occurs between victims and perpetrators who know each other and that most murders occur over the week-ends, especially on Saturday afternoons or evenings.

A very powerful argument is also often put forth that the apartheid era has created such a legacy of violence and lack of respect for other people that it is easy to explain the occurrence of crimes such as murder, rape of women and children. "Social inequality and enormous deprivation caused by the apartheid system are at the root of most violence in South Africa" (Hamber, 2000:9). On a practical level, there is also a great availability of firearms and other weapons, which are legally available in South Africa, giving many people the tools to carry out violent acts.

As argued earlier, the HSRC research on family murder pointed to a complex interplay of etiological factors, which included intrapsychic, interpsychic, and social. It did not in any way isolate a specific factor or emphasise the specific social context within which family murder takes place. More than a decade after the completion of that study the question may be posed whether the findings of the project are still applicable to the present South African situation or whether new factors should be taken into consideration.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As has been argued throughout this article, one should therefore be wary of theories or hypotheses regarding the etiology of family murder, which are often at best simplistic and at worse damaging. Examples alluded to earlier, are the following:

1. Some people will argue that the family murderer is crazy, demented or evil. These terms do not tend to be useful. In a way they tend to distance people from the event and remove any kind of social responsibility. They also imply that one can never understand the mind of someone who kills his/her children. This kind of explanation is highly judgmental and moralistic and may have very damaging effects on the surviving relatives and friends of the family who are desperate to make some sense of the tragedy.
2. Emotive clichés are often reflected in the media. One such example is to call family murder, "the ultimate act of love" in which family murderers kill the children with them because they cannot bear to leave them behind. Family murder has also been called the "ultimate form of revenge" against one's spouse (Pretoria News, 16 July 2002:3). These types of explanations are also limiting in scope and focus only on one reality.
3. Focusing solely on social factors and linking these forms of violence with the social context created by the apartheid era may also shift one's attention away from possible solutions. It may render one powerless by focusing on the past rather than developing a more pragmatic approach.

One may argue that in the South African society people may feel that there is no solution to their problems; that there is nowhere to turn when in trouble and where emotional and psychological suffering is often not addressed and in fact denied because of the stigmatisation surrounding it.

Social constructionism proposes that social realities are constructed through language and through the relationships that people have with each other. The present South African context may have become one where the overwhelming reality has been created that violence is the only possible solution to problems and that other alternatives are not worth exploring. South Africa is often described as a "culture of violence" (Vogelman & Simpson, 1990 *in* Hamber, 2000:5). According to these authors this refers to "a society which endorses and accepts violence as an acceptable and legitimate means to resolve problems and achieve goals". Furthermore others argue that "because violence is often considered the ultimate or only solution to problems, people may fail to develop skills in any area other than aggression, intimidation or weaponry. In a crisis, this is where they turn" (http:/ www.health.iafrica.com).

Therefore violence seems to have become the core of most social interactions. As far as the perpetrators of family murders are concerned, the reality seems to have been created in their lives that there is neither end, nor solution to their desperation and that no help to their problems is available.

However, postmodern thinking also argues that people's experiences of their world and the realities

they create around these are highly individual and should not be generalised. It may therefore be impossible to identify a common denominator or pattern for the kind of desperation which leads to this particular violence. For some people financial status and stability are the major driving forces in their lives. For others a sense of disillusionment in their fellow men may be the triggering factor. Yet again, for some the fear that they might lose their children through divorce may be utterly terrifying.

However, many people are faced with similar desperate situations but still do not go as far as to commit such extended violence. Can one ever understand the reality of the family murderer?

People today live in a society where simplistic explanations are often sought and proposed. Trying to grasp the "truth" around family murder may be impossible. A complex interplay of intrapsychic factors such as possible depression or personality disorders at play with certain interpersonal relationship such as a poor marriage, lack of support from the extended family, or an overly involved relationship with the children may lead to a family murder. In some cases some factors will be more prominent than others.

Consequently, there are certain implications for mental health professionals when faced with the increasing number of family murders in this country. In the last section the author will suggest some possible areas that should require reflection from mental health professionals.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

However disastrous the legacy of apartheid may have been psychologically and sociologically on this country, South Africans need to develop interventions which reflect the present mental health state. The phenomenon of family murder which is so horrific and which unfortunately has become so intrinsically connected to South Africa, may be a sign of the lack of the psychological well-being in this country and the implications of this for its people.

It has been argued throughout this article, that more often than not overly simplistic explanations are sought to explain this type of violence. These fail to address the complex phenomenon of fathers or mothers who decide to kill their own families as well as taking their own lives. These types of explanations often also take away the responsibility from society and its mental health professionals. A society needs to be created in which death and violence are not the only realities available to people. In this sense one has a social responsibility as a mental health professional to create structures and support systems, which allow people to explore other alternatives when faced with what they perceive to be desperate situations.

In the eighties the debate prevailing in this country's mental health circles was around the social responsibility of psychologists to speak out against apartheid and the mental suffering that it caused in people (Dawes, 1985:55). However, it can be argued that the role of the psychologist as an activist is not being restricted to a pre-1994 era. Social responsibility is even greater now for people working in the mental health professions. On some levels Psychology seems to be developing a social awareness as reflected by the introduction of community service after the internship of clinical psychologists. However, there still exists a very strong stigma around psychological and psychiatric help. Medical aids' contributions towards psychological services are very limited and most people are unable to afford psychotherapy.

In a country wrought with economic problems and also facing a pandemic of HIV/AIDS, money for mental health services seems very limited. However, unless a society can be created where mental health issues are regarded as important as other economic, social and political issues, desperate people with psychological problems for which they see no solutions will still seek violent solutions.

One's responsibility as a mental health professional is to move beyond the realm of academia or private practice. A mental health professional has the responsibility to create a public awareness and a social context where psychological problems are approached in a human and empathic manner.

In other countries one sees more social and political inputs by psychologists and other mental health professionals. In the 9/11 aftermath many psychologists in the United States of America have been involved on

a large social and political scale, not only in tertiary interventions that followed the tragedy, but also in offering contributions towards the fight against terrorism.

South Africa is also undergoing a period of social and political crisis as a result of its transition into democracy, which urgently requires the contributions of its mental health professionals. A different kind of psychological mindedness will have to be created in the society, if the kind of human tragedy reflected so strongly by family murders is going to be addressed and intervened upon in an effective manner.

LIST OF REFERENCES

ANON 2002: Why do family murders occur? Available from: http://www.Health.iafrica.com/psych.

BEYERS, D 1990: In an interview with the author regarding the interpersonal dynamics of the family murderer.

BEYERS, D; VISSER, M & MARCHETTI, MC 1992: The family context: Processes and interaction in family murder. **Geneeskunde**, 34(9):3-7.

DAWES, A 1985: Politics and mental health: The position of clinical psychology in South Africa**. The South African Journal of Psychology,** 15:55-61.

DAILY DISPATCH 2002: Editorial opinion: Wholesale slaughter. Monday, 11 February 2002.

DE JONGH VAN ARKEL, JT 1985: Gesinsmoord: 'n Pastorale-teologiese perspektief. **South African Journal of Law and Criminology**, 9(2):141-148.

DE JONGH VAN ARKEL, JT 1988: Gesinsmoorde: 'n Toenemende verskynsel. **UNISA Bulletin,** 13(4):11.

DU TOIT, SI 1990: Family violence: Familicide.(**In:** McKendrick, B & Hoffman, W **eds.** 1990: People and violence in South Africa.Cape Town: Oxford, pp 288-300).

GELLES, RJ & STRAUSS, MA 1979: Determinants of violence in the family: Toward a theoretical integration. (**In:** Burr, WB; Hill, R; Nye, FI & Reiss, IL **eds**. Contemporary theories about the family. New York: Free Press, pp. 549-581).

HAMBER, N 2000: "Have no doubt it is fear in the land": An exploration of the continuing cycles of violence in South Africa. **Southern African Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health**, 12(1):5-18.

KRATOCOSKI, PC 1988: Families who kill. **Marriage and Family Review**, 12(1-2):47-70.

MARCHETTI, MC; HAASBROEK, CP & DE JONG VAN ARKEL JT 1992: A literature review on family murder. **Geneeskunde**, 34(8):6-10.

MARCHETTI, MC & HAASBROEK, CP 1992: The role of the extended family in the phenomenon of family murder. **Geneeskunde,** 34(9):8-13.

MARCHETTI, MC 1992: Medea or the mother who kills her children: Some aspects regarding family murder. **Koers**, 57(4):471-482.

MARCHETTI, MC 1993: The phenomenon of family murder in South Africa: Complex interacting feelings and systems. **The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher**, 6(2):7-12.

OLIVIER, L; HAASBROEK CP; BEYERS, D; DE JONGH VAN ARKEL, JT; MARCHETTI, MC; ROOS, JL; SCHURINK EM; SCHURINK, WJ & VISSER MJ 1991: The phenomenon family murder in South Africa: An exploratory study. Pretoria: HSRC Report ED-8.

OLIVIER, L; HAASBROEK, CP; BEYERS, D; DE JONGH VAN ARKEL, JT; MARCHETTI, MC; ROOS, JL; SCHURINK EM; SCHURINK, WJ & VISSER, MJ 1991: The phenomenon of family murder in South Africa: An exploratory study. Summary. Pretoria: HSRC Report ED-9.

OLIVIER, L; HAASBROEK, CP; BEYERS, D; DE JONGH VAN ARKEL, JT; MARCHETTI, MC; ROOS, JL; SCHURINK, EM; SCHURINK, WJ & VISSER, MJ 1991: The phenomenon of family murder in South Africa: An exploratory study. Appendix: Case studies. Pretoria: HSRC Report ED-10.

PELSER, A & DE KOCK, C 2000: Violence in South Africa: A note on some trends in the 1990's. **Acta Criminologica**,13(1):80-93.

PRETORIA NEWS 2002: "Neighbours shocked that dad killed sons", 16 July 2002.

ROOS, JL; HAASBROEK, CP & MARCHETTI, MC 1992: Family murder in a black South African family: A case report. **Geneeskunde**, 34(8):31-35.

ROOS, JL; BEYERS, D & VISSER, MJ 1992: Family murder: Psychiatric and psychological causes. **Geneeskunde**, 34(8):25-30.

ROOS, JL; BEYERS, D & MARCHETTI, MC 1999: Family murders. **Journal of Depression and Anxiety**, 2(3):95-101.

TAYLOR, SJ & BOGDAN, R 1984: Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings; 2nd ed. New York: Wiley.

VAN DER HOVEN, AE 1988: Social factors conducive to family violence. **Acta Criminologica,** 1(1):34-38.

VOGELMAN, L & SIMPSON, G 1990: Current Violence in South Africa. **Sunday Star Review,** June 17 1990.