

**AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF GANG VIOLENCE ON THE  
COGNITIONS AND BEHAVIORS OF ADOLESCENTS IN A SPECIFIC  
COMMUNITY WITHIN THE WESTERN CAPE**

**ALICIA EDITH DAVIDS**

A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister  
Artium (Research Psychology) in the Department of Psychology, University of the Western  
Cape

Supervisor: Mr Umesh Bawa

August 2005

**AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF GANG VIOLENCE ON THE  
COGNITIONS AND BEHAVIORS OF ADOLESCENTS IN A SPECIFIC  
COMMUNITY WITHIN THE WESTERN CAPE**

Alicia Edith Davids

**KEYWORDS**

Gang violence

Adolescents

Community violence

Anxiety

Post Traumatic Stress

Gun violence

Qualitative research

Phenomenology

Thematic Analysis

ATLAS.ti



## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF GANG VIOLENCE ON THE COGNITIONS AND BEHAVIORS OF ADOLESCENTS IN A SPECIFIC COMMUNITY WITHIN THE WESTERN CAPE**

M.A mini-thesis, Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape.

The subculture of gang violence has become a most feared phenomenon in many poverty-stricken communities in South Africa and especially in the Western Cape. The gang violence that is prevalent in these communities affects mostly the adolescents, who are supposed to be ‘the leaders of tomorrow’. The purpose of this research study was to focus on adolescents in a community where gang violence is rife and in turn reveals their perceptions on gang violence, what the causes of gang violence are and how they are affected by it as expressed in their own words. The researcher establishes the significance and necessity of focusing on adolescents as influenced by gang violence through a phenomenological exploration of their lives. The position that is developed affirms that adolescents are adversely affected by gang violence both from a behavioral and cognitive standpoint. The dire extent of gang violence on these adolescents’ lives is illustrated by using Fanon’s six dimensions of violence. Furthermore various theoretical hypotheses are provided to explain the origin of gang violence in comparison to the explanations expressed by the adolescents themselves from the interviews conducted. The study is concluded with recommendations extracted from relevant literature as well as comments expressed by the participants of this study. The main limitation within this study was the lack of research outputs within the South African context on the topic of how gang violence affects adolescents who are not gang members. The rich information produced by this study in conducting in-depth interviews with adolescents makes this study significant.

## DECLARATION

I declare that *An explorative study of the influence of gang violence on the cognitions and behaviors of adolescents in a specific community within the Western Cape* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Alicia Edith Davids

August 2005

Signed: .....



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would hereby like to thank first and foremost our loving Jesus Christ for giving me both the strength and concentration needed to complete this study, thank you Lord.

A heartfelt thank-you to my parents and family who have guided me and encouraged me every step of the way and still do.

To the principal, teachers and students of the high school where this study was conducted thank you for your patience and for making this study possible.

And last but not least, thank you to my supervisor Umesh Bawa, may you have every success in your future, God Bless.



## CONTENTS

<b>KEYWORDS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1    BACKGROUND.....	9
1.2    MOTIVATION FOR STUDY.....	10
1.3    AIMS .....	11
1.4    SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	12
1.5    CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS .....	13
1.5.1    Adolescents as defined in South Africa.....	13
1.5.2    Community Violence.....	14
1.5.3    Gangsterism.....	15
1.6    CHAPTER ORGANISATION.....	16
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1    VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	18
2.2    GANGS IN SOUTH AFRICA – PAST AND PRESENT .....	18
2.3    THE EFFECT OF VIOLENCE ON YOUTH.....	21
2.4    THEORETICAL CONCEPTS .....	25
2.4.1    Genetic-biological hypothesis of violence .....	25
2.4.2    Subjective hypothesis of violence.....	27
2.4.3    Environmental hypothesis of violence .....	28
2.4.4    Contextual theories of violence .....	29
2.5    THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	31
2.6    CONCLUSION.....	33
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1    INTRODUCTION.....	35
3.2    RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY .....	35
3.3    RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH .....	38

3.4	PARTICIPANTS.....	40
3.4.1	<i>Criteria for selection.....</i>	40
3.4.2	<i>Rationale for criteria .....</i>	41
3.5	INSTRUMENTATION.....	41
3.6	DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES.....	42
3.7	ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	43
3.7.1	<i>Thematic Analysis.....</i>	43
3.7.2	<i>ATLAS.ti - Qualitative Data Analysis .....</i>	44
3.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	44

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF**

#### **RESULTS .....46**

4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	46
4.1.1	Actual accounts of gang violence as experienced by the participants.....	46
4.2	DISCUSSION OF CODED CATEGORIES .....	49
4.2.1	Adolescents’ definition of gang violence .....	49
4.2.1.1	<i>Gang violence defined as acts of revenge and war over territory....</i>	50
4.2.1.2	<i>Gang violence defined as violence against innocent people .....</i>	51
4.2.2	Adolescents’ perception of gang activities .....	52
4.2.2.1	<i>Gang activities: ‘Having to pay protection’.....</i>	52
4.2.2.2	<i>Gang activities: Exchanging stolen goods for money, drugs and guns.....</i>	53
4.2.2.3	<i>Gang activities: Forcing community members to store guns.....</i>	54
4.2.3	Adolescents’ perception of the causes for gang violence.....	55
4.2.3.1	<i>Gang violence as a result of fighting over territory .....</i>	55
4.2.3.2	<i>Gang violence as a result of competing with other gangs.....</i>	56
4.2.3.3	<i>Gang violence as a result of unemployment and dropping out of school.....</i>	57
4.2.4	Adolescents’ perception of the effects of gang violence .....	57
4.2.4.1	<i>The effect of gang violence on adolescents’ home life and personal space .....</i>	57
4.2.4.2	<i>The effect of gang violence on parents in the community .....</i>	58
4.2.4.3	<i>The effect of gang violence on the psychological space of adolescents.....</i>	59

4.2.4.4	<i>The effect of gang violence on adolescents' personal relationships</i> .....	60
4.2.4.5	<i>The effect of gang violence on adolescents' mobility</i> .....	61
4.2.4.6	<i>The effects of gang violence on adolescents' education</i> .....	61
4.2.5	Adolescents' response to coping strategies in view of gang violence .....	62
4.2.6	Adolescents' perception of the community's response to gang violence .....	65
4.2.7	Adolescents' perception of the police response to gang violence .....	66
4.3	CONCLUSION.....	69
4.4	THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF MAIN THEMES .....	70
4.4.1	Social learning theory: Causes of gang violence.....	70
4.4.2	Contextual theories of violence: Causes of gang violence .....	72
4.4.3	Post traumatic stress symptoms, desensitisation and anxiety: Effects of gang violence on adolescents.....	74
4.4.4	Fanon's six dimensions of violence: Effects of gang violence on adolescents .....	76
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b> .....		<b>79</b>
5.1	CONCLUSION.....	79
5.2	THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	80
5.3	LIMITATIONS OF STUDY.....	81
5.4	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	81
5.5	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	82
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....		<b>84</b>
	<i>SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTION GUIDE</i> .....	84
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....		<b>86</b>
	<i>TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH GRADE TWELVE PUPIL: BOY</i> .....	86
<b>APPENDIX C</b> .....		<b>92</b>
	<i>EXAMPLE OF THE TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW THAT HAS BEEN CODED USING ATLAS TI. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS</i> .....	92
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....		<b>94</b>



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

*“The tragedy of violence involves not just victims, but also victimizers. What we need to see – if we are to understand violence and to prevent it – is that human agency or action is not only individual; it is also, unavoidably, familial, societal, and institutional, like that of which gangs has become. Each of us is extricably bound to others – in relationship. All human action (even the act of a single individual) is relational. Understanding that point is essential to understanding the origins of violent acts, and the strategies that might be helpful in preventing them (Gilligan, 1996, p. 27)”.*

The world is experiencing an unprecedented increase in the number of young people. One in every five persons in the world is a young person. Of an estimated 1.2 billion young people in the world today, 85% of these live in developing countries. In South Africa, there are currently about 18 million people under the age of 20 years. These young people account for approximately 44% of the total population (Dickson-Tetteh & Ladha, 2000). Twenty one per cent (8.8 million) of young South Africans are adolescents between 10 and 19 years, and it is between these two ages where adolescents lay victim to either becoming involved in gang violence or are directly affected by the violence caused by gangs.

The subculture of gang violence has become deeply entrenched in the Western Cape, particularly in areas such as Elsies River, Manenberg, Bonteheuvel, Parkwood and Lavender Hill to mention but a few. The news and media have broadcast the growing lists of children shot dead or wounded in gang crossfire, painting an ominous picture of life for children and adolescents in these Western Cape communities, where the streets and the parks seem to

belong to gangsters. It is estimated that more than half of all attempted murder charges in several communities of the Western Cape were gang related. Many communities have tried to organise themselves in an attempt to break the grip of fear that the gangs have on the residents, but with mixed success (Kinnes, 1995). The resources that communities need are not available to put a stop to the surge of gangsterism that occurs in these communities. Kinnes (1995) stated that gangs were much more organised than the community leaders and that in these economically deprived communities the gangs portray images of power, wealth and success.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR STUDY**


Human violence is much more complicated, ambiguous, and most of all tragic than is commonly realised or acknowledged. From the past – violent consequences of European expansionism – violence in post colonial South Africa – Apartheid capitalism to present day, for South Africa violence has become a natural occurrence in the search for power and unappeasable greed. It has been noted that many research studies previously done on gang violence focused very little on the people's lives affected by gang violence and more on gang involvement.

Most studies on gangsterism done in the Western Cape dealt only with the criminal aspects of gangs. The people who have to endure gang violence on a day-to-day basis in gang infested communities have for too long been overlooked, as the focus of research studies is usually on the gangs and not the people who live in fear and terror. Therefore the rationale for this study was to provide these people, more specifically adolescents with the ability to voice their own experiences and thoughts with reference to gang violence. This would in addition present a

further understanding of gang violence and how precarious it has become in the Western Cape.

### **1.3 AIMS**

The aims were to:

- i. To investigate the adolescent's perceptions of the origin of gang violence.
  - ii. To explore adolescents' perception of how gangs have come to exist in their community.
  - iii. To explore adolescent's perceptions with regard to the influence of gang violence on their lives.
- 
- iv. To briefly investigate what coping-mechanisms or strategies, if any, these adolescents use regarding the influence of gang violence on their lives.
  - v. Provide stimulus for further research on adolescents affected by gang violence and make recommendations for possible interventions that can be implemented to help not only adolescents, but also other people affected by gang violence.

#### 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In previous studies that were conducted with reference to gang violence, the focus was mainly on gang members i.e. the dangers of being in a gang, how gangs are formed, initiations that take place and the different type of gangs that exist. A dearth of scholarship exists with regard to the victims of gangs or community members that live in fear of gangs and their activities. By focusing on adolescent's perceptions of gang violence and attempting to understand the sense people make of their experiences, makes this study significant. Therefore adolescents, with the aid of the in-depth interviews that were conducted, were given the opportunity to voice their own experiences and provide people outside their community with the ability to understand how gang violence has affected their lives.

*“I'd just like to say that this would really expose people and teenagers to this life we're living in and that the children here must realise there is another way of living...a better way of life than this...when the teacher told me that someone was coming to the school to ask us questions about this I said yes I want to go.” – Grade 12 Boy -17 years old*

## 1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

### 1.5.1 *Adolescents as defined in South Africa*

Adolescence is often defined as a transitory stage between childhood and adulthood, and an influential period during which many life patterns are learned and established. A time that is both crucial and dynamic for young people as they begin to develop their capacity for empathy, abstract thinking and future-time perspective; a time when the close and dependent relationships with parents and older family members begin to give way to more intense relationships with peers and other adults (Cheetham & Klindera, 2004). With regard to physiology, adolescents begin to reach their adult size, their bodies become more sexually defined and reproductive capacity is established. The concept of adolescence is in fact relatively new. Until the 20th century the passage from childhood to adulthood occurred relatively quickly, usually coinciding with puberty and subsequent childbearing. More recently both biological and socio-economic landmarks bracketing the transition to adulthood have moved in opposite directions. Menarche now occurs earlier and many societies have adjusted the definition of social and economic maturing and independence, which has now moved upward in the teen years. As a result adolescence can no longer be viewed merely as a stage between childhood and adulthood. It is now a unique and important developmental period requiring specific programming and policy attention (Cheetham & Klindera, 2004).

There is some variation in the age definition for adolescents who are often defined as those ages 10-19 years. Various governments and intra-governmental organisations have differing definitions based on age. Typically, 'youth' covers the ages 15-24, and 'young people' describes those 10-24 years of age. Therefore, 'young adults' are typically considered in the age range of 20-24 (Cheetham & Klindera, 2004).

In South Africa adolescents are defined as those persons between the ages of 10 and 19 years. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined 'adolescents' as persons in the age group 10-19 years, while 'youth' has been defined as the 15-24 years age group. These two overlapping groups have been combined into one entity, that of 'young people' in the age range 10-24 years (Dickson-Tetteh & Ladha, 2000).

### *1.5.2 Community Violence*

The phenomenon of community violence exposure is conceptually complex. According to Bell (1997) as cited in (Saigh, 1991), the nature of experiences covered under the community violence concept includes both predatory violence and violence arising from non-family interpersonal conflicts. In the case of predatory violent incidents the perpetrator's objective is to take something of value from the victim (usually a stranger), and physical threats or direct violence to the victim are means to achieve that goal. In opposition, participants in violent interpersonal conflicts are usually acquaintances involved in an altercation in which the distinction between perpetrator and victim is not clearly defined. Pointing out that gang-related and drug-related violence can represent either predatory or conflictual types, and that an additional form of community violence occurs (through negligence) when 'innocent victims' are caught incidentally in the line of fire.

The community violence concept applies not only to direct personal exposure (happened to you); it also includes exposure through witnessing (saw it happen to someone else) and vicarious (know someone it happened to) routes. Instruments that are used to measure community violence exposure take these different forms of exposure into account, providing separate items and summary scores for each type (Saigh, 1991).

### 1.5.3 *Gangsterism*

The definitions of gang and gang violence are a matter of controversy and confusion among law enforcement officials and researchers. Adolescent groups are not necessarily what are commonly called gangs. Nor is a high rate of juvenile crime indicative of gang activity (Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 2004). In differentiating between youth and delinquent adolescents from gang activity can become quite a hard task, as it is sometimes unclear. However in order to define gangs there are general characteristics that gangs have such as, gang names and recognisable symbols, a geographic territory, regular meeting patterns or even ordered and continuous course of criminality.

Gang violence is sometimes defined on the basis of whether an incident involved a suspect or victim who is a gang member and sometimes based on whether the incident involved gang activity (e.g., retaliation, territoriality, recruitment, wearing gang colours, shouting gang slogans) (Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 2004). Traditionally, racial, ethnic or religious groups formed gangs. The pressure of old values and traditions forced many people to band together to fight the prejudices found in their new environment which, could have been noted in the apartheid era. Territorial lines were drawn based on race, ethnicity, and religion, and group members maintained their own language and subcultures. Gangs of today are based on similar needs to identify with a group. Today gangs are based on, besides racial, ethnic, and religion, common experience and geographic location for example, urban and poverty-stricken areas.

Researchers have given several motivations for youth enrolment in gangs. These causes include enhanced status or prestige among friends, increased income from drug sales and other criminal enterprises, protection from other gangs, social relationships giving a sense of

personal identity and coercion into joining gangs. Gangs often have tattoos that symbolise their gang affiliation and generally establish distinctive clothing to signify membership with a particular gang. Unwary youths wearing similar clothing may become victims of gang rivalries resulting in physical confrontations.

Drive-by shootings in the community may occur, most often as a result of competition between gangs for territory. Gang members will drive by brandishing weapons to demonstrate their capacity for deadly violence. Communities with a history of gangs are more likely to have an established gang presence with gang membership including representation from several generations (Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 2004).

## **1.6 CHAPTER ORGANISATION**

Chapter one provides the reader with a detailed background of the topical area of the study conducted and the rationale for the specific psychosocial problem researched. The aims of the study are in addition discussed as well as what the significance this study holds. In the last section of this chapter various concepts are expanded on as related to this study and are defined and summarised as a means to provide the reader with a better understanding of what is discussed in the literature review and in the discussion of results chapter.

Chapter two encompasses the literature consulted, providing detailed discussions of hypothesis; theories and definitions of the topic researched. In this chapter the theories selected are discussed as a means of providing an explanation for the themes that arose out of the in-depth interviews. Furthermore the theoretical framework namely the phenomenological framework is explained and linked to the research study.



Chapter three provides a comprehensive description of the methodological framework and methods applied in this study. The research philosophy is discussed and disadvantages as well as advantages are listed with reference to the type of research method used namely qualitative methodology. An exact description of participants, and the type of instrumentation used are mentioned. In addition, a step-by-step explanation of how the data was collected as well as how the data was analysed is specified. This chapter furthermore indicates the ethical considerations taken into account for this study. The limitations, significance and recommendations for this study are discussed and a summary is presented.

Chapter four encompasses the core of this study. In this chapter the results of the interviews conducted are interpreted and discussed. All the categories that were coded are presented and the main themes selected from these coded categories were analysed using thematic analysis and Atlas ti., a qualitative analysis software programme. This was achieved by comparing the selected codes to existing theories and hypothesis. And noting whether new hypothesis have surfaced, or whether the information obtained from the interviews could be linked and is in agreement with the existing theories. And whether there are disparities between the results and that of the theories and hypothesis discussed.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Vogelman and Lewis (1993) assert that the term ‘culture of violence’ is often used in South Africa to explain and describe the country’s heightened incidence of violence. Whereby the endorsement and acceptability of violence to which this label refers is crucial to an understanding of any violent incident in South Africa. It has been said that resolving conflict and problems through violence has for a long time been a major part of the South African culture. Violence has played a significant role in African tribal society, in white colonial settlement, in the South African government’s programmes of repression and also in the liberation struggle against apartheid. And it continues to be a frequent method of resolving conflict and achieving certain goals in the family, in sexual relationships, in the school, in peer groups, as well as in the industrial relations and political spheres (Vogelman and Lewis, 1993).



### **2.2 GANGS IN SOUTH AFRICA– PAST AND PRESENT**

Researchers contend that the rise of gangs on the Cape Flats have come about mainly after the vast removals of people under the Group Areas Act from places such as District Six in the 1970s under the Group Areas Act. As a result of people being removed, often further away from the city and away from job opportunities, family structures were broken down. The areas where these people were relocated were seen as barren and because homes consisted of flats, overcrowding and instability in family life often occurred. The youth were therefore left with little choice in their home life and more than often would opt for spending their time on the streets. Lack of motivation to go to school and/or complete their education resulted in

increased numbers of dropouts further increasing the level of unemployment and poverty. Thus in particular some of the youth would seek other means to sustain themselves, which meant becoming members of gangs. Furthermore children in the Cape Flats would get caught up in this system and were more than likely to end up as members of a gang, especially in gangs, which were family based. Prince (2005) stated that the reasons for the formation of gangs on the Cape Flats were because of high poverty levels, social instability and unemployment.

Therefore in the Western Cape, removals were seen as the most common cause of the gangs and that the discrimination and inequality imposed by the apartheid regime resulted in the majority of areas remaining underdeveloped and under-resourced. This resulted in poor access to health care services, limited and racially biased access to education and training; limited employment opportunities resulting in high levels of unemployment for the majority of young people (Prince, 2005).



Pinnock (1996) focusing on the formation of gangs in the present day, suggested that the reasons why the youth easily identify with street gangs is a result of the association that fulfils the need for a rite of passage from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. Youth in the community grow up spending the majority of their time on the streets, to break away from violence and/or the effects of alcohol abuse, which are prevalent in many homes. Dissel (1997) emphasises that many such young people particularly males are drawn into gangs almost through a process of natural attrition. Their parents are gang members, so they naturally take on the inherited roles of their fathers. The gangs provide members with a sense of belonging as well as opportunities for financial improvement and for gaining a sense of power, acceptance and purpose. The existence of gangs revolves mainly around the supply and trafficking of drugs in the community, in the surrounding areas and at the higher level of

international drug trafficking. Although adults control the gangs, younger members are often used to carry out tasks on behalf of the gang.

Gangs are an example of a subculture in which violence is particularly prominent, and this is connected to the composition of its members and their social setting. With reference to township gangs, both the youth and maleness of their members are said to encourage the use of violence as a result of the strong association between masculinity and violence. Furthermore, given the marginalisation of the members, violence offers a quick and easy method to level the social playing field and to make an impression on an otherwise indifferent society to gain societal approval (from fellow members), and to obtain power and pleasure (Dissel, 1997).

In South Africa over half of the 11 254 homicides that were committed from December 2001 to February 2002 were inflicted by firearms, and more than a quarter by sharp instruments. The number of homicides rose abruptly in the 15 to 19 year age group, peaked in the 25-29 age group and remained high until 44 years of age. There were 6.6 male homicides for every female homicide. Of the males, 56% were killed using firearms, while firearms accounted for 43% of female homicides. Firearm homicides were the largest single external cause of homicides for all ages 5 years and older and most of these homicides occurred in and around private homes (Harris and Van Niekerk, 2002). Reasons why homicide by the use of firearms was included to such an extent was because when looking at gang violence there are many victims that have fallen prey to gunshot wounds, which either wounded them fatally or were the cause of their death. It is the relationship of gangs to homicide that make this concern a pressing adolescent health problem.

In the Western Cape the official homicide rate for the period 1999-2000 was 91 per 100 000 people. In the first five months of 2001 alone there were 103 registered murders on the Cape Flats, while in May 2003 there were 37 murders attributed to gang violence. In March 2003, on separate evenings, stray bullets from gang fights hit five children, four of whom died from their injuries (Standing, 2003). In Manenberg, a community comprising of approximately 6000 people, gang violence has become so rife that the local school is surrounded by an electric fence and barbed wire to keep 'gangsters' out, and bullet-proof windows protect the few inhabited public buildings.

Gang violence therefore impacts people's lives by injuring it and destroying it; it restricts lifestyles, evokes fear, damages relationships, dehumanises those who are involved and alienates people (Mingo, 1999).

### **2.3 THE EFFECT OF VIOLENCE ON YOUTH**



Recent media attention has been focused on the plight of inadvertent victims of violent street crime, and the issue of community violence is now recognised as a major public health issue, more than a criminal justice problem, especially among youths. Early studies of youth experiences with community violence focused primarily upon the issue of relapsing into crime among adolescent perpetrators. Only recently studies have begun to examine a spectrum of community violence and its traumatic consequences to youth victims. Even though all the studies focus on community violence and does not focus on gang violence per se, there is awareness that gang violence is an aspect of community violence.

Risks for victimisation have been found to be disproportionately distributed across demographic categories, including gender, socio-economic status (SES), race, level of

community urbanisation, and age (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993). Risk for community violence exposure is higher among the poor, the non-white, and those who live in densely populated urban areas. Studies found that late adolescence, ages 15-19, represents the period of highest risk for community violence exposure (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993).

Other studies on prevalence of community violence have examined rates of victimisation related to direct, witnessing, and vicarious types of exposure. These studies have consistently identified higher levels of indirect (witnessing and vicarious) types of exposure than direct exposure to community violence among urban youths (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993). Males reported significantly higher direct and witnessing exposure, but not more vicarious exposure than females. Most community violence studies with adolescents use the youths' self-report as the basis for determining community violence exposure. Youths' self-report may be preferred because studies comparing parents' reports of their child's community violence exposure and trauma-related psychological distress to the child's report found that parents stated significantly less exposure and distress (Martinez & Richters, 1993).

Gang affiliation has also emerged as a key risk factor for victimisation. Gang-related violence has become one of the most pervasive, brutal, and complicated forms of community violence frequently taking the form of fighting between rival gangs, armed robberies, high-speed car chases with rival gangs and/or the police.

Previous studies have proven that the effects of community violence exposure in youth are linked to anxiety symptoms and disorders. Reporting on two local academic studies into children's experience of violence on the Cape Flats, the following was reported (Standing, 2003, p. 3):

"Ninety-seven per cent of children surveyed reported hearing gunshots, nearly half had seen the dead body of a stranger and nearly as many the dead body of a relative, or somebody they knew, who had

died from unnatural causes. Many had seen people being shot or stabbed, and more than a third of them had seen somebody shot or stabbed in their own homes. Several had themselves been shot, stabbed or raped, or been threatened with a gun or a knife. The study found that more than one in 10 of the children had been shot at while at a taxi rank, more than one in five knew somebody who had been shot and killed while in a taxi, and more than one in 20 had a relative who had been shot and killed while in a taxi. Another earlier study showed nearly 17% of children and teenagers at school in a specific area of Khayelitsha with high levels of violence had suffered post-traumatic stress disorder. This study again turned up ‘unacceptable high levels of distress symptoms’ among a different group of children, resulting in disturbed eating and sleeping patterns as well as disturbed concentration and spontaneity.”

Researchers have confirmed that chronic exposure to community violence is believed to have a negative impact on various aspects of development and adaptive functioning in youth. Studies of exposure to neighbourhood and community violence indicate that these youth experience distress, anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress symptoms. Community violence exposure has been associated with declines in cognitive performance and attentional impairment. It was reported that possibly the result of lowered concentration levels that were found were due to distracting and intrusive thoughts concerning violent events, consistent with anxiety symptomatology (Cooley–Quille et al., 1995). Fitzpatrick (1993) reported that victimisation was associated with increased depressive symptoms, but witnessing violence was negatively linked with depression. In contrast, in a previous study victims of violence were not significantly more depressed than those who witnessed or heard about violent events. Both victimisation and observation have been associated with posttraumatic stress symptoms (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Martinez & Richters, 1993; Singer et al., 1995). The research implies that the form or modality of exposure to community violence may relate to its emotional impact on children and adolescents. Youth with higher incidence or more severe forms of exposure to community violence or both, display significantly more distress than

those with less exposure (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Martinez & Richters, 1993). Combined with Cooley-Quille and Lorion's results, the pattern is consistent with the suggestion that for adolescents exposed to high levels of community violence, a desensitisation process may occur that represents a means of adapting to chaotic communities (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993)

Some longitudinal studies have consistently documented that between half and two-thirds of youth growing up in families or communities where violence and abuse are rife, do overcome the odds and turn a life trajectory of risk into one that manifests resilience (Bernard, 1995). In contrast, Osofsky advises that being a witness to violence and living in a community where violence is prevalent can create aggression, anxiety disorders such as acute and post-traumatic stress, relational problems, and disruption in the development of empathy. This may eventually cause the child to become desensitised to what they see and experience (Capaldo and Lindner, 1999).



Pinnock (1984) and Murphy (1991), as cited in Mingo (1999) contend that with no one to turn to, the youth turn to each other; therefore gangs replace the extended family as the support network for children and youth. It would be safe to assume that a small percentage if not larger of the 6062 adolescent offenders in South African prisons in March 2001, which is 3.5% of all prisoners (a total of 170 959), may have possibly been part of a gang (Maree, 2002). For this reason it has become progressively critical for adolescents to be able to speak out about the problems and issues they face regarding gang violence, as it seems that some of these youth will inevitably become another statistic if they are not given the support needed.



## 2.4 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The origin of violence and the definition thereof has been a contentious subject matter debated under many disciplines. 'Violence' is typically the preferred word of the media when referring to criminal acts carried out by individuals or a group, either in public or private. In the social sciences literature, various theorists have provided their theories on violence and their definitions thereof (Archer and Brown, 1989). Newman (1979) defined violence as the situation that leads to physical injury or damage, given that historically and statistically it is the only aspect of violence that one is able to observe or record. Actual violence could be defined as an act carried out with the intention, or perceived as having the intention, of physically harming or hurting another person (Bulhan, 1985). For the purpose of this study gang violence can be defined as 'gang shootings, killing, raping and intentionally physically harming people whether directly or indirectly.



In the following section dominant theories and principles are discussed and related to violence as associated to gangs. These theories fall under two different domains. Firstly, theories which derive from the traditional literature on aggression and which include the genetic-biological hypothesis, the subjective hypothesis and the environmental hypothesis. Secondly, contextual theories located within the interactional dynamic and social systems theories on violence.

### 2.4.1 *Genetic-biological hypothesis of violence*

In the history of human violence, biological concepts have been the most compelling stimulants of violent behaviour. For example, racism itself is a 'biological' concept, or rather, a pseudo- biological one. According to Gilligan (1996), the widespread belief in the inherent biological inferiority of the different individuals and groups has often been used to justify and

even obligate violence toward them. This is why analysis of biological concepts is said to be in itself a central part of any thorough investigation of the causes and prevention of violence. The importance of biological determinants has been emphasised by Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) as they suggested that age and gender differences in criminal behaviour have been repeatedly and cross-culturally demonstrated. Siann (1985) however argues that this position fails to take into account either the subjective experiences of individuals or the social circumstances in which they live. While some theorists believe that having access to guns, being a victim of abuse at the hands of parents and peers, or being immersed in a culture that glorifies violence and revenge causes aggression.

On the other hand, it is stated that behaviour need not have a strong emotional basis to be aggressive. People often attack others with intent to harm but without necessarily feeling any malice toward the victim and that aggression is simply a means to some other end (Bushman and Anderson, 2001). The Frustration-Aggression hypothesis (an early motivational model) stated that individuals become aggressive whenever external conditions prevent them from reaching their goals. John Dollard, Neal E. Miller and their colleagues at Yale University used this motivational approach to explain aggressive behaviour. Frustration thus arouses aggressive drive, which surfaces at the behavioural level in the form of (1) an attack on the source of the frustration or (2) displaced aggression aimed at some other person or object. Dollard and his colleagues summarised their Frustration-Aggression hypothesis by stating that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presuppose the existence of frustration and, inversely, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression (Dollard et al., 1939).

The oldest and probably best-known explanation for human aggression centres on the view that human beings are somehow 'programmed' for violence by their biological nature,

sometimes known as the instinct theory of aggression. The most famous early supporter of this perspective was Sigmund Freud who held that aggression stems mainly from a powerful *death* wish or *instinct (thanatos)*, possessed by all persons (Berkowitz, 1962). According to Freud, this instinct is initially aimed at self-destruction but is soon redirected outward toward others. Freud believed that the hostile impulses it generates increases over time and if not released periodically, will soon reach high levels capable of guiding dangerous acts of violence (Byrne, 1991).

#### **2.4.2 Subjective hypothesis of violence**

Thompson (1989) emphasises that aggression stems from structural violence or relative deprivation. The fundamental formulation being the DFA linkage: *deprivation* leads to *frustration*, which in turns produces *aggression* when pent-up hostility against a perceived aggressor is released by an immediate stimulus; or as put in layman terms by Rule (1988) who suggests that when people are pushed too far they explode and when people's basic rights and dignity are trampled upon they're likely to strike back. Gurr (1970) argues that the discontent that arises from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic integrating condition for participants in collective violence. Thompson (1989) supports this view and asserts that a gap between expected and achieved welfare on some dimension produces the collective discontent that generates violence. Siann (1985) however state that the subjective hypothesis, though valuable in understanding aggressive feelings and certain group processes, does not take cognisance of the social environment that impact on behaviour.

### ***2.4.3 Environmental hypothesis of violence***

The antecedents of aggression that has been considered thus far have all been grounded in the human being's biological system. At one time, during the ascendancy of behaviourism, such variables would not have been assigned much of a place in aggression; such behavior would have been explained almost entirely as something acquired through conditioning and learning. Today it is recognised that the roles of learned and innate factors in human aggression cannot be described in an either/or way (Geen, 2001). Virtually every psychologist who investigates the problem recognises that both are involved and that differences in viewpoint involve the relative emphasis placed on each. To set 'nature' against 'nurture' in discussing human aggression is to create a false dichotomy. Aggressive or violent behavior is a response to conditions in the situation that provoke the person; even when one is disposed to aggress and capable of behaving aggressively, a specific situation must elicit the act. The probability that such behavior will occur, and also the intensity of the behavior, will vary according to both the nature of the provocation and the level of potential for aggression set by several background variables. There are certainly people born with dispositions to be violent who will be more aggressive when attacked than those lacking such dispositions, and people who have acquired strong aggressive tendencies through social learning who will react more aggressively than those who will not. Therefore according to Geen (2001) heredity and social learning are seen as complementary factors in human aggression.

The social learning theory of aggression emerged in the 1960s, largely as a result of the theorising of Albert Bandura and his associates. Bandura (1977) took the environmental stance and viewed aggression as behavioural patterns that are learned largely through reinforcement and modelling. Bandura saw aggressive behaviour as an acquired skill that can be used to intentionally harm others. Thus learned aggression is a pattern of a response or 'habit' that is acquired through the imitation of a model or 'identification' with the aggressor.

The 'learning position' assumes that aggressive behaviour is learned and used strategically in the service of particular goals. Children and adolescents aggress to gain attention, groups compete for scarce resources and soldiers aggress in the interest of national policy.

The Environmental hypothesis, even though cognisant of the impact of social learning and cultural background, fails to factor in the contextual elements that result in violent behaviour as it links the origin of violence to certain subcultures that approve of violence as a problem solving strategy (Siann, 1985).

#### ***2.4.4 Contextual theories of violence***

Newman (1979) states that the sub-cultural way of life of some ethnic groups may itself contribute to violence. In such lower subcultures it is said that, toleration if not encouraged, violence becomes part of the normative structure (Wolfgang, 1958). For example, when conflict arises among youth gangs, violence is the preferred means of settling it. When one gang invades another gang's turf, to fight is the normal method of settling this dispute. When gang members need money, they acquire it by committing robberies or muggings. Violence is so strongly ingrained in the normative structure of the group that individuals behave aggressively simply to establish a reputation among their peers (Forsyth, 1995).

“The Interactionist hypothesis proposes that the theories that explain violence in organic terms obscure the fact that it is above all people, the social systems they create, and the technology of death they develop that bring oppression and violence (Bawa, 1997, p.15)”. This interactionist position renders this fact by its emphasis on historical and contextual factors and by its focus on the expression of violence, the aggressor, the victim or accuser and the judge. Although this perspective does take the psychological and biological factors that

may provoke varying responses among individuals in the same environment into consideration, it also creates the insights obtained from other hypothesis and attempts to avoid their limitations (Bawa, 1997).

Decker and Van Winkle (1996) looks at gang violence specifically and suggests three answers as to why the level of violence is so high among gangs or groups as well as the reasons why this violence exists within the 'gang culture'. It is proposed that gangs, like the military, are organised for violence, that these gangs amplify violence and that gang membership is selected for violence. In this context the increase in gang violence, or at least the reported problem of gang/group violence in some cities, can be attributed to many things. One of the largest factors is that gangs have more weapons than they had in the past. Honour in gangs is said to be key to understanding their violence. Howell and Gleason (1999) reports that, according to a 1993 study in Chicago, most gang violence is related to the emotional defence of one's identity as a gang member, the defence of the gang and its gang members, the glorification of the reputation of the gang as well as gang member recruitment, and territorial expansion.

Power within the gang subculture is said to be obtained by both money (through drug sales or robbery) and the number of violent acts committed. These acts of violence and criminal activity demonstrate a member's allegiance to the gang and the ability to carry out such acts (Staub, 1989). Often, initiation into gangs requires an illegal or violent act. Recruitment into gangs also often involves coercion or intimidation. Violence is amplified in gangs as belonging to a group makes it easier for people to act in ways that are out of the ordinary. These gang members no longer need to take individual responsibility for their actions, as the group is held responsible or the group's leader. Anonymity can lead to the loss of a well-

defined separate identity that embodies inhibitions, increasing antisocial behavior (Staub, 1989).

Scheidlinger (1994) identifies three intertwined group psychological processes that appear to be at work among these loosely tied and unstable gangs. (1) A crowd-like condition where reason, control and judgement give way to strong uncontrolled emotion. (2) De-individuation, a process wherein a person is prevented by group factors from becoming aware of him/herself as a separate individual (the de-individuated individual is guided by the group's immediate cues and emotions rather than by long-term beliefs and consequences). (3) Emotional contagion, which can be described as an automatic spread of behavior from one person to another or to a whole group. The group is a drug that puts conscience and reason to sleep, frees the imagination, emotions and instincts. Baron (1997) found that the group itself appears to encourage and support violence as a tool of dispute settlement and that these methods earn the praise of peers, indicating some sort of group approval.



These contextual theories of violence all share a particular assumption that aggression and violence are best understood in terms of interpersonal relationships within a social perspective (Bawa, 1997). Contextual theories of violence place emphasis not only on individual predispositions but also on social processes, which makes these theories applicable to this study.

## **2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The phenomenological approach in a general non-philosophical sense is grounded in qualitative methodology. In sociology, phenomenology was mediated by the Husserlian-based phenomenology of the social world by Schuetz, and further by Berger and Luckmann in *The*

*Social Construction of Reality*. Phenomenology was founded as a philosophy by Husserl at the turn of the century and further developed as existential philosophy by Heidegger, and then in an existential and dialectical direction by Sartre and by Merleau-Ponty (Kvale, 1996). The subject matter of phenomenology began with consciousness and experience, was expanded to include the human life world by Heidegger, and to include human action by Sartre. With the focus of the interview on the experienced meanings of the subjects' life world, phenomenology appears relevant for clarifying the mode of understanding in a qualitative research interview. Phenomenology is the study of the structure, and the variations of structure of the consciousness to which any thing, event, or person appears. Phenomenology focuses on clarifying both that which appears and the manner in which it appears.

Phenomenology attempts to get beyond immediately experienced meanings in order to articulate the pre-reflective level of lived meanings to make the invisible visible (Turner, 2003). The phenomenological approach is used to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of the everyday 'lived' experiences of people. It provides one with the opportunity to richly and deeply probe the phenomenology and experiences of gang violence with the participants, without having to assume that there is an Archimedean point of view from which this phenomenon is supposed to be seen. Although phenomenology is the attempt at a direct description of experience without any considerations about the origin or cause of an experience, for the purpose of this research study these two areas were also explored (Kvale, 1996).

Furthermore in discussing gang violence, it becomes inevitably clear, the dreadful effects it has on the people in communities in which it is found to be rife. Gang violence is seen as an oppressive force, where the oppressed (the people in the community) finds that their physical and psychological space are unappreciated, intruded into, and curtailed. In light of the



literature that has been discussed thus far, Fanon's six dimensions of oppression will be used to provide a conceptual framework for the study of violence and how violence, as an oppressive system violates one's space, time, energy, mobility, bonding and identity (Bulhan, 1985).

As gang violence permeates the every day lives of people, the innocent are not allowed any claim to territoriality nor are their privacy respected. Of the twenty- four hours of each day, there is less time the oppressed can call their own; to be used at will for self-development and /or leisure. The energy of the oppressed is often depleted and expropriated (Bulhan, 1985). The movements of the oppressed is controlled and curbed. Equally crucial, their bonding with others is threatened and rendered conflictual. His or her personal, as well as collective identity is also challenged, undermined, and confused. Life is seen as inconceivable without space, time, energy, bonding, mobility, and identity. These six dimensions thus define, and substantiate the human psyche and are the foundations of human psychology (Bulhan, 1985). Fanon's theory of the six dimensions of violence are incorporated in this study by means of having provided a guide to the questions that were asked of the participants regarding gang violence. Thus, the questions that were asked reflected how gang violence permeated the different dimensions of their lives.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

The theories discussed above have been described as possible explanations to the current research inquiry. Very little research has been conducted in South Africa that relate to the origins of gang violence as a specific topic. Furthermore there is a need for research in the area of psychological implications and effects of gang violence on victims. The applicability of these theoretical dispositions thus all need to be proven within the local context of South

Africa. However, the researcher does acknowledge theories and theoretical hypothesis that may adequately provide explanations for gang violence and the effects thereof in the South African context. These theories and hypothesis will be elaborated on in chapter four in the theoretical analysis of main themes section.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Dawes (1994) has stated that most research related to children's emotional reactions to violence has been framed within the psychiatric biomedical paradigm. The focus of this paradigm is therefore on identifying mechanisms in the psychological make-up of the child and the context she/he inhabits, which predicts various forms of outcomes following exposure to violence. However this tends to limit one's understanding and methods of intervention. Foster (1987) has further noted that in recent years there has been increasing criticism of quantitative and experimental methods. A much stronger advocacy for the use of qualitative methods has therefore ensued, such as interviews and observations of interactions in naturalistic 'real world' settings that are taking place. Therefore for the purpose of this research study, qualitative methodology was utilised by conducting in-depth interviews. This allowed selected issues to be explored in-depth, with openness, and in detail in attempting to understand the categories of information that emerged from the data.

The next section explores the qualitative paradigm of research and seeks to explain the rationale and methodology that is applied in qualitative studies. Furthermore, limitations as well as advantages in using qualitative research methods are discussed.

### **3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

For the purpose of this research study, qualitative methodology by conducting in-depth interviews was utilised.

At the most basic level, qualitative interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996). Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as the attempt to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.

In practice, open-ended qualitative interview questions are often combined with more closed-ended structured interview formats. Qualitative interviews are useful as it may be used as an exploratory step before designing more quantitative structured questionnaires to help determine the appropriate questions and categories. Conversely, interviews may be used after the results of more standardised measures are analysed to gain insight into interesting or unexpected findings. While those who disagree with the findings sometimes dismiss quantitative results on political or methodological grounds, it can be harder to dismiss the actual words of participants, which convey their powerful emotions (Patton, 1990).



Within the phenomenological framework, the interpretive approach was used. The researcher using the interpretive approach regards the reality to be studied consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world. The researcher may adopt an intersubjective or interactional epistemological stance toward that reality, and use methodologies (such as interviewing or participants observations) that rely on subjective relationship between the researcher and the subject. Although the controlled environment of the interviews may undermine the validity of the study from a positivist perspective, from an interpretive perspective the context is the key to valid research (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

In using the qualitative research approach, namely in-depth interviewing, certain advantages and disadvantages need to be considered. The advantages are (1) It allows the participant to express what is meaningful or significant to him or her using his or her own words rather than

being limited to predetermined categories, thus participants may feel more relaxed and truthful (Kvale, 1996). (2) It provides high credibility (reliability) and face validity; results 'ring true' to participants and make intuitive sense to lay audiences. (3) It allows the researcher to probe for more details and ensure that participants are interpreting questions the way they were intended (Bless & Higson –Smith, 1995). (4) The interviewers have the flexibility to make use of their knowledge, expertise, and interpersonal skills to explore interesting or unexpected ideas or themes raised by participants (Sewell, 2003).

The disadvantages faced when using qualitative interviews as a research method are that it may be experienced as a more intrusive method than that of quantitative approaches as participants may say more than they intended to say, and later regret having done so. The research method may be more reactive to personalities, moods, and interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee than methods such as surveys. Training interviewers and conducting interviews can become fairly expensive and time-consuming, since qualitative interviewing requires considerable skill and experience. And analysing and interpreting qualitative interviews is much more time-consuming than analysing and interpreting quantitative surveys. Qualitative interviews are in addition more subjective than quantitative methods because the researcher decides which quotes for specific examples to report.

### 3.3 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

When using qualitative interviews for the purpose of data collection in research there are two basic purposes that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, to find explanations to the research question under investigation and secondly, to attempt to solve the specific problem or problems under question.

Reliability of qualitative studies is difficult to judge since the study is taken under the assumption that the researcher and the participants are dynamic entities and do not remain static for any two moments in time. This reasoning therefore drives qualitative studies presupposing that the findings are time and place bound. The issue of reproducing the results of a study is therefore redundant. It is therefore not the intention of qualitative studies to prove theory or hypotheses but in actual fact to rather add to existing theory and stimulate new hypotheses.



Some qualitative researchers, depending on a philosophical perspective, have come to reject the framework of validity that is commonly accepted in more quantitative research in the social sciences. These researchers reject the basic realist assumption that there is a reality external to our perception of it. Therefore, it doesn't make sense to be concerned with the 'truth' or 'falsity' of an observation with respect to an external reality (which is a primary concern of validity). These qualitative researchers argue for different principles for judging the quality of research (Trochim, 2002). Principles such as that proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985) as criteria for judging the dependability of qualitative research explicitly offered these as an alternative to more traditional quantitatively oriented criteria. These four criteria were understood to better reflect the underlying assumptions involved in qualitative research. The four criteria are as follows (Guba and Lincoln, 1985):

### Credibility

The credibility criterion involves establishing from the perspective of the participant in the research that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results.

### Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. The researcher can improve transferability by doing a comprehensive job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. The person who wishes to 'transfer' the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer is.



### Dependability

The idea of dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study.

### Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. The researcher can do this by documenting the procedures thus enabling the researcher to check and recheck the data throughout the study.

### 3.4 PARTICIPANTS

Participants for this study were selected on a voluntary basis from grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 at a school in the Western Cape. Since the study involved the administering of in-depth interviews, two participants from each grade 8, 9 and 10 was selected and three participants from grades 11 and 12 was selected. Therefore a maximum of twelve participants were interviewed. The question of gender balance was kept in place as six of the participants were female and the other six participants were male. The ages of the participants ranged from 13 to 17 years old and they were allowed to speak both English and/or Afrikaans throughout the interviews. With the aid of the contact-teacher, 12 participants from the school were approached for pre- interviews. These interviews, before the actual study, helped ascertain whether the interviewees selected were/are suitable participants. The decision was based on specific criteria to ensure that the selection process was as uniform as possible for all participants.



#### 3.4.1 *Criteria for selection*

Criteria for inclusion of participants in the study were:

1. 6 males and 6 females;
2. Ages ranging from 13 to and including 17 years;
3. Live in the a community where gang violence is prevalent;
4. Identify themselves as non-gang members and are identified by the community as non-gang members.



### 3.4.2 *Rationale for criteria*

The reasons why six males and six females are stipulated in the criteria were to maintain a gender balance in the study so that both genders could be represented equally. The age criteria from 13 years up to and including 17 years old was incorporated as because this age range is classified as early adolescents according to Erickson psychosocial development (Newman & Newman, 1995).

The third criterion included the focus on a community where gang violence occurred within that specific setting. The rationale behind this specific criterion was that persons that live outside the community might not have sufficient first hand knowledge of gang violence that occurs within that community. Therefore their participation would have proven to be ineffective.



The reason for criterion four is linked to one of the main aims of this research study which was to provide the participants/adolescents in this community that may be affected by gang violence to voice their experiences and stresses. These are the innocent members of this community that lay victim to gang violence and therefore does not focus on gang members but those affected by gang violence.

## **3.5 INSTRUMENTATION**

Patton (1990) identifies the basic types of qualitative interviewing for research which are, the informal conversational interview, the interview-guide or semi structured interview guide approach, which may be the most widely used format for qualitative interviewing and the standard open-ended interview. For the purpose of this research study a semi-structured

interview guide was used as it followed a checklist of issues that was explored. This allowed for probing of additional information, which provided new enriched data relevant to this study (Patton, 1990). The strength of this approach is that while a researcher has control over issues to be discussed, he/she allows the interviewee to deviate on the core issue of discussion, as long as it is still within the research topic. In this way issues that were not expected during the planning process are raised and may be followed up either in the present interview or the next interview (Hardon et al 2003). Structured interviews on the other hand tend to be too rigid and do not provide either an interviewer or interviewee to expand beyond the stated question. This method though, requires an experienced researcher with skills to note when the interviewee is deviating from the present issue of investigation. To ensure uniformity of issues discussed during interviews, an interview guide was used to lead discussions. A vignette was utilised to stimulate and facilitate the responses from the participants whilst using a semi-structured interview guide. This approach allowed for depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewees' responses. A sort of balance between the researcher and interviewee was developed during the interviews, which provided room for negotiation, discussion, and expansion of the interviewee's responses.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

In accessing the participants needed for this study, the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED) was contacted via telephone as well as an informed letter requesting permission to do the research study at the selected school. Once the WCED and the principal granted permission to conduct the study, a meeting was held with the contact teacher.

In the meeting a general sense of the study was explained and the setting up of times, dates and suitable venues were planned. A letter of consent was drawn up beforehand regarding

acquiring consent from the parents of the children to partake in the study. The contact teacher was very helpful in overseeing that all informed consent forms were given to parents and were signed and returned by the pupils before any interviews were conducted. The participants were assured that all data collected would remain confidential and anonymous. The interviews were conducted at the school in a classroom. Each interview varied between thirty minutes to an hour and was tape-recorded with prior permission obtained from the interviewees.

### **3.7 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### *3.7.1 Thematic Analysis*

There are many different analytic traditions that come under the umbrella of interpretive analysis, for example phenomenology, grounded theory and thematic content analysis. For the purpose of this study thematic analysis was used.



Thematic analysis is useful when the aim of a study is exploratory in nature and is carried out by reading through the body of material and identifying recurrent themes or categories.

The first step was to transcribe the interviews, from which patterns of experiences was listed. The next step was to identify all the data related to the already classified patterns. The following step was to combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes, the emergence of similarities and the mes required the researcher to check the transcripts for similarities that would inform the creation of categories and themes. Once the similarities and common themes were grouped together a rigorous reflection synthesis and transformation of the central themes originating from the clusters, took place. Each cluster of quotations was examined systematically and different inconsistencies were noted. Themes that emerged from the

interviewee's responses were then pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience.

### 3.7.2 *ATLAS.ti - Qualitative Data Analysis*

In addition to thematic analysis, ATLAS.ti was used to assist in creating the themes that came out of the interviews. This was done by entering all the transcribed interviews into the ATLAS.ti program and from then on coding each quotation from each interview that was conducted. The codes were then entered into the relevant themes that started to emerge. ATLAS.ti therefore made it easier to insert the relevant quotations under each theme when writing up of the discussion began as well as the results of the study.

ATLAS.ti therefore in the course of qualitative analysis helps one to uncover the complex phenomena hidden in one's data in an exploratory way. For coping with the inherent complexity of the tasks and the data, ATLAS.ti offers a powerful and intuitive work environment that is designed to keep one focused on the material itself (Friese, 2005).

## **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Informed consent was obtained prior to the study from the persons concerned, viz. the parents of all the participants who took part in the study and that of schooling staff. Individuals who were selected and did not want to further participate in the study were able to withdraw from the study (time was allocated for those individuals to do so) thus not affecting the number of participants needed for the study. Confidentiality and anonymity was assured before the interviews took place as well as before any recordings were done. Due to the sensitive nature

of the research study, counselling sessions were arranged when needed, by referral to the appropriate counsellors and psychologists.



## CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following section is presented in a phenomenological approach, focusing on the interviewees' responses and the experienced meanings of the participants' life. In the sections to follow, exact accounts are provided as verbalised by the participants of this study.

#### 4.1.1 Actual accounts of gang violence as experienced by the participants

The responses as depicted below are subjective experiences of gang violence and are presented here to provide a vivid picture of incidents involving gang violence as experienced by the participants. Here the concept of gang violence not only applies to direct personal exposure (happened to you), it in addition includes exposure through witnessing (saw it happen to someone else) and vicarious exposure (know someone it happened to) routes. These responses furthermore provide one with a clearer understanding of the themes that will be discussed after these accounts of gang violence have been grasped.

*“Ja ek het gehoor hulle het 'n klonkie dood geskiet 'n klong wat wil uit gekom het uit die huis uit, en toe wiet ek nie hoe dit gebeur het nie ma toe skiet hulle vir hom, die koel het deur die deur gekom hoor ek toe skiet hulle die klonkie dood en hy was binne in die huis, 'n onskuldige klong.” - Grade 10 - boy - 14 years old.*

[Yes I heard they shot a little boy a boy that wanted to come out of the house but I don't know how it happened but so they shot him, the bullet came

through the door so I heard, so they shot the little boy dead and he was inside the house, an innocent boy.]

The following is an account given by one of the participants. This was also voiced by many of the other participants throughout the interviews conducted. Innocent children within this community are often the victims of stray bullets as mentioned before; at least 13 children were shot dead in the space of three months as the result of gang violence.

*“Ja. Ek kan net vir jou sê dat ons bly in die hart van die gangs. Nou soes een oggend toe ek skool toe loep toe begin hulle al te skiet al en ek het by ons se hek gestaan toe kom die gangsters oor en skiet 'n leader van 'n ander gang...reg voor my...ek het dit voor my gesien.” - Grade 10 - boy - 16 years old.*

[Yes. I can just tell you that where we I live is in the heart of the gangs. Now like one morning when I had to walk to school they started to shoot and I was standing by our gate so the gangsters came over and shot a leader of a gang...right in front of me...it happened in front of me.]

Children are often left in fear even before their day has begun, having to be witness to gang fights and shootings that occur on their doorstep. When eventually making it safe to school they are yet again threatened as one participant pointed out:

*“Ek was al gegun point al hie by die skool.” - Grade 10 - boy - 16 years old*

[I was already held at gunpoint at school.]

Travelling in and around this community furthermore proves to be a dangerous task and people's lives are left in the balance as gang wars occur at any given time and at any place as a 16-year-old girl explained:

*“Klim toe in die taxi by die huis en met die wat ek in die taxi in klim ruk die gatjie 'n gun uit...ek het soe groot geskrik dat ek soema net trug gestaanit en ek hetie gebothor om in te klim kommie anne taxi verby en hulle skiet op mekaar en daar is mense in die taxi's maar hulle skiet op mekaar.” - Grade 11 - girl - 16 years old*

[I climbed into a taxi by my house and just as I got into the taxi a taxi guard took out a gun...I got such a fright that I immediately stood back and did not bother to get in as another taxi passed and so they started shooting at each other and there were people in the taxi but they still shot at each other.]



Many of these youth bear witness to gruesome shootings as depicted by a 17-year-old boy:

*“Like I saw someone get shot through his head and it still haunts me...I saw a person get shot...hit with sledges and lots of things. I've seen people get stabbed a lot of times and these things happen on a daily basis here but the worst I've seen is someone get shot in the head.” - Grade 12 - boy - 17 years old*

Some of the people that get shot are not strangers, to the participants more than often a friend, family member or someone that they knew have been killed as a result of gang violence.



*“Ek het al iets gesien, 'n nogge gangster het my vriend se berk geskiet, dood geskiet en hy het twee kinders, ek het oek al gesien hoe skiet hulle vir 'n klong in onse court...ek het baie gesien.” - Grade 8 - girl - 13 years old*

[I have seen something already, another gangster shot my friends boyfriend, shot dead and he has two children, I've also seen how they shot a boy in our courtyard...I've seen a lot of things.]

These subjective experiences as noted above are but a few of the daily incidents that adolescents have encountered in their early life. Throughout the interviews it was observed that each of these participants had been affected by the events that they had either witnessed or heard about. This was made evident by the haunting expressions and genuine concern expressed on their faces as well as discomfort shown in the form of their body language that was observed.



## **4.2 DISCUSSION OF CODED CATEGORIES**

In the following section the key findings that emerged from the Atlas.ti coding phase and thematic analysis are discussed. The codes generated in the individual interviews were combined into coded categories forming various themes. The key findings that are discussed in this section were raised, in most instances, by all participants involved in this study.

### **4.2.1 Adolescents' definitions of gang violence**

Since all the participants that were selected for this study live in an area where gang violence is rife, it was important to understand what these participants' own personal understandings of gang violence were and how they defined gang violence as they have experienced it. Gang

violence is seen as an integral part of the gang culture, it is seen as the motivation for many young people to join their gangs, and is typically part of the initiation into gangs. Violence is ever present in the lives of most of the gang members.

#### *4.2.1.1 Gang violence defined as acts of revenge and war over territory*

Gang violence was referred to and defined as including the fight over territory in the community by gangs.

*“'n Gang wat saam kom en nou besluit hulle gaan nou amper soos oorlog bakly tien aan 'n ander gang om uite roei dat hulle kan die plek oorwat.” - Grade 10 - boy - 14 years old*

[A gang that comes together and decides that they are now going to fight a war against the other gang to cast them out so that they can take over the territory.]



As well as acts of revenge between rival gangs because of gang members being shot or killed by each other.

*“I think for me it is means gangs fighting each other like gangs competing with another gang, say they have something the other gang wants, it's like the two of those gangs will fight till they get what they want. Say for instance this gang shot someone is their gang now the other gang will have or will take revenge on the other gang because they now lost someone who was working for them and they would like 'go for blood' and they will shoot someone from the other gang to get revenge.” - Grade 10 - girl - 15 years old*

#### 4.2.1.2 *Gang violence defined as violence against innocent people*

The most common definition of gang violence was described as that of violence occurring between gang members and innocent bystanders that are harmed in the process.

*“Gang violence is soes wat gebeur onne gangs in 'n community soes onsin, soes skietery, robbery, en mense wat onoorag seer kry...daai is gang violence vir my.” – Grade 12 - girl - 17 years old*

[Gang violence is what happens between gangs in a community like ours, like shooting, robbery, and people that unnecessarily get hurt...that for me is gang violence.]

In the need for territory, power and money innocent community members are often targeted using violence as a means to achieve these ‘goals’. According to the participants of this study gang violence was defined as that of people getting robbed, being stabbed, held up by gunpoint, murdered and raped.

*“Ek dink aan gangsters en hoe violent hulle is. Hulle maak mense dood, hulle stiek mense, hulle rape mense. En as ek vir iemand moet sê sal ek sê dis wanneer gangsters wat op mekaar skiet, hulle skiet mekaar dood...” - Grade 8 - girl - 13 years old*

[I think about gangsters and how violent they are. They kill people stab people they rape people. And if someone must ask me I will say that it is when gangsters shoot at each other, they shoot each other dead.]

## 4.2.2 Adolescents' perception of gang activities

In the previous section a brief account of gang activities were mentioned however this section will provide a more detailed account of gang activities that take place in this community as well as specific undertakings of how gangs operate in the community in order to sustain themselves.

### 4.2.2.1 Gang activities: 'Having to pay protection'

For people in this community, besides living in fear of being shot by stray bullets in one's home, gangsters have become accustomed to 'taxing' people who own house-shops. Whereby at any time they demand money or goods from house-shop owners. Besides satisfying their own needs by 'taxing' these people, they do it to prove to the community the power they have over people who live in their territory.



*"If you don't pay tax dan gat jou winkel ma toe because die leader van whatever gang vra soema vir twee broode en whatever want die gang is honger hulle wil iet, en hulle soek entjies en dan is daar miskien een van die gang lede wat in die tronk is dan gat hulle nou miskien na hom toe dan sê hulle dat hulle oek taxi fare nodig het of soe...jy moet net oor gie hulle wil gesien wies by die community." - Grade 12 - girl - 17 years old*

[If you don't pay tax then you will lose your shop because the leader of whatever gang will demand two breads and whatever because his gang is hungry and they want to eat, and also cigarettes and maybe a leader is in jail and maybe they want to go to him then they'll ask for taxi fare as well...and

you must just hand it over and that is how they want to be seen by the community.]

In reality the gangs commit robbery in the form of ‘taxing’ people however according to the gangs the people who own house-shops need protection in the event of other gangs that might rob the shop owners therefore they must pay. The shop owners are not given a choice in paying these so called ‘taxes’ enforced by the gangs and it was said that many have closed down their businesses as a result of fearing for their lives as well as not making a profit from their business.

*“Like some people that have house shops or any little business they must pay protection money it's basically like they are getting taxed by the gangsters but what happens is that some don't want to pay and they stand up to these gangs but then it becomes personal from the gangsters and that's when people get hurt and threatened.” - Grade 12 - boy - 17 years old*

#### *4.2.2.2 Gang activities: Exchanging stolen goods for money, drugs and guns*

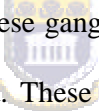
The goods and money that are robbed from the people in the community are not only exchanged for money but are also exchanged for guns and ammunition as well as for drugs.

*“Say now they are wearing jewellery the gangs would ...if they now need bullets and stuff and they need money so they take your jewellery, any valuable thing you have so they can sell it or trade it in for bullets.” - Grade 10 - girl - 15 years old*

*“As ek miskien jewellery op het en ek wil nie it gie nie dan maak hulle vir jou seer because hulle wil dit hê, hulle wil miskien vir hulle drugs gat koop of guns...whatever hulle maak met die geld. Nou as hulle nie die goed van jou kry nie maak hulle jou seer, nou om nie my lewe te verloor dan gie ek ma my goed... verstaan?” - Grade 12 - girl - 17 years old*

[If I should maybe have jewellery on and I don't want to give it then they will hurt you because they want it, maybe they want it for drugs or to buy guns...whatever they do with the money. Now if they don't get the stuff from you then they'll hurt you, now not to lose my life I give it to them...understand?]

#### *4.2.2.3 Gang activities: Forcing community members to store guns*

Besides robbing the community members, these gangs go as far as using people to store their guns and ammunition that they have acquired.  These people are forced to do this against their will and are physically threatened if they refuse to do so.

*“Miskien soes hulle hou hulle guns, hulle verkoop die goed vir hulle, die drugs en soe en dan kom haal hulle net die geld. Ok daai vrou het miskien beoog om daai besigheid te run ma nie vir hulle nie sy was gevorseer in daai en soe druig hulle die mense hier.” – Grade 12 - boy - 17 years*

[Maybe like they keep the guns and sell the guns for drugs and then they just come fetch the money. Like that lady maybe she didn't want to run that for them but she was forced and that is how they threaten the people here.]

### 4.2.3 Adolescents' perception of the causes for gang violence

#### 4.2.3.1 Gang violence as a result of fighting over territory

The participants in the study provided various causes for the result of gang violence in the community in which they live. One of the most prominent causes given for gang violence existing in their community was the issue of territory. More than one gang exists within this community, as the participants mentioned at least five different gangs that patrol their neighborhood. The community is therefore divided into different sections where invisible lines are drawn as to which gang occupies which area. It was said that when a gang enters a rival gang's territory, violence soon erupts because this is seen as both a threat and an insult to the gang occupying that particular area at that time, as one of the participants explained:

*“The whole thing comes back to territory everyone wants to be like my gang wants to rob here but when they rob one of my people then I'm not going to like it perhaps so I'll tell my gang we must go and do something about it. Then it's a big thing...and people die.” - Grade 12 - boy - 17 years old*

*“It gebeur miskien om dat hulle wil geld hê of iets dan gat rob hulle die mense en sê ma nou ek is 'n funkier en jy is 'n boston ek gat in jou territory in en hulle sien vir my en nou kom hulle oor en begin te bakly en skiet soema soes hulle wil, 'n onskuldige mens wietie wat aan gaan nie en word geskiet.” - Grade 8 - boy - 13 years old*

[It might happen because they want money or something so they go and rob the people and say for instance I am a 'funkier' and you are a 'boston' and I go into your territory and they see me now they'll come over and begin to fight and

shoot like they want, an innocent person does not know what's going on and gets shot.]

#### 4.2.3.2 *Gang violence as a result of competing with other gangs*

Another reason given for the high intensity of gang violence in the community was that these gangs more than often compete against each other to increase their level of status in the community and to prove to other rival gangs who is better at what they do, from robbery to murder as well as seeing which gang can recruit the most children to be part of their gang.

*“Die gang wil meer status hê as die ander gang ...ons kan meerde moorde maak ons kan meer mense rob of seer maak as die ander gang. As een gang nou iets aan vang vanaand dan doen die ander gang iets bieteer die next aand soe een wil higher status as die ander gang het en as 'n individual van 'n gang soes sê nou ek is die leader van die gang en jy is die leader van 'n nogge gang dan kyk ons wie kan die meeste kinders influence om gangsters te raak because vandag soes ek nou sien in die community is dit net jong kinders wat gangsters raak. - Grade 12 - girl - 17 years old*

[The gang wants more status than the other gang...we can commit more murders we can rob more people or hurt more people than other gangs. If one gang does something tonight then the other gang will do something better the following night and so one wants higher status than the other gang and if an individual from a gang like say I'm a leader of a gang and you are a leader of another gang then the two of us will see who can influence the most children to become gangsters because today like in this community it's just young children that become gangsters.]



#### 4.2.3.3 *Gang violence as a result of unemployment and dropping out of school*

The issue of unemployment was another cause that was mentioned however instead of seeking employment many adolescents in the community laze at home, some of the youth are dropouts looking for something to do besides actually looking for employment, they look at how much money or things gangs accomplish in a day and see that as a better route of making money, as a boy in grade 10 explained:

*“Nou kry hulle nie werk nie, dink hulle miskien nou het hulle nie werkie wat kan hulle nie in daai dag gedoen nittie. Daais hoekom instead van werk gaan soek, hulle soek ma net werk vir hulle hanne, maak mense dood rob mense steel.” - Grade 10 - boy - 14 years old*

[Now they don't get work, so they think about what they could have done in that day if they were not working. That's why instead of looking for work instead they're just looking for work for their hands, killing and robbing people.]

#### **4.2.4 Adolescents' perception of the effects of gang violence**

##### *4.2.4.1 The effect of gang violence on adolescents' home life and personal space*

The effect of violence on the participants of this study was reflected in various dimensions of their lives. Many participants related that even when at home whilst children would play outside they would have to flee inside their homes because of gangs shooting. Therefore the participants home life and personal space was often threatened and oppressed.

*“That means for the people living in the community they don't have the freedom of their own because in the afternoon maybe their children are playing the roads and suddenly there will be a shooting and stuff and the children get caught in the cross-fire and stuff happen like it's not nice because ...or even at night when you're not asleep and watching TV and they suddenly start shooting and it's right there...right in the road and maybe they'll run into your yard the gangs run into your yard because they are looking for someone and the people are shooting at them and so they come in there and many times the bullets go through your house and the people have to like lay on the floor.” - Grade 10 - girl - 15 years old*

#### *4.2.4.2 The effect of gang violence on parents in the community*

Parents of children would often have to come up with ways and means to occupy their children's time as well as keep them inside their homes in fear of their children being shot or killed by gangs. This more than often leaves these parents energy's being depleted and because these children cannot afford to play outside, their own homes and their personal space are invaded.

*“...kyk die ma's wil mos nie hê dat hulle kinders seer moet kry nou deur daai koep die ma's mos tv' en videos om hulle kinders binne te hou want deur die geskieterij en aangeaanery, mense kan nie afford om hulle laaste laaste weg te gie nie, en die watie werk nie kom net en dan kry hulle dit op 'n skinkbord.” - Grade 10 - boy - 14 years old*

[...look the mother's of these children don't want them to get hurt so because of this they buy TV's and videos to keep their children inside because of the

shootings, people can't afford to use their last and now those that don't have work just come and then they get it on a silver platter.]

#### 4.2.4.3 *The effect of gang violence on the psychological space of adolescents*

Besides the participants' personal space being oppressed, their psychological state of mind is often distressed as a result of gang violence occurring around them even at school. They are often left with apprehensive feelings not only for their own safety but also for the safety of their friends and family members who they fear may be harmed.

*“You so scared because the shooting is so loud because it's happening right there and you are scared because you heard of people being shot in their homes and you're scared this might happen to you because it has happened around you so why can't it happen to you so you can't even sleep because people are just so very scared.” - Grade 10 - girl - 15 years*

*“It laat my skrik want ons is nog in die skool en hier begin die skietery nou al, ons moet nog huis toe gaan ...en 'n mens kan nie reg dinkie jy moet dink oor die werk wat nou aan gaan, maar dan dink jy nog oor die geskietery wat aan gaan. 'n Mens kannie concertrate tie.” - Grade 10 - boy - 14 years old*

[It makes me get a fright because we are still at school and here they begin to shoot and we still have to go home...and a person can't think about the work you must think about the work but then you still think about the shooting that goes on. A person can't concentrate.]

These psychological feelings of distress are often played out through physical symptoms because of the gang violence witnessed and experiences in their lives, as one participant explains:

*“Ja dit pla vir my it pla may baie, 'n mens word siek, dit effect jou liggaam jy word soema net siek of naar en jy wiet waarom nie maar in die mean time is dit oor die gang violence en ek het al baie soe gevod...baie.” - Grade 10 - boy - 16 years old*

[Yes it disturbs me a lot, a person gets sick, it effects your body you get sick or nauseous and you don't know why in the mean time it's because of the gang violence and I have felt like this many times...many.]

#### 4.2.4.4 *The effect of gang violence on adolescents' personal relationships*



Being able to interact or bond with relatives and friends was another dimension affected by gang violence. Participants were often unable to visit family and friends outside their community because of the realisation that they may be physically harmed, threatened or robbed by gangs. Their friends and family who live outside their community would often be told not to enter the community as they might be physically harmed, threatened or robbed.

*“Jy kan nie jou vriende visit nie oek jou familie omdat jy te bang is en jou vriende voel oek soe. En as hulle nou miskien 'n way gekry het vir my te kom visit dan moet hulle nie lang bly nie omdat as hulle lang bly kan daar miskien 'n geskietery gebeur.” - Grade 10 - boy - 14 years old*

[You can't visit your friends also your family because you are too scared and your friends too. And if they found a way to visit me then they can't stay long because if they stay long then shooting may still happen.]

#### *4.2.4.5 The effect of gang violence on adolescents' mobility*

One's time was another dimension exploited by gang violence therefore participants had to be careful at what particular time they could leave their home, whether going to a shop or by chance visiting a friend close by.

*“Jy kon nêrens rond loepie en ienage tyd wanner jy rond loep dan word jy gestiek of gerop. En jy kannie na hulle toe gaan nie net as it stil is maar annes nie.” - Grade 10 - boy - 16 years old*

[You could walk around nowhere and when you did walk around then you'd get robbed or stabbed. You can't go to them only when it's quiet but otherwise not.]

#### *4.2.4.6 The effects of gang violence on adolescents' education*

The participants of this study stated that one of the most detrimental effects of gang violence on their lives was the negative impact it has on their education and academic life. Consequent to witnessing gang violence, concentration levels at school were said to be minimal. As soon as gunshots rang at school, they would experience flash backs of what they have witnessed through gang violence as well as fear for family or friends being shot. Thus making it impossible to concentrate in class and more specifically during examinations.

*“It affects your school work a lot because maybe today you to write an exam and you can't write it because there's shooting going on outside, you are already terrorised because of the fact that this is happening right there where you are... and then you have to go to school...walking and then maybe you have to turn around and go back home and miss that exam or school closes for a while because it's too ruff so they send you home or call your parents to come and fetch you or call the police.” - Grade 10- girl - 15 years old*

*“And at school when you are sitting in class and you hear a gun shot you just think about who that person can be that got shot, is it one of your family? Is it one of your friends? Your mom perhaps? Your mind just...you can't even focus on your work and the teachers know but they just try to distract you but your mind keeps going back to what you saw.” – Grade 12 - boy - 17 years old*



#### **4.2.5 Adolescents’ response to coping strategies in view of gang violence**

In this particular community where gang violence becomes an almost daily experience, specifically for members of the community who do not belong to gangs, have resorted to different ways and means of coping with having been affected by this violence. For many, speaking to close friends or relatives was seen as a coping strategy as well as a means of comfort and support.

*“Ek praat net met my niffie wat in die huis is dan vra ek vir hom, waar is ons twee se broers nou as ons twee hier in die huis is? Dan sê hy ja ek moettie warrie nie omdat hulle by hul vriende is, dan vo el ek beter.” - Grade 10 - boy - 14 years old*

[I only talk to my cousin who lives in our house then I'll ask him, where are our two brothers now, if the two of us are in the house? Then he'll say that I mustn't worry because they are by their friends, then I feel better."]

However the participants sometimes feel that although talking does help, even going as far as reporting certain incidents of gang violence to the relevant authorities; more than often nothing gets done about it as one participant clearly expressed his views in this matter:

*“Ek het al met my ma gepraat daaroor en ek het saam met die kaptein van die polisie stasie gepraat al maar niks word gedoen nie. Ek was al gegun point al hie by die skool en toe maak ek 'n saak by die skool en die polisie stasie maar niks was gedoen nie.” – Grade 10- boy - 16 years old*

[I have spoken to my mother about this and I spoke to the captain of the police station but nothing gets done. I was held up at gunpoint at school and so I made a case at the school and police station but nothing was done about it.]

As a result of no action being taken on reporting these offences or speaking out about their experiences, they are often left with feelings of helplessness and no way of coping with what they have endured as victims of gang violence.

*“Ek het mos probeer om 'n saak te maak teen die gangs maar niks word daaraan gedoen nie, soe ek kannie cope daarmee nie.” - Grade 10 - boy - 16 years old*

[I tried to make a case against the gangs but nothing gets done about it, so I can't cope with this.]

Some of the participants were referred to therapists in order to assist in coping with what they have experienced.

*“Ek was al op therapy gewies vir alles wat ek gesien het. Ek het al baie dinge gesien ma ek hou it vir myself en probeer altyd myself daar deur kry en help.”*

*- Grade 11 - girl - 16 years old*

[I went to therapy for everything that I’ve seen. I’ve seen many things but I keep it to myself and try to help myself through it.]

While others try and cope with what they have seen and heard on their own.

*“At first you tell yourself you can move forward but it's like waiting for you at the back of your mind but after a time you do panic and stuff like that when people talk about things like that but then you get to a point where you get use to it and it doesn't bother you so much but it still scares you.”*

*- Grade 12 - boy  
- 17 years old*

*“Het jy miskien met ienage mens hieroor gepraat? R: nog nooit. I: hoekom nie? R: ...ek kannie somtyds...ek kannie maklik praat. I: nou hoe cope jy? R: op my eie...alleen, saam my self praat en ek sê vir myself it gaan op hou maar it gaanie op hou – op hou nie, but it gaanie meer soe baie wiessie soes it was nie”. - Grade 12 - girl - 17 years old*

[I: Have you spoken to someone about this? R: no never. I: Why not? R: ...sometimes I can't...I can't talk easily. I: So how do you cope? R: On my own...alone, talking to myself and I will tell myself it's going to stop but it's not going to stop but it won't be as bad as before.]



A common response from the participants and their view as to how others cope with gang violence was that, because of it occurring on such a frequent basis, many have become use to it in a sense that it has become the norm.

*“Ek is deur getrek al...ek huil nie mee nie as hulle skiet. As hulle skiet dan sit ek net vas”. - Grade 8 - girl - 13 years old*

[I’m wise about these things already...I don’t cry any more when they shoot.  
If they shoot I just sit tight.]

#### **4.2.6 Adolescents’ perception of the community’s response to gang violence**

The participants expressed mixed feelings with regard to the community’s response to gang violence. A few of the participants felt that some of the community members, even though they see on a day to day basis the alarming results of gang violence, refuse to speak out about it to the police and only speak among themselves instead of taking action.

*“Baie mense praat daaroor but doen niks oor die saakie, hulle sal net onne mekaar maar nie die law nie, hulle sal nie daai doen nie.”- Grade 11 – Girl – 16 years old*

*[Many people talk about it but do nothing about it, they speak amongst themselves but not with the police, they won’t do that.]*

As for the other participants they felt that the community members are concerned about the gang violence prevalent in their community.

*“Die community issie met peace daaroor nie want hoe sal U miskien nou...U bly nou in 'n pad in en hier kom maak hulle met U net soes hulle wil. En hulle wil U se besagheid soema net soe oorvat en vat protection money ienage tyd en U kan niks daaroor doen nie.” - Grade 12 – Boy – 17 years old*

[The community is not at peace with this because how would you like...you live in a road and here they do as they please with you. And they want to take over your business and demand protection money at a ny time and you can do nothing about it.]

The participants stated that many of the community members have witnessed and experienced gang violence in the form of losing their children either having been killed by gunshots or becoming members of a gang.

*“Hulle voel nie lekker nie omdat hulle kinders, klein kinders, speel nog buite dan kom die gangsters en skiet hulle dan moet die kinders in ienage huis in hardloop. Die mense is upset van som van die kinders is self gangsters oek hulle word gangsters.” - Grade 8 - Boy –14 years old*

[They don't feel good about it because children, small children, play outside then the gangsters would come and shoot then the children must run in by any house. The people are upset because some of the children become gangsters.]

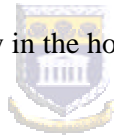
#### **4.2.7 Adolescents' perception of the police response to gang violence**

Policing on the Cape Flats have always been a heated debate as many people from these community's regard the police as untrustworthy and involved in gang activities. As for the

participants of this study the same consensus was made apparent through the following accounts articulated during the interviews conducted. Firstly, with regard to the police patrolling the neighbourhood it was said that the police would often avoid areas known to be rife with gang activity and shootouts and would instead go to safer areas.

*“Ek voel net soe...as die boere soe op en af ry da by ons nou waar is hulle wanner hulle soe begin te skiet? Hulle vat hulle self weg daais hoekom ek sê die polisie werk saam met die gangs. En ek dink ook aan die mense watie nou in gewaar issie, my suster by die huis, my familie by die huis?” Grade 10 - boy - 16 years old*

[I just feel like...if the police drive up and down like there by us, where are they when the shootings start? They drive elsewhere and that’s why I say the police are working with the gangs. And I think about the people that are in danger, my sister at home, my family in the house?]



Secondly, when community members call in to report gang shootings the police would arrive one to two hours later, which in many cases provide the gangs with enough time to leave the area or go into hiding.

*“The police...I don't know, like when a shooting breaks out the police is always to late and they always never catch the people who shoot.” Grade 10 - girl - 15 years old*

Thirdly, the participants believe that the police are involved in gang activities. Activities such as supplying gangs with guns, bullet-proof vests and ammunition in exchange for drugs and vice versa. It was further said that when cases were made against certain gang members, and

they would have to appear in court when that time arrived, their case dockets would go missing and would said to have been misplaced or stolen allowing the gang members to go free.

*“Die polisie werk eintlik saam met die gangsters, daais hoe ek dit sien.” -*

*Grade 11 - girl - 16 yrs*

[The police actually works with the gangs, that’s how I see it.]

*“Kyk...hulle kry dit deur connections en is die polisie wat saam met hulle werk watit vir hulle gie. Die mense in die community wiet al hulle kannie vir die polisie trusttie want hoekom?...hulle werk saam met die gangsters. Ek kan vir jou sê van 'n keer toe dit nog rof hie gewiesit toe vang die polisie twee gangsters met 'n box guns hie agter, toe sê hulle ons los julle gat sit net die guns weg dus al. Nou wat?...daais mos nie 'n polisie man se plig om vir jou daai te sê nie, hulle moes uitlik gevonis gewies het. Dus waarom ek sê die polisie is net soe saam met die gangters, ek trusttie vir hulle nie.” - Grade 12*

*- boy - 17 years old*

[Look they get it through connections and the police that work with them give it to them. The people in the community know they can’t trust them because they work with the gangsters. I can tell you of a time when it was dangerous here when they caught two gangsters with a box of guns and when they caught these two they told them to just go and put the guns away. Now what?...that’s not what a policeman should do, they should’ve been arrested and taken to jail. This is why I say that the police are with the gangs I don’t trust them.]

“...hulle gie dan goed soes drugs en bullet proofs vir die gangs.” - Grade 8 -  
girl - 13 yrs

[...they give things like drugs and bullet proof vests to the gangs.]

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

In the section discussed above, the participants provided their own definitions of gang violence. They defined gang violence to include acts of revenge, territorial wars as well as gangs shooting; stabbing, stealing and threatening people. The participants perceived gang activities to include having to pay for protection that would regularly be demanded by the gangs from innocent community members in return for protection from rival gangs that live in the same community. Other gang activities such as stealing and stabbing were again mentioned here in defining gang violence. The participants provided a range of causes for gang violence, these included gangs fighting over territory or competing with rival gangs, unemployment and youth dropping out of school in search of making money.

The last section of this chapter concluded with participants' perceptions of the effects of gang violence on their lives, how they have learnt to cope with having to deal with gang violence occurring in their community and what they think the community's response has been in light of the violence committed by gangs. And lastly, the participants expressed their views on what they think the police response to gang violence has been thus far, which proved to be very negative.

The next section will focus on the analysis of the main themes that arose out of the interviews. Different theories and hypothesis will be discussed and where relevant, in the South African

context, will be linked to the main themes in providing a deeper understanding of the origin of gang violence and the effect it has on adolescents.

#### **4.4 THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF MAIN THEMES**

The following theories that are discussed under each theme were chosen for the reason that they provide the most plausible explanations to that specific theme.

##### **4.4.1 Social learning theory: Causes of gang violence**

A common hypothesis among all participants in this study was that youth within the community that they live would more than often model what they see in their community. When these youth observe gangs they see opportunities for money, status, fear and power, and these are influences that usually are the causes for wanting to join gangs and become gang members.



*“For status I think and fear and power. When I say fear I mean like...when I walk, and like I said before about the territory, and say for instance I walk on the other side of the road and people want to rob me and when I come back and see people I know that are gang members so I act brave and join them because I know if I don’t they will beat so I’m actually afraid. And then power, ...it’s like no one wants to look like a wimp so now I join them just for status.”- Grade 12 – Boy – 17 years old*

Youth in this community also succumb to peer pressure and are sometimes easily influenced by friends who already are gang members but also by gang leaders. The gang leaders or

members offer youth promises of money, status, cars and other material possessions in return for their loyalty in joining the gang.

*“Vir die eerster tyd dan sê die gangsters mos vir jou hy sal goed koop vir jou en alles en dan is dit amper soes nou is dit tyd vir jou om terug te betaal vir hom deur mos nou ...hy sê vir jou, “Ek het vir jou dir tekkies gekoep...” nou miskien moet jy na die huis toe gaan om nou ’n video of ’n TV vir hom te steel. Soe is amper soes payback, soe moet jy hulle terug betaal.” - Grade 10 – Boy – 14 years old*

[For the first time then the gangsters will tell you they’ll buy all this stuff for you and then it’s time for you to pay him back...and he will tell you, “I bought you these takkies...” now maybe you must go to a house and steal a video or a TV for him. So it’s almost like payback, like that you must pay them back.]



These youth look up to the gang leaders and members as role models not only because of the monetary and material possessions promised to them but also because of the support offered and this is often the reason as to why many youth join gangs especially children from broken or abusive homes.

*“...die ma, die pa, of die stief pa...is ’n alcoholic en dan issit altyd...as die boy nou in die huis kom dan is daar ’n gefightery al maak die kind nou niks verkeet dan gryp hy daai kind en stoot hom tien die muur of soe.” - Grade 11 – Girl – 16 years old*

[...the mother, the father or step-father...is an alcoholic and then it’s always ...if the boy comes into house then there is always a fight even if the boy

does nothing wrong he'll grab him and push him against the wall and that's how it goes.]

Children grow up idolising gangs although they see the activities gangs are involved in and what the consequences of their actions are whether it includes robbing people, selling drugs or hurting people. These remain the role models children grow up with and eventually become. Gangs are thus seen as a way out to fit in.

*“Because most other children grow up in good communities and partake in activities that is positive but here our children...I don't blame them because they grow up with this stuff they see this stuff and idolise these people and want to be like them because they have all the money, women and everything ...so children want to be like them. Children find out that he has to sell drugs to get his money...so they also want to do that.” – Grade 12 – Boy – 17 years old*



#### **4.4.2 Contextual theories of violence : Causes of gang violence**

The subculture of violence theories adequately provides one with the explanation as to why gang violence is seen as a ‘culture of violence’. The subculture of violence theories further proposes that violence is seen as a normative structure which encourages violence and aggressive behaviour to establish a reputation among peers and in this case gang members. Participants in this study viewed gang activities involving violence because it was seen as a necessary form of establishing their status as well as a threat within the community that they live in. The violence behaviour of gangs were also seen as form of excitement, as the following participant described:



*“Vir my is dit net violence by hulle issit iets lekker en hulle sal ienage iets doen om die next perso on seer te maak en somtyds wonne ’n mens oek self wat isit wat hulle soe graar wil hê in die lewe.”- Grade 11 – Girl – 16 years old*

[For me violence by them is seen as something exciting and they will do anything to harm the next person and sometimes I just wonder what is it they want out of life.]

The violent activities that these gangs perpetrate in communities in which they live by regularly fighting over territory, shootings rival gang members, and competing against rival gangs for status develop a type oppression within these communities as described by the participants and which is reflected in the interactional hypothesis of violence. Many participants described their home life as that of living in a prison, not being able to move freely and constantly having to be on guard for one’s safety which in actuality was described as living under the oppression of gangs.

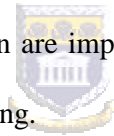
Deckler and Van Winkel (1996) suggested that gang culture includes violent behaviour, issues of honour amongst members and the understanding of violence. The participants reiterated these views and especially when looking at recruitment procedures that gangs would use in getting as much of the youth into their gangs. Gangs would often use intimidation and threats of physical harm in the event of a member wanting to leave a gang.

*“Jy kannie uit die gang uitie, net as jy miskein nou converted raak en daai is nog iets wat jy moet bewys. As jy nou miskien nou wil uit trek uit die gang uit,*

*hulle sal vir jou sê jy's dood and hulle sê dit nettie hulle doennit...jy hettie 'n choice nie.' - Grade 12 – Girl – 17 years old*

[You can't leave the gang, only if you maybe become converted and then you'll still have to prove that. If you want to leave the gang, they will tell you that you're dead and they don't just say that they do it...so you don't have a choice.]

Gangs would also resort to subtle forms of coercion in the attempt to recruitment members. This would take the form of gang members sometimes intoxicating friends which are not members of a gang to such an extent that they are talked into joining the gang as well as being tattooed whilst intoxicated and only being made aware the next day that they are now part of this gang and 'that they have been marked'. Other gangs would now recognise them as being a part of a gang. And when this realisation has sunk in and the new member wants to pull out the cycle of physical threat and intimidation are imposed once again leaving the youth little choice but to continue being a part of this gang.



#### **4.4.3 Post traumatic stress symptoms, desensitisation and anxiety: Effects of gang violence on adolescents**

International studies and literature suggest that children/youth/adolescents exposed to long-term violence may begin to show signs or symptoms of posttraumatic stress and anxiety. Participants expressed various symptoms of posttraumatic stress symptoms as well as adverse effects of anxiety as a consequence of continued gang violence that occurred in their community. The symptoms of posttraumatic stress that were reported after having witnessed gang shootings, people being shot in front of their own eyes and maimed by knives and other weapons were nervous irritability, high levels of anxiety and depression leading to attempts of

suicide. Many of the participants stated having flashbacks of people getting shot and what these victims looked like having been shot months after the event took place, which would be triggered by hearing gunshots going off at any time.

*“It will bring back everything because then you’ll think oh! My God again because suddenly I have to go back to being afraid.” - Grade 10 – Girl – 16 years old*

*“Say when I’m walking around it’s like I have to be constantly on guard, you must be... you have to. And the things I saw plays on my mind but I try not to think about it but it won’t...subconsciously it’s there and sometimes I dream about it and it haunts me...that’s when I cry.” – Grade 12 – Boy - 17 years old*



Psychological stressors that include heightened levels of panic and anxiety were mentioned as being frequently experienced as a result of being affected by gang violence and activities. Some of the participants reported that they could not concentrate during class time because of gunshots that would go off outside their school premises increasing their anxiety levels and feelings of panic and some even reported having become physically ill as a result of witnessing gang violence.

*“Ek het baie swak in my skool werk begin word, ek was tweede in my klas ma toe na wat ek gesien het ek swakker geword. Ek was vir drie maande siek in ’n hospitaal gelê vir al die goed en daar was ’n tyd toe ek daar lê dat ek die Heere vra om maar vir my te kom haal.” - Grade 11 – Girl – 6 years old*

[I started doing very bad in my schoolwork, I was second in my class but after what I saw I got weaker. I laid in hospital for 3 months for everything I saw and there was I time I asked God to just come and fetch me.]

Although some of the participants said that the youth experience feelings of anxiety and symptoms of posttraumatic stress, some of the participants said that having witnessed people getting shot, stabbed and killed in front of their eyes, some of these youth actually become so used to seeing and hearing these atrocities, as in conjunction with international literature and research studies, that they no longer even feel scared when hearing a gunshot go off, as one of the participants describes:

*“I’ve ...it was a long time ago but it still haunts me and sometimes I really panic but sometimes you get used to it.” – Grade 12– Boy – 17 years old*



*“If a gun goes off I don’t even get a fright anymore, it’s like what’s new?” – Grade 8 – Girl – 13 years old*

#### **4.4.4 Fanon’s six dimensions of violence: Effects of gang violence on adolescents**

Fanon’s six dimensions of violence cover different aspects of one’s life suspended in a state of oppression. For the participants in this study oppression emerges in the prevalence of gang violence. Youth and adults alike live in constant fear and anxiety because of territorial wars and shootings that occur in their community. Space, energy and mobility are two of the six dimensions of Fanon’s theory that have been most imposed on by gang violence. Participants have said that people have been terrorised even in their own homes because gang shootings would often occur on their doorstep. Therefore many parents in the community would not

allow their children to play in the own front yards in fear of their children being shot down as a result of stray bullets. Parents therefore tried to keep their children in doors by buying entertainment, which would often result in parents' energy levels depleting in thinking up new ways of trying to protect the children.

*“ ’n Mens voelie safe in jou eie huis nie want jy wietie wane hulle daar in gehardloop sal kom nie en skiet op jou huis.” – Grade 10 – Boy – 16 years old*

[A person doesn't feel safe in your own house you don't know when they'll come running and shooting at your house.]

Fanon's dimensions on mobility, time and bonding as influenced by gang violence were further described by the participants in that when wanting to walk around, whether during the day or at night, was said to be a dangerous task because they would not know if a shooting would break out between gangs or that they would be robbed or stabbed by gang members.

*“As jy nou miskien erêns wil loep op jou eie tyd dan moet jy prepared wies om eerde gestiek of gerob te wies. Issie iets wat jy net maklik kan doen nie. Jy moet uitkyk.”- Grade 10 – Boy – 15 years old*

[If you want to walk around on your own time you have to be prepared to be either robbed or stabbed. It's not something you can do easily. You must watch out.]

The participants further stated that they could not easily visit friends and family because of the gang violence, which negatively impacted on their ability to bond with their loved ones.

Therefore many of the participants stated that they felt as if they were living in a prison not being able to do things that people would consider to be normal and an everyday thing to do.

*“It’s like for the community it’s like they live in terror, they are always in a prison, they can’t go where they want to go even at night they are like too scared to go out.” - Grade 10 - girl - 15 years old*

As for Fanon’s last dimension of violence namely identity, all the participants said that they did not feel that their identity was and ever would be influenced by gangs. However they did state that if a gangster knows that one is not a gang member they would often try to influence their identity’s through threats and bullying in trying to coerce them to become a gang member. These gangsters would often prove to be relentless but as for the participants in this study all proved to have very strong identities in what they believed to be right and wrong.



In conclusion, it has been made clear that gang violence clearly affects not only one but all aspects of one’s life as expressed by the participants in this study. Gang violence is therefore seen as an oppressive force that holds these adolescents lives hostage and where even their own homes are no longer respected but bombarded by gangs that live in their community.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 CONCLUSION

In South Africa the culture of violence encompassed by gangs is an ever-growing crisis, which affects all youth involved as well as the entire community in which it has taken claim. As a result of this rising psychosocial problem many research studies have been conducted however the focus has been on gangs and rarely on victims of gang violence. This seems to be the trend in international studies however in this study the focus differs as it brings forth literature voiced by the victims of gang violence themselves. In this study it was made evident that the influence of gang violence on innocent youth in South Africa and more specifically within a Western Cape community is of a dire nature.

Children are growing up within communities where gang violence becomes so rife that in the end it is perceived as the norm and that these behaviours of gangs, as observed by children younger than five years old, are imprinted in their minds leaving little or no choice of role models because gangs have been in their environment from day one.

The study's main objective was to provide adolescents the opportunity to voice their experiences and understanding regarding the effects of gang violence and the causes why gangs are formed within their community. In order to achieve this objective the researcher conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with pupils from the setting who were identified as non-gang members by the contact teacher at the school. The analysis of these interviews provided important indications that could be replicated in future studies. These indications include the need for interventions or programmes that will focus on the psychological effects that gang violence has on youth, the need for developing healthy coping strategies and

recreational projects to provide positive activities in order to keep the youth off the street. Lastly, there is a need for implementing workshops that convey the consequences of gang violence not only to all youth in the community but also to parents and other community members. Thus enabling the entire community to work together to eradicate gangs and the violence associated with it in the community.

Although the data provided is of great importance, one must be cautious in not generalising the findings of the current study to the entire adolescent population of South Africa. Even though many studies shown within the literature provide numerous comparisons, it could be said that only to a certain degree there is a probability that the data analysed in this study were representative of youth in their particular setting.

## **5.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**



The biological theories and hypothesis of the origin of violence and aggressive behaviour does not find application in the study conducted. The findings of this study suggest that social and contextual theories of violence take precedence as an explanation into the causes for gang affiliation and violent behaviour. The legacy of apartheid in addition did not feature as an explanation into why youth become gang members and why they at all exist. This might have been a plausible explanation for much older gangs in the uprising of youth in the apartheid era against poverty and discrimination however apartheid was not mentioned as one of the causes given by the participants of this study. Social contextual and social interactional theories were further offered as an explanation of the source of gang violence and activities as well as Scheidlinger's theory of gang formations. Scheidlinger (1994) suggested that there are three intertwined group psychological processes that appear to be at work among loosely tied and unstable gangs. These theories, as mentioned above, were not applicable to this study as the



participants spoke only about existing gangs in the community that appeared to be well structured, connected and organised even though there were small gangs with notoriety but not known as major gangs that operate in the community.

### **5.3 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

The limitations that occurred during the study were in the initial phase of data collection and the search for relevant information for the literature review of this study. When the interviews were conducted at the school during class time, and because some of the interviews would be between 30 to 40 minutes long, the interviews would sometimes carry through during interval times. This caused a problem because of the noise factor experienced during these lunch intervals. And when these interviews were then later transcribed it made it difficult to hear what the participants had to say although all information recorded was captured. As for the search for relevant information within the South African context in relation to gang violence and the effect it has on adolescents, very little studies have been conducted in this area. Therefore, in finding relevant information to inform the literature review this was seen as an extremely difficult task to complete especially when wanting to compare the results with other studies that were conducted.

### **5.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The findings of this study could be used as hypothesis about adolescent youth in semi-urban areas in the broader South Africa with regard to the affects of gang violence and for further investigation, internationally.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the study conducted the participants voiced that schools, teachers and community members can play an integral part in the development of eradicating gang violence that occurs in their community. Schools can help students develop resiliency toward gang violence by providing positive and safe learning environments, setting high yet achievable academic and social expectations, and facilitating their academic and social success (Catalano, Loeber, & McKinney, 1999). In addition, youth who belong to a socially appropriate group sponsored and supported by the school (e.g., academic club or social organisation) are less likely to become involved in gang activities and provide these youth with ways and means of coping with having been affected by gang violence.

Van Acker & Wehby (2000) suggest that the community representing a network of social structures and organisations can be an important deterrent to engaging in antisocial and violent behavior. For example, an influential family member or a community mentor can be instrumental in teaching a child strategies for avoiding trouble and interacting positively with others and can link the school and family for supporting and encouraging the strengths and abilities of the youth. Other community support factors include after-school employment, recreational opportunities, and volunteer activities. Skiba and Peterson (2000) suggest a number of themes that should be included in a school's plan for preventing and responding to youth aggression and violence therefore providing a support base for youth affected by violence:

- Classroom strategies for preventing and responding to violence in and around the community.

- Parent involvement – whereby parents are encouraged to become involved in the children’s lives and are given skills to address children that have been affected by gang violence.
- Crisis and security planning – a secure system should be set in place where the safety of the students becomes a concern especially when schools become the target of gang violence.

By combining schools and community involvement as well as police security systems working together, as articulated by the participants, where gang violence continues to be rife it becomes less of a mammoth task and more of an achievable undertaking to remove gangsterism through recognising the seriousness of the problem. There is a need for a joint effort (i.e. schools cannot handle the problem on their own, neither can police, neither can the government, neither can the students). Victims and the non-offending majority need to see that they will be protected and assisted and that the offenders will be held accountable. Lastly, there is a need to recognise the growing problem of gang conflicts and that there is no single agency, community group, law, piece of legislation, or approach alone sufficient to successfully address a complex problem such as gang violence. Any good strategy will need to be a long-term strategy.

## APPENDIX A

### SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTION GUIDE

**Question 1:** If you think about the term gang violence, what do you think this term means?

**Question 2:** Does gang violence occur in your community?

**Question 3:** Can you describe gang violence in terms of your community?

**Question 4:** Do you think that gang violence that occurs in your community is a problem?

**Question 5:** What do you think are the causes of gang violence in the community in which you live?

**Question 6:** Can you describe, if any, the gang activities that have occurred in the past 2 to 3 years that you know of (seen or heard)

- Violence between members of gangs?
- Violence against non – gang members?

**Question 7:** Do these events that you have mentioned affect you in any way?

- > School?
- >Home?
- >Visiting friends/friends visiting you from outside your community?
- > Visiting family/family visiting you from outside your community?



**Question 8:** How do you feel when you think about the gang violence that has occurred in your community?

- Do sleep well?
- Do you eat well?
- Do you panic a lot?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate in class?
- Do you feel relaxed at home?

**Question 9:** When you feel the way you do as a result of gang violence in your community, do you talk to anyone about your feelings? (If no, why not?)

**Question 10:** What do you do to cope with the thoughts and feelings you experience as a result of gang violence in the community in which you live?

**Question 11:** Do you think gang violence should be stopped?

**Question 12:** What do you think should be done in your community and other communities where gang violence is rife?

> Community and at home?

> At school?

> Government?

> Police?



## APPENDIX B

### *TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH GRADE TWELVE PUPIL: BOY*

I: When you think about the term gang violence what does it mean to you or how would you describe it?

R: I'd say that to me it's like a group of friends standing on a corner smoking weed and gambling and then a fight breaks out and most of them would be armed with knives and guns like some of the big gangs that are sophisticated, to me those are gangs. What they do like stealing and robbing people is violence, like here at the robot they'll throw spark plugs into the windscreen of a car and just grab your bag and it happens real fast or they'll put a knife or anything like that and just take your money. The reason why I can tell you these things is because I had friends that did these things and I have grown up with people who did these activities but mainly when I think about gang violence...I just get a picture of a battlefield and they actually call this field here at the back the 'battlefield' and the people that live on this side call this side the border because it's more dangerous on the other side for us and people that live on the other side to come here it's more dangerous for them. So they already refer to wars between gang members that happen on that piece of field they call the 'battlefield' so that already gives one a mental picture of what's going on here.

I: So people that live on this side, is there a different gang here compared to that side?

R: Yes but it's not only one gang the whole thing comes back to territory everyone wants to be like my gang wants to rob here but when they rob one of my people then I'm not going to like it perhaps so I'll tell my gang we must go and do something about it. Then it's a big thing...and people die. So what happens is that a gang for example that lives here but also has members in another area will come here and look for that gangster that killed one of his members...here is a lot of gangsters here, you also get wannabe gangsters but they also do things that really bad like breaking-in to places, our houses our own people...I really don't know what's happening to this community. And many people say that they should go outside the community if they want to steal not steal in their own community...I even say that if they want to steal and not that I think it's right to steal but then steal from people who have things or that's well off not

from the poor. But this is what I think about when I think of gang violence...people killing each other.

I: I heard that a lot of people get killed in crossfire's when gangs are shooting?

R: Yes a lot of people. Sometimes people look just like someone else, and because sometimes these gangs dress similar but you just notice that that one is wearing the same takkies you saw the person you're looking for had on...but anyone could have those takkies but then they just shoot anyway. Because they don't want to go close to that person because he might have a gun on him and shoot you first so it's 'fastest lives the longest'.

I: So do you think it is a big problem in the community?

R: Definitely...I don't think it can be something positive. Because children grow up with this fear inside of them and I don't think it is right. Because most other children grow up in good communities and partake in activities that is positive but here our children...I don't blame them because they grow up with this tuff they see this stuff and idealise these people and want to be like him because he has all the money, women and everything so children want to be like him. So children find out that he has to sell drugs to get his money so they also want to do that.

I: And do you think that it's almost as if it's passed down from generation to generation?

R: Yes from generation to generation because the child sees what's going on and he sees there's money in this and now ...like here in our community if a girl knows your father is a drug dealer or merchant then she wants to be with you because she knows you have money. Now you notice these things about girls just wanting to be with that person. Now he grows up like that and he becomes something that is natural to him that's not so bad to him because his father and his father's father did it so why can't he do it and that's the mentality that his going to have once his grown up.

I: Why else would they want to join gangs?

R: For status I think and fear and power. When I say fear I mean...like when I walk, and like I said before it's about territory, and say for instance I walk on the other side and people want to rob me and when I come back people I know that they are gangs in my environment then I join them because I know they will beat them but I'm actually afraid. And then power, ...it's like ...no one wants to look like a wimp so now I join them just for that status.

I: I heard that the shooting have calmed down now but when it was so hectic do you remember seeing or hearing anything with regard to gang violence?

R: I saw a lot...really saw a lot.

I: Are you comfortable in mentioning what you saw?

R: Yes, why not? I mean if this is going to be like for the good of people who wants to know what's happening in our place, why must we hide it? But as I said I did see a lot. Like I saw someone get shot through their head and it still haunts me and that's why when the teacher told me that someone was coming to the school and ask us questions about this I said yes I want to go. You know many times when you want to go out with your friends and then you see a group of people standing on a corner and they look suspicious because the way they look at you...and you want to look away but you are afraid because they might chase you so you force yourself to look and then you'll see a person laying there maybe a girl...But like I said I saw a person get shot...hit with sledges and lots of things. I've seen people get stabbed a lot of times and these things happen on a daily basis here but the worst I've seen is someone get shot in the head.

I: And does this type of violence happen between gang members only?

R: No...there was this guy that wanted to get out of the gang but the only way you can get out is if you get married sometimes or if you, like they say, join 'God's Army'. But he didn't do both...he just wanted out and so they left him just to make him forget...they wanted him to be unaware that they are coming so one night me and my friend was sitting with him in his room playing dominoes so at that time they came and they don't knock they just come in and they didn't know who we were so they just



grabbed us also because they thought we were gangsters that want to stop them so they took us with him to a other house but it's like a creepy house but so he told them to leave us because we have nothing to do with it but then they asked him why he just wants us to leave because are we going to tell other people to rescue him. And he told them no but we stayed there the whole night and we didn't know what they were doing to him but then when we came to him they had stabbed him. And when we eventually left he did not want to go to the hospital because he was too bad off so the doctor would have opened as case and he knew he had to sought out his own problems. So after a while because he knew the guys that stabbed him he planned to get them back and now his back in jail because he stabbed those four guys. And about two weeks back he wrote to me and said that that is what he wanted even though his in jail he ha s peace of mind because it' s 'you take my blood I take your blood' as they say.

I: Wow...how did all these happenings affect your schoolwork?

R: Sometimes when they would shoot then and this is in the mornings, then you most definitely can't come to school because you know after school then they'll still be shooting, and they will shoot whole day...they don't sleep they do drugs to keep them awake. And at school when you are sitting in class and you hear a gun shot you just think about who that person can be that got shot, it one of your family? Is it one of your friends? Your mom perhaps? Your mind just...you can't even focus on your work and the teachers know but they just try to distract you but your mind keeps going back to what you saw.

I: How does gang violence affect those people that are not part of gangs?

R: Like some people that have house shops or any little business they must pay protection money it's basically like they are getting taxed by the gangsters but what happens is that some don't want to pay and they stand up to these gangs but then it becomes personal from the gangsters and that's when people get hurt and threatened. For me...these are things that drive me to get out of this place not to forget my roots or anything but it just drives me because it's not worth living here in this place.

I: How does all these things affect you personally?

R: Say when I'm walking around it's like I have to be constantly on guard you must be you have to. And the things I saw plays on my mind but I try not to think about it but it won't ...subconsciously it's there and sometimes I dream about it and it haunts you ...that's when I cry.

I: Can your friends come and visit you anytime they want to?

R: They can but they don't want to...family don't want to.

I: How do you feel about people that have this type of negative reaction toward the community you live in?

R: I don't think it's right because there is a lot of other places that are dangerous but this is just the way they are and I'm not one to judge another's opinion but I think if they had to live here then they would have a better perception of what is actually going on here.

I: During that time when you saw all those things, could you sleep?

R: No not at first...it's humanely impossible to go sleep like that after if you had to see such stuff.

I: And now?

R: I've...it was a long time but it still haunts you and sometimes I really panic but sometimes you get used to it.

I: Have you ever spoken to anybody about what you've seen or how you feel?

R: Yes I did, to a psychologist but I didn't get feedback to what can be done about it.

I: So how do you cope?

R: At first you tell yourself you can move forward but it's like waiting for you at the back of your mind but after a time you do panic and stuff like that when people talk about

things like that but then you get to a point where you get use to it and it doesn't bother you so much but it still scares you.

I: Do you think people can stop gang violence?

R: People? ...No I don't think so ...I don't think so...you can reduce it but not stop it.

I: How?

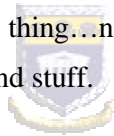
R: Inform little children, teenagers so that the next generation won't do it.

I: And what do you think the government should do?

R: Create jobs for people so tat they don't steal to get money.

I: And the police?

R: I think the police are with the whole thing...not everyone but there are policemen and women are with these drug dealers and stuff.



I: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

R: I'd just like to say that this would really expose people and teenagers to this life we're living in and that the children here must realise there is another way of living...a better way of life than this.

I: Thank you very much for your participation.

## APPENDIX C

### EXAMPLE OF THE TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW THAT HAS BEEN CODED USING ATLAS TI. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

HU: Gang Violence - Thesis  
File: [C:\Program Files\Scientific Software\ATLASTi\TEXTBANK\Gang Violence  
- Thesis]  
Edited by: Super  
Date/Time: 03/09/05 12:02:00 PM

-----  
Codes-quotations list  
Code-Filter: All  
-----

#### **Code: Account of GV {11-0}**

P 6: GRADE 12 - BOY - 17 YRS.txt - 6:12 (99:102) (Super)  
Codes: [Account of GV] [Coping]

Like I saw someone get shot through their head and it still  
haunts me and that's why when the teacher told me that  
someone was coming to the school and ask us questions about  
this I said yes I want to go.

#### **Code: Definition of GV {9-0}**

P 5: GRADE 12 - BOY - 17 YRS - two.txt - 5:1 (7:12) (Super)  
Codes: [Definition of GV]



Ek sal sê dus soes 'n klomp chommies wat die verkeerde  
invloed op jou het en hulle doen die verkeerde goed aan jou  
het en waar gang fights betrokke is. Die violence part  
gebeur sê ma nou ek is nie a gangster nie...nou ek loep af  
in die pad en hulle kom verby dan hardloep ek soema verby  
hulle ma hulle kyk vir my aan om soe te sê dies onse pad.

#### **Code: Effects of GV {47-0}**

P 6: GRADE 12 - BOY - 17 YRS.txt - 6:15 (140:143) (Super)  
Codes: [Effects of GV]  
Memos: [school]

Sometimes when they would shoot then and this is in the  
mornings, then you most definitely can't come to school  
because you know after school then they'll still be  
shooting, and they will shoot whole day...they don't sleep  
they do drugs to keep them awake.

**Code: GV activity {23}**

P 6: GRADE 12 - BOY - 17 YRS.txt - 6:18 (152:156) (Super)  
Codes: [GV - activity]

Like some people that have house shops or any little business they must pay protection money it's basically like they are getting taxed by the gangsters but what happens is that some don't want to pay and they stand up to these gangs but then it becomes personal from the gangsters and that's when people get hurt and threatened.

**Code: Police {7-0}**

P 6: GRADE 12 - BOY - 17 YRS.txt - 6:7 (47:53) (Super)  
Codes: [Reason for GV]

Sometimes people look just like someone else, and because sometimes these gangs dress similar but you just notice that that one is wearing the same takkies you saw the person you're looking for had on...but anyone could have those takkies but then they just shoot anyway. Because they don't want to go close to that person because he might have a gun on him and shoot you first so it's 'fastest lives the longest'.

**Code: Causes for joining gangs {2-0}**

P 6: GRADE 12 - BOY - 17 YRS.txt - 6:14 (114:118) (Super)  
Codes: [Reason for joining gangs]  
Memos: [Reason for joining gangs->6:14 As well as reason for joining gangs and the reason and the consequence for joining gangs...not being able to get out without being able to get out without being hurt or possibly killed]

there was this guy that wanted to get out of the gang but the only way you can get out is if you get married sometimes or if you, like they say, join 'God's Army'. But he didn't do both...he just wanted out and so they left him just to make him forget...they wanted him to be unaware that they are coming

## REFERENCES

- Archer, J. & Brown, K. (1989). *Human aggression: Naturalistic approaches*. London: Routledge.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Baron, S. (1997). Canadian Male Street Skinheads: Street Gang or Street Terrorists. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, (34): 125-154.
- Bawa, U. (1997). Theories of violence. *Journal of Community and Health Sciences*, 4 (1): 1-29.
- Benard, B. (1995). *Fostering resilience in children*. Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign children's Research Center. [Online]. Available <http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/benard95.html>
- Berkowitz, L. (1962). *Aggression: A social psychological analysis*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Bless, C. & Higson-Smith, C. (1995) *Fundamentals of social research methods. An African perspective*. Lusaka : Juta. (Scientific method and hypothesis testing).
- Bulhan, H. (1985). *Frantz Fanon and the psychology of oppression*. New York: Plenum Press.

Bushman, B. & Anderson, A. (2001). Is it time to pull the plug on hostile versus instrumental aggression dichotomy? *Psychological review*, (108): 273–279 [Online]. Available <http://www.psychology.iastate.edu/faculty/caa/abstracts/2000-2004/01BA.pdf>

Byrne, D. (1991). *Social psychology: Understanding human interaction*. London: Allyn and Bacon.

Capaldo, T. & Lindner, L. (1999). *Resensitizing Society: Understanding the connection between violence toward human and nonhuman animals*. [Online]. Available <http://www.neavs.org>

Catalano, R.F., Loeber, R. & McKinney, K.C. (1999). School and community interventions to prevent serious and violent offending. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, 1-12.



Cheetham, N. & Klindera, K. (2003). *The Nutritional Needs and Status of Adolescents*. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth. [Online]. Available <http://www.fantaproject.org/downloads/pdfs/Adolescents.pdf>

Cooley-Quille, M.R., Turner, S.M. & Beidel, D.C. (1995). The emotional impact of children's exposure to community violence: A preliminary study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, (34): 1362-1368.

Dawes, A. (1994). The emotional impact of violence. In A. Dawes & D. Donald (Eds.), *Childhood and adversity: Psychological perspectives from South African research*. Cape Town: David Philip.

Decker, S.H. & Van Winkle, B. (1996). *Life in the Gang*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dickson-Tetteh, K. & Ladha, S. (2000). Youth Health. South African Health Reviews: *Reproductive Health Research Unit*. [Online]. Available <http://www.hst.org.za/sahr/2000/chapter20.htm>

Dissel, A. (1997). Youth, street gangs and violence in South Africa. *In Youth, Street Culture and Urban Violence in South Africa, proceedings of the international symposium*. Ivory Coast: Ibadjan. [Online]. Available <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papganga.htm>

Dollard, J., Doob, L.W., Miller, N.E., Mowrer, O.H. & Sears, R. (1939). *Frustration and aggression*. New Haven: Yale University Press.



Foster, W. (1987). Understanding qualitative research: a strategic approach to qualitative methodology. *Human Education and Development*, 26 (2): 51-63.

Forsyth, D. (1995). *Our social world*. New York: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Fitzpatrick, K.M. (1993). Exposure to violence and presence of depression among low-income, African American youth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, (61): 528-531.

Fitzpatrick, K.M. & Boldizar, J.P. (1993). The prevalence and consequences of exposure to violence among African-American youth. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, (32): 424-430.



Friese, S. (2005). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti*. Stuttgart: Sauerampferweg.  
[Online]. Available <http://www.quarc.de>

Geen, R. (2001). *Human aggression*. Second Edition. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Gilligan, J. (1996). *Violence*. New York: Vintage Books.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gurr, T.R. (1970). *Why men rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hardon, A et al. (1994) *Analysis of Qualitative Data*. In: *Applied Health Research Manual: Anthropology of Health Care*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.



Harris, C. & Van Niekerk, A. (2002). A profile of fatal injuries in South Africa. *Third Annual Report of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System*. MRC South Africa: Crime, Violence and injury Lead Programme.

Howell, J.C.& Gleason, D.K. (1999). Youth gang drug trafficking. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*.  
[Online]. Available <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/showArticle.htm>

Kinnes, I. (1995). Reclaiming the Cape Flats: A community challenge to crime and gangsterism. *Crime and Conflict* (Winter).

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage Publications.

Maree, A. (2002). The causes of crime: is South Africa on the right track? *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, (24): 96.

Martinez, P. & Richters, J.E. (1993). The NIMH community violence project: II. Children's distress symptoms associated with violence exposure. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, (56): 22-35.

Mingo, C.D. (1999). *Perceptions of gang violence in an Elsie's River primary School in the Western Cape*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

Newman, B. & Newman, P. (1995). *Development through life*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.




Newman, G. (1979). *Understanding violence*. New York: J.B. Lippincott Company.

Nonprofit Risk Management Center (2004). *Perspectives on gang violence*. Washington, DC. [Online]. Available [http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/nwsltr/archive/nl100\\_3.htm](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/nwsltr/archive/nl100_3.htm)

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Prince, E. (2005). *History II seminar: The phenomenon of gangsters in South Africa*. [Online]. Available from <http://www.rucus.ru.ac.za/~eitan/gangs.html>

Pinnock, D. (1996). Gangs, guns and rites of passage. *Child and Youth Care* (10): 13.

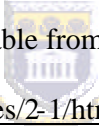
- Rule, J.B. (1988). *Theories of civil violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Saigh, P.A. (1991). The development of posttraumatic stress disorder following four different types of traumatization. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, (29): 213-216.
- Scheidlinger, S. (1994). A commentary on adolescent group violence. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, (25): 3-11.
- Sewell, M. (2003). *The use of qualitative interviews in evaluation*. [Online]. Available from <http://ag.arizona.edu/fcs/cyfernet/cyfar/Intervu5.htm>.
- Siann, G. (1985). *Accounting for aggression: Perspective on aggression and violence*. Boston: Allen & Unwin.
-  Singer, M. I., Anglin, T. M., Song, L. & Lunghofer, L. (1995). Adolescents' exposure to violence and associated symptoms of psychological trauma. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (273): 477-482.
- Skiba, R.J. & Peterson, R.L. (2000). School discipline at a crossroads: From zero tolerance to early response. *Exceptional Children*, (66): 335-347.
- Standing, A. (2003). *The social contradictions of organised crime on the Cape Flats*. London: University of London, Institute for Security Studies. [Online]. Available from <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Papers/74.html>

Staub, E. (1989). *The roots of evil: The origins of genocide and other group violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Terre Blanche, M. & Durheim, K. (1999). *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (Pty) Ltd.

Thompson, J.L.P. (1989). Deprivation and political violence in Northern Ireland, 1922-1985. A time series analysis. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (33): 676– 699.

Trochim, W. (2002). *Qualitative validity: Trochim knowledge base*. [Online]. Available from <http://trochim.cornell.edu/kb/qualval.htm>

Turner, D.S. (2003). Horizons revealed: From methodology to method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, [Online]. Available from  <http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2-1/html/turner.html>

Van Acker, R. W., & Wehby, J.H. (2000). Exploring the social contexts influencing student success or failure: Introduction. *Preventing School Failure*, (44): 93-96.

Vogelman, L. & Lewis, S. (1993). *Gang rape and the culture of violence in South Africa*. South Africa: Centre for the study of violence and reconciliation.

Wilson, J.Q. and Herrnstein, R.J. (1985). *Crime and human nature*. New York: Plenum Press.

Wolfgang, M.E. (1958). *Patterns in criminal homicide*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia.