

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

**THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG WOMEN JOINING STREET
GANGS IN A SPECIFIC AREA IN CAPE TOWN**

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**A full thesis submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The Western Cape province is known as the gang violence capital in South Africa with the highest murder rate, of which a significant number is gang related. Gangsterism is stereotypically male dominance; and many research studies have focused on males in gangs. International studies recognised the substantial numbers of female membership, that women in gangs are vulnerable and at risk of experiencing victimization and exploitation; a realm of gender-based violence (GBV) within a male dominated gang environment, overlooked by many. This domain of violence contributes to the much challenging high rate of GBV in South Africa. Hence, there is a need to create awareness and recommendations within a social work setting to determine gender-specific services for women in gangs. This qualitative study explored the perceptions of experiences and risk factors of women in gangs with the aim to make recommendations. The study followed an exploratory design, using semi-structured interviews, with the aid of an interview schedule, to gain understanding of the participants, the descriptive approach gave deeper insight, while the purposive sampling, based on inclusion criteria, provided relevant and rich data from the participants. This study plays out the sequential effects of a marginalised community in Cape Town. The researcher used the snowballing method and recruited 10 female participants between the ages of 18 and 35 years. The systems theory was used to include relevant systems connected to the participants. Thematic analysis was done in accordance with the eight steps originally developed by Renata Tesch. The findings revealed that women in gangs experienced multi-variate risk factors from a very young age, which contributed towards their decision to join gangs. Troubled family life emerged as a prominent risk factor for participants, followed by their external environment, namely, a marginalised community with poor socio-economic conditions, and a gang-infested area, with its negative influences, which placed equal pressure on joining a gang. While being in the gang, all participants experienced and witnessed some form of victimisation and exploitation.

Ethics considerations encompassed approval before commencement of the study by the relevant committees of the institution. The researcher observed informed consent and voluntary participation by the participants, ensuring participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. The researcher also ensured debriefing and minimising risk especially because the participants were vulnerable and did not want to be exposed. Therefore, arranging data storage and security of information was also imperative.

KEY WORDS

Gang membership and exploitation

Child victimisation

Gender marginalisation

Youth

ABBREVIATIONS

APA	-	The American Psychiatric Association
CASA	-	National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
CPD	-	Continuing Professional Development
DWCPD	-	Department of Girls, Children and People with Disability
GBV	-	Gender-based violence
IPV	-	Intermate partner violence
NGO	-	Non-governmental Organisation
NYP	-	National Youth Policy
PPU	-	Population Development, Provincial Population Unit
SACJCP	-	The South African Center of Justice and Crime Prevention
SAPS	-	South Africa Police Services
UK	-	United Kingdom
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	-	United States of America
WHO	-	World Health Organisation

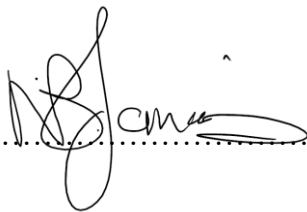
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the study, entitled, *The experiences of young women joining street gangs in a specific area in Cape Town*, as presented by me, is my original work, which has not been submitted in any form for examination at any other university, or study institution. Additionally, all the sources that I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Student name: Nena Francis

Date: December 2021

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nena Francis', written over a horizontal dotted line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

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Thank you to my Almighty God, for giving me the opportunity, and provided me with inner strength, divine guidance, and motivation to undertake this research.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this piece of work to the ladies in my life. My sisters, Sabrina, Vivian and Felicity; and my mother, Selina. You are an amazing bunch of women, and I admire your strength. You inspire me to stay strong. I love you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The Western Cape has been branded the capital of gang violence in South Africa. Statistics indicate that, between April 2018 and March 2019, the Western Cape held the highest (gang related) murder rate per capita (South Africa Police Service [SAPS], 2020). According to these statistics, Cape Town displays the highest murder rate in South Africa (SAPS, 2020), which, inevitably, is related to significant gang activity in the city (BusinessTech, 2019).

Gangsterism is stereotypically male, because of male dominance; therefore, much of the focus of research has been on males in gangs, with substantially less focus on women (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Auyong, Smith & Ferguson, 2018). However, several international studies have revealed that women also join the gangs, and the membership numbers have been escalating (Khan, Brice, Saunders, & Plumtree, 2013). Regardless of their numbers, most women joining gangs are at risk of being victimised, which is a further indication that there is a need for research, to create awareness and determine gender-specific services to women (Auyong, Smith & Ferguson, 2018; Khan et al., 2013).

In this current qualitative study, the researcher aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of women in gangs. The aim of the study is to focus on these experiences of young women in gangs and gang life, and risk factors that instigate their gang involvement, to offer meaningful recommendations for social work practice. The researcher anticipated that this current study will offer insight into the experiences of women in gangs, their various motives, and their victimisation, because of being in a gang. In this current study, the researcher argues for women to be included in, and focused on, in the intervention services with gangs. The theoretical

framework used was the systems theory which was especially useful as it included relevant systems linked to participants' circumstances that might potentially be risk factors.

1.2. Background and context

In South Africa, specifically Cape Town, the existence of gangsterism was first documented, and traced back to District 6 in 1937, where the first gang was named, *The Globe gang* (MacMaster, 2010; Pinnock, 1984). With the forced removal of Coloured people from District 6 to the Cape Flats, under the Group Areas Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No. 41 of 1950), the Globe gang fragmented into the different areas, including, the area under study, Manenberg, and Hanover Park. This resulted in their presence throughout the Western Cape, later forming individual gang identities in the various areas (MacMaster, 2010).

The area under study in this current study, was established in the 1970s to house a portion of the Coloured people, who were forcefully removed and displaced from District 6 under the above-mentioned act (Watson & Ryan, 2014). According to the 2011 South African Census (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Strategic Development Information and Geographic Information System Department [SDI&GIS], 2013), the area under study's total population is 32,598, with women comprising a slight majority (51.7%). The town is identified as a vulnerable community, because of the area's characteristics of severe gang activity, high rate of drug abuse, incomplete schooling, poor urban households, and the majority of properties are either state-owned, or comprise informal structures (Watson & Ryan, 2014).

Regardless of the fact that gangs as stereotypically male, globally, it has been observed that women also join gangs, in substantial and increasing numbers (Pachecho, 2010, Auyong et al., 2018). In the United States of America [USA], the National Council on Crime and Delinquency

classified young female offenders as the fastest growing offenders' group in the country (Pachecho, 2010). Studies also identified they commit as serious crimes as their male counterparts do (Eghigian & Kirby, 2006; Sutton, 2017). According to the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ, 2009, p. 19) in the United Kingdom [UK], "media coverage has suggested" the emergence of girl gangs as a problem, similar to the USA, with the common perception that these groups carry dangerous weapons and are prepared to commit deadly crimes (Hallsworth & Young, 2008, cited in Cox, 2011). While other studies found that risk factors applied in the study, are relatively less common (Alleyne & Prichard, 2016).

Literature suggests that there are significant causal factors that influence young people to join gangs (De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013). These causal factors include personal factors, family conditions, peer pressure, lack of school achievement and community turmoil (Khan et al., 2013; Pachecho, 2010). It further suggests that the majority of women who join gangs, are victims of physical and sexual abuse, frequently with family members as the perpetrators (Sutton, 2017; Gosselin, 2005). While ironically, when women join gangs, they experience further victimisation, through sexual violence and exploitation by male gang members (Young, 2009). For example, when they are initiated into the gang, they are required to have sex with some of the male gang members (Khan et al., 2013). These acts are perceived as abuse, and therefore, unacceptable (Vigil, 2008). Consequently, a focus on the gang membership of women, especially in the South African context, is long overdue.

1.3. Problem statement

Globally, it was acknowledged that the phenomenon of women-in-gangs, is under-studied; however, awareness of their involvement is increasing. A few studies have been conducted, on the experience and risk factors of women in gangs, with the proviso and recommendation that

more studies needed to be undertaken to delve into this phenomenon (De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013; Auyong et al., 2018).

With the increasing awareness that women in gangs are on the increase, including in South Africa, it has been observed that women are also increasing their engagement in more violent, criminal activities (Auyong et al., 2018; De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Khan, Brice, Saunders & Plumtree, 2013) and their behaviour has detrimental consequences for themselves, their families, and society, as it contribute to crime (Khan et al., 2013). They also suffer severe victimisation and exploitation imposed by their counterpart male gang members (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Pachecho, 2010; Young, Fitzgibbon & Silverstone, 2012), which, ultimately increase gender base violence statistics. The concern existed that the continued recruiting of women into gangs, as well as their increased involvement in more violent crimes, would have serious implications for women in society, intact families, and community safety.

Limited acknowledgement results in limited services for these women. Therefore, the researcher is of the opinion that insufficient attention has been paid to their experiences; therefore, insufficient attention has been applied to the content of support, awareness and educational programmes. In addition, previous studies have not identified specific intervention programmes that are focused on these women, although, the NYP 2009-2014 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Office of the Presidency, 2008) has already then identified the female youth as a vulnerable group, because of particular challenges they experience, such as personal and physical insecurity and socio-economic oppression.

This current study, therefore, was aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of the experiences of women in gangs with contributing factors that might influence them joining gangs in the Cape Town context; as well as offering pertinent recommendations for support-,

preventative-and awareness services, and programmes to young women in gangs, their families, and their communities, These services and programmes should include the prevention of substance abuse, victimisation and exploitation, non-gang-involvement and skills development programmes.

1.4. Research question

Based on existing literature, the main research question for this current research is: “What are the experiences of young women in gangs and risk factors that potentially contribute to their gang involvement in a specific area in the Cape Flats of Cape Town?”

1.5. Aim and objectives

The aim of the study is to understand the experiences of women in gangs, especially with regard to the factors that contributed to their choices. Drawing from this aim, the following objectives emerged:

1. To explore and describe the perceptions of women in gangs, regarding their experiences.
2. To explore and describe causal factors that contributed to their gang involvement.

1.6. Overview of the study methodology

1.6.1. Research Approach: Qualitative

The qualitative approach was selected as it allowed the researcher to gain rich and in-depth data by exploring the feelings, and meaning, as well as describing the context of the women’ experiences in the gangs (Bourgeault, Dingwall & De Vries, 2010), which excluded statistical descriptions of the data (Borbasi & Jackson, 2012). This approach allows the researcher to

employ several data collection sources, namely semi-structured, individual interview, field notes, as well as participant observation, which would shape the direction of the study, and provide the researcher with themes and sub-themes (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). During the interviews, an interview schedule would be used to guide the interviews, as well as an audiotape recorder to record the sessions for later transcription and analysis. Ultimately, based on the findings of this current research, the researcher would be enabled to offer appropriate recommendations for social work practice, education, and policy, as well as future research.

1.6.2. Research design

The research design provided a strategic framework for the research process, yielding the findings on the topic of interest, and providing clarity on the phenomenon under scrutiny, as well as the study procedure (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze, & Patel, 2011). The researcher employed an exploratory and descriptive research design. According to Bless and Smith (2007, cited in De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2011), an exploratory research design is used to gain new insight, discover new ideas, and increase knowledge of the phenomenon under study. In this qualitative study, the researcher aimed to discover new ideas, and increase knowledge about the experiences of young women in gangs (Babbie & Mouton, 2008). The exploratory aspect allowed the researcher to gain an initial understanding of the participants' experiences (Neuman, 2014). This was an appropriate design, because, in the local context, *women in gangs* is a relatively unexplored topic.

The descriptive design enabled the researcher to find deeper meaning of, and insight into, the phenomenon under study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Fouché & De Vos, 2011). Through the descriptions of the participants, the researcher became familiar with the topic, and gained insight into, as well as understanding of their perceptions and experiences in the gangs. In

addition, the researcher gained rich, deep findings, as a basis to offer appropriate recommendations for social work practice, education, and policy, as well as future research studies.

1.6.3. Population, sampling and recruitment

The population of interest for this current research was young women from the area under study, as the geographical area, as well as surrounding areas that represented the specific population chosen (Neuman, 2012). The inclusion criteria were the following: young women between 18 and 35 years of age, who had experiences in gangs, and resided within the area under study and surrounding areas; young women between 18 and 35 years of age, who had a good understanding what the study entailed, and were willing, as well as able to participate.

A non-probability sampling method was used to select the participants for this current study, based on the established inclusion criteria (Grinwell & Unrau, 2008; Strydom & Delpont, 2011; Vosloo, 2014). Using the purposive sampling technique, the participants were recruited, according to their suitability for the research study; in this instance, their unique experiences in gangs, in the designated area (Lune & Berg, 2017; Patton, 2015; Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher decided to use the snowball sampling technique (Maree & Pietersen, 2016; Strydom & Delpont, 2011), due to sampling difficulties, regarding the personal risk for potential participants, who would decide to participate in this current study. The snowballing technique was a time-consuming process; however, eventually the researcher was able to recruit 10 participants.

1.6.4. Data collection

The researcher used one main data collection method to obtain data from the participants, along with ancillary methods to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data obtained (Creswell, 2013;

De Vos et al., 2011). The researcher made use of the individual, one-on-one, semi-structured interview method (accompanied by an interview schedule as a guide, and an audiotape recorder to record the interviews), field notes, and the researcher's participant observation. The semi-structured interview method allowed interview flexibility, from which the researcher gained rich, in-depth data (Greeff, 2011). These methods, used together, strengthened the validity and the trustworthiness of the data for this current study. The individual interview, however, was the main data collection technique, which is common in qualitative studies (DePoy & Gilson, 2008, cited in De Vos et al., 2011).

1.6.5. Data analysis

The researcher applied qualitative data analysis to obtain a non-statistical clarification of the participants' opinions and experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2007), which emerged from the interview process, the researcher's participant observations, and field notes (Creswell, 2013). The raw data from the interviews were examined, using a systematic manner, to ensure order, with the purpose of reaching a structure of findings (Silverman, 2011). The raw data were transcribed and analysed immediately after the interviews. The researcher applied the latent and manifest coding techniques, to systematically identify themes and sub-themes, by searching for similar meanings (Lune & Berg, 2017), same words, phrases, and actions (Bryman, 2016), and grouping these together. This process was followed until all the raw data were depleted (Cresswell, 2013). Tesch's (2013) eight steps of analysis method was used as a guide, which also assisted with order, while the raw data were being analysed.

1.7. Definitions of key concepts

The following four concepts are considered key to this current study:

1.7.1. Gang membership

The Centre of Social Justice, in the United Kingdom (Khan et al., 2013) defines a gang as a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people, who view themselves, and are perceived by others, as a dissembled group, engaged in a range of criminal activity and violence, identifying with, or laying claim to territory, having some form of identity structural feature, and in conflict with the law. This current study, being focused on women in gangs, viewed the definition from the vantage point of men in gangs. There are very few women-only gangs locally and worldwide; therefore, this study is focused on participation of women in male gangs.

1.7.2. Child victimisation and exploitation

Child victimisation occurs when a child is, repeatedly, and over a period, exposed to negative actions of one, or more other persons (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Turner Vanderminden, Finkelhor & Hamby, 2019). Veneziani (2013) describes exploitation as one person exercising power and dominance over another. According to Briñol, Petty, Durso, and Rucker (2017), power is a motivating force that is central to human interactions. Data on the victimisation and exploitation of individuals as children, are significant, in order to compare these with the victimisation and exploitation later in their lives, while being involved in a gang. It was relevant in determining whether these concepts played a role in the women's tolerance of victimisation and exploitation in the gang.

1.7.3. Gender marginalisation

Marginalisation is defined as a state, and process of being restricted to participate socially, politically, economically, and culturally, as enjoyed by the broader society (Alakhunova, Dlalio, Del Campo & Tallarico, 2015). Gender marginalisation is society's tendency to place

gender into their specific categories that are identified by specific traits (Landry, 2016). Gender marginalisation was particularly relevant in this current study, as the continued subjugation of women in the gang was revealed, from their lowly positions to their exploitation, as a means to an end for the gang.

1.7.4. Youth

The South African Draft National Youth Policy, 2009-2014 (RSA, Office of the Presidency, 2008) is based on the mandate of the National Youth Commission Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No. 19 of 1996). It refers to young people as individuals, who fall within the age group of 14 to 35 years, which cuts across many developmental stages (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2015). Therefore, in this current study, the researcher focuses on this age group, as a particularly vulnerable group, embracing adolescence and early adulthood.

1.8. Overview of the dissertation: Chapter outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and context of the study

In this chapter, the researcher provides the background to this current study, regarding women in gangs, within the area under study's context. The chapter is focused on establishing the motivation and rationale for the study. The research question, aim and objectives are identified, as well as an overview of key methodological aspects, to ground the study in a scientific process. Key concepts that underlie the study are identified and defined.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature review is divided into two sections. In the first section, the researcher explores the origins and emergence of women in gangs, based on literature, as well as previous literature conducted on the experiences of, and risk factors for women in gangs. In the second section,

the researcher discusses a theoretical framework on which this study was grounded, in an attempt to understand the behaviour/actions of women in gangs.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

In Chapter 3, the researcher reveals and explains the research methodology that was employed to collect and analyse the data the findings of which are presented in Chapter 4. The methodology was used to address the research question in this qualitative research study, and includes the research design, population and the sampling techniques, data collection and analysis, as well as the trustworthiness strategies that were used to reach the study objectives.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

In Chapter 4, the researcher presents the geographic profile of the ten participants, who were willing and able to share their experiences of gang involvement. Their profile is situated within literature, which revealed the relevance and significance of demographic variables within the study, locally, as well as internationally. Subsequently, the research findings that emanated from the semi-structured, in-depth interviews, conducted with the participants, are presented and discussed. The data collected were analysed and presented in the form of six main themes, as well as nineteen sub-themes, and located within a literature review of previous studies.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 5 is the final chapter, in which the researcher presents a summary of the research conducted. The researcher provides the study conclusions and implications of the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the research, in relation to the research objectives. Finally, the researcher offers recommendations to address the gaps in services provided, contributions to social work education and policy, as well as recommendations for future research.

1.9. Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the research study with the focus on the motivation and rationale for the chosen research topic. It has been established that the focus previously, has not been on women in gangs, but instead on males in gangs. There is an understanding that males in gangs represent, more significantly, the numbers and crime; however, the increased recruiting of women into these gangs is starting to demand attention from all stakeholders.

The researcher provided a background of the topic, specifically, the reasons for focusing on an individual area, such as the area under study, and its surrounds. The reason is socio-political, as it is a vulnerable community in the south of the Cape Flats, with a serious gang problem. The researcher, therefore, provided the research question, the aim and objectives of the study, as well as the research approach and design that best suited the study. It was established that the qualitative approach was the most suited for the type of study on which the researcher intended to embark. Key concepts, identified as pertinent to this current study, provided a brief explanation, to ground the study theoretically, in terms of the rationale and significance of the study. In the following chapter, the literature review explores previous literature on the topic under scrutiny, as well as the theoretical framework, to establish the need for this current study further.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In previous literature, the possible reasons are provided that clarify why women join gangs, and the family has been highlighted as a significant source (Khan, Brice, Saunders, & Plumtree, 2013; Auyong, Smith & Ferguson, 2018). Factors such as troubled family relationships, trauma, victimisation, inadequate supervision, single parenthood, gang members in the family, as well as a poor socio-economic environment, could influence individuals to join gangs (Howell, 2010; Khan et al., 2013; Auyong, Smith & Ferguson, 2018). These causal factors also strongly emerged in this chapter. In addition, literature identified the need for evidence-based and gender-specific programmes that focused on females, to address the phenomenon of women in gangs, which currently appears to be non-existent (Calix, 2013; Khan et al., 2013).

Studies have linked gangsterism to crime and violence, as well as exposed the adverse consequences for the individual, family, and society (De la Rue & Espelage, 2014; Watson & Ryan, 2014). Brown (2007, p. 402) asserts, “Violence is a cornerstone of gang activity”, which implies that it is imperative to focus on gangsterism, as it influences the levels of violence in communities.

Globally, studies have revealed that crimes are committed, mostly, by criminal gangs (Egley & Ritz, 2006; Howell, 2010). In South Africa gangs are a substantial challenging. Female gang members can increase the challenges and to attend to these risk factors, may reduce gang membership (Auyong et al., 2018). In Cape Town, the Police Commissioner stated that gang violence remains the biggest contributing factor to the high crime and murder rates, and this

challenge needed to be addressed (RSA, 2015). The research was conducted in the area under study, Cape Town, a predominantly Coloured community in a marginalised and vulnerable part of Cape Town, with a high rate of violence, crime, and gang activity. The area under study was established in the 1970s to re-locate the mostly Coloured community, who were forcefully removed from District Six, in terms of the Group Areas Act (RSA, 1950), according to Calix (2013), as well as Watson and Ryan (2014). According to Watson and Ryan (2014:76–77), the area under study can be identified as a vulnerable area, based on the following five elements, using Moser's (1998:4) framework:

- **Labour** - evident by high unemployment rates
- **Human capital** - undermined by high rates of drug abuse and failure to complete schooling, or access tertiary education.
- **Production assets** – the vast majority of properties are owned by the state, or are informal structures
- **Household relations** - mechanism for pooling income fail women and children, when absent fathers make insufficient maintenance payments.
- **Social capital** - trust from social ties has been eroded by the divisions between those who benefit from, and those who feel victimised by, the drug trade.

Based on the afore-mentioned elements, The area under study, as a vulnerable area, therefore, was an appropriate setting to conduct this current study on women in gangs. Numerous studies that focused on several topics, have been conducted in the area under study, including gangsterism; however, rarely on women in gangs. The literature review included previous research on the topic under study, which provided the researcher with a guideline on current

evidence-based research, and, with the qualitative approach, the researcher was able to explore each interpretation, during data compilation. Consequently, in this chapter, the researcher focuses on the following two sections: the origins and emergence of male gangs, with the focus on trends and origins internationally, as well as in the South African context; and the emergence of women in gangs, in particular. A discussion ensues regarding the following risk factors: the family; child victimisation; peer pressure; substance abuse; the use of leisure time; mental health; as well as the school and community, as documented by other literature. Intervention strategies, including the role of the social worker, follows, and finally, a discussion on the theoretical framework used in this current study, along with a conclusion of this chapter.

2.2. Origins and emergence of male gangs

In this section, the researcher provides an account of the emergence of gangs, with an emphasis on females, as the initial narratives and historical recordings have been focused on males in gangs (Klein, 1995, cited in Pacheco, 2010; Auyong et al., 2018). Consequently, it is vital to establish the socio-political and -economic origins of gangs, as a framework for the phenomenon of women in gangs.

2.2.1. International trends and origins

Gangsterism has always been perceived as a global phenomenon, with an increase of gangs across the world (Hagedorn, 2018; Khan et al., 2013; MacMaster, 2010). According to Hagedorn (2018), industrialisation and urbanisation, after the second world war, has created growing conditions for the emergence of gangs in third world countries worldwide, particularly in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Hagedorn, 2018). In South Africa, organised gangs emerged in 1947 (Pinnock, 2016), whereas in Sierra Leone, West Africa, gangs were formed by children, because of urban immigration (Abdullah, 2002). According to Klein (1995, cited

Hagedorn, 2018), a majority of gangs originated from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, reflecting significant marginalisation, and the poor socio-economic status of most people in those areas.

In New Zealand, gangs have existed since the mid-20th century (Hagedorn, 2018), while in Cairo, since the 1940s (Aburish, 2004). In China, it is recorded that gangs had been established in the 18th century already. In the USA, gangs have been in existence for many years, and had become a challenge since the mid-20th century; however, only 19 states have reported youth gang violence (Howell, 2010), while modern day gangs could be traced to the 1960s (Modern gangs have roots in racial turmoil of '60s, 1988). The first Mexican gangs recorded, apparently emerged from Los-Angeles, USA, in the 1940s (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). However, gangs existed in London, England, United Kingdom, long before gangs in America emerged (Hagedorn, 2018).

These origins of gangs, therefore, relate the narrative that gangs thrive where marginalisation, power differentials, and the poor socio-economic status of certain sections of society exist. Current studies confirm that the trends for gangsterism, globally and locally, are in concert (Hallsworth & Young, 2008; Magidi, 2014; Pachecho, 2010). The concern is especially in townships, where young people struggle to survive, due to the high unemployment rate, poor living conditions, and poor schooling (De la Rue & Espelage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013).

2.2.2. South African context with particular reference to Cape Town

The emergence of gangs in South Africa is difficult to pinpoint; however, some studies indicate that gangs have been operating in South Africa since the 1920s, with documented records of gang violence in South Africa, reporting its emergence in the Western Cape since the 1930s (Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). In Cape Town, problems started to exist in District 6, post-World

War 2, when urbanisation escalated, and the area became severely overcrowded (Pinnock, 1997, 2016). The rapid increase of the population in the 1940s brought about an increase in poverty, due to high unemployment, leading to an increase in crime and violence. At the time, the community of District Six 6 started and operated informal businesses, in order to survive, resulting in a great sense of social control and community support (Pinnock, 2016).

However, District 6 also became the background for idle youth. These youth became known as “skollies”. They disputed over territory and space for hawking. The term, *skollie*, was most probably derived from the Dutch word, *schoelje*, meaning, scoundrel or scavenger (Pinnock, 2016). Subsequently, in 1937, a group of businesspersons established the gang, and named themselves “*Globe*”, to improve security for their businesses from the rise in petty crime. They initially operated with the police to control this development. The gangs were observed to have integrated well with the community, as they performed an informal social control function, and worked well with the businesses in the area (Pinnock, 2017). However, with the enforcement of the Group Areas Act (RSA, 1950), during the 1960s and 1970s, the Coloured majority, were pushed into inhospitable and barren areas, such as the area under study, Hanover Park, Manenberg, Bonteheuwel, Elsies River, Bishop Lavis, and Michell’s Plain. Due to these removals, the *Globe* members were scattered into these areas, which resulted in the formation of new gangs, in these new communities (MacMaster, 2010).

These gangs, however, transformed in these new communities, where they started to commit increasingly violent crimes (Kinnes, 2017). This forced removal destroyed the sense of community and connection that people had enjoyed in District 6 (Calix, 2013; Kinnes, 2017; MacMaster, 2010). This was worsened by the socio-economic inequality and disempowerment that became entrenched in all Coloured and Black communities, as a result of the enforcement

of the Apartheid policy in 1948 (Pinnock, 2017). Consequently, unemployment was rampant (characterised by little employment opportunities and low-income employment), the quality of education was poor, and the living conditions, unbearable. These conditions motivated young (and older) people, in these marginalised areas, to join the gangs, in order to survive, and to forge a sense of belonging with others (Cooper & Ward, 2012; Kinnes, 2017). Elgar (2014: 58) states the following: “Once fractured by inequality, communities fail to function as communities. Opportunities to socialise as communities, voluntarism drops fear of crime goes up, social support weakens, trust declines and schools become more violent. Social controls over violence no longer work”.

The literature on gangs in Cape Town concur that the forced removal from District 6 precipitated the establishment of gangs in the Cape Flats (Calix, 2013, Kinnes, 2017; MacMaster, 2010; Pinnock, 1997, 2016). Similarly, international studies assert that gangs were observed to emerge in areas with poor socio-economic conditions, including poverty, low employment opportunities, and poor schooling (Calix, 2013; MacMaster, 2010; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017).

2.3. The origins and emergence of women in gangs

Studies have mostly reported on males in gangs and acknowledged the profound consequences of their involvement in the gangs. A few studies have also identified that the presence of women in gangs was emerging, and that they had been involved in gangs for a long time, but ignored. For example, Davies (1998, cited in Hagedorn, 2018) argues that female gangs might have been in existence in Manchester (USA) in the 19th century already, but never documented. With the increase of reported criminal activities of females, recent research started to record females in gangs (Pachecho, 2010). In addition, it has been observed that their numbers were increasing,

and their roles were changing. Previously, their roles were supportive ones, such as financial, sexual, and emotional (Pachecho, 2010); however, these have changed to more prominent roles, such as more participation in severe crimes and activities, carrying guns, as well as stashing guns, money, and weapons for the gangs (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Khan et al., 2013).

2.3.1. International trends of women in gangs

In several countries, studies have acknowledged that the women-in-gangs phenomenon is understudied, and women' membership have increased (Auyong, Smith, & Ferguson, 2018; De la Rue & Espelage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013). Research in the USA, Canada, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the UK, identified several similar trends of risk factors for the gang involvement by women (Auyong et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2013; Moore & Howell, 2010; Pinnock, 2016):

- **Macro factors**, such as marginalised and low socio-economic communities, poor social support, and victimisation;
- **Mezzo factors**, such as family violence, the family members role in gangs, poor family relationships, unstable parents' lifestyles;
- **Micro factors** such as, delinquent peers, disconnect from schools, poor educational performance, early persistent conduct problems, starting as young as 12 years of age, substance abuse, and suspected mental health problems.

These are all contributing factors for gang involvement.

Dunbar (2017), who conducted a study in Canada, Auyong et al. (2018), who conducted one in Bosnia, and Cox (2011) in the UK, all acknowledged that the USA had more studies on women in gangs, which facilitated easy access to data from the USA, for application to their

circumstances, and comparisons with their data. According to these authors, previous research initially assumed that women in gangs, in their respective countries, were low compared to the USA. However, they acknowledged that their numbers had increased, but the underestimation had been due to a lack of statistics, as few women were likely to be arrested for criminal acts (Dunbar, 2017). The increasing spike in women arrested for criminal acts was regarded as an indication that more women were involved in gangs than was anticipated.

In tandem with the increased involvement of women in gangs, the traditional supporting roles filled by women in gangs, have also changed (Khan et al., 2013), as they have adopted more violent, dominant, and independent roles, engaging in serious crimes, such as robbery, rape, and murder (Cox, 2011; Dunbar, 2017). Globally, researchers have observed that the risk factors for women in gangs, in some cases, overlap with males in gangs; however, one main difference encountered, was that women join gangs, more often for emotional reasons, such as the lack of support, and the lack of a relationship with family. This implies that efforts to assist these women should be gender specific (Dunbar, 2017; Khan et al., 2013).

2.3.2. South African trend of women in gangs

In South Africa, it is acknowledged that the number of women in gangs are increasing. According to Jantjies and Popovac (2011), compared to countries like the USA and Canada, South Africa's increase was not dramatic. South African researchers have observed that research on women in gangs is scant (Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). South African studies were inclined to focus more on males in gangs, and females in gangs were ambiguously mentioned (Burton et al., 2009; Mgidi, 2014; Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). A local study by Shaw and Skywalker (2017) concurred with international studies (De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013) that women join gangs for emotional reasons, searching for a sense of belonging.

In addition, according to studies conducted in South Africa, the type of crime that women engaged in, were more dangerous than previously assumed (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). Additionally, it has been identified that the traditional gender roles, substance use and abuse, family factors, and community, are potential risk factors, which motivate women to join gangs (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Strand, 2014). Studies concur that women join gangs for emotional attachment, and violent victimisation have serious consequences for their physical and social wellbeing. In addition, it has been observed that peaceful home environments delay the onset of delinquent behaviour of children (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017).

2.4. Risk factors of gang joining

There are various reasons why women, boys, and adults join gangs; however, some common risk factors emanated from the literature, ranging from personal, social, and community factors. These risk factors, as drawn from literature, related the topic of concern, are discussed as follows:

2.4.1. Family as a risk factor

According to Swick and Williams (2006), a healthy, attached family life has been observed to be the most important factor that distinguished youth, who join gangs, from those, who do not; and women, who join gangs, tended to emanate from severely stressed family circumstances (Amroodt, 2011; Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor, & Freng, 2009; Khan et al., 2013; Vigil, 2008). Children, who were exposed to a positive and healthy family environment, were less likely to join gangs (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013). Studies have identified several dynamics within the family environment that play a vital role in children's behaviour later in life. These dynamics included, family relationships, family conflict, and parental monitoring,

as contributing factors towards the development of troubling behaviour in youth, which could result in gang involvement (Gosselin, 2005; Khan et al., 2013).

Studies have identified that emotional factors in families play a greater role than material needs, as a family contributes towards a girl's sense of belonging, a significant factor, which prevents them from joining gangs, unless this need is unfulfilled (De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013; Langa, 2007). The absence of emotional support from the family is one of the prominent reasons that women connect with gangs, as they experience a sense of emotional security and attachment.

2.4.1.1. Dysfunctional and conflictual family relationships

Some studies reveal that poor family relationships and conflict are associated with the development of severe behavioural problems in children. In addition, family conflict and violence are strongly associated with the women's involvement in gangs (De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). A study conducted by Shaw and Skywalker (2017), on female gangs in the Western Cape, provided information on how their exposure to unstable family circumstances, resulted in their gang involvement. Some females disclosed that troublesome relationships, rejection from their family (mostly their mothers), family financial issues, sexual abuse from family friends, the alcohol abuse of their parents, witnessing IPV, abandonment, and being raised by grandparents, forced them into joining gangs, to escape their traumatic family life. Others indicated that they joined the gang because it gave them a sense of belonging, which they did not experience with their own family. Others reported that they found the gang life appealing for the power, status, and material gain.

2.4.1.2. Multi-generational gang membership

Youth within multi-generational gang families were also identified as more likely to join gangs (Burton et al., 2009; De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Grekul & LaRocque, 2011; Howell, 2010; MacMaster, 2010; Strand, 2014). De La Rue and Espalage (2014) conducted a study in the USA to contrast the risk factors of female gang members, who had been pressured into joining gangs. Their findings revealed the relationship, as well as frequency of interaction between women in gangs and their families, clarifying why family gang participation could influence youth to join the gangs. Similarly, in a study conducted by Vigil (2008), females involved in gangs disclosed how they had been trained by older family gang members, from an early age, to participate in gang activities. Their findings revealed the influence that family members have on each other, whether negative or positive. Additionally, it clarifies the importance of the role family members' play within a family. In South Africa, Major General Jeremy Veary, Provincial Commander of Operation Combat, the South African Police Service (SAPS) Western Cape anti-gang strategy unit (at the time), noted that children often appear to imitate gang family members, when joining gangs (Swingler, 2014). He implied that the family, as gang members, enabled women and men to join gangs, as it normalised gang membership, making it more acceptable to engage in gang activities.

2.4.1.3. Single parenthood implications

Being reared by a single parent, or both parents, also came under scrutiny in some studies, in which it was identified how both parents play an important part in a child's life (Ward & Seager, 2010; Young et al., 2012). Studies suggest that being a single parent could create various challenges, when raising children without assistance (Strand, 2014; Young, Fitzgibbon, & Silverstone, 2012). A study conducted by Grekul and LaBourcane-Benson (2008), for example, observed that in a single parent household, families tend to live under financially

constrained conditions, where there is less support, and more disorder and instability (moving around). This situation is exacerbated by the parent's added absence, due to long working hours, to provide for the family. Consequently, the single parents are unable to monitor their children (especially after school), resulting in a lack of supervision. Studies confirmed that most of the participants, who were gang members, emanated from broken families, and single parents (mostly mothers, with the father absent, deceased or unknown to the child), with minimal parental supervision (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Dunbar, 2017; Howell, 2010; Howell & Egley, 2005).

Being in a single parent family does not imply that the child, inevitably, will become involved in gang-related criminal behaviour; however, the complications that arise from being in a single parent family might increase a girl's inclination towards gang membership, for a sense of belonging (Ward, Gould, Kelly, & Mauff, 2015). Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as unemployment, and poverty, in the context of economic inequality experienced by the family, are also key factors that drive youth into gangs (Ward, Van der Merwe, & Dawes, 2012). Domestic violence was identified by researchers as another risk factor that could influence women to join gangs (Bell, 2009; Chesney-Lind, 2013).

2.4.2. Gender roles and domestic violence as risk factors

Jantjies and Popovac (2011) conducted a study on crime and violence among young females in South Africa and viewed gender as a core aspect of an individual's identity. These authors identified that society strongly discriminated between the roles and society's expectations for men and women, which are viewed as the norm by society. They emphasised that traditional gender norms are still followed by South African youth. For example, traditionally, females are expected to be the nurturers, maternal, sensitive and emotionally motivated. In this current study, the focus was on identifying the factors that influenced women to become involved in

violent behaviour, which contrasted with traditional norms, and could assist in understanding their aggressive behaviour.

The United Nations, together with the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021), defined domestic violence as a gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm/suffering for women. In addition, this could include threats of such acts, intimidation, or unreasonable denying of freedom, whether occurring in public, or in private life. The Domestic Violence Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No. 116 of 1998) was introduced in South Africa, to provide women with protection against intimate partner violence [IPV] (MacMaster, 2010), which is a most common form of gender-based violence [GBV]. Due to the ongoing escalation of violence against women, the President of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, addressed these existing disparities on 7 September 2020. Women, who had been violated in engagements, dating, customary relationships, as well as actual, or perceived, violence in intimate relationships, or sexual relationships of any duration, were included under the banner of violence against women (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Department of Health [DoH], 2020).

Studies, including in South Africa, report that, historically, women have been the prime target of violence (Burton, 2008; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011), and concerningly, it is highly prevalent in South African youth relationships (Bhana, 2012; Wubs, Aaró, Matthews, Onya & Mbwamba, 2013). Evidently, gender roles in South African families were observed to play a major role in this perpetuation of violence against women (Kandemiri, 2020; Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams, 2011). Boys in domestic abusive homes are often taught and conditioned to practise traditional gender roles, with the belief that violence was an acceptable means of controlling women, as well as gaining respect and authority among their male peers and older

men (Brown, 2007; Mathews et al., 2011). In addition, it has been revealed that these men had been victims of trauma as children (Mathews et al., 2011). The findings of a study conducted by Brown (2007) in the USA context, revealed that women, who witnessed domestic violence, were conditioned to tolerate victimisation, and consequently, were vulnerable to become victims themselves. The implication is that children, who witness these acts of violence in the home, often remain the hidden victims of abusive encounters.

Some studies indicate that violence in families is common; however, the level of violence in most offenders' households, was higher than that of non-offenders (Burton et al., 2009), with the father being the perpetrator, in most cases (Brown, 2007). Other studies argue that children, who had witnessed their mother being abused, suffered profound and lasting harm (Burton et al., 2009; Kanchiputu & Mwale, 2016; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). Additionally, those who were exposed to the assault of their mothers, often suffered precisely the same harm, and exhibited exactly the same symptoms, as children who were actually abused (Brown, 2007). However, a study conducted by Young et al. (2012) observed that not all young persons in their study, who had joined gangs, had familial history of domestic violence, or abuse.

2.4.3. Child victimisation

Child victimisation occurs when a child is repeatedly exposed to negative actions over time by one, or more person (Boulton & Smith, 1994). Veneziani (2013) describes exploitation as the misuse of power and dominance over an individual. According to Briñol et al. (2017), power is a motivating force, central to human interactions. Victimisation is a significant motivating factor for women to join gangs and needs to be understood in the context of the women in gangs (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2012; Khan et al., 2013). Children are the most victimised, due to their vulnerability, dependency, and reduced ability to defend themselves, because of their relative psychosocial immaturity (Finkelhor, 2011; World Health Organization [WHO], 2016).

Their violation occurs, primarily, in the forms of physical, psychological/emotional, as well as sexual abuse and neglect. The WHO (2016) further imply that violence against children is a common global phenomenon.

Research literature on abuse and neglect has revealed that a history of victimisation is related to aggressive behaviour of a child (Graves, 2007; Kempf-Leonard & Johansson, 2007). Some research indicated that young women, compared to males, have a disproportionately higher history of sexual abuse, which increases the risk of anti-social behaviour (Bell, 2009; Javdani, Sadeh & Verona, 2011), including gang involvement (Ward & Seagar, 2010). Researchers also observed that most juvenile victims had experienced multiple incidents of victimisation, which occurred within the family household (Khan et al., 2013; Meinck, Cluver, Boyes & Loening-Voysey, 2016; Young, 2011). In addition, studies have revealed that women, who were abused, were more inclined to join a gang, as Rapp-Paglicci, Stewart, and Rowe (2008) observed that over 92% of female gang members in their study, experienced physical, psychological, and/or sexual abuse. Khan et al. (2013), however, observed that young women in gangs were three times more likely to be victims of physical abuse and neglect, as well as equally more likely to be sexually abused, than other women entering the justice system. A study by Auyong, Smith and Ferguson (2018) did not find a difference in victimisation between female in gangs and non-female gang members, but acknowledged that this could be because of their inadequate victimisation measures in their research. In the South African context, the study of Meinck et al. (2016) involved 3,515 children, between the ages of 10 and 17 years, reporting that 56.3% experienced physical abuse, 23.5% emotional abuse, and 9% sexual abuse. Although their study did not focus on gangsterism, they confirmed that physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children was a major social issue in South Africa.

The South African Centre of Justice and Crime Prevention (SACJCP, 2009) claims that one form of abuse of a child does not occur in isolation, as South African children, who experienced abuse, usually report several types of abuse, simultaneously. Research on the prevalence, incidence, and location of child abuse, acknowledged that the perpetrators of physical abuse of females were mainly primary caregivers, while sexual abuse was perpetrated mainly by a relative, or someone known to the family (Langa, 2007; Meinck et al., 2016; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). A study by Ward and Seager (2010), on street children in Cape Town, revealed that one of the main reasons for women leaving home was sexual abuse. Typically, the abuse was perpetrated by their stepfathers, or the mothers' boyfriends. Due to their vulnerability on the street, street children are likely to be drawn into gang activities, and even join gangs for protection and shelter (Ward & Bakhuis, 2009; Ward & Seagar, 2010). The findings of a study by De La Rue and Espelage (2014) revealed that physical abuse was not as significant a predictor, as sexual abuse was, which distinguished gang-involved women from the non-involved, and at-risk groups. Their study also indicated that a history of sexual abuse, and running away from home were linked to each other.

Finkelhor (2011), therefore, asserts that the more risk factors a young female was exposed to, the greater their chances of gang involvement. These victimisations are believed to continue when the female joins a gang (Khan et al., 2013). Young et al. (2012) also observed that, in some cases, family members could be victimised by rival gangs, because of the individual's gang involvement, although they could not find evidence of this being a regular occurrence. These authors further mention that, although families, generally, are not direct victims of gang violence, they are victims in two ways. Firstly, they experience enormous distress at the young person's involvement in crime and violence associated with gang life; and secondly, families experience the traumatic consequences, for example, their house being raided by the police, as

well as the prosecution and incarceration of the individual involved with the gangs. Additionally, they frequently have to deal with the aftermath of a serious incident, stigmatisation, and murder/death of their family member.

2.4.4. Peer Pressure

Peer pressure has always been a popular topic, as the basis of the argument would be the extent to which an individual allows his/her peers to decide his/her life choices, as opposed to making his/her own choices. This peer pressure has been identified as a risk factor for women joining gangs (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Khan et al., 2013). In addition, studies have acknowledged that peers would always be a fundamental part of the adolescent's development (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Martinez, Tost, Hilgert & Woodard-Mayers, 2013). Jantjies and Popovac (2011) explain that, when children reach adolescence, they are in the development stage, in search of independence, which makes them detach from their parental bond, to be with their own social circle. They have the desire to fit in and seek validation from their friends. This may influence them to adopt the behaviour of the social group with whom they associate. Consequently, friends are able to influence young individuals; therefore, peer relations could directly result in gang involvement, because of these strong influences (Howell, 2010; Khan et al., 2013; Martinez et al., 2013).

Earlier, previous studies have demonstrated how peer influences could affect the decision making of a young person, especially women. Langa (2007) conducted a study in South Africa on juvenile offenders in prisons and observed that peer pressure played a significant role in persuading youth to commit crime, which could lead to gang involvement. Some of the participants of the study, including women, admitted that peer pressure influenced them to execute criminal activities, despite having caring parents, and experiencing a good upbringing.

Some studies argue that youth, who were influenced by their peers, experienced a lack of parental attachment, support, and supervision as children, developing an irresistible need to belong (Santrock, 2010; Thomas, 2011), and likely to seek it in out-of-family contexts, without weighing up the consequences (Santrock, 2010). Pertaining to women, specifically, Thomas (2011) asserts that women frequently use their close intimate friendships to share very personal, emotional information, making it risky to discontinue these relationships, as it placed them at risk of being emotionally exposed, and hurt through the betrayal of a close friend. Consequently, women hold on to relationships, even negative ones. According to these cited studies, women join gangs for more than emotional reasons. They appear to seek strong attachment to a family, and when that is lacking, they become more inclined towards negative influences.

2.4.5. Substance abuse/misuse: Parents and youth

International research has concluded that the impact of substance misuse on the family is remarkably similar worldwide, and is a very particular experience (Arcidiacono, Velleman, Procentese, Albanesi & Sommantico, 2009; Orford et al., 2005). Kinnes (2008) asserts that, within the South African milieu, gang membership is not isolated from substance abuse. Substance abuse was recognised as a risk factor for the gang involvement of women from an early age (Chesney-Lind, 2013, Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens, 2008; Khan et al., 2013). In South Africa, the Department of Social Development, Department of Women, Children & People with Disability, and the United Nations Children's Fund (DSD, DWCPD & UNICEF, 2012) acknowledge that substance abuse by parents, disrupts their ability to care and monitor their children, decreasing their parenting skills. This could lead to poor (and conflictual) communication between the parent(s) and children, and in turn, cause children to feel neglected and isolated, particularly, deprived of their sense of belonging.

The family system was identified as a predictor of whether a young person would abuse substances later in life (Fisher, 2015; Schäfer, 2011). The findings of research by Schäfer (2011) in New Zealand revealed that substance abuse/misuse could be the result of modelling family members, for example, the father or mother, who abused substances. Additionally, most of the participants of that study disclosed that their parents were addicted to alcohol, as well as other drugs, and regarded this to be the precipitating reason for their own abuse (Schäfer, 2011). Fisher (2015) study produced similar findings, which revealed that the behaviour of children is shaped through the observation of, and learning from, their immediate environment, which mainly comprises their parents' behaviour. For example, if the parents abused substances, the children would, most likely, imitate this behaviour, and subsequently, abuse substances as well.

Additionally, it has been determined that substance abuse could result in aggression, violent behaviour, and criminal involvement. This led to the establishment of the Central and Drug Authority Board (CDA), a statutory body, established in terms of Section 53 of the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No 70 of 2008), to eradicate substance abuse challenges. According to Schramm-Sapyta, Walker, Caster, Levin, and Kuhn (2009), teens are more susceptible to substance abuse, as, during adolescence, the parts of their brain, responsible for judgement, decision making, as well as emotional and impulse control, have not completely developed, leaving them exposed to, more than likely, engage in risky behaviour, including joining gangs. According to Burton et al. (2009), substance abuse is a predictor of offending, and observed, in their study, that young people, who avoided illegal substances, were less likely to engage in criminal behaviour.

Studies have found that substance abuse is rooted in gang culture, and occurs on a daily basis, because it encourages specific functions of certain gang members (Anton, 2010; Chesney-

Wijnberg & Green, 2014). In these studies (Anton, 2010; Wijnberg & Green, 2014), gang members disclosed that they use substances as a means of coping, to ease their conscience, because of their violent actions. Some gang members were introduced to substances when they joined the gang, while others already used substances before they entered the gang (Wijnberg & Green, 2014).

2.4.6. Use of leisure time

Besides the family, an often-overlooked factor, such as leisure boredom, was also identified as a risk factor for gang involvement and substance abuse (Wegner, Flisher, Muller & Lombard, 2006). Flisher (2007) and Strand (2014) emphasise that leisure time should be used appropriately, and attempts should be made to avoid leisure boredom during childhood, as well as adolescence, as this may also lead to the individual's engagement in all kinds of mischief, including gang involvement. In Cape Town specifically, adolescents experience high levels of boredom, with the risk being considerably higher for female Black/Coloured students, than for their peers (Wegner et al., 2006). Strand (2014), in his local study, identified boredom as a predictor of children's tendency to join gangs. This author explored the youth's environmental system, and identified cultural activities for children and the youth, as well as places, such as sport fields and parks in the area. However, due to the gang prevalence in the community, these sports fields are under-utilised, and the youth do not participate in the cultural activities, because of the unsafe environment, which results in idleness and boredom.

In the area under study, the findings of a study by Calix (2013) revealed that the main soccer field had become a war zone for gang violence, where innocent people are shot and killed. During his research, a 5-year-old learner was shot, while walking across the field, on his way to school (Calix, 2013). In a local study on gangsterism in Cape Town by Strand (2014), a participant mentioned the lack of after-school activities, which could result in children joining

gangs. Another participant indicated that, even when parks are established in the community, they are taken over by the gangs and drug dealers, and consequently, are unsafe to be utilised for recreational purposes, as well as not maintained and repaired (Calix, 2013; Davids, 2005; Magidi, 2014).

2.4.7. Mental health as a risk factor

Mental health issues could affect a child's behaviour profoundly. The WHO (2016) defined mental health as a state of wellbeing, in which state, individuals realise their own potential, have the ability to cope with normal daily stressors, are able to work productively, prosper, and contribute to their community. According to the WHO (2016), children and adolescents, with good mental health, could accomplish more, and largely sustain optimal psychological, social functioning, and well-being. They have a good sense of identity, as well as self-worth, and therefore, are able to be productive and learn. In addition, they are able to deal with evolving challenges. The American Psychiatric Association [APA] (1994, cited in Ward & Seager, 2010) specified that children, who suffer from depression, or a health mental problem, commonly display hostile, rebellious, and problematic behaviour. Poor mental health appears to be a strong precursor to gang involvement, and acknowledged by researchers to be a contributing factor to the tendency of women to join gangs (Flisher, 2007). Graves, Frabutt, and Shelton (2007) conducted research on children's mental health in the juvenile justice services systems in the USA, and observed that women presented with significantly more severe mental health problems; however, others found insufficient information on mental health as a risk factor for women in gangs (Khan et al., 2013).

2.4.8. School as a risk factor

Researchers identified schools as a secondary socialising agent for children (first being the family), where the child learns to socialise, get along with others, accept authority, and obey

certain rules and regulations (Burton, 2007; Martinez et al., 2013). Researchers have identified several school-related factors, such as, early dropout, truancy, lack of school commitment, poor academic performance, troublesome behaviour at school, frequent changing of schools that lead to social ostracisation and aggressive behaviour, including gang involvement (Burton, 2007; Fox, 2010; Martinez et al., 2013; Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014).

2.4.8.1 Violence in School

Globally, violence in schools is reported as an issue, because it is a factor that contributes towards children leaving school early, or adopting similar violent behaviour. Gangsterism was identified as one of the major sources of school violence (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). Studies, specifically in South Africa, identified the dynamics of violence in South African schools. Maphalala and Mabunda (2014) researched the consequences of school violence at three selected schools in underprivileged communities in the Western Cape. The findings of their study were significant, as it explained how gangsterism spilled over into the schools and operated on school premises. Gang fights occurred between rival gang members at the school, and the teachers were too afraid to be caught in the crossfire, igniting fear in learners as well. Gang members waited for learners at the gates to threaten them; and additionally, children (younger than 13 years) are recruited into the gangs. The result was that the learners and educators were compelled to stay home until the violence subsided. Their study also confirmed that gangs use the schools to operate in criminal activities, for example, selling drugs (Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014).

Many learners also disclosed that they generally “do not feel safe in school as there are always people standing in the front of the school for women who walk alone” (Maphalala & Mabunda, 2011: 67), because public schools have inadequate, or non-existent security systems, often with broken fences. Some participants feared using certain facilities on the school premises, such as

the toilets, playing fields/ sports fields, and classrooms, as they felt unsafe. These fears were most common in female participants (Maphalala & Mabunda, 2011). The previous Deputy Police Commissioner of the Western Cape, Jeremy Veary, recognised that schools in the Western Cape were in danger of gang-takeovers (Swingler, 2014). He indicated that gangs do business at schools in under-resourced communities.

2.4.8.2. Early school dropout

Studies also identified that schools in deprived communities tended to have a higher rate of failing students, and early dropouts, which might amplify their inclination towards joining gangs (Calix, 2013; Davids, 2005; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Strand, 2014). Additionally, Fox (2010), in the USA, noted that underfunded schools created an opportunity for the proliferation of gangs. According to Mncube and Harber (2013), many schools in South Africa are in the same position; however, they operate well because of the management of the school. Therefore, it would appear that the key factor is a well-organised and managed school, with the main aim to protect the safety/security of the staff and learners (Mncube & Harber, 2013). Gangs can access to schools where the security is poor or inadequate, to threaten learners and staff, as well as disrupt the learning endeavour. However, children, who are affiliated to gangs, also attend schools (Magidi, 2014), adding to the unsafe situation.

In South Africa, Burton et al. (2009) established several reasons for early school leaving. Most of their study participants from the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Kwazulu Natal, reported that they had left school because they felt unsafe, while at school, experiencing feelings of distress caused by their fear of the criminals, as well as the fear for walking to and from school. In addition, they felt unsafe and traumatised because of unexpected gang shootings in the community. Studies by Calix (2013) and Kanengoni (2016) in the area under study (township on the Cape Flats) confirmed that learners and ex-learners also expressed the fear of walking

to and from school, because of gang shootings, with the lack of police presence. Evidently, learners fear for their lives on a daily basis, and this constant violence could lead to early school dropouts.

The findings of studies have revealed that learners, who are involved and connected with their schools, as well as educators and co-learners, are motivated to perform better, academically, and are less likely to drop out (Glesmann, Krisberg & Marchionna, 2009; Kanengoni, 2016). Glessman et al. (2009) concluded that youth in gangs, compared to their non-gang peers, were less engaged in school, and less likely to have caring relationships with adults outside the house, or school. A local study, conducted by Kanengoni (2016) on youth unemployment in The area under study, identified the positive outcome of connectiveness between learner and educator in an underprivileged community. In this study, the participants, in the absence of their parents as positive role models, explained how educators connected with them. These educators constantly praised them and made every attempt to stay in contact with them, encouraging them stay in school and improve their schoolwork, which inspired them to complete matric, eventually. Kanengoni (2016) argued that children, who did not have positive role models at home, could find them at school, thereby encouraging them to remain and complete their education. Similar findings were revealed in a study by Burton et al. (2009) on youth resilience to crime in South Africa, that positive role models in a child's life could play a vital role in resisting criminal behaviour.

2.4.8.3. Women in schools

Women experience various forms of violence in schools. Dunne, Humphreys, and Leach (2006) identified gender violence as implicit and explicit in schools. They refer to implicit gender violence as institutional practices that imitate gender hierarchies, which include traditional beliefs that women should perform domestic duties, while men do work that is more

physical. There is a difference in punishment, management, and behaviour of girls and boys. For example, girls are expected to behave passively, while boys are more dominant in the classroom. Explicit gender violence refers to aggressive acts towards women, such as physical, sexual, and verbal abuse, as well as intimidation. According to Burton (2008), women are more sexually assaulted, verbally abused, and intimidated at school. Studies have also identified that some women leave school prematurely, because of maltreatment at school. In addition, Sadker and Sadker (2010) refer to the inconsistency in the treatment of girls and boys by the teachers. Women are more likely to be invisible in the classroom, as teachers interact more frequently with boys; ask better questions of them, and provide more accurate and helpful feedback to them, than to the women. This frequently leads to loss of self-confidence, decline in achievement, and possibly, early school leaving, resulting in limited career options (Sadker & Sadker, 2010), making them vulnerable to engage in gang activities.

2.4.9. Community as a risk factor

It is commonly assumed that the long-term exposure to adverse neighbourhood factors, such as gang violence, high rate of unemployment, and marginalisation, poor living conditions, poverty and deprivation, are substantial risk factors for juvenile delinquency; which in turn, might cause children to join gangs. Studies have identified the link between early exposure to crime in the community, and subsequent criminal behaviour (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiiya, 2014; Alleyne & Wood, 2014). In addition, literature has determined that negative factors in the community, such as violence, gangsterism (Van Wyk, 2010), poor housing, and inferior schools, could lead to anti-social values, and low levels of social control, which in turn, increases delinquency (Khan et al., 2013; Kierkus, Johnson, & Hewitt, 2010; Magidi, 2014). A study by Khan et al. (2013) in the UK, similarly, observed several community risk factors that could lead to women feeling unsafe in the community. These risk factors included low

community engagement, significant gang activity, poor opportunities and marginalisation, availability of drugs, and high neighbourhood crime.

A local study by Strand (2014) identified a lack of social structure and support in the communities, which could also lead to gang involvement, specifically within marginalised communities. Additionally, some studies identified limited employment opportunities as a contributing factor for the joining of gangs (Hallsworth & Young, 2010; Vigil, 2008). The findings of a recent study by Shaw and Skywalker (2017), in Cape Town, revealed that women, who originate from under-resourced and violent environments, join gangs for the sense of belonging. Shaw and Skywalker (2017) posit that it is easier to join, than resist gangs in gang afflicted communities. They indicated that some women readily join gangs, and find the immediate availability of illegal resources rewarding (Shaw & Skywalker, 2017).

2.4.10. Women (gender) as a risk factor

There is clear evidence that women in gangs, generally (in one way, or the other), are victimised by male gang members, through violence against them, and are expected to regard these violent acts as methods of introduction and acceptance into the gangs (Dorais & Corriveau, 2009; Grekul & LaRocque, 2011). Acts such as these, outside the terrain of gangsterism, are generally accepted by society as abuse (Brown, Chesney-Lind, & Stein, 2007). However, female victimisation is often accepted as part of gang culture, ignoring the devastating consequences it holds for women (Beckett et al., 2012; Brown, 2007; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017).

Females in gangs could be victimised when they join gangs, through physical abuse, as well as sexual violation and exploitation by male gang counterparts; for example, when they are initiated into the gang, they are required to have sexual relations with some of the male gang members (Beckett et al., 2012; Brown, 2007; Vigil, 2008; Young, 2009). The women do not

see the abuse as an unlawful and violent deed imposed on them, and therefore, do not report these acts to the authorities. Reporting the abuse is also life threatening to them (Beckett et al., 2012; Brown, 2007; Vigil, 2008). Additionally, the women are also forced into a relationship with one of the gangsters, and consequently, having no formal status, are more at risk of violence and exploitation by the gang, while any assistance or protection is taboo (Beckett et al., 2012; Brown, 2007).

Besides the sexual abuse and exploitation, Beckett et al. (2012) add that women are also victims of physical abuse, while in a relationship with a gang member. They are physically abused behind closed doors, and warned of the consequences, if they report the abuse. Beckett et al. (2012) importantly argue that these acts may become normalised within gang-affected neighbourhoods, which further places women at risk, because of the manner in which both the victim and the perpetrator comprehend and conceptualise their experiences. These findings suggest that a young person's gender and position in the gang play a role in their risk of violence. Young women's status within a male-dominant gang is mostly determined by their relationships with young men and their sexuality. This seems to confirm that women in gangs have very little power (Beckett et al., 2012). In addition to the violence, women are also exploited to engage in criminal acts that benefit the gang financially, for example, as couriers of weapons and drugs (Beckett et al., 2012).

The most telling reason that women join gangs, is to find a substitute family (Pinnock, 2016), despite these afore-mentioned violent acts against them, the over-riding need is to feel a sense of belonging and experience security, even as they experience victimisation, daily brutality and harm.

2.5. Intervention and the role of social work

The inadequate number of programmes designed specifically for women, the lack of formal evaluation of the ones that exist, as well as the absence of national policy and guidance, has resulted in limited evidence of the effectiveness of services (Batchelor & Burman, 2004; Petersen & Howell, 2013; Williams, 2009). Some countries recognised this limitation and addressed it by implementing various forms of support programmes. The interim report of the UK Children's Commissioner (Berelowitz, Firmin, Edwards, & Gulyurtlu, 2012) has acknowledged that women in gangs was a concern, with potential risks, which required urgent intervention. These concerns led to the establishment of the *Girls, Women and Gangs Working Group*, and the provision of funding to improve the services for women under 18 years of age, who had been victims of gang-related abuse (Beckett et al., 2012). The UK government budgeted for the appointment of 15 specialist advisers on young women in gangs, to initiate the eradication of gang and youth violence. This programme is still in the initial stage, and it is too soon to evaluate the impact thereof (Beckett et al., 2012).

The WHO (2016) reported that a 15-year global plan of action would be considered by WHO Member States at the World Health Assembly in 2016, to strengthen the role of the health system, in addressing interpersonal violence, specifically against women, as well as children. They indicated that interpersonal violence was strongly associated with social determinants, namely, social norms, gender inequality, poverty and unemployment, including other risk factors, such as easy access to, and misuse of alcohol and firearms (WHO, 2016).

These plans, however, have no specific focus on how to prevent women from joining gangs. When gangsterism is mentioned, the assumption always involves males, with little consideration for women in gangs (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011). According to the Western Cape

Department of Community Safety Report (Western Cape Government, 2015), a 5-year strategic plan (2015-2020) was drawn up to combat gang related crime, with little focus on women.

2.5.1. Social work services rendered relating to factors that influence women in gangs

According to Zastrow (2017), social workers have an obligation towards marginalised groups, and those at risk, whether through individual (micro [individual], mezzo [group] and macro [community]) methods. Zastrow (2017, p. 90) further states that social workers are “knowledgeable about evidence-base interventions to help individuals’ groups and communities to achieve their goals”. They are professionally geared to work with diverse intervention strategies, including case, group, and community work, as well as research (Masilo, 2018). In the South African context, limited specific programmes/services have been implemented to address the challenges that women in gangs experience; however, social workers render professional services for these diverse challenges, for example, substance abuse, challenging behaviour, or family dysfunction.

- **Youth in conflict with the law:** The South African government has acknowledged the challenges of youth between the ages 14 and 17 years, who are in conflict with the law. The Department of Social Development [DSD] in the Western Cape, South Africa, offers the following diversion programmes: *Rhythm of Life* is a general life skills programme; *Wake-up Call* is focused on substance abuse; and *In the Mirror Programme*, on sexual offenders (Western Cape Government, 2019). These diversion programmes run for a period of eight weeks, and child offenders are granted seven opportunities to be diverted to these programmes. These programmes include females, but are not gender specific, and should be altered to make it acceptable for women only.

- **Gender-based violence:** The DSD has established a 24-hour GBV command centre that provides immediate support, counselling and referral services to victims of GBV (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Department of Social Development [DSD], 2017).
- **Substance abuse:** Regarding substance abuse, in the Western Cape, the DSD identified a disparity in the rehabilitation of women, because of the special needs and challenges of women. This decision was made, based on research that physical and sexual trauma, followed by post-traumatic stress disorder, are commonly linked to substance abuse in women, compared to men, and therefore, would require specific treatment, which is beneficial, as it would address the specific needs of women (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Western Cape Government, Department of Social Development [DSD], 2015). According to Marsh, Dale, and Willis (2007), women, who abuse substances, tend to suffer more often from depression and anxiety, than their male counterparts do.

The Kensington Treatment Centre in Maitland, established in July 2009 for all genders, in partnership with the DSD and Lukhanyo clinic, was transformed and opened for women only, on 01 May 2015 (RSA, Western Cape Government, DSD, 2015). Services are free and admission is via statutory requirements for involuntary referrals. Voluntary referrals are made through a social worker, in terms of the Prevention of and Treatment for substance Abuse Act (RSA, 2008), and includes after care services. The services are for rehabilitation and developmental purposes, and focus on the needs of women only. The theoretical approach, discussed next, is an attempt to understand women in gangs, as well as their behaviour/actions through the selected theoretical framework.

2.6. Theoretical framework: Family Systems Theory

The term, *system*, emerged from Emile Durkheim's early study on social systems (Friedman & Allen, 2014). It is defined as an organised unit, comprising several mechanisms that interact in

separated and different ways from their interaction with other entities, over a certain period of time, forming an integrated whole (Anderson, Carter, & Lowe, 1999; Arnold & Wade, 2015). Friedman and Allen (2014) indicate that previous theories were inclined to view the whole as fragmented. Subsequently, they started to consider the systems theory, as an organisational theory that studied the interaction between different systems, comprising the individual, the family, and the community. They further elucidated that the system is expected to conform to standards within the larger environment, and when the system failed to abide by these norms, the system was dysfunctional (Friedman & Allen, 2014). This expressed the interdependency of different systems, to obtain functionality within society.

The family is identified as a system of inter-connectedness with interdependent individuals, who cannot be understood in isolation, as one family member's actions affect the other family members (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2006; Miller, Ryan, Keitner, Bishop, & Epstein, 2000). Additionally, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2013) state that viewing families from a systems perspective, emphasises family interrelationships over individual needs and drives, and focuses on overall family functioning, instead of individual behaviour. In this current study, when an individual lives an unacceptable lifestyle, such as gang involvement, the other family members will be affected.

2.6.1. Systems thinking

Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), who introduced the Systems Theory, differed with the notion of the fragmented approach, as he believed that systems were interrelated, and should rather be considered from a holistic approach. Bertalanffy (1968) further opined that change might occur during the interaction between these systems. In addition, he viewed relationships and interactions with other systems as an instrument of development and transformation (Friedman

& Allen, 2014). Therefore, systems theory includes the family systems, as well as the ecological systems, focusing on the way people interact with their environment.

Previous studies focused either on the behaviour of an individual, or the environment, but not the complex interaction between the two. The ecological systems theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), provides an explanation about the ways in which the environment influences a child's development. In this theory, the individual is identified to exist in continuous transactions with their environment (Melson & Fine, 2010; Miley, O'Meila, & DuBois, 2009). The individual is viewed as a sub-system within a hierarchy of larger systems, which includes family, friends, and the community, in which the individual occupies an essential position. The ecosystem perspective further describes the way the individual and the environment are affected by one another. The individual reacts consciously and intentionally; however, s/he could act unconsciously and spontaneously. The individual is neither completely powerful, nor powerless, but plays an active role in the construction of events that shape his/her life, a role tempered by environmental forces and situations (Miley et al., 2009).

This theory provides an interactional view of any systems perspective, within the context of its environment, which includes the biological, psychological, social, and the spiritual aspect of the individual, assessing the individual, family and the environment. In addition, according to Friedman and Allen (2014), the ecosystem perspective views the individual as both the cause, and the effect of his/her situations, because each individual is in a dynamic situation, as each change s/he makes, causes a reactive change in the larger system. The systems theory views adaptation as an important concept to understand the nature of the interaction between the individual and the environment (Friedman & Allen, 2014). The individual would change, to meet environmental opportunities or demands. Alternatively, the environment is changed for

the physical and social settings to be more responsive to the people's needs, rights, goals and capacities. Additionally, in the ecological system, not only the present is considered, but also the historical and cultural factors surrounding the family, and any biological concerns; hence the bio-psycho-social nature of ecological systems (Friedman & Allen, 2011). Some studies have identified and concluded that a history of family culture, for example, family members and gang involvement, could encourage individuals to join gangs (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Strand, 2014; Vigil, 2008).

Other research has provided an implicit explanation on how the neighbourhood conditions, such as high unemployment, insufficient resources, and gang violence within a community, could affect an individual, which might create a pathway to criminal behaviour (Burton, Leoschut & Bonora, 2009; Howell, 2010; Khan et al., 2013), as explained by the ecology theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979) strongly believed in the resilient nature of human beings. He regarded resiliency as rooted in a cultural setting that helps form and shape the individual.

2.6.2. The Family Systems Theory

The family is identified as a social system, and all social systems receive input from the environment, engage in processes, and generate outputs (Friedman & Allen, 2014). It has a specific structure and function, with the family identified as an important social system, whose function it is to socialise and care for its members. This notion prompted the emergence of the Family Systems Theory. In addition, some studies also documented family members as one of the important factors in a child's development, because they are acknowledged as part of a system (Burton et al., 2009; Howell, 2010; Khan et al., 2013). According to Anderson et al. (1999), the system in the family context, is the family unit that interacts diversely, in a way distinct from their interactions with other entities. Friedman and Allen (2011) argue that it is important to understand the interplay of familial values on the individual. He explains that, for

example, an individual's goals could be altered by the ecological forces that are acting on the individual, which may dictate an altered path. Shulman (2009, p. 5) refers to this as a "client-system interaction" and explains the importance of understanding the context surrounding the person. Therefore, it is up to the professional service provider to consider the individual's strengths, instead of trying to identify the origins of the problems.

In the mid 1950's, the Family Systems Theory was introduced by Murray Bowen (1913-1990), an American psychiatrist and a professor in psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health, Georgetown University, USA (Pirelli, 2021). After studying patterns of the family for many years, as well as the origins of people, who received treatment for schizophrenia (Pirelli, 2021), Bowen concluded the following:

- 1) The family functions and behavior influence an individual's behavior
- 2) The family is an emotional unit that cannot be understood on its own, as according to Minuchin, Lee, & and Simon (2006, p. 14), there is constant interaction between family members. They experience a "past" and a "present" together that is understood in their interactions with each other, which, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), contributes to the formation of their character. Bowen (1978) defines the family as a relationship and emotional system, as the members influence one another individually, in several structures, and on intergenerational levels.
- 3) Individual functioning shapes the family functioning within their lifetime.

Family systems could create pathological behaviour in the individual because of the interconnectedness they share (Hutchison, 2003; Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2012). According to Rudlin (2020), pathological behaviour is beyond the normal mischievous behaviour, and creates the inability for the young person to behave appropriately, which can

lead to the person to become involved in extreme risky behaviour and unlawful activities. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2006) assert that, when an event that affects one family member, the other family members will also be impacted. Bowen's research is rooted in existing and multi-generational observations of the interaction between the individual and the family, excluding internal processes. This theory implies that treatment does not have to be directed at the symptomatic person, necessarily, but at family members as well. This concept allows flexibility, and could mollify a difficult situation, for example, if the symptomatic person refuses assistance, therapy could be offered to the family members, who want change. Consequently, a family member's ability to change his/her emotional functioning, could improve the family's overall emotional functioning. Bowen's view (Hutchison, 2003; Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 2005) was shared by other influential theorists, namely, Satir (1983), Minuchin (1974), as well as Carter and McGoldrick (1988). According to Bowen, family problems could be addressed, by monitoring the relationships between family members, or certain members, over a period of time (Winek, 2010). Bowen's approach was not aimed at reducing the symptoms, but at improving the intergenerational transmission process, within a family (Winek, 2010). According to Winek (2010), Bowen's theory would be more attractive to theories that seek to understand, rather than facilitate symptom reduction. Bowen had eight theoretical concepts that he followed, which are explained by Winek (2010) as follows:

- 1) **The differentiation of self:** Refers to the ability of the person to separate feelings and thought, react to anxiety, and manage life changes, while following his/her goals. It implies that a person with a high level of individuality differentiation may be able to maintain individuality, and simultaneously, maintain emotional contact with the family. These people appear to be more satisfied with their successes, through their own efforts. The person with a low level of individuality may share the same feelings as the family,

because of the lack of interpersonal boundaries between the family members. These people with fewer successes may look for validation from others.

- 2) **An emotional triangle.** Implies that a couple's relationship may become unstable when they experience anxiety, whereas three persons in a relationship provide more resources to manage, decreasing general anxiety in the group or family. However, regardless of the potential to minimise anxiety, it creates its own rules, leaving two sides in agreement, and one side in conflict, which may result in a difficult situation. Bowen indicated that children could easily become triangulated within their parents' relationship.
- 3) **Family projection process.** The transmission of a parent's anxiety, relationship difficulties, or emotional challenges, may contribute to the development of emotional issues, as well as other concerns in a child. When the parent places the child's focus on the anxiety, and the child's reaction is worry or anxiety, the parent might want to "fix" it, which makes the child dependent on the parents to resolve issues for him/her.
- 4) **Multigenerational transmission process:** According to Bowen, certain behaviours and conditions tend to run across generations, because people tend to look for similar levels of differentiation. A couple with lower differentiation may have children with lower differentiation as well, which would influence the following generation, by extension. This pattern, however, could be broken, if the individual increases his/her differentiation, possibly releasing him/her from his/her symptoms, preventing the systems of low differentiations to occur.
- 5) **An emotional cut-off.** This occurs when an individual emotionally distances him-/herself from the family, during emotional turmoil. By separating emotionally, the individual may intend to decrease the tension and stress in the relationship, but instead causes more pain and anxiety. Bowen's view is that that emotional cut-off, allows people to focus more on their own relationship, which, inadvertently, could put more stress on the relationship.

- 6) **Sibling position:** This emphasises the position of the older, middle, and younger children, to allow for the differentiation of their roles within the family, as set by the expectations of parents or relatives.
- 7) **The societal emotional process:** This describes how the emotional system in the family could influence the emotional system of society, resulting in both progressive and regressive periods in society. Individuals may experience more anxiety and instability during times of regressions, similarly to the societal and family functioning. Examples of regression include factors such as, overpopulation, availability of resources, an unresponsive health system, or the economy.
- 8) **The nuclear family emotional process:** Bowen indicated that the nuclear family is inclined to experience challenges in four areas, namely, intimate partner conflict; problematic behaviour or concerns in one partner; emotional distance; and impaired functioning in children. Bowen believed that anxiety may cause conflict, arguments, criticism, or over/under performance of responsibilities, and/or distancing behaviour. According to Winek (2010), Bowen sees the family's emotional system as the primary cause of what they are, and how they function.

These eight concepts reflected the significant interconnection between the individual, the family, and society.

2.6.3. The rationale and application of Family Systems Theory

The researcher utilised the Family Systems Theory, as it has been acknowledged for some time that an interconnection exists between a family member and aspects in the environment; therefore, a person cannot be observed in isolation (Bowen 1978). According to Walsh (2013), the Family Systems Theory has been observed to be successful in persons with adverse behaviour, as it employs two techniques, namely, the Personal- and Developmental reflection,

to gain insight into an individual's adverse behaviour. The Personal reflection provided insight about the individual's present circumstances, while the Developmental reflection focuses on the socio-historical development of the individual, and his/her family.

Although the systems theory did create an opportunity for the researcher to obtain information about the individual's present and their past circumstances, and family throughout the years, it does not provide specific guidelines as to what to particular pay attention to. The researcher therefore had to design the data collection tools in such a way as to delve into particular aspects of the participants' behaviour, circumstances, choices, and effects, so as to associate the emerging data with the system. This then provided a more concise understanding of the participants' behaviour and their gang involvement.

2.7. Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of the phenomenon of gangs, specifically women in gangs, in international and local contexts. The historical development of gangs was particularly interesting, as the Globe gang was initially the protector of the people that subsequently, through political processes, became the criminal gangs, which currently operate on the Cape Flats. The researcher reviewed literature relevant to this current study, which uncovered specific causal (risk) factors, and provided substantial insight into the research topic.

The Family Systems Theory, as theoretical framework, was relevant to the current study, as it allowed the researcher to determine whether the family does play a role in the participants' gang involvement, as well as to what extent, directly or indirectly.

In the next chapter, the researcher describes the methodology employed in this current research study, to achieve the aim and objective of the study on women' experiences of being involved in a gang.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In Chapter 2, the researcher provided extensive information from literature, relating to the topic under discussion. A significant number of studies identified similar factors that impel women to join gangs, with the main factor being family circumstances as a risk factor for gang involvement. Therefore, it could be inferred that particular precipitating factors play a role in children's formative years, which could motivate women to join gangs in their later years. The aim of this current study was to explore and describe the contributing factors that, possibly, may have compelled women to join gangs, as well as their experiences while being involved in gangs, in order to offer meaningful recommendations, not only for social work practice, but also to government, as an important role player, and community members.

In this chapter, the researcher focuses on the methodology of this current study. Consequently, the researcher discusses the steps, methods, and techniques applied in the research process, as well as how these techniques were implemented. Methodology generally implies that some activity (in this case the research study) was conducted in a scientific (systematic and logical manner) to obtain data (Creswell, 2013; De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011; Henning, 2011). In this current study, the qualitative approach was employed to reflect the underlying philosophy of the methodology, because it emphasised the experiences of the participants in a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Henning, 2011). In this current case, it was the experiences of women in gangs, to gain the needed richness and depth of the researched topic. Consequently, it would generate a more holistic

understanding of the complexity and subtleties of the research in question (Babbie & Mouton, 2008).

The study methodology and approach represent a planned activity, with the intention of exploring experiences, ideas, and information about a specific phenomenon, which the researcher in this current study aims to conduct with a sample of women in gangs. The methodology is underscored by several important components, on which the main sections of this chapter are focused. These components are: the underlying philosophical assumptions of the study; the qualitative approach, as guiding principles for the study; the explorative and descriptive research design, in line with the study goals and purpose; the population and sampling, with a discussion on how the participants were recruited; the data collection methods and analysis; and the trustworthiness strategies to verify the findings. The study ethics that guided the study are also explicated.

3.2. The research philosophy

Creswell (2013) contends that researchers should consider the study's philosophical foundations before embarking on the study. The researcher, therefore, focused on two philosophical underpinnings that were considered and reflected upon.

3.2.1 Underlying philosophical assumptions of the study

Every research study is built on key philosophical assumptions, which underlie the decisions that the researcher makes, or informs the philosophical perspectives of the researcher, in the light of the research topic to be studied (Creswell, 2014, p. 1; Mack, 2010. p. 6). Four assumptions on how researchers view the acquisition of knowledge in the research world are illustrated by Creswell (2013). These assumptions, namely, ontological, epistemological,

axiological, and methodological, significantly influence the selection of the research approach and design.

Ontology: Creswell (2013), Snape & Spencer (2003) and Kivunja & Kuyini (2017), identify ontology as the nature of the world, and the knowledge that could be obtained from it, which, in turn, informs researcher-defined truth and reality (also see Bryman, 2008; Neuman, 2011; Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2013). Fouché and Schurink (2011) identified two beliefs within the ontology assumption. Firstly, to obtain data that is more truthful, reality should be approached objectively, as an external reality, in which the researcher takes on a role of emotional disconnectedness, while conducting the study. Secondly, no truth exists, and the reality is subjective to the determination of an emphatic understanding of the participants' life world. This second belief convinced the researcher to focus on exploring the experiences of the participants. The ontology was the product of the epistemology, in this case the result, based on the data gained from the research.

Epistemology: Epistemology is a way of understanding and deciding, "How do we know what we know" (Crotty, 2003: 3). It is focused on exploring the complexity of social phenomena, with the aim of gaining an understanding, and construing daily events, experiences, and social structures, as well as the value that individuals attach to these phenomena (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Ormston et al., 2013; Rubin & Babbie, 2010; Yin, 2016). The researcher used a semi-structured question guideline as a guide, and with the consideration of their knowledge of their gang involvement, conducted the research to acquire the data that would be valuable for this research study. Meaning, that the source of knowledge obtained, was empirical knowledge valuable for the research study.

Therefore, this assumption fits the purpose of qualitative research, which was more appropriate to this current study.

Axiology: According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), axiology reflects judgements about values that underpin decisions and beliefs. Biedenbach and Jakobsson (2016, p. 140) states that the word, “axiology”, stems from two Greek words, “axio”, meaning “value”, and “logos” meaning “logic or theory”. Together it forms the concept of the “theory of value”. In the case of research, axiology addresses questions related to what is valued, and accepted to be appropriate for the research topic under study. When conducting a research study, researchers are required to recognise and note their values, report their values and bias, as well as the value-laden nature of the information gathered from the field (Carnaghan, 2013). The researcher considered all the ethical precautions during the planning phase and during the research process to avoid subjectivity and bias.

Methodology: According to Creswell (2013), the methodological assumption involves the assumptions made by researchers, concerning the types of reasoning utilised in the process of research, to gain scientific knowledge. Two modes of reasoning, namely, deduction and induction, are used to understand the process of forming generalisations of knowledge building (Delpont & De Vos, 2011). Deduction is used when a conceptual and theoretical structure is developed, and subsequently tested by empirical observation [moving from the general to the specific] (Delpont & De Vos, 2011; Grove, Burns & Gray, 2012). A deductive form of reasoning is specifically employed in the quantitative approach, as it uses a hypothesis that is testable, or able to provide concrete empirical evidence (Grove et al., 2012). According to Creswell (2013), induction analysis of data involves identifying patterns, categories, and themes, working from the bottom up, arranging the data into more abstract units of information. The researcher applied an inductive process to scrutinise the words and descriptions of the participants in this current study (Borbasi & Jackson, 2012). In addition, this same process was used to identify themes as they emerged and create a set of statements to form concepts (Carey, 2009; Engel & Schutt, 2010).

3.2.2. Paradigmatic considerations for the study

For the aforementioned philosophical discussion, two main paradigms are discussed namely positivism and interpretivism and it was determined that interpretivism would be most appropriate for this study.

Positivism: According to Henning (2011), positivism makes emphatic judgments because of its claims that knowledge can only be accepted as valid and trustworthy, as well as accuracy measured, through experimental means. This implies that, to understand the phenomena under study, it must be measured and supported by evidence (Denscombe, 2008; Hammersley, 2013). Henning (2011) explains that positivism follows empiricism, with observation and measurement as the core of the scientific venture, while the world operates by the law of cause and effect, which is detectable through scientific methods only, excluding personal insight. Glicken (2003) argues that positivism simply entails a belief that the methods and procedures of the natural sciences are suitable to the social sciences. The latter view involves a belief that the objects of the social sciences, namely people, are not a hurdle to the implementation of the scientific method (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011).

A major concern about positivism is that, when using this paradigm in social sciences, it does not allow the measuring of phenomena related to emotions, such as intention, attitude, or thoughts of humans, as these concepts may not be observed or measured unambiguously, with the view of experience, or without evidence, leading to a lack of depth (Hammersley, 2013). These mentioned aspects are required to find rich data in this study, as this study would include the participants perceptions of their experience in gangs, which is unmeasurable. For these reasons, this qualitative research approach would not fit easily into the positivist approach (Vosloo, 2014: 304), following the views of Gratton and Jones (2010), Welman, Kruger, and

Mitchell (2009), as well as Wisker (2008). The limitations that positivism hold, resulted in the development of an alternative viewpoint, such as interpretivism (Vosloo, 2014).

Interpretivism: By the mid-20th century, there was a shift from the positivist approach, as the methods used to understand data related to physical science, could not be the same for human and social sciences (Hammersley, 2013). Interpretivism presumes that, instead of a single truth, multiple interpretations, which are able to be determined by the measuring process, may exist. According to Fouché and Schurink (2011), the interpretivists believe that the social sciences are different to the natural sciences, which therefore, require different methodologies, to gain interpretive knowledge and explanation, for the social researcher to be enabled to appreciate the subjective meaning of social behaviour. This brought about the qualitative wave, which attempted to present the reality of the participants, drawn from their own opinions, in this case the participants perceived viewpoints of their experiences in gangs with potential risk factors, gradually changing into the complete interpretive point of view (Creswell, 2013; Henning, 2011; Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

Irrespective, interpretivism has some limitations. A common refrain is that there are questions regarding the verification of validity, as well as the usefulness of research outcomes, when using the scientific process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Secondly, its ontological view is perceived to be subjective, instead of objective (Mack, 2010). This current study employed the interpretivist approach, because the study was focused on exploring the participants' life experiences, based on their own interpretations, to obtain data appropriate to the study aims and objectives.

3.3. The research approach

Researchers use a variety of approaches to conduct research, which falls within three main categories, namely, the qualitative, quantitative, and the mixed methods approaches (Creswell,

2014). For this current study, the researcher selected the qualitative method, for reasons outlined in Section 1.6.1. A brief exposition of the three approaches follows, as well as the plausibility of the selection of the one for this current study, as opposed to the other two.

3.3.1. The quantitative approach

Historically, quantitative research evolved in the late 19th century (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research is an approach, utilised to test objective theories, by examining a causal relationship, or links between variables (Creswell, 2013; Fouché, Delport & De Vos, 2011). These variables can be measured by instruments, for numbering data to be analysed, through statistical procedures (Babbie & Mouton, 2012; Fouché et al., 2011). Closed-ended questions, as well as a structured interview schedule, in the format of a questionnaire, are common for the data collection process (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011). The quantitative approach has its limitations, as there is no flexibility in the questions, and therefore, may lack depth (Choy, 2014). The quantitative approach could be beneficial when a large population group is studied in a short period, where the result will have a “high degree of generalizability” (Flick, 2015, p. 12). However, a key disadvantage is the lack of focus on contextual details, which influence the richness of data (Henning, 2011). For these reasons, the quantitative approach was purposefully not selected for this current research study.

3.3.2. The mixed methods approach

According to Creswell (2014), the mixed methods approach in the field of research is a relatively new approach, stemming from the late 1980s, although its origins could be traced further back. At that time, social science researchers started to research bigger, multi-sided questions, by shifting from a single approach, and amalgamating the two methods in one study (Ivankova & Greer, 2015).

Some scholars have different views of the mixed method process. The mixed methods approach includes both the qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, while the data are analysed in numerical and textual methods, using alternative tools like the statistical and thematic analysis (Creswell, 2014; Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2003). The approach uses separate designs, which may include philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014), Dörnyei (2007), as well as Creswell, Fetters, and Ivankova (2004) argue that mixed methods research is more than merely the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, as, at some stage during the research, the data have to be incorporated, related, or mixed. In addition, these authors argue that, using the one method only is not always sufficient to capture the trends and details of the situation; however, using both would provide a more complete analysis. Riazi and Candlin (2014) add that issues around mixed method designs are extremely complicated, as, for example, they need to be conducted at a level of research paradigms, purposes of mixed methods research, and order of quantitative or qualitative stages. However, De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011) assert that the mixed method approach provides evidence, which is more comprehensive, and addresses the shortcomings identified in the individual quantitative and qualitative research approaches. In this current study, similar to the quantitative research approach, the mixed research approach was not considered by the researcher, whose aim was not to gain a statistical overview of the research problem, but to obtain deep and rich data, which could only be provided by the qualitative approach.

3.3.3. The qualitative approach

Creswell (2014, p. 4) identifies qualitative research as “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals of groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. Burns and Grove (2009) define qualitative research as an orderly, idiosyncratic, holistic style, employed to explain life experiences and circumstances of persons; and consequently, provides

a deeper understanding of the research topic under study, and helps to develop theory. Qualitative research involves studying the participants in a study, by using non-statistical methods (Borbasi & Jackson, 2012), and links with naturalistic analysis, by exploring the complex experiences of people (McLeod, 2011; Moxham, 2012). The meaning of people's lives is studied in a real-world situation (Yin, 2011, p. 7). It allows the participants to speak freely, with in-depth responses, to provide rich data (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016).

Some researchers, namely Creswell (2013) and Marshall and Rossman (2011), noted the following core characteristics of qualitative research:

- **Natural setting:** Qualitative research is conducted in the natural setting of the participants, where the researcher collects data in the field, at the site where the participants experienced the issue, or problem under study.
- **The researcher is the key instrument:** The researcher collects and gathers the data, by interviewing the participants, observing behaviour, and examining documents.
- **Multiple sources of data:** Data are collected through a variety of sources, such as interviews, observation, artefact and document studies, audio-visual information, and open-ended questions.
- **Inductive data analysis:** Through the induction process, the researcher works back and forth, to build patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up, by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. This continues until the researcher has established a set of themes.

- **Participants' meaning:** The researcher's constant focus is on learning the meaning that participants hold of the topic under research, and not the meaning that was created by the researcher, or captured by other literature.
- **Emergent design:** The process of qualitative design is emergent, implying that the initial idea for research cannot be closely prescribed, and the phases of the process may change, or shift, after the researcher has entered the field, and begins to collect data.
- **Reflexivity:** The researcher has an opportunity to reflect on his/her own personal background, culture, and experiences, which, potentially, could influence his/her interpretations, such as the themes s/he advances, and the meaning s/he assigns to the data that eventually shapes the direction of the study.
- **Holistic account:** Qualitative research attempts to develop a complex picture of the research topic. This includes reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in the situation, and commonly drawing a bigger picture that arises.

3.3.4. The selection of the qualitative approach

The researcher purposefully used the qualitative research approach, due to the benefits that the approach held for this current study. The researcher's intention was to explore and describe the experiences of women in gangs, to promote understanding of the topic, subsequently, for interventions by the helping professions. The qualitative approach offered non-statistical information, which provided insight into the deeper underlying explanations of why women join gangs, and included their own perception, opinions, attitudes, values, and feelings (Henning, 2011). Consequently, because of the sensitivity of the topic, the researcher did not

merely search for statistics on women in gangs, but aimed to focus on the opinions of the participants to clarify why these women became involved in gangs.

Additionally, the qualitative approach offered an opportunity to provide a description, as well as an understanding of the participants' experiences, instead of simply an explanation of their behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006), the qualitative approach exposed the humanistic view of the participants' lives. By using the qualitative method, the researcher was also enabled to obtain each of the participants' own subjective interpretations of the factors that might contribute to their gang involvement, as well as a comprehensive view of each of their experiences in gang involvement. The qualitative research, therefore, enabled the researcher to explore each participant's unique experiences of their various life stages, before, during, and even after they had become gang members. In addition, it allowed the researcher to engage in conversation with the participants, as well as listen to accounts of their experiences (Forrester, 2010), being afforded an opportunity to understand their emotions, and the feelings associated with their experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2011; Gray, Grove & Sutherland, 2016).

3.4. Research design

Research design is described as a comprehensive plan to connect the theoretical research problem to a valid, achievable, empirical study (Yin 2009). The research design identifies what data are required, the methods that will be used to collect, as well as analyse the data, and jointly, how the design will address the research questions (Yin, 2009). To simplify this, the research design is a plan for a research study and functions as a guide to collect and analyse the data. The researcher followed the explorative and descriptive design, explicitly used to attain the data required for this current study.

The **explorative design** refers to an investigation of phenomena, with the aim of gaining new insight and information, finding new ideas, and/or maximising the knowledge of the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2013; Singleton & Straits, 2010). By using the explorative approach, the researcher was able to explore the topic, to assess the landscape pertaining to the nature of the participants' life experiences, as gang members, and consequently, gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in gangs. This was achieved through observation and prompting questions, using the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendices B & C) as a guide. With this information, the researcher could provide a profound account of the participants' lived experiences.

The **descriptive design** refers to research that primarily focuses on explaining the characteristics and attributes of individuals, situations, or groups, and their deeper meaning, which leads to thicker descriptions (Creswell, 2009; Rubin & Babbie, 2005). It provides a "picture of the particular details of a situation, social setting or relationship: and focuses on the 'how' and 'what' questions" (Neuman, 2014, p. 38). This design is observational in nature, and has an element that enhances an understanding of a specific phenomenon, subsequently providing a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances of the population under study, and its dynamics (Durrheim, 2006). With the existing literature, for the purpose of this current study, the researcher used the narratives of the participants, to illustrate their lived experiences, comprehensively, in their own words.

3.4.1. Application of the design

The explorative and descriptive designs provided "deeper insight and comprehensiveness" of the participants' experiences in gangs, offering a better understanding of why women join gangs, focusing on uncovering information from the perspective of women (Babbie & Mouton,

2001, p. 80). During the interviews, following the exploratory design, the researcher asked questions for clarification, to obtain rich data from the participants. In addition to this, the descriptive method allowed the researcher to acquire additional detailed description of the phenomenon under scrutiny, in the participants' contextual setting (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The participants could share their views on the perceived factors that contributed to their gang involvement, as well as their experiences of being involved in gangs in their communities (Brink, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The population, sampling, and data collection methods are discussed next. These enabled the researcher to access appropriate participants, and with the applicable data collection methods, obtain rich data of the experiences and perspectives of the women in gangs.

3.5. Research population and study context

A research population is defined as a collection of individuals with certain characteristics that fit into a set of criteria, designated by the researcher, and utilised in a study to gain knowledge (Blaikie, 2010; Brynard, Hanekom & Brynard, 2014). These individuals should also be interested in participating in the research (Gray, Grove, & Sutherland, 2016). The population of the study was young women, who had experience of being in gangs, in the area under study, as the geographical area of the research study.

The area under study is a township in the Southern Peninsula of Cape Town, created under the Group Areas Act No. 41 (RSA, 1950), for the displacement of the Coloured community, mostly, from District 6, which was once a vibrant area in Cape Town, located near Table Mountain (Calix, 2013). The majority of the residents can trace their origins to District 6 (Calix, 2013).

According to the Provincial Population Unit [PPU] (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Western Cape Government, Department of Social Development [DSD], 2020), The area under study has an estimated population of 32 263 residents with 15 191 males and 16 072 females, with 4 820 females between the ages of 15 and 34 years. In Figure 3.1, an illustration provides a breakdown of the estimated population of The area under study (RSA, Western Cape Government, DSD, 2020).

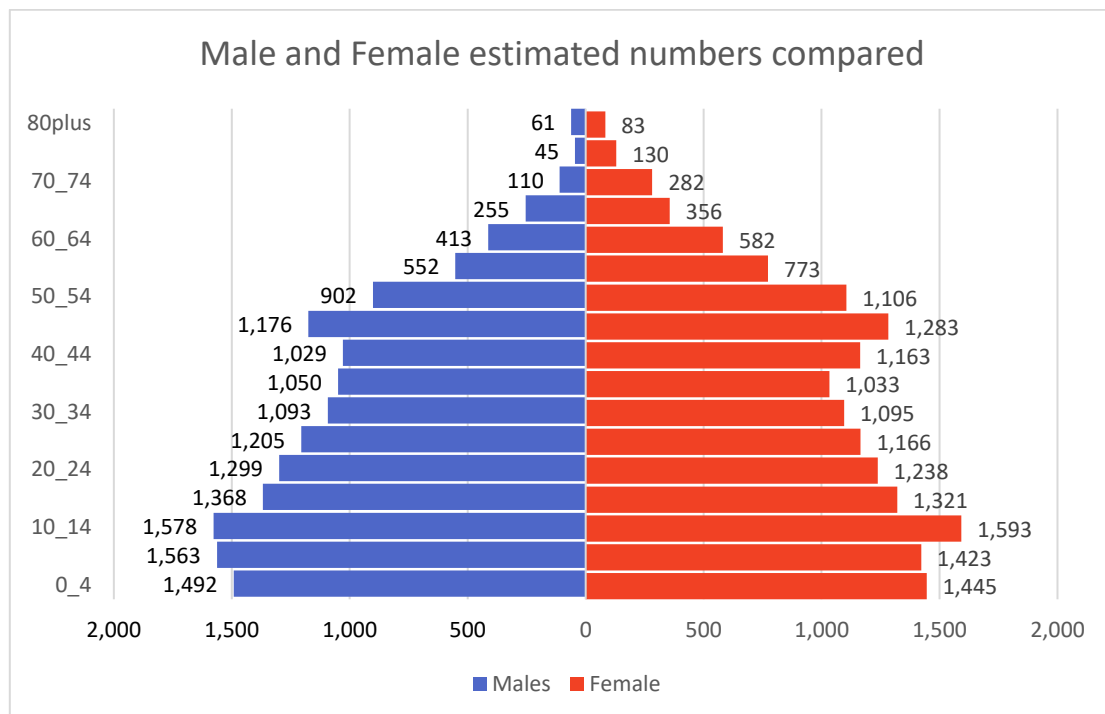


Figure 3.1: The area under study 2020 Estimated Population

Source: Provincial Population Unit PPU, 2020, Small Area Layer SAL population estimates for 2020 (derived from Census 2011 proportions aligned to 2020 Mid-Year Population Estimates, MYPE)

The area under study is identified as one of the most marginalised areas in the Cape Flats, because of the depth of socio-economic challenges. These challenges are as follows:

- **Housing:** Housing is very condensed and mostly compartment style. It consists of flats, (known as courts), maisonettes, semi-detached houses, a small area of freestanding houses, were badly constructed, and not maintained throughout the years. A vast area of informal settlement, with shacks and many backyard dwellings, mushroomed during the past three decades (Watson & Ryan, 2014).
- **Poverty and unemployment:** Studies reported the area under study as a low socio-economic community, characterised by severe poverty, high unemployment, over crowdedness, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, family struggles, as well as gang violence and activities (Calix, 2013; Kanengoni, 2016; Watson & Ryan, 2014). With an unemployment rate of above 42.03%, and the youth unemployment beyond 60%, young people are being drawn into crime, making them highly susceptible to gang recruitment (Kanengoni, 2016; Watson & Ryan, 2014).
- **Gang violence:** Gang violence in the area under study occurs constantly, with many innocent people being killed during gang wars. The area could be described as a community living in extreme fear, as the residents constantly fear for their lives because of the constant violence; while informants, who snitch on gangsters and drug dealings, fear the gangsters' revenge on them and their families (Watson & Ryan, 2014). The national news (eNCA News, 2019) reported that the area under study is severely affected by gang violence and drug abuse.
- **High crime rate:** The Crime Statistics (SAPS, 2020), as well as the Crime Report 2018/2019 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Western Cape Government, Department

of Community Safety, 2020) reported the following crime statistics of three key areas in the greater Cape Town area:

Table 3.1: Comparative crime statistics

2018-2019	Murders	Attempted murder	Sexual offences	Drug related	Illegal guns	Common assault
The area under study	53	108	107	1847	100	346
Mitchell's Plain	148	213	173	3475	243	1661
Nyanga	289	164	294	1956	144	783

Source: Crime Statistics (SAPS, 2020) and Crime Report 2018/2019 (RSA, Western Cape Government, Department of Community Safety, 2020)

These communities have a much bigger geographical area than the area under study, and therefore, have a greater number of crime related statistics; however, they experience similar types of crime related violence. The statistics indicate that marginalised communities in the Western Cape experience high rates of gang related crime.

- Recreational and community facilities:** The area did not seem to be well equipped with recreational facilities for youth to develop, or to keep them occupied. Some facilities have been destroyed/vandalised, while those that still remained in reasonable condition, such as the sport grounds and play parks, have been monopolised by the gangs, to operate their criminal activities, and have become dangerous places for children (Calix, 2013; Kanengoni, 2016). Some researchers have argued that limited recreational facilities pose a danger, as some youth join gangs because of boredom (Calix, 2013; Khan et al., 2013). Kanengoni (2016), in her research on Youth's Pathway to employment, acknowledged that limited recreational facilities existed in the area under study. In addition, gangs have filled the vacuum created through high

unemployment, by providing residents with all kinds of material needs, such as food, money, school uniforms, among other necessities.

The levels of violence were experienced particularly during the data collection phase, with gang violence constantly flaring up between rival gangs, to the extent that visitors had been warned against visiting unexpectedly. The sample for this current study was selected from this population group.

3.6. Sampling methods and techniques

Sampling for research refers to the selection of individuals, or elements, from a population of interest (Gentles, Charles, & Ploeg, 2015); Buckingham & Saunders, 2008), with the purpose of representing a specific population (Neuman, 2011). According to Strydom and Delport (2011), a sample enables an interpretation, on behalf of the whole population of interest. Sampling in qualitative research occurs after the setting of the study has been established, involves a smaller selection than in quantitative research, and contributes towards obtaining quality and rich data that are aligned with the study goals and objectives. Strydom and Delport (2011, p. 391) further explain that “rich data” implies broad and varied information, gathered over an extended period, specifically acquired through the qualitative research process. For this current study, the researcher selected ten (10) participants from the population of the area under study, between the ages of 18 and 35 years, who had been involved in gangs, and were willing, as well as able to share their experiences.

3.6.1. Sampling methods

Probability and non-probability sampling methods are employed to obtain a sample that would be appropriate to represent the population of study. According to Neuman (2014), in the probability sampling method, all subjects of the population have an equal opportunity to be

selected for the sample, as a randomisation selection process is used, which is an easy way of obtaining a research sample. The probability sampling is specifically used in quantitative research (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016). Although probability sampling offers a better chance of recruiting a sample, the results will be statistical, in which the researcher was not interested, and therefore, this method was not suitable for the current study.

According to Gravetter and Forzano (2003), as well as Salkind (2000, both cited in Strydom, 2011), non-probability sampling refers to the likelihood that the potential participants, who will be selected for the study, are unknown to the researcher, because neither the members, nor the size of the population under study, are known to the researcher. This implies that each subject in a sampling setting do not have an equal chance of being selected as a potential participant (Strydom, 2011). Unlike probability sampling, the randomisation selection process does not apply in this case; therefore, the subjects of the qualitative study population do not have an equal opportunity to be selected (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016). The components of the sample are selected, therefore, based on the personal 'judgement' and the discretion of the researcher (Strydom & Delpont, 2011, p. 392). For the purpose of this current study, the researcher employed non-probability sampling, as it allowed the representation of a range of elements that have specific qualities, related to the research topic (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). The non-probability sampling procedure, therefore, was applied to select the participants, who had knowledge and experience of the research topic (Cozby, 2009).

For the purpose of this current study, the researcher selected two sampling techniques, namely, purposive and snowball sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2016; Strydom & Delpont, 2011).

3.6.1.1. Purposive sampling

This type of sampling is often also referred to as judgmental or deliberate sampling (Mandallaz, 2007). Researchers select the sample according to their judgement of which participants are suitable for the study (Rubin & Babbie, 2005), based on the authentic experiences of the individuals, who belong to the research population (Lune & Berg, 2017; Patton, 2015; Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The type of sample selection is based exclusively on the judgement of the researcher, regarding whether the sample possesses appropriate characteristics or common traits that fit the study best (Grinwell & Unrau, 2008; Strydom & Delport, 2011). The purposive sampling technique was employed in this current study as it provided a sample that satisfied the considered and thoughtful decision of the researcher. The sampling selection was considered on the following inclusion criteria:

- Females between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age.
- Females, who were currently, or previously involved in gangs.
- Females residing in the area under study and surrounding areas.
- Females, who were willing to participate in the study, and able to provide rich information.

Individuals were excluded on the following basis:

- Their gender, as the focus was on women.
- Falling outside the required age range of between 18 to 35 years.
- Not residing within the area and surrounding areas of the study.
- Insufficient experiences in gang involvement.
- Unwilling, or unable to participate in the research study.

3.6.1.2. Snowball sampling technique

Snowballing is accomplished by approaching one person, who links the researcher to another, until the selection of the sample is achieved, and/or saturation reached (Henning, 2011; Strydom & Delpont, 2011). Durrheim and Painter (2004) describe snowball sampling as the method of collecting an appropriate large sample through contacts and references. It is also referred to as the “chain referral” or “networking sampling” (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016, p. 113). This technique is used when the sampling setting is unknown, and access to potential participants for the study is limited (Babbie, 2016; Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003; Strydom & Delpont, 2011). The researcher used the snowballing sampling technique for the following reasons:

- The researcher had trouble in obtaining suitable participants through any other sampling technique.
- Time constraints did not allow the researcher to search for, and recruit participants, as considerable time was consumed, attempting to recruit participants.
- It was an efficient and practical means of locating participants, as it relied heavily on networks and fellow participants.

The researcher found the snowball method beneficial because it was cost effective, and eventually did provide access to suitable participants, to complete the sampling process.

3.6.2. Sample size and data saturation

Sampling size in qualitative research has been debated much among researchers (Bernard, 2000; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Researchers argue that in qualitative research, the focus is not on sampling size, because of its search for data richness (Emmel, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). According to Dworkin (2012, p. 1), sampling size in qualitative research is generally much smaller than for quantitative research, because the focus

is on gaining an in-depth understanding of the topic of concern, or on meanings, which are mainly based on the “how” and “why” of the phenomenon, or topic. The aim is to explain, describe, and interpret the phenomenon under study, and not to present opinions, or generalise, from the sample to the population (Maxwell, 2013). Emmel (2013, p. 154) cautions against depending on numbers, and suggest the consideration of other factors, stating that, “it is not the number of cases that matters, it is what we do with them that counts”. Charmaz (2006, 2014) concurs with this sentiment. In addition, data saturation is an important influencing factor of sampling and data collection (Bernard, 2012; Given & Saumure, 2008).

The initial sample size was to involve approximately 20 participants; however, this was unattainable, due to difficulties with accessing participants, as well as their fear of participation. The eventual sample comprised ten females, who met the criteria, and importantly, were willing to share their experiences. According to Patton (2002, cited in Strydom & Delpont, 2011), no rules exist for sampling sizes in qualitative research, as the information that is required, as well as the credibility it holds, dictate the need. The information obtained from the ten participants was deemed to hold credibility, as their information about their experiences produced comprehensive data, and the researcher could reach saturation, which provided trustworthiness. According to Greeff (2011), the principle of data saturation can be reached, when no new information is forthcoming, within ongoing data analysis. Therefore, the ten participants were deemed sufficient (Greeff, 2011).

3.6.3. Sampling procedures

The following procedures formed part of the initial recruitment procedure:

- **The researcher’s own caseload:** With the initial recruiting procedure, the researcher was unable to obtain any of the participants from her caseload as initially planned.

- **Initial recruitment:** Three participants, who were initially targeted as potential participants, as they met the criteria, were reluctant to participate, and consequently, withdrew. They feared gang reprisals, and that their lives might be in danger, as within the gang culture, whoever reveals gang secrets would be severely (often violently) penalised.
- **Contact with social work NGO:** The researcher also telephonically contacted a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that rendered welfare services to the community of the area under study, and the surrounding areas, for potential participants. This telephonic request was followed up with an e-mail as requested by the manager. The manager sent the request to some of the social workers, whom, she thought, worked closely with potential participants. The researcher was introduced to the social workers, who indicated that they would assist wherever they could. However, after several attempts, they indicated that they struggled to find even one potential participant. They admitted that they had never realised how difficult it would be to find potential participants, merely to meet with the researcher, as they rendered services to many persons, who met the criteria.
- **Contact with colleague:** Subsequently, the researcher contacted a colleague, who, likewise, struggled to recruit participants. After several attempts, one person was recruited. The researcher was introduced to this person, who agreed to participate in an interview.
- **Contact with community member:** A community member, subsequently consulted by the researcher, eventually assisted in identifying individuals she knew, who met the criteria. Snowball sampling was employed with these individuals.

3.6.3.1. Recruiting within a gang context

Recruiting the first potential participant was a lengthy process. This was complicated further by the context in which this study was conducted, as the participants had to have experience and knowledge of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Henning, 2011; Lune & Berg, 2017). The following were some of the obstacles associated with the study context:

- **Safety and fear:** The fear of gang reprisals also affected the community member, to whom the researcher referred to previously. The community member, knowing the dynamics of the gangs, had to tread carefully, in terms of whom to approach, while simultaneously ensuring that the women did not know about each other, as they also needed to be protected from one another. Snowball sampling was effective, as one participant was asked to introduce the researcher to another.
- **Increasing gang violence:** This process was further impacted by spiralling gang violence that was a constant occurrence in the areas, which made these female participants more vulnerable and fearful. In addition, it frequently prohibited the researcher from entering the areas.

The challenge of recruiting participants also influenced the sampling size, and ultimately, only ten participants were recruited. However, using the non-probability method, the sampling size provided rich, profound information/data, which were appropriate for the study (Strydom & Delport, 2011).

3.7. Data collection methods

Data collection simply refers to the methods and tools used to gather data, relevant to the research study. In qualitative research, a selection of methods could be employed to collect data in the research process, namely, observation, focus group discussions, and individual interviews (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Questionnaires are identified as the most common data

collection tool for quantitative research, which mostly depends on closed-ended questions (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011).

The qualitative researcher may combine more than one method, which, in scientific terms, is referred to as the triangulation data method for data collection (De Vos et al., 2011). According to Creswell (2013, p. 251), the triangulation method is “the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence”. The data collection methods used were the in-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interview, with an interview schedule as a guideline, field notes, and researcher observation. These methods strengthened the validity and the trustworthiness of the data of the study.

3.7.1. The semi-structured, one-on-one interview

Interviews are defined by Du Plooy and Gilson (2008, cited in Greeff, 2011) as the most dominant data, or information collection method in qualitative research, which occurs through direct interchange with the participants. Henning (2011) describes an interview as a means of verbal communication between two or more individuals, who are equally in control and in ownership of the interview process. While Babbie and Mouton (2011: 289) define an interview in qualitative research as “an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of enquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words and in a particular order”. This implies building a rapport with the participant and using an interview schedule to manage in the questions. Within qualitative research, three interview types, namely, the structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interview, are used in research (Erikson & Kovalainen, 2008; Scott & Usher, 2011).

The researcher chose not to use the structured approach, as it was very rigid and would not allow flexibility, which could prevent the participants from expressing themselves freely. It is a method mainly used in the quantitative approach (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011). The

researcher also decided not to utilise the unstructured interview approach, as it was based largely on a single question. Single based questions could lead the interview to an open discussion, which could result in the participants sharing unnecessary information (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

For this current study, the researcher employed the semi-structured interview, as the aim of the study was to obtain a detailed picture of the participants' perceptions, or accounts of their experiences in gangs. Diccico-Bloom and Crabtree (2006: 315) defines semi-structured interviews "as those organized around areas particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth". The researcher selected this method, as it allowed more flexibility than the aforementioned two, while simultaneously placing the emphasis on the research topic (Bates, 2004; Greeff, 2011). In addition, it allowed the opportunity to pose questions, based on the topic researched. The participants were able to share their own experiences and perceptions, as well as express themselves freely. However, the researcher was aware of the negatives of this approach. This approach allowed the researcher to ask leading questions during the interviews, or use non-verbal signals, which could have influenced the participants' responses. Additionally, in order to capture the data comprehensively, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, which increased their duration, and consequently, was time consuming.

The following are the key advantages of the semi-structured interview:

- **Adaptability:** The researcher could alter the questions to ensure clarity for the participants. The researcher used probes to follow up on the participants' opinions and experiences for clarification, while their motives and feelings were explored, which is not possible with a questionnaire (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

- **Face-to-face contact:** The researcher also chose the one-on-one interview method as it is perceived to be the most effective method for this current study, because of the sensitivity of the research phenomenon. Deep emotions might be uncovered, which could be captured through personal contact, as opposed to the quantitative methods of questionnaires, or surveys that are impersonal and distant (Greeff, 2011). A benefit of the one-on-one, semi-structured interview method was that the participants could offer an in-depth description of their perceptions regarding their gang involvement experiences. It allowed comprehensiveness and a flow of the discussion.
- **Individual context:** An advantage of the one-on-one interview method was the opportunity to understand the perceptions of the participants, individually, as they were able to describe their own experiences as females in gangs, without being influenced by anybody else, in any way, which might have happened, had they been interviewed in groups, for example, focus groups (Greeff, 2011).
- **Openness and depth:** The one-on-one interview contributed to a high level of openness and trustworthiness. It allowed the researcher to verify certain aspects that appeared unclear, which created more in-depth information and study reliability, irrespective of the opinions of some researchers, who consider the interview method as time consuming (De Vos et al., 2011).

The participants were interviewed in the language of their choice, which was English or Afrikaans. Unintentionally, they chose English, mainly, although, at times, a mix of the two languages were employed, which made the process easier, as translation was not a requirement.

3.7.1.1. The interview procedure

The interviews were arranged at the convenience of each participant. All the participants preferred to be interviewed at the office of the researcher's workplace. Each participant was

provided with an information sheet (Appendix D), while the researcher also provided verbal information regarding the proposed study. Some of the participants seemed sceptical at first; however, they still agreed, as there were challenges with finding alternative venues, where the participants felt they would be comfortable. The researcher's workplace supervisor granted permission, beforehand, to utilise an interview room. The interview room was prepared prior to the interviews, with comfortable seating, and the audiotape recorder checked for functioning and positioning. Pen and paper were made available for notes, and care was exercised to ensure that no disturbances would occur (Greeff, 2011). Prior to the interviews, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix E), on which they stipulated that they understood what had been explained to them (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006).

The researcher conducted one interview with each of the participants. The time scheduled for each interview was between 45 minutes to one hour. The researcher used the first interview as a pilot interview, to check the process, timeframe, and feasibility of the questions, for the interviews that followed. The interviews were conducted according to each participant's linguistic style of engagement and dialogue of events. The participants were allowed a considerable degree of latitude to express themselves within the framework of the interview question schedule and the research topic. The researcher's interpersonal knowledge and skills, being qualified as a professional person in the field of interviewing, provided the participants with some form of freedom to express themselves at the appropriate times, with minimum interruptions (Bates, 2004; Creswell, 2013). After all the uncertainties were raised and addressed, with no new issues arising, the researcher ended the interviews (Driedger, Gallios, Sanders & Santesso, 2006).

The researcher used interview techniques recommended by Creswell (2013), such as affirmation, reflection, and non-verbal techniques (for example, nodding), to demonstrate

attentiveness to the participants during the interviews. The following figure reflects the structure of the questions compiled and utilised for this current research study.

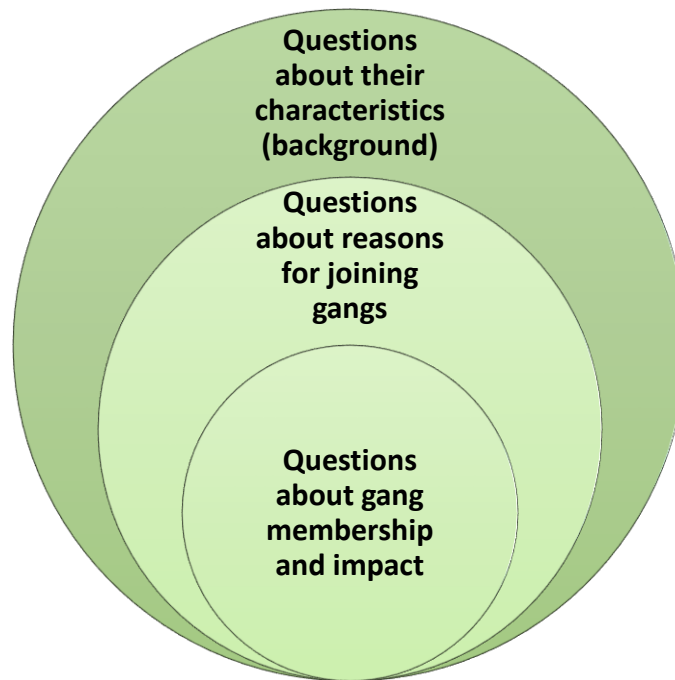


Figure 3.2: Progression of questions

Sources: Babbie & Mouton (2011); Creswell (2013); Greeff (2011); Lune & Berg (2017); Patton (2015).

According to Santiago (2009), the research question/s is a systematic element of the topic under study. The questions were arranged to funnel from general to specific; firstly, building a rapport with the participants, and subsequently, leading into the more intense, and emotionally laden questions (Greeff, 2011; Patton, 2015). The researcher commenced with the outer circle, starting with the wide-ranging questions, based on general knowledge that was non-threatening, such as questions of their identity, status, as well as background information, to establish a rapport and build trust with the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2011; Lune & Berg, 2017). After sufficient information was obtained, and the participants seemed more at ease, the researcher commenced with the questions on the factors that might have contributed to them joining gangs, as well as their experiences in gangs, and ended with the smaller circle, with questions on how the gang involvement affected their lives. According to Bless et al. (2006), if trauma should occur during the interviews, specific processes should be in place to manage

any negative consequences. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, the researcher remained alert to the participants' feelings during the interviews, to ensure that they were in a good frame of mind to continue, to avoid any harm. Where necessary, when the participants were overwhelmed by their emotions, the researcher would pause to allow the participant to recover composure, subsequently ascertaining whether they were able to continue, needed debriefing, or further assistance (see Ethics considerations in section 3.10). The researcher reiterated that they could withdraw at any time, with no consequences as the data is merely for research where no one would have access to the information and their identity would stay anonymous.

Besides the initial agreement to participate in the research process, the researcher additionally asked their permission to continue before the interview commenced. The participants were also offered counselling, in the event that it became necessary (Lune & Berg, 2017). None of the participants indicated that they would require any form of counselling, post-interviews.

After the interviews, the researcher summarised the pertinent points in the narratives, and asked the participants to verify the accuracy of the information, or rectify where necessary, to ensure the trustworthiness of the data (Henning, 2011). The validity and trustworthiness of the study are further discussed in section 3.11. The interview further allowed the researcher to use the funnelling technique to elicit general opinions, as well as specific concerns of the participants on the topic.

3.7.1.2. The semi-structured interview schedule

The semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the one-on-one interview process. These two methods complemented each other, with the aim to maximise the trustworthiness of the collected data, and diminish the possibility of bias by the researcher (Greeff, 2011). The interview schedule included open-ended questions that provided the participants with the opportunity to express themselves freely, provide their own views, instead of selecting from a

number of given alternatives Silverman (2010). In addition, it allowed the researcher to have a set of prearranged questions to “engage the participants and designate the narrative terrain” (Monette, Sullivan, & Delong, 2005: 178). Silverman (2010) also asserts that open-ended questions could be used in small samples, such as in this current case.

The researcher designed the questions in line with the research methodology, to gain knowledge and acquire an understanding of the participants’ experiences in gangs (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The first part of the interview schedule comprised open-ended questions concerning the role and responsibilities of the participant within the family setting, with the aim to build a rapport with the participant (Greeff, 2011; Patton, 2015). This information did not form part of the data analysis. The second part contained a detailed exploration of their experiences in gangs, reasons for joining gangs, as well as the effects and consequences of gang membership. These topics served as central to the study. The questions were structured in such a manner to exclude questions that might sound judgemental. This was done by weighing them up against the sensitivity of the topic (Bergman, 2003, cited in Henning, 2011).

3.7.1.3. Audiotape recording

During each interview, the researcher used of an audiotape recorder to record the verbatim responses of the participants, which subsequently, were transcribed as primary data for the data analysis process. All participants granted their permission to be recorded, after the researcher explained what would be done with the recorded data. The researcher ensured that the device was in good working order prior to the commencement of the interviews. With the recorder running, the researcher was able to concentrate on the interview, as well as maintain eye contact with the participants, to hold their interest (Greeff, 2011). In addition, the researcher was able to record key notes relating to non-verbal observations, and the participants’ emotional well-

being, which provided additional insight into the participants' involvement and experiences in gangs, especially the emotional after-effects.

3.7.1.4. Field notes

According to Greeff (2011), field notes are written minutes, accounting for the details that the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks about, during the course of the interview. Firstly, the researcher requested the participants' permission to take notes while conducting the interviews; to which they all agreed. The purpose was explained to the participants, namely, to record key notes that would also be utilised as data for the analysis process. After the interviews, the researcher discussed the field notes with the participants, to ensure that the data, as well as the researcher's interpretations were accurate. The researcher corrected the notes, when necessary, as indicated by the participants. Immediately after the interviews, the researcher's impressions of the participant during the interview were also recorded (Babbie, 2016; Greeff, 2011), while the recollections were still fresh in the mind.

These three data collection techniques, used collectively, made it easy for the researcher to acquire detailed data and advanced trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Greeff, 2011). The researcher was able to interpret, confirm, and check the accuracy of the data collected, with the participants (Creswell, 2014). It allowed for the thorough descriptions and interpretations of underlying assumptions (Stumpfegger, 2017) as well as the exploration and, in the process, discovering of more data that were valuable to the study. All this contributed to the richness of data, which improved credibility.

3.8. Data analysis method

Babbie and Mouton (2007) define qualitative data analysis as a non-statistical investigation and clarification of participants' opinions, with the aim of ascertaining underlying meanings and patterns of interactions. Creswell (2013) refers to the data analysis method as an ongoing collaborating process, which commences at the initial data-gathering interview, while Silverman (2011) classifies data analysis as a systematic scientific process of examining raw data, with the aim of reaching a conclusion. Additionally, according to Creswell (2013), the process of data analysis organises and gives structure to the gathered data, in order to make sense of the data. Tesch (2013: 84) describes data analysis in qualitative research as following a "sifting and sorting procedure through the primary data that has been obtained through the research process, concerning the aspects that the study seeks to explore". The data from interviews were transcribed and analysed immediately after each interview, and preliminary coding was created to enable the researcher to detect initial patterns. This also assisted the researcher to make a judgment regarding data saturation. The researcher employed Tesch's method of analysis, which finally yielded the primary data (Tesch, 2013).

Tesch's (2013: 141–145) eight step guide and process of qualitative data analysis is a popular method of data analysis employed by qualitative researchers. After the recordings were transcribed, the researcher reviewed the data, to identify commonalities that could be developed into themes. Subsequently, the themes were grouped to form categories, which introduced data reduction (Tesch, 2013: 138). Data reduction refers to the process of abstracting selected segments from an interview that are representative of other similar segments of data in the interview. During categorisation, the researcher frequently uses techniques, such as "indexing", also known as "coding", to group related data, as well as order the data. Subsequently, the data are categorised into sub-categories, to provide a more

meaningful analysis. Tesch (2013) advises researchers to review the codes and categories constantly, as the existing data may need to be recoded and re-categorised, to derive greater meaning for the purpose of the study. With Tesch’s (2013: 141–145) eight steps method, the researcher conducted the following steps in Table 3.2 to analyse the data.

Table 3.2: The eight steps of Tesch

Tesch’s eight steps		Application by the researcher
1.	Get a sense of the whole. Read all the transcriptions carefully, and jot down some ideas as they come to mind.	After the interviews were conducted, the researcher typed up the interviews, and read the transcripts, while simultaneously making notes of prominent ideas as they emerged.
2.	Pick one document (for example, one interview), the most interesting one, the shortest, the one at the top of the pile. Go through it, asking yourself, “What is this about?” Do not think about the substance of the information, but its underlying meaning. Write thoughts in the margin.	Subsequently, the researcher re-read the transcripts and simultaneously highlighted specific phrases pertaining to the research questions, making notes in the margins about the meaning of the data, always keeping in mind the research questions, as advised by Rapley (2008). The researcher selected the shortest transcript to start the analysis process.
3.	After completing this task for several participants, make a list of all the topics. Cluster similar topics together. Form these topics into columns, perhaps arrayed as major, unique, and leftover topics.	The same procedure was followed with all the other transcripts. The common elements were clustered together, and the coded elements were arranged into meaningful themes, unique, and leftover topics.
4.	Take this list and return to the data. Abbreviate the topics as codes, and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. Try this preliminary organising scheme to see whether new categories and codes emerge.	In the margin of the data, the researcher inserted codes next to the main themes, used colour codes to identify the sub-themes. This was done with all the transcripts. Subsequently, in the margins, the researcher used different colours to highlight the broader identified themes and categories with coloured highlighters.
5.	Find the most descriptive wording for the topics and convert them into categories. Pursue ways of reducing the total list of categories, by grouping topics that relate to each other. Perhaps draw lines between your categories to show interrelationships.	The researcher used the question schedule as a guide to name the themes. Others were named by using the words of the participants as a guide. Subsequently, the researcher was able to develop a conceptual structure that was converted into the following headings: Themes, sub-themes and categories.
6.	Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetise these codes.	Once the final decision had been made, in terms of the themes and sub-themes, similar themes was grouped together, and instead of alphabetising, the researcher use various colours for different categories. Themes were highlighted in the colour red, sub-themes in green, and those left over, in yellow.
7.	Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.	Subsequently, the researcher tested the emerging thematic understandings, and returned to the transcripts, to search for alternative information.
8.	Recode existed data where necessary	Lastly, the researcher drew up a table that was utilised as a form to write up the themes, sub-themes and categories, for easy identification, at a later stage for the findings.

Sources: Babbie & Mouton (2007); Creswell (2013); Silverman (2011); Tesch (2013).

The researcher found Tesch’s (2013: 141–45) eight step guide and process of qualitative data analysis, very practical. The researcher used coding for the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the participants’ transcriptions.

3.8.1. Coding process

Coding is described by Rossman and Rallis (2012) as a process of arranging the data collected, by connecting chunks, and choosing a word to represent a category in the margin of the transcript. It involves taking transcribed data, or pictures collected during the data collection process, collapsing sentences, sections, or images into groups, and categorising these categories with terms, which are usually based on the language of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). According to Lune and Berg (2017), there is no one specific way to code data best; therefore, the researcher used an uncomplicated coding technique.

The researcher regarded the two-coding technique, by Creswell (2014), namely the latent- and manifest coding, as the most helpful in this respect.

- **Latent coding technique:** With the assistance of the latent coding technique, the researcher read paragraphs and sought to identify similar meanings of themes and moods, irrespective of different wording. Lune and Berg (2017, p. 364) assert that, in the initial coding process, the researcher undertakes a coding process called “open coding”, which allows him/her to systematically recognise and select themes, topics, or issues from the data.
- **Manifest coding technique:** Through the manifest coding technique, the researcher ought to identify similar words, phrases, and actions that frequently appeared (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014). Subsequently, these related codes were grouped together. The researcher explored the main meaning of words, categorised, and named them accordingly.

During the coding process, when uncertainty about the data occurred, the researcher skipped that data, and continued with coding. The categories with the greatest priority, which firstly,

matched the existing themes, and secondly, had the greater numbers of data, formed the foundation of the findings. After the coding process was finalised, the researcher returned to the non-coded data, to check for additional useful data, to ensure that valid data were not lost. During the coding process, some categories could already be identified as themes.

3.9. Pilot study

According to Moxham (2012), a pilot study is a lesser version of the key study that is used to evaluate the efficacy and viability of the research in progress. A pilot study is an integral part of a research procedure, to implement and complete the research study successfully (Gray et al., 2016; Strydom & Delpont, 2011). Because of the difficulties in the sampling and recruitment process, the researcher conducted the first interview as a pilot study, to determine whether the correct procedure was being followed. In addition, the pilot study was used to establish whether the timing was correct, the research ethics were being adhered to, as well as whether the questions were relevant to obtain data that was pertinent to the topic (Royse, 1995, cited in De Vos et al., 2011). Subsequently, the data collected from the pilot study, were included with the data collection from the interviews that followed.

During the pilot study interview, the researcher timed the process, in order to remain within the timeframe, as promised to the participants, which was exceeded by 10 minutes. After the interview, the researcher checked the questions to determine whether they were relevant, or not applicable. In the subsequent interviews, the researcher devoted less time to the first portion of the interview, which was the introduction. Additionally, the researcher consciously focused on the manner in which the questions were phrased, to establish whether the questions were clear, which was determined by probing for clarity (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The researcher also eliminated unnecessary articulation that did not pertain to the study, in order to ensure that the

interview was study- focused. The pilot process boosted the researcher's confidence to conduct the succeeding interviews.

3.10. Ethics consideration

Ethics is described as the worldly concept of right and wrong (Babbie & Mouton, 2012; Singleton & Straits, 2010). According to Kumar (2005), ethics consideration is an important aspect in any research study. The researcher adhered to the following ethics considerations, as the study involved a sensitive topic, which could evoke emotions and sad memories of events.

- **Ethics approval:** Before commencing with the research study, the researcher received ethics clearance (Appendix A) from the Research Ethics Committee of the institution (currently the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee), as evidence that permission was granted to conduct the study, while ensuring that ethical principles were maintained during the research process (Elliot, Aitken & Chaboyer, 2012; Jirojwong, Johnson & Welch, 2011).
- **Informed consent:** Informed consent is a process of obtaining written permission from the participants, with the requisite knowledge of the study and the possible consequences of participation (Creswell, 2011; Strydom, 2013). Informed consent was provided by means of two documents:
 - i. **Information sheet:** Each participant was provided with an information sheet (while they also received a verbal explanation), which outlined the aim of the study, the interview process, as well as the ethical considerations, when participating in the research (Appendix D). All the participants were satisfied with the information and the ethics considerations that were introduced to protect them throughout the study process.

- ii. **Consent form:** Each participant was provided with a consent form to sign, prior to the interviews, as evidence of their agreement to participate in the research (Appendix E). The participants were informed that the signed forms were not binding, and that they could withdraw their participation at any given time. Additionally, they were informed that they were not obligated to answer any questions, which made them uncomfortable.
- **Language and comprehension:** Language was not a barrier, as participants were fluent in English, or used a mix of languages, which is common to people on the Cape Flats. There was no reason to translate the consent form, or the information letter, as all the participants were comfortable to converse, mainly, in English. There were also no concern that the data would be influenced negatively, as all participants were fluent in English.
 - **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality refers to the assurance that the information shared within the context of the study, would be handled in a private and confidential manner (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Kagee, 2006; Strydom, 2013). The confidentiality clause was explained to the participants, and they were allowed time to contemplate, before signing the consent letter. The researcher explained, in detail, what the research entails; their role and the researcher's role, respectively; and confirmed that the data would only be used for the purpose of this current study, to complete the study, as well as for further publications from the thesis. The researcher ensured that the information was managed in a secure and confidential manner, with no other persons having access to the data.
 - **Privacy and anonymity:** Anonymity is described as Babbie and Mouton (2012) as the absence of identifiability of the participants in research, implying that the participants' identity would not be revealed, under any circumstances, to ensure their safety (Wisker, 2008). To protect their identity, the participants' real names were removed from the

transcripts, to preserve anonymity, and were substituted with pseudonyms. They were informed that their real names would not be mentioned, under any circumstances, and neither privately, nor publicly revealed. This information was repeated once more, prior to the interview sessions.

- **Minimising risk:** During the interviews, the researcher continuously balanced the risk against the importance, and possible benefits of obtaining data, to avoid harm to the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Strydom, 2011a). This was not an easy task, as the researcher had to remain conscious of the way the questions were phrased, to avoid doing harm. Additionally, each participant had his/her own experiences, and did not respond similarly to the questions. After each interview, the researcher debriefed the participant, to allow her to reflect on their experiences of the interview, as well as raise any questions, concerns, or share any information pertaining to the research (Strydom, 2011a). Counselling with a counsellor was pre-arranged by the researcher, should any the participants have had the need; however, none was required.
- **Storage of data:** According to Bless et al. (2006), the information provided by the participants must be protected and made available to no other than to the researcher. According to Dykes (2014, p. 227), “since the use of technology in research is common and practical, storage of data can be focused on using ample data storage devices”. To store the data of the research, the researcher used an external hard drive and backed up the data to a USB device. The researcher kept the information locked up in a safe and secure environment, to which no one, besides the researcher, had access. The data and transcriptions will be kept for five years, and thereafter, responsibly destroyed.

3.11. Validity and trustworthiness

McMillan & Schumacher (2006) define validity as a level of consistency between the explanation of the phenomena and the actualities of the world. According to Koonin (2014), trustworthiness is the dominant term that is used for validity and reliability of researcher findings in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) constructed four criteria to ensure trustworthiness, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The criteria for qualitative and quantitative research differ because of its different characteristics.

- **Credibility vs Internal invalidity:** Credibility is the manner in which the researcher interprets the data received from the participants in the study (Koonin, 2014). A study could be considered credible if the data collected is checked to ensure that the gathered data is linked to the research questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Credibility depends on the richness of the data and analysis (Patton, 2002), rather than the sample size that aims to represent a population in quantitative research. The researcher made use of triangulation. As previously stated, triangulation is the process of using more than one data collection method to nullify bias in research, or data collection, which serves to build credibility (Creswell, 2014).
- **Transferability vs external validity:** Transferability is described as the ability to apply the findings to a similar situation, and obtain similar results (Koonin, 2014). Transferability in qualitative research could be achieved through thorough description and underlining assumptions (Stumpfegger, 2017). The researcher used rich, thick quotes (see chapter 4), and a thorough description of the research setting (see section 3.5) for other researchers to check for similarity.
- **Dependability vs Reliability:** In qualitative research, reliability is akin to dependability, because the same results are expected as in quantitative research

(Strumfegger, 2017). The appropriate strategy that the researcher used is the provision of a comprehensive discussion of the research methodology, specifically the data collection methods and techniques, to enhance dependability, should other researchers attempt to conduct the same study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

- **Confirmability vs Objectivity:** According to Koonin (2014, p. 259), “confirmability refers to how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of the researcher”. In a quantitative study, the researcher’s general objectivity is obligatory, while in the qualitative study, the researcher’s neutrality of interpretation is required. In this current study, member checking was employed as a strategy to ensure this. The participants were asked to check whether their responses had been captured correctly, and advised to rescind their description, in the event of misinterpretations (Babbie & Mouton, 2007), which simultaneously, verified the collected data. The data verification process ensures that the data gathered is authentic and trustworthy (Creswell, 2003).

Reflexivity:

Firstly the researcher employed introspection to identify experiences that might interfere with the research process. The introspection included an examination of the researcher’s background, life experiences, and personal feelings, with the aim of eliminating possible bias, and ensuring credibility and objectivity (Burns & Grove, 2003). The participants shared many unhappy experiences in a single interview, and the researcher had to be vigilant, not to become overwhelmed by emotions. The researcher had to maintain a balance of objectivity (without appearing to be insensitive), and simultaneously demonstrate an understanding of their experiences.

The researcher explored their mutual relationship to identify preconceived ideas that may exist about the participants (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). By being

aware of the preconceived ideas, the researcher was able to put aside personal feelings, to prevent it from interfering with the research process, especially during the data collection process. In addition, the researcher constantly used *bracketing* during the research process to clear any preconceived ideas that may exist about the participants. Through, *Bracketing*, a term where the researcher refrained from judging the participants, was done by remaining neutral and objective. irrespective of personal feelings and biases (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003).

This research made the researcher reflect on her own background and experiences as a person. Being raised in a marginalised area, within a secure home, with good support systems of the family and community, in a different era, where neighbours automatically took over the role as caregivers, while the parents are at work, especially protecting the young females, with more strict supervision imposed on girls than boys, the researcher initially found it difficult to comprehend why women would engage in gangs. The researcher could relate with some of the participants who had been raised by a single parent. With the sudden death of a father at the age of 14, with a mother who worked and having to take on the dual role, but having the privilege of neighbours supervising, made life much easier. However, by looking at how hardships, with an almost nonexistent support system, gangs having taken control of the community, creating powerlessness and disconnectedness of the community, the researcher gained insight into their challenges. The researcher constantly explored her preconceived ideas that may exist about the participants (Speziale, Streubert & Carpenter, 20011), by conducting an examination of her background, experiences, and personal feelings, to eliminate possible bias, ensuring credibility and objectivity (Burns & Grove, 2003, 2009).

3.12. Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher provided a description of the process followed, to collect and analyse the data. Information regarding the philosophy underpinning the research study was provided. The qualitative approach provided the opportunity to gain profound understanding of the women' experiences in gangs, through the process of exploring and describing. Additionally, the researcher was able to uncover their feelings, thoughts, values, and beliefs, regarding their perceptions of their experiences, while being involved in a gang.

The data collection methods, such as the semi-structured, one-on-one interview, with the aid of a specially developed interview schedule, allowed the researcher to be flexible, yet remain focused on the aim of the research. While the interview schedule was being compiled, the researcher considered and phrased the questions in such a way, to eliminate emotional harm to the participants. The data collection methods proved appropriate, while the researcher ensured the trustworthiness of the methodology, especially the data collection and analysis procedures. The researcher experienced this phase as most challenging, because of the difficulty to recruit participants. In the following chapter, the findings of the study that emerged from the data analysis are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings that emerged from the analysis of the data, collected from the participants in the study, in accordance with the philosophy and procedures set out in Chapter 3. Therefore, this chapter is focused on the kinds of information that pertains to the topic under discussion, from the perspectives of the participants. According to Creswell (2013), as well as Silverman (2011), data analysis is a process of bringing structure and order, to make sense to the loads of data (information) collected. This was done through a process of cautious, comprehensive, and orderly analysis, as well as the interpretation the data collected, with the aim of identifying patterns, themes, assumptions, and meaning (Lune & Berg, 2017), as stipulated in the qualitative approach.

The identified theoretical framework, the Family Systems Theory, was a helpful means of identifying *a priori* codes during the data analysis process, as the family system was deemed the most significant factor for gang membership (Amroodt, 2011; Esbensen et al., 2009; Khan et al., 2013; Vigil, 2008). Via the Family Systems Theory, the researcher assessed the nature of the interaction between the participants and their families, as well as the participants' interpersonal and developmental circumstances, to determine how their past and present circumstances influenced their gang involvement (Walsh, 2013). Subsequent to this, the researcher viewed other systems, such as their peers, the school, and the community, to reveal that the interaction between the participants and these social systems could influence their gang involvement (Friedman & Allen, 2014; Khan et al., 2013). Through the coding process and the Family Systems Theory, the themes and sub-themes emerged, as outlined in section 4.3.

Firstly, the researcher presents a demographic profile of the participants (Table 4.1) to clarify their disposition, in terms of specific variables that would provide substance and context to their opinions and experiences. Due to the risk factors involved for women in gangs, their profiles were kept brief and basic, to ensure their continued safety. The demographic profile was followed by a discussion of the findings through the process of themes and sub-themes (Table 4.2) as they emerged during the research study. The findings were substantiated by the participants' narratives, and compared with previous research, using a literature review. In addition, the analysed data revealed similarities to, and contradictions with, previous literature.

4.2. Demographic profile of the participants

An overview of the demographic profile of the research participants is illustrated in Table 4.1, in terms of their age, gender, race, residential area, academic information, relationship- and parental status.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Residential area	Highest education	Relationship status	Children
1	25	Female	Coloured	Grew up in the area under study	High school – suspended studies	Courting	Yes
2	30	Female	Coloured	Grew up in the area under study	High school – suspended studies	Single	Yes
3	28	Female	Coloured	Born in the area under study	High school – suspended studies	Courting	No
4	30	Female	Coloured	Grew up in the area under study	High school – suspended studies	Married	No
5	35	Female	Coloured	Born in the area under study	High school – suspended studies	Courting	No
6	31	Female	Coloured	Grew up in the area under study	High school – suspended studies	Courting	No
7	30	Female	Coloured	Previously from another areas	High school – suspended studies	Courting	Yes
8	25	Female	Coloured	Grew up in the area under study	Matriculated	Courting	Yes

9	26	Female	Coloured	Visits the area under study	High school – suspended studies	Single	Yes
10	35	Female	Coloured	Grew up in the area under study	Matriculated	Courting	Yes

Table 4.1 illustrates the number of participants and their information, to highlight the inclusion criteria (see section 3.6.2), as well as the reasons for their importance to the study. The aim of the study was to elicit the experiences of female gang members, in and around the area under study.

Females are identified as a marginalised and vulnerable group, with fewer opportunities than males (RSA, 2008; WHO, 2016). Due to fewer opportunities, women are restricted from becoming self-sufficient and independent of their male counterparts. Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* text (Friedan, 1963) then already criticised the notion that women could only find fulfillment through raising children and home making. She stated that women mean more to society and need to find their own identity. In addition, many studies have identified the victimisation and exploitation of women in gangs (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Ward & Seagar, 2010), while lethargy still persists, by not recognising, documenting, and implementing policies to improve these challenges.

4.2.1. Biographic details of the participants

The participants were all between the ages of 18 and 35 years, and all females, as intended for the study purpose; therefore, males were not considered for this current study. The study included only females, due to the dearth of studies on women in gangs, as acknowledged by Jantjies and Popovac (2011), Khan et al. (2013), as well as Strand (2014). Jefthas and Artz (2007) offer three reasons why women in gangs are overlooked. Firstly, females usually commit petty crimes; therefore, the focus is more on men, who perpetrate more violent and serious crimes. Secondly, crimes committed by females are not regarded as a significant impact

on society; therefore, they receive less attention. Thirdly, female crimes are not considered worthy of the focus of studies, because of the prevalence and depth of crimes committed.

Because of the aforementioned reasons, plans to combat gangsterism have a limited focus on women in gangs, as the assumption in policies are always centred on males in gangs. For example, the Department of Community and Safety drew up a 5-year strategic plan - 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Western Cape Government, Department of Community and Safety, 2015) to combat gang-related crime, with little focus on women in gang (Khan et al., 2013; Strand, 2014). According to the WHO (2016), interpersonal violence against women, among other social issues, are strongly linked to gender inequality, where the male is in the dominant position. According to the South African National Youth Policy [NYP] 2009-2014 (RSA, 2008), women who are marginalised in their ecological environment are more likely to join gangs.

Marginalisation is defined as having a lack of capacity to participate politically, economically, and culturally (Jenson, 2000); resulting in a sense of unimportance, low influence, with less power (Coumans & Spreen, 2003). Studies, including in South Africa, report that women are historically the primary target of violence (Burton, 2008; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011), and extremely prevalent in South Africa (Bhana, 2012; Wubs et al., 2013). Despite attempts to change and equalise power and positions, as well as decrease victimisation, for example, the implementation of the Employment Equity Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No. 55 of 1998), and the Criminal Law [Sexual offences and related matters] Amendment Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No. 32 of 2007), authorities acknowledge that the oppression, exploitation, and violation of women still prevail, wherever patriarchal dominance exists.

The fact that all the participants identified themselves as Coloured was unintentional, but expected, since the study was focused on the area under study. However, since more than 80% of the area under study residents are Coloured people, it did influence the recruitment and selection of the participants (Calix, 2013). The area under study is one of the most marginalised areas, stemming from the apartheid era, when the residents from District 6, in particular, were forcibly removed and relocated to the inner areas of Cape Town (Calix, 2013; Kanengoni, 2016; Watson & Ryan, 2014). The estimated population is 32 263 residents, with 15 191 males and 16 072 females (RSA, DSD, 2020). The area experiences severe socio-economic challenges, such as, over-crowding, poverty, high unemployment of 42.03% (RSA, DSD, 2020), alcohol and substance abuse, family violence (Calix, 2013; Kanengoni, 2016; Pinnock, 2016; Watson & Ryan, 2014), and a high rate of gang violence and activities (SAPS, 2020). Gang violence in the area under study is a regular occurrence, where innocent people are shot and killed. According to SAPS Crime Statistics (2020), murders in the Western Cape had escalated from 3729 in 2018, to 3974 in 2019, and gangs accounted for 938 of these murders; an increase of 245 from the previous financial year.

4.2.2. Geographic background

The majority of the participants were born and reared in the area under study. One participant resides in a surrounding area, but is daily in the area under study, which made her a good candidate for this current research study. The area that she emanates from, shares similar socio-economic conditions as the area under study. Studies attest to the fact that negative socio-economic conditions and under-resourced areas are linked to gang involvement (Khan et al., 2013). According to Jantjies and Popovac (2011), the findings of their research in South Africa with young persons revealed that poverty played a significant role in individuals' involvement in criminal activities, especially as a means of providing for their families. Pinnock (1984, 2016, 2017) describes how long-term poverty in District 6, since the 1940s, already existed,

and were transposed to the new relocated areas, including the area under study, which created a new type of gang culture in young people, because of the increase of poverty, high unemployment, as well as crime and violence. Kinnes (2017), as well as Cooper and Ward (2012) attest to the socio-economic inequality in South Africa, with little employment opportunities, low-income employment, poor quality education, and poor living conditions, which substantially influences young people in these marginalised areas, to join gangs, in order to survive.

4.2.3. Schooling and Literacy

All the participants attended schools in the area under study, as well as schools in nearby areas. All reached high school, although the majority dropped out before completing matric level, as only two participants matriculated. Early dropout from school has been linked to youth involvement in violent behaviour, including gang involvement (Calix, 2013; Martinez, Tosh, Higert, & Woodard-Meyers, 2013; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Strand, 2014). According to the South African National Youth Policy 2014-2019 (RSA, 2015), 34.5 % of young females in South Africa are either unemployed, not attending school, including further or higher education, compared to 29.9% of young men.

4.2.4. Relationships

Most of the participants, who are currently in relationships, admitted to being in a relationship with a gang member. Intimate partner violence (IPV), a form of gender-based violence, appeared to be a regular occurrence in all relationships. As stated previously, studies, including in South Africa, report that women are historically the prime target of violence (Burton, 2008; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011), and particularly, in South African youth relationships (Bhana, 2012; Wubs et al., 2013).

Six participants reported having children of their own, while four did not have any, yet. Surprisingly, none of their children was in their care, but either in the care of their mothers, other family members, or alternative care. A similar trend was observed in a study by Shaw and Skywalker (2017), where the majority of women involved in gangs, reported that their children were in the care of others, mostly family members. It seems to be common that women in gangs become non-custodial parents, because of their lifestyle, with society deeming them unfit to care for their own children. Their unstable lifestyles, namely, being gang members and abusing substances, might be the reasons that these participants were unable to care for their children. Within the South African context, the Department of Social Development, Department of Girls, Children and People with Disability and UNICEF (RSA, DSD, DWCPD, & UNICEF, 2012) state that the substance abuse of parents, disrupts their ability to care and monitor their children, and reduces their parenting skills. Substance abuse, in these cases, are linked to gang involvement. Kinnes (2017) concurs that, in South Africa, substance abuse cannot be separated from gangsterism.

4.2.5. Conclusion of demographic profile of participants

The demographic profile provided a concise background of the participants, who agreed to participate in this current research. These participants met the criteria of being females between the ages of 18 and 35 years, connected to the area under study as the target area, with experience in gang involvement, as well as sharing similar socio-economic backgrounds. They all reached high school level of education, and were fluent in English, the preferred communication language for the research. Additionally, they had a reasonable level of language literacy and competency to participate in the research. The main factor that emerged was the confirmation that the poor socio-economic environment played a substantial role in their current lifestyles and had serious consequences for them.

4.3. Main themes and sub-themes: Discussion of findings

The findings comprised six themes and 19 sub-themes that reflected the opinions and experiences of the participants regarding gang joining juxtaposed with gender. In Table 4.2, the findings framework is illustrated.

Table 4.2: Framework of themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1 Poorly functioning families	1.1. Multi-generational gang involvement 1.2. Misusing family homes 1.3. Single parenthood 1.4. Separated families
Theme 2 Gang joining compulsion	2.1. Peer pressure 2.2. Influence of boyfriends / intimate partners 2.3. Socio-emotional drivers
Theme 3 School environment	3.1. School friends as entry to gangs 3.2. School drop out
Theme 4 Victimisation and exploitation	4.1. Abuse and rape by gang members 4.2. Exploitation by gang 4.3. Intimate partner violence 4.4. Exploitation by gangster boyfriend
Theme 5 Substance abuse	5.1. Substance abuse by parents 5.2. Substance abuse by the participants 5.3. Drug houses in communities
Theme 6 Poorly resourced community	6.1. Socio-economic conditions 6.2. Community sanction and fear 6.3. Lack of community resources

These six main themes formed the foundation of the framework and discussion.

4.3.1. Theme 1: Poorly functioning families

Generally, the family has been accepted as the most fundamental factor for an individual, as it provides him/her with a safety net, when it functions optimally (Dunbar, 2017; Khan et al., 2013). However, some studies have observed the family to be the most important risk factor for women joining gangs (Khan et al., 2013). It is evident that all families are confronted with

challenges on a daily basis, which they usually deal with effectively. However, occasionally families are confronted for a length of time with severe challenges, which they find difficult to resolve, leading to devastating consequences (Minuchin et al., 2006). Studies have recorded that long-lasting family problems may interfere with a family's equilibrium, resulting in family dysfunction (Amroodt, 2011; Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor, & Freng, 2009), which affect some family members negatively. Some studies argue that children, who are exposed to a dysfunctional family, are at higher risk for gang involvement at a later stage (De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013; Strand, 2014; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). Ultimately, the family system, with its interconnectedness, is an ultimate factor within an individual's social system (Friedman & Allen, 2014). Four sub-themes emerged under Theme 1, namely, multi-generational gang involvement, misusing family homes, single parenthood, and separated families.

4.3.1.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Multi-generational gang membership

Multi-generational gang membership refers to households, in which more than one generation of family members have belonged to gangs. This has been identified as a risk factor for gang involvement (Burton, Leoschut, & Bonora, 2009; De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Grekul & LaRocque, 2011; Howell, 2010; MacMaster, 2010; Strand, 2014). In addition, other studies have revealed how women were exposed, influenced, and trained, from a very young age, by the older family gang members, to participate in gang activities (Auyong et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2013; Moore & Howell, 2010; Pinnock, 2016). Burton, Leoschut, and Bonora (2009), in their South African study, assert that positive role models in a child's life could play a vital role in resisting criminal behaviour.

The following are key participant responses to this topic:

“Well, my father was a gangster, until he got killed, but I think I was always exposed to gangsterism and gangster language stuff.” [Participant 6]

“...like if you have a daddy that’s a gangster when you’re born, you are already part of the gang. Like what your daddy do as a gangster that is wrong, then you will also have to live with the consequences, so unfortunately you are just part of it. I was a daddy’s girl. But he is dead now, my daddy.” [Participant 4]

“...my father did put our lives in danger...We lived a happy life, but since he came out of jail, everything almost like collapsed. My mother was never home... and the gangsters came there, and they started smuggling there as if it’s their house.” [Participant 7]

“My brothers, they both were part of the gang... My one brother is standing trial for murder for a crime he didn’t commit. Yes (he is a gangster).” [Participant 8]

“Once my cousin, he is also a gangster, he started hitting me with a gun, like on my head.” [Participant 9]

These participants indicated that their early exposure to gangsterism within their families automatically linked them to gangs and gang activities, as they became known to the gangs through their family members’ involvement. This exposure normalised gang membership, and provided a convenient gateway to gang involvement. In their feedback, the participants revealed how they, as innocent family members, had to deal with the trauma of being directly exposed to gangs, including rival gangs, placing their lives in danger, being exposed to criminal activities, as well as the troubled, conflictual relationships of the family, initiated by gang involvement. Studies reveal that youth, who emanate from multi-generational gang families, are most likely to join gangs (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Strand, 2014). The findings of this

current study concur with the above studies for women, as most of the participants in this study indicated that their older family members were involved in gangs. Another similarity is that family gang members were mostly the males, namely fathers and brothers (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Strand, 2014).

4.3.1.2. Sub-theme 1.2: Misusing family homes

Besides having to deal with family members, who were gang members, some of the participants also had to tolerate the gangs' unrestricted access to their homes, placing their lives in danger, especially the women, because of their vulnerability as females. In the following extracts, the participants shared how their family members allowed gangsters into their homes, to conduct criminal activities:

“In our house, there’s a lot of gangsters... he (stepfather) let his gangster friends come in and do what they want... do what they please and that’s why I did move out.”

[Participant 7]

“In my case, I left the house because my mother was on tik, after my father died, he was shot, also a gangster so I left not to become part of a gang, but just to be away from home. My mother started bringing this one and that one into the place, gangsters too.”

[Participant 6]

“Yes, my one brother is a gangster (name removed) and the other one is a gangster (name removed). So there are three gangsters (names removed) in the house.”

[Participant 3]

These participants revealed their experiences of living with parents, who allowed gangsters unrestricted access to their home, exposing them to an unsafe home environment, a place in which they should feel safe and secure. Their parents' actions drove them out of their homes,

to escape this unsafe environment, in anticipation of finding a better one. Some studies could only identify other family members in the house as gang members, exposing the family to danger (Khan et al., 2013; Strand, 2014). In addition, the research findings revealed how gangs lured these women into the gangs with drugs, which might have been the case with the parents, who also abused drugs.

4.3.1.3. Sub-theme 1.3: Single parenthood

This sub-theme emerged in various ways through the narratives of the participants. Single parenthood is caused by absent fathers/mothers, divorce, and death. Liu, Li, & Ge (2009) observed that separation from parents during childhood, including reasons other than death or divorce, significantly increases the child's risk of anxiety and depression. This finding revealed how single parenthood affected the functioning of a household, as well as how the children's lives were affected. Single parenthood, mostly due to absent fathers, is a common finding in many studies (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Howell, 2010; Howell & Egley, 2005; Strand, 2014). These studies mostly focused on boys in need of a father figure, as a role model in their lives. However, several of the participants disclosed the absence of a father, which appeared to have had a profound effect on them. Some participants responded as follows:

"I really don't have a relationship with my father. I don't see him, and I don't speak to him." **[Participant 7]**

"The divorce (parents) did have a big impact on me..." **[Participant 2]**

"He (father) died a long time ago....my father was always in prison, he was never there for us and um, I saw a lot of things in my life. Like my mother was having an affair with another man and I will always tell her about that and that's why she don't like me ...Yes

(situation with mom and the issues with dad influenced decision to join gangs).”

[Participant 5]

These narratives reflected the participants’ trauma because of their absent fathers. Studies observed that single parenthood could initiate many challenges, when only one parent has to raise children. Two parents fulfill diverse roles in the household; therefore, when one parent is missing, less control and support results (Strand, 2014). Therefore, single parenthood could exacerbate an already stressful family situation, struggling with financial constraints, and other environmental conditions (Strand, 2014; Young, Fitzgibbon, & Silverstone, 2012). The findings of this current study accord with other studies (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Dunbar, 2017; Howell, 2010; Howell & Egley, 2005) that many gang members emanate from single parent families. A single parent household scenario places more strain on the one parent, decreasing parental supervision, and leaving the young person vulnerable to the allure of gang membership (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Howell, 2010; Howell & Egley, 2005). In these studies, the mothers were more often left behind as single parents. Young et al. (2012) observed that the absence of a father might cause young women to seek validation and recognition from older people, peers, or boyfriends.

In addition to one parent’s absence, some participants reported that the loss of someone close to them, especially through death, was a painful experience. According to Kubler-Ross and Kessler (2005), there are five stages of mourning, namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Consequently, when individuals do not deal with their mourning effectively, they do not learn to let go and move on, becoming stuck in sadness or anger.

Some participants reported their experiences as follows:

“The time that my mommy was alive, I wasn’t involved with gangs... I’m living with my brothers and sisters, no mother, no father...After my mommy died, I ran away because my father abused me a lot (physically). My father was very aggressive and had a short temper.” **[Participant 3]**

“I did sing for that choir...and my grandmother used to attend that church, but then she passed away and that’s how I got involved in drugs and gangsterism and things.”

[Participant 7]

“My mother is dead and my daddy. So, I only have an aunty, two brothers and a sister; we live with my aunt.” **[Participant 4]**

Whether the cause of single parenthood is the death of their caregiver, the absence of one parent, or the absence of both parents, the family functioning is significantly affected, as the loss creates disorder, loss of control, and frustration (Liu, Li, & Ge, 2009; Erdelja, Vokal, Bolfan, Erdelja, Begovac, & Begovac, 2013). Participant 3 clearly disclosed how the death of her mother brought disorder in the household, placing her at the mercy of her father’s physical abuse, which provoked her to run away from home. In the case of participant 4, the siblings had to leave their family home, to live with relatives, because both parents died. These participants disclosed that, losing someone close to them, through death, left them with significant feelings of loss and sadness, which compromised their decision-making. According to Costello (2012), mourning the loss of a loved one is a process experienced in stages, and the mourner might need good support from others to work through this process. Without support, the person might not be able to work through these feelings, or move on (Costello, 2012). The participants’ disclosures reflected their experiences of loss, for which they possibly did not receive any support, to assist them with their loss.

4.3.1.4. Sub-theme 1.4: Separated families

Separated family implies that one or more family members were removed or kept apart for a period of time (Bryson, Purdon, & Skipp, 2017). In this research, a separated family was identified as voiding the sense of belonging, which subsequently contributed to gang involvement. In a study conducted by Strand (2014), the participants disclosed that the gangs promised a false sense of belonging, as all they desired was to use the individuals to engage in criminal activities for their material gain. The following narratives highlight the participants' experiences of being separated from family members, as well as the effects on their lives:

“We are five children, but I grew up in an orphanage (pause). I don't even know how it is to be in a family and that's all I wanted over the years. But we never had that, my sister she went away and stayed by other people. I last saw my family 15 or 16 years ago... when we split (siblings), I never looked for them and they never looked for me either. And I never ever looked for them. So, when I met the gang, they were like my family. They were there for me when my family wasn't.” [Participant 10]

“I really love my brothers and sisters, but my sisters, we don't live together. We all separated one live here, the other one around the corner... and I'm now in The area under study.” [Participant 7]

The participants shared their experiences of separation from their families and not knowing what it was like to be part of a family. They disclosed how this exacerbated the feelings of loss, as well as being lost, and the longing to belong to a family, which consequently, prompted them join a gang, in anticipation of finding a family in the gang. Studies have revealed that the sense of belonging was a common contributing factor to women joining gangs (Khan et al., 2013; Strand, 2014). There are several reasons for an individual's need to belong, and emanating from a separated family, is identified as a significant factor. A family contributes to

an individual's sense of belonging, which was observed to be a significant factor for the act of joining a gang (De La Rue & Espalage, 2014; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). Not knowing who your family is, could evoke feelings of loss, and develop a need to belong. According to Pinnock (2017), women, who join gangs, seek a substitute family in the gang. This current study revealed that a disrupted family life was a risk factor for these participants, which again coincides with cited literature. Walsh, (2013) argued that the family systems theory, with its Personal-and Developmental reflections techniques, is effective in persons with challenging behaviour.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Gang joining propulsion

Three sub-themes emerged from theme 2, namely, peer pressure, the influence of boyfriends and intimate partners, and socio-emotional drivers. Peers, as part of the participants social system, seems to play a vital role in these women to participate in gangs.

4.3.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Peer pressure

Peers play a crucial role in a young person's life. Peer pressure is described as a direct or indirect influence by others of the same age, to perform an act (Santor, Messervey & Kusumakar, 2000). A young person is especially vulnerable during adolescence, as a number of key events occur simultaneously during this stage, namely, children start separating from their parents, friends become more important to them, they want to fit in, and friends (peers) exercise influence in their decision making (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011). Studies have revealed that peer pressure could be a risk factor for entering gangs, because of their influence in making choices (De Le Rue & Espelage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013). A lack of parental support and supervision in the household might disconnect youth from their parents, facilitating a search for a sense of belonging, making them vulnerable to be influenced by their friends (Santrock, 2010; Thomas, 2011). Studies have revealed that children from a positive and healthy family

environment, with close bonds with their family, are less likely to join gangs, as their sense of belonging is met through the close relationship with their family (Amroodt, 2011; Esbensen et al., 2009). This especially relevant with women, as it has been revealed that women join gangs for more emotional reasons (Dunbar, 2017; De Le Rue & Espelage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013).

The participants disclosed, in the following responses, how they were influenced by their friends to engage in offending behaviour:

“That was the problem (friends) the people I got involved with, they weren’t good friends, they were drug users.” **[Participant 2]**

“My relationship with my parents are fine. A don’t think anything parents did contributed their kids turning out this way. I just think that the three of us (siblings) where selfish, we knew better. It’s just peer pressure that got us (siblings). You know, when you are high, it’s easy to get influenced.” **[Participant 8]**

In the above narratives, the participants admitted to the influence of their friends in using substances, as well as becoming involved in other negative behaviour. Frequently, a lack of family connection is not always a factor for women to engage in negative behaviour, but more the fact that the individual succumbed to negative influences, as in the case of participant 8, who enjoyed a close-knit family. Other studies concur that peers do influence individuals to make poor choices (De Le Rue & Espelage, 2014; Khan et al., 2013).

4.3.2.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Influence of boyfriends/intimate partners

Being in a relationship with a gang member is different from other types of intimate relationships, because of the dynamics of the gang culture (Beckett et al., 2012), including

loyalty towards the gang. The participants acknowledged that their involvement with their gangster boyfriends had a significant influence on them to become involved in gangs.

“My daddy was also a gang member, but if I didn’t meet my boyfriend, I don’t think I would’ve been involved in this stuff.” [Participant 6]

“Yes, he does (influence being part of the gang) like he always gives me the guns to keep when they go shooting and things like that then I must hide the guns that they did use. Or I must go to the corner to go see if there is any other gangsters there.” [Participant 3]

“I started dating a boy who was also a gangster. I wouldn’t say that he motivated me to be a gangster, but if you have a boyfriend that’s a gangster you might as well say that you are because now you have to look out for him... 50% I would say yes.” [Participant 4]

“I did save his life also, they wanted to shoot him so I saved him. I grab the gun out of the boy’s hand and let my boyfriend run.” [Participant 3]

Although they did not join the gang in the traditional manner, these participants came to realise that, by merely being in a relationship with a gang member, automatically made them part of the gang. Consequently, a gang member’s girlfriend may inadvertently become a gang member, when she is introduced to them. The gang activities she witnesses, while associating with them, together with their secrecy policy, necessitates that girlfriends become part of the gang, to maintain their silence and loyalty, as indicated by the participants. In this current study, a boyfriend in a gang was observed to be a risk factor for women to join gangs. The gangs exploit the women to engage in criminal acts that benefit them financially, and for their safety, they use the women as shields (Beckett et al., 2012). This finding coincides with the findings of a study by Strand (2014) and confirmed in an article by Sefali (2014), in which a girl

acknowledged that she had joined the gang because her boyfriend belonged to the gang. Being in a relationship with a gang member is risky, and it could add to an individual's abuse and exploitation, without assistance or protection (Beckett et al., 2012; Brown, 2007).

Inter-generational family gang membership, especially fathers in gangs, also play a key role in this sub-theme. According to Bowen (1978), certain behaviours and circumstances tend to be passed down from generation to generation, because people are inclined to seek partners with the same patterns of behaviour. Bowen (1978) indicates that these patterns could be broken, if the individuals increase their differentiations (from the father), which might possibly free them from the need to emulate their family members.

4.3.2.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Socio-emotional drivers

Some women join gangs for socio-emotional reasons. According to Shaw and Skywalker (2017), some women join a gang because of the immediate availability of illegal substances. They are attracted by the parties, flashy cars, and perceived power, which they think they will acquire when they join a gang. The participants' opinions and experiences are expressed as follows:

“Women are involved with gangs who have power and is brutal, so they think they are protected somehow. That's how I felt when I was with a gangster (name removed), like no one could touch me.” **[Participant 2]**

“Like everything that is going wrong, you can run to them. If someone wants to rob you or kill you, then you can run to them for backup. So, they will come there with guns or knives or anything.” **[Participant 3]**

The participants indicated that they joined the gang for the power and protection in a violent community (Chesney-Lind, 2013), such as the area under study, which is assailed by violence on a regular basis (Calix, 2013). They assumed that they would be safe and protected by the gang. The study of Shaw and Skywalker (2017) revealed similar findings with women in gangs assuming that they would be protected by the gang. For women from socio-economical deprived communities, facing hardship on a daily basis, with limited opportunities to improve their circumstances, a gang that, seemingly, could provide them with an instant flashy lifestyle, as well as free shelter and safety, could be too tempting to resist.

The participants also noted that young people join gangs because of their own social and emotional needs, for example, to belong, for protection and shelter, as well as for status. Ward and Bakhuis (2009), as well as Ward and Seager (2010) posit that children, who live on the street, may join gangs for protection and shelter. Some of the participants also explained that they engaged in relationships with gang members, because of their positions in the gang, which reflected well on their own status in the community. Shaw and Skywalker's (2017) study also reveal that some women join gangs because its lifestyle appeals to them, with its public symbols of perceived wealth. The participants in this current study reported that they were attracted to the flashy lifestyle that the gangs could provide, which represented the initial allure to join the gang. The following narratives are pertinent:

"...like a lot of the women like the flashy cars that the gangsters (name removed) drives, so at first they go for that. They first buy you stuff (drugs) and that, but they also use you to buy stuff. You think you are seen by them, but they are actually using you... clothes and the money,, the drugs mostly." **[Participant 5]**

“I would say it’s mostly the drugs and the way they are. Some women like the fast life and the guys they drive lekker fast cars with the loud music. They get you like that. Women are stupid. I was also.” [Participant 6]

“Say now you are the gang (name removed), now he is like the main person, now and you get the opportunity as a girl, because he wants to Koppel (go out) with you, it’s cool because hey, I’m with him. That is what made me thinks its lekker (nice) to be with them or so. But it’s not worth it at the end of the day.” [Participant 9]

The participants were unguarded about the way they were attracted to a seemingly a better life, in which they would be provided with money and clothing, and most importantly, free drugs. The opportunity to access free drugs, however, seemed to be their main reason for joining the gangs. Soon the participants realised that life was not as flashy as it was made it out to be, because the gangsters used the *free stuff* as bait, to draw them in; however, in return they had to perform criminal activities. The study of Shaw and Skywalker (2017) revealed similar findings. According to Pinnock (2017), women joined gangs as a substitute family, having an overriding need for security, as well as to belong, and would remain in the gang, even after experiencing victimisation, brutality, and harm, on a daily basis.

4.3.3. Theme 3: School environment

School plays a vital role in a child’s development, as, second to the home environment, the child is also taught discipline and socialisation there. Burton, Leochut, and Bonora (2009), as well as Kanengoni (2016) identified that, attending a school, could have a positive outcome for a learner, in the absence of a parent. The school could be the positive role model, in the absence of the parents; therefore, a child should be encouraged to complete his/her schooling. According to Calix (2013), gangs flourish in communities with poor schooling. Theme 3 has two sub-themes that are focused on the power of school friends and poor school achievements.

4.3.3.1. Sub-theme 3.1: School friends as entry to gangs

In this sub-theme, the participants discussed how associating with a negative peer group at school, influenced them to engage in offending behaviour with their school friends, mostly after school. The following extracts reveal how schools could have the opposite effect on the development of young learners:

“...and then I went to high school... and then I started with a group...I was the only one in the group that was like using drugs. They were drinking and that, going out on weekends...” [Participant 5]

“My (school) friends that time we only smoked cigarettes and that and okay dagga. And that (the dagga) made my friends, some of them say, “hey ons smaaak mossie vir skool vandag nie” (we don’t feel like going to school today).” [Participant 9]

“That was the problem (friends at school), the people I got involved with, they weren’t good friends, they were drug users and that. Tik after school and I got roped in like that, and the more you use drugs, the more shady your company gets I think.” [Participant 2]

“Well, I was just very stout (naughty) at school. I went to (name removed) primary school and (name removed) high school and we (school friends) sniffed glue and smoked green pipes and stuff. Also lekker (very) naughty school friends. We had the same style, we do the same things.” [Participant 3]

These narratives highlight how school friends could influence a vulnerable or at-risk young person to participate in questionable activities, while being fully aware that they would be unacceptable. The participants appeared to have gained some insights, while doing introspection of their life in high school, as well as their behaviour and lifestyle. They admitted

to smoking cigarettes, and dagga (cannabis), as well as engaging in other troubling activities, while in their teens with their school friends.

According to MacMaster (2010), negative school experiences may cause young people to join gangs. None of the participants reported that they had other negative experiences at school, for example, maltreatment or bullying. However, most of them engaged in offending behaviour with their friends while at school (although their activities occurred mostly after school). In a study conducted by Ward and Bakhuis (2009), the youth claimed that, because of a lack of after-school activities, such as sports, there appeared to be fewer alternatives than, either staying home after school getting bored and doing nothing constructive, or getting involved in questionable activities, such as joining gangs. Molidor (1996) suggested that school-based programmes be implemented in schools to create positive social interactions for youth at-risk.

However, it must also be noted that not all the participants associated with the wrong friends at school. Participant 1 stated, *“They (school friends) are not in any way associated with drugs, they are not even gangs, and this is why I’m not friends with them anymore”*. Therefore, participant 1 had good friends at school, and broke ties with them because they were not interested in her negative activities. Participants 8 did not seem to want to conform to a group that might have presented positive outcomes for her. Positive peer pressure could be a strong motivator for adolescents not to engage in negative behaviour (Padilla-Walker & Bean, 2009).

4.3.3.2. Sub-theme 3.2: School drop out

The educational institution is reportedly a primary agent, after the family, where children learn to socialise and interact with others, as well as learn to accept authority (Burton, 2007; Martinez et al., 2013). Several reasons were identified for early drop out, including feeling unsafe at school, truancy, lack of school commitment, poor academic performance, and troublesome

behaviour at school (Burton, 2007; Burton, Leoschut, & Bonora, 2009; Fox, 2010; Martinez et al., 2013; Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). When children drop out of school, they become targets for gang involvement. All the participants in this current study reached high school and most of them performed satisfactorily. They did not indicate any learning challenges. However, most dropped out between grades 10 and 11. Their following experiences attest to this:

“I was quite a smart child on school. I passed grade R right through Grade 11. And then I started dropping out, because from me school got bored. I was good in school.”

[Participant 9]

“Yes, I did (enjoy school). At primary school it was nice, the children were less like naughty and stuff, but when I went to high school, my mind changed.” **[Participant 6]**

“Yes I did (enjoy school). Everything fell apart because of the drugs.” **[Participant 5]**

“I was a good student, passed most subject easily, but when I started to experiment with drugs, I lost interest in school.” **[Participant 2]**

“I was never in class, but when I was in that classes, I used to enjoy it.” **[Participant 3]**

These participants did not appear to have academic performance challenges; however, they admittedly adopted challenging behaviour, while at school. Apparently, boredom struck, truancy followed, and they started using substances that interfered with their schooling, which they identified as their drop out contributory factors. According to Martinez et al. (2013), academic challenges, including dropping out, are associated with troubled behaviour and gang involvement. Studies have revealed that schools in deprived communities tend to have a higher rate of failing students and early dropout, making them vulnerable to be recruited into a gang (Calix, 2013; Davids, 2005; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Strand, 2014). Schools in deprived areas

are generally underfunded (Fox, 2010; Mncube & Harber, 2013), where less can be provided for these learners, creating more dissatisfaction for children to be in school, which in itself could be stressful for a learner. The school as part of a child's ecological system and a tool for development (Friedman & Allen, 2014) and it is imperative that children are link to a school that would fulfill their educational needs, and essentially also equip them with life skills to make better choices in life.

4.3.4. Theme 4: Victimisation and exploitation

This theme reflects the high incidents of victimisation and exploitation that all the participants experienced from the gang members, particularly their gang boyfriends, while being part of the gang. Exploitation implies having power and dominance over someone (Veneziani, 2012). Power is a motivating force, central to human interactions (Briñol et al., 2017). The victimisation and exploitation of women are the consequences of being part of a gang, as well as the inability to leave the gang voluntarily, thereby ensnaring them in this subjugated and abusive environment (Beckett et al., 2012). There are four sub-themes in this theme, reflecting the various ways in which the participants were being exploited and victimised.

4.3.4.1. Sub-theme 4.1: Abuse and rape by gang members

Patriarchy is deeply entrenched in the average South African psyche. The perception is that males are the providers, the aggressive ones, emotionally closed-off, sexually promiscuous, independent and dominant, regarding females as sex objects (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011). Because of this mind-set, South Africa battles with ongoing violence against females. This violence and mind-set also appears to play out in other areas, such as the gang sub-culture. Several studies identified victimisation against women as a common phenomenon in gangs (Beckett et al., 2012; Khan et al., 2013; Young, 2009). The participants disclosed how they

were victimised by the gang, while being a gang member. The victimisation includes physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Some of the participants reported as follows:

“I didn’t want to have sex with him...he skopped (kicked) me more (hit) me...when I got conscious again... then the sex had to happen.” **[Participant 1]**

“... and it’s not always just one person (participant starts crying)... it’s a few of them...and you don’t want to do what they tell you to do (sexual favours), they’ll start hitting you. And sometimes they force doing it to you. And I can talk about it because I’ve been through it a lot of times.” **[Participant 9]**

The participants disclosed how they experienced multiple incidents of abuse and rape in the gang, intensifying their fear, anxieties, and trauma. They were aware that they were expected to yield to any acts, and engage in criminal activities, even against their will. In addition, they did what is expected of them because of their loyalty to the relationship, although they were aware that their actions were probably criminal. Irrespective of their loyalty, they were not protected by their gang member boyfriends against the rape by other gang members. The following extracts refer:

“They will kill you and nobody will know anything. If you have been raped by them, you can’t go make a case, they will kill you, so you must play the game with them.”

[Participant 3]

“Well, I couldn’t go to the police, even though I wanted to, even though I cried, and it’s something I don’t do. I hate crying. I hate showing my feelings and whatever. So me crying, it says a lot. I hated every moment of it.” **[Participant 1]**

“When my boyfriend was in prison, one of his funky brothers wanted to rape me. No, you can’t do that [make a case] then you are betraying the gang.” **[Participant 6]**

“Like the raping and stuff, like that is going on by us it’s almost like its natural, its normal [to be raped]. Like for the women also its not rape anymore.” [Participant 10]

The above narratives reveal the immense trauma that these participants have had to endure. Exacerbating the already fraught situation, the participants could not lay criminal charges against these perpetrators, because they feared for their lives. This coincides with the findings of other studies (Becket et al., 2012; Brown, 2007; Vigil, 2008), which corroborated the acts of violence inflicted on the women in gangs, and most importantly, that these acts were no longer viewed as rape, demonstrating acceptance and normalcy. Additionally, these incidences were not reported to the authorities, because of their loyalty toward the gang, as well as the knowledge that, reporting to the police would place their lives in danger.

4.3.4.2. Sub-theme 4.2: Exploitation by gang

In addition to the abuse and rape by gang members, the participants also experienced exploitation, as they were used to engage in criminal activities, such as robberies, carrying guns, hiding drugs, and being a lookout, or looking out for the rival gangs (Cox, 2011). The following excerpts are examples of participants’ experiences:

“They [gang] will give the women drugs and then you must do stuff for them. And when you are finished smoking, they will say, go and stab that one with a knife or something. Then they do it because he [gangster] gave them [women in gangs] drugs and he saw to her needs.” [Participant 7]

“The way they use the women in every way not only for sex, but some of the women in the gang are even serving prison sentences for the gang, and a lot of the time it’s not their fault. Like they are serving time for selling drugs, carrying guns for the gang and

such kind of stuff, taking the blame for murders and other stuff that isn't even them."

[Participant 3]

"Yes because, if you get caught with drugs, they (gangsters) don't bail you out. They leave you in Pollsmoor, but also depends on your position in the gang." **[Participant 5]**

"I just came out of jail that time, which was for a sentence that was also for selling drugs for the gang." **[Participant 7]**

From the narratives above, participants highlighted how the gangsters used the drug supply as a weapon, to gain control over them, and use them to commit petty and/or violent and serious crimes. They had to carry or stash the weapons, and sell or stash drugs, which placed them at risk of being arrested with these items in their possession. In addition, they had been arrested, convicted and imprisoned for crimes they did not commit, but had to take the rap on behalf of the gang. There was also the likelihood that they would not receive any support from the gang, should they be arrested. From the responses, it is clear that their role in the crimes had become more severe and dangerous to them, as well as others. Studies have revealed that women in gangs, currently, commit more serious crimes than before, from a supportive role, such as financial, sexual, and emotional support (Pacheco, 2010), to more serious crimes, such as, robbery, carrying or stashing guns, money and weapons for the gang (De La Rue & Espelage, 2014; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011; Khan et al., 2013).

4.3.4.3. Sub-theme 4.3: Intimate partner violence

Studies have revealed that women are the prime target of intimate partner violence [IPV] (Burton, 2008; Jantjies & Popovac, 2011), and the concern is that IPV is highly prevalent in South African youth relationships (Bhana, 2012; Wubs et al., 2013). Being in a relationship with a gang member, who follows the gang culture, which includes the victimisation and

violation of women associated with the gang, could place them more at risk of being victimised by their boyfriends. Some participants reported as follows:

“It was fine in the beginning, then afterwards he started hitting me. And the second one also, he also was so, but first he did buy me everything I wanted and so, so I fell in love with him, but that was all a mistake. It’s almost like they bribe you man just to be with you, do their dirty work, hide their guns and that.” **[Participant 7]**

“It started off nicely, but then it got violent and then I was associated with the gang. My life started to becoming like his life. I started knowing things I shouldn’t have known, like the crime activities, murder, things like that, armed robberies and stuff.” **[Participant 8]**

“But it was okay in the beginning. I was not so heavy on the tik, like I am now, but as I got to drug more, I think he started to lose respect for me.” **[Participant 6]**

The participants disclosed the violations by their boyfriends. They described the process of courting, and thereafter, the abuse. They were initially treated well, but were later abused by their boyfriends, an act similar to the way they were lured in by the gang. IPV is a pattern of violent and abusive acts, with the intention of controlling an intimate a partner (Brown, 2007). As contended by Becker et al. (2012), women in gangs have little power, which places them at risk of abuse. Besides the violations that they have to endure, they are also not always allowed to leave the relationship on their terms (see Participant 6).

“I can’t take my head out of it... my boyfriend, he is threatening me around every corner... because wherever I go, he came to the place and threaten to hurt the people if I don’t come out. He did it already.” **[Participant 3]**

“I don’t know how I will get away from him (name removed). If I leave him, he will come look for me. You see we know a lot and leaving will give them suspicion that we are going to tell the enemy about their doings. Also, where are we going to go?” [Participant 6]

In these narratives, the participants disclosed that they could not end their relationships, because they were threatened. Frequently, their family members were threatened as well. The findings of the study by Shaw and Skywalker (2017) also revealed that the women disclosed how they were being abused by their gang boyfriends but were afraid to end the relationship.

4.3.4.4. Sub-theme 4.4: Exploitation by gangster boyfriend

In addition to being exploited by the gang (sub-theme 4.2), the women are also exploited by their gangster boyfriends. They are exploited for their boyfriend’s financial gain, as well as the added prestige within their gang (Beckett et al., 2012), while the girlfriend envisaged a better life with him. The following are responses of the participants:

“...but now I am heavy in the gangs because I was with a “gang member” he was my boyfriend, so wherever he went, I also went... so, you do what the romance do also sell stuff.” [Participant 6]

“So I had to carry guns from one place to the next. So, its maybe a distance and in-between there is the enemy, so I have to walk and I’m putting my life in danger as well [doing this for the boyfriend].” [Participant 4]

“Yes I was involved with a gang member, who was like this. He [boyfriend] wanted me to go and work on the streets.” [Participant 10]

These participants, who had relationships with gang members, all indicated how they were persuaded by their boyfriends to sell or stash drugs and guns, carry or transport drugs, look out

and spy on rival gangs, while some were coerced into prostitution. The participants' actions demonstrate their loyalty towards their boyfriends, irrespective of the consequences. However, they know that, to withdraw themselves from the gang, or the criminal situations, would put their lives in greater danger. According to Becker et al. (2012), women who are in a relationship with a gang member, are most likely to be exploited by this gang member. Additionally, because of the relationship between the gang member boyfriend and his other gang members, she is less likely to receive any assistance or protection, as they perceive the exploitation as normal, and part of the gang culture (Beckett et al., 2012; Brown, 2007). This sub-theme confirmed how participants' intimate relationships have serious implications for role players in the mezzo system with the result they have little support and protection.

4.3.5. Theme 5: Substance abuse within the family

Substance abuse is commonly known to have a negative influence on the family functioning (Arcidiacono et al., 2009; Orford et al., 2005). Substance abuse causes conflictual relationships and disrupts family functioning (Schäfer, 2011). Studies have revealed that people, who abuse substances, are likely to display aggressive behaviour and become involved in drug-related crimes (Schäfer, 2011). This could include gang involvement (Schramm-Sapyta, et al., 2009), due to the link between gangsterism and illicit substances/drug smuggling in South Africa (Kinnes, 2008). Additionally, it affects the parents' ability to care for their children, as it influences their parenting skills (Kinnes, 2008). Consequently, substance abuse by parents could also be a cause that children might use substances later in life, because of modelling on their parents (Fisher, 2015; Schäfer, 2011). In this theme, three sub-themes emerged from the participants' narratives.

4.3.5.1. Sub-theme 5.1: Substance abuse by the parents

Substance abuse by parents has been identified as a risk factor, because it could interfere with the parent spending quality time with, and caring for their children, which could compromise the well-being of the family (Velleman & Reuber, 2007). Most of the participants emanated from homes, where drugs were used by the parents. The following narratives reflect this:

“Sometimes it’s at home, like your mother, maybe drink, or maybe drugs, now the children also go out.” [Participant 5]

“Maybe the mother is everyday drunk, there is nothing to eat, they smoke drugs in the house every day, nothing is clean, so man. Then you think you can rather be outside. Go and look for things outside... So outside you get love from the gangsters.” [Participant 3]

“I really don’t have a daughter mother relationship with my mother, because she is always drinking, but I don’t blame her.” [Participant 7]

Substance abuse by the parents could weaken the parent’s parenting skills, as it could disrupt the parent’s ability to ensure the children’s wellbeing, which may cause children to feel insecure, and seek solace, as well as a sense of belonging outside the home (RSA, DSD, DWCPD & UNICEF, 2012). Some of their narratives also reflected the participants’ opinions of the role that the substance abuse of parents played in the community, in relation to gangsterism. Some of the participants identified with the parents use of substances, and disclosed how their parents neglected the household and the care of the children. The following extracts refer:

“In my case, I left the house because my mother was on tik, after my father died, he was shot, also a gangster so I left not to become part of a gang, but just to be away from

home. My mother started bringing this one and that one into the place, gangsters too.”

[Participant 6]

“I left the house because my mother was on tik, after my father died... he was also a gang member...” **[Participant 6]**

For the participants, their parents’ substance abuse left them in an uncared-for household environment, with no food, indirectly forcing them to look for better options outside, as there was nothing inside. Besides the lack of material needs, their parents also failed to provide for their psychological needs, such as attention, love, and support (Strand, 2014).

4.3.5.2. Sub-theme 5.2: Substance abuse by the participants

According to Wijnberg and Green (2014), drugs and South African gangs are interlinked. When someone is addicted to drugs that are freely available in gangs, it is hard to resist, and being drawn into gangsterism is an easy step. Substance abuse was identified as one of the most prominent catalysts of joining a gang, as most of the participants were using substances already, before their gang involvement, and were drawn to the gang because of the availability of drugs.

Participant 8 summed it up succinctly: *“...because nobody makes rational decisions when they intoxicated. Nothing you do or say can be looked at as a stable decision. You are not yourself, so anything you say can’t be true”*. All the participants, who were on drugs before entering the gangs, acknowledged that the availability of drugs was a major motivator for them to engage with the gangs. The following extracts elucidate:

“If I wasn’t on drugs I wouldn’t have been here. You get sucked in by the drugs, which is free from the start off with, but then it’s payback time and you have to pay somehow...they own you, they control you, you belong to them.” **[Participant 2]**

“Most definitely, the drugs definitely the drugs, there you get your drugs, you get your whatever, man.” **[Participant 1]**

“Like for the drugs, the women, they do drugs now the gangsters give them drugs first and then after that, if you know it, if you don’t know it, you are part of the gang.”
[Participant 7]

“Ignorance I knew what it was about but still went, but that’s why I say, when you smoking drugs, you not yourself, you not stable. By the time I woke up, I thought what the (expletive) did I get myself into, I was already in it. It’s so quick to just drop and dive into it, then to actually get out.” **[Participant 8]**

“There won’t be so much women involved for gangsters [if there were no drugs in the area]. It wasn’t always like that where women sell and shoot guns and fight and stuff. It’s all because of the drugs that they are using, make them brave enough to do that.”
[Participant 6]

Participants delivered strong testimony regarding the role of drugs and substances in their association, as well as subsequent gang joining and offending behaviours. It appears that their drug addiction was an opportunity for the gangs to recruit them, and expect all kinds of favours from them in return, which they unable to refuse. Additionally, they admitted that the drugs affected their decision-making. According to CASA (2011), substance abuse could lead to aggressive and violent behaviour, as well as criminal involvement. It affects the individual’s ability to make sound decisions.

4.3.5.3. Sub-theme 5.3: Drug houses in the community

The participants disclosed that there were specific drug houses in the community, occupied by the gangs, where drugs abuse and other criminal activities takes place. These houses appear to

be a significant for gang involvement, as the majority of the participants expressed, in detail, how intrigued they were by these houses, where initially, they received free drugs. Most of the participants disclosed that these houses were easily accessible, which made it easy for them to obtain drugs; however, being in those houses exposed them, to witness the commission of serious crimes, instilling in them a fear of leaving the gang, because they knew too much and had become a security risk. Leaving the gang, thereafter, could hold catastrophic consequences for them. The following narratives describe their experiences:

“We always sit by the pella pos (drug house operated by gangsters), like a place, a house where people don’t care, anything can happen there...they just sit there and smoke, the smokkel (smuggling) ... the clients come up to buy drugs, anything. The house got quite risky.” [Participant 9]

“It started by sitting by drug houses where they (gangsters) hang out. Like they get to know you, give you drugs to keep and guns and stuff.” [Participant 5]

“Murders happened in that house, women get raped, they come there to smoke, and they only leave a week later, because the gang (name removed) didn’t want them to leave. If they talk then they are killed... They have a big impact on my life, and I feel like a I can’t get out of it... some women have been killed.” [Participant 2]

The participants above explained that the decision to approach the gangs for drugs was a compulsive need to satisfy the craving, as well as the wrong type of decision an individual would make, when addicted to drugs. They frequented drug houses because drugs were easily accessible. Khan et al. (2014) warned that the easy accessibility of drugs in the community, could lead to gang involvement for young women in that community. The family system was identified as a strong predictor for persons abusing substance (Fisher, 2015; Schäfer, 2011).

4.3.6. Theme 6: Poorly resourced community

Marginalised communities are usually assailed by social challenges, for example, being poorly resourced, low employment opportunities, poorly resourced and functioning schools, lacking recreational facilities, and non-existent safety networks (Calix, 2013; Cooper & Ward, 2012; Pinnock, 2017). These challenges deprive the families and individuals of crucial development opportunities, or the improvement of their poor circumstances (Kinnes, 2017)

Three sub-themes emerged from this theme, namely, socio-economic conditions, community sanction and fear, and the lack of community resources

4.3.6.1. Sub-theme 6.1: Socio-economic conditions

The general perception is that gangs thrive in marginalised and poorly resourced communities. The area under study is no exception. According to Calix (2013), the social power that drug merchants and gang leaders achieve in a community, should be seen as the reason and result of the insufficiency and incapability of the state authority to provide basic social and economic security to the community. Statistics revealed that the area under study's high unemployment rate, with limited work opportunities and low educational status, keeps the community in poverty, as people struggle to survive in poor communities (Calix, 2013; Kinnes, 2017). However, this may also keep the community in the cycle of poverty from generation to generation, known as the multi-generational transmission process (Bowen, 1978, also cited in Winek, 2018), which may cause young people to join gangs (Cooper & Ward, 2012; Kinnes, 2017). Some studies have identified limited employment opportunities, specifically, as a contributing factor towards joining gangs (Hallsworth & Young, 2010; Vigil, 2008). All the participants recognised that their poverty-stricken community played a substantial role in their gang involvement. The participants' experiences are recorded as follows:

“It’s difficult. Because children are running around with no food, children are on drugs and on glue. People have no work. Like during the day it looks like Saturday even if its school. Children don’t even worry to go to school and that is how they get pulled in by the gangsters. But the people are also poor, that’s why they take from the merchants. They have no other way.” **[Participant 6]**

“People are poor, there is no work that’s it, people suffer...like you know there is poverty in our community, like you don’t know where the food is going to come from. Now you have to do things for them. Like keeping the drugs on you and stuff like that.” **[Participant 5]**

“But I also think that our government don’t care about anybody living in Belhar, Manenberg, Retreat, and [the area under study]. This is like isolated areas, the pit where all the [uses expletive] happens... just the area itself. The flats give you a negative impact in your life because its like a cell block. Your whole community, from the way it is built, to the way you go in and out, like a concentration camp.” **[Participant 8]**

The participants expressed their awareness of the ways in which their community conditions exert influence on youth to join gangs, because of their exposure to gangsterism on a daily basis in the community, from a young age, and gangsters being regarded as heroes. Participant 8 was of the opinion that the government was not trying to improve the circumstances of the people. Elgar (2014) argues that marginalised communities do not operate as communities; the fear of crime increases, while social support decreases, trust diminishes, and social controls over violence breaks down. Although the study by Damm and Dustman (2013), in Denmark, did not find support for a crime-ridden neighbourhood as a contributing factor for female criminal behaviour, but did for males. Other studies, though, did find a correlation (Khan et al., 2013; Shaw & Skywalker, 2017). The participants voiced the following extracts:

“...like the children in our areas look up to gangsters like heroes, no lies, you must hear how it goes in the community, four, five year old children talking about guns, this funky, that funky, who shot who and all that.” [Participant 6]

“Let me tell you about growing up in [study area]... you got different gangsters in different courts [flats]. So, on the left side you get a gang and on the right side you get a gang. So everywhere you go there is a gang.” [Participant 4]

“It’s that they want to stand out everybody wants to be a gang member (name removed) and the leader is like a role model, even for the ladies.” [Participant 5]

Studies have identified the link between early exposure to crime in the community and resulting criminal behaviour, including gang involvement (Burton, 2007; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Mncube & Madikizela-Madiiya, 2014). The participants reported how they had witnessed young children being drawn to gangsterism because of their perception of gangsters as heroes. These children are fascinated by the gang violence because of the daily occurrence, constant exposure, and gangsters in all parts of the area under study. Bronfenbrenner (1972), who developed the Ecological Systems Theory, explains how the environment has an influence on a child’s development. Children are in continuous interactions with his/her environment (Melson & Fine, 2010; Miley, O’Meila & DuBois, 2009), and responds consciously and unconsciously to events in the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1972). However, other factors in a child’s life, such as family influences, culture, and history should not be ignored (Friedman & Allen, 2011). Studies support participants’ experiences that children do join gangs at a much younger age (MacMaster, 2010). Therefore, growing up in a gang-infested community facilitates easier engagement with gangs, and living with poverty, makes it easier for gangs to recruit members.

4.3.6.2. Sub-theme 6.2: Community sanction and fear

Community sanction, in this context, implies people who are partial to the gang and their activities, because they need the resources and concessions offered by these gangs (Kinnes, 2000). The gangs seem to use this tactic of being seemingly benevolent, to lure people to their side, as the same gangs will spurn those who do not support them. According to Strand (2014), the dangers of violence and gang violence involve and affect the whole community, not only the gangs and their rival gangs. The participants explained this phenomenon in the following ways:

“If the cops come then the community members will alert them. If you ask the gangsters for a ten rand maybe for electricity, then they will give you. Or buy bread for you.”

[Participant 3]

“Yoh, they (some community members) are actually the backup hey. Like even the old people (still support them) ... Part of like, hello hier kom die boere” [here comes the police] like the “vang pos” [on the lookout for the police].” **[Participant 1]**

In the above narratives, the participants explained the ways, in which the community acted, to support and enable the activities of the gang in their community. It is regarded as *quid quo pro*, or trade-off for the *services* that gangs provide to the community. Kinnes (2000, 2017) describes how gangs provide food, pay rent, and purchase electricity for individuals in deprived communities, to ensure their support, and to control the community. In addition, Kinnes (2000) asserts that, in so doing, they could commit crimes, with the confidence that they would not be reported. According to Kinnes (2000, 2017), the gangs have achieved this by “effectively exploiting the economics of poverty”. The gangs are well versed in the social politics of community living, and manipulate, or take advantage of the profound vulnerabilities of others.

In addition to the above, the participants also disclosed that gangs tend to receive good support from their families, specifically mentioning the mothers, who protect their boys in gangs, thereby enabling their offending and violent behaviours. The participants could identify with this, as they had had first-hand experience thereof. Participant 10, for example stated, *“The mummies mostly... they protect them knowing they are gangsters and kill people all the time, but when the police look for them their mothers cover up for them”*. This narrative coincides with the findings of a study by Wegner et al. (2016), which revealed that male gang members disclosed the importance of their relationship with their mothers, as to them, it was the only relationship in which they received honest love and acceptance, irrespective of their wrongdoings, and did not feel judged for their actions.

Besides the fact that some residents were dependent on the gang to provide them with their basic needs, they would also not challenge the gang, because of fear, as indicated in the following extracts:

“They’re (community) actually scared. They will talk things, but they won’t say it out loud, or in the gangs face or that...” **[Participant 5]**

“The gangs will give some people money and even have Christmas stuff for the children, but the people of the community forget what they actually do. A lot of people hate them, but they are scared, some people even like them because they get stuff from them. ...Hulle word sommer goed gekoep (gangsters buy them stuff). Like if they get that stuff then it looks like the gangsters care about them and look out for them.” **[Participant 6]**

“Some people in the community protect the gangsters, some people don’t like them, but they can’t say anything.” **[Participant 2]**

From these narratives of the participants, it could be deduced that the communities are caught *between a rock and a hard place*, trying to maintain themselves and their families through whatever means available to them; and subsequently, fearing gang reprisals, when attempting to opt out. Participant 8 summed the situation up insightfully in the following way:

“The community is bullshit, because people in poverty-stricken areas are like this. Where they can benefit, they will help. Where they can’t, they won’t. They will talk among each other and do nothing...Sometimes they support the gang, sometimes they don’t, just how and when it suits them.”

Calix (2014) reports, in his study on the area under study, how the community praised gang leaders for their good deeds of charity, which were usually experienced in the form of their daily necessities; however, the author also highlighted the community members’ fear of the gangs. They fear for their lives, their children’s safety, and that their children would be drawn into these gangs.

4.3.6.3. Sub-theme 6.3: Lack of community resources

It is acknowledged that the socio-political structure and infrastructure of the community could contribute to how a person perceives his/her environment (Strand, 2014). In addition, Strand (2014) asserts that a lack of social structure and support in the communities could lead to gang involvement, specifically in marginalised communities. Recreational facilities in poor communities, always seem to be under resourced, either because of the under-development by the government in these areas, gangs invading these facilities, communities destroying existing facilities, or the area being too dangerous for residents to move around and make use of these facilities (Calix, 2013; Strand, 2014). Often the residents are not aware of facilities or resources, and therefore, do not utilise these resources or facilities. The participants expressed the following:

“There is nothing there for the youth you know, there is just nothing to do for the children when they get home from school you know? They just stand on the corners or by the shop.” [Participant 10]

“There is nothing for the kids to do, all they sit there and what they do is watch gangsters’ whole day.” [Participant 8]

“There are programmes coming to us...there are churches who try to help addicts... churches give counselling to the women...they talk to us women in the gangs also, but we don’t listen. There are school-programmes ...a soup kitchen.” [Participant 2]

Recreational facilities are necessary to keep children occupied, with constructive activities, to prevent boredom (Calix, 2013; Strand, 2014). Some participants highlighted the apparent lack of recreational resources for the children, to keep them occupied. According to them, boredom could easily be overlooked as a factor in the gang membership of young children. Wegner et al. (2006) also identified the lack of resources as a risk factor for gang involvement, while Strand (2014) identified boredom as the predictor for youth joining gangs, and emphasised the importance of keeping adolescents appropriately occupied, to avoid boredom. An important point, mentioned by Participant 2, was that youth do not pay attention to the message in programmes, despite the resources and programmes that are available. The relationship macro system allowed the researcher to show the influence the environment have had on the participants’ behaviour (Bronfenbrenner (1972).

In the study by Skywalker and Shaw (2017: 4), the researchers highlight that the young women in gangs are not “naïve” about the gang’s criminal activities, but are partially attracted by the unlawful resources. Originating from very deprived circumstances, with nothing to survive on, they might not be too keen to leave the gang and return to their poor circumstances.

4.4. Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings of the research study. In many ways, these findings were similar to other studies on the research topic. Literature supported the six main themes that emerged, namely, poorly functioning families, gang-joining compulsions, school environment, victimisation and exploitation, substance abuse, and poorly resourced community, as risk factors for the women' gang involvement. The participants expressed themselves in their own way, and provided rich, thick details of their perceptions and experiences.

From the participants' narratives, the risk factors for gang involvement were multi-variate, and continues over an extended period. These multi-variate risk factors caused an overlapping of the sub-themes, which revealed how the various causal factors acted inter-dependently, instigating substantial social problems for community members. In the following and final chapter, the researcher provides the conclusion and recommendations of this current research study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The researcher's decision to conduct this research was reached, while working with young women from the area under study, who, reportedly, displayed challenging behaviour, and simultaneously socialised with gangs. The researcher was intrigued by the manner in which the gang involvement was perceived as a secondary challenge by their families, although it had substantial implications for the behaviour of the women. The researcher realised that limited focus had been directed at women in gangs, which created an interest, and culminated in the conducting of this current research. The specific area, the area under study (and its surrounds) have also become the target areas to recruit appropriate participants. The following two objectives were used to centre the data collection strategies and interviewing questions:

- To explore and describe the perceptions of women in gangs, regarding their experiences.
- To explore and describe causal factors that contributed to their gang involvement.

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach, with the purpose of gaining rich data, as well as reaching a holistic understanding of the topic under study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with ten participants, who met the inclusion criteria. In Chapter 3, the researcher disclosed the challenges faced with the recruitment of the study sample in the area, as the subjects were reluctant to reveal their experiences about being in a gang, for fear of reprisals from gang members. Consequently, the researcher was compelled to broaden the search for participants, instead of restricting it to the area under study only. However, all the

participants had a connection with gang membership in the area under study; therefore, the researcher was able to explore, successfully, the necessary perceptions and interpretations from each participant, regarding their experience in gangs. The data analysis followed the thematic analysis formula.

In this chapter, the researcher provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis, based on the objectives of the research, with the inclusion of probable implications of the themes. It explains that the objectives were fulfilled, followed by recommendations for interventions, as well as future research, and explicates the limitations and significance of the study. Additionally, in this chapter, the researcher concludes, and provides suggestions for the completed research conducted.

5.2. Conclusion and implications of the empirical findings

A qualitative approach was employed, as it enabled the researcher to explore the underlying feelings and experiences of the participants' involvement in gangs. The qualitative approach allowed rich, in-depth data of the topic under scrutiny to be revealed, subsequently, providing a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Using the qualitative approach, the researcher was enabled to explore and describe the topic, in an orderly manner, with the aid of an interview guide. The researcher's goal was to allow the participants to verbalise freely, in the way they preferred to respond to the questions and probes. This goal was achieved and, as a result, the researcher was able to use the primary data to obtain 6 main themes and 19 sub-themes. By using multiple data collection methods, the researcher strengthened the trustworthiness of the data collected and consequently, ensured the validity and reliability of the data collected, which made it more authentic. In view of the above, the implementation of the empirical approach was executed by the researcher successfully.

5.2.1. Conclusion and implications of demographic profile

Ten participants were recruited for this current study. All of the participants met the inclusion criteria for the research, namely, females between the ages of 18 and 35 years, living in the area under study (and the surrounding areas), with experience of gang involvement. They had all reached high school level of education, were able to comprehend what the study entailed, as well as share their experiences. In addition, they were articulate, which made communication with them effortless. In this regard, they were able to share their views, in response to the questions asked. The participants were all from one ethnic background, and identified as being Coloured women, which was not one of the criteria, or intentional; it occurred involuntarily during the snowballing selection.

Initially, the researcher experienced considerable challenges with the recruitment of potential participants, who met the inclusion criteria for this research. The potential participants, who had been approached, refused to participate in this current study, out of fear for their safety. The demographic profile of the participants matched the conditions of the women's involvement in gangs, which was identified as, *in a marginalised area with poor socio-economic conditions of poverty, over-crowding, high unemployment, substance abuse, and high rate of gang related violence.*

The **conclusion**, therefore, is that the demographic profile was consistent for the study, and could provide rich findings regarding the study topic. The fear of the women in this area, with regards to talking about their experiences, was real. Recruitment of males in gangs, compared to women, appear to be simpler in South Africa. The **implication** is that gangs have enormous and far-reaching power in communities, which has substantial consequences for service rendering by all stakeholders.

5.2.2. Conclusion and implications of main themes and sub-themes

Six (6) main themes and 19 sub-themes emerged from the data collection and analysis processes, as well as existing literature on the topic under scrutiny. This was not an easy task, as much of the literature was based on international studies, and males in gangs. Irrespective of these challenges, this study produced thick, rich findings, as evident in the narratives of the participants. The experiences of the female participants, and the contributing factors for their gang involvement, were multi-variate, and could be mapped using the Family Systems Theory.

5.2.2.1. *Main theme 1: Poor family functioning*

Main theme 1 emphasised that poor family functioning contributed significantly to the phenomenon of women joining gangs. Within the theme, the participants' narratives produced four sub-themes:

- Sub-theme 1.1: Multi-generational gang involvement
- Sub-theme 1.2: Misusing family homes
- Sub-theme 1.3: Single parenthood
- Sub-theme 1.4: Scattered families

In **sub-theme 1.1**, the participants highlighted how difficult life was for them, emanating from a multi-generational gang family. The participants explained how they, from a young age, were involuntarily linked to gangs, exposed to gang activities, and had had their lives placed in danger, because of the older generation's gang involvement. In **sub-theme 1.2**, the narratives describe the criminal actions of older family members, and gang members in the household. The participants had left their homes at a very young age to escape that unstable and unsafe environment, hoping to find a better one elsewhere. Their constant fear of the exposure to this dangerous and unsafe environment, especially for women, could be identified clearly in the narratives. In **sub-theme 1.3**, the rift that the absent parent leaves in a household was revealed

unmistakably. The participants were left with the pain and trauma of the loss of a parent, and the burden that was placed on the single parent, to fulfill the role of both parents. It illustrated how some single parents were overwhelmed by their circumstances and compelled to conform to gang culture and activities. The participants' intentions in leaving were to avoid becoming part of such a lifestyle. In **sub-theme 1.4**, the development of the participants' needs to belong to a family, because of the lengthy separation from their original families, is explained.

Conclusion of theme 1: It could be concluded that women in gangs emanate from multi-risk factors within the family and household. Additionally, for young women, this factor was the most significant *push factor* into gang involvement. Consequently, these long-lasting and multi-generational challenges need to be disrupted and addressed. The **implication** is that several of the family members contribute and are affected by the multiple challenges in the household. Therefore, social workers should strongly consider rendering services inclusively with the whole family, and not only to the women in gangs. Should this not be done the risk exists that the services may not be successful. Additionally, poor family functioning could escalate into the community, and subsequently contribute to the dysfunction of the whole community; therefore, the family, as a whole, needs to be included when intervention services are considered.

5.2.2.2. Main theme 2: Gang-joining compulsion

Main theme 2 reflected on the compelling reasons that persuaded women to join gangs. The gang-joining compulsion delivered three sub-themes, as drivers towards joining gangs, according to participants' narratives.

- Sub-theme 2.1: Peer pressure
- Sub-theme 2.2: Influence of boyfriends / intimate partners

- Sub-theme 2.3: Socio-emotional drivers

In **sub-theme 2.1**, the focus is on the power of negative friends and peer groups, as well as the bad choices that the participants could make, when influenced in a negative way. In **sub-theme 2.2**, the findings revealed the power that boyfriends could have, directly or indirectly, over young women in particular, to perform acts and make choices, while being fully aware of the consequences. In **sub-theme 2.3**, the narratives highlighted how the participants were drawn into gangs by their socio-emotional drives, because they wanted to experience the perceived (as indicated by them) power, protection, enjoyment of a fun social life, while receiving free drugs, money, and nice clothes, which the gangs provided initially. However, they all realised later that the fun was short lived, and the free items were not free, but only used to draw them into the gangs, to be exploited later for the benefit the gang.

Conclusion of theme 2: The **conclusion** is that the participants' poor family life and sense of socio-emotional estrangement, placed them at risk and vulnerable to be influenced easily by friends and boyfriends. They had become powerful drivers in their lives, triggering a sense of belonging to a group, and an attraction for the material things that the gang had to offer. The **implication** is that, if these factors are left unchecked, they will continuously be prone to being targets for the gangs. Better opportunities need to be created for the family, to improve their socio-economic conditions. Women also need to be empowered and educated about personal power, as well as making better choices.

5.2.2.3. Main theme 3: School environment

Main theme 3 focused on the school environment that could be positive or negative for schoolchildren, especially adolescents. This theme produced two sub-themes that were contributing factors for the participants' gang involvement.

- Sub-theme 3.1: School friends as entry to gangs
- Sub-theme 3.2: School drop out

Sub-theme 3.1, focused on the narratives of the participants, revealing how their downward spiral started by associating with the wrong (and highly influential) friends in high school. The participants' narratives reflect how they were influenced by their friends to use substances and truant (bunk off) from school. The drug usage started with cigarettes, which escalated to stronger substances. This sub-theme revealed how the wrong friends could be the pre-cursors to gang joining. In **sub-theme 3.2**, most of the participants (but for two) dropped out of school. Literature confirmed that, subsequently, they became targets for gang involvement, and ultimately, entered the gangs.

Conclusion of theme 3: The **conclusion** is that the participants associated with these friends because they, admittedly, displayed the same behaviour, and consequently, were connected through similar circumstances and behaviour. These connections fostered a sense of belonging and *fitting in*. The **implications**, therefore, are that, if a child is not prepared to resist bad influences, irrespective of the circumstances they emanate from, there is a great chance that they could become easily susceptible to peer pressure. The school environment could play a huge role in preparing the child to resist peer pressure, by providing programmes to all learners, identifying the vulnerable ones, and including them in programmes that are more specific.

5.2.2.4. Main Theme 4: Victimisation and exploitation

Regarding main theme 4, rich narratives were gathered on how the participants were victimised and exploited, through multiple incidents, by the gang they got involve with, as well as their boyfriends as gang members. This theme was particularly revealing about the levels of sexual

violence to which the participants were subjected. Main theme 4 has four sub-themes, as follows:

- Sub-theme 4.1: Abuse and rape by gang members
- Sub-theme 4.2: Exploitation by gang
- Sub-theme 4.3: Intimate partner violence
- Sub-theme 4.4: Exploitation by gangster boyfriend

In **sub-theme 4.1**, the extent of the violation against participants, including rape, physical and emotional abuse, and disrespect of them as human beings, in general, and women in particular. The gang perceived these deeds against them as natural and befitting of their positions in the gang, or that they were a possession of the gang. The narratives also revealed that the participants did not report the abuse, for fear of violent retribution against them, placing their lives in grave danger. In **sub-theme 4.2**, the participants were also used to engage in criminal acts, which implied a criminal record and/or jail time, if arrested, as they were compelled to take responsibility for crimes committed by the gang and were occasionally imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. In **sub-themes 4.3**, and **4.4**, the focus was on the violence and exploitation by participants' boyfriends. These sub-themes were even more emotionally laden, as intimate relationships, generally, are perceived as being built on trust, respect, love, and care. However, for the participants, these relationships were also founded on violence and exploitation.

Conclusionn of theme 4: The **conclusion** is that women in gangs suffer long-term victimisation and violation by the gangs, as well as their boyfriends, because they are unable to leave on their own terms. They cannot protect themselves, are not protected by their boyfriends, or the authorities, as they are unable to report the violations because of fear for their lives. **The implications** are that the violations will continue and leave these young women

with long-term scars, which might eventually not heal, depriving them of living and building normal lives for themselves, as well as others who need them, for example, their children. They should be protected when they lay charges, and safe houses could be established to safeguard them from the gangs, when they leave this dangerous lifestyle.

5.2.2.5. Main Theme 5: Substance abuse

Substance abuse is extremely prevalent in the Western Cape, established as it was by the *tot system*, as well as the proliferation of gang activities, including the illicit drug smuggling trade. This theme produced three sub-themes.

- Sub-theme 5.1: Substance abuse by parents
- Sub-theme 5.2: Substance abuse by the participants
- Sub-theme 5.3: Drug houses in communities

In **sub-theme 5.1**, the focus is on parents abusing substances, as well as its consequences for their parenting skills; the caring and attention they were unable to provide for their children, the participants in this current study. The narratives indicated that, in their household, where the parents abused substances, less food, care, and supervision over the children abounded, as the parents were inebriated most of the time. Often, they were not even home to supervise their children. The consequences were that the children were hungry and unsupervised, as well as left to their own devices, including being on the street more often. In **sub-theme 5.2**, the participants, who abused substances, were assessed. Eventually they admitted that they had joined the gang for access to free drugs, which influenced their decision making, realising only later the serious consequences of their choices and behaviour. In **sub-theme 5.3**, an interesting phenomenon emerged, namely, the existence of drug houses, operated by the gangs, which made it more difficult to resist, and eventually, locking them into their drug and gang lifestyle.

Conclusion of theme 5: The conclusion is that, next to family dysfunction, substance abuse is one of the most compelling reasons that impelled women to join gangs, as it implies addiction and habit-forming behaviours. Parents and family are the igniters, but gangs and gang-houses are the maintainers. It is in the best interests of gangs to feed the drug habits of people, to maintain their illicit drug trading. The **implications** are that families play a vital role in preventing drug use and abuse, because this is where it starts for young people, while communities are complicit in the proliferation of drug houses and drug abuse, by not taking remedial action.

5.2.2.6. Main Theme 6: Poorly resourced community

Poorly resourced communities are the springboards for crime to sprout and increase. Through the narratives, the following three sub-themes emerged from this main theme:

- Sub-theme 6.1: Socio-economic conditions
- Sub-theme 6.2: Community sanction and fear
- Sub-theme 6.3: Lack of community resources

In **sub-theme 6.1**, the role of poverty in the community is revealed, with many people being unemployed, which create ideal opportunities for the power and influence of gangs and gangsters. Housing is in a poor state; however, as one participant described, it feels like being in a cellblock, with entrances and exits, like a concentration camp. In **sub-theme 6.2**, the participants' narratives reflected that the gangs seemed to be the only people, who thrive in the community. This attracted the children, as they perceive the gangsters as heroes or role models and strive to emulate them. Community conditions do not create many options for the people to obtain money in an honest way; consequently, the gangs take advantage of the situation, by providing them with necessities, and in return, expect their loyalty and support. The narratives revealed that these acts divided the community, as some supported the gangs, while others

opposed them. A divided community lacks community support and unity; therefore, it will not stand united against gangs. An interesting finding was that the participants drew attention to the mothers of the gangsters, who protected and supported their male gangster children, despite being aware of their criminal activities. In **sub-theme 6.3**, the focus was on the lack of recreational activities in the community; however, an interesting narrative indicated that the youth were uninterested to participate in community recreation activities, and prone to disobey.

Conclusion of theme 6: Living in a poor socio-economic community deprived individuals of many opportunities to improve their lifestyle and escape poverty, because of a lack of resources. With a community, crippled by poverty and seeking for ways to survive, as well as the poor vision of authorities, who show no effort to improve these peoples' circumstances, the gangs are given the upper hand. They win the community over by providing them with their basic needs, and subsequently, they take control, to facilitate an increase in their criminal activities in the area, without fear of any opposition. This is exacerbated by a divided community, caused by the support some members for the gang activities, and the opposition of others. **The implication** is that the community will remain in this situation for a very long time, and might deteriorate, which ultimately traps the community in these severe conditions, from which they are unable to escape. As the situation worsens, the more difficult it will be for the government to intervene, and the community, to recover fully.

5.2.3. Overall conclusion of the main findings

The overall conclusion of the main findings was that the family is and continues to be the main stakeholder and role player in the lives of children. Here children learn what it is like to be nurtured; or in the lives of the participants in this current study, neglected, abused, and left to their own devices for the most part. The findings correlated well with the literature.

Six profound and interesting revelations emerged:

- the multi-generational aspect of gang membership;
- the lifestyle of women in gangs always centred on their subjugation and abuse, both by the gang, as well as their gangster boyfriends;
- the role of drug dens in the community, and the role they played in the maintenance of the drug habits of people in that community;
- the role of mothers in enabling their sons' criminal behaviour and activities, believing that they could do no wrong;
- the sanction of communities is important to the gangs longevity in a specific community; and
- the strategies by gangs to enslave individuals and communities.

5.3. Research findings in relation to the research objectives of the study

The study had two objectives, which were previously mentioned to describe precisely what the researcher aimed to accomplish. In this section, the researcher describes how the research findings fulfilled the two research objectives.

5.3.1. Objective 1: To explore and describe the perceptions of women in gangs, regarding their experiences

This objective was achieved by exploring and describing the participants' gang involvement, through the semi-structured interviews and an interview schedule, with the inclusion of research literature. The data collection methods were able to gather data that provided insight into how the women in gangs perceived their experiences within the gangs, in which they were involved. Their opinions and experiences, generally, could be seen from Theme 1 to Theme 6, in which they provided their opinions on and descriptions of their experiences, while being part

of a gang, as well as the effects that the gang-infected community had on them, and the rest of the residents. However, in Theme 4 (Victimisation and exploitation) they explained being introduced by their boyfriend gang member, as well as their experiences during their gang involvement. This cemented the experiences of the participants, regarding their involvement in gangs, and resulted in Objective 1 being fulfilled.

5.3.2. Objective 2: To explore and describe causal factors that contributed to their gang involvement

The researcher gathered rich and deep data that explained how certain factors in the lives of the participants contributed to their gang involvement. The findings of the study also provided a deeper understanding of the complexity of being gang-involved. These findings reflect in all the themes (Themes 1-6). It covers the micro (individual), meso (family), and the macro (community) levels.

Theme 1 was centred on the factors involved in being reared in a multi-variate dysfunction family, comprising multi-generational gang involvement by various family members. The family homes misused, where other gang members frequented, and gang activities were allowed to transpire, within the confines of the participants' homes. Growing up with a single parent was particularly concerning, and provided insight into the specific difficulties of being a single parent, and its contribution to the issue. Finally, separated families were springboards of the search for a sense of belonging.

In Theme 2 (gang joining compulsions), causal factors were also provided, as could be observed by the influence of friends, boyfriends, and the specific social and emotional needs of participants. Theme 3 was focused on the circumstances within schools, especially the

influence of school friends and early school dropout. In Theme 4, the researcher describes the victimisation and exploitation that the women endured at the hands of gang members, leaving them with long-term scars, as well as unable to leave the gang on their own terms. In Theme 5 (substance abuse), the substance abuse by the participants' parents, as well as their own abuse, were causal factors, the perpetuating factor being the drug houses in the community. Theme 6 was focused on the adverse circumstances in the community, based on a sense of dispossession and marginalisation. The afore-mentioned findings support the fulfilment of Objective 2.

5.4. Recommendations emerging from the study

The following recommendations are offered in terms of six main sections.

5.4.1. Recommendations for objective 1: Women' experiences in gangs

The following recommendations are made, regarding the participants' general experiences of being in gangs:

- **Women in gangs police unit:** Police stations should have a special team working with abused women, to identify women in gangs and, in collaboration with other stakeholders, render services to them. These types of services should include support, counselling, and accepting the criminal charges laid against the perpetrators. The team should offer protection to them, by referring them to safe houses that are immediately available to them.
- **Support services:** Government social services, together with NGOs, should create support services and easily accessible rehabilitation centres for women inside and outside the community. Some women prefer to attend programmes in the community, while others prefer to go out of the community, where they are away from the scrutiny of their neighbours, or other gang members.

- **Accessible and available safe houses:** Safe houses for women should be easily accessible, and immediately available. Women in need of immediate safe housing should not be put on a waiting list. Safe houses should accommodate these women and their children for at least two years, to assist them with finding employment and permanent accommodation. These centres should include parenting skills and substance abuse rehabilitation programmes.
- **Specialist professional services:** The Department of Correctional Services should implement three-tiered specialised services. Firstly, a special section within prisons (for those who are incarcerated) that provide specific counselling to women in gangs. Secondly, after completing their prison sentences, to refer them to safe houses, where they are equipped with skills and assisted with finding employment. Thirdly, thereafter, to provide them with a permanent place to stay outside the area from which they originated. Additionally, provide them with opportunities to have contact with their children, while working towards reuniting them with their children, as frequently, they have to return to the community to have contact with their children.

5.4.2. Recommendation for objective 2: Causal factors for gang involvement

The recommendations that follow are centred on the participants' opinions about the causal factors of women joining gangs.

- **Prevention services at an early age:** The government (provincial and local authorities) to re-assess current preventative services for younger girls and boys with the aim to prevent challenging behaviour later in their lives. Community centres to have crèches, preschools, and after care for the schoolchildren, to keep siblings together and safe after school, while the parents are at work. Free tutors should be employed to assist children with their schoolwork. These centres should have life skills programmes for girls and

boys, separately, for boys to unlearn the traditional male role, and to learn to respect women, while girls are empowered to see their worth, with sport and recreational activities.

- **Recreation programmes and activities:** Provincial and local authorities (for example, The City of Cape Town) to establish programmes over weekends for families to have fun together. Here religious and cultural organisations also have a significant role to play.
- **Better community policing:** The police should patrol the area continuously. People generally feel safer when the police are always around. People lose hope and trust when the police patrol occasionally. Police officers should rotate in areas on a regular basis, to ensure that they do not become too familiar and known to the residents, including gangs, to illuminate potential police corruption. Police to eradicate gang houses, while patrolling at any hour of the day or night. Here specialist gang training will be important.
- **Family intervention:** Government should create a special unit of social workers/ community workers/social auxiliary workers, who are based in specific areas to identify families or children at risk. Social workers, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should focus specifically on rendering services to these families.
- **Parenting skills and rearing adolescents:** Programmes on parenting skills and the rearing of adolescents should be provided in the community, to ensure that they are easily accessible. These programmes should be offered voluntarily, and involuntarily, for those who are guilty as neglectful parents. These programmes should also be held after hours, or on weekends, to accommodate those who are employed. The involuntary parents should be compelled to complete the programme, or face consequences.

- **Special cadre for working with women in gangs:** The Department of Basic Education should employ special persons to focus on support services and programmes after school for women. In many instances, after school activities are managed by the teachers, who often fail because of the inconsistency and sustainability of activities. Teachers are already overloaded with their core function, and do not have the time to manage these activities, which should be a consistent and a long-term project.
- **Truancy and school dropout officers:** Department of Basic Education should consider implementing strict rules and laws against the parents, who allow their children to bunk off or be absent from school without a valid reason.

5.4.3. Recommendations for policy

The National Youth Policy (NYP) 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Office of the Presidency, 2015) do refer to women in gangs. It should recognise the existence of women in gangs, and distinctively include specific recommendations to protect, uplift, and improve their lifestyles; however, foremost, they should identify plans to protect them from victimisation within the sphere of gangs.

- **Funding policies:** Government should amend or create fiscal policies to enable the awarding of specific funding to combat gangs, and these should be allocated to holistic programmes, for example, social work services, health services, recreational, sport, art and educational centres in the area. This is to ensure that programmes are regular and sustainable.

5.4.4. Recommendations for social work practice and education

The following recommendations are focused on social work practice and education, as well as CPD.

- **Specialist CPD training for practice:** Current social work practitioners should consider applying for CPD training opportunities that specifically focus on gangs, and women in gangs. The orientation should be that this is a specialised area of work.
- **CPD service providers:** Trainers should be encouraged and given incentives to provide training, with a special focus on gangs, and women in gangs.
- **Social work degree content:** Especially in the Western Cape, where gang joining is rife, social work degree programmes at the specific universities in the province should consider offering specialist modules on gangs.

5.4.5. Recommendations for further research

During this current research, it became clear that women in gangs are understudied; therefore, more studies should be conducted on this topic. Due to time constraints, and because some topics identified, did not fit this topic, they could not be included in this research. Research on the views of the family members could be considered, to determine how they perceived the young woman's gang involvement. Studies on the reasons for initiating substance use, which, in this current research, was a pertinent risk factor, could also be considered. Studies, specifically on victimisation and exploitation of young women in gangs could also be considered, to gain a deeper understanding of the abuse, to subsequently, be able to make recommendations on how to assist, or protect these women. As these studies are conducted, additional relevant topics might emerge.

5.4.6. The specific role of government

In addition to the recommendations already made, there should also be cooperation between the various government departments, which is of paramount importance to addressing the scourge of women in gangs, and generally, the proliferation of gangs in the Western Cape. All government departments should implement specialist services for women, which should be

advertised via the media, namely, newsletters, television, billboards, and community newspapers. In the community newspapers, there should be a special column of services and contact details. The media (for example, announcements on the television, billboards, among others) should be constant reminders of the services in the areas, especially regarding GBV, rape, gang exploitation, as well as how to get out of being involved in a gang. Government departments should have a policy of cooperation, so that services are provided within the overall policy of women, with *gangs* as a sub-component.

5.5. Limitations of the study

The researcher could only recruit 10 participants, although the targeted number was 20 participants. However, the sample was sufficient for a qualitative study. The recommendations, therefore, were based only on the findings of the 10 participants. Additionally, South African studies that fully focused on women in gangs were limited, which also limited the support of the study's findings, based on the literature of previous findings. However, this current study did provide rich, thick data on the women's experiences in gangs, which could form the basis of other studies in the future. A limitation was that the study only focused on one general area in Cape Town, which could limit its transferability to other areas.

5.6. Significance of the study

Limited research in South Africa focus on women in gangs, as most studies focus on males in gangs. This current study centres on women, and is valuable, as it contributes to the limited available studies. The study, with the other literature available, could be used as a guide to determine the types of services for women in gangs, and to plan, as well as implement accordingly. Women are marginalised; not only in terms of poverty indicators, but also because of the strong patriarchal and gender-bias that exists in families and communities, which

constrains the importance of the role they play in society. This current study contributes to the awareness of gender in society, as well as the struggles and challenges of women, in order to increase the focus on them, with the aim of improving their circumstances. The study also focusses on IPV, and therefore, through the implementation of programmes and services for women in gangs, it could assist in reducing IPV. Women, who experience gender-based violence, would also be able make use of these services. The study includes specific recommendations for a holistic focus on young women, to facilitate and enable a better future for them.

5.7. Study conclusion

In this current study, the researcher aimed to identify risk factors that significantly contribute to women joining gangs, and their experiences within the gang setting. Within this study, some risk factors were more prominent, and could be compared with other research studies. This study reveals how the participants family system and systems in their ecological environment may have contributed to their gang involvement.

The troubled family was observed to be the foremost risk factor for these participants in gangs. Most of the participants identified several behavioural traits within the family, namely, distorted relationships, multigenerational gang members, and single parenthood, which were related to women joining gangs.

A child model's behaviour from a young age and their character is formed from their early developmental stages. Ongoing interaction between the child and the parents (caregivers) plays a big role in shaping a child's personality traits. A child, who has been exposed to a stable interactive environment; and where the caregiver uses appropriate comforting measures, may

turn out to be more self-controlled and self-disciplined, as s/he grows older. Conversely, children who have been exposed to aggressive behaviour and an unstable environment is at higher risk of adopting these unstable behaviour and lifestyle.

This study identified how multigenerational gang participation influenced gang involvement for some participants. Some of the participants were born and raised within risky home environments, which rendered them more vulnerable to gang involvement. Besides the modelling of behaviour, this study further revealed that some of the participants who were raised in a gang cultured environment, were purposefully trained by these family members to engage in gang activities.

It would appear that, from the family system's perspective, a gang family member was not necessarily a protective factor against gang victimisation in a gang-infested community, but instead, seemed to make these participants' more vulnerable to gang victimisation. The participants, who were exposed to such an environment, disclosed how they feared for their safety because of the known gang moving in and out of their home, and simultaneously, feared being targeted by rival gangs because of their association with a specific gang.

Single parenthood, or the absence of a parent figure/s, in an impoverish community, was also identified as a potential risk factor for women joining gangs. In this current research, the participants reflected the trauma they experienced with the absence of their parent/parents, mostly their fathers. Therefore, it could be concluded that their exposure to single parenthood had a profound impact on them, emotionally. The loss these women endured because of an absent parent/s could be the result a lack of, or insufficient supervision by their single parent.

From a single parent's perspective, in a marginalised community, it is most likely that single parents may experience their own challenges of taking on dual roles, financial limitations, and the challenges of parental supervision. In an impoverished community, such as the area under study, where hardship occurs daily, these participants' single parents may have struggle between providing for the family, having to supervise, as well as discipline their children, who are exposed to high levels of negative influences that might hamper their supervision, which may create a feeling of disconnected from the family, and ultimately searching to satisfy that sense of belonging elsewhere, leaving them susceptible to negative influences, such as joining of a gang.

After the family, the community was observed as one of the foremost contributing factors to the trend of women entering gangs. The concept of marginalised communities is well explained by certain prominent research scholars, specifically within the South African context. They specifically draw attention to the broader spectrum of the marginalised communities, where it is said that marginalised communities are the breeding ground for persons to join gangs for survival. A fundamental concept is the long-term exposure of most of the participants to a marginalised community, which could play an important role in them developing challenging behaviour, most probably resulting in gang involvement.

In this research, peer pressure, including boyfriends, who are gang members, also emerged as a compelling factor for these participants to join gangs. Studies argue that peer pressure is a strong stimulus for behaviour, which could be an indication of the influence peers exact on each other.

Additionally, in this current study, the use of substances appeared to play a prominent role in the association with gangs. All participants were misusing/abusing substances and most of them acknowledged that they had joined the gang to have free access to illicit drugs, which could be a major attraction for women who is on drugs, to join gangs; as all of them used substances prior to joining a gang.

Moreover, in this current study, the participants reported experienced more than one form of abuse, such as physical- and psychological abuse at home as a contributing factor, with psychological abuse more prominent, but excluded sexual abuse.

Besides the behaviour at school, the findings of this study could not clearly determine whether the school environment was a risk factor for the participants to join gangs, as there was no indication of the level of influence, the school environment had on them. This research was also unable to determine whether poor academic performance could play a role in the gang involvement of women, as all the women in this current study had reached high school, and most performed satisfactorily at school.

This current research also highlighted the victimisation and exploitation of participants in gangs. All the participants admitted that they had been exposed to physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, and coerced into selling drugs, carrying drugs and guns, spying on rival gangs, while placing their lives in danger, regardless of their older family gang involvement. Therefore, involvement seems to have severe negative consequences for them.

Finally, a simple, but important aspect of leisure boredom, which also emerged as a risk factor in this study, should not be overlooked as most of the participants indicated how there is not

much for the young people in the area to do, either because they are stuck in the homes to escape the gang violence, or limited and interesting activities in the area to keep them occupied. Reviewing these risk factors, as well as how intertwined they are, might well designate that most of these participants were exposed to some form of risk factor; but most probably exposed to multiple risk factors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Ethics Clearance Letter



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



8 November 2021

Mrs NB Francis
Social Work
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

HSSREC Reference Number: HS16/7/9
Project Title: The experiences of young women joining street gangs in a specific area in Cape Town.
Approval Period: 30 September 2016 – 30 September 2017

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology, and amendments to the ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

For permission to conduct research using student and/or staff data or to distribute research surveys/questionnaires please apply via:

<https://sites.google.com/uwc.ac.za/permissionresearch/home>

The permission letter must then be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Josias'.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

Director: Research Development
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

APPENDIX B: Participant Interview Schedule

This interview schedule is to address the following research question:

“What are the risk factors that contribute women to join gangs and what influenced it had on them?”

The objectives of the study will be to:

- i. To explore and describe the experiences of women in gangs in the area under study, Cape Town
- ii. To explore and describe the risk factors that contribute to women joining gangs in the area under study, Cape Town

Please make sure that you have given your written consent before taking part in this research study, also note that everything that will be shared during this interview will only be used for the research project and pseudonyms will be used to insure anonymity.

Questions
Introductory question: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Are you comfortable to talk?2. How would you describe yourself to a person you have just met? Can you tell me more about yourself3. What would be the best parts of yourself and what do you think are your worst? What would your friends say about you?
Questions on the family: <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Why do think some people get into trouble? (or join gangs)5. How would you describe the relationship and experiences between you and your family, mother, father, siblings?6. What role did your family have in your life and joining a gang?7. What do you think are the main reasons for you joining a gang?
Questions on the community: <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. How would you describe your community/ neighborhood?9. What are the good elements (enablements) and what are the bad elements (constraints)?
Questions on the experience as a gang member <ol style="list-style-type: none">10. Can you tell me how you experienced being part of the gang?11. What are the good parts and what are the bad parts?
Concluding questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none">12. How do you think can social workers improve their services13. Would you like to add anything else14. Do you have any other question or concerns?

MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK

EXPLORING AND DESCRIBING WOMEN IN GANGS

(Unstructured Interview Guide)

1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- How old are you?
- Where are you originally from (province, community, etc)
- How long do you live in the province/area?
- If you moved from another province, how long ago was that?
- Why did you move?
- Where do you currently live?
- What gender do you identify with?
- What race group do you identify with?
- How would you describe yourself to others?

1.2. SCHOOL/EMPLOYMENT

- Are you currently in school?
 - If yes, what grade are you in? At what school?
 - If no, what grade did you reach? At what school?
- How do you/did you experience school?
- What would you say how do/did you perform academically?
- What subjects did you like? Why?
- What subject did you not like? Why?
- What kind of friends do/did you have at school?
- Are you currently working?
 - If yes, tell me more about your work?
- How long have you been working there?
 - If no, how long have you been out of work?
- What do you do for an income/ how do you provide for yourself financially?

2. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- Who do you live with?
- How long have you lived with them?
- How many people live in the house?
- Are they family of yours?
- How are you related?
- What is your home life like?
- Does anyone get along? What does getting along look like?
- Who is employed in the house?
- Who contribute financially and who don't?
- Can you tell me more about each family member?
- Can you describe your relationship with the family members?
 - If the relationship is not good, why not?

- Is there any other family member that is/ was a gang member?
- How do you family feel about you being involve in the gang?
- How was your life like as a child within the family?
- Was there any violent behaviour taking place in your family?
 - if yes, can you give me an example?
- Is /was there any violence of any kind of a family member towards you?
 - If “yes” Can you share it with me?

2.1 Other relationships

- Are you in a relationship/married?
 - If yes, how long have you been in the relationship/married?
- How would you describe your relationship with your partner?
 - If no, have you ever been in a relationship before?
- Is he part of a gang?
- Does he have any influence in you being part of the gang?
- Do you have any children?
 - If “yes” do you think you involvement in the gang bother the children?
 - If “yes” can you share with me how?

3. COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

- Can you tell me a little more about your community?
- Who lives in your community and what are these people like?
- What kind of challenges do the people in the community have to deal with?
- What kind of challenges do you have to deal with in the community? How do you deal with it?
- How do you feel about these challenges that affect you?
- Are there any gangs in the community?

3.1 Peers

- Tell me a little bit more about your friends. What type of friends are they?
- Where are they from?
- How did you meet?
- Do they attend school/ work?
 - If “no” What do they do for a living?
- Does your family/parents know your friends?
- What do they think about your friends?
- Are/Was they part of a gang?
 - If “yes” how long have they been part of a gang?
 - Do you belong to the same gang as yours?
- Do they have any influence in you entering the gang?
- Do you have a best friend?
 - If “yes” tell me more about him/her

4. EXPERIENCES AS A GANG MEMBER

- What gang did/ do you belong to?
- How long have you been a member of the gang?
- Can you tell me how you first got involve in the gang?
- What is/was your position in the gang?
- What role did/do you have in the gang?
- Do any of your friend/s family currently belong to a gang?
 - If “yes” what role/position (do they fill) do they play in the gang?
- How did/do you feel being part of a gang?
- What do you think, why did you join the gang?
- What impact did/does this have on your life?
- How do you feel now about being part of a gang?
- What kind of contribution do you make to the gang?
- How often do you meet with the gang?
- How do you feel being part of the gang?
- Is/Was there any benefits you get out of the gang?
- Can you share with me examples?
- Is/Was there any negative/ bad things you get out of the gang?
- Can you share with me examples?
- Is there any initiations taking place when a person joins a gang?
 - If yes” Can you share with me how it’s being done?
- Were you initiated into the gang?
 - If “yes” Can you share with me how?
- How does/did your family feel about you being in a gang?
- How do they treat you because of your gang involvement?
- Do you think you joining the gang was the right thing to do?
- Can you explain why you say so?

5. OTHER

- How can Social Workers improve their services regarding women in gangs?
- What type of programmes do you think will be beneficial as prevention?
- Where would you go if you feel you want to see a professional person?
- If you need help of any kind, who do you approach?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- Do you have any questions/commends?

Thank you for your contribution. It is highly appreciated.

Date of interview.....pseudonym:.....Age:.....

APPENDIX C: Participant Interview Schedule (Afrikaans)

<p>Inleidende vraag:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Is jy gemaklik om te praat?2. Hoe sou jy jousef beskryf aan 'n persoon wat jy pas ontmoet? Kan jy my meer oor jousef vertelc. Wat is die beste dele van jousef en wat dink jy is jou ergste? Wat sou jou vriende van jou sê jy?
<p>Vrae oor die familie:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Hoekom dink jy kom sommige mense in die moeilikheid? (of aansluit by bendes)4. Hoe sou jy die verhouding en ervarings tussen jou en jou familie, ma, pa, broers en susters, beskryf?5. Watter rol het jou gesin gespeel in jou lewe en die aansluiting by 'n bende?6. Wat dink jy is die vernaamste redes vir jou by die aansluit van 'n bende?
<p>Vrae oor die gemeenskap:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Hoe sal jy jou gemeenskap / omgewing te beskryf?8. Wat is die goeie elemente (enablements) en wat is die slegte elemente (beperkings)?
<p>Ervarings as n bendelid</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">9. Kan jy my vertel hoe jy ervaar 'n deel van die bende?10. Wat is die goeie dele en wat is die slegte dele11. Verken en beskryf meisies in bendes
<p>Opsommende vrae:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">12. Hoe dink jy kan maatskaplike werkers hul dienste verbeter?13. Wil jy graag enige ander inligting met my meedeel?14. Het jy enige ander vrae of kommentaar?

MEESTERS IN MAATSKAPLIKE WERK
VERKENNING EN BESKRYWING VAN MEISIES IN BENDE

(Ongestruktureerde onderhoud riglyn)

1. DEMOGRAFIESE PROFIEL

- Hoeveel jaar oud is jy?
- Waar is jy oorspronklik van (provinsie, gemeenskap, ens)
- Hoe lank woon jy in die provinsie / gebied?
- As jy getrek het van 'n ander provinsie, hoe lank gelede was dit?
- Waarom het jy verhuis?
- Waar woon jy tans?
- Hoe oud is jy?
- Wat geslag identifiseer jy met?
- Wat rassegroep identifiseer jy met?
- Hoe sal jy jousef beskryf aan ander:

1.2.-Skool /werk

- Is jy tans in die skool?
— Indien ja, watter graad is jy? Op watter skool?
- Hoe kom jy by die skool?
- Hoe ervaar / het jy skool ervaar?
- Wat sou jy sê hoe presteer / het jy akademies ge presteer?
- Watter vakke het jy van gehou? Hoekom?
- Watter vakke het jy nie van gehou nie?
- Wat soort vriende het jy in die skool/ gehad?
— Indien nee, watter graad het jy bereik? Op watter skool?
- Is jy tans werksaam?
—Indien ja, vertel my meer oor jou werk?
- Hoe lank werk jy daar?
— Indien nee, hoe lank is jy al uit die werk?
- Wat doen jy vir 'n inkomste / hoe sorg jy vir jousef finansieel?

2. FAMILIE VERHOUDINGS

- Wie woon jy met?
- Hoe lank woon jy saam met hulle?
- Hoeveel mense woon in die huis?
- Is hulle familie van jou?
- Hoe is julle verwant aan mekaar?
- Wat is jou huis lewe soos?
- Kom almal oor die weg met mekaar? Wat beteken dit om oor die weg te kom, vir jou?
- Met wie kon jy goed oor die weg? Hoekom?
- Met wie kom jy nie goed oor die weg nie? Hoekom?

- Wie werk in die huis?
- Wie lewer n bydra in die huis en wie nie?
- Kan jy my meer vertel oor jou familieledede?
- Kan jy jou verhouding met die familie beskryf?
— Indien die verhouding nie goed is nie, hoekom nie?
- Is daar enige ander familielid wat n bendelid is / was?
- Hoe voel jou familie oor jou betrekkenheid in n bende?
- Hoe was jou lewe as 'n kind in die gesin?
- Was daar enige gewelddadige gedrag wat plaasvind/gevind het in jou familie,?
—Indien “Ja” kan jy 'n voorbeeld gee?
- Is / was daar enige geweld van enige aard van 'n familielid teenoor jou?
—Indien "ja" kan jy dit met my deel?

2.1. -Ander verhoudings

- Is jy tans in 'n verhouding / huwelik?
— Indien “ja”, hoe lank is jy in die verhouding /getroud?
- Hoe sou jy jou verhouding met jou lewensmaat te beskryf?
— Indien “nee”, was jy al ooit in 'n verhouding voorheen?
- Is hy deel van 'n bende?
- Het hy enige invloed in jou 'n deelname in die bende?
- Het jy enige kinders?
— Indien “ja” dink jy jou deelname aan die bende pla die kinder?
— Indien “ja” can jy met my meedeel hoe?

3. GEMEENSKAP MILIEU

- Kan jy my 'n bietjie meer oor jou gemeenskap te vertel?
- Wie woon in jou gemeenskap en watter soort mense is hulle?
- Watter soort uitdagings het die mense in die gemeenskap te doen het met?
- Met watter soort uitdagings het jy te make in die gemeenskap? Hoe hanteer jy dit?
- Hoe voel jy oor hierdie uitdagings wat jou raak?
- Is daar enige bende groepe in die gemeenskap?

3.1.Vriendekring

- Vertel my 'n bietjie meer oor jou vriende, Watter tipe vriend is hulle?
- Waar is hulle vandaan?
- Hoe het julle ontmoet?
- Woon/Het hulle skool by/ bygewoon?
— Indien “nee” wat maak hulle vir n lewe?
- Ken jou familie/ouers jou vriende?
- Wat dink hulle van jou vriende
- Is/Was hulle deel van 'n bende?
— Indien “ja” hoe lank is/was hulle deel van die bende?
- Behoort hulle aan dieselfde bende as jy?

- Do hulle enige invloed in jou bende betrokkenheid?
- Het jy 'n beste vriend?
 - Indien "ja" vertel my meer omtrent hom / haar
- **4. ERVARINGS AS 'N BENDELID**
- Wat bende het / behoort jy aan?
- Hoe lank is jy 'n lid van die bende?
- Vertel my hoe jy die eerste keer betrokke geraak het in die bende?
- Wat is/was jou posisie in die bendegroep?
- Watter rol het jy gespeel/speel jy in die bendegroep?
- Is daar enige van jou vriende / familie wat tans behoort aan 'n bende?
 - Indien "ja" watter rol/posisie (beklee hulle) speel hulle in die bendegroep?
- Hoe voel jy om deel te wees van n bende?
- Wat dink jy is jou rede vir jou aansluiting by die bende?
- Wat impak het dit op jou lewe/gehad?
- Hoe voel jy nou oor jou aansluiting by die bende?
- Watter tipe bydrae lewer jy in die bendegroep?
- Hoe gereeld sien jy die bendegroep?
- Hoe voel jy om deel van die bende te wees?
- Is/Was daar enige voordele wat jy uit die bendegroep uitkry?
- Kan jy voorbeelde gee?
- Is/was daar enige negatiewe dinge wat jy uit die groep uitkry?
- Kan jy my voorbeelde gee?
- Is daar enige "initiations" wat plaasvind as n persoon by n bende aansluit?
- Indien "ja" Kan jy aan my vertel hoe word dit gedoen?
- Was jy in die bendegroep "initiated"?
 - Indien "ja" Kan jy my vertel hoe jy initiate" was?
- Hoe het jou familie gevoel oor jou wat deel van n bende is?
- Hoe hanteer jou familie jou oor jou bende lidmaatskap??
- Dink jy jou aansluiting by die bende was die regte ding?
- Kan jy verduidelik hoekom jy so se?

5. ANDER

- Hoe kan Maatskaplike Werkers hul dienste verbeter vir meisie in bende?
- Watter tipe programme dink jy kan aangebied word as voorbehoeding?
- Waar sal jy om hulp gaab vra as jy voel jy wil n profesionele persoon sien?
- As jy hulp nodig het van enife aard, wie nader jy?
- Is daar enigiets anders wat jy my wil vertel?
- Do jy enige vrae / kommentaar?

Dankie vir jou bydra. Dit word hardlik waardeer

Datum van onderhoud.....skuilnaame.....ouderdom.....

APPENDIX D: Information Letter



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: 0823349746

E-mail: nenafrancis50@gmail.com

Project Title: Exploring and describe probable risk factors that contribute to young women joining gangs and their experiences in gang involvement in the area under study, Western Cape,

What is this study about?

This is a research project will be conducted by Nena Francis at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because of your experience in gang involvement and you are a resident of the area under study. The purpose of the study is to gain knowledge and understanding of what factors might lead to women joining gangs and their perceived experiences whilst being a part of a gang.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

- a) You will engage in a discussion on your perceptions and experiences of your gang involvement
- b) You will be asking to describe life within your family, friends and the community you reside in.
- c) You may also be requested to provide with recommendations for social work practice.

The interview will be conducted at a service delivery organisation or, alternatively, at your home where you will be comfortable in talking. The language of communication will be either in English or Afrikaans depending on your preference.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The information which you share within the context of the study will be handled by the researcher in a private and confidential manner. The information will be used for the purpose of the study and you have the right to determine the information which you feel comfortable in disclosing. Your name will be substituted with pseudonyms to maintain your identity and therefore you will not be linked to any information discussed in the interview. You as a participant will stay anonymous.

All information recorded will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will only be accessed for academic purposes by the supervisor at the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. You will have the right to inform the researcher of any information you do not want mentioned in the data.

What are the risks of this research?

There are potential risks from participating in this research study. All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nonetheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention. In the event of where you may have been emotionally affected by the nature of the questions, we will debrief you and refer you to an appropriate counsellor, with your permission.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to benefit you personally. However the results may provide the professional in research with knowledge about the experiences of women in gangs and the effect it has on their families. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the effect gang involvement has on them and their families. Through this we hope that this understanding help us to improve social work services, inventing effective early intervention and awareness programmes to alleviate this challenge of women joining gangs, and improve family life.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by *Nena Francis* at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Nena Francis at: nenafancis50@gmail.com

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department: Professor R. Schenck

University of the Western Cape

✉ Privaatsak/Private Bag x17 Bellville 7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2011

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Email: rschenck@uwc.ac.za

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences:

Prof José Frantz

University of the Western Cape

✉ Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535

Email: chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

APPENDIX E: Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Exploring the experiences of women joining street gangs in the area under study in the Western Cape.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

APPENDIX F: Transcript

Participant 6

(The highlighted sections are the questions posted by the Researcher followed by the participant's responses)

good afternoon, my name is Nena, can you please introduce yourself to me?

hello, my name is [REDACTED]

before we start, are you comfortable to speak?

yes I am

okay, let's start with some questions about yourself.

okay.

how would you describe yourself as a person?

I don't know. I would describe myself as a good person, other than drugs now (laugh). I think I am caring for people, and I like to talk and have nice conversations with people.

where are you from?

I am from [REDACTED]. I grew up in the area.

can I ask how old you are?

I am 31 years old, my birthday was now in [REDACTED]

since we are talking about you and your personality, how would people describe you, like your friends and family?

other than the drugs, I was a nice person. I went to school, I had respect for my parents and still love to be with family and talk to them, only now they don't trust me so much anymore.

what makes them not trust you?

It's because of drugs and stealing to support mt tik habit.

let's talk about your schooling, where did you attend?

I went to [REDACTED] primary school. I finished there and then went to high school at [REDACTED], but I didn't finish because I dropped out.

what happened there?

like I started experimenting with using drugs, drinking, parties and that. Then I forget about school on Monday (laughs).

did you enjoy school for the time that you attended?

yes I did, at [REDACTED] it was nice, the children were less, like naughty and stuff, but when I went to [REDACTED], my mind changed.

which subjects did you enjoy?

LO and English and also business studies.

okay were you good at it?

yes I was okay, I enjoyed it.

what substances did you use in high school?

alcohol, dagga, tik...

and what happened next?

I left school.

were you employed?

I worked for [REDACTED] and at a [REDACTED], but there I did more drugs, because the owner of the [REDACTED] smoked tik.

are you still employed there?

no, I don't, I left there long time ago. I don't work now anymore. I "surrel" now (laughs)

what do you mean?

I sit by the [REDACTED] (gang) and ask for money and work for them for money.

and what is that like

hard, because you have to do a lot to get a little. Like must sell drugs, or sleep with one of them or everyone, it doesn't matter.

how do you find that experience?

It's hard because you must just do it, whatever they ask, if you want to smoke you must do your thing.

okay you speaking about the gang now, and I'm going to come back to that later, why do you think people join gangs?

there are many reasons for people to join gangs. Like the children in our areas look up to the gangsters, like heroes, no lies, you must hear how it go in the community, four, five year old children talking about guns, this funky, that funky, who shot who and all that.

why else would they join?

like some of the guys are forced to, sometimes, like the young ones will be given drugs and they become gangsters, other people want to be "ouens" like be somebody in the community and also want people to fear them, because the [REDACTED] are brutal. They don't care. I think that's why.

is that it?

in my case, I left the house because my mother was on tik, after my father died, he was shot, also a gang member, so I left, not to become part of a gang, but just to be away from home.

it was difficult at your house?

yes, my mother started bringing this one and that one into the place, gangsters too. Funny that I left there, because my mother used to bring [REDACTED] (gang name) in the house, but now I am heavy in with the [REDACTED] (gang name)

why did you end up there, and how?

because I was with a [REDACTED] (gang name), [REDACTED], (boyfriend's name) he was my boyfriend, so wherever he went I also went, and he operated with them, a "gunman" so you do what the romans do as they say, also sell stuff.

can you give me examples?

I will like carry a bag with guns for him, sell drugs, count the drugs, all that.

why would women get involved in the gang, you said you got involved because of your boyfriend, what about other women.

they think its nice times see, the guys show them money and mainly tik and there they go, into the trap. Once you there, they do with you what they want. You are like a piece of meat that they pass around. Especially if you Tik and do drugs. Because that's how they control you.

how is your relationship with your other family?

my mother's people have wrote her off, they want nothing to do with her, they from [REDACTED] (area) My sister was taken away by social workers, because of the drugging. It's just me and my sister, but she is from another daddy

do you think your family's life, played a role in you joining a gang?

well, my father was a gangster, until he got killed, he wasn't a [REDACTED] (gang name) he was a [REDACTED] (gang name) but he used to sell mandrax and that, so we always had money, but I think I was always ma exposed to gangsterism and gangster language and stuff.

did that influence your decision to join a gang?

I don't know, but I was used to it, so I really can't say.

can you think of other reasons, other than your boyfriend that you joined the gang?

I also like the fast life and I didn't like what was going on at home, with my mother.

what did you, or do you get from the gang that you don't get at home?

I am with my boyfriend, my mommy don't like him, I get food from the leader, he knew my daddy, so he is nice to me. We sell drugs and I get drugs. I'm not having to sex for food or clothes or stuff like the other women.

which other women?

the women who smoke drugs and are gangsters, if they want drugs or food, they must sleep with the [REDACTED] (gang name) or the leader, he only take the pretty women.

what is it like to live in the area under study?

It's difficult because children are running around with no food, children are on drugs and glue. People have no work. Like during the day it looks like Saturday even if it's a school day. Children don't even worry to go to school and that is how they get pulled in by the gangsters.

what do you mean?

It's like they look for children who are a bit naughty and have guts and stuff, they can use you, to do their dirty work, because the police won't suspect you.

how does the community feel about the gangs?

they will like think stuff but say nothing, but people are afraid in the communities, then you have the parents of the gangsters who protect their children. I'm not going to lie. My boyfriend's mother never wants to hear anything about him. He will kick me messed up every day and his mother will say nothing. He shot people already, he stabbed someone in the front of his mother and when the police came she told them she didn't see. So that is how the community is, some people.

do they protect the gangsters?

a lot of people hate them, but they are scared, some people like them because they get stuff from them.

okay, what else happens?

the gangs will give some people money and even have Christmas time stuff for the children and so, but the people of the community forget what they actually do. Okay I'm part of them but I hate what they are doing to our communities.

okay, where do you live currently?

I stay by my boyfriend's people, who have [REDACTED].

how do you experience living there?

It's okay, I'm living there since I moved out by my mommy.

how do you support yourself?

my boyfriend will make a way, he sell for the boss and then they give us money, but most of what we get we use for drugs, his "brothers" of the gang is also there and they smoke and they bring their "stukkies" (women) to sex in my place. I don't like it but I can't say anything.

what happens if you do say something?

then I will make him a "poes" sorry for my word, because then they will see it like I'm trying to sit on his head.

what happens then?

then when they leave, or soema when they there then he will hit me and they don't stop him.

then what do you do?

nothing I must mind my business. I mustn't get involved or tell the numbers what to do.

and the other women, what do they say?

They can't say anything, they must shut their mouths and pretend like nothing is happening. His mother will shout "██████████" (boyfriend's name) but that's it.

how long have you been together?

████ years now I think, but it was okay in the beginning. I was that time not so heavy on the tik, like I am now. Then I was only smoking now and then. But as I got to drug more, I think he started losing respect for me, because I drugged with the other guys of the gang also, then he used to think that I have sex with the guys for drugs, because that's how it usually is, if a girl and guy is together and they tik, or the guy make you drugs then you give off. You sleep with him. But I'm not like that.

what other experiences have you had being part of the gang?

plenty, I watched women get raped in my place. I've seen how cops come raid my house and look for my boyfriend. I see how they shoot. Lots of stuff. When my boyfriend was in prison one of his █████ brothers wanted to rape me, he is locked up now.

did you make a case

no you can't do that, then you are betraying the gang. I went to the leader, he knew my daddy I told you, so they fucked him up, they let him "loop fyn" as they call it. Bit he is in jail for murder, he killed a rival in █████ and they caught him.

do all women report to the gang leader if stuff happen?

no, they don't report it, because if you use drugs then you mean nothing, and also if the leader know you and like you, he will do something, like me, he know me since small. But if you come there and tell, or "piemp" like they say, it could backfire, because than they will think that you will run to a rival gang and tell them all our secrets, the best is to keep quiet and be smart.

okay, even though you are part of the gang the rapes are allowed?

yes and no, they look at your behaviour, if you allow yourself to be used and they see you greedy for drugs, they will use you, everybody will use you. But if you not so greedy then they wont still try their luck. It's like a power trip, the weaker you are, or show yourself like, the worst it will get for you as a lady.

do women have roles in the gang?

selling drugs, is the main thing, because women can use the money to buy their own stuff and not sleep with this and that one. Women are also used to dress nice and walk to other areas to see for the enemy. But that is not safe anymore because they know us by now, they know who the funky women are and they watch. My friend, she is also with us, got stabbed by the [REDACTED] (rival gang name) when she went to their area.

you said earlier that women get drawn to gangs by the nice times, is there anything else?

I would say it's mostly the drugs and the way they are. Some women like the fast life and the guys that are "sabellaring" and driving lekker fats cars with the loud music. They get you like that. Women are stupid. I was also. So ja.

are there any good things about being part of the gang?

not a lot, but you get power and respect, people won't soema mess with you, you are a [REDACTED] (gang name) girlfriend. You hang out with the "ouens" what they call themselves. You party and stuff when the leader feels like it.

anything else?

that's it. I think there isn't a lot of good in it at the end of the day, in the beginning there is a lot of good, you are just there and having the best time, but once they have you in that trap, they don't let go of you.

how long have you been with the [REDACTED] (gang name)

like [REDACTED] years, really involved, like doing the stuff that they do, robbing people, going to do armed robberies, fighting with the enemy, like the rival gangsters, [REDACTED] (gangs names) and all that. Its strange because sometimes you fight against people that you went to school with, primary school friends, people that you grew up with. Some people even fight their own family.

really?

yes It's a messed up situation. it's like hell (laughs).

You said that you got involved through your boyfriend?

my daddy was also a gang member, but if I didn't meet my boyfriend I don't think I would've been involved in this shit stuff.

what is your role in the gang?

I don't know if I have a role. I just sell drugs, carry guns, hide guns in my [REDACTED]. I don't go to rob anymore because I was locked up last year and Pollsmoor isn't a lekker place.

what happened there?

me and my friend robbed a lady here at the shop in [REDACTED], but then the people recognized us and they took me. It wasn't a lekker experience, yoh I don't want to go back.

what happened then?

then I got out, because the lady identified the other girl, because she had the knife. I just ran with.

okay, how do you think social workers can help improve services for women in gangs?

I don't know how we can get help, the question is do we want help. I don't know how I will get away from [REDACTED] if I leave him, he will come look for me. You see we know a lot of these secrets here, and leaving will give them suspicion that we are going to tell the enemy about their doings. Also where are we going to go? Because we need help, I know I need it, but how I am going to get the strength I can say is another issue. I was actually talking to this one girl the other day, she isn't a gangster, she is a nice women, working for [REDACTED] and I told her, because we grew up together, how I want to change my life. I would like help but I don't know where to start.

what about the other women?

A lot of us are drug addicts because we live for the tik and mandrax, we even sell our bodies for it, almost every day. That's why the gangsters can disrespect the women because they all have had you already. But maybe they can help us women with the children. I don't have any children, but I don't want to bring children up in such a messed up place. But they can help them with that.

what about other support?

like maybe programmes and such stuff, yes, proper programmes for us in the area you know, not away from the area.

anything else

The government must also do something about the gangsters who control this area. I don't know what they going to do, but they must do something.

anything else you can think of?

maybe send the women to rehab of counselling like that.

how would it be if there were no drugs in the area, would things be different?

There won't be so much women involved with gangsters. It wasn't always like that, where women sell and shoot guns and fight and stuff, its all because of the drugs that they are using, that makes them brave enough to do that.

Is there anything else you can think of?

I really can't think now, but the people are also poor in the communities and that's why they take from the merchant, because they have no other way. If they have no bread they can go ask the merchant for stuff and then you must pay him back somehow, maybe keep his drugs or stuff in your house and you not even a gangster. Its difficult in this community

tell me about that?

you see, a lot of innocent people get killed because the gangsters go into their houses, now the enemy think that you are also a gang member, mean time you ow the merchant a favour for money he gave you for food, so it's difficult.

It there anything else you can think of?

no, its fine. I'm tired now (laughs).

(laughs) thank you for participating [REDACTED]

.....

APPENDIX G: Editorial Certificate

12 November 2021

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Editorial certificate

This letter serves to prove that the thesis listed below was language edited for proper English, grammar, punctuation, spelling, as well as overall layout and style by myself, publisher/proprietor of Aquarian Publications, a native English speaking editor.

Thesis title

EXPLORE AND DESCRIBE THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE
EXPERIENCES OF GIRLS IN GANGS AND THE CAUSAL FACTORS
THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR GANG INVOLVEMENT

Author

Nena Belinda Francis

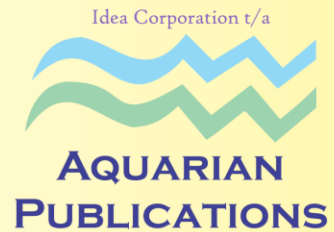
The research content, or the author's intentions, were not altered in any way during the editing process, and the author has the authority to accept, or reject my suggestions and changes.

Should you have any questions or concerns about this edited document, I can be contacted at the listed telephone and fax numbers or e-mail addresses.

Yours truly



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