

# **Exploring Factors That Gravitate Youth Towards Gang Involvement in The Paarl East Community**

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A full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Social Work in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape

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## DECLARATION

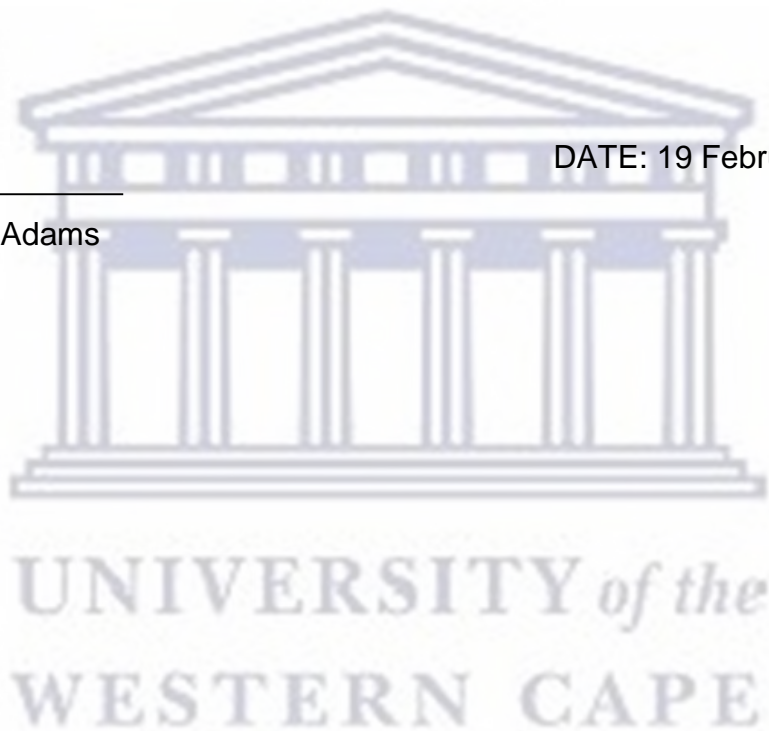
I, Jodie Marcelle Adams, declare that this dissertation titled “***Exploring Factors That Gravitate Youth Towards Gang Involvement in The Paarl East Community***” is my own work and all sources that were utilised have been acknowledged in-text and in the reference list. This dissertation is being submitted for a Master of Social Work degree in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, Department of Social Work at the University of the Western Cape. This work has never been submitted to any other institution for examination.



DATE: 19 February 2022

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Jodie Marcelle Adams



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to my parents, John and Marion Adams, who have supported and encouraged me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all what they have done for me.

I am also dedicating this thesis to my beloved paternal grandfather, Rudolf Abraham Adams, who taught me the value of hard work. Although he is no longer with us, the memories of him continue to regulate my life.



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- The participants in my study. Thank you for sharing your perceptions, personal experiences, and viewpoints with me, which helped me in answering the research question.
- BADISA and Charleston Hill Secondary School in Paarl East community. I appreciate your willingness to provide me with permission and support to conduct my research at your institutions.
- My fiancé, Sydwin Wellman, and my parents, John and Marion Adams, and the rest of my family. Thank you for your support, encouragement and belief in me. To my parents: You not only provided me with emotional support. You provided me with crucial resources to conclude my study, and you served as an example of dedication, compassion, and commitment to make a difference with regards to vulnerable youth.

## ABSTRACT

Youth gang involvement has been noted as a concern in the Paarl East community. This study was based on an identified need to inform social work services aimed at prevention from or early intervention in youth involvement in gangs on the causal factors thereof. The study was framed within the Ecological Systems Theory to identify causal factors within each system in youths' lives. It was envisaged that, by addressing these causes, youth can be empowered and supported to make alternative life choices.

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community in order to make recommendations for preventative and early intervention social work practice. A qualitative approach was followed, and the explorative and contextual research designs supported the choices of research methods in this study. The purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample from the population of youth living the Paarl East community. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews with eight participants. Criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, conformability, and reflexivity were used to ensure data verification. Ethics in this study entailed the limitation of harm to participants and debriefing, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and data management.

Tesch's framework for qualitative data analysis (cited in Creswell, 2014) was implemented to identify causal factors for your gang involvement in Paarl East. The participants provided a description of gangs within the community. The findings further provided a description of causal factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community in terms of the micro, mezzo, exo, macro, chrono and technosystems that gravitate youth towards gangs. Recommendations for preventative and early intervention services were made based on the findings.

**Key concepts:** Community, ecological systems theory, gangs, gangsterism, youth

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DSD	Department of Social Development
EST	Ecological Systems Theory
FT	Forum Theatre
GBV	Gender-based violence
ISDM	Integrated Service Delivery Model
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAPS	South African Police Service
WHO	World Health Organisation



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to explore the reasons for youth gang involvement in the community of Paarl East located in the Western Cape, South Africa. Etheridge (2017) provides some illuminating insights on the topic, reporting that pupils as young as Grade 8 are recruited as gang members in Paarl. Searching for possible reasons behind this phenomenon, Geldenhuys (2019) postulates that one of the main motivations for youth joining gangs is due to a lack of belonging within their homes, which causes them to find their sense of self in gangs. Shedding further light on the topic, other authors (cf. Pinnock, 2017; Magidi et al., 2016; SABC Digital News, 2016) have reported that youth gang membership grows each year due to the failure of systems, such as the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the school system to address those reasons behind youth gang affiliations effectively.

Through her professional experience as a social worker in the Paarl East community, the researcher became aware of the problem of youth involvement in gangs in this area. This in turn aroused her curiosity to find out why young people are lured into gangsterism and what is needed for them to either refrain from joining gangs or to leave the gangs altogether. An initial search of the literature revealed a paucity of research on youth gangsterism in this geographical area. To address this gap, this study set out to explore the causal factors that draw the youth into gangsterism in the Paarl East community and to make recommendations for context-relevant and effective social work services.

As an introduction to this present study, and to conceptualise the focus thereof, this first chapter defines the key concepts and explains how these relate to this study (section 1.2). This is followed by a preliminary literature review (section 1.3), the theoretical framework (section 1.4); the research problem (section 1.5) that informed this study; the research question (section 1.6); as well as the aim and objectives

(section 1.7); a discussion of the significance (section 1.8) of the study; and an outline of the chapters (section 1.9). A brief conclusion wraps up the chapter (section 1.10).

## **1.2 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

The key concepts related to the focus of this study are *community* (sub-section 1.2.1), the *ecological systems theory* (EST) (sub-section 1.2.2), *gangs* (sub-section 1.2.3), *gangsterism* (sub-section 1.2.4), and *youth* (sub-section 1.2.5). These concepts will be conceptualised and related to this present study in the discussion below.

### **1.2.1 Community**

A 'community' is viewed as a macrosystem that consists of a variety of micro- and mezzosystems, and is influenced by exo-, chrono-, and technosystems. On a micro level, it includes youth and families. On a mezzo level, it includes groups, such as peer, sport, and cultural groups. These youth, families, and groups are in some form of contact and relationship with each other that could result in positive or negative influences on each other and on the youth (cf. Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018). Similarly, Hepworth et al. (2013) describe communities as social systems. These systems are characterised by the way they organise themselves, their sense of belonging, and the power structures in and among the different systems. Often, according to these authors, communities are influenced by specific social phenomena within the geographical area in which they are situated, pointing to a need to explore contextual needs when planning services in communities.

This study focused on a specific geographical area, namely, Paarl East, and on the social phenomenon of gangsterism within this community. This description of a community aligns with ecological systems theory (EST), which will be discussed next.

### **1.2.2 Ecological Systems Theory (EST)**

Bronfenbrenner (1979, cited in Neal & Neal, 2013) developed the 'EST' as a framework where micro-, mezzo-, macro-, exo-, and chronosystems in an ecological environment are nested in each other, and therefore interdependent on each other (cf. Johnson, 2010). According to this theoretical framework, one has to understand how

each of the systems affects the individual, as well as each other (Eriksson et al., 2018). Johnson (2010) also added the technosystem, as interaction on social media has become an additional system that might influence a person's engagement with the environment. Based on this description, the researcher added the technosystem as a sixth system to explore the research topic from.

The EST served as the theoretical framework from which the researcher explored and described factors nested in the different systems that gravitate youth in the Paarl East community towards joining gangs. Eriksson et al. (2018) advises that this framework is particularly valuable when one wants to draw conclusions that result in recommendations for interventions.

### **1.2.3 Gangs**

Pinnock (2017) describes 'gangsters' as a group of people that can include both genders, but mainly men. Gangsters may be viewed as dangerous due to their engagement with a range of criminal activities that often include acts or threats of violence. Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014) distinguish between scavenger, territorial, and corporate gangs. *Scavenger gangs* are involved in petty crimes, while *territorial gangs* are well organised. The latter often involves initiation rites. *Corporate gangs* are even more structured, with illicit business activities as their core focus. These gangs have specific names with symbols that are attached to these names.

In terms of this present study, the focus was on all forms of gangs in the Paarl East community, with specific attention given to why youth are drawn to joining these gangs.

### **1.2.4 Gangsterism**

'Gangsterism' refers to the way in which gangs operate (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). Amongst other things, it has to do with power. Bowers Du Toit (2014) refers to both *structural power* and *coercive power* associated with gangsterism. Where structural power has to do with power structures within the gangs and in the territories in which they function, coercive power is associated with fear. This author specifically highlights that in vulnerable communities where gangs have structural power, children and youth are coerced into joining gangs and their activities.

This study is interested in those structural and coercive factors that contribute to youth in the Paarl East community being vulnerable to becoming involved in gangsterism.

### **1.2.5 Youth**

'Youth' is a life stage between the ages of 15 and 34 years (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2020). Sauls (2014) asserts that this life stage is a crucial phase due to the fact that it has to do with finding ways to meet needs and to build capacities towards independence. Within the South African context, the National Youth Policy (RSA, 2020) acknowledges that youth are exposed to a variety of risks that lead to vulnerability. These risks include poverty, youth unemployment, high school drop-out rates and inadequate skills development, poor health, a lack of recreational opportunities, a lack of access to social services, and high rates of substance abuse that often contribute to engagement in violent and criminal activities (RSA, 2020).

This study explored the causal factors as risks that lead to youths' vulnerability to joining gangs in the geographical area of Paarl East. The targeted age group were youth between the ages of 18 and 28 years. The participants were viewed as persons who could provide informed consent to participate in the study, while also providing the researcher with insight into those vulnerabilities that cause youth to join gangs in the Paarl East community.

The literature review that follows next is based on the above key concepts, which informs the choice of theoretical framework and the identification of the research problem.

## **1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to develop an understanding of what is known about the research topic, the researcher explored relevant and recent literature pertaining to gangsterism, causal factors behind youth involvement in gangs on an international and national level, and possible solutions to address the phenomenon of youth in gangs effectively.



### **1.3.1 Gangsterism**

Hallsworth (2011) refers to the term 'gangland', which describes a geographic territory in which a gang functions. The author explains that the gang views this territory as an area where members have psychological control over their community.

The term 'gangsterism' refers to a group of more than three people showing their identity through a collective name, hand signs or symbols, a certain dress code, and language. Gang members associate with the gang they belong to through a common purpose (Pinnock, 2017; Akiyama, 2012). The signs and symbols are the gangsters' way of enforcing their purpose through intimidation and control (Geldenhuys, 2019; Magidi et al., 2016). Therefore, gangs are associated with antisocial and criminal behaviours (O'Brien et al., 2013; Deuchar, 2011).

Kerig et al. (2013) explain that the intimidation and control of gangs draw youth at risk to join them, especially when the gang could protect them from social injustices, such as discrimination. Youth that join gangs are therefore known to come from underprivileged or vulnerable backgrounds (Bowers Du Toit, 2014).

### **1.3.2 Causal Factors Behind Youth Gangsterism**

Causal factors, according to Brady (2013), provide a description of reasons behind a social phenomenon, in the case of this study, youth in gangs. To develop an understanding of current ideas regarding the causal factors behind youth gangsterism, international and national factors were explored and compared.

#### ***1.3.2.1 On an international level***

O'Brien et al. (2013) list individual and family factors, as well as negative peer relationships as factors that contribute to youth involvement in gangs in the United States of America. In terms of individual and environmental factors, Boxer (2014) focuses on American youth, while Kadir (2012) focuses on youth in Indonesia. Both identify risk factors as:

- A lack of sense of belonging and safety,
- School drop-out,
- Unemployment, and
- Socioeconomic disadvantages.

Related to the contextual focus of this present study, Kerig et al. (2013) refer to community factors that draw youth to gangs. These authors assert that violent and poor environments lead to youth finding it difficult to find alternatives for their lives. Gangs provide them with some form of security and social status in these environments. Kadir (2012:352) goes further and refers to structural environmental causes, noting that youth gangs grow due to “weakening authority of the state and the reduction in social control from families and schools”.

### **1.3.2.2 On a national level**

South African children as young as 13 years are involved in gang activities due to exposure to gangs in their communities (Davids, 2019). Pinnock (2017) asserts that the Cape Flats, a previously disadvantaged neighbourhood in Cape Town in the Western Cape Province, is one of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the world. The author asserts that someone dies almost every day in Cape Town due to gun violence where the shooters and the victims are between 15–23 years of age.

News reports indicate that gang violence in areas such as Paarl East, another previously disadvantaged community in the Western Cape, is escalating and that the community members attribute this to a lack of policing (SABC Digital News, 2016). The South African Police Service (SAPS) Statistics (2019) for this area highlight that 40% of murders, and 46% of attempted murders during 2018 were gang related. According to Davids (2019), a journalist in Paarl, one possible contributing factor to violence in Paarl is that gangsters compete to sell substances and fight over territory. These fights result in violence which traumatises community members and results in youth viewing violence as a normative response. In 2018, the ages of gang-related offenders and murders were the following in Paarl East: Three offenders were below the age of 20, four offenders were between 20 and 30 years, and three offenders were above 30 (SAPS Statistics, 2019). Despite these reports, no formal research studies describe the contributing factors for youth in gangs in this area.

In terms of the history of gangs in previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa, Brankovic (2012) concurs that apartheid forced people of colour to live in inadequate, overcrowded infrastructure and with limited access to resources. As such, Pinnock (2017) links causal factors behind gang association to the legacy of the past.

In the Western Cape, gang membership is often a result from the apartheid laws where whole communities were forcefully moved to other areas, such as the Cape Flats. The author adds that young men from these communities were excluded from job opportunities during apartheid because they were stigmatised as being a 'skollie', a slang word meaning "criminally inclined". However, people in the new democratic South Africa still live in the same areas due to poverty (Pinnock, 2017). Focusing on one outcome of the past and present-day challenges faced by South African previously disadvantaged communities, Geldenhuys (2019) argues that in communities that are exposed to socioeconomic-political chaos, youth seek alternative means to survive emotionally, socially, and physically. Gangs also become an alternative to escape poverty.

Risk factors that lead to youth vulnerability and therefore encourage youth gang membership in South Africa include:

- A lack of safe and secure home life,
- A lack of positive parenting,
- Exposure to poverty,
- Exposure to abuse,
- Exposure to bullying,
- Exposure to neglect, and
- Substance abuse (Magidi et al., 2016; Nicholas et al., 2010).

Availability of substances such as marijuana and crystal methamphetamine further increases the chances of youth gang involvement, as substance abuse is a way to deal with deprivation and trauma, while selling substances becomes a way to obtain money (Nicholas et al., 2010).

Louw and Louw (2014) explain that adolescents between 12 and 18 years are in a period of searching for their identity as they are transitioning between childhood and adulthood. They attempt to define their roles and values in society, and are influenced by the norms, values, and practices in their environments. Both Geldenhuys (2019) and Pinnock (2017) assert that when youth lack a sense of belonging within their homes, gangsters seem to become their only role models. In this regard, Pinnock

(2017) explains that young men find their passage to manhood through gang involvement when they suffer a lack of belonging in a healthy environment. As such, youth form part of gangs in order to gain social status, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and to secure safety in a violent community (Boxer, 2014; Kadir, 2012; Brankovic, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2010). Furthermore, Pinnock (2017) draws a link between youth vulnerability and antisocial behaviour that is viewed as another contributing factor to youth gangsterism (cf. Kirst-Ashman, 2013).

Absent fathers are identified as a major contributing factor to youth joining gangs. Pinnock (2017) refers to 'failed fathers' as either absent or abusive fathers. In this regard, Brankovic (2012) explains that absent fatherhood can be ascribed to long hours at work in order to cope with the hardships of poverty. In terms of exposure to abusive fathers or role models, youth learn that abuse in relationships is normative, making violent behaviour in gangs acceptable (Pinnock, 2017; Kerig et al., 2013; Brankovic, 2012). Children and youth exposed to either a lack of parenting by one or both parents and aggressive parents also experience a lack of guidance. Joining gangs to access some form of guidance then becomes a way for these children and youth to deal with their life. They also find material support from these gangs, which is then perceived as some sort of care (Magidi et al., 2016; Brankovic, 2012).

Peer pressure in communities where gangs operate is another common contributing factor to youth gang involvement. Youth who unwilling join a gang are then subjected to victimisation (Geldenhuys, 2019). An example would be recruiting members in a violent manner through bullying or branding them, which affects their sense of safety, social status, and self-image (O'Brien et al., 2013; Kadir, 2012; Brankovic, 2012). Gangs therefore serve as a form of protection against victimisation. O'Brien et al. (2013) also refer to the fact that youth become influenced by peers who tell them about the perceived benefits from being a part of a gang. Geldenhuys (2019) goes further and asserts that some youth join gangs because they seek protection from rival gangs.

In line with the above discussion of the reasons for youths' involvement in gangs, violent and poor environments make it difficult for youth to find an alternative solution apart from gangs. In addition, people from dangerous areas are often stigmatised because of where they live. This prevents them from accessing employment, which

further limits their options to escape from poverty (Pinnock, 2017). The causal factors above indicate how a variety of systems may influence youth to join gangs.

### 1.3.3 Potential Solutions

The alarming trend of youth involvement in gangs requires social work interventions to adjust to the needs of youth who are vulnerable and drawn to gangs (Nicholas et al., 2010). For this reason, the context-related causes behind youth gangsterism must be explored to inform the planning of preventative and early intervention strategies. The Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) serves as a framework to address gangsterism in a holistic manner. The ISDM framework is used to deliver integrated developmental welfare services with the purpose of promoting service integration in a holistic manner (Patel, 2015). 'Service integration' refers to inter-sectorial and interdepartmental integration, intradepartmental or programme integration, and grassroots or local service integration (Department of Social Development [DSD], 2013a). In terms of this framework, the community as a whole should be mobilised in the planning and implementing of interventions. This will, for example, require partnerships between the SAPS, DSD, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community members (Davids, 2019; DSD, 2013a). For the purpose of this study, the researcher explored two levels of interventions within the ISDM framework, namely: prevention/awareness and early intervention services/programmes to address risk factors and anti-social behaviour that contribute to youth gang affiliation.

According to Patel (2015), *prevention* programmes focus on preventing social problems, and in the case of this study, gangsterism, before it occurs by identifying possible risk factors. These factors then inform interventions, such as:

- Awareness programmes,
- Educational activities/programmes on the dangers of gangsterism through life orientation programmes (Patel, 2015; Kirst-Ashman, 2013; Nicholas et al., 2010), and
- Crime awareness campaigns through social media and the radio (SAPS, 2016).

*Early interventions* focus on identifying known risk factors and addressing it in order to prevent it from further occurring or escalating (Patel, 2015). These programmes include:

- Early childhood development programmes in order to equip parents with skills and promoting healthy relationships (Pinnock, 2017; Patel, 2015),
- Implementing protective factors, strengths, and resilience in youth programmes (O'Brien et al., 2013),
- After-school youth activities such as recreational activities (Pinnock, 2017),
- Conflict resolution life skills and job-seeking skills programmes (Nicholas et al., 2010), and
- Implementing programmes at identified hotspots (SAPS, 2016).

The choice of theoretical framework that was identified as a lens through which this research topic could be explored was based on both the descriptions of contributing factors and possible solutions in this section.

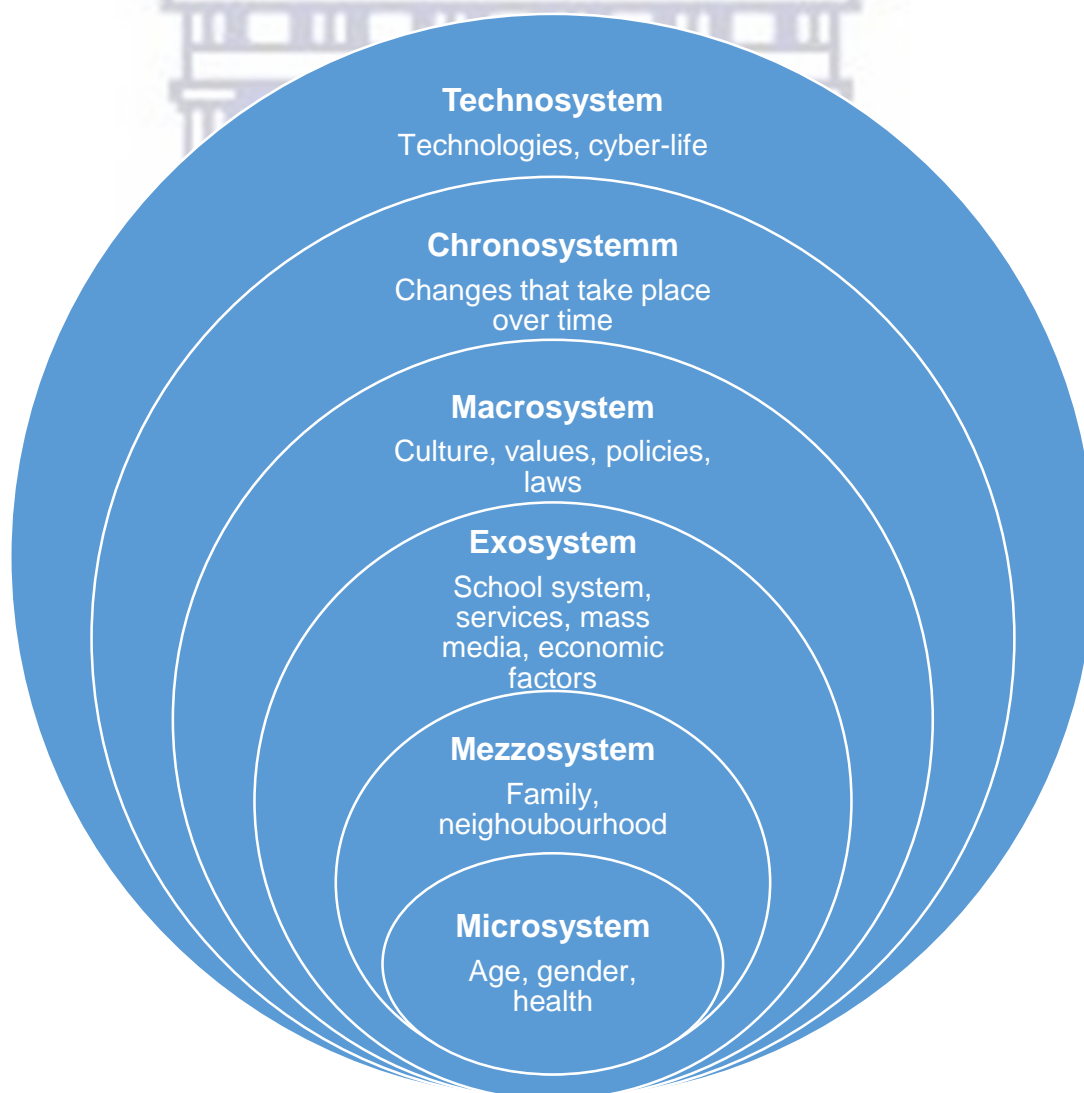
#### **1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The EST was chosen to guide this study as it assisted the researcher to identify possible causes of youth gangsterism at the various system levels. The purpose of this theoretical framework is to promote adaptation between the person and their environment, rather than the person as an isolated system (Healy, 2014). According to Healy (2014), the EST is based on the premise that problems arise due to lack of a fit between the person's needs and their environment. This theory is therefore valuable to assist social workers to focus on transactions across systems in order to achieve long-term sustainable change. The different systems are presented below (see Table 1 and Figure 1) in terms of relevance to this research, namely: The microsystem, mezzosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem, and technosystem.

**Table 1: Description of the different systems within the EST**

System	Description	Relevance to this study
The microsystem	<p>This system refers to the personal factors that affect the person's well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This can include factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Age,</li> <li>▪ Gender, and</li> <li>▪ Health.</li> </ul> <p>The microsystem also includes the immediate environment, such as the family, school, neighbourhood and cultural affiliations.</p>	<p>This study explored those personal factors that are viewed as typical for youth in Paarl East who join gangs. A further focus was on what the immediate environmental factors for youth in Paarl East are.</p>
The mezzosystem	<p>The system consists of the interactions or connections between the factors in the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The interrelatedness of how the family and neighbourhood activities and norms affect the immediate context of the youth are acknowledged.</p> <p>For example, Magidi et al. (2016) note that youth can easily replace their traditional family with their new gang family, as it is more supportive than what is missing within their own family.</p>	<p>In this study, the interactions between those aspects identified on a micro level was explored in order to identify how these interactions affect the youth's decision to join gangs.</p>
The exosystem	<p>The system is the broader system, which does not involve the clients themselves, but it affects the microsystem and their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is known as the indirect environment, and can include the schools' system, services or the lack thereof, mass media, and economic factors.</p>	<p>Within this system, indirect influences on youth were explored, such as opportunities or the lack thereof, and access to services within the community.</p>
The macrosystem	<p>This system includes culture, values, policies and laws that impact the rest of the layers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).</p>	<p>In this study, causal factors related to security, lifestyles, and the implementation of norms and values within the Paarl East community were explored to identify causal factors of youth gangsterism.</p>

The chronosystem	This system refers to changes that take place over time that affect the different systems and therefore also the individual within the system (Sigelman et al., 2019).	Apartheid continues to affect gang formation today, as poverty is still prevalent in the same areas, leading to a sense of hopelessness. Gang formation is therefore seen as the only form of survival (Pinnock, 2017).  The legacy of the past and how it still prevails in present times was explored to inform the recommendations of the study.
The technosystem	According to Johnson (2010), this system includes the client's interaction with other systems through technologies that create a cyber-life, which impacts the individual.	This system involves gang violence spreading through social media, radio, and the Internet. This system has not been explored in recent studies focusing on youth gangsterism, which was included in this study.



**Figure 1. Ecological Systems Theory (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1979)**



The value of this framework is described by Nicholas et al. (2010) who asserted that poor bonds between the different systems in a youth's life can result in anti-social behaviours. Interventions should therefore be explored in terms of how existing community resources, strengths, and assets can be implemented in order to discourage youth gangsterism. In addition, Hepworth et al. (2013) advise that preventative and early intervention social work services should draw a link between the client's strengths and resources.

The preliminary literature review, together with the identified theoretical framework, resulted in the formulation of the problem statement of this study, which is presented next.

## **1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

A problem statement is based on identified gaps during a review of literature on the topic of interest (Neuman, 2014). Pandey and Pandey (2015) explain that the review of literature that results in a research study should either lead to a question or a hypothesis. The literature review carried out above informed the formulation of the problem statement that follows.

The SAPS Statistics (2019) identified an escalation in gang-related crime and youth involvement in gangs in the Paarl East community. This, then, points to a need to base social work services aimed at prevention from or early intervention in youth involvement in gangs on the causal factors thereof. By addressing these causes, youth can be empowered and supported to make alternative life choices.

Literature describes possible causal factors, such as personal vulnerabilities, peer pressure, family dysfunction, and environmental factors (cf. (Pinnock, 2017; Magidi et al., 2016; Brankovic, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2010). However, the causal factors in Paarl East, a previously disadvantaged community in South Africa, behind youth making the choice to join gangs have not been documented. The need to explore

context-related causal factors serve as the research problem for this study.

From the EST framework, a need was identified to identify factors within the different systems in the lives of the youth in Paarl East and for these to be addressed through recommendations to inform preventative and early intervention social work services.

The problem statement informed the formulation of the research question and aim (cf. Pandey & Pandey, 2015) that are provided next.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION**

In social research, a problem statement often results in the identification of a gap in existing literature. This, then, leads to research questions that need to be answered through a scientifically sound methodology. As such, research questions flow from the research problem, and direct the focus of a research study (Neuman, 2014). Makhubela and Mashegoane (2019) support this description of a research question and add that it directs the choices regarding the research population, sampling, and data collection methods. The research question that emanated from the research problem for this study was:

What are the perceived contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community?

## **1.7 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

A research question should provide a focus for a research study, and therefore inform a clear goal and attainable objectives (Mankwane et al., 2018). Pandey and Pandey (2015) explain that a research goal refers to the aim, or the desired outcome, of the research.

The aim of this study, which was informed by the research question, was to:

Explore and describe the contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community in order to make recommendations for preventative and early intervention social work practice.

Pandey and Pandey (2015) further note that the research objectives describe those steps that assist the researcher to reach the aim. In this study, the objectives that directed the research process were:

- 1) To explore the perceptions and experiences of youth regarding the contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community through a qualitative inquiry.
- 2) To describe the perceptions and experiences of youth regarding the contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community through qualitative data analysis.
- 3) To interpret the findings to make recommendations for preventative and early intervention social work practice.

The aim of this study points to a contribution to social work practice. The significance of this study will be further elaborated on below.

### **1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It was envisaged that the findings of this study would provide the researcher with context relevant information to inform practice. By describing the contributing factors that lead youth in the Paarl East community to join gangs, the researcher was able to make recommendations to support preventative and early intervention social work strategies. In this way, the aim of this study was attained.

This study was also significant in that it included the techno system in the EST framework from which this study was conducted. This system has not been included when exploring causes behind youth in gangs in research related to this research topic.

Through data verification practices the researcher also hopes that the findings could be related to other previously disadvantaged communities, and/or that the research could be replicated in such areas.

## **1.9 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1 introduces the phenomenon under study. Specific attention is given to the main elements of the research, namely: definition of key concepts; methodology; literature review; research question; aim and objectives of the study; significance of the research; and outline of the chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review that focuses on youth, gang affiliation, prevention, and early interventions.

Chapter 3 unpacks the research methodology that was employed in this study.

Chapter 4 discusses the research findings of the study.

Chapter 5 provides a summary, recommendations, and a final conclusion.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduced the research topic on youth involvement in gangsterism in the community of Paarl East located in the Western Cape, South Africa. Included in the chapter was a brief description of the key concepts and their relation to the present study; a presentation of the preliminary literature review, which informed the formulation of the research problem and the choice of theoretical framework. The research question, aim, and objectives of the study were also indicated, followed by a discussion of the significance of this study. The penultimate section outlined the forthcoming chapters, followed by a brief conclusion that summarised the main points of the chapter.

The literature review of the study is presented next.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter introduced this study on youth gang involvement in the community of Paarl East. The current chapter presents the literature review of the study. This review allowed the researcher to analyse existing literature on the topic to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the research problem (Shirindi, 2018). While Chapter 1 described the research problem as formulated by a preliminary literature review, this chapter presents the literature review to further explore what is known about youth gang involvement within the theoretical framework of this study. This in turn enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive overview of key aspects related to this study that could be used to compare and contrast the research findings (Leavy, 2017).

In order to unpack the focus of the present study according to the existing literature and within the theoretical framework, the discussion will take place under the following headings: youth (section 2.2), youth gang affiliation (section 2.3), and solutions to youth gangsterism (section 2.4). This chapter then closes with a summary of the discussion (section 2.5).

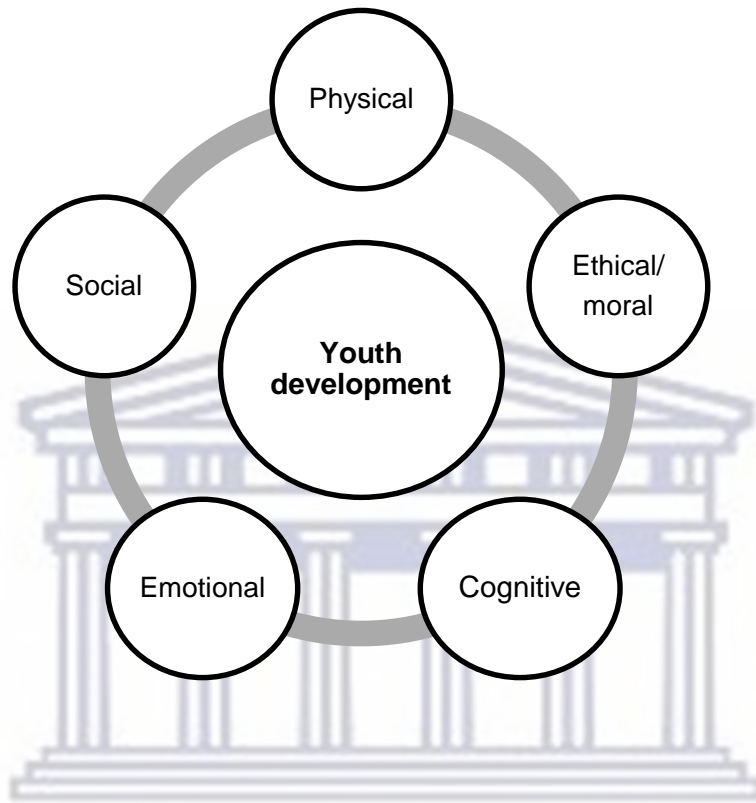
#### **2.2 YOUTH**

According to the National Youth Policy (RSA, 2020), youth is a life stage between the ages of 15 and 34 years, known as adolescence. During this life stage, youth develop a sense of identity (Panday et al., 2012). Their identity, notes Panday et al. (2012), is shaped by input from their family, communities, and schools. Sackman and Terway (2016) further assert that youth experience changes in five common dimensions, namely:

- Physical change,
- Cognitive development,
- Social development,

- Emotional development, and
- Moral/ethical development.

These dimensions influence one another, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2. The interrelatedness of developmental domains**

In order to unpack these aspects that characterise youth, the abovementioned interrelated developmental changes of adolescence will be discussed.

**Physical development:** According to Flanagan and Syversten (2005, cited in Panday et al., 2012), the many changes that occur during youth start with physical changes and end with cultural development. In terms of *physical development*, Sackman and Terway (2016, p. 6) describe the characteristics as “rapid growth, improved motor skills and sexual maturity”. Focusing on how the physical development of youth affect them, the authors explain that youth become more aware of their physical changes, which may result in feelings of awkwardness, mood swings, and unhealthy eating habits. This, then, highlights the link between physical and emotional development.

**Emotional development:** Based on the aforementioned link between physical and emotional development, Sackman and Terway (2016) argue that emotional issues may occur if there are gaps in understanding sexual maturation. These authors, supported by Chhuon (2013), indicate that *emotional development* has to do with identity formation and the development of a sense of independence. Identity formation also has to do with how adolescents see themselves at this time, as well as in their future. It often results in them taking on adult roles that they have observed from their parents and family (Panday et al., 2012). Louw and Louw (2014) elaborate that youth is a period where young people search for their identity as they transition from childhood to adulthood, which may result in a temporary identity crisis because they are confused by existing roles and values and who they want to become. In line with this, Sackman and Terway (2016) accentuate the role of peers when self-esteem may be negatively affected when their developing identity and sense of self do not align with that of their peers.

**Cognitive development:** *Cognitive development* refers to young people's ability to comprehend, think, and reason to make sense of the world around them (Sackman & Terway, 2016). This is the time that they develop a sense of responsibility, the ability to plan, and set goals. This development is important to make different choices that may or may not lead to risky behaviours such as the use of substances and unprotected sex (Sackman & Terway, 2016). Fletcher (2014) and Chhuon (2013) support this viewpoint, and explain that the way in which youth learn to reason is often influenced by what they see and experience in their communities. Panday et al. (2012) maintain that cognitive development should result in the ability to take on adult responsibilities such as completing school, finding a home, and starting a family, which develops over time. This, then, supports the movement from childhood to adulthood.

**Social development:** *Social development* means that youth seek group identity beyond their families as they move from childhood to becoming an adult. In this sense, cognitive and social development relate to each other (Panday et al., 2012). They seek to find a strong group identity, while they shift away from their family. Social acceptance by peers may trigger positive emotions, and therefore links to emotional development. A lack of belonging in the peer group may lead to negative emotions that manifest in negative behaviours such as substance use, school drop-out, or

violent behaviour (Sackman & Terway, 2016). Louw and Louw (2014) identify a relationship between social, cognitive, and emotional development and argue that if youth fail to develop a healthy identity in their current developmental stage, it may result in problems during their adulthood, for example, lacking positive relationships or finding a meaningful career.

**Moral/ethical development:** Typically, this domain, according to Sackman and Terway (2016), is where a youth's sense of values determines his/her ethical behaviours. Identifying a relationship between moral and cognitive behaviour, these authors contend that the ability to think abstractly allows adolescents to develop a sense of values and ethical behaviour. Panday et al. (2012) draw a link between moral and social development and argue that social connections offer youth a key in socialising their sense of belonging where group values impact on the development of their own moral and value bases.

The above description of youth informed the researcher's understanding of the research topic. This study further explored youth from the EST framework. For this reason, the next section focuses on youth in terms of the different systems related to the EST.

### **2.2.1 Youth in Terms of the Ecological Systems Theory**

The EST was chosen to assist the researcher to identify possible causes of youth gangsterism at the various system levels. The researcher was interested in clarifying what is needed to create a fit between youth and their environment to understand how gang affiliation can be prevented, or how early interventions can support youth to leave gangs (Healy, 2014). The systems that are explored include:

- Microsystems,
- Mezzosystems,
- Exosystems,
- Macrosystems,
- Chronosystems, and
- Technosystems.



### **2.2.1.1 Microsystem**

On a micro level, this study was interested in the personal factors and immediate environmental factors that are viewed as typical for youth in Paarl East who join gangs. Lubman et al. (2018) explain that the youth's immediate environment, which includes family, peers, and the school environment, is where he/she turns for guidance and support. The responses of these microsystems impact on the personal factors that affect their well-being.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to 'personal factors' as aspects such as age, gender, and physical and mental health that affects the person's well-being. Personal factors that affect youth and that could be viewed as potential factors that may incline youth towards gangs, are noted by Fletcher (2014) as follows:

- Personal health,
- Education,
- Communication,
- Self-confidence,
- Personal and social responsibility, and
- Self-independence.

In addition, factors in the immediate environment that affect well-being include:

- Family or household,
- School,
- Neighbours, and
- Cultural affiliations within these systems.

Moreover, Fletcher (2014) maintains that family and friends in the immediate environment influence the personal aspects mentioned above.

South Africa is a diverse society. This diversity influences the way we perceive the term 'family'. This is confirmed by the definition provided in the White Paper on Families (DSD, 2013b, p. 3), which describes a 'family' as:

- "A societal group
- That is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and

- Go beyond a particular physical residence”.

Combrinck (2015) also views the family as an immediate influence, and argues that it is the primary place where children and youth are nurtured, supported, educated, cared for, and socialised. Also focusing on the role of the family, the World Health Organisation (WHO) emphasises ‘nurturing care’ as a response to children and youths’ needs to support them to develop into independent citizens of a country (WHO, 2018). The family’s well-being and responses to life events will influence the youth’s well-being, responses, and decisions.

Peers also play a vital role on a micro level, as they provide youth with a place where they can discover their identity, and learn what works and what does not work in their social lives. This becomes the platform where they learn what to expect from their environments, and how to respond to challenges (Louw & Louw, 2014).

### **Risk factors**

The following risk factors were identified in the microsystem, which increases youth gang participation:

- Lack of belonging and safety within their homes (Kadir, 2012),
- Abuse and neglect in family homes (Kadir, 2012), and
- Anti-social peers (Magidi et al., 2016).

#### **2.2.1.2 Mezzosystem**

Bronfenbrenner (cited in Drakenberg and Malmgren, 2013, p. 119) defines the *mezzosystem* as “a set of interrelations between two or more settings where the developing person becomes an active participant”. According Onwuegbuzie et al. (2013), the mezzosystem includes relationships between the family-, school-, neighbourhood- and peer experiences. It thus encompasses all the interactions between all the microsystems relevant to the youth. This study focused on how the interactions between the microsystems have an impact on the youth’s involvement in gangsterism.

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2013) and Van der Merwe et al. (2012) provide the following examples of family and school experiences:

- What happens at home (family experience) might have an impact on the youth's school performances (school experience).
- Youth might perform poor at school (school experience) if they witness family violence between their parents (family experience).
- Youth who are bullied at school (school experience) might withdraw themselves from their family at home (family experience).

As such, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) contend that unsupportive home environments may influence youth school and peer experiences. The factors and experiences between the microsystems therefore have a direct impact on youth, which increases their vulnerability.

### **Risk factors**

The following risk factors were identified in the mezzosystem, which increases youth gang participation:

- Gangs as young people's surrogate family (Petering, 2016),
- Family members' involvement in gangs (Gilman et al., 2014),
- School experiences, such as bullying (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013),
- Family experiences, such as abuse (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013), and
- High risk peer environment, such as peers that join gangs with perceived advantages (Van der Merwe et al., 2012).

### **2.2.1.3 Exosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, cited in Drakenberg & Malmgren, 2013), the *exosystem* consists of a setting that does not involve the youth as an active participant, but as events that are affected by what happens in other settings. Kamenopoulou (2016) also highlights that this system has to do with external influences, and may include policies and legislation. Van der Merwe et al. (2012) concur that the exosystem affects the microsystems, such as youth and their school, household, peer group, and neighbourhood. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2013) accentuate that the external influences result in youth and other microsystems not playing an active role in what is happening to them. The system therefore does not include youth directly, but it still affects them

at the micro level through what is happening in the school system, a lack of services, economic factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and mass media (Van der Merwe et al., 2012). As an example, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) explain that poverty in the neighbourhood can be seen as an exosystem that affects the youth.

Continuing with a description of the external influences through the exosystem that affect youth, David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) opine that youth growing up in communities where they are exposed to high rates of crime, family violence, poverty, and failing school systems may be especially vulnerable to engaging in high-risk behaviours such as joining gangs. In agreement with the above sentiment, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) refer to a lack of social organisation that leads to a lack of social control, which could affect school performance, impacting on the different domains of development mentioned in the previous section of this chapter. The authors continue to explain that social disorganisation can also affect parenting by reducing the amount of social support that parents may receive from neighbours. David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) further identify the following exosystems in the community that may gravitate youth toward gangs:

- Residential instability,
- Overcrowded housing,
- Poor economic growth,
- Lack of positive relationships,
- High crime levels,
- Gang activities,
- Unemployment, and
- Substance use or sales.

David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) conclude that youth therefore see violence and gangs as acceptable and as a way to reduce their vulnerability.

### **Risk factors**

The following risk factors were identified in the exosystem, which increases youth gang participation:

- The lack of positive school systems (Gilman et al., 2014),
- Lack of police involvement (Pinnock, 2017),

- Lack of job opportunities (Pinnock, 2017),
- Lack of access to services within the community (RSA, 2020),
- Substance availability in the neighbourhood (Magidi et al., 2016),
- Violent and underprivileged environments (Kerig et al., 2013).

#### **2.2.1.4 Macrosystem**

According to Drakenberg and Malmgren (2013), the *macrosystem* has to do with cultural values and beliefs that influence the environment in which the person is growing up. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2013, p. 5) expand on this by including societal belief systems, cultural norms, ideologies, policies, or laws that influence the community, the neighbourhood, and the community members.

Van der Merwe et al. (2012) and David-Ferdon and Simon (2014, p. 15) link political issues and social or cultural norms within the macrosystem. The authors explain that political leaders make use of violence in order to resolve disputes. This, then, becomes a norm in the community of how to deal with disputes. In addition, Kamenopoulou (2016) and David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) refer to socioeconomic factors such as media, violence, policies, and a lack of educational and economic opportunities that increase youths' vulnerability to violence and gangsterism. In terms of economic factors, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) report that poverty and the gap between the poor and the rich plays a role in the high rates of violence because poor families have less opportunities for employment, and are more exposed to substance abuse, violence, and crime in their neighbourhoods. This increases the youths' vulnerability to violence and gang involvement (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014).

Van der Merwe et al. (2012, p. 77) further describe the macrosystem as "less tangible but nonetheless influential". They add, "The socioeconomic aspects, attitudes and ideologies of a culture exert their influence on all its contexts".

#### **Risk factors**

The following risk factors were identified in the macrosystem which increases youth gang participation:

- Poverty (Brankovic, 2012),
- Cultural norms, values, beliefs, and behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979),

- Attitudes and ideologies of culture (Van der Merwe et al., 2012),
- Lack of support from government (Pinnock, 2017), and
- Economic factors, such as poverty, and a lack of employment opportunities (Kadir, 2012).

### **2.2.1.5 Chronosystem**

The *chronosystem* refers to changes that take place over time that affect the different systems, as well as the individuals within the system (Sigelman et al., 2019; Kamenopoulou, 2016). Van der Merwe et al. (2012) draw attention to the impact of the use of violence to solve problems in South African history. Various role models clearly depict the use of violence as acceptable. The authors postulate that during apartheid some young people were used by the system to maintain its oppressive policies, while other young people were actively and integrally involved in the liberation struggle against apartheid. Both resulted in violent actions.

In addition, Ratele and Shefer (2014) reflect on the apartheid practice of segregating people according to race and ethnicity (African, Coloured, Indian, and White). While the Whites were advantaged through legislation and practices, people of colour were oppressed and disadvantaged. People of colour, therefore, struggled with the meaning of their life and their place in the world (Ratele & Shefer, 2014). Apartheid forced them to move into overcrowded communities that lacked proper infrastructure. These communities, such as the Cape Flats, still exist today, and have an enormous impact on the youth, as they are still excluded from opportunities (Pinnock, 2017; Brankovic, 2012). The lack of opportunities encourages them to join gangs (Brankovic, 2012).

Van der Merwe et al. (2012) argue that due to the absence of anti-violence standards and norms in the post-apartheid society, the youth learn that violent behaviours are acceptable, which in turn contributes to their involvement in gangs, particularly in disadvantaged communities (Pinnock, 2017).

### **Risk factors**

The following risk factors were identified in the chronosystem as increasing youth gang participation:

- The historical influence of apartheid,

- Ongoing violence that become a norm in society, and
- Ongoing lack of opportunities in communities (Pinnock, 2017)

### **2.2.1.6 Technosystem**

There is a paucity of research on the *technosystem*, which was identified only much later after the development of Bronfenbrenner's original EST. In particular, the factors in this system that have an impact on youth gang involvement remain unexplored. According to Johnson (2010, p. 176), the technosystem "includes child interaction with both living (peers) and non-living (hardware) elements of communication, information and recreation technologies in immediate or direct environment".

The technosystem has a positive and negative effect on youth. Cognitive development is an example of the former (Johnson, 2010). In terms of the negative effect, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) assert that youth are more likely to be aggressive when they are in an environment that does not have anti-violence norms and when they are exposed to violent images on television. These authors affirm that youth emulate what they see, which has a direct emotional influence with long-lasting effects, impacting on youth development. The Internet may further harm youth through exposure to inappropriate content (Johnson, 2010). In this study, the technosystem refers to social media, television content, and applications for communication.

#### **Risk factors**

The following risk factors were identified in the technosystem which increases youth gang participation:

- Social media (SAPS, 2016),
- Radio and television (SAPS, 2016),
- Internet (Johnson, 2010), and
- Mass media, including applications for contact between youth and people they might not know (Van der Merwe et al., 2012).

Based on the description of those systems within the EST, youth gang affiliation was further explored.

## **2.3 YOUTH GANG AFFILIATION**

The above section explored youth in terms of the EST and explored how each system may influence their well-being and contribute to youth gang affiliation. Risk factors in each system were identified. With this in mind, this section focuses on youth and gang affiliations in terms of the causes behind gang affiliation and the possible impact thereof.

### **2.3.1 Causes of Youth Gang Affiliation**

Gilman et al. (2014) indicate that the neighbourhood, family, peers, and individual domains are all factors that lead to youth gang involvement. This points to the micro- and mezzosystem as the systems that receive the most attention in the literature. Although some literature also discusses factors in the macro- and chronosystems, such as underprivileged backgrounds and the failure of systems. The following risk factors which, according to the literature, increase youth gang involvement, are discussed below: *Lack of sense of belonging; risk factors in families; anti-social peers; substance abuse; underprivileged background; failure of school systems; and the apartheid system.*

#### **2.3.1.1 Lack of sense of belonging**

A lack of belonging within peer groups, families, and communities is one of the main causes of youth gang affiliation. In that youth seek alternative ways to develop a sense of identity and belonging, which they find in gangs (Geldenhuys, 2019; Boxer, 2014; Kadir, 2012; Panday et al., 2012). Ward et al. (2012) maintain that gangs are seen as their alternative family and sources of identification, when it is not available at home. As an explanation, Geldenhuys (2019) and Pinnock (2017) conclude that this is due to the fact that gang members seem to be the only role models available. In this regard, Pinnock (2017) concludes that young men find their passage to manhood through gangs when suffering from a lack of belonging within their environment.

#### **2.3.1.2 Risk factors in families**

Gilman et al. (2014) and Nicholas et al. (2010) postulate that unstable family circumstances and disorganised family structures can result in youth gangsterism.



Petering (2016) describes a gang as a young person's surrogate family because the gang provides for their basic needs when their families are unable to do so. Risk factors include a lack of parental care and involvement, abuse and neglect, and family members who are involved in gangs.

**Lack of parental care and involvement:** The lack of parental involvement includes the following:

- Poor child monitoring,
- Permissive parenting,
- Low family bonding,
- A lack of supervision,
- A lack of guidance,
- Poor parental attachment,
- Low warmth, and
- Low maternal age (Jones, 2013; Van der Merwe et al., 2012).

Another cause of youth gang involvement includes single-parent homes or absent parents (Jones, 2013; Cooper & Ward, 2012). In terms of the latter, the absence of fathers is a major contributing factor to youth joining gangs (Pinnock, 2017; Brankovic, 2012). David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) assert that a lack of parental care and involvement contributes to anti-social and aggressive behaviour in youth, especially among youth living in poor environments. Pyrooz and Sweeten (2015) proclaim that a lack of parenting exacerbates behavioural problems, increasing gang affiliation, substance abuse, unsafe sex, gun carrying, drug sales, and arrests, which continue after leaving the gang into their adulthood. Due to the lack of belonging resulting from inadequate parenting, youth seek guidance and material support from gangs, which is a way for them to experience some form of care and cope with life (Magidi et al., 2016; Brankovic, 2012).

**Abuse and neglect in childhood:** Cooper and Ward (2012) assert that parents who have pro-violence attitudes encourage youth gang affiliation. Abuse and neglect in families increases the following risk factors:

- Family conflict and violence,
- Caregiver criminality,

- Harsh disciplinary practices,
- Physical and psychological abuse,
- Harsh disciplinary practices,
- Parental conflict,
- Violence,
- Physical maltreatment,
- Parental conflict, and
- Sexual abuse in youth (Harding, 2014; David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014; Jones, 2013; Van der Merwe et al., 2012; Panday et al., 2012).

Long-term consequences of childhood abuse and neglect, as described by Panday et al. (2012), include depression, suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and violent behaviours. Physical abuse during early childhood is a particular risk factor for aggressive behaviour later in life (Van der Merwe et al., 2012). This means that victims of aggression and abuse, on the one hand, are at risk of developing violent and antisocial behaviours because of poor attachment to parents and other microsystems, while the violent and antisocial behaviours, on the other hand, increase their chances of joining gangs (Petering, 2016; David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014; Van der Merwe et al., 2012; Cooper & Ward, 2012). Pinnock (2017) and Kerig et al. (2013) further add that youth may view abusive fathers as role models, and understand abuse as normative and acceptable, which increases their gang participation (Jones, 2013).

**Families' involvement in gangs:** Another cause of youth gang involvement is families' involvement in gangs, which exposes youth to the practices and values associated with gangs, including violence and crime (Jones, 2013). In support of this line of thought, Kerig et al. (2013) and Van der Merwe et al. (2012) contend that siblings and caregivers who are involved in gangs function as role models for youth, and therefore learn in the microsystem to function within a gang culture. Apart from being exposed to gang activities in the home, Cooper and Ward (2012) further report that youth are actively recruited to join gangs by family members. Families' involvement in gangs are viewed as part of a culture in the family (Moses, 2019; Geldenhuys, 2019).

### **2.3.1.3 Anti-social peers**

Anti-social peers in the neighbourhood and in schools are risk factors of youth gang involvement (Van der Merwe et al., 2012; Cooper & Ward, 2012). According to Cooper and Ward (2012), young people join gangs because their peers are already involved in gangs, which causes the peers to actively recruit them. Petering (2016) and Gilman et al. (2014) explain that youth whose sense of belonging is supported by peers who are members of gangs will gravitate them towards gangs. In agreement, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) maintain that peer groups play a socialisation role as youth are seeking peer approval and adjust their behaviours and choices accordingly.

Another cause is that youth are involved in gangs through either bullying (O'Brien et al., 2013) or peer pressure (Pinnock, 2017) where they are influenced by peers about the benefits of being part of gangs (O'Brien et al., 2013).

Van der Merwe et al. (2012) further assert that unsupportive home environments encourage youth to associate with anti-social peers. They are then more likely to follow their peers' examples of violent behaviour and gang activity (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014).

### **2.3.1.4 Substance abuse**

Gangs and substance abuse are often linked. For example, youth who abuse substances start to sell substances on behalf of gangs in order to get their own. Once they are addicted to substances, they need to meet the demands of the gangs (Van der Merwe et al., 2012). The availability of substances in the neighbourhood and gangs as providers of substances therefore contribute to youth joining gangs (Gilman et al., 2014; Jones, 2013; Van der Merwe et al., 2012; Panday et al., 2012; Cooper & Ward, 2012).

Venatus and Agnes (2010) further mention that substance abuse encourages youth to act brave and, as a result, they find it easier to engage in the criminal and violent activities of gangs. David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) and Magidi et al. (2016) concur that substance abuse causes aggressive beliefs, weak social performances, and encourages youth gang membership. Magidi et al. (2016) add that poverty encourages

youth to be involved in dealing with substances through gang involvement because it helps to support them with their daily existence.

### **2.3.1.5 Underprivileged backgrounds, poverty and unemployment**

Underprivileged backgrounds as risk factors of youth gang involvement include the following:

- Inadequate livelihood opportunities,
- Failure of the economic system,
- Lack of job opportunities,
- High levels of unemployment,
- Local, national, or global financial crises,
- Lack of services, including state services such as policing,
- Large population due to poverty,
- High levels of unemployment,
- Low educational levels,
- Social exclusion, and
- Marginalisation (Jones, 2013; Cooper & Ward, 2012; Venatus & Agnes, 2010).

Youth are often labelled in terms of the communities they live in. To illustrate this further, Chhuon (2013) explains that Cambodian youth living in areas where gangs operate are often labelled as gangsters, which impacts on their identity formation. Similarly, illiterate, unemployed and uneducated youth are more vulnerable to gangs because they are seeking alternative sources of belonging and a way to sustain themselves and their families (Jones, 2013; Venatus & Agnes, 2010). The latter is supported by Cooper and Ward (2012) who assert that youth from underprivileged backgrounds join gangs in order to make a living due to a lack of alternatives (Cooper & Ward, 2012). Poor families tend to have larger households and low maternal education, which makes it hard for caregivers to supervise and monitor the behaviour of youth (Van der Merwe et al., 2012). David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) add that youth who grow up in neighbourhoods where they are exposed to high crime levels, family violence, and poverty see gangs as an acceptable way to reduce their vulnerability in either their homes or their neighbourhoods.

In support of the above, Magidi et al. (2016) argue that youth from underprivileged and vulnerable backgrounds join gangs because it is difficult for them to find success and safety elsewhere. Gangs provide them with a form of security and social status in these underprivileged environments. The authors add that youth living in violent communities form part of gangs to provide them with protection from victimisation by rival gangs (cf. Geldenhuys, 2019).

### **2.3.1.6 Failure of school system**

Further risk factors for youth gang affiliation include poor educational systems, a lack of afterschool activities, a dearth of recreational opportunities, and learning problems (Jones, 2013; Van der Merwe et al., 2012; Cooper and Ward, 2012; Venatus & Agnes, 2010). David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) warn that the failing school system leads to a lack of other opportunities, such as employment, which contributes to youth seeing gangs as an acceptable way to reduce their vulnerability. In support of this, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) assert that South African schools have challenging and chaotic environments, with crowded classrooms that negatively impact on the learning that takes place. In addition, a study by David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) highlighted that one in five learners between the ages of 12 to 18 reported that gangs were present in their schools, and that most youth join gangs before the age of 15.

Van der Merwe et al. (2012) add that youth who are occupied with prosaic activities, such as homework, sport, and cultural activities are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviours or substances. Secondary school learners who have high levels of leisure boredom are either disinterested in available activities, or they do not have access to sufficient activities at all.

Petering (2016) draws a link between youth gangsterism and school dropout. School dropout can be attributed to social disorganisation where no structures are available to support at-risk youth. Another cause of school dropout is due to teachers labelling youth as troublesome or rejecting them (Pinnock, 2017; Brankovic, 2012). Summarising the school system as a causal factor to youth gangsterism, Gilman et al. (2014) observe the anti-social environment of schools, inept functioning of schools, poor academic performance, and students and teachers being victimised by gangs.

Once youth join gangs, the impact on them, their families, and communities must be considered. This is discussed next.

### **2.3.2 Impact of Youth Gang Affiliation**

Youth gang affiliation has various adverse effects on the youth themselves. Both Petering (2016) and Sanders (2012) agree that youth gang involvement influences youths in the following ways:

- Suicide attempts,
- Homicidal thoughts,
- Increased mental and physical health problems,
- Depression,
- Anxiety,
- Increased stress levels,
- Violent behaviour, and
- Lifetime substance abuse and high-risk sexual activity.

Sanders (2012) opines that the above risk factors increase negative physical, behavioural, and psychological outcomes. Petering (2016) focuses on the long-term impact of substance abuse, warning that youth involved in gangs are three times more likely to meet the criteria of abusing substances in their adulthood.

Families of rival gangs are particularly victims of these types of violence (Magidi et al., 2016). Brankovic (2012) reports that youth gang involvement increases their families' vulnerability to rival gangs, which results in them being beaten, robbed, emotionally abused or intimidated, or even raped out of revenge.

For communities, the most common impact of youth gangsterism are the high levels of violence in the community. According to Magidi et al. (2016), SAPS (2016), and Gilman et al. (2014), youth gangsterism causes:

- High numbers of homicide,
- Robbery,
- Property crime,
- Substance abuse,

- Drug wars,
- Human trafficking,
- Housebreaking,
- Robbing, and
- Vehicle thefts.

According to Moses (2019), violence in Paarl (East) where the current study was conducted occurs due to gangs selling substances and fighting over territory, which results in traumatising community members. Similarly, Magidi et al. (2016) concur that gangs control communities through intimidation and by instilling ongoing fear among community members, causing them to feel like prisoners in their own homes. Geldenhuys (2019) further reports that a lack of mobility due to gangsterism results in community members being unable to access resources in the geographical areas of rival gangs. Alarmingly, gang violence causes a lack of policing due to the escalation of gang violence in disadvantaged communities (SABC Digital News, 2016).

However, Geldenhuys (2019) posits the view that gangsterism can be seen as a solution to communities' challenges. This is further supported by Magidi et al. (2016) who report that gang members control the community positively by taking control over geographic areas and filling the gaps where the government is absent, for example, they would support families financially. Moses (2019) believes that these are the reasons why the community would protect youth gang members. In this way, gangs become established in a community's core, such as schools, churches, and economic venues where the current government and systems are failing.

Both causal factors and the impact of youth gangsterism, from the EST framework, were of interest to support this study. In order to contribute to the aim of the study, possible solutions, as discussed below, were also considered.

## 2.4 SOLUTIONS TO YOUTH GANGSTERISM

For this purpose of this study, prevention and early interventions were solutions explored as interventions to either (1) prevent youth in Paarl East from joining gangs, or (2) to support them to leave gangs.

### 2.4.1 Prevention Services

The researcher explored prevention and awareness as an intervention within the ISDM framework, as discussed in Chapter 1, in order to address risk factors that contribute to youth gang affiliation (Patel, 2015). According to Cooper and Ward (2012), the aim of prevention programmes is to prevent youth from participating in gangs in the first place. In line with the EST, Gilman et al. (2014) advise that prevention interventions should focus broadly on the influences of youth gang affiliation on youths themselves, their families, anti-social neighbourhoods, as well as anti-social peers. This means that prevention services should be aimed at the micro- and mezzosystems.

Below are some examples of *prevention services* aimed at youth gang affiliation. The examples provided are arranged under the following target areas: schools; hospitals and clinics; and the community:

- **Schools:**
  - Within the school system, social workers can educate both teachers and parents/caregivers of the warning signs of gang membership (Geldenhuys, 2019).
  - Preventative social work services can be included in life orientation programmes where learners and teachers participate. The focus of such services includes information regarding the dangers of gangsterism, non-violence skills in resolving problems, anger management, and conflict resolution skills, as well as anti-substance abuse programmes (Patel, 2015; David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014; Kirst-Ashman, 2013; Cooper & Ward, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2010).
  
- **Hospitals and clinics:**
  - Awareness programmes at hospitals and clinics should focus on educating nurses with regards to warning signs of youth gang involvement and encouraging at-risk



youth to find positive ways to achieve success and to address challenges (Kirst-Ashman, 2013).

▪ **Community:**

- Neighbourhood activities can be implemented to introduce youth and their parents/caregivers to alternative and healthy youth activities and skills development programmes, and to provide them with support and resources to prevent youth from joining gangs (Cooper & Ward, 2012).
- On a macro level, crime awareness campaigns through social media and the radio can create an awareness of the dangers of gangsterism and provide information regarding alternatives. These campaigns should specifically aim to reach areas that are as identified hotspots (SAPS, 2016).

#### **2.4.2 Early Intervention Services**

The researcher explored *early intervention services* as an intervention within the ISDM framework to support youth who have joined gangs, or who have started to engage with gang-related activities, to leave gangs (Patel, 2015). Early interventions focus on identifying known risk factors and addressing these in order to prevent their further occurrence (Patel, 2015; Cooper & Ward, 2012). The following early intervention programmes are discussed below: *suppression programmes, parenting skills programmes, resilience in youth programmes, and after school activities for youth.*

▪ **Suppression programmes:**

According to Cooper and Ward (2012), suppression programmes aim to suppress gang activities that exist in the community. Since a lack of safety is a concern in communities where gangs are active, the following suggestions are made:

- Police need to be more involved in schools by implementing random substance and weapon searching.
- Police need to enforce stricter control in order to prevent gangs from entering schools (Magidi et al., 2016).
- Visible policing or projects for the youth need to be placed at identified hotspots to reduce gang violence (SAPS, 2016).
- Firearms need to be reduced.

- Punishment for illegal gang activity should be increased.
- Full military campaigns should be increased in order to reduce gangs accessible to youth (Cooper & Ward, 2012).
- Safe physical environments in communities need to be improved by creating safe green spaces and modifying public spaces, as well as restoring neighbourhoods and schools (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014).

▪ **Parenting skills programmes:**

According to David-Ferdon and Simon (2014), the implementation of parenting skills programmes should focus on parents and youth where aggressive behaviour already exists. These programmes should focus on:

- Helping parents to build healthy relationships with youth and promoting problem solving skills.
- Encouraging parents to monitor the youth's behaviour through implementing family management skills and discipline strategies.
- Supporting youth through monitoring communication, boundaries, rules, monitoring youths' activities, problem solving, and behaviour management skills.
- Providing therapeutic services to families and youth offenders or high-risk youth.

▪ **Resilience in youth programmes:**

Increasing resilience in youth programmes, according to Cooper and Ward (2012), should focus on:

- Providing youth who are already involved in gangs with employment opportunities, training and skills development, family counselling, and substance abuse treatment opportunities.
- Implementing and improving protective factors, strengths, and resilience (O'Brien et al., 2013).
- Protective factors in order to prevent their gang membership from further occurring or escalating, and thus not only pay attention to punishing youth involvement in gangs (Pinnock, 2017).

▪ **Recreational activities:**

Recreational activities include building better facilities for youth in order to reduce boredom and empowering youth to reduce their vulnerability (Pinnock, 2017). These programmes should:

- Be viewed as 'cool' (Pinnock, 2017).
- Incorporate known mentors who young people trust in order to gain their participation and to motivate them to change anti-social behaviours.
- Include the following services, as noted by Cooper and Ward (2012):
  - recreational activities,
  - skills development aimed at accessing employment,
  - educational assistance,
  - other activities, such as dance, music, and football.
- Focus on helping youth in exploring their skills and to encourage them to make use of non-violent behaviour, conflict resolution skills, avoiding substances, succeeding in school, and encouraging them to deal with past exposure to violence and abuse (David-Ferdon and Simon, 2014).

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented a review of existing literature on the developmental stage of youth, how youth can be viewed within the framework of EST, as well as the causal factors of youth gangsterism and the impact thereof. Based on this investigation, possible solutions were explored in terms of preventative and early interventions. This information framed the research and was used to compare and contrast the findings of the present study.

Building on this research, the next chapter presents the research methodology of this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The research methodology concerns the approach that is adopted to conduct a scientifically sound investigation in order to answer the research question, obtain new knowledge, and contribute to a deeper understanding of the research problem (Cohen et al., 2018). Kielmann et al. (2012) postulate that the theoretical framework from which the researcher views the research problem will direct the methodology that will be used, while the research findings will contribute to the theory.

This third chapter focuses on the research methodology used in this study to answer the research question: *What are the perceived contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community?* The research methodology was therefore aimed at exploring and describing the factors that contribute to youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community in order to make recommendations for preventative and early interventions in social work practice.

The discussion commences with a description of the research approach (section 3.2) and research design (section 3.3) used in this study. This is followed by a description of the research methods and techniques that were employed (section 3.4); the ethical considerations adhered to (section 3.5); the limitations of the study (section 3.6); and a brief conclusion of the chapter (section 3.7).

#### **3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

In order to explore and describe the factors that entice youth into gang involvement in the Paarl East community, a qualitative research approach was identified as the most suitable for this study. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2014, p. 287), qualitative research is interested in “feelings, experiences, social situations and phenomenon as they occur in the real world in their natural setting”. The authors further explain that qualitative researchers are interested in data in the form of words, which can be written

or spoken. Similarly, Astalin (2013) refers to research from a qualitative approach as systematic and scientific inquiries that want to add to the knowledge base and contribute to the understanding of social phenomena through the use of narrative descriptions. Working from a qualitative approach, the researcher then analyses the data in order to identify main themes, sub-themes, and categories (Terre Blanche et al., 2014). These in turn assist the researcher to answer research questions when a gap in the current knowledge base on the research topic is identified.

Another characteristic of the qualitative approach is that the experiences and perceptions of people close to the research topic are explored and described through their descriptions, and the findings are often contextual in nature (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This, then, relates well to the contextual nature of the present study. The procedures within this approach are also less structured and controlled, and are determined by the participants' profile (Jensen, 2016).

Based on the above description, a qualitative approach supported the research aim of this study, which was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of youth living in Paarl East in order to develop an understanding of the risk factors that gravitate youth towards gangs in this area.

The research design that was implemented to support the qualitative research approach is presented next.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A qualitative research design refers to a general way of thinking about the procedures, processes, methods, and techniques that will be best suited to answer the research questions (Astalin, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified two research designs that were used as a framework from which she chose the research methods and techniques for this study (Robson & McCartan, 2016), namely:

- *The explorative research design:* This design supports qualitative research in that it aims to explore a field of interest to build on knowledge (Delpont et al., 2011). Reiter (2017) explains that this design assists the researcher to make decisions on what methods and techniques would best suit an exploration of the mental, social, and cultural realities within a specific context or segment of reality. This design therefore fits well with the contextual nature of this study. In addition, the exploratory research design assisted the researcher in identifying suitable methods for:
  - Sampling,
  - Data collection, and
  - Data analysis.
  
- *The contextual research design:* This design is relevant when a research topic is explored within a specific context to develop a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of people in this context (Delpont et al., 2011). Holtzblatt and Beyer (2015) refer to this design as particularly valuable when a researcher wants to contribute to practice, as it is user-centred. This design was therefore appropriate for this study, as the aim was to make recommendations for context-relevant preventative and early intervention social work practice. This design assisted the researcher in identifying the population and sample that was used in this study.

Next, the implementation of research methods and techniques that helped the researcher to explore and describe the contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community will be discussed.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

Research methods and techniques refer to scientific methods that are chosen to assist a researcher to answer the research questions. The chosen research approach and design direct the choices of methods and techniques (Neuman, 2014). Kielmann et al. (2012) posit that there is a close link between the theoretical framework of the study and the choices of methods and techniques. This includes choices related to:

- Population and sampling,
- Data collection,
- Data analysis,
- Data verification, and
- Ethical considerations (Cohen et al., 2018).

The methods and techniques that were used in this study are presented under the following sub-headings in terms of a description of the chosen method or technique, the reason for the choice, as well as the implementation thereof.

### **3.4.1 Population and Sampling**

According to Hagemeyer et al. (2014), a research population involves all the people or groups that are related to the research topic. Similarly, Alvi (2016) explains that a population is chosen based on the focus of the study. In the case of the present study, the contextual nature of the study, as well as the focus on youth and gangsterism directed the choice regarding the population for the purpose of this study.

Related to this present study, the South African Planning Commission (Children's National Development Plan, 2019) acknowledges that children and youth should inform planning, monitoring, and evaluation of services that involve them. In order to explore why youth in the Paarl East community are drawn to gangs, youth living in this context were viewed as experts to inform this study. Based on this viewpoint, and related to the research topic, the population for this present study was identified as:

- Youth living in the Paarl East community.

Terre Blanche et al. (2014) describe 'sampling' as a selection of participants from an entire population. Agreeing with this description, Alvi (2016) emphasises that the sample of a research study must be representative of the population and chosen based on specific characteristics that will best represent the population to be able to answer the research question.

In order to identify a sample from the above population, the *non-probability sampling* technique is viewed as relevant for this study. This meant that the probability of being selected into the sample could not be determined prior to the study, and that the

sample size could not be determined at the beginning of the research (Kumar, 2014). Alvi (2016) explains that non-probability sampling is particularly valuable when a researcher is interested in a particular group's understanding of the research topic, and that this then requires the identification of inclusion criteria.

The *purposive sampling technique*, typical of the non-probability sampling method, was chosen to identify the criteria for inclusion into the sample. This technique assisted the researcher in deciding who in the population was best suited to answer the research questions (Ritchie et al., 2014). This study focused on youth, indicating that the perspectives of youth would be of interest to the researcher. The researcher also considered that children exposed to gangs might be negatively affected when participating in the study. The research topic is sensitive, and it could expose them to emotional and social harm. This is also true for other participants and therefore the ability to provide voluntary consent was viewed as an important factor. Therefore, the inclusion criteria for this study were:

- Male and female youths,
- Living in the Paarl East community,
- Between the ages of 19 and 24, and
- Able to speak either English or Afrikaans (the two most commonly used languages in this community).

The sample size in this study was determined by data saturation. The researcher conducted interviews until she and her supervisors detected that data became repetitive (Jensen, 2016). Data saturation was observed after six interviews. The researcher then conducted 2 more interviews to ensure that no more new information was provided by participants. The sample size was therefore eight.

Sampling and access to participants took place concurrently. This will be discussed in the next sub-section.

### **3.4.2 Data Collection**

Data collection, according to Terre Blanche et al. (2014), requires a scientifically sound process. Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that researchers consider the following components during data collection:



- Ethical clearance from relevant institutions,
- Permission to do research within a specific context,
- Methods to access possible participants and to invite them to participate,
- The instruments that will be used to collect the data, and
- The methods that will be used to record and document the data.

Once the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape (see Annexure A), she contacted community organisations, namely a Non-profit organization and a Secondary school where youth participate in the organisations' activities. The researcher spoke with the social work manager, school principal and a school teacher. She informed the organisations of the aim, objectives, and nature of the study, as well as the ethics that guided the research, and requested them to assist her to access suitable participants (see Annexure B). The organisations that agreed were further requested to arrange for the researcher to access the youth.

Once the organisations provided the researcher with the names of possible participants who indicated their willingness to participate in this study, the researcher arranged to meet with them individually at the respective organisations at a time that was convenient for the prospective participants. An information letter (see Annexure C) that contained the following information was handed to and discussed with each individual during the arranged meeting:

- The aim of the study,
- The nature of the study,
- How data will be collected,
- How privacy will be protected,
- How efforts will be made to do no harm,
- Access to debriefing where needed,
- The right to withdraw at any time,
- Participation is voluntary,
- Non-participation will not be held against them, and
- Participation will not be rewarded (Harding, 2019; Devlin, 2018; Bless et al., 2013).

Once all the information was provided, prospective participants were afforded the opportunity to ask questions for clarification. Those who agreed to participate were

asked to sign an informed consent form (see Annexure D). The times and venues for the interviews were arranged according to what would work best for the participants. However, it should be noted that these interviews took place during the COVID-19 lockdown period and therefore the venues had to meet the requirements for social distancing, face masks were compulsory and sanitizer was available.

Based on the sensitive nature of this research topic, the researcher made use of individual semi-structured interviews. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2014), such interviews create spaces for openness and trust where participants can openly share their experiences and viewpoints.

Hagemeier et al. (2014) indicate that semi-structured interviews make use of a list of topics that the participants must talk about. The interview questions (see Annexure E and Table 2) were based on the research topic and the theoretical framework in the following way:

**Table 2. Interview Questions**

Layers in the EST	Questions
The microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, what would be the characteristics of a typical youth that will join gangs in your community?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Probing areas:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Age,</li> <li>▪ Gender,</li> <li>▪ Specific attributes such as health, disabilities, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ What aspects regarding a youth's family could contribute to him/her joining a gang?</li> <li>▪ What aspects regarding a youth's neighbourhood could contribute to him/her joining a gang?</li> <li>▪ What aspects regarding a youth's friends could contribute to him/her joining a gang?</li> </ul>
The mezzosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How do you think the connections between families, youth and typical neighbourhood activities (e.g., sport, church, existing gangs) in the community play a role in youths' decision to join gangs?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Probing areas:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family interaction with gangs in the community,</li> <li>▪ Family interaction with neighbours,</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family interactions with community activities such as church and sport,</li> <li>▪ Friends' interaction with gangs in the community,</li> <li>▪ Friends' interactions with community activities such as church and sport.</li> </ul>
The exosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What economic factors in your community lead to youth joining gangs?</li> <li>▪ What services or projects in your community can assist youth to abstain from gangs?</li> <li>▪ What services or projects are needed in your community to assist youth to abstain from gangs?</li> </ul>
The macrosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What attitudes and values by community members do you think support youths' decision to join gangs?</li> <li>▪ What social problems in your community do you think contribute to youths' decision to join gangs?</li> <li>▪ What municipal or government services are needed in your community to prevent youth from joining gangs?</li> </ul>
The chronosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If you think of your community, what do you think happened in the past for gangs to become active in this community?</li> </ul>
The technosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does the media inform youths' decision to join gangs?</li> <li>▪ How could the media be used to prevent youth from joining gangs?</li> <li>▪ How could the media be used to assist youth to leave gangs?</li> </ul>

The semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore the research topic from the theoretical framework, while using open-ended questions so that the participants could provide any information they deemed necessary and relevant. The researcher requested permission to audio-record the interviews, or alternatively made use of field notes to record the information provided by the participants. After each interview, she transcribed the audio-recordings or field notes (Greeff, 2011).

Dikko (2016) advises qualitative researchers to conduct pilot studies before commencing with a study to ensure that the chosen research methods and techniques can contribute to data verification. Therefore, the researcher made use of a *pilot interview* in order to see if the interview guide served the aim of this study. After this pilot interview, she transcribed and analysed the data, and discussed the outcome with her supervisors. The pilot interview indicated that the questions could be answered and that the answers contributed to the attainment of the research aim

(Bryman, 2016). Therefore, it was decided not to make any changes to the interview schedule.

Once the data was collected, and data saturation was observed, the researcher continued to analyse the data.

### **3.4.3 Data Analysis**

Maguire and Delahunt (2017) describe qualitative data analysis as a process to identify main themes in the data sets. Patterns are further explored within each theme by identifying sub-themes and categories. In this study, the researcher made use of Tesch's (1990, cited in Creswell, 2014) framework for qualitative data analysis. The researcher followed the eight steps of this framework in order to identify the themes, sub-themes, and categories that described the findings of this study.

The eight steps followed are briefly described below:

- Step 1: The researcher started by reading all the transcripts carefully and writing down main points next to the text in order to get a sense of the whole.
- Step 2: Thereafter, she re-read the transcripts one at a time and added to the points. She therefore selected one interview at a time.
- Step 3: After all the transcripts were worked through, the researcher made a list of all the points noted in the transcripts.
- Step 4: Next, she identified the main themes and placed all the relevant points under the relevant headings. Main themes were listed related to the special theme, micro-, mezzo-, exo-, macro-, chrono and technosystem.
- Step 5: She then continued to identify sub-themes and categories under each main theme.
- Step 6: Once the themes, sub-themes, and categories were identified, she continued to place all the verbatim quotes associated with each theme, sub-theme, or category under the relevant theme, sub-theme,

or category. Direct verbatim quotations included both Afrikaans quotes and English translated quotes.

- Step 7: She then continued to identify and formulate the headings for each theme, sub-theme, or category that would best describe the content.
- Step 8: Finally, she revisited the final analysis to ensure that all the information related to the research question.

The researcher as well as an independent coder used the above process to analyse the data. The two sets of analyses were compared, and the researcher and independent coder came to an agreement as to what the main themes, sub-themes, and categories should be included to answer the research questions. This was then followed by a discussion with the supervisors, after which a final decision was made regarding how to present the findings.

In order to ensure the validity of this qualitative study, the researcher included methods of data verification. These are described next.

#### **3.4.4 Data Verification**

Anney (2014) refers to Guba's (1981) description of what data verification in qualitative studies entails in terms of four main questions that the qualitative researcher should consider, namely:

- How can the researcher be certain that the findings presented are a true reflection of the participants' contributions? This question concerns itself with the truth value of the findings.
- How will the researcher determine if the findings are applicable to other settings or communities? The question is concerned with the applicability of the findings.
- How will the research be sure that the findings would be similar if the study is repeated with the same participants in the same context? This question is concerned about the consistency of the findings.
- Can the researcher show that the findings were not influenced by bias or by the researcher's own interpretations or interests? The concern here is the neutrality of the findings.

Based on the questions below, the following verification strategies ensured the validity of the qualitative data in this study: Credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability (Connelly, 2016; Walle, 2015; Anney, 2014; Terre Blanche et al. 2014). According to Connelly (2016, p. 435) trustworthiness of a study refers to “the degree of confidence in data and methods used to ensure the quality of the study”.

#### **3.4.4.1 Credibility**

Terre Blanche et al. (2014, p. 90) describe *credibility* as “producing findings that are convincing and believable”. In this study, the researcher made use of the transcripts to ensure that the findings were based on the participants’ verbatim responses, and not based on her own understanding of the research topic. In addition, she made use of the interview techniques of clarification and summarising (Greeff, 2011) to ensure that the findings were a true representation of the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

#### **3.4.4.2 Dependability**

The *dependability* of a qualitative research study is based on a logical and well-documented research process (Kumar, 2014). This means that the study could be repeated in the same or other context, and then be compared. For this reason, the researcher documented how the research methods and techniques were implemented in this chapter so that the methodology can be replicated in other contexts.

#### **3.4.4.3 Conformability**

*Conformability* refers to the neutrality of the findings (Kumar, 2014). The researcher made use of the transcripts and field notes to document the findings, as well as followed a scientific process of data analysis, used an independent coder, and exposed the findings to a literature control to support the conformability of the findings.

#### **3.4.4.4 Transferability**

Transferability refers to “the extent to which it is possible to generalise from the data and context of the research study to broader populations and settings” (Terre Blanche et al., 2014: 91). The use of transferability is the researcher’s aim to describe population and to make “universal theoretical claims” (Terre Blanche et al., 2014: 91).

#### **3.4.4.5 Reflexivity**

In addition, the use of *reflexivity* supported the verification of the data in this study. According to Anney (2014), reflexivity involves the researcher's personal reflection and events that happened in the field in relation to the research study. Firstly, the researcher reflected on the research process to ensure that she followed the correct procedures to ensure valid findings. Secondly, she reflected on her own interpretation of the findings to ensure that she is aware of how her own understanding and experiences might impact on the interpretation of the findings. The use of an independent coder supported her in this regard. Reflexivity further supported her to ensure that the findings are credible and neutral (Harding, 2019).

The following ethical aspects guided the implementation of the research process.

### **3.5 ETHICS**

Strydom (2011) explains that qualitative research involves people, and therefore it brings about unique ethical challenges that need to be identified and considered when planning the research project. In support of this viewpoint, Devlin (2018) proposes the following aspects to consider when conducting social research:

- Voluntary participation and consent are essential,
- The results should benefit society,
- All possible risks should be explored, identified, and described, while no study should be conducted when the risk to participants will affect their general well-being, and
- Every precaution should be in place to prevent harm.

In this study, the following ethical practice informed the implementation of the research methodology.

### **3.5.1 Avoidance of Harm and Debriefing**

Ethical research practice is aimed at limiting and/or *avoiding physical, emotional, or social harm* that the participants may be exposed to due to their participation (Devlin, 2018).

Voluntary participation and informed consent, as discussed below, supported the researcher to avoid and limit harm, and she also ensured that the interviews took place in a private and comfortable venue. Interview appointments were arranged at a time and place convenient for the participants. In addition, prior to collecting the data, the researcher recruited a social worker to be available for *debriefing*, should participants be vulnerable or express discomfort during data collection. The participants were also informed of this option prior to their participation when they were provided the chance to participate voluntarily.

### **3.5.2 Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent**

*Voluntary participation* means that participants are not forced in any way to participate, that non-participation will not involve negative results, and that participants are aware that they can withdraw their participation at any time without penalty (Bless et al., 2013).

In order to make an informed decision regarding participation, participants were provided with information related to the research aim, the nature of the study, what would be expected of them, and how confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. After affording them time to ask questions and clarify uncertainties, they were asked to sign *informed consent* forms and to provide the researcher with permission to audio-record the interviews. The researcher also ensured the participants that their anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy would be protected at all times.



### **3.5.3 Anonymity, Confidentiality and Privacy**

*Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy* are related terms. In order to ensure confidentiality, the participants' anonymity must be ensured, and their privacy must be protected (Strydom, 2011).

To this end, the researcher, firstly, conducted the interviews in a private setting. Secondly, she made use of data storage and management protocols to protect the participants' confidentiality. In order to safeguard anonymity, the personal details of the participants did not appear on the transcripts that were used by the independent coder or in the final document. The transcripts were numbered, and the number was related to the participant. This information was only accessible to the researcher and her supervisors. The fact that the participants participated voluntarily and chose the venue and time to protect their privacy also contributed to confidentiality and anonymity as other members of the community did not know who participated in the study. The protection of anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of the participants also links to the protection of the storage and management of data.

### **3.5.4 Data Storage and Management**

Harding (2019) relates the way in which research data is stored and managed to the principles of anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. The researcher stored the audio-recordings, informed consent forms, the document that lists the assigned numbers linked to the participants, and transcripts in a locked space. She also made use of a password protected computer to document the findings. The documents will be kept in this safe, locked space for five years after the research is concluded. Thereafter, the documents will be destroyed, either by shredding the hard copies, or deleting the files on the computer.

## **3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

According to Strydom (2011), limitations of a research study may impact the validity of the findings, the identification of a population and access to participants, ethical problems, and controlling environmental factors. The limitations of the study were as follows:

First, gaining access to community organisations in the Paarl East community during the COVID-19 pandemic was a significant challenge that landed up delaying the process of data collection.

Second, the sensitivity of victims affected by gangsterism was also a challenge, which could have influenced how much the participants were willing to share.

Third, violence in the community posed a further challenge because the researcher had no control over community factors, for example, the possibility of gang shootings. This meant that some interviews had to be re-scheduled due to the fact that the researcher and/or participants could not travel to the venue at the original agreed-upon time.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter focused on how the qualitative research approach, the research design, and data collection methods and techniques of this study assisted the researcher to develop a better understanding of youths' experiences and perceptions of the reasons why youth in the Paarl East community are drawn to gangs. In order to ensure data verification, the methods and techniques regarding sampling, data collection, and data analysis were discussed with a description of how the methodology was implemented. Attention was also given to the criteria to verify the qualitative data and ethical components included in this study. This was followed by a brief discussion of the limitations of the study.

Next in Chapter 4, the findings will be presented through verbatim quotes from the participants, which will be compared and contrasted with the literature reviews presented in both Chapters 1 and 2.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS: FACTORS THAT GRAVITATE YOUTH TOWARDS GANG INVOLVEMENT IN THE PAARL EAST COMMUNITY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The first two chapters focused on literature related to the research topic. Specific attention was given to youth and youth gang affiliation within the framework of the EST, and to solutions in terms of preventative and early intervention services that could address the aspects that gravitate youth towards gangs. The previous chapter presented the methodology used in this study, and described the reason for the choices and the implementation of the research approach, designs, methods of data collection, analysis and verification, as well as ethical practice.

In this chapter, the findings regarding factors that gravitate youth towards gangs, as described by the youth living in Paarl East who participated in this study, are presented. The participants were requested to reflect on the causes of youth gang involvement, which were categorised in the micro-, mezzo-, macro-, exo-, chrono- and technosystems of the EST. They also provided suggestions on preventive and early intervention services that can be implemented in order to address the issue of youth gangsterism. The participants were also given the chance to reflect on their own description of gangs operating in the Paarl East community, which will be presented as a special theme.

The participants were all Afrikaans speaking, which is the most commonly spoken language in the community. In order to contribute to contextualised knowledge, one Afrikaans quotation will be presented per special theme/theme/sub-theme/category in order to give the participants' own voices a space. The rest of the quotations were translated into English.

The demographic profile of the participants will be provided next (section 4.2), after which the findings (section 4.3) will be presented. A brief conclusion wraps up the chapter (section 4.4).

## 4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

Eight youth members living in the Paarl East community participated in this study. Data saturation occurred after five interviews, after which three more interviews were conducted to ensure that no new information came to the fore. Fusch and Ness (2015) explain that data saturation is not determined by the number of available participants, but rather by the determination that further themes, sub-themes, and categories are no longer identified. The authors concur that interviews as a method of data collection result in the ability to determine that no new information is being identified through coding. Sebele-Mpofu (2020) adds that in addition to no new information being identified, the researcher can provide multiple examples to describe the research topic based on the data that was obtained. These descriptions guided the researcher's decision to complete the data collection after eight interviews.

The biographical information of the youth participants is presented in Table 3 below, and explored further thereafter.

**Table 3. Biographical details of youth participants**

Nr	Age	Gender	In a gang	Ex-member	Only exposed to gangs
1	21	Male		X	
2	26	Female			X
3	28	Male		X	
4	21	Female			X
5	20	Female			X
6	20	Male			X
7	23	Male			X
8	18	Female			X

Four females and four males participated in this study. Two participants were male ex-gang members and six participants have been exposed to gangs. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 28 years. According to the National Youth Policy (RSA, 2020), youth is a developmental stage between the ages of 15 and 34 years.

Sauls (2014) asserts that this developmental stage is a crucial life phase where youth attempt to find ways to meet needs and to build capacities towards independence. This is expanded on by Sackman and Terway (2016) who mention that young people's cognitive development is aimed at building their ability to comprehend, think and reason to make sense of the world. They develop a sense of responsibility, ability to plan and set goals, and they make important decisions which may or may not lead to risky behaviours. Panday et al. (2012) further indicate that youth develop a sense of identity during this life stage, and that their identity is shaped by input from their family, communities, and schools. Fletcher (2014) and Chhuon (2013) support this viewpoint, and explain that the way in which youth learn to reason is often influenced by what they see and experience in their communities.

The participating youth were viewed as experts to assist the researcher in her efforts to explore why youth in the Paarl East community are drawn to gangs. They were able to provide the researcher with a variety of viewpoints based on their lived experiences, which will be reported on in the next section.

### **4.3 FINDINGS**

Six themes were identified that assisted the researcher to answer the research question. Each theme also consists of sub-themes and categories to further clarify the findings. In addition, the open-ended nature of the semi-structured interviews resulted in a special theme that was identified. Table 4 below summarises the themes, sub-themes and categories of the findings that describe the participants' descriptions and experiences of the causes of youth gang affiliation.

**Table 4. Themes, sub-themes and categories**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
<b>Special theme:</b> Participants' description of gangs operating in Paarl East	<b>Special Topic 1:</b> Gangs focusing on money	
	<b>Special Topic 2:</b> Gangs focusing on violent crimes	
	<b>Special Topic 3:</b> Territory	
	<b>Special Topic 4:</b> Areas in Paarl East community	
	<b>Special Topic 5:</b> Symbols related to gangs	
	<b>Special Topic 6:</b> Substance abuse as part of gangsterism	
<b>Theme 1:</b> Factors related to the microsystem	<b>Sub-theme 1.1:</b> Personal attributes of youth entering gangs	<b>Category 1.1.1:</b> Age
		<b>Category 1.1.2:</b> Gender
		<b>Category 1.1.3:</b> Other attributes
	<b>Sub-theme 1.2:</b> Aspects regarding a youth's family contributing to them joining gangs	<b>Category 1.2.1:</b> Lack of parenting
		<b>Category 1.2.2:</b> (Parental) Substance abuse
		<b>Category 1.2.3:</b> Gender-based violence
		<b>Category 1.2.4:</b> Parents involved in gangsterism
<b>Sub-theme 1.3:</b> Aspects regarding a youth's peers contributing to them joining gangs		
<b>Sub-theme 1.4:</b> Aspects regarding a youth's neighbourhood contributing to them joining gangs		
<b>Theme 2:</b> Factors related to the mezzosystem	<b>Sub-theme 2.1:</b> Interactions between the youth and community systems	<b>Category 2.1.1:</b> The interaction between community structures protecting gang members
		<b>Category 2.1.2:</b> Community systems' relations to internal motivation to change
	<b>Sub-theme 2.2:</b> Interactions between the family and community systems	

	<b>Sub-theme 2.3:</b> Interactions between peers and community systems	
<b>Theme 3:</b> Factors related to the exosystem	<b>Sub-theme 3.1:</b> Economic factors in the community	<b>Category 3.1.1:</b> Unemployment and social security
	<b>Sub-theme 3.2:</b> Services or projects in the community	<b>Category 3.2.1:</b> Services available in the community <b>Category 3.2.2:</b> Services needed in the community
<b>Theme 4:</b> Factors related to the macrosystem	<b>Sub-theme 4.1:</b> Community attitudes and values	<b>Category 4.1.1:</b> <i>Lack of solidarity to stand up against gangsterism</i> <b>Category 4.1.2:</b> <i>Advantages of gangs in the Paarl East community</i>
	<b>Sub-theme 4.2:</b> Social problems in the community	
	<b>Sub-theme 4.3:</b> Systems contributing to youth entering gangs	<b>Category 4.3.1:</b> Gangsterism in prisons
		<b>Category 4.3.2:</b> Lack of education and skills development options
		<b>Category 4.3.3:</b> Lack of policing
<b>Sub-theme 4.4:</b> Municipal and government services needed in the community to prevent youth from joining gangs		
<b>Theme 5:</b> Factors related to the chronosystem		
<b>Theme 6:</b> Factors related to the technosystem	<b>Sub-theme 6.1:</b> The influence of media	<b>Category 6.1.1:</b> Limited influence
		<b>Category 6.1.2:</b> Negative influence
	<b>Sub-theme 6.2:</b> Possible preventative function	
<b>Sub-theme 6.3:</b> Possible intervention function		

The findings will be supported by verbatim quotes and a literature control.

**SPECIAL THEME:** Participants' description of gangs operating in Paarl East

The participants explained the focus of gangs in terms of money, violent crimes, and territory. In addition, they identified specific areas in Paarl East where gangs are active. They also described symbols associated with specific gangs, and explained the link between substance abuse and gang membership.

**Special Topic 1:** Gangs focusing on money

*“Die 26e is op geld uit, hulle soek die kroon”.*

The above statement highlights how gang activities are motivated by money. The participants described their experiences of how gangs and money are connected and, in line with Special Topic 6 below, how sales of substances are the main source of their income.

*“Now he might become a mule for them [gangs] and he sells the goods [substances], and he knows drugs and ‘tik’ [methamphetamine] have a street value over a million”.*

*“So yes, a drug dealer plays a very important role in gangs' lives [as a way to make money]”.*

Dykes et al. (2021) support this viewpoint when asserting that gangs have territorial power that is mainly associated by increased income obtained through the sale of substances.

A participant described how money causes gangs to fight against each other. *“They [gangs] will play against each other for money”.* This is in line with Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) who found that violence among youth in the Cape Flats results from clashes and competition between gangs due to dealing with weapons and illegal substances. The reference to violence will be further explored below.



## Special Topic 2: Gangs focusing on violent crimes

*“En die gevaarlikste groep van amal, dis die 27s. Ek maak net ‘n voorbeeld, dan kan ek ‘n mes uithaal, dan stiek ek vir jou hoeveel gate. En dan sit ek net jou bloed in ‘n sakkie of gaan wys die bloed soes ek het iemand gestiek. Nou gaan wys ek die bloed met die mes vir daai een [senior gang member]. Daai een sê okay die nommer maak nou vol, okay nou kry djy sterretjies, da kry djy jou goenyas [ranks] en sukke goed, ... en het ek ‘n chap [shows tattoo]”.*

Above, the participant explained how violent actions can create status within the gang. The statements below illustrate how the participants drew a link between gangs and violence, and also how youth are being included in violent acts.

*“And then of course, then you get the blood red 28's. It's people who were 27's, and now they've turned 28's, and now they can stab you and they can sexually harass you”.*

*“The main guy is now in the jail of Chicago [area in Paarl East]. He is in jail, that's why it is calmer now ... It's an organised crime, he is literally the leader. He may not like that guy, then he says to the child, here is a R200 for you, go shoot him”.*

In support of the findings of this study, Hesselink and Bougard (2020) agree that gang involvement results in violence, crime, substance abuse and other criminality. Similarly, descriptions by Dykes et al. (2021), Magidi et al. (2016), SAPS (2016) and Gilman et al. (2014) refer to youth gangsterism in terms of violent crimes such as high numbers of homicide, assault, and murder. Violence, according to a participant, is also related to power:

*“If you have a gun, you are almost untouchable, because who is going to bother you if you have a gun?”*

Other participants explained how victims of violence by gangs might be innocent bystanders:

*“The parents are actually against gangs, because they endanger the lives of all of us, even small children. As soon as they fight among themselves, a small child runs and then they can accidentally shoot or stab that aunt’s child”.*

*“When Freedom Park [a recreational park in Paarl East] had not been there yet, even though children were walking there, then they would start shooting. They might have shot a child through their hand by accident or something like that. That’s how it was. You walk there, they do not care. They shoot at you, because you’re in the way, whether you’re a baby or something. Someone can also sit in the shack [informal housing], then they would shoot and then that bullet goes through the shack”.*

These statements are supported by Moses (2019) who concludes that gang violence results in traumatising community members. The descriptions of violence that exist in the community is often a result of gangs fighting over territory, which will be discussed in the next special theme.

### **Special Topic 3: Territory**

Below, a participant describes how violence is a way of settling differences between gang members.

*“Hulle kan nie saam almal op ‘n jaard is nie, dan gaan daar moeilikheid is. Amal kan saam gegaanit, maar op ‘n tyd toe blaas da nou net ‘n bom opie jaard [a fight starts] en dan stiek hulle mekaar of soe”.*

A participant links violence and territory as follows:

*“Yes and territory is also very important, that’s why they also kill. For example, if you are going to smuggle at his house today. Now someone else comes and he smuggles in front of your door, which is driving you*

*crazy. They literally stab you to death without blinking an eye... The one leader of Chicago [area in Paarl East], they shot him dead. He is out of their lives so that another leader can take over”.*

Similar to the description of innocent bystanders becoming victims of crime in the previous special topic, participants explained that territory also results in violence due to not being viewed as belonging in a specific area:

*“If you are staying at the top of the cricket patch, you can’t watch the cricket at the bottom. There is a possibility that you can still get hurt if you watch the cricket at the bottom. There was the incident where someone lives at the very top of Groenheuwel [area in Paarl East], then they attacked him”.*

*“The rival gangsters, they grew up together ... were great friends and now if I get you on that side [referring to living in another area and entering the area where friends are active gang members], now they [friends] have to kill you”.*

Hallsworth (2011) refers to territorial power where members have psychological control over their community. Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) agree with this viewpoint, and add that it is money driven, as described in Special Topic 1. These authors assert that gangs aim to control a specific market in a territory, using violence and power to gain control over the sales of illegal substances. Dykes et al. (2021) further describe that territorial power is when gangs identify a geographical area and do everything in their power to control this region, and to keep rival gangs out of their area. The participants in this study also referred to specific areas in the Paarl East community that are associated with gang activities.

#### **Special Topic 4:** Areas in Paarl East community

*Dis Groenheuwel, Chicago, en Smartie Town, Flatse, Amstelhof, Nederburg... daai is die main kern plekke [gangster hotspots]”.*

The participants described areas where gangs are less likely to be active, as well as gangster hotspots.

*“In Paarl East you get Groenheuwel, you get Smartie Town, Charleston Hill, New Orleans. You are not going to see such things [gangsterism] in Klein Parys, Denneburg or Charleston Hill”.*

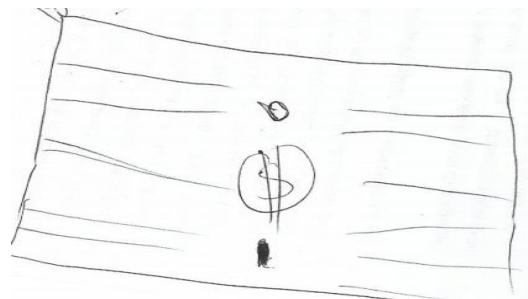
Another participant explained how the association with gangs differ from street to street in specific areas:

*“Magnolia Street is very quiet, but the street next to Magnolia Street, Hibiscus Street, is very dangerous. About 50% or 55% of the young people are gangsters. And everyone who lives there now is 28s, and the street after that is the 27s”.*

Another participant described how known gang areas are avoided by service delivery systems: *“They do not deliver [food deliveries] in Chicago or New Orleans, they only deliver in Charleston Hill or Denneburg [implying fear of the community]”.* In addition to the discussion on gangs associated with specific territories and areas, the next discussion will describe how symbols characterise gangs.

#### **Special Topic 5: Symbols related to gangs**

The participants reported on different gang related symbols such as tattoos, clothes, flags, numbers, language, and the way they walk and talk. One of the participants drew a flag to symbolise a specific gang, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3. Flag of the 26 gang**

Another participant explained the role of flags as a way to show affiliation:

*“Yes, look, if you're a Pumalanga [name of a gang in Paarl East community] like a 26, then you have an American flag. If you are a Schombizo [name of a gang in Paarl East community] you are a 27 ... but if I wear a green flag, then they know I'm a 28”.*

The statement below describes clothes and language as symbols of gang affiliation.

*“Ons uitbeelding ... kan maar sê die eeste ding is die kleredrag en hoe ons praat. Sien, so as ons kom bymekaar dan isit: Hos, Saloet broe, Pakamieza (greetings), hoe vallie lyne uit (how are you doing), kan osie venaand miskien op dai slabas [home town] lyne trek of soe nie”.*

The participants explained that the symbols show affiliation, which is viewed as a status.

*“It's like as soon as you join a gang, there are certain standards what you have to maintain, for example, you must have a tattoo”.*

*“Sometimes it's their dress code, yes, and the way they walk, their way of speaking, and yes, they have a different way, and their reactions to the next person as well”.*

*“Remember, us gangsters are always nicely dressed. The thing is the style man ... we now call it the swag. Our swag represents who we are”.*

Similar to the above descriptions, authors such as Dykes et al. (2021), Pinnock (2017), and Akiyama (2012) postulate that gangsters show their identity through a collective name and other physical signs, such as hand signs or symbols, a certain dress code, language, tattoos, hats, clothes, jewellery and shoes, and they mark their area with graffiti. Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) explain in this regard that gangs use symbols to express their belonging in the group. A participant, however, referred to the fact that these symbols can also result in someone becoming a target.

*“How you dress and the 'colours' that you wear causes you to get hurt”.*

Symbols also relate to ranks in gangs. A participant illustrated the diverse ranks in different gangs in the drawing depicted in Figure 4 below.



**Figure 4. Ranks and signs associated with gangs (28 gang left, 27 gang right)**

Another participant referred to specific ranks used in prison among gang members:

*“Yes, in prison you get a captain, you get a sergeant, a major, and you get all that stuff. The highest one is a general”.*

The final description of gangs in this special theme has to do with substance abuse among gang members.

#### **Special Topic 6:** Substance abuse as part of gangsterism

*“Hulle gaan ‘rob’ om ‘n ‘nice’ time te het en om te drink met vrinne. En as hulle dronk is dan gan soek hulle eers kak met die mense. En dai is hoe bekleiery en alle tipe dinge inkom”.*

Above, substance abuse is described as a lifestyle or gang culture that leads to violence among gang members. This was expanded on by the following statements:

*“So, gangsters and drugs go hand in hand, there will not be a group of gangsters who do not use drugs”.*

*“Alcohol abuse, drug abuse. They might chill early in the day, maybe smoke marijuana, smoke for a while and then they might buy alcohol for themselves. That is how it [criminal activities] starts. After that they are no longer 100 percent, and then they start with the things they want to do [criminal activities]”.*

A participant also referred to substance abuse as a way to introduce youth to gang activities:

*“Now they find someone with a car and gives him ‘tik’ [methamphetamine]. They tell him to just drive ... he is unaware of what they are planning and they start shooting. He is now also part of the mix and knew nothing about it”.*

In support of the findings of the present study, Venatus and Agnes (2010) mention that substance abuse encourages youth to act brave and, as a result, they find it easier to engage in the criminal and violent activities of gangs. David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) and Magidi et al. (2016) concur that substance abuse causes aggressive behaviour, weak social performances, and encourages youth gang membership.

Another participant speaks about the fact that addiction to substances increases youths' chances of joining a gang to sustain the addiction:

*“If you are using drugs, there is a big chance that you might become addicted. You know if you belong to a gang, they work with the stuff. You are going to sell it for them. So, there will also always be drugs for you to use. So, you are having that mind-set that you will become a gangster”.*

This is supported by Van der Merwe et al. (2012) who argue that youth who abuse substances start to sell substances on behalf of gangs in order to get their own. Once they are addicted to substances, they need to meet the demands of the gangs. A participant in this study added that gangs provide youth with substances as *“a way to draw someone into gangs”*. Hesselink and Bougard (2020) confirm this statement,

asserting that gangs provide youth with easy access to alcohol and substances, thereby facilitating youth substance abuse to lure them into gangs.

The next themes describe factors that contribute to youth joining gangs in terms of the EST.

### **THEME 1:** Factors related to the microsystem

Lubman et al. (2018) assert that the microsystem is where youth turn to for guidance and support. This is expanded on by Carson and Hipple (2020), who explain that youth join gangs due to high-risk factors within the microsystem across domains such as individual, peer, school, family, and community. Geldenhuys (2019) and Boxer (2014) refer to a lack of belonging within these domains as one of the main causes of youth gang affiliation where youth seek alternative ways to develop a sense of identity and belonging, which they find in gangs. In this study, the participants referred to contributing factors in the microsystem in terms of personal attributes, family, peers and the neighbourhood. These risk factors will be discussed in the sub-themes below.

#### **Sub-theme 1.1:** Personal attributes of youth entering gangs

Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to personal factors in the microsystem as aspects such as age, gender, and physical and mental health that affect the person's well-being. Literature further identifies the following personal factors that contribute to youth gang affiliation: Education, communication, self-confidence, social responsibility, self-independence, and personal vulnerabilities (cf. Pinnock, 2017; Magidi et al., 2016; Brankovic, 2012). The categories below describe the personal attributes that were viewed as contributing factors to youth gang affiliation.

##### **Category 1.1.1:** Age

*“Wat ek gesienit, dis van sewe jaar oud af ... Klein, dit kon jou broertjie gewiesit wat die goeters voor jou doen ... En soes ek by my vriende ook gesienit, is jonk kinnners van die ouderdom van 10, Soe hulle roek dagga, roek entjies, hulle tik”.*



The above statement refers to children as young as seven entering gangs, and link thereof with substance use, as described under Special Topic 6. In line with this, other participants explained that children in Paarl East become part of gangs from a young age.

*“They start at a young age. Seven or eight”.*

*“It is teenagers who are gangsters, but over the last few years or so many younger children have started to practice it”.*

*“I would say ... between the ages of 12 to 18 join gangs”.*

*“I would say from 13 years old to 30 years old”.*

This was also a trend indicated by Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) and De Wet (2016) who found incidents of children as young as nine years old entering gangs on the Cape Flats. Moreover, in line with Special Topic 6, a link between young children and substance abuse and gangsterism was described by the participants.

*“In our street is a drug house ... the child is 12 years old. They said that he does drugs too ... he is not in school anymore”.*

*“And many times, at the drug dealers, then there are kids selling drugs ... He leaves school after Grade 1, 2 and then he works for the drug dealers”.*

A participant explained that the drug dealers take over the role of the parents: *“He says ‘my mom can’t tell me anymore’”*. In line with the above description, Dykes et al. (2021) explain that identity formation becomes disturbed when there is an imbalance between the different domains, such as peers, community members and parents, which may result in antisocial behaviour such as the selling and abuse of substances.

### Category 1.1.2: Gender

*“So Pitfits (type of gang) is die mans en dan is die meisies mos nou Pitfit Queens. Die Pitfits beef nou miskien teen die Stiflers (type of gang), dan ‘beef’ die Pitfits meisies teen die Stiflers Queens, so daar is miskien nie ‘n gangsters groep vir vroumense nie, maar as hulle (gangsters) nou meisies het, dan ‘beef’ die meisies op die ander span se meisies”.*

The above statement indicates that gang affiliation is mostly seen among males. Another participant confirmed this, stating: *“It is mostly 95% males”*. Similarly, Van der Westhuizen and Gaulayo (2020) report that gangs on the Cape Flats mainly target boys and focus on their need for recognition. In this study, the participants added that the girlfriends of the male gang members also engage in the gangs’ activities, and that female gang affiliation is often associated with substance abuse, as discussed in Special Topic 6.

*“It is mostly 95% males”.*

*“Women are drawn into gangs with drugs such as ‘cocaine’, ‘tik’ and LSD. Then they become mules, you know the ‘drugs’ they store in their bodies”.*  
*“Girls are also sometimes part of gangs. Her dad was also maybe shot dead. Now maybe they’re using her to maybe take drugs to him [selling drugs to male gangsters], but with her is someone who has a gun to shoot the next one [referring to a revenge killing]”.*

The findings are in line with Pinnock’s (2017) assertion that, while gangsters are mostly men, gangs can include both genders. The following statement indicates that romantic relationships with gang members gravitates females to joining gangs:

*“Girls are involved in gangs by being involved with their boyfriends. Girls also help their boyfriends to do what they do. They use the girls. They go to town at 12 o’clock in the evening to rob ... take the girls along to deceive the guys and then they jump out of the bushes ...”*

Other participants alluded that, in Paarl East, females have their own independent gangs.

*“Ghetto chicks and Lamlockers are just girls, there are no guys”.*

*“Lamlockers are 7s and the Ghetto chicks are 8 ... they [female gang members] are also 27s and 28s”.*

The latter statement shows that the female gangs are associated with the male dominated gangs. Wijnberg (2012) also concluded that, while gangsterism may be viewed as male dominated, women are increasingly joining gangs and forming gangs themselves. Similarly, Dykes et al. (2021) indicate that the phenomenon of schoolgirls joining gangs is becoming more common. The participants continued to describe that violent acts, as indicated in Special Topic 2, are also experienced among female gangsters. One participant explained this as follows:

*“Females fight; they stab each other with knives, and with glasses. They can also not have the same clothes, many times it is about clothing”.*

This statement relates to Special Topic 5 in terms of clothes that symbolise gang affiliation. The statement below explains that association with female gangsters can put someone at risk to be targeted by rival female gangs.

*Die Ghetto chicks het ‘beef’ gehad met die Lamlockers meisies, hulle is van die Amstelhof. Nou kom dit dat ek nou net een dag per ongeluk saam met XXX [anonymous] gestaan het. Ek is mos nou onskuldig, ek staan en gesels met haar - ek het nie geweet sy is ‘n Ghetto chick nie. Nou kom daar Lamlockers verby. Nou kry hulle my eendag alleen op ‘n plek dan word ek aangeval.”*

### **Category 1.1.3:** Other attributes

According to Hesselink and Bougard (2020) and Mendez et al. (2020), **childhood abuse and trauma** are risk factors of youth involvement in gangs. In this study, the participants identified sexual abuse as a factor that gravitates youth to gangs.

*“And he's never going to tell you what happened ... he's never going to tell you they assaulted or sexually assaulted him”.*

*“Sometimes parents also touch their children ... Especially if they are drunk”.*

Mendez et al. (2020) found that adolescents with a history of sexual and physical abuse in their childhood are four times more likely to join gangs. Long-term consequences of childhood abuse result in depression, suicidal thoughts, substance use, and violent or aggressive behaviour later in life (Panday et al., 2012; Van der Merwe et al., 2012). Victims of abuse therefore are at increased risk of associating with gangs (Petering, 2016).

A participant reported that a **lack of safety** is another reason why youth join gangs: *“Many times, then, it's for protection too, that's why they join gangs”.* Hesselink and Bougard (2020) confirm this statement, and explain that youth join gangs in order to protect themselves, because they do not feel safe in their environment. Another participant indicated that, apart from the protection provided by gangs, the latter also offers a **sense of belonging**: *“Or he could have been bullied at school ... now he is going to belong to a gang group, because there is more power”.* Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) explain that this belonging has to do with the development of an identity through the gang's identity. Their affiliation to gangs provides them with safety, financial wealth, a sense of masculinity and social inclusion. In addition, Dykes et al. (2021) link the sense of belonging and the desire to be respected. The authors explain that respect is a central value for gangs, because gang relationships and communication are based on respect, which form their gang identity. Ward et al. (2012) explain that youth see gangs as an alternative family, and as the only role models available (Geldenhuys, 2019).

**Poverty** was also identified as a motivational factor to join gangs. The verbatim quotes below explain that the option of accessing money through gang activities gravitates youth exposed to poverty towards gangs.

*“So, ‘right’, ek gaan vir jou ‘n paar Jordans koop, djy hoor net name goed. Nou, djys jonk, djy check right ek gaan dit [getting involved in crime] doen. Nou sê ek net vir jou ‘kykie gaan skiet iemand dood’. Djy sê ‘gie die gun hier’; nou gaan skiet djy dai een dood ... Daar is ‘n sin van altyd geld het as djy ‘n gangster is”.*

*“Dit begin mos by jou huis. Djy sien da gat niks an by jou huisie, djy gat uit om te gat staan vir jou gesin [contribute financially]”.*

The participants explained that gangsterism becomes a way to survive.

*“Poverty ... no one is working in your house; you go to the gang leader. He tells you what you must do, such as stabbing someone, for the prize of R1000”.*

*“Poverty has caused for people to look for a way to survive”.*

A participant explained that the need to access money lures the youth to associate with gangs, while they do not understand where the money comes from. *“Look you can wear Nikes, little to know that the guy had to rob or hurt other people to get those clothes and things. But later on, if you’re too deep in the thing and you don’t want to be there anymore ... then it’s too late”.* This was reiterated by Carson and Hipple (2020) who relate the need to belong and identity formation with branded clothes that play an important role.

Other comments confirm the way in which money attracts youth to join gangs, but highlight that access to money is not only linked to dealing with poverty, but also to sustain **substance abuse**, as indicated in Special Topic 6.

*“The boss [gang leader] gives them money for smoking stuff. Because he cannot drive away to another dealer. Now he uses small children to transfer the goods [substances]”.*

*“The big gangsters use the kids, they pay them. They [youth] are looking for that money, they are looking for a smoke thing. They know that children*

*would not go to jail and those gangsters have big cases against them at court. They cannot afford to go to jail”.*

Another attribute was identified by the participants to be a **lack of vision for the future**.

*“We gangsters do not have that mentality of 'hey I have to go to work'. He does not stand up in the morning with the attitude of going somewhere, going to school or going to work”.*

*“Often by us, there are many children who are born in a house that may only have one room. And now he's growing older and just thinks, this is where his life is going to end”.*

*“I live literally with gangsters every day. It's just the 'same old', the same thing over and over. There is no change in their lives, they live with getting up every day and do their own things”.*

Substance abuse is also seen as a routine in the youths' everyday lives, which in turn has an effect on their vision for the future: *“He gets up, 'I'm going to smoke a pipe' ... and that is the routine the whole day”*. Louw and Louw (2014) provide the explanation that adolescents are in a stage of attempting to define their roles and values in society. This is shaped by the norms, values, and practices in their environments, which influence their motivation and their vision. In line with this explanation, a participant described an experience of a family member's lack of motivation which led to gangsterism as a way of life:

*“My cousin's words were, he says it to my father every year ... when he comes out of jail ...: ‘this is not my home. My home is inside the jail’. He says that he only goes out of jail for a holiday. And he now has a high rank in that group”.*

A lack of vision is also associated with a **lack of self-worth** caused by poverty, and labels given to youth, as described in the statements below.

*“Djy kry mos nou mense wat jou af gaan druk. Die man sê nou vir my djy is ‘n slagpat, djy kan niks bereik nie. Djy check ek bly dan in ‘n hok, kyk hoe lyk djy... en soe nou djy begin dit te glo.”*

*“Ek loep miskien in die pad, dan roep iemand – daar loep daai suipgat. En nou djy gloe ek is ‘n suipgat”.*

A participant explains that self-worth is linked with **self-confidence**, and that role models can contribute to youth’s sense of self that will support the development of a vision for the future.

*“Their self-confidence ... they do not have that person in their life who would tell them you can, you must, and you want to. They do not have that person who motivates them ... who tells them no matter how many times you fail, you can get up, and you can achieve something in life”.*

Literature supports the above discussion in that a lack of self-worth, belonging, and positive role models within the home causes gangsters to be young people’s only role model (cf. Geldenhuys, 2019; Pinnock, 2017). Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) explain that self-esteem becomes very significance during adolescence, and that the need to belong and to be accepted by others makes youth susceptible to joining gangs. Referring to the attributes discussed in this sub-theme, these authors conclude that gangs provide youth with a sense of belonging and recognition, and a means of surviving poverty and violence, which is why gangs look attractive to them. These attributes can be associated with family circumstances that will be discussed next.

**Sub-theme 1.2:** Aspects regarding a youth’s family contributing to them joining gangs  
The participating youth identified four aspects within the family system that are viewed as contributing to youth joining gangs, namely: a lack of parenting, gender-based violence (GBV), substance use, and parents who are involved in gangs. These aspects will be presented in the categories below.

**Category 1.2.1:** Lack of parenting

*“Want sy ma het miskien met die baas geslaap om geld te kry vir hulle vir kos. Nou hy sienitjie soe nie. Hy gan net vir sy vrinne sê hy hou nie meer van dai jong nie en hulle moet probeer om iets aan hom te doen. Soe maak die laitetjies die groot merchant dood. En so kry hulle ook hulle kwaad en hulle woede binne hulle self as hulle sien hulle ouers doen sulke goed”.*

Gilman et al. (2014) and Nicholas et al. (2010) postulate that unstable family circumstances and disorganised family structures can result in youth gangsterism. A participant, through the above statement, explains that the child is not able to understand the motive for the parent's actions, and that the example of the parent results in anger that motivates gang affiliation. Another participant reports the lack of example from parents as follows: *“The parents do not work sometimes. Then they start to smuggle with drugs and that has an impact on their children”.*

Also referring to poverty, as discussed in sub-theme 1.1, the participants describe the quality of parenting that is being compromised by family circumstances:

*“There are many people in the home. You don't even have your own bed, you don't get the same attention as your own siblings, and you will therefore start with your own thing”.*

*“He comes home, his mother does not work, and they don't have money. His mother is lying there, and the child has to get money to buy them food”.*

*“Seven and eight-year-olds are on the streets. There is nothing at their home, because both parents are sick”.*

The above statements are supported by Jones (2013) who asserts that if the parent cannot parent the child, it may lead to a lack of parental involvement, low family bonding and warmth, a lack of supervision and guidance, and poor parental attachment. In addition, Van der Merwe et al. (2012) note that poor families tend to



have larger households and low maternal education, which makes it hard for caregivers to supervise and monitor the behaviour of youth. Dykes et al. (2021) and Hesselink and Bougard (2020) agree that children are more susceptible to joining gangs when they do not receive attention and are not supervised by a responsible adult. Carson and Hipple (2020) elaborate on this further and concur that a lack of a supportive adult relationship may contribute to youth gang affiliation. Along these lines, a participant specifically noted that a lack of involvement stems from absent fathers: *“There are many times that there is no father figure for boys”*. Similarly, Hesselink and Bougard (2020) assert that antisocial behaviour by youth can be linked to, among others, absent fathers. Brankovic (2012) remarks that absent fathers include those who have to work long hours to ensure that the family’s financial needs are met.

As indicated in sub-theme 1.1, the participants’ described how a lack of belonging serves as a reason behind youth gravitating towards gangs.

*“He does not get the love in his own home; he will therefore find love somewhere else”.*

*“It’s how your parents treat you. You are not going to worry because there is always that favourite one in the family. The mother favours the one more, gives more money to that one, which causes you to go out, drop out of school”.*

*“They don’t get attention in their homes. They will seek the attention outside with friends who are already part of gangs. He starts to hang out with the gangs, and smoke and drink with them ... then he becomes one of them”.*

Hesselink and Bougard (2020) concur that a lack of belonging may result in poor bonds (cf. Petering, 2016; David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014). As such, Geldenhuys (2019) and Boxer (2014) explain that a lack of belonging within their homes may lead to youth finding their sense of self in gangs. Also referring to the personal attributes discussed in sub-theme 1.1, a participant expressed the view that abuse in the home can lead to youth finding a place to belong in gangs: *“Many of them are abused in their home.*

*They would get involved in a specific group where they feel they can fit in". As discussed under Special Topic 2, violent behaviour is associated with gangs. Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) conclude that abuse in the home can lead to youth being comfortable with violent actions within gangs (cf. Magidi et al., 2016).*

Another aspect within the family system that is viewed as a contributing factor to youth gang affiliation is that of a lack of discipline in the home. Participants explained this through the following utterances:

*"I think that it depends on what is going on in the home. If parents don't teach their children what is right and wrong, that child would do that wrong thing".*

*"If I go outside, a lot of young children would stand in groups from the 'blokke' [an area] and throw stones. The parents stand there and see what their children do but would not discipline them".*

*"They would smoke drugs, or stab someone to death and go [to] jail. Parents would visit their children in jails, but still would not teach them what is right or wrong".*

*"A lot of parents would stand by their children and go with them to the battlefield. They would throw stones against another team with their children. They would cover anything. They would deny their children's behaviour and would even stand for their murder".*

Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) also refer to the lack of guidance from parents that contributes to the inability to make positive decisions, and their vulnerability to join negative peers and gangs. Some participants explained this in terms of how children's behaviour is being tolerated by parents due to the income it provides for the family.

*“Some parents allow their children to use drugs in their home, they would hide it if the police come; the parents entertain their children’s habits, because their children smuggle with drugs to make a living”.*

*“That is why the parents don’t actually worry that their children are gangsters, because they bring an income to their home”.*

However, a participant contemplated that it is not clear that parents can be viewed as the only contributing factor to youth gang affiliation: *“I don’t know why people would say we have the same parents, because the one would study and the other one become nothing”.*

**Category 1.2.2:** (Parental) Substance abuse

*“Nou besluit die seun ook ... My pa is ‘n druggie, ek moet ook nou ‘n druggie raak”.*

Parental substance abuse, as a contributing factor to youth gangsterism, was explained by the above statement, and expanded on in the following words:

*“Look here is a squatter camp, here is wine. Most of the parents drink alcohol ... he sees that his mom drinks every day, his dad smokes things ... he wants to apply it on his life because his dad is his role model, he wants to be like him”.*

*“... I see what’s going on in the house [substance abuse] and think that it’s right”.*

*“Like in the house, nothing is going on in there ... literally. The house is untidy and there’s nothing. The mom and dad use drugs. What else can the child do?”*

The latter statement relates to the aspect of a lack of role models as discussed in the previous category. Dykes et al. (2021) agree that behaviours in families such as

substance abuse can lead to youth's susceptibility to joining gangs. These authors also refer to GBV in the home as a contributing factor.

### **Category 1.2.3:** Gender-based violence

*“Ons jong kinders sien miskien die pa ‘abuse’ die ma. Hy slaan miskien die ma. Nou check hy... okay djy slaan, nou kan ek mos nou ook dit doen”.*

The participant in the above excerpt concludes that if a child witnesses GBV it may lead to similar behaviour. Pinnock (2017), Kerig et al. (2013), and Brankovic (2012) all refer to aggressive fathers becoming role models that lead to youth viewing violent behaviours as normative, making violent behaviour in gangs acceptable. Mendez et al. (2020) confirm the link between exposure to violence, including GBV in the home, and youth gang affiliation. In terms of normalising violence, a participant explains that the father serves as a role model for expressing stress through violence: *“The father can abuse the child because he has stress”*. Another participant posits the view that this can also be related to the previously described personal attributes where youth enter gangs to find power and protection: *“He can also be abused in his home and decided that he wants to be part of a gang because there is more power”*.

Literature confirms that exposure to violence may contribute to youth dealing with anger in a violent manner, and to finding their sense of belonging in a group where violence is acceptable (Mendez et al., 2020; Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020; Cooper & Ward, 2012). This category highlighted that parents' behaviour serves as an example for youth that may contribute to them joining gangs. Parents' involvement in gangs is also noted by the participants. This will be presented in the next category.

### **Category 1.2.4:** Parents involvement in gangsterism

*“Dan is daar weer die nadeel van ‘n pa wat ‘n gangster is, hy gaan laat sy laaitie ook soos hy word”.*

The above statement refers to sons following in their fathers' footsteps by joining gangs. Similar to parents portraying violent behaviour described in category 1.2.3, Hesselink and Bougard (2020) concur that the criminal behaviour of parents tends to contribute to criminal and antisocial behaviour among children. The participants in this study confirmed this viewpoint through the following utterances:

*"There are cases where the children's parents are also involved in gangs. They see the lifestyle of their parents and they fall in that trap".*

*"They do what their parents did. My uncle was a 26 gangster for a long time, and his son is also involved in the gang group".*

*"Maybe their father or family are part of gangs and now they think that it's right. They did not grow up with what right or wrong in their home".*

In line with the latter statement, Petering (2016) and Jones (2013) explain that families' involvement in gangs exposes youth to practices and values associated with gangs and crimes. As such, gang membership is a phenomenon that occurs in different generations and is viewed as acceptable (cf. Dykes et al., 2021). The next sub-theme portrays the participants' viewpoint of peers also contributing to youth joining gangs.

**Sub-theme 1.3:** Aspects regarding a youth's peers contributing to them joining gangs

*"Iemand het vir jou iets gemaak en dan sal jou vriende vir jou sê, ma d jy kanitie netso losie, ons gaan jou bystaan".*

*"En twee chommies is klaar deel van 'n bende en d jy ganou saam met hulle. Nou sien daai pesoon djys nou saam hulle. D jy is mos nou nie 'n gangster nie. Dan loep d jy in die dorp, dan kry hulle vir jou. En dan voel d jy, okay hulle wiet ek was klaar saam met 'n gang, so ek kan mos maar nou net eenkeer aansluit".*

The statements above refer to support provided by peers who are in gangs, and how association with peers in gangs leads to a vulnerability to be targeted by other gangs and therefore serves as a motivation to join gangs. Carson and Hipple (2020) agree

that peer loyalty plays a role in involvement in gangs where peers would defend their friends, which could escalate into violent behaviour that is also accepted with gang practices. Both Dykes et al. (2021) and Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) refer to peers as a strong influence within the microsystem, as the role of peers become more important than the role of families during the youth developmental stage. A participant reflected on the role of peers in his own involvement with gangs: *“We started to hang out and started our own name. We became well-known and we started to look for trouble with another gang and that is how gangs start”*. The statements below concur with the viewpoints in the literature and the description above:

*“It starts with the wrong peer groups, and with who you hang out with”.*

*“Your friend is already in a specific group. Now you also want to be part of one ... you go with the stream and do what your friends do”.*

A participant explained that younger age groups are particularly vulnerable to being influenced by peers: *“The younger you are, the more you can be influenced”*. Carson and Hipple (2020) explicate that the need to belong makes youth vulnerable to being peer pressured into joining gangs and engaging in gang activities. In this way, negative peer relationships provide youth with a chance to discover their identity by learning how they benefit from gang affiliation (cf. Louw & Louw, 2014). Again, similar to the discussions above, a participant referred to substance use as a causative factor: *“Friends would say that if you don’t smoke dagga, then you aren’t cool. You start to smoke dagga, tomorrow it’s not dagga than its tik... then gangs”*. In line with the statement above that youth want to be viewed as cool by their peers, other participants described the need to fit in with peers through the following utterances:

*“Sometimes, you don’t have friends, you want to be with that group because they look cool”.*

*“Young people are involved with gangs because they don’t want to be called the ‘Mommy’s baby”*”.

Similar to the above descriptions, Petering (2016) and Gilman et al. (2014) explain that youth whose sense of belonging is supported by peers who are members of gangs will gravitate towards gangs. In order to be accepted, they need to participate in gang activities. Contrary to the above descriptions, some participants expressed viewpoints of peers not seen as a risk factor for youth joining gangs:

*“My friend is not a gangster [referring to own choice to join a gang]. You can’t say it’s your friends, you want to be one [a gangster]”.*

*“I wouldn’t say its friends ... everyone makes their own choices”.*

As depicted in this discussion, some participants identified peers to be a risk factor for youth joining gangs. Van der Merwe et al. (2012) and Cooper and Ward (2012) link peers with the neighbourhood. This will be further discussed in the next sub-theme.

**Sub-theme 1.4:** Aspects regarding a youth’s neighbourhood contributing to them joining gangs

Hesselink and Bougard (2020) and Yiu (2021) assert that youth join gangs due to socioeconomic factors in neighbourhoods such as high crime levels, poverty, and low social organisation. Dykes et al. (2021) add that when youth experience problems in their homes, they spend more time outside of their homes and on the streets, which further exposes them to neighbourhood influences that may attract them to gangs (cf. Mendez et al., 2020). The participants in this study referred to exposure to gangsterism in the neighbourhood that impacts on youth’s choice to join gangs, as illustrated by the statement that follows.

*“Dit gan meestal oor wa djy bly as djy in ‘n spesifieke area woon. Dis mos nou jou vriende en djy het grootgeword saam met hulle”.*

As described in sub-theme 1.4, Chhuon (2013) explains that youth living in areas where gangs operate are often labelled as gangsters, which impacts on their identity formation. In this study, the participants also described how youth witness gang activities from a young age, which contributes to them being drawn to gangs.

*“They are exposed to gangs from a young age. Gangs set them wrong examples”.*

*“They would see how adults shoot on one another. Later they think that this is the perfect example, so they start to join”.*

*“What happens in the community is like a movie you watch every day. It is nice and interesting to see that someone is stabbing someone”.*

*“The environment makes the children get involved in gangs ... That child is five years old, and he sees his brother shooting. He wants to grow up and shoot. It becomes his mentality”.*

Davids (2019) explains the young ages of children joining gangs in South Africa, as discussed under the special topic, in terms of exposure to gangs in their communities. Gang exposure contributes to a perception of power and social status in underprivileged environments (Yiu, 2021; Kerig et al., 2013). A participant explained that gangsterism is viewed as normative of a specific community: *“It can be that everyone in your street and community is part of a gang. Now for you it is like normal and now you decide to also be involved in one”*. David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) add that youth who grow up in neighbourhoods where they are exposed to high crime levels, family violence, and poverty see gangs as an acceptable way to reduce their vulnerability in either their homes or their neighbourhoods.

In terms of the influence of gangs in the neighbourhood, the participants also reported on intimidation when persons try to intervene to prevent youth from joining gangs. A direct quote from a participant attests to this viewpoint.

*“As d jy nou vir hulle bemoedig kom weg daar, dan sit d jy ‘n ketting om jou nek. Want nou gaan hulle iemand anders sê wat miskien heel groter is, miskien ‘n generaal. En dan gaan hulle nou en slaan hulle sommer my kop nat, want ek het nou vir die laaities gesê hulle moenie”.*



Dykes et al. (2021) agree that the community members are reluctant to confront gangs because they are afraid that they would hurt them due to the fact that they are armed with pistols and knives. Similarly, Yiu (2021) and Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) postulate that youth have a fear of being targeted if they do not follow the norms of gangs in their neighbourhood, which causes their involvement in gangs.

The next theme presents the mezzosystem that impacts on the lives of youth in Paarl East.

## **THEME 2:** Factors related to the mezzosystem

The mezzosystem includes relationships between the family, school, neighbourhood, and peer experiences (cf. Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). As such, in this theme the participants described their viewpoints on the relationship between the microsystems.

### **Sub-theme 2.1:** Interactions between the youth and community systems

The participants referred to how the interaction between community structures protect gangs, and also how systems relate to internal motivation to change, or the lack thereof. These two aspects will be described in the categories that follow.

**Category 2.1.1:** The interaction between community structures protecting gang members

*“Miskien nou die bende ... hulle kom miskien nou in hulle ‘rivals’ se ‘territory’. Miskien sal een van die aunties sien hulle word nou gejaag. Dan sê sy, kom sommer by my in die jaard in ek gaan die deur toemaak ... En dan later aan is dit ‘n gewoonte - is nou oraait dat ons in daai jaart gaan wegstiek”.*

The statement above illustrates how community members create safe spaces for gang members. Similarly, a participant explained that the community has structured itself to protect gang members: *“The other time when a murder was committed, the community covered it up”*. Another participant explained that formal structures are being used as protection: *“They would go to church. They would be part of Thusong [DSD Paarl project], because they are wanted by gangs. They want to get away to hide”*. In addition, a participant raised the concern that the actions by community members to

protect gang members are supporting them instead of encouraging them to change: *“And the neighbours, that aunt would not help them right. So, they just continue”*. Moses (2019) argues that the reasons why community members would protect gangsters are based on the fact that gangs would establish themselves in the community’s core establishments such as schools, churches, and economic venues. The latter statement points to the fact that the interaction between gangs and the community hinders the development of an internal motivation to change.

**Category 2.1.2:** Community systems’ relations to internal motivation to change

While the previous category indicated that informal and formal structures’ interactions with gangs protect them from being held responsible for certain behaviours, a participant explained how the continuous efforts of church leaders can make a positive contribution towards an internal motivation to change.

*“Kerk is eintlik ‘key’ in die ding. Baie keer dan nooi hulle (the family) die pastoor. As hy uitkom, dan kom hy met ‘n bloeiende mond uit. Want die laaitie dink, wat soek djy hier. Dan slat hy die pastoor. Hy (the pastor) kom weer terug en hy gaan weer saam met jou kom praat, en nou gaan die laaitie begin te dink”*.

However, another participant reported that involvement in sport as a community system would keep youth gang members from criminal activities for a limited time only, pointing to not affecting a motivation to change. *“A community member would start a cricket team. That would not keep them out of doing wrong. They would play maybe until 18:00. They would start drinking after that and they return to their own ways”*. Other statements also alluded to the fact that interventions by community systems did not contribute to long-term change informed by a motivation to change.

*“Only you can decide to change. He would go to church every Sunday, but he does not care, and he only goes to church because it makes his mom happy”*.

*“It [Interventions services] does not really help, because when they make their choice, then it is like that. Some people want to live like that ... there*

*are people that can get out of it. I don't know how they get it right, but the chances are slim. Once you're in then you're in".*

*"Like the one can maybe do it [going to church] to please their parents".*

*"The parents can be converted, but it's their child's own choice".*

The above excerpts point to a distinction between internal and external motivation to change that are informed by engagements with formal and informal community systems. Legault (2016) explains in this regard that internal (or intrinsic) motivation is associated with satisfying experiences. This means that the person makes a choice to change not because of specific external stimuli, but because it is a satisfying experience. External (or extrinsic) motivation, then, has to do with being motivated by something other than the experience, for example, pleasing a parent.

One participant explained that a lack of motivation to change in the community influences the lack of motivation among youth: *"It can be that people in the community do not actually care, people see but no one would do anything about it".* This was further explained by a participant who indicated that gangsters will take part in community activities aimed at change without changing their behaviour: *"Gangsters would include themselves in youth centres and rehabilitations. Then they would go back and that is how it goes. They would participate in community activities, then they would return to their wrong doings and that is how it goes".* Other participants, however, indicated that interactions with community systems could support the development of an internal motivation to change:

*"Sport keep[s] them out of trouble and gangs longer".*

*"Church also plays a big role in changing gang children who want to change".*

*"... Sport is the biggest motivation".*

One participant advised that community structures could make use of ex-gang members to support the motivation to change within the systems: *“Bring ex-gang members to speak with the youth to say: ‘Right, I am regretting the choice I made that time’. I think a lot of gang members regret it, they become converted and realise what they did was wrong, and the only choice was God”*. The participants also reported on the interactions between the family and community systems, which will be presented in the next sub-theme.

### **Sub-theme 2.2:** Interactions between the family and community systems

*“Hulle (family) is chommies saam met die gangsters en soe hulle ‘worry’ nie, hulle ken mekaar. Jy het voor my grootgeword. Jy is nou deel van ‘n gang maar jy is steeds daar”.*

*“Dis amper soe, julle (gangsters) ‘protect’ nou ons plek”.*

The participants, through the above utterances, expressed their views that the relationship between gangs and family members impacts on how the family responds to gangs, which then influences their parenting. In addition, the link between employment conditions and parents’ ability to be available to their children was made through the following statement:

*“In many cases parents are not involved in their children’s lives on a daily base. You must take it into consideration that parents have responsibilities, they must invest long hours and shifts to give their children a living. There is no other community support to look after their children. This is when children start to hang out with their friends, which causes them to become part of gang activities”.*

Van der Merwe et al. (2012) confirm this viewpoint by asserting that unsupportive home environments where parents are, for example, not available, have a direct impact on youth’s vulnerability to gang association. Opposed to the above descriptions of how the family interactions may support youth gang affiliation, a participant reported that community members might provide support where parents are unavailable: *“There*

are many people in the neighbourhood where people try to help children to prevent them from falling in that trap". Van der Merwe et al. (2012) also allude that social support between the microsystems may reduce the vulnerability of youth. In this study, the following statements point to a lack of supportive interaction between the family and community structures:

*"A mother whose child is addicted ... people would write him off because they would see how it is".*

*"As I have seen, everyone is not so close to each other. You are going to stand by your child who is in a gang, but now the neighbours do not like each other due to their child's behaviour".*

The above statements describe a reduced amount of social support that parents may receive from neighbours, which may affect parenting and the ability to support youth to exit gangs (cf. Van der Merwe et al., 2012).

### **Sub-theme 2.3:** Interactions between peers and community systems

*"Jou chommie speel krieket. Jy willie eintlik nie, maar hy motiveer vir jou. Nou speel jy saam krieket en nou hou dit vir jou uit die moeilikheid uit. Kerk, jy sien jou chommie gaan kerk toe. As jou chommie uit die kerk uitkom, dan staan jy miskien nou alleen by die winkel, môre motiveer jou chommie kom saam my kerk toe".*

*"Dis nou die jong laaities wat op hoërskool is wat wil oorvat. Almal is gangsters of vriende met gangsters, die meeste is op 'drugs' en die vroumense is met hulle".*

The utterances above identify both positive and negative interactions between peers and community systems such as churches, sport clubs, and gangs that may affect the decision to join a gang or not. A participant described positive peer engagements further: *"I would say children who are involved in sport and church activities learn norms and principles with their friends who are there".* Breen et al. (2019) talk about

the influence of positive engagements with peers in terms of activities such as soccer, church, and dance. Another participant explained how engagements with peers who do not engage with positive community activities can support gang affiliation: *“But just because your friends are not involved in sport, then they take you from that mentality”*.

Hesselink and Bougard (2020) and Geldenhuys (2019) also argue that negative peer activities can include gang-related behaviour, and that it is often based on peer pressure. Youth involved with peers who associate with gangs become aware of the so-called benefits, which then influence them to become part of the gang (cf. O’Brien et al., 2013). In line with the discussion in sub-theme 2.3, this experience of benefits, then, results in a perceived positive experience, which can lead to an internal motivation to become part of a gang (Legault, 2016). This is explained by a participant who illuminates a benefit of gang membership:

*“You get bullied, you know your friend is a gangster and that he is in the same school. You start hanging out with him tomorrow, they would see that you are with him, and you are no longer bullied. Then you are part of them”*.

However, Dykes et al. (2021) report that bullies are often also part of gangs. In this way, bullies are part of gangs, and inadvertently contribute to youth joining other gangs for protection. A participant summarises the fact that interaction with peers can both be contributing to *and* preventing youth from joining gangs:

*“Friends’ interaction with gangs can be positive or negative. Your friend can take you out of it, or your friends can be in gangs. You hang out with them, and you fall for that trap”*.

Themes 1 and 2 reported on systems of influence in the young person’s most immediate environment. The next theme presents the participants’ perceptions of how the exosystem could either contribute to or prevent youth from joining gangs.

### **THEME 3:** Factors related to the exosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the exosystem is a broader system that does not involve the individuals themselves, but it affects their development in the microsystem. This indirect involvement may include the school system, a lack of access to services, economic factors, mass media, policies, and legislation (cf. Kamenopoulou, 2016; Van der Merwe et al., 2012). Van der Merwe et al. (2012) further concur that it affects the microsystem, which could either support or challenge the well-being of youth. In this study, economic factors and services and projects in the community were identified by the participants as exosystem factors that gravitate youth towards gangs, or that prevent them from joining gangs.

#### **Sub-theme 3.1:** Economic factors in the community

*“Soes djy kom nou uit matriek, nou jou uitslae is nie so goed nie. Nou djy kry oekie werkie en dan besluit djy djy raak nou ‘n ‘merchant’. Djy vekoep ‘drugs’ of soe en nou raak djy die ‘leader’ van jou gang. En soe help jy met werkloosheid. Maar die nagevolg in daai persoon se lewe wat die goed by djou koep... en daai maak mos nou oek dat hulle swaarkry”.*

The above statement points to poverty that might inform the decision of youth to enter gangs. Another participant reflected on how poverty is visible in the community: *“Like what I have seen is the soup kitchen. I see how many people stand there every day. I see the poverty, their need for food, they have literally nothing”*. The reliance on social grants due to poverty was described by the following statement: *“The father and mother do not work, they get SASSA [South African Social Security Agency] and you know the SASSA does not necessary go for food”*. Also referring to poverty that leads to youth entering gangs, Dykes et al. (2021) declare that 17 million of South Africa’s population, which equates to 30%, are reliant on a social grant.

Another participant continued to describe that the unemployment rate results in poverty, which then entices youth to join gangs: *“Poverty and unemployment plays a big role. I can become a gangster because I can’t find a job”*. Hesselink and Bougard (2020) identify a number of historical socioeconomic factors affecting the nation, including high levels of poverty, unemployment, living in high-crime neighbourhoods,

and a history of violence due to territorial war between gangs. These factors leave residents feeling powerlessness, which then encourages youth to seek gangs to escape poverty (Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020). A further exosystem factor was described as services or projects that support, or do not support, the community's vulnerabilities.

**Sub-theme 3.2:** Services or projects in the community

The next two categories describe the services available in the community of Paarl East, as well as services that are lacking.

**Category 3.2.1:** Services available in the community

*“Raait en later het dji jousef soe ingepas by die spesifieke groep, dji sny jousef af van gangsterism af. Dji begin oefeninge bywoon en alles”.*

The statement above explains how availability of systems in the community, such as organised sport, can provide an alternative to gangs, where the positive experience may lead to the internal motivation to change (cf. Legault, 2016). As also highlighted in the discussion in Theme 2 above, the availability of services such as sport activities has provided youth with an alternative to gangs:

*“It is the Freedom Park [a sport area] that they built. It was the war park in the past. Now it consists of sport patches ... they made the land beautiful”.*

One participant indicated how sport activities reduced gang activities:

*“Look in my area is club cricket; I can see the changes. The guys that fought against each other in the past, since they started in different clubs ... sport would keep them busy, whether you a gangster it's fine ... as long as conflict is reduced”.*

However, another statement indicates that while the services provide a healthy alternative for gang activities, this did not necessarily result in gang members leaving



gangs: *“The Rebels [gang group name] plays Sunday against the Kudus [gang group name] for R400 ... if they are done they would continue to shoot on each other”*. The participant conceded that police visibility did, however, lead to higher levels of safety at the sport events: *“Sometimes when the police stand next to the field, [it] makes it a little bit safe”*.

A participant referred to the community organising itself to demand change: *“People started a march for peace against gangs due to innocent people who died. People are fed up then they walk to the police station”*. Other participants reflected on how the community itself organised services and projects to address the mentioned poverty in the community, which could also prevent youth from becoming desperate and then joining gangs to get access to money:

*“Since Covid-19 began, a lot of people in our communities began to hand out food”*.

*“My mom brought two boxes of grapes; we would hand it out. We would hand out our leftovers to the people the next day”*.

Apart from community members organising supportive projects, a participant also described how gang members' involvement in the community addresses community needs: *“There would maybe come big gangs. Then they come and speak, or they would pray on the land like Pitfit's [gang group name] leader. His funeral was held on the land. There are a lot of good things happening there”*.

The participating youth also identified services offered by the DSD to discourage youth from joining gangs or to support them to leave gangs:

*“Like they would get certificates that they can put on their CV's. They would do a course at Thusong [DSD community centre]”*.

*“There is a soup kitchen where they would give food to those that do not have, and computer classes at Thusong ... gangsters would hold them back”*.

The latter statement, however, indicates that gang activity might impact negatively on service delivery. Another participant identified the local radio station as a positive service, but conceded that youth might not be exposed to this service: *“I think there are motivational programmes with Radio KC [local radio station] and I don’t think young people listen to Radio KC”*.

**Category 3.2.2:** Services needed in the community

*“Djy wat ‘n jonk mens is is baie moeg van sulke goed (being a gang member). Later, dan djy wil miskien eendag ‘n familie hê. Maar nou is djy al klaar soe diep in soe nou check djy toemaar los maar, gaan maar aan met die ding”*.

The above statement emphasises how a lack of opportunities or alternatives can impact on the decision to leave gangs. The following statement provides a further description: *“Not actually [community services]. It’s just sport that they [community members] organised on their own, it’s not a service someone is providing”*. It is related to the mezzosystem, and specifically a lack of vision of a future, as discussed in Theme 1. In this study, the participants voiced a concern about the lack of housing and employment opportunities coupled with a lack of projects that provide alternatives to youth, specifically focusing on skills development:

*“There’s very few projects that expose children: training, skills programmes. That is the main thing of gang involvement, if there are more projects. More children would be involved in it instead of in gangs”*.

*“I would like for everyone to have more computer classes ... like by Thusong, it is skills because they don’t have any skills”*.

*“A lot of people are homeless. That is why they would become involved in gangs. Jail is [the] gangsters’ home most of the time”*.

*“Maybe to give everyone a job – like to clean up the site after sport”*.

In line with the above sentiments, Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) recommend that economic opportunities need to be created in order to prevent youth from seeing gangs as their only option. This was also highlighted by the National Youth Policy (RSA, 2020), where the following indicators that increase youth vulnerability were emphasised: A lack of opportunities, access to employment opportunities, resources, services, and recreational opportunities, and a lack of access to social services and alternatives.

Gangs are associated with violence, and the participants referred to needed services that are aimed at safety. Geldenhuys (2019) and O'Brien et al. (2013) recommend that services need to target bullying and victimisation that influence youths' decisions to participate in youth activities. In this study, a need for services that contribute to safety, and fear caused by gangs within the community, was identified and linked to the impact of being exposed to gang activities, including youth being part of gangs. A participant also mentioned the fear of possible harm when wanting to exit a gang:

*“Like you can walk in town with your mom and dad, then they shoot your mom dead, you are never rid of your enemies. That man can get you in 20 years”.*

*“You would be surprised how the murderers walk past you ... To be honest, I have a fear”.*

*“Families get destroyed and everywhere you walk you get threatened because of a specific boy in that family that is involved in a specific group”.*

*“The parents can only walk where their children can walk, because gangs would assault your mother”.*

*“By X [previously disadvantaged community in the Western Cape] people are being terrorised because they don't want to be involved”.*

Again, as discussed in Theme 2, a participant referred to parenting programmes that focus on addressing the phenomenon of absent fathers (cf. Hesselink & Bougard, 2020; Brankovic, 2012):

*“I think a father figure is needed. Fathers must learn how to be a father for their children. It must start with the parents and how they should handle their children before we go to something else”.*

Also focusing on parental roles, another participant concurred: *“Firstly there are a lot of services, but the main thing is that it should start at home, we can give them anything outside, but the thing starts in their home”.* This was supported by a participant who highlighted the need to create a sense of belonging within the home through parenting programmes: *“Most of the time, the child’s own people don’t want that child. Or most of the time, you would grow up with a step farther, which impacts that child”.* David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) also recommend programmes aimed at positive parent-child relationships to prevent youth’s gravitation towards gangs. Similar to the discussions pertaining to the micro- and mezzosystems (Themes 1 and 2), the participants strengthened this point through explaining how a lack of parenting can contribute to youth joining gangs:

*“They see how the gangs operate. And there is nothing else. So, they are interested in how the feeling is of shooting a gun on people”.*

*“They do not have a role model, then they take the gangster and want to be like him”.*

A participant referred to existing resources in the community that could be used to provide youth with an alternative to gang activities: *“For example, the Afrikaans Taalmonument, let’s take the children out for the day. Maybe they would find something interesting ...”* Another comment alludes to adjusting existing services for better incorporation of the youth: *“Or the church, to have more open-air services that keep the children busy”.* These statements refer to outdoor youth activities. Another participant related this to skills development and socialisation opportunities: *“Maybe*

youth camps, where you would learn and other things, and you come in contact with learners from other schools”. Importantly, according to the participants, these activities need to be aimed at long-term engagements to ensure that activities lead to change. These interventions should be aimed at providing youth with community structures addressing the normalisation of violent behaviours and encouragement of healthy living (Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020).

*“On the sport field, here is where the thing starts. He would run from the sport field in his sports clothes, and he starts to fight ... there is a sense of the love for sport, but the main thing is I am a gangster, and I would act like one”.*

*“They are interested, but it can’t keep them busy too long, because the gangsters are calling them. It’s like a job for them”.*

The latter statement again highlights the need to address the intimidation caused by gangs discussed earlier in the category. In the themes discussed so far, the participants described how the environment plays a role in luring youth to gangs. This will be unpacked further in the next theme which looks at the macrosystem.

#### **THEME 4:** Factors related to the macrosystem

Macrosystems refer to the environment in which a person grows up, and which influences personal development. It has to do with the socioeconomic functioning within the environment. Cultural and religious systems influence the macrosystem in terms of the collective beliefs, values and norms that are being practiced in the community (Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020). The participants in this study spoke about attitudes and values, social problems, systems, and services within Paarl East when they described the macrosystem’s influence on youth in this area.

##### **Sub-theme 4.1:** Community attitudes and values

The participants described how the attitudes and values in the community lead to a lack of solidarity to address the issue of gangsterism in the community, and explained this in terms of how the gangs contribute to the community. This will be presented in the categories that follow.

**Category 4.1.1: Lack of solidarity to stand up against gangsterism**

*“En baie mense is bang om betrokke te raak om die mense uit te wys en aan te meld by die polisie, omdat dit hulle lewens in gevaar kan stel of hulle kinders kan expose”.*

The above statement points to fear of becoming a victim of gang violence and crime as a factor that impacts on how the community is able to live according to their norms and values. The participant explained that people tolerate the gang activities to protect themselves and their children, and not because they support gang activities. This is in line with previously discussed literature (Yiu, 2021; Geldenhuys, 2019; O'Brien et al., 2013) and descriptions of gangs (Special Theme), microsystems (Theme 1), and exosystems (Theme 3). This was expanded on in the following excerpts:

*“The community does not agree with what is happening, but it can be a sensitive topic, because most of the community’s children are involved in gangs”.*

*“The people in the community are not actually satisfied, we want to address gangsterism, but everyone is not standing together”.*

This was elaborated on by a participant: *“Many people are against gangs. Our people want to live a sincere life”.* The desire to live according to one’s own values and norms is, according to the descriptions, negatively affected by a lack of solidarity. This is due to gangs’ perceived power through their violent attitudes and behaviour (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020). This viewpoint is summarised by a participant as follows:

*“Neighbourhood watches are established to provide safety. It was effective to a certain extent, but also dangerous. Many people do not work together to expose gangs, because they feel threatened by gangs. It’s a matter of you know that it isn’t right, but you will do nothing about it because you are scared that it will backfire on you family and children”.*

In line with the discussion in category 3.2.2 where the need for protective services was accentuated, a participant explained that the violent nature of gangs (see Special Topic 2) results in youth entering gangs for protection, and that they then adopt the culture, beliefs, norms, and values of gangs.

*“At a block, elder gangs would fight against each other, shoot or stab one another. The gangs classify youth from those blocks even though those children have nothing to do with it and they are threatened. They must be involved otherwise they would not make it”.*

In this way, gangs influence the social structure within the macrosystem. Another way in which gangs affect the macrosystem is through their contributions, which will be discussed next.

**Category 4.1.2: Advantages of gangs in the Paarl East community**

*“Hulle sal miskien help skoonmaak of vee vir die grootvrou [elderly women]. Die ander sien dat die ‘leaders’ van die CK [Type of gang] help die grootvrou skoonmaak en dan kom die ander kleintjies ook en wees deel van dit”.*

Opposed to the descriptions of how gangs terrorise the community, the participants explained how gangsterism provides some advantages, and even good examples as depicted in the above statement, and that this leads to the acceptance of the gang culture. Other utterances pointed to protection and support provided by gangs, and also how gangs provide a way out of poverty, as was also indicated in sub-themes 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 3.1, and 3.2.

*“Like we are gangsters here. Now we see they [a rival gang] were robbing M. We are going to help her. See they would not only do the wrong thing, they would help you”.*

*“Drug lords support some people’s households, or they provide people with jobs, like an income. A lot of people are not willing to give it up due to poverty and struggling to get a job”.*

Some of the advantages that gangs provide include a form of security and social status in underprivileged environments (cf. Geldenhuys, 2019), for example, supporting families financially (cf. Magidi et al., 2016). In this way, gangsterism is seen as a solution to the challenges of communities. Gangs take control of the community in such a way that it is viewed as a positive contribution. For instance, by overseeing specific geographic areas and filling the gaps where government has failed to do so (Geldenhuys, 2019). The community would protect gangsters, who then become established in the community’s core (cf. Moses, 2019). A participant referred to how the contributions also lead to social problems faced in the community, which will be discussed in the next sub-theme: *“Like they would be involved in the community like sport ... playing rugby or soccer. If they are done, then he would start drinking”.*

#### **Sub-theme 4.2:** Social problems in the community

The interrelatedness of the different systems was highlighted again in this sub-theme, where the participants referred to the social issues of substance use, poverty, and violence that impact on the social structure and organisation of the community. The direct quotes below describe how norms in the community are being directed.

*“Daar is mense wat ‘drugs’ vekoep, soe paar huise uitmekaar uit.  
Jonk mense gaan in en uit...”*

*“Dis hoekom mense sê ek gan ma nou gangsterism draai of  
vroumense voel sommer ek moet ‘n gangster vat, ek draai  
prostituut”.*

A participant explains that substance use has become a norm, and asserts that it can be viewed as a gateway to enter gangs: *“The reason why youth are involved in gangs is because it happens in the community and the children see it. They start with smoking dagga, and it escalates from there”.* Magidi et al. (2016) also refer to how the availability of substances increases youth gang participation. Similarly, Dykes et al.



(2021) assert that the illegal use and selling of substances among youth becomes normative and may lead to association with gangs.

In this sub-theme, the participants also described how violence impacts on the community's well-being. The following excerpt shows how young children are affected by the violence in the community.

*“Daar was een geval van my chommie wat gery het met sy seun, hy was 1 jaar oud. Toe skiet hulle vir hom dood binne in die kar en sy babatjie sien hoe skiet hulle vir hom dood ... nou hoe moet daai laaitetjie nie groot raakie, hy't gesien hoe skiet hulle sy pa dood”.*

Expanding on this, a participant explained how the whole community is affected by the violence that impacts on innocent bystanders: *“I think it starts with a specific gang fight ... innocent people get hurt in the process, it affects everyone that lives around you”.* The following statement illuminates how being a witness of violent crime endangers the lives of community members: *“The boy that died had a friend with him. The friend saw who shot his friend dead. They are looking for him, because he is a main witness”.*

Another participant explained that violence became a normative way to deal with differences in the community: *“If we start fighting, we start shooting and stabbing each other ... Youth are not even afraid of guns anymore”.* A participant explained that this exposure within the macrosystem leads to youth attempting to retaliate by forming their own gangs as a form of protection: *“He was robbed when his mom sent him to the shop. He gets robbed regularly, and that causes him to make his own team to take revenge”.* In this way, gangsterism becomes the way of living in the community.

Hesselink and Bougard (2020) agree that the violence and crime in the community causes the need for youth to protect themselves. Thus, being in a gang provides them with security and social status, and it is difficult for youth to find alternatives (cf. Kerig et al., 2013). Alternatives for youth gang affiliation, according to the participants, are impacted on by the functioning of systems in the macrosystem.

### **Sub-theme 4.3:** Systems contributing to youth entering gangs

The participating youth identified prisons, education and skills development, and the police as those systems in the macrosystem that play a role in youth gravitating toward gangsterism. This will be unpacked in the categories that follow.

#### **Category 4.3.1:** Gangsterism in prisons

*“Djy het nie eintlik ‘n mag daar (in prison) nie. Soe daai ou (prisoner who is member of a gang) sê sommer nou al vir jou, as djy inkom hier, hier is orde. Djy moet eintlik baie sterk is as djy by soe ‘n plek is ... Hier sal djy werk vir ons en toe het ek noodwendig aangesluit by die 27s. Toe het hulle my niks meer gemaak nie, want djys nou onder hulle vlerke”.*

In the quote above, the participant explains that the prison system is used by gangs to intimidate inmates to join gangs. Hesselink and Bougard (2020, p. 463) assert that “community gang involvement eases the way into prison gangs” once they are sentenced. A participant explained how the gangs in prison are aware of what is happening in the community, and how they use this information to prepare for people entering the prison system: *“Those who are in jail are aware of X who committed a murder this weekend. If X comes inside, people inside already have files sorted”.* In addition, crime becomes a status symbol, as depicted in the excerpt below:

*“Okay, die is X, en hy het ses moorde weg. X het al verkragting en soe hy is mos nou ‘n PA [personal assistant]. Soe hy het ‘n hoë posisie”.*

Another participant, related to Special Topic 5, explains how the symbols of gangs are then used to link the youth to the gang, even after they left prison: *“The man was a different man when he came from prison ... They tattooed him in the face”.* In this way, gang members would make use of youth to proceed further in their future criminal business when they leave prison (Pinnock, 2017).

**Category 4.3.2:** Lack of education and skills development options

*“Baie van die kinnners wat in my area bly gaan by X skool. X het ... ‘n klomp van die Maflingo [name of a gang] gangsters ... djy’s letterlik bang om skool toe te gaan ... Djys al een tussen hulle almal nou los djy soema die skool. En die skole doen niks da annie”.*

David-Ferdon and Simon (2014) proclaim that failing school systems lead to a lack of opportunity and employment, which contributes to youth gang involvement. Van der Merwe et al. (2012) describe a reason behind the failing South African school system as challenging and chaotic overcrowded school environments. Yiu (2021) further asserts that school disorder may foster a low commitment to education. The direct quote above describes how a lack of protection against youth gangs in the school system precipitates school dropout (cf. Breen et al., 2019). A participant explains how youth involved in gang activities are expelled from school without any interventions that provide parents with support, or youth with alternatives: *“You are on your way to work ... now the child gets in trouble in school ... they would tell the mom that they are no longer willing to accommodate the child”*. A participant also refers to a lack of activities in the community, linking the macro- and exosystems (see category 3.2.2) and how youth were not provided with any alternatives when schools were closed during the COVID-19 national lockdown: *“And with the lockdown, schools are closed and you must sit at home because you have nothing to do”*.

The National Youth Policy (RSA, 2020) identifies school dropout and a lack of skills development opportunities as a contributing factor to youth vulnerability. In support, a participant explains that the lack of further education and skills development opportunities post school also contributes to youth leaving the school system early: *“It is a problem because you can’t get into a college ... now he wants to leave his education”*. The literature confirms this link between school dropouts and low educational levels that limits the options for youth to move out of poverty, and in this way gravitates youth to gangs (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020).

### Category 4.3.3: Lack of policing

*“Hoekom kom hulle [defence force] nie Paarl toe nie? Hier by ons in die Paarl gaan dit woelig ... Dis naweek, dis Vrydag ... Is ‘n vrees wat by jou is. Hulle [community members] kan maar protesse doen. Dit help nie, die polise kan ook niks doen nie”.*

Above, a participant explains that actions by the community to demand protection from the police are not successful because the police is also powerless against gangs. This participant asks why the plight of the Paarl East community is being ignored, and why government is not providing extra support through the involvement of the South African Defence Force (SADF). This was accentuated by another statement: *“I think the government must come out more often”*. Another participant explains how violent events are not responded to, and how the community has learned to live with the impact of these events: *“Someone gets shot and it’s all about it for a week. Tomorrow it’s over and people don’t care anymore. The police only drives past and goes on with doing their own thing”*. Pinnock (2017) and Jones (2013) confirm these viewpoints, and conclude that a lack of police involvement increases youth gang participation. This has been confirmed in the Paarl East community (SABC Digital News, 2016).

Corruption in the police was described as a reason behind the fact that gangsterism in the community continues to flourish. A direct quote confirms this viewpoint:

*“Baie keer dan is die polisie die probleem ... in my gemeenskap baie keer kry die ‘drug’ handelaars ‘tipoffs’ van die polisie af om te sê ‘maak weg jou goed die polisie is oppad ... Die ‘drug handelaar’ betaal ‘protection’ aan ‘n polisie man”.*

The relationship between members of the police and gangs was further described in terms of how crimes are not attended to: *“Their [gang members] children are getting preference mostly. One drug dealer’s child committed a murder in daylight. That case was kicked out. The man didn’t get justice”*. Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2020) also refer to the fact that high levels of corrupt structures such as the police service maintain gang activities in communities. The next sub-theme further elaborates on the impact of formal structures on the macrosystem.

**Sub-theme 4.4:** Municipal and government services needed in the community to prevent youth from joining gangs

The direct quote below indicates that the formal development of interventions to address youth vulnerability (cf. RSA, 2020) is needed to address youth gang affiliation in Paarl East.

*“Die jonkmense is baie lief vir werk. Hulle is nie lui nie, gie net vir hulle iets om te doen. Hulle gannie twee keer dink om dit te doenie. Maakit ‘n werksopsie ook vir hulle dat hulle miskien hulle ‘neighbourhoods’ en plekke net skoon hou elke dag, dan word hulle miskien ‘n klein footjie betaal. Soe kanit gangsterism verminder”.*

A participant referred to the need for expansion of the educational opportunities for youth that have left the school system: *“Reading and writing... it is essential”*. Another participant advised that the development of educational systems can become an employment opportunity for youth: *“They can build a new school. They do not have to get contractors because there is a lot of youth at home who can do that job. It’s an income for them but such things are not done”*. This sentiment emphasises how community development activities serve as pro-social opportunities, and resources could include youth as a form of employment as an alternative to gang affiliation (cf. Breen et al., 2019).

A participant explained that opportunities are needed in areas that have been historically affected to assist youth to reach their potential and develop their talents: *“You can have a specific talent, but sometimes talents are not enough”*. This statement relates to the chronosystem, which will be presented next.

#### **THEME 5:** Factors related to the chronosystem

The chronosystem refers to changes that take place over time that affect all the systems (cf. Sigelman et al., 2019). In this study, the participants referred to the involvement of gangsterism as a historical component that influenced the functioning of the Paarl East community, as depicted by the direct quote below:

*“Dit is ‘n generasie, dit kom al van daai tyd af ... ou gangsters het daai tyd baklei, dit het gegaan oor meisies en nou ganit oor ‘turf, territory’”.*

A participant explained how generations are affected by gangsterism: *“In Paarl it goes from one generation to another”*. Apartheid was seen as a main contributing factor for the current existence of gangs.

*“It started with apartheid when the white people started to take over and then the white people lived on that side of the river and the coloureds live on the other side. They just put us on a piece of land. That side of the river people had more resources than what we had. Crime started that time ... and poverty”.*

*“There were no good job opportunities for our people. Our parents had to work on farms, hard work. That is how it led to poverty; it began there”.*

*“They [apartheid regime] pushed our people down and that caused unemployment, and that our people felt inferior and how gangs originated”.*

Hesselink and Bougard (2020) assert that racial segregation during the apartheid era caused major socioeconomic challenges which pushed the youth into gangs. In further confirmation, Dykes et al. (2021) conclude that gang violence in South Africa increased as a result of apartheid. In addition to the influence of the past on youth entering gangs, the last theme will present the technosystem, which is the most recent system included in the theoretical framework.

#### **THEME 6:** Factors related to the technosystem

This system includes the impact on the individual’s interaction with the rest of the systems through the use of technologies (Johnson, 2010). In this study, the participants spoke about the role of social media, and also about how technology could possibly serve prevention and intervention functions.

### **Sub-theme 6.1:** The influence of media

The participants, on the one hand, indicated that social media has a limited influence on youth's decision to join gangs. On the other hand, social media was described as a negative influence on youth.

#### **Category 6.1.1:** Limited influence

A participant in this study indicated that gangs are not using social media platforms by saying: *"Social media ... a lot of gangsters are stupid in it"*. This is contrary to the report by Fernández-Planells et al. (2021) about youth in gangs in Spain that are actively using social media platforms. Also contradicting the above statement, in South Africa, the SAPS (2016) found that social media is a risk factor for youth gang involvement. Another participant in this study, however, conceded that the influence is limited because postings are viewed as normative, and that it is not more influential than actual gang exposure. *"For example, on Facebook you can go in anything ... it is like normal as in our community"*. These statements are opposed to other descriptions of the negative influence of social media on youth, which will be presented next.

#### **Category 6.1.2:** Negative influence

*"... die tieners ... dan dink hulle jõe die jong is kwaai, hy het 17 moorde ek wil oek soe word. Baie kinnere maak hulle Facebook soe oop XXX 27 Stifiler, jy word soe gemerk op Facebook"*.

*"En daai speel oek 'n groot rol en van die ouer laaities wat op Facebook 'post'; gunne en sukke goed. Djy dink die bra is mos nou kwaai, hy staan met n 'gun' in sy hand. Mõre gan djy oek uitvind ma waar kan ek 'n 'gun' kry"*.

Above, the participants are explaining how postings on social media serve as a form of role models for youth. Fernández-Planells et al. (2021) assert that social media has transformed social relations, which then means that role models can be accessed online. In this study, participants explain how youth are influenced by the examples posted on social media:

*“They see the videos on YouTube, they want to be on YouTube and do the same things ... they also want to be seen”.*

*“Like in X it was a very violent time ... the videos were shown, it was visible to us as well and to young children. That caused our children to want to do the same thing as well”.*

*“They want to do the same thing ... they are copycats”.*

A participant affirms that it is not strange to see youth posting negative comments on social media: *“When you go on social media ... a lot of young people would post ugly things”.* Another participant links these posts with a need to be recognised: *“You post such things to be part of this and that”.* This is further supported by the direct quote below:

*“Want ek dink as hulle sien ma sulke goed word ge‘post’, nou gaan iemand anners môre iets anners ‘post’. En nou gan djy dink die mense ‘comment’ lekke goed hier, ek gaan oek later aan sulke goed ‘post’, al is djy glad nie eens ‘n gangster nie. En nou sien anner mense wat djy ‘post’... ek dink baie keer dan wiet die ouers nie eens dat djy suke goed ‘post’ op sosiale media nie”.*

The quote above refers to parents not knowing about their children’s activities on social media. Another participant refers to friendships that may be formed with gangsters online, introducing the youth to gangsterism:

*“The people that comes from jail posts ... He posts and talks the way they talk in jail ... you become attached to it, and you also want to be like him, and you tattoo yourself and post it and write gangster language ... you get a lot of likes and you feel more happy”.*

Television and other platforms may expose youth to violent images. These images then support the development of violent norms in a community where anti-violent norms are lacking (cf. Van der Merwe et al., 2012). Johnson (2010) refers to television



as a platform where inappropriate material can encourage youth to join gangs, because of the image in which gangsterism is being portrayed. In support, participants noted:

*“Many young people see movies, and like that person is doing this and that and I want to try that as well. I think that it’s wrong that such things are played on social media and TV”.*

*“You see the actors are wearing guns and things, you also want to wear a gun and bandannas tomorrow, clothes play a big role”.*

### **Sub-theme 6.2:** Possible preventative function

*“Om miskien vir hulle te gebruik om in ‘n filimpie te speel of soe. Soes in ‘n ‘documentary’ te speel. Party is poliesie en party is gangsters innie film in en soe sien mense ook hulle ‘characteristics’”.*

The quote above refers to the use of community participation in productions where a message can be used as a preventative tool. Already in 1996, Seguin and Rancourt (1996) recommended that the so-called Forum Theatre (FT) be used to compose sketches for situations that require change. These authors mention that this is a tool that was successfully used in Africa, and specifically in rural areas. Van der Merwe et al. (2012) also refer to the preventive function of prosaic activities when working with vulnerable youth. The quote above refers to linking arts with media in that productions are documented and made available on different platforms.

### **Sub-theme 6.3:** Possible intervention function

This study did not only focus on preventing youth from entering gangs, but also on aspects that could assist youth to exit gangs. In this study, the participants identified the intervention strategies where technology is used as follows:

*“Every young person is on Facebook ... So, it can be used as awareness about gangsterism. Programmes can be implemented on Facebook by*

*the police and social workers, such as what the consequences of gang involvement are”.*

*“Use social media to share your story with others to inspire others where you would go against gang violence. It would convince people more if you were a gangster and you changed your life”.*

Arendt and Verner (2019) refer to multisystem interventions, which includes technology, as a successful way to address youth behavioural challenges. While the participants indicated how a lack of community involvement and opportunities contribute to youth participation in gangs, this last comment illustrates how the community, through the use of social media, has organised a form of intervention: *“There are groups on Facebook from the communities where gangsterism takes place. They would post to warn people and give hints what is taking place. The community stand together because their children get affected by it”.*

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The findings presented in this chapter assisted the researcher to answer the question of: What are the perceived contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community? The participants were able to provide descriptions of factors gravitating youth to gangs in terms of the EST, which was the theoretical framework underpinning this research. They described factors in terms of the micro-, mezzo-, exo-, macro-, chrono- and technosystems within the Paarl East community. In addition, they provided a colourful description of the profile and functioning of gangs in this community.

The findings will be used to draw conclusions and make recommendations, which are presented next in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the perceptions and experiences of youth regarding the causal factors of youth gang affiliation in the Paarl East community. The researcher hoped to formulate recommendations and solutions based on the insights of the research and the findings of this study. While the study was contextual in nature, it was envisaged that it could be repeated in other rural areas so that a comparison could be made with the findings. A further aspiration was that the findings would contribute to a better understanding of youth exposed to gangsterism from previously disadvantaged communities.

The preliminary literature review presented in **Chapter 1** assisted the researcher in developing an understanding of what is known about the research topic to identify and describe the research problem. The theoretical framework underpinning this study was also described to frame the focus of the study. The research question was then formulated to guide the researcher during the research process, and the aim and objectives of the study were clearly stated.

The preliminary literature review was then expanded on in **Chapter 2** to provide a thorough understanding of the research topic. Particular attention was given to youth as a developmental stage within the EST framework, youth gang affiliation, and solutions to youth gangsterism in terms of prevention and early intervention.

**Chapter 3** described the research methodology that enabled the researcher to conduct a scientifically sound investigation to answer the research question. The methodology was described in terms of characteristics, the reason behind the choices, and the implementation thereof. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, and was supported by explorative, descriptive, and contextual research designs. The population of this study was youth living in the Paarl East community. The non-probability sampling method and the purposive sampling technique was used to

identify youth that could best describe the factors that attract the youth in Paarl East to gangs. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to collect the data, using the EST to frame the open questions. Criteria of credibility, dependability, conformability, and reflexivity were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study and verify the qualitative data. Ethical practices were strictly adhered to avoid causing harm. This included debriefing opportunities, voluntary participation and informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and the appropriate storage and management of data.

Utilising the methodology, the researcher was able to present the demographic profile of the participants and the findings in **Chapter 4**. The findings were supported by verbatim quotations and existing literature.

The study's findings are summarised in this final chapter, **Chapter 5**, and reflected on to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

## **5.2 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section summarises the findings of the study. This summary will then be used to inform the conclusions that were drawn and formulate the recommendations that follow.

### **5.2.1 Summary**

Although not asked directly, the participants shared descriptions regarding gangs operating in Paarl East. Due to the contextual nature of this study, this information was included and presented as a **Special Theme**: Participants' description of gangs operating in Paarl East. The six special topics that were identified are summarised below.

**Special Topic 1** described gangs focusing on money. The participants described how gangs are driven by money and therefore sell substances as a main source of income. Their pursuit of money was also mentioned as a reason for the fights between gangs. The literature ascribes this focus on money to territorial power (Dykes et al., 2021).

**Special Topic 2** relates to gangs focusing on violent crimes in line with the above-mentioned fights between gangs. This special topic describes how gangs use violence to assert their power. Gang violence is associated with crimes and substance abuse. These violent acts often lead to trauma within the community (cf. Hesselink & Bougard, 2020; Magidi et al., 2016; Gilman et al., 2014).

**Special Topic 3** focused on territory. This special topic refers to the territorial power described in Special Topic 1, where the gangs' aim is to control a specific market in a geographical area using violence, as described in Special Topic 2. Territorial power through violence was described in terms of how it affected communities when innocent bystanders become victims of these violent acts. Similarly, the literature describes territorial power as when gangs identify a geographical area and their activities are aimed at gaining power to control this area and keep rival gangs out of it (cf. Dykes et al., 2021).

**Special Topic 4** identified specific areas in the Paarl East community that are particularly vulnerable to gang activities. The participants described gangster hotspots, and explained how gang affiliation differs from street to street in these specific areas. Such areas are characterised by fear of the gangs, and are further disadvantaged because service delivery systems avoid these areas. In the special topic, the participants also referred to areas that are not typically known to be affected by gangsterism. They did not, however, provide reasons for why specific areas are more vulnerable to gang activities.

**Special Topic 5** speaks about symbols related to gangs. The participants reported on gang related symbols such as names, flags, tattoos, clothes, and the way they walk and talk. These symbols are used to demonstrate their collective identity through signs and symbols, and as a way of showing their belonging in a group (cf. Dykes et al., 2021; Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2021; Pinnock, 2017; Akiyama, 2012).

**Special Topic 6** focused on substance abuse as part of gangsterism. The participants described substance use as forming part of the gang culture and as a way of introducing youth to gang activities. Substance use causes aggressive and criminal

behaviour and weak social performances, which encourages youth to become part of gangs (cf. Magidi et al., 2016; David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014).

The six themes related to the EST theoretical framework are summarised next.

**Theme 1** focused on factors related to the **microsystem**. This theme involved personal attributes of youth entering gangs, their families, their peers, and aspects in their neighbourhood contributing to them joining gangs. The microsystem is where youth turn for guidance and support, and they join gangs due to high-risk factors in the microsystem (cf. Carson & Hipple, 2020; Geldenhuys, 2019; Lubman et al., 2018; Boxer, 2014).

**Sub-theme 1.1** described the **personal attributes** that gravitate youth towards gang affiliation. The literature refers to such attributes as education, communication skills, social responsibility, self-independence, and personal vulnerabilities (cf. Pinnock, 2017; Magidi et al., 2016; Brankovic, 2012). In this study, age was identified as a personal attribute. It was found that children as young as nine years enter gangs, which is linked with substance abuse among these young children (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020; De Wet, 2016). Gender was also identified as an attribute in that gangs, according to the participants, mainly target boys that respond to experiencing recognition by gangs. However, the participants reported that women have increasingly joined gangs (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020; Wijnberg, 2012). Childhood abuse and trauma were also associated with aspects in the microsystem that lead youth to gang affiliation (cf. Hesselink & Bougard, 2020). The literature alluded that abuse during childhood makes youth four times likelier to form part of gangs due to long-term consequences such as depression, substance use, and aggressive behaviour (cf. Panday et al., 2012; Van der Merwe et al., 2012). It was also found that youth form part of gangs due to their lack of safety in the community, and where gangs provide them with protection (cf. Hesselink & Bougard, 2020). Consequently, they develop their identity through the gang's identity based on respect and protection (cf. Dykes et al., 2021; Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020). Poverty was found to be another motivational factor for youth joining gangs, as the latter provided for their material needs (cf. Carson & Hipple, 2020). Access to money through gang affiliation is a form of surviving and helps sustain their substance abuse.

Poverty, according to the participants, results in a lack of vision, self-worth and self-confidence, which makes them vulnerable to joining gangs (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020).

**Sub-theme 1.2** describes aspects within the **family** contributing to youth gangsterism. Four aspects were identified in the family system that result in youth gang affiliation, namely: A lack of parenting, parental substance abuse, GBV, and parents' involvement in gangsterism. Unstable family circumstances result in children not understanding the motive of their parents' behaviour. Gangs, then, become a substitute family (cf. Gilman et al., 2014; Nicholas et al., 2010). A lack of parenting includes a lack of supervision of children, poor parental attachment, and low maternal education, causing youth to find their sense of self in gangs (cf. Geldenhuys, 2019; Boxer, 2014; Jones, 2013; Van der Merwe et al., 2012). This was linked to parental substance abuse as another risk factor why youth join gangs (cf. Dykes et al., 2021). GBV in families was identified as a factor that informs youth gang affiliation. Aggressive fathers become the youth's only role model, which results in them viewing violent behaviours as a norm (cf. Pinnock, 2017; Kerig et al., 2013; Brankovic, 2012). Abuse in their homes causes youth to deal with their anger in a violent manner, and they find their sense of belonging in gangs where violence is acceptable (cf. Mendez et al., 2020; Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020; Cooper & Ward, 2012). In addition, parents'/caregivers' involvement in gangsterism was found to be another risk factor. Criminal behaviour by parents becomes normalised, which causes youth to demonstrate criminal and antisocial behaviour (cf. Hesselink & Bougard, 2020). Families who associate with gangs expose children to the values associated with gangs. In this way gang-related behaviour is being viewed as acceptable (cf. Dykes et al., 2021; Petering, 2016; Jones, 2013).

**Sub-theme 1.3** focused on **peer** influences contributing to youth joining gangs. During adolescence, peers become a strong influence and more important than families within the microsystem (cf. Dykes et al., 2021; Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020). Where peer gang affiliation is a norm, youth will be more vulnerable to form their identity according to gangs' identities due to peer pressure (cf. Louw & Louw, 2014). They will participate in activities that are informed by gang culture, such as substance abuse. This is motivated by young people's need to belong, and when gangs provide

them with a sense of belonging and recognition, they will be drawn to gangs (cf. Petering, 2016; Gilman et al., 2014).

**Sub-theme 1.4** described the contribution of **neighbourhood** environments to youth joining gangs. Youth are more prone to join gangs due to socioeconomic factors in the neighbourhood such as high crime levels, poverty, low social organisation, their lives on the streets, exposure to gangs, and being labelled as gangs due to the area they live in (cf. Yiu, 2021; Dykes et al., 2021; Hesselink & Bougard, 2020; Mendez et al., 2020; Chhuon, 2013). Youth also become part of gangs because they have a fear of being targeted if they do not follow the norms of the gangs (cf. Yiu, 2021; Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020).

**Theme 2** focused on factors related to the **mezzosystem**. This theme described the interactions between the youth and community systems; interactions between the family and community systems; and interactions between peers and community systems.

**Sub-theme 2.1** described the **interactions between the youth and community systems**. It was found that the community members create safe spaces for gangs, and in this way, they support the actions of gangs instead of resisting them. This is because gangs establish themselves in the community's core such as the economy, schools and churches where the government is lacking (cf. Moses, 2019). Existing resources in the community can contribute towards youth's internal motivation to either not join gangs, or to leave gangs. It was however found that existing resources, such as the church and sport clubs, only keep youth away from criminal activities for a limited time. The participants accentuated that an internal motivation to change or to choose not to join gangs is essential, and that this needs to be supported by services to youth (cf. Legault, 2016).

**Sub-theme 2.2** explained the **interactions between the family and community systems**. It was found that the families' responses to gangs and the relationship they have with them influences their parenting. The employment conditions of parents also have an impact on their ability to supervise and parent their children, which impacts on youth's vulnerability to join gangs. The lack of support that the community



structures provide parents/caregivers with also contributes to parents' ability to provide youth with support and guidance to not join gangs, or to leave gangs (cf. Van der Merwe et al., 2012).

**Sub-theme 2.3** focused on **interactions between peers and community systems**.

The participants spoke about both positive and negative peer groups. Positive peer groups would include peer involvement in community systems such as churches and sport clubs. This, then, motivates youth to also join the activities their peers are part of. Negative peer groups are associated with pressuring youth to become part of gang activities by luring them through the perceived benefits of gang affiliation, such as access to money (cf. Hesselink & Bougard, 2020; Geldenhuys, 2019; O'Brien et al., 2013). Bullying by peers may lead to youth finding protection by gangs, particularly when other protective systems are not available to them.

**Theme 3** described the factors related to the **exosystem**. The school system, access to resources, mass media, economic factors, policies and legislation are factors that indirectly affect the well-being of youth (cf. Kamenopoulou, 2016; Van der Merwe et al., 2012). While these systems might not have a direct influence on youth, it affects their functioning within the micro- and mezzosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, the participants identified economic factors in the community and services, or projects existing and needed in the community as factors within the exosystem that contributes to youth gang affiliation.

**Sub-theme 3.1** described the **economic factors** in the community. Poverty was found to be a main contributing factor to why youth form part of gangs. The participants explained that a majority of families rely on the social grants due to high levels of unemployment (cf. Dykes et al., 2021). Poverty was linked to unemployment and the fact that gangs provide an option for obtaining money as a contributing factor for youth gang involvement (cf. Hesselink & Bougard, 2020). Gang affiliation becomes a way to evade poverty (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020).

**Sub-theme 3.2** focused on **services or projects available and needed** in the community. The participants described how the available resources in the community, on the one hand, fosters their internal motivation to change. On the other hand, some

participants argued that while youth access these activities it does not necessarily result in a motivation to leave gangs. Existing resources that were identified as a form of support to youth are sport clubs, and the DSD community Thusong Centre that provides youth with the opportunities to update their CV's and to develop their computer skills. The participants also reported that a lack of housing in the community, skills development opportunities, recreational opportunities, and social services impact on the youth's ability to develop a vision for life. Youth need access to systems that will protect them should they want to leave gangs, and to provide them with alternatives to move out of poverty. The participants asked for long-term engagements through regular youth activities by churches.

**Theme 4** relates to factors in the **macrosystem** which included community attitudes and values, social problems in the community, systems contributing to youth entering gangs, and municipal and government services needed in the community to prevent youth from joining gangs.

**Sub-theme 4.1** described the **attitudes and values of the community**. It was found that there is a lack of solidarity in the community to address the issue of gangsterism. Community members tolerate gangs to protect themselves and their families from the violent behaviours of gangs. In this way, youth are exposed to and adopt the beliefs, culture, norms, and values of gangs as they seek protection (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2020). The advantages of gangs in the communities also explain the acceptance of gang culture. Moreover, gangs provide the community with a way out of poverty through supporting people's households, providing them with employment, and their involvement in cultural activities. Gangsters are therefore contributing positively to the community by filling in the gaps where the government is lacking (cf. Geldenhuys, 2019).

**Sub-theme 4.2** discussed the **social problems that exist in the community**. The participants expressed their viewpoints regarding social issues such as substance use, poverty and violence, and explained that these problems contribute to youth joining gangs. The availability of substances and the use thereof have become normative in the community. Youth engaging in substance use are susceptible to joining gangs (cf. Magidi et al., 2016). In that dependence on substances results in

youth joining gangs to access the substances (cf. Dykes et al., 2021). Violent behaviour has also become a norm in the community. Youth exposed to witnessing violence either join gangs because they feel comfortable with violent behaviour, or to protect themselves. Gangs provide them with security and social status, which makes it difficult for them to find alternatives within the community.

**Sub-theme 4.3** focused on **systems contributing to youth entering gangs**. This sub-theme includes gangsterism in prisons, the absence of education and skills development options, and a lack of policing in the community. Youth offenders entering prisons are exposed to gangs in the prison. Gangs make use of the prison system to intimidate youth to form part of gangs, and to remain part of these gangs after they return home (cf. Pinnock, 2017). The participants, referring to gang symbols, explained that youth in the prison system receive tattoos. When they leave the prison, these tattoos ensure that they remain affiliated to the gang. The scarcity of educational and skills development opportunities and projects was raised as a concern. The participants referred to youth being failed by the school system through a lack of access to preventative and early intervention services available within the schools. Youth with problem behaviours are then excluded from the school system, and also have no access to other educational systems (cf. Yiu, 2021; David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014; Van der Merwe et al., 2012). It was also found that no alternatives or support are provided to the parents/caregivers after the youth are expelled from school. There is consequently a low commitment to education among the youth which results in gang participation (cf. Yiu, 2021).

**Sub-theme 4.4** described **municipal and government services needed** in the community to prevent youth from joining gangs. The participants explained how formal development of interventions in order to address vulnerable youth are needed (cf. RSA, 2020). Addressing youth gang affiliation would include educational and employment opportunities, and using community development activities, such as educational systems that serve as pro-social opportunities and resources, as an alternative for gang affiliation.

**Theme 5** focused on factors related to the **chronosystem**. This system refers to events that occurred over time, which still influence the rest of the systems. Apartheid

was found as a contributing risk factor to why gangs exist today. The racial separation in the past has perpetuated socioeconomic challenges in the previously disadvantaged communities. Gang membership and involvement has thus been a means to escape poverty (cf. Dykes et al., 2021; Hesselink & Bougard 2020).

**Theme 6** presented factors related to the **technosystem**. This system includes the individual's interaction with the rest of the systems using technologies (Johnson, 2010). In this theme, the participants referred to the influence of media, and possible preventative and intervention functions.

**Sub-theme 6.1** addressed the influence of **media**. On the one hand, some participants explained that gangs do not really make use of social media. Other participants, however, alluded that social media platforms are viewed as a normal way of disseminating information, and that it has the potential for youth to post messages that will increase their social status. These participants, as opposed to the viewpoint of limited to no use of social media by gangs, described that messages by gang members on social media expose youth to the gang culture, viewing it as acceptable and a way to receive positive feedback when posting gang-related messages (cf. Fernández-Planells et al., 2021; SAPS, 2016). As such, social media serves as a platform for youth to mimic behaviours by gang members that will receive positive feedback from viewers as a form of recognition. In this way, online platforms introduce youth to gangsterism and encourage them to build friendships with gangs online. Another negative media influence was reported to be television programmes exposing youth to violent images, which supports the development of violent norms where anti-violent norms are lacking (cf. Van der Merwe et al., 2012).

**Sub-theme 6.2** focused on possible **preventative functions**. The participants referred to the use of documented drama and forum theatres. Literature confirms positive results through these preventative activities using the arts, referring to it as prosaic activities (cf. Van der Merwe et al., 2012; Seguin & Rancourt, 1996).

**Sub-theme 6.3** discussed possible **intervention functions through the use of technology** to assist youth to exit gangs. These would include awareness programmes regarding the dangers and consequences of youth gang involvement.

This could include motivational messages by ex-gang members. These multisystem interventions (cf. Arendt & Verner, 2019) include technology by professional service providers, which can help to successfully address youth behavioural challenges. The participants also mentioned that the community made use of social media as an intervention function to warn people of where gangster activities take place.

The summary of the findings was used to draw the following conclusions.

### **5.2.2 Conclusions**

This study was interested in finding focus areas for prevention and early intervention services within the ELT to support youth to either not enter gangs, or to exit gangs. The conclusions below are on aspects related to prevention and early interventions that could contribute to addressing youth gang affiliation in the Paarl East community.

In the **Special Theme**, it was highlighted that money is a driving force behind gang activities, and that this leads to violence and territorial power in specific areas in Paarl East. This power is asserted by symbols that portray gang affiliation. It is concluded that the gangs' identities become a gravitating factor for youth, and even young children, to associate with gangs, while gangs also provide them with a sense of power and security. To prevent youth gangsterism, active engagement with the SAPS is needed to identify the reasons why gangs continue to assert power in certain areas, and what role players and actions are needed to address this effectively. This will require intervention on the macro level. This includes providing youth with role models and activities in their families and neighbourhoods to counter the alluring power of gangs. Also noted in the special theme was substance abuse that is part of the gang culture, and that youth are introduced to substances to serve as a gateway to entering gangs. This requires the availability of long-term substance use prevention and treatment services in the community, so as to provide sufficient support and intervene timeously.

**Theme 1** focused on the **microsystems** in the youth's lives. From the findings it was concluded that high-risk factors that exist in the microsystem result in youth seeking alternative ways to develop a sense of identity and belonging in gangs. Youth form part of gangs due to risk factors on the individual level, which includes direct contact

with their peers, schools, families, and communities. Lack of belonging within these domains causes them to seek alternative ways to develop their sense of belonging, which they find in gangs.

It was concluded that both preventative and early intervention services need to include children. While males are viewed as predominantly exposed to gang affiliation, services should also be aimed at females who join gangs via romantic relationships with gang members.

Services within the microsystem should focus on substance prevention and early intervention programmes; addressing early school dropouts; parental support programmes to ensure a sense of belonging in homes; peer support programmes; and neighbourhood programmes where youth can be exposed to positive role models.

Focusing on services to youth and the family, it is important that children and youth exposed to abuse and violence receive support and therapeutic services to assist them to recover from the exposure, and to limit long-term consequences such as depression, violent behaviour, substance use, as well as a lack of self-worth and self-confidence that might gravitate them towards gangs. An important conclusion is that children and youth who are exposed to abuse and violence, including GBV, need to be identified and supported. They should be aware of where to find needed assistance in their neighbourhoods. Parental support can include parental substance use treatment, day care to children and youth where parents are working, and addressing GBV in the family. To break the cycle of abuse, youth should be exposed to awareness programmes that are aimed at changing inter-gender communication.

Peer support programmes can provide youth with skills to support each other, to engage in positive activities available in the community, and to address bullying among peers. Importantly, youth will need formal and informal support to engage in the above focus areas, and activities in the community such as sport and cultural practices must be supported in an effort to create a space for youth to engage with each other and to develop healthy identities without the influence of gangs.

Social issues within the neighbourhood such as poverty and violence should receive particular attention. Youth in communities where there are limited alternatives may lack a vision for their futures. Therefore, projects and programmes for sustainable development that address poverty, crime and violence are needed so that youth have access to education and employment as an alternative to joining gangs. An important factor to consider during service delivery within the microsystem is that youth who want to exit gangs might be afraid to do so because to the violent nature of gangs.

**Theme 2** focused on factors related to the **mezzosystem**, which include the interaction between youth and community systems, families and community systems, and the interaction between peers and the community systems. It was concluded that the interaction between community members and gangs are influenced by the community's fear of the gangs. Protection and support must be made available to ensure the safety of youth, families, and community members. Projects aimed at building solidarity among community members to act against gang activities will have to include protection services, requiring the involvement of the SAPS.

Another factor that affects the interaction between the community and gangs is the fact that gangs bring perceived benefits to the community, such as financial support and opportunities. As mentioned above, long-term sustainable development programmes are needed to address poverty, crime, and violence so that youth and their families have alternative ways to move out of poverty.

Youth's interaction with resources that could assist in dealing with youth gangsterism such as the church and sport does not necessarily lead to youth exiting gangs. It is therefore concluded that existing resources and activities need to be aimed at long-term engagements in order to ensure that activities that lead to change are based on an internal motivation to change. This will require that youth become motivated to leave gangs because they are experiencing the benefits of not belonging to a gang. Services that are aimed at improving protective factors such as resilience and life skills may enable youth to positively respond to interventions.

The interaction between the community and families should be supported to create informal support to parents whose children are exposed to gangs. Care for children

and youth whose parents are working long hours and who cannot afford formal care services, need support to ensure that their children are not vulnerable and drawn to gangs to find a sense of belonging. This lack of support from the community includes the community labelling youth involved in gangs and their parents. The added lack of support from formal resources in the community leaves the parents without assistance to support their children to leave gangs.

From the findings, it is concluded that peer interaction with community systems are influenced by the perceived benefits gangs provide them with. A lack of alternatives, such as education and employment opportunities, results in an internal motivation to become part of gangs. Peer support services can contribute to positive interactions with other resources in the community, providing that such resources exist or are developed. As mentioned, poverty, crime and violence as well as disorganised families need to be assisted to effectively address the interaction between peers and gangs.

**Theme 3** identified the **exosystem** as the economic system, and services existing and needed in the community. It was concluded that families rely mostly on grants, which is not enough to support the family. Poverty makes youth more vulnerable to form part of gangs due to the perception that this is the only option to evade poverty. Youth in Paarl East are vulnerable to gangsterism due to limited access to educational resources and employment opportunities. The services that are available in the community do not necessarily help the youth to exit gangs, and it is concluded that a contributing factor is the lack of opportunities. It is important to determine the available resources and which are still needed, and ensure that the youth have access to these so that they have an alternative to gangs. The impact of existing resources should be reviewed so that any necessary amendments can be made. Interventions should also focus on encouraging educational and economic participation. Economic opportunities need to be created to prevent the youth from seeing gangs as their only option.

**Theme 4** focused on factors related to the **macrosystem** such as community attitudes, values and social problems that contribute towards youth entering gangs, and municipal and government services needed in the community to avert youth from joining gangs. In order to prevent youth from joining gangs or to assist them to leave gangs, it is necessary for service providers to understand that gangs assert power to



attain money in specific territories, which often takes the form of violent acts. Community members are in turn traumatised and service providers are impeded in making suggestions as the community members live in real fear of their safety. Innocent bystanders and witnesses of violent crimes endanger the lives of the community members. As also concluded when discussing the above systems, safety in the community must be addressed, and the power of gangs and the reason behind this should be investigated to encourage change. The findings revealed that there is a lack of service delivery in the areas where gangs are active due to the co-occurring violence. The study thus determined that people exposed to gang violence are further disadvantaged as they cannot access resources and services easily due their restricted movement.

Substance use and the selling of illegal substances in the community affects the family system, as well as the youth who become vulnerable to substance use and dependency. Substance use treatment and aftercare services will be vital to support the community to address this problem and related social issues such as GBV and gangsterism. These services should be accessible and affordable to all community members.

Also mentioned above, poverty in the community gravitates youth, their families, and community members towards gangs when gangs make positive contributions in the community instead of other service providers. It is concluded that a part of the power of gangs is that they provide for basic needs where other systems are failing.

It is concluded that a lack of policing results in gangs having power and community members living in fear. To address gangsterism effectively, and to work towards youth not joining gangs, the active involvement of the SAPS is needed. This means that service providers and the SAPS must work collectively, and with the community, to address gang-related activities and its consequences effectively.

Educational and employment opportunities within the community are viewed as essential to provide youth with a vision for the future. This requires collaboration between education systems and the business sector. Within the school system, it is important to note that gangs influence youth who then continue with gang related

behaviours within the school system. This results in intimidation where youth join gangs for protection, or drop out of school due to bullying. Safety in the community therefore also includes safety within the schools.

**Theme 5** presented the **chronosystem**, with a focus on the historical influence of apartheid. Racial separation resulted in limited resources and a lack of access to resources and opportunities within the Paarl East community, which is still perpetuated today. The development of services and resources, and the accessibility thereof, is vital to address the legacy of the past and prevent gangs from continuing to assert their power in vulnerable communities.

**Theme 6** looked at factors related to the **technosystem**. It is concluded that social media can expose youth to gang-related material that becomes popular. Gang members then associate with this and respond to the posts, or they post material themselves to obtain recognition. Social media, however, can also be used effectively to create awareness regarding the dangers of gang affiliation, how to exit gangs, as well as advertise alternatives to gang affiliation.

Possible prevention services using technology could include participatory theatre documentaries where youth participate in the production of awareness messages. Interventions via technology can be aimed at online support and motivational information.

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations for services within the ELT, as well as for further research are made.

### **5.2.3 Recommendations**

It is recommended that partnerships between the SAPS, DSD, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and community members be established to identify, develop, and implement a coordinated response aimed at preventing youth from entering gangs, or to assist them to exit gangs. Recommendations regarding the focus of such responses will be made in terms of the different systems of the ELT.

## **Microsystem**

- Services should be aimed at children and youth to ensure early intervention when young children are affected by exposure to gangs.
- Services should include both male and female youth, focusing on the different reasons why they are gravitated towards gangs.
- The different systems must be activated to identify youth who engage with gang activities or who are at-risk of joining gangs. A specific needs assessment must be aimed at identifying the reasons behind gang involvement to address those high-risk factors through services that are included in the collaborative work by the service delivery systems.
- Resources to address the needs of youth should be developed, such as educational, substance use treatment, and therapeutic support services.
- School social workers can play an important role to develop pro-social programmes within the school systems. Peer support groups within the school system can be used to create platforms for experiencing a sense of belonging and to address bullying effectively.
- Parenting programmes should be implemented with the aim of focusing on both youth and parents where aggressive behaviour already exists. The aim of parenting skills programmes is to help parents to build healthy relationships with their children, and to encourage parents to monitor their children's behaviours. Parents should be equipped with parenting skills that include monitoring, communication, boundaries, and problem solving.

## **Mezzosystem**

- Recreational programmes are needed to decrease youth's risk factors. Trusted young mentors should facilitate these programmes with the aim of encouraging youth participation, and motivating them to change their anti-social behaviours. Examples of recreational activities are skills development, educational assistance, and cultural and recreational activities such as dance, music, and sport. These programmes should not only focus on keeping youth busy, but should also assist with skills development, and to effectively deal with high risk factors such as substance use and violent behaviours.
- The implementation of peer focused programmes can take place within schools, churches, and sport clubs. Existing resources can work together to provide youth

with a variety of places where they can experience positive peer interaction. It is recommended that such programmes focus on bullying, peer pressure, victimisation, and pressures from local gangs. Youth should be empowered to support each other to not join gangs or to exit gangs.

- After school programmes and day care facilities are resources needed to ensure that parents are supported in the community to care for youth.
- The implementation of resilience programmes facilitated by service providers can help to address the youth's lack of internal motivation to change. These include providing youth involved in gangs with training and skills development to stimulate the cultivation of protective factors, which will decrease vulnerability to youth gang affiliation.

### **Exosystem**

- Economic opportunities need to be created to prevent the youth from seeing gangs as their only option to evade poverty.
- Economic opportunities should be supported by skills development programmes to provide youth with skills that will contribute to employability.
- Existing resources such as churches, sport clubs, and the DSD youth development centre should work collaboratively to ensure that services link with each other and that youth have access to support and services in multiple spaces.

### **Macrosystem**

- The SAPS should be responsible for initiating activities that are aimed at addressing gang activities within the community. These activities can only be supported by other service providers when safety and protection is provided.
- The SAPS must be held accountable for the reasons why gang-related crimes are not being solved, and why community members are not being protected. In addition, the selling of illegal substances, as well as violent acts should be attended to by the SAPS to prohibit gangs from getting away with criminal activities. Working together, the different resources and service providers in the community can support police efforts to curb gang-related crimes and violence. However, the SAPS must be committed to a long-term sustainable effort to effectively address gang activities.

- Protection of learners in schools needs to be implemented by the SAPS to prevent school dropouts and youth gang affiliation.
- Educational services can be supplemented by youth life orientation programmes. Topics should include information regarding the dangers of gangsterism, non-violence skills in resolving problems, anger management, and conflict resolution skills, as well as anti-substance use programmes. These programmes can be provided by a variety of service providers as a concerted effort to support vulnerable youth. Teachers and parents should be included to ensure that the programme content is being integrated in the school and within the family.
- The implementation of neighbourhood activities is recommended, introducing youth and parents/caregivers to healthy youth activities and skills development. Such activities should be initiated by community members, and supported by SAPS, government departments, and social service organisations.

### **Technosystem**

- Multisystem interventions can include all role players as well as technology to address youth behavioural challenges. Such interventions can include awareness programmes through the use of social media platforms. The implementation of Forum Theatres that are documented and posted on various platforms should include youth participation where they actively participate in sharing anti-gang information and promoting pro-social behaviours.
- Social media platforms can also be used as a protective initiative where community members can report gang activity, and the SAPS can respond to these reports.

This study was contextual in nature. Therefore, recommendations for further research are made in the section below.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is recommended that:

- The reason for ongoing gang involvement in specific areas be explored to identify why such areas are vulnerable.

- The different role players needed to address youth gangsterism be identified, and that the roles and functions of the role players be explored to ensure a coordinated response.
- The reasons behind failure to address gang violence and crimes by the SAPS be explored to ensure that services can be improved to support community safety and gang-free communities.
- Challenges experienced in the school system to support vulnerable children and youth be explored with the aim to identify what is needed within school systems to contribute to the holistic development of learners.
- Existing services to families at risk be evaluated to ensure that the aspects drawing youth to gangs be addressed through preventative and early intervention services.
- The significance of the technosystem in services to youth be further investigated.
- The research methodology used in this study be replicated in other contexts to compare and contrast the findings to obtain a holistic overview of youth gang affiliation in South Africa.

#### **5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The goal of the study was to explore and describe the perceptions and experience of the causal factors of youth gang affiliation in the Paarl East community with the aim of making recommendations for prevention and early intervention social work practice. The research question was answered by the information provided by the participants based on the different systems levels. Their input and valuable information on the nature of gangs in this specific context also provided a more in-depth description of youth and their vulnerability to gang affiliation in Paarl East. The researcher was able to compare and contrast the findings with existing literature, as described in Chapters 1 and 2, and to draw conclusions based on the findings and existing literature. The recommendations that emanated from the findings were presented in terms of the different systems in the youths' lives. To address the issue of youth gangsterism in South Africa, the researcher also made recommendations for further research to add to the existing knowledge base.

The recommendations were based on the youths' descriptions of why they are attracted to gangs, and what is needed to support them to avoid joining gangs, or to exit gangs. The researcher hopes that these recommendations will be considered by service providers and role players in the community to actively work towards protecting youth from entering gangs, and to support them to develop their full potential. The researcher hopes that the community will realise that the implementation of services cannot be the sole responsibility of social welfare services, and can only be successful if the community and different service providers work together in unison.

In conclusion, gangs have infiltrated the core of the community over a long period of time. Therefore, efforts to address youth gang involvement should be long-term to ensure sustainable change.



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# ANNEXES

## ANNEXURE A: ETHICS APPROVAL



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE



Department of Institutional Advancement  
University of the Western Cape  
Robert Sobukwe Road  
Bellville 7535  
Republic of South Africa

June 2020

Ms JM Adams  
Social Work  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

**Ethics Reference Number:** HS 20/4/23

**Project Title:** Exploring factors that gravitate youth towards gang involvement in the Paarl East community.

**Approval Period:** 10 June 2020 – 10 June 2023

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and 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.**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '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 21959 4111  
Email: [research-ethics@uwc.ac.za](mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za)

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

## **ANNEXURE B: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**Title of Research Project:** Exploring factors that gravitate youth towards gang involvement in the Paarl East Community

**To whom it may concern**

**Dear Sir/madam**

My name is Jodie Adams., I am a Masters in Social Work (MSW) student in the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. For the purpose of this degree, I am conducting a research study that has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The research aim is to explore and describe the contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community in order to make recommendations for preventative and early intervention social work practice.

I am requesting permission to gain entry into the community through your organisation. This would entail that you provide me with an opportunity to provide youth, between the ages of 19 and 24 at your organisation with information regarding the project and to invite them to participate. Those who are interested will be provided with an information letter that will also be provided to you. Youth that agree to participate will then be requested to make contact with me to arrange a time and place for me to interview them. Please note that participation is voluntary and that ethical practice of limitation of harm, availability of debriefing opportunities, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity will be implemented.

Your willingness to support me will be much appreciated. I am also providing you with the information letter to the participants, as well as proof of ethical clearance for you to be able to make an informed decision to support me.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen

Social Work Department

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17

Bellville

7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: [mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za)

Should you have any further 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:

Dr Marcel Londt Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9593710 Email: <a href="mailto:mlondt@uwc.ac.za">mlondt@uwc.ac.za</a>	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 <a href="mailto:chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za">chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za</a>
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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: [research-ethics@uwc.ac.za](mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za)

**REFERENCE NUMBER:**

Thank you.

---

Kind regards.

Miss Jodie Adams

E-mail: [34544040@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:34544040@myuwc.ac.za)



## **ANNEXURE C: INFORMATION SHEET**

**Title of Research Project:** Exploring factors that gravitate youth towards gang involvement in the Paarl East Community

### **What is this study about?**

This research project will be conducted by Jodie Adams for a Master of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. The research aim is to explore and describe the contributing factors for youth gang involvement in the Paarl East community in order to make recommendations for preventative and early intervention social work practice. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a person who could provide relevant information on the topic to assist the research to attain the aim of this study.

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

You will be requested to sign a consent form which confirms your decision to participate voluntarily. The researcher will conduct an individual interview with you, which will last between 45 minutes and 60 minutes. You will be asked to share your experiences and perceptions on the topic. You will also be requested for permission to audio record the interview for purposes of accurate documenting.

### **Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

You will be asked permission that the researcher can audio-record the interview. Should you choose not to give permission for this, your answers and contributions be recorded by means of field notes. The recording will be transcribed immediately after interview, and the recordings will be locked into a safe space to which only the researcher and her supervisors will have access. The researcher undertakes to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, your name will not appear on the transcript of the interview. A number will be assigned to your name, for example 'Participant 1', and a list will be made that links the numbers to the identity of the participants. This list will be stored on a password computer to which

only the researcher will have access. All documents will be destroyed five years after that study was completed. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, any disclosure of abuse or harm made during the research process by you or any other participant, has to be reported. In this event, I will inform you that I have to break confidentiality to fulfil my legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

### **What are the risks of this research?**

Discussing personal experiences and perceptions carry some amount of risks. The researcher will nevertheless 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.

### **What are the benefits of this research?**

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher to make recommendations for social workers to develop interventions to prevent youth in your area to join gangs, or assist them to leave gangs. In this way, your community could benefit from your participation.

### **Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised in any way.

**Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?**

Should you feel, at any stage during the interview uncomfortable or afraid to continue, your participation will be stopped even though you consented. Even though your experience and insight are valuable to this research, the researcher will respect your decision to terminate. Should you wish to terminate your participation because you feel uncomfortable due to any form of disclosure, the researcher will refer you for counselling.

**What if I have questions?**

This research is being conducted by Jody Adams under the auspices of the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research itself, please contact the researcher at: 073 027 2517 (cell phone number) or at [3454404@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:3454404@myuwc.ac.za) (email address).

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen

Social Work Department

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17

Bellville

7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: [mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za)

Should you have any further 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:

Dr Marcel Londt Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9593710 Email: <a href="mailto:mlondt@uwc.ac.za">mlondt@uwc.ac.za</a>	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 <a href="mailto:chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za">chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za</a>
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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: [research-ethics@uwc.ac.za](mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za)

**REFERENCE NUMBER:**

Thank you.



## **INLIGTINGSVORM**

**Titel van die navorsingsprojek:** “Exploring factors that gravitate youth towards gang involvement in the Paarl East Community”

### **Waaroor gaan die studie?**

Die navorsingstudie sal gedoen word deur Jodie Adams vir ‘n Meestersgraad in Maatskaplike Werk by die Departement van Maatskaplike Werk van die Universiteit van die Wes-Kaap. Die doel van die navorsing is om die oorsaaklike faktore vir jeug se betrokkenheid by bendes in die Paarl-Oos gemeenskap te verken en te beskryf om aanbevelings te maak vir voorkomende en vroeë ingryping maatskaplike dienste. U word uitgenooi om deel te neem aan die studie omdat u geïdentifiseer was as iemand wat relevante inligting oor die onderwerp kan verskaf om sodoende die doel van die studie te kan bereik.

### **Wat word van my verwag as ek toestem om deel te neem?**

U sal eerstens gevra word om ‘n toestemmingsvorm te teken wat bevestig dat u vrywillig deelneem. Die navorser sal ‘n onderhoud met u voer wat ongeveer 45 tot 60 minute sal duur. U sal gevra word om ervarings en opinies te deel oor die navorsingsonderwerp. U sal ook gevra word om toestemming te verleen dat die onderhoud op band opgeneem kan word vir dokumentasie doeleindes.

### **Sal my deelname in die studie konfidensieel hanteer word I?**

U sal toestemming gevra word dat die navorser die onderhoud op band kan opneem. Sou u kies om nie hiertoe in te stem nie, sal u antwoorde en bydrae deur middel van notas gedokumenteer word. Die bandopnames sal dadelik na die onderhoud getranskribeer word, en die opnames sal toegesluit word waar net die navorser en haar supervisors toegang het. Die navorser sal ook u identiteit en die aard van u bydrae beskerm. Om u anonimiteit te beskerm, sal u naam nie op die transkripsie van die onderhoud aangedui word nie. ‘n Nommer sal aan u naam geallokeer word,

byvoorbeeld 'Deelnemer 1, en 'n lys met die nommers wat aan elke deelnemer se naam gekoppel word sal op 'n rekenaar gestoor word wat 'n toegangsnaam vereis. Slegs die navorser sal toegang tot die toegangsnaam hê. Die data en alle kommunikasie en dokumente sal 5 jaar na afloop van die navorsing vernietig word. Sou die navorser 'n verslag skryf oor die navorsing sal u identiteit beskerm word.

Volgens wetgewende vereistes en professionele standaarde, moet enige vorm van leed of gevaar teenoor persone wat aangedui word tydens die onderhoud aangemeld word. In so 'n geval sal die navorser u inlig dat konfidensialiteit nie gehandhaaf kan word nie en dat dit aangemeld moet word.

### **Wat is die riskios verbonde aan deelname?**

Wanneer persoonlike ervarings en opinies bespreek word is daar 'n mate van risiko aan verbonde. Sulke riskios sal so ver moontlik beperk word, en die navorser sal dadelik optree as u enige fisiese, emosionele of ander ongemak beleef gedurende die onderhoud. Waar nodig sal u verwys word na professionele dienste vir verdere ondersteuning.

### **Wat is die voordele van die navorsing?**

Hierdie studie is nie daarop gemik om persoonlik te bevoordeel nie, maar die resultate kan help om aanbevelings te maak wat maatskaplike werkers kan ondersteun om jeug te beskerm to betrokkenheid by bendes in u gemeenskap. Op hierdie wyse sal u deelname tot voordeel van u gemeenskap wees.

### **Moet ek aan die studie deelneem en kan ek enige tyd onttrek?**

U deelname is totaal vrywillig en u kan besluit om glad nie deel te neem nie. Sou u besluit om deel te neem aan die studie, kan u enige tyd u deelname staak. Indien u besluit om nie deel te neem nie, of om u deelname te staak, sal u nie op enige wyse gepenaliseer word nie.

**Is daar enige ondersteuning beskikbaar indien my deelname aan die studie my negatief so beïnvloed?**

Sou u ter enige tyd gedurende die onderhoud ongemaklik voel en nie verder wil deelneem nie, sal u deelname gestaak word ten spyte daarvan dat u ingestem het om deel te neem. Alhoewel u ervarings en insigte waardevol is vir die navorsing, sal die navorser u besluit om u deelname te staak respekteer. Sou u besluit om u deelname te staak omdat u ongemaklik voel oor die inligting wat bespreek word sal die navorser u vir verdere ondersteuning en berading verwys.

**Wat as ek enige vrae het?**

Die navorsing word onderneem deur Jody Adams onder leiding van die Departement van Maatskaplike Werk van die Universiteit van die Wes-Kaap. Indien u enige vrae oor die navorsing self het, kontak die navorser asseblief by: 073 027 2517 (selfoon nommer) of by [3454404@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:3454404@myuwc.ac.za) (epos adres).

Indien u enige vrae rakende die studie het of enige probleme wat u ervaar het rakende die studie en u regte as deelnemer wil rapporteer, kontak asseblief die studie supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen

Social Work Department

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17

Bellville

7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: [mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za)

Indien u enige verdere vrae rakende die studie het of enige probleme wat u ervaar het rakende die studie en u regte as deelnemer wil rapporteer, kontak asseblief die studie supervisor:

Dr Marcel Londt Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9593710 Email: <a href="mailto:mlondt@uwc.ac.za">mlondt@uwc.ac.za</a>	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 <a href="mailto:chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za">chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za</a>
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Hierdie navorsing is aanvaar deur die Universiteit van die Wes-Kaap se "Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee".

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

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**VERWYSINGSNOMMER:**

Dankie.

## ANNEXURE D: CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** Exploring factors that gravitate youth towards gang involvement in the Paarl East Community

The study has been described to me in a 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.

**I agree to participate in the research study** \_\_\_\_\_

**I do not agree to participate in the research study** \_\_\_\_\_

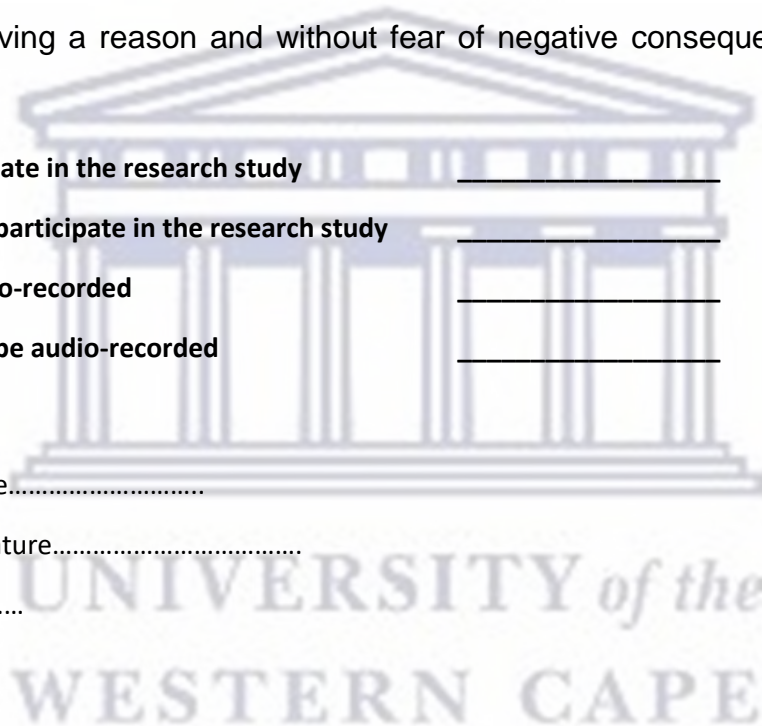
**I agree to be audio-recorded** \_\_\_\_\_

**I do not agree to be audio-recorded** \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....



Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen

Social Work Department, University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17

Bellville, 7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: [mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za)

Should you have any further 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:

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---	--

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E-mail: [research-ethics@uwc.ac.za](mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za)

**REFERENCE NUMBER:**

Thank you.

---

## TOESTEMMINGSVORM

**Titel van die navorsingstudie:** "Exploring factors that gravitate youth towards gang involvement in the Paarl East Community"

Hierdie navorsingstudie is aan my verduidelik in 'n taal wat ek kan verstaan. My vrae oor die studie is beantwoord. Ek verstaan wat my deelname sal behels en ek stem toe om deel te neem uit my vrye keuse en wil. Ek verstaan dat my identiteit nie openbaar gemaak sal word aan enige iemand nie. Ek verstaan dat ek ter enige tyd my deelname kan onttrek, sonder dat ek 'n rede moet gee en sonder 'n vrees dat dit enige negatiewe gevolge of verlies aan voordele vir my sal inhou.

Ek stem toe om deel te neem aan die studie \_\_\_\_\_

Ek stem nie toe om deel te neem aan die studie nie \_\_\_\_\_

Ek stem toe dat die onderhoud op band opgeneem kan word \_\_\_\_\_

Ek stem nie toe dat die onderhoud op band opgeneem kan word nie \_\_\_\_\_

Deelnemer naam.....

Deelnemer handtekening.....

Datum.....

Indien u enige vrae rakende die studie het of enige probleme wat u ervaar het rakende die studie en u regte as deelnemer wil rapporteer, kontak asseblief die studie supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen

Social Work Department, University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17

Bellville, 7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

Indien u enige verdere vrae rakende die studie het of enige probleme wat u ervaar het rakende die studie en u regte as deelnemer wil rapporteer, kontak asseblief die studie supervisor:

Dr Marcel Londt Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9593710 Email: <a href="mailto:mlondt@uwc.ac.za">mlondt@uwc.ac.za</a>	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 <a href="mailto:chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za">chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za</a>
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**VERWYSINGSNOMMER:**

Dankie.

---



## ANNEXURE E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Title of Research Project:** Exploring factors that gravitate youth towards gang involvement in the Paarl East Community

### *The microsystem:*

- In your opinion, what would be the characteristics of a typical youth that will join gangs in your community?
  - Probing areas:
    - Age,
    - Gender,
    - Specific attributes such as health, disabilities, etc.

What aspects regarding a youth's family could contribute to him/her joining a gang?

What aspects regarding a youth's neighbourhood could contribute to him/her joining a gang?

What aspects regarding a youth's friends could contribute to him/her joining a gang?

### *The mezzosystem:*

- How do you think the connections between families, youth and typical neighbourhood activities (e.g. sport, church, existing gangs) in the community plays a role in youth's decision to join gangs?
  - Probing areas:
    - Family interaction with gangs in the community,
    - Family interaction with neighbours,
    - Family interactions with community activities such as church and sport,
    - Friend's interaction with gangs in the community,
    - Friend's interactions with community activities such as church and sport.

*The exo system:*

- What economic factors in your community lead to youth joining gangs?
- What services or projects in your community can assist youth to not join gangs?
- What services or projects are needed in your community to assist youth to not join gangs?

*The macro system:*

- What attitudes and values by community members do you think support youth's decision to join gangs?
- What social problems in your community do you think contribute to youth's decision to join gangs?
- What municipal or government services are needed in your community to prevent youth from joining gangs?

*The chronosystem:*

- If you think of your community, what do you think happened in the past for gangs to become active in this community?

*The technosystem:*

- How does media inform youth's decision to join gangs?
- How could media be used to prevent youth from joining gangs?
- How could media be used to assist youth to leave gangs?

## ONDERHOUDGIDS

**Titel van navorsingsprojek:** Ondersoek na faktore wat die jeug in die rigting van bende-betrokkenheid in die Paarl-Oos-gemeenskap

*Die mikrosisteem:*

- Wat sou jy sê is die tipiese kenmerke van jeug wat by bendes in jou gemeenskap sal aansluit?
  - Verkenningvrae:
    - ouderdom,
    - geslag,
    - spesifieke eienskappe soos gesondheid, gestremdhede, ens.

Watter aspekte rakende jongmense se gesin kan daartoe bydra dat hy / sy by 'n bende aansluit?

Watter aspekte rakende jongmense se buurt kan daartoe bydra dat hy / sy by 'n bende aansluit?

Watter aspekte rakende jongmense se vriende kan daartoe bydra dat hy / sy by 'n bende aansluit?

*Die mezzo-sisteem:*

- Hoe dink jy speel die verband tussen gesinne, jeug en tipiese buurt aktiwiteite (bv. sport, kerk, bestaande bendes) in die gemeenskap 'n rol in die besluit van jongmense om by bendes aan te sluit?
  - Verkenningvrae:
    - Gesinsinteraksie met bendes in die gemeenskap,
    - Gesinsinteraksie met bure,
    - Gesinsinteraksie met gemeenskapsaktiwiteite soos kerk en sport,
    - Vriende se interaksie met bendes in die gemeenskap,
    - Vriende se interaksie met gemeenskapsaktiwiteite soos kerk en sport.

*Die eksosisteem:*

- Watter ekonomiese faktore in jou gemeenskap lei daartoe dat jeug by bendes aansluit?
- Watter dienste of projekte in jou gemeenskap kan jongmense help om nie by bendes aan te sluit nie?
- Watter dienste of projekte word in jou gemeenskap benodig om jongmense te help om nie by bendes aan te sluit nie?

*Die makrosisteem:*

- Watter houdings en waardes deur lede van die gemeenskap dink jy ondersteun jongmense om by bendes aan te sluit ?
- Watter sosiale probleme in jou gemeenskap dra by tot jongmense se besluit om by bendes aan te sluit?
- Watter munisipale of regeringsdienste is in jou gemeenskap nodig om te voorkom dat jongmense by bendes aansluit?


*Die chronosisteem:*

- Wat dink jy het in die verlede gebeur dat bendes in hierdie gemeenskap aktief sou wees?

*Die tegnosisteem:*

- Hoe beïnvloed die media jongmense se besluit om by bendes aan te sluit?
- Hoe kan die media gebruik word om te voorkom dat jongmense by bendes aansluit?
- Hoe kan media gebruik word om jongmense te help om bendes te verlaat?

## ANNEXURE F: EDITOR'S LETTER



**PROOF-READING**

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21 November 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

**Exploring Factors That Gravitate Youth Towards Gang Involvement  
in The Paarl East Community**

By

**Jodie Marcelle Adams**

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux