# THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION IN COMMUNITIES OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

Youth gangsterism is a foremost societal ill in the Western Cape of South Africa; this phenomenon has been identified as the most severe crime problem facing the province. Youth gangsterism continues to intensify, not only in prevalence, but also in brutality. South Africa has cultivated a rich body of research regarding unmet needs of youth across all levels of the ecological system as the principle underlying cause for youth gangsterism. Policy and legislative frameworks call for social crimes, such as youth gangsterism, to be addressed through preventative measures; for this reason, social workers have been identified as key role players in delivering prevention services. However, these policy and legislative directives lack guidance towards social work intervention for the prevention of youth gangsterism. Thus, the role of social workers in youth gang prevention is yet to be determined. This study aimed to gain an understanding of the perceptions of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape.

A qualitative research approach was therefore employed. This was underpinned by the ecological perspective, which was further supported through adoption of an exploratory research design as a framework for implementation of the said research approach. This research approach and design was selected as most suitable for this study, as it allowed for the collection of rich data, detailing the role of social workers in youth gang prevention. Purposive sampling was applied, and twenty social worker participants were selected from whom data was collected through the means of a semi-structured interview.

The findings of the study indicated that social workers are key role-players in youth gang prevention through the capacity to intervene through said roles, in an effort to address the core needs of youth vulnerable to gang involvement. However, the findings of the study further reveal that the role of social workers in youth gang prevention, specifically in case work, group work and community work, require clearer directives in terms of empowerment strategies at primary and early intervention levels with a focus on multidisciplinary approach. These findings indicate gaps in social work practise towards youth gang prevention. Based on these findings, relevant conclusions and recommendations are presented.

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## OPSOMMING

Jeug betrokkenheid by bendes is ‘n maatskaplike probleem wat volop voorkom in die samelewing van die Wes-Kaap in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie verskynsel is geïdentifiseer as die mees erinstigste misdaads probleem wat die provinsie in die gesig staar. Die betrokenheid van jeug by bendes bly toeneem en nie net slegs in getalle nie maar ook in geweldadigheid. In Suid-Afrika is daar reeds ‘n ryk versameling van navorsing aangaande die onvervulde behoeftes van jeug op alle vlakke van die ekologiese stelsel en dui dat dit primêre oorsaak van jeug berokkenheid by bendes is. Beleid en wetgewings raamwerke roep vir maatskaplike misdaad probleme, soos jeug betrokkenheid by bendes, om aangespraak te word deur voorkomende maatreëls in te stel. Vir hierdie rede is maatskaplike werkers geïdentifiseer as hoof rolspeelers in die lewering van voorkomende dienste. Hierdie belied en wetgewings voorskrifte gee egter min leiding vir maastkaplike werk interfensie wat kan help met die voorkoming van jeug betrokkenheid by bendes. Dit kan dus gestel word dat die rol van maatskaplike werkers in jeug bende voorkoming nog nie vasgestel is nie. Hierdie studie poog om ‘n begrip van die persepsie wat maatskaplike werkers aangaande hulle rol, in die voorkoming van jeug bende berokkenheid, vas te stel.

‘n Kwalitatiewe navoorsings benadering is toegepas en hierdie benadering word onderskryf deur die ekologiese perspektief en word verder ondersteun deur die gebruik van ‘n verkennende navorsing ontwerp wat as ’n raamwerk dien vir die implementeering van hierdie benadering. Hierdie benadering en ontwerp was gekies as die mees toepaslik metode vir hierdie studie aangesien dit toelaat vir die versameling van inligting ryke data wat die besonderhede rol van maatskaplike werkers in die voorkoming van jeug bende betrokkenheid uitwys. Doelgerigte steekproefneming is toegepas en twintig maatskaplike werk praktisyns was gekies, vanaf wie data verkry is deur ’n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud.

Die bevindinge van die studie het aangedui dat maatskaplike werkers sleutelrolspelers is in die voorkoming van jeug bende betrokkenheid. Dit word verig deur hulle kapasiteit om in te gryp in hulle betrokke rolle en wat dan dien as ’n poging om die hoof behoeftes van kwesbare jeug aan te spreek. Die bevindinge van die studie bewys egter steeds dat die rol van maatskaplike werkers in jeug bende voorkoming, spesifiek in gevalle werk asook groep werk en gemeenskapswerk, meer duidelike aanwysings benodig

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met betreken tot bemagtiging strategieë op die primêre en vroeë interfensie vlakke. Daar is ook n strek fokus op ‘n multidissiplinêre benadering. Hierdie bevindinge wys dat daar leemtes in maatskaplike praktyk is in terme van die voorkoming van jeug bende betrokkenheid. Gebaseer op hierdie bevindinge, word relevante gevolgtrekkings voorgelê.

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# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The global definition of social work commits the profession to the promotion of social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people; it is a profession grounded in principles of social justice and human rights (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014; IASSW, 2014). This definition of social work inherently binds the profession to youth gang prevention, as the profession seeks to pre-emptively forestall social ills that may jeopardise social justice or human rights. Thus, the prevention of youth gangsterism is fundamental to the profession of social work, as youth gangsterism undermines South Africa's constitutional democracy (Republic of South Africa, 1998; Basson, 2004; Standing, 2005), contradicts the notion of human dignity (Republic of South Africa, 1998; MacMaster, 2007; Department of Safety and Security, 2016), and threatens the safety and well-being of society (Standing, 2005; Department of Social Development, 2011; Department of Safety and Security, 2016; Wollberg, 2020).

Social work emphasises the need to address societal ills, such as youth gangsterism, through primary and secondary prevention services (Department of Social Development, 1997, 2011, 2016). Such prevention efforts are compelled to focus on the youth as a vulnerable group (Department of Social Development, 1997, 2005, 2011, 2013; Department of Safety and Security, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). This guidance afforded by South African policy and legislation extends to the prevention of youth gangsterism, as social workers have been identified as key role players in this field (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017).

However, while South African policy and legislation guides social workers towards prevention efforts focusing on the youth, there remains a glaring lack of reference targeting youth gangsterism specifically. Consequently, social work remains largely devoid of direct and targeted youth gang prevention efforts. This gap in social work

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policy and practise indicates a gap in the profession's knowledge towards the role of social workers within the field of youth gang prevention. As youth gangsterism continues to intensify and transform within the Western Cape (Department of Safety & Security, 2017; 2018), it is vital that this knowledge gap be filled.

## 1.2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Youth gangs are a global phenomenon, occurring in almost every society at some point in history (Roloff, 2014; ÖksÜz, 2017; Kinnes & Peturs, 2018; Wollberg, 2020). Within the South African context, youth gangsterism has been identified as the most severe crime problem facing the country (Kinnes, 1995; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ramaphosa, 2019; Wollberg, 2020). The Western Cape, in particular, was responsible for 83% of South Africa's gang-related murders between 2017 and 2018 (Department of Safety and Security, 2017; 2018). The severity of the Western Cape's youth gangsterism crisis can be noted in a statement made by community safety MEC, Albert Fritz:

> War is commonly defined by the UN and other such institutions as an act of conflict that has claimed more than 1000 lives. In the Western Cape, 1 875 people were murdered in the past 6 months alone. This means that many of our most vulnerable residents in the province are living in a war zone (Fritz, 2019).

In the first six months of 2019, 2 302 people were murdered in the Western Cape (eNCA, 2019; Social Justice Foundation, 2019). Majority of these murders have been confirmed as gang-related (eNCA, 2019; Social Justice Foundation, 2019). Premier Alan Winde estimated that 60 gang-related murders occur weekly in the province; however, residents of gang-infested areas insist this average is too low to reflect the reality of the youth gang crisis (Davis, 2019; Githahu, 2019). As youth gang violence escalates to unprecedented levels, the Western Cape Community Policing Forum has called for a state of emergency to be declared in gang hotspots, for further military and police forces to be deployed to the most affected areas, for the establishment of specialised courts for gang-related crime, and for bail to be denied to those arrested for gang-related offences (Davis, 2019).

South Africa boasts a large body of research encompassing youth gangsterism, which has contributed to an in-depth understanding of the root causes and optimal responses

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to the phenomenon. Extensive literature indicates unmet needs across the micro, meso and macro levels of the ecosystem as the fundamental cause of youth gangsterism (Fortune, 1998; Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Wollberg, 2020). Against this backdrop, it is widely accepted that youth gangsterism should be addressed through preventative efforts that serve to meet micro, meso and macro level needs through legitimate means (Department of Social Development, 1997, 2011, 2016; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ward, 2007; National Planning Commission, 2011; Pinnock, 2015; Department of Safety and Security, 2016; Department of Health, 2017; Mccain, 2017; Parker, 2018; Ramaphosa, 2019; Wollberg, 2020). For example, South Africa's history of apartheid and lack of reform under democracy, has largely stripped the country's non-white populations from any structural or supportive means to meet their political, economic, or social needs (Standing, 2003; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Novell, 2014; Michaeli, 2016). Consequently, these racially marginalised groups embraced gangsterism as the only seeming substitute to meet political, economic and social needs within a societal structure that hindered legitimate efforts to do so (Gakunzi, 1997; Nair, 1999; Van Way & Theron, 2005; MacMaster, 2007; Van Lennep, 2019).

Despite the abovementioned knowledge, legislative and practical responses to the youth gangsterism crisis have been suppressive, rather than preventative, in nature (Cooper & Ward, 2012; Pinnock, 2015; 2017; Department of Community Safety, 2017; Wollberg, 2020). These suppression efforts can be noted in the development of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2017), the reinstitution of the South African Police Service's anti-gang unit (Pitt, 2018), and the deployment of South Africa's military forces into gang-infested areas of the Western Cape (Gerber, 2019). While these interventions have sought to curb youth gangsterism in the Western Cape, they have had the adverse effect of provoking youth gangs into greater cohesion and further violence; thus, youth gangsterism is continuing to intensify and transform (Standing, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012; Department of Safety and Security, 2017; 2018; May, 2018; Wollberg, 2020).

The futility of current youth gang interventions can be attributed to a misalignment with literature, as well as vague guiding policy and legislation. Efforts to eradicate youth gangsterism within the Western Cape have failed to align with the widely accepted preventative approach and, instead, have favoured a suppressive approach due to

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groundings in outdated criminological research (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Kinnes, 2017; Wollberg, 2020). This grounding in outdated criminological research has resulted in youth gang interventions' failure to encompass the widely researched social aspects of the phenomenon (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012). Additionally, South Africa's legislative and practical efforts to target youth gangsterism remain generalised under the blanket terms of "social crime prevention" and "organised crime prevention" (Department of Justice, 1998; Department of Social Development, 2005; 2011; 2016), thus failing to provide specific services towards a highly specific phenomenon. Consequently, deep legislative and practical gaps can be noted in the Western Cape's youth gang prevention efforts.

These legislative and practical gaps have reached social work service provision. Literature, legislation and policy identify social workers as priority role players in youth gang prevention (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017), yet the profession remains largely devoid of concrete and direct services targeting the phenomenon. This gap in social work service delivery indicates a misalignment with the Western Cape's prioritisation of youth gangsterism. Despite being identified as the optimal profession to render youth gang interventions, social work is the profession most intrinsically involved in the collective life that youth gangs form part of (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017).

The prevention of crime – and, thus, the prevention of youth gangsterism – has been declared an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental responsibility (Republic of South Africa, 2008; Department of Social Development, 2011, 2016). Within this collective responsibility, social workers have been identified as key role players (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). Increasing research, calling for the prevention of youth gangsterism, indicates that a fundamental cause of the phenomenon is the failure to satisfy a range of social needs, such as the need for physical safety or economic security, through legitimate means (Fortune, 1998; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Salo, 2005; Swingler, 2014). Social work is intricately associated with the fulfilment of social needs through areas of psychosocial support, working with the family, societal reintegration, child protection, and contributing to social capital (Newham, 2014; Ornellas, 2014). However, attributable to social work being saturated with child protection work, the

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profession is structurally barred from adequately addressing the social aspects and underlying causes of youth gangsterism (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012; Department of Cooperative Governance, 2016; Kinnes, 2017).

While social workers engage in generalised crime interventions through involvement in social crime prevention organisations in the Western Cape, such organisations focus primarily on tertiary interventions (Department of Social Development, 2016). Tertiary intervention is defined as efforts aiming to prevent recidivism of criminal activities by offenders (Department of Social Development, 2016). Thus, this involvement of social work can be noted as (a) general crime prevention that fails to specifically target youth gangsterism and (b) suppressive, rather than preventative, in nature. Against this backdrop, youth gang prevention is confirmed as a gap in social work service delivery as interventions are lacking in specific focus and fail to adequately focus on prevention (Department of Cooperative Governance, 2016).

This gap in social work service delivery is reflected in national budgetary allocations. While a range of policies and legislation acknowledge the need for crime prevention to be holistic through interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration, the national budget fails to reflect this principle (Republic of South Africa, 2008; Department of Social Development, 2011, 2016). The Department of Police's budget continues to balloon, while investments in social work involvement appear miniscule in comparison (Newham, 2014). This reflects a national misalignment with literature calling for an increase in social service involvement in crime prevention. As a result, social crime prevention (4%) and youth development (3%) receive the lowest allocations of funds (Department of Social Development, 2016). Thus, social work is financially barred from obtaining the manpower and physical resources needed to engage in adequate youth gang prevention efforts.

Social work's absence in direct youth gang prevention efforts is reflective of the gap in South African policy and legislation targeting the youth gangsterism crisis. While an abundance of policy and legislation indicates the profession's prioritisation of prevention (Department of Social Development, 1997, 2011, 2016; National Planning Commission, 2011; Department of Safety and Security, 2016; Department of Health, 2017), guidance as to how this relates to the field of youth gangsterism is lacking. In

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other words, social work lacks guidance towards the development of successful youth gang prevention efforts.

This can be noted in how the Integrated Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) makes vague and limited reference to youth gangsterism, merely stating gangs are a significant source of violence within schools. Whereas the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) has been critiqued for being too broad and misleading to forge an entry way for intervention, thus reducing it to purely a legal construct (Pinnock, 2015; Geldenhuys, 2016). The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2017) has also been critiqued as being suppressive in nature, unimplementable and vague (Pinnock, 2017). The inexplicit and unfocused manner in which youth gang prevention is portrayed in South African policy and legislation fails to adequately identify the role of the social worker or guide the profession's involvement in this field.

The lack of social work services targeting youth gangsterism, despite this being a priority area of concern within the context of the Western Cape, indicates a literary and legislative gap in the profession's knowledge towards the role of social workers within the realm of youth gang prevention. Despite delivering services within areas of high youth gang activity, social workers may be inadequately equipped to focus their interventions towards specifically addressing youth gangsterism while their role remains unspecified within the field of this phenomenon. While this professional gap in knowledge and practise is a universal concern within social work, the need for this gap to be filled is particularly relevant to the Western Cape as it has been identified as the gang capital of the world (Zille, 2017).

Although youth gangsterism has been a widely researched phenomenon, the role of the social worker within this realm has been neglected due to a criminological approach being favoured over that of the social sciences (Erasmus, Magidi & Schenk, 2016). It is, therefore, vital that this short-coming in social work practise is recognised and that scientific inquiry into the role of social workers within youth gang prevention be undertaken in order to ensure prioritisation of this phenomenon within the indigenous context that it is occurring (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried & Larsen, 2018).

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## 1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Youth gangsterism was identified as the most severe crime problem in the Western Cape in 1995 (Kinnes, 1995; Van Way & Theron, 2005). This statement remains accurate in the current 21st century (Ramaphosa, 2019). As the contemporary world advances at unprecedented rates (Jordan, 2003; Ramaphosa, 2019), youth gangs have mirrored this ambition through intensifying in brutality (Standing, 2005; Kinnes, 2017). In contrast to these progressive transformations, efforts to eradicated gangsterism have remained inadequate and significantly limited in scope. This is consequent of two core factors:

- Interventions have focused primarily on suppression through groundings in outdated criminological research (Van Way & Therson, 2005; Kinnes, 2017).
- Interventions lack grounding in research or theory encompassing the social aspects of gangsterism, such as social exclusion, community disintegration and family dysfunction (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012).

It is thus evident that interventions need to move towards the social work service sector (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012). The Western Cape government demarcates the social service sector to include the Department of Social Development and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that serve to uplift communities, deal with social challenges, and assist the public to become self-sufficient (Western Cape Government, 2019). Social work is inseparable from youth gang prevention as, not only do social workers espouse partial responsibility towards societal wellbeing (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014), but also for the rehabilitation of youth gang members once they are inevitably incarcerated (Rawoot, 2012). Thus, social work has been identified as the optimal social service provider in which to carry out youth gang prevention, as it is the profession most intrinsically involved in the collective life of society that youth gangs form part of (Jordan, 2003).

While youth gang prevention has been investigated internationally from a social work perspective (Totten, 2013; Garcia, 2014; Sanders & Moore, 2015; Maschi & Leibowitz, 2017), insufficient research regarding the role of social workers in youth gang prevention has been carried out within the indigenous context of South Africa or the Western Cape. Thus, there remains a lack of understanding of the role of the social

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worker within the field of youth gang prevention within a local context, resulting in the profession being devoid of such services. It is thus vital that an understanding of the role of the social worker be established in relation to youth gang prevention in the Western Cape in order to fill this research gap.

The lack of studies conducted from a social work perspective has resulted in the favouring of criminological interventions, thus resulting in the criminal justice system being youth gang members' first contact with appropriate support, by which stage, gang members are too entrenched in gangsterism for intervention to be successful (Novell, 2014; Swingler, 2014). Moreover, without further research into the role of social workers within youth gang prevention, the profession will remain without adequate guidance towards the prevention of this phenomenon, thereby partially contributing to the Western Cape remaining the "gang capital" of South Africa (Zille, 2017), and Cape Town the "murder capital" of the world (Pinnock, 2015).

## 1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape?

## 1.5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape. This aim was supported by the following objectives:

- To describe and conceptualise the nature and extent of youth gangsterism in the Western Cape.
- To discuss policy and legislation relevant to the role of the social worker within the realm of youth gang prevention.
- To empirically investigate the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape.
- To present conclusions and recommendations regarding the views of social workers of their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape.

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## 1.6. THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The ecological perspective, the conflict theory, and the empowerment approach have been utilised as theoretical points of departure in gaining comprehensive insight into the roles of social workers in the prevention of youth gangsterism.

### 1.6.1. The ecological perspective

The study has been conducted from an ecological perspective, which is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological systems theory. This perspective declares human behaviour as a reaction to the interrelated micro, meso and macro systems of an individual's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). These concepts and ideas were first introduced to social work by Germain and Gitterman (1976; 1980). As a result, the profession continues to make use of the contemporary ecological perspective as a means of understanding how behaviour is intricately related to the environment (Johnson & Yanca, 2010). Phenomena, such as youth gangsterism, are symptomatic of an incongruent relationship between an individual and their environment (Dahrendorf, 1958; Johnson & Yanca, 2010).

The research study has, therefore, drawn on this perspective for the following reasons:

- It supports a common theme in understanding youth gangsterism, which indicates that the phenomenon is a response to needs (Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014).
- It is praised for being conceptually scientific while still centralising the human experience (Germain, Gitterman & Knight, 2013).
- It encourages research based on improving the congruency between human needs and available environmental resources (Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Germain, Gitterman & Knight, 2013).

The ecological perspective argues that maladaptive behaviour, such as is demonstrated through youth gang practises, is the result of incongruent ecological relationships that cannot sustain the needs of the person and/or the environment (Germain & Gitterman, 1976; 1980). The conflict theory further develops this premise by identifying conflict and deviance, such as youth gangsterism, as specific

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maladaptive behavioural manifestations of these incongruences (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958).

### 1.6.2. The conflict theory

The conflict theory expands on the specificities of maladaptive behaviour by identifying conflict and deviance as specific consequences of these incongruences between human needs and environmental resources (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958).

This theory stems from the works of Marx (1859), who understood conflict in terms of unequal power distributions within economics, racial and cultural groups, and collective society. Social work has adopted and contributed to this theory through infusing perspectives of the interrelationship between individuals and their micro, meso and macro systems (Meyer, 2013). Alienation, apathy and hostility from dominant groups in society can result in conflict and deviance in individuals who form part of populations considered to be non-dominant within the social, political and economic geography of a society (Hutchison, 2013). Therefore, the conflict theory has been employed in this research study as a foundation to understanding the roles of social workers in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape, as youth gangsterism is partially consequent of non-dominant populations being alienated from collective society (Van Lennep, 2019). For example, the apartheid regime established South Africa's non-white populations as structurally non-dominant through alienating their residential rights to demarcated ghettos (Standing, 2003; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Farred, 2009; Novell, 2014; Roloff, 2014; Pinnock, 2015).

The principles of the conflict theory and the ecological perspective have contributed to the development of the empowerment model (Gutierrez, 1990; DuBois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; 2016). Thus, this model has been employed in support of the ecological perspective and the conflict theory.

### 1.6.3. The empowerment approach

The empowerment approach assumes that change in one level of the ecosystem will reverberate through the rest (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; 2016), potentially leading to conflict as possession of power shifts between groups (Pritzker, Richards-Schuster & Rodriguez-Newhall, 2018). This is relevant to understanding how apartheid resulted

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in the intensification of gangsterism in South Africa due to power being distributed along racial lines, and how shifts in power in contemporary democracy have perpetuated the phenomenon (MacMaster, 2007; Roloff, 2014; Southall, 2019). Thus, the empowerment approach provided a framework to understanding the underlying causes of youth gangsterism in an indigenous context.

Further motivation for application of the empowerment approach, is its dedication to empowerment through mobilisation of resources and strengths within a specific context (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; 2016), which is a vital principle when intervening in South Africa's context of limited accessible resources. Therefore, the empowerment approach was utilised in support of the predetermined ecological perspective and conflict theory. Additionally, it was employed as a means of providing recommendations towards potentially improving social work services with the aim of preventing youth gangsterism, and thus, promoting social justice (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; Dubois & Miley, 2016).

## 1.7. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Key concepts of the study are defined below in order to ensure their understanding within the context of the study.

### 1.7.1. Gangs

According to South Africa's Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998:6), a gang is defined as:

> Any formal or informal ongoing organisation, association, or group of three or more persons, which has as one of its activities the commission of one or more criminal offenses, which has an identifiable name or identifying symbol and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity.

### 1.7.2. Prevention

In keeping with the focus of the study, the Department of Social Development's definition for prevention within crime-based services has been used. This definition conceptualises prevention as interventions addressing all risk factors for crime or deviance in the population (Department of Social Development, 2016).

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### 1.7.3. Role

One's role is the position or function that someone possesses in a relationship, organisation or larger society (Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language, 1995).

### 1.7.4. Social worker

The Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 defines a social worker as an individual who has registered with the South African Council of Social Service Professions (SACSSP).

### 1.7.5. Youth

The United Nations (1985) defines youth as young individuals ranging from 15 – 24 years of age, who are within the transition period between childhood dependency and adulthood independency. However, the United Nations (1985) also notes that this definition cannot be considered absolute as the criteria for youth is fluid. For instance, within a more indigenous context, the African Youth Charter (2006) defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years. For the purposes of the study, youth is considered as individuals ranging from the ages of 12 – 25, as youth gang membership can begin as young as 12 in South Africa (Cooper & Ward, 2012).

## 1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology designated to the research study is discussed in the following sections: regarding the research approach, design, method, and nature of data analysis.

### 1.8.1. Research Approach

The study has employed a qualitative research approach, which entailed the collection of data from the perspectives of human respondents in order to understand phenomena in its natural context (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). The qualitative approach has allowed for the researcher to study the phenomena of youth gangsterism and the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention within its natural, indigenous context of the Western Cape.

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Furthermore, the qualitative approach promotes the development of diverse frames of reference to perceive and understand the social reality and the phenomenon of gangsterism occurring within it (Alasuutari, 2010). Interpretivist ontological dimensions assert that this social reality should be viewed in alignment with the social structures and individuals that create the social reality (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Smith, 2014). Thus, these dimensions have been incorporated into the research study through the use of diverse literature and legislation encompassing youth gangsterism, as well as through investigating the roles of social workers in youth gang prevention from the perspective of human respondents that construct their own social reality. In this manner, the use of interpretivist ontological dimensions was utilised in support of the qualitative approach.

The qualitative approach was selected due to its suitability when investigating circumstances in which limited prior studies have been conducted, such as the roles of social workers in the field of youth gang prevention (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Limited research has been conducted on social work youth gang prevention services or the roles of social workers in this field (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Erasmus, Magidi & Schenk, 2016). Thus, the qualitative approach was deemed optimal in investigating this unfamiliar domain.

Moreover, the qualitative approach was selected due to its element of flexibility (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013) – a characteristic to be desired when investigations involve the ever-evolving social sphere (Hepworth, *et al.,* 2018). This flexibility is further desired as it allows for a movement between deduction and induction within the research study. Deduction has allowed for the role of social workers in youth gang prevention to be understood from a framework of existing principles and laws that govern youth gang prevention services in the Western Cape (Gould, 2017). Induction has allowed for patterns and themes to be established from the empirical data collected and has increased the findings' potential to be applied in practise (Creswell, 2007; Gould, 2017). In this manner, the use of the qualitative approach has contributed to the depth and holism of the study.

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## 1.8.2. Research Design

The research has taken on an exploratory design. This design is typically utilised within qualitative research when little prior knowledge is possessed on the phenomenon (de Vos & Fouche, 2011; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). This element aligns with the prior mentioned motivation for the study highlighting a lack of research in social work youth gang prevention (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Erasmus, Magidi & Schenk, 2016). Additionally, this design is concerned with gaining insight into a phenomenon in order to answer the "what" questions (Mouton, 2001). This element has been conducive to sections of the research study that aimed to identify what social workers' roles and responsibilities are in terms of youth gang prevention.

Moreover, while the empirical aspect of the research study was firmly founded in an exploratory design, it is beneficial to acknowledge the elements of a descriptive research design that manifest in the literature study. Descriptive research aims to describe a phenomenon through answering the "how" and "why" questions (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). This characteristic presents in the literature study's efforts to understand the economic, social and political meanings underlying gangsterism, as well as those that outline the roles and responsibilities of social workers within the field of youth gang prevention.

Finally, the study has been conducted predominantly along a primary and basic research design. A primary research design was most conductive as the study is underpinned by a specific research question, of which the primary design seeks to answer (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Basic research strives to contribute to further understanding of a particular phenomenon in order to potentially influence action, while applied research seeks to resolve a specific problem (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Therefore, basic research was selected as the predominant emphasis due to the study's commitment to understanding social work's involvement and responsibility towards youth gang prevention.

## 1.8.3. Research Method

This section will present the determined execution of the literature study, population and sampling, method of data collection, and the pilot study.

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#### 1.8.3.1. Literature study

The literature study serves to construct a logical framework for the research through embedding the study in a realm of inquiry and specific context (Delport, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Thus, the literature study has been utilised as a means of inquiring about social work services related to the prevention of gangsterism within the context of the Western Cape. Reference is made to diverse forms of sources, including theoretical and empirical literature, as well as policy and legislation (Flick, 2009). These references are made to build a set of conceptualising and guiding principles (Babbie & Mouton, 2007), in order to understand the roles of social workers in the field of youth gang prevention. Additionally, the use of this specific point of inquiry and context was utilised as a means of informing deduction within the literature study and informing induction during data analysis.

#### 1.8.3.2. Population and sampling

Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) define the population as the complete group of individuals that the research study will target. Strydom (2011) expands on this definition through describing the population as the entirety of persons or units that are relevant to the research focus. The sample is the restricted set of individuals, drawn from the population, which the research study will empirically investigate (Strydom, 2011; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Although qualitative research is less concerned with representation of the population and more concerned with diversity, it remains vital that the population be well-defined in order to ensure selection of the sample is accurate and adequate to the study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Accurate representation by the sample is verified once data saturation has been reached, which occurs when no new information would be contributed by continuing with data collection (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

The sample size was restricted to 20 participants. This smaller sample, in relation to the extensive population, is recommended by Strydom (2011) in order to contribute to data significance and avoid oversensitivity towards the phenomenon. However, it should be noted that the sample size may be increased slightly in order to contribute towards trustworthiness of the empirical study by ensuring that data saturation has been reached (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Similarly, the proposed sample

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size may be reduced during the empirical investigation once data saturation has been achieved and the topic is exhausted (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

Purposive sampling was utilised. This method involved participants being selected according to the researcher's discretion and judgement of which participants best represented the target population (DeJong, Monette & Sullivan, 2005; Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). As the population was social workers in the Western Cape, the sample was purposively made up of social workers practising in gang-ridden areas of the Western Cape.

The researcher identified five areas that are considered gang hotspots in the Western Cape according to the South African Police Services (SAPS) (Department of Safety and Security, 2001). These areas were Mitchells Plain, Hanover Park, Manenberg, Bishop Lavis and Elsies River (Department of Safety and Security, 2001). Thus, the researcher selected four participants that are employed at social work organisations in each of these five areas, making up the determined total of 20 participants. The directors of social work child welfare organisations in the identified areas were contacted via email. They were informed of the focus and method of the study in order to request permission via a gatekeepers' invitation letter (Appendix A) to conduct the study at the organisation. Thereafter, the directors of the organisations were asked to extend a request for participation to their social work employees (Appendix B), who were provided with the researcher's telephone number and email address. The interested social workers made email or telephonic contact with the researcher in order to communicate willingness to form part of the sample.

Thereafter, the telephonic interviews were scheduled on a date and time of the participants' convenience. The social workers who were interested in voluntarily participating in the empirical study, were emailed an informed consent document prior to the interview in order for knowing consent to be established. Additionally, the researcher ensured to thoroughly present and discuss said informed consent document with each of the participants during the introductory phase of each interview.

The participants were checked against a sample criterion in order to ensure relevancy to the study and to avoid selection bias. The criteria for inclusion within the research sample was that the participants were required to be:

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- Registered social workers in the Western Cape who have been rendering services in gang-ridden communities for one year or more.
- Proficient in English.

1.8.3.3. Method of data collection (instrument)

A semi-structured interview schedule was utilised as the data collection instrument. This instrument allowed for specific and detailed information to be probed, while still possessing the flexibility that permitted participants to expand on the target phenomenon and relay personal experience as they saw fit (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Additionally, this method of data collection allowed for diverse and contending perspectives to be introduced and intensify the depth of the empirical study (Greeff, 2011). In order to overcome the risk of interview-related bias associated with semi-structured interviews (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013), a set of predetermined questions supporting the research focus and based on Greeff's (2011) interviewing directions were used to guide the interview schedule (Appendix C). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the interview schedule was carried out through telephonic interviews in order to preserve the safety of both the researcher, and the participants. Each of the interviews took place over an average timespan of one hour. In order to ensure immersion in the telephonic interview and avoid competing distractions (Greeff, 2011), data was captured solely through audio-recording of the interviews which were used to electronically transcribe the data through denaturalisation.

1.8.3.4. Pilot study

It is critical to eliminate bias in the data collection instrument and bridge gaps in the interview schedule when making use of a smaller sample (Delport & Fouche, 2011; Strydom, 2011). The elimination of bias is proven by ensuring viability and reliability of the instrument, which can be achieved by altering the data collection instrument in response to a pilot study (Delport & Fouche, 2011; Strydom, 2011). The pilot study followed the same method as the core empirical study, but purposively selected only two respondents that meet the sample criteria previously discussed (Delport & Strydom, 2011). The pilot study was used to ensure accuracy and reliability of the sample criteria in terms of relevance to the research goals and objectives, as well as to eliminate bias from the data collection instrument (Delport & Strydom, 2011). The

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interview scheduled was altered following the pilot study in order to include further examination into the role of empowerment in youth gang prevention.

## 1.8.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis serves to organise and structure the collected data in order to identify underlying meanings and patterns (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink. 2011; Babbie, 2014). The structuring, organisation and interpretation of the data is considered valuable when patterns are identified and linked, and diverse potential explanations are provided for these patterns (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Therefore, the collected data was analysed through manual and denaturalised transcriptions in order to ensure familiarity with the data. Additionally, analysis occurred through identifying and coding trends within the data that were grouped according to themes and categories. Finally, literature control was carried out in relation to identified themes, sub-themes and categories in order to discover potential interpretations of the data. This method of data analysis is best highlighted through Tech's eights steps (Creswell, 2014).

### 1.8.4.1 Tech's eight steps to qualitative data analysis

1) The researcher carefully reviewed all data transcriptions in their entirety in order to gain a holistic sense of the data. This allowed for the research to record initial ideas captured by the data.
2) Again, the researcher individually reviewed each transcription to the specific end of identifying and recording the initial underlying meanings of the data.
3) Based on knowledge gained through the above two steps, the researcher made an independent list of identified themes; similar themes were clustered together.
4) This list of themes was abbreviated as codes. These codes were applied in writing to the various sections of the data transcripts to which they are relevant. As this was done, the researcher continued to consider further themes or codes that emerged.
5) Next, the optimal description for the themes was identified within the data transcriptions, which formed the data categories. The researcher recorded these categories to the transcriptions and drew lines to demonstrate relationships between the categories.

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6) A final decision was made on the abbreviation codes for each category, which were alphabetised.
7) The data was then assembled according to the final coded categories, allowing for thorough analysis to take place.
8) Finally, the data was continuously re-categorised and recoded as necessary (Creswell, 2014).

1.8.4.2. Method of data verification

Reliability and representativeness, which are conventional criteria for data verification (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011), have been incorporated into the research methodology presented above. However, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are criteria more relevant to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1999).

Credibility is argued as the most vital criterion. It is demonstrated through the target phenomenon being precisely identified and described within the data collection process (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). This has been achieved through triangulation of interview techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1999) that include open ended and closed questions, probing, summarising, clarifying, focusing and paraphrasing (Ornellas, 2014). Credibility was further ensured and demonstrated through the use of deduction and induction between established theory and the empirical data (Lincoln & Guba, 1999).

Transferability is the ability for research findings to remain accurate across diverse contextual paradigms. Qualitative research has been critiqued for lacking this quality (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). This, however, can be overcome through declaring the theoretical parameters under which transference can be conducted, thereby contributing to data verification (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Thus, transferability was achieved within the research study through employing the perspective, theory and model that have been determined under subheadings 1.6 and 1.7 of this chapter. Infusion of these theoretical frameworks allowed for the data to be transferable across various contexts when conducted in accordance with similar perspectives, theories and models (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011), thereby contributing to data verification.

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Dependability is demonstrated through conducting and recording the study in a manner that is systematic, audited and professionally documented (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). In order to meet this criterion of data verification, the research findings have been presented and discussed in a logical and organised sequence, and the study in its entirety has been professionally edited.

Finally, data verification can be achieved through conformability, which is achieved through demonstrating that the research findings are absolutely representative of the participants' narratives and not that of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). This criterion was met through distinctly linking all interpretations of the collected data to established premises and theory discussed in the literature study.

## 1.9. REFLEXIVITY

The research tends to be influenced by the researcher's personal background and current context. It was vital that the researcher employed reflexivity in preparing for, and throughout, the research process as a means of lowering the risk of personal bias, opinions and emotions from influencing or invading the integrity of the study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). This is particularly important in qualitative studies, whereby the researcher is the primary tool in empirical data collection (Greeff, 2011). Thus, reflexivity was applied towards personal experience and personal prejudice.

Firstly, the researcher recognised a similar academic background to that of the participants, as she had obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. However, the researcher had limited working knowledge of delivering services as a registered practitioner and, therefore, was able to avoid personal opinion or bias associated with working experiences of the roles and responsibilities of social workers in delivering youth-based prevention services.

Additionally, the researcher acknowledged a notable interest in the research focus and had developed personal, academic opinions in this regard. However, the researcher felt assured that these opinions would not permeate the study due to her uncompromised dedication to thorough scientific research values, as well as her aforementioned lack of personal experience in the field.

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Finally, the researcher understood that gangsterism is a phenomenon predominantly present within black and coloured communities of the Western Cape (Roloff, 2014). As a young white female, she recognised an absolute absence of any personal experience regarding the historical and perpetuating marginalisation these populations have been subjected to. The researcher ensured that the research addressed issues related to race within a balance of science and cultural sensitivity, in order to remain rigorously scientific while respecting issues of race-related social justice. This was achieved through the researcher asking herself six questions geared towards reflexivity, as posed by Ruokonen-Engler and Siouti (2016), which are explored through a reflexivity report (Appendix D).

## 1.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In keeping with Code of Ethics and Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2017), the research study was conducted according to the following ethical considerations:

- The study took a stance of beneficence, which obligated that the research minimised potential harm to participants (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). The sample was comprised of respondents considered to be low-risk in terms of the research focus. Additionally, the study exclusively focused on work-related topics that aligned with the respondents' views on the role of social workers within the field of youth gang prevention in order to further minimise emotional risk.
- Participants were included in the study on an informed, confidential and voluntary basis. The participants were made aware of their rights within the research study, all of which was included in the informed consent forms that the participants signed (Appendix E).
- Confidentiality of data collected was of the utmost priority through non-disclosure of participant and organisational identities.
- The empirical study proceeded only once ethical clearance had been obtained from the Department of Social Work Ethical Screening Committee (DESC) and Research Ethical Clearance (REC). The researcher was notified of ethical clearance through a notice of approval (REC-2020-14943) that is demonstrated as Appendix F.

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## 1.11. INTENDED POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE STUDY

Social workers are at the forefront of preventative care with regards to societal ills, such as gangsterism, in South Africa. However, the profession lacks support from policy, legislation, state and interdisciplinary departments with regards to the prevention of gangsterism in the Western Cape. This may be due to a lack of theoretical and research underpinnings that allow for an understanding of social work within the field of gangsterism prevention. Therefore, the intended impact of the study was to identify the roles of social workers in the field of youth gang prevention in the Western Cape, in order to improve these prevention services on a micro, meso and macro level.

## 1.12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had the potential to be weakened if limitations are not identified, clearly disclosed and appropriately managed (Delport & Fouche, 2011). Therefore, four study limitations were identified that will be presented and discussed below.

Firstly, the study was solely qualitative, thereby introducing the limitation of a one-dimensional research approach. However, this limitation was countered by the focus of the study specifically calling for a qualitative approach, which allowed for a rich and in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon that is challenging to portray through quantitative research (Delport & Fouche, 2011).

Secondly, qualitative research introduces the limitation of a small sample that is accompanied by generalisability issues (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). However, the use of purposive sampling contributed to overcoming this limitation, as it allowed for a selection of participants that remained within the sample criterion but constituted broad and diverse contextual paradigms.

Thirdly, established prior research is lacking in relation to the specific scope of the study (Erasmus, Magidi & Schenk, 2016). Therefore, broad aspects related to social work youth gang prevention services were utilised in order to build a firm understanding of the subject matter.

Finally, the sample presents an absence of gang-involved individuals. While the study focused on social workers, Green and Wijnberg (2014) describe the necessity of

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including the dialogue of gang members when attempting to expand a knowledge base of which they are related. Thus, the exclusion of these individuals within the empirical study could be considered a limitation. However, this limitation was overcome by means of a thorough literature study related to youth gangsterism.

## 1.13. PRESENTATION

This research report is made up of several chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction, which includes the rationale, problem statement, research question, aims, and research methodology employed throughout the study.

Chapter two and three present a literature review focusing on the risk factors associated with youth gangsterism in the Western Cape, as well as relevant policy and legislation guiding intervention of these risk factors from an ecological perspective.

Chapter four focuses on the empirical study conducted. Data that was collected through the semi-structured interviews has been presented and analysed.

Chapter five presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study, in accordance with data findings and analysis.

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# CHAPTER TWO

# PREVALENCE, NATURE AND EXTENT OF YOUTH GANGSTERISM

## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Youth gangsterism, and the prevention thereof, has been identified as a foremost priority in the Western Cape (Kinnes, 1995; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ramaphosa, 2019; Wollberg, 2020). This chapter seeks to conceptualise the nature and extent on the youth gang crisis through the lens of the ecological perspective. This perspective supports the understanding of youth gangsterism as a maladaptive behaviour underpinned by incongruent ecological relationships that fail to sustain the needs of the person and/or the environment (Germain & Gitterman, 1976, 1980).

The ecological perspective is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological systems theory, which was first introduced to social work through Germain and Gitterman's (1976, 1980) life model. These theoretical frameworks declare human behaviour, such as youth gangsterism, a reaction to the micro, meso and macro systems of an individual's environment (Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). Youth possess a unique set of needs within each level of the ecosystem. When these needs are not fulfilled, they become risk factors for involvement in dysfunctional phenomena or behaviour, which may include youth gangsterism (Fortune, 1998; Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). These risk factors have been explored throughout this chapter in the pursuit of constructing a holistic understanding of the nature and extent of youth gangsterism in the Western Cape. In support of said understanding, the empowerment approach and conflict theories have been drawn on in direct relation to each ecological level.

## 2.2. MICRO-LEVEL RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH GANGSTERISM

The individual forms the core component of their microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Germain & Gitterman, 1976; 1980). Consequent of this centrality, the unique characteristics of the individual's microsystem directly influence the individual's

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behaviour, functioning, well-being and emotions (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Germain & Gitterman, 1976; 1980). Age, gender, genetics, and racial categorisation therefore serve as the unique characteristics that form the foundation of the individual's being and, dependant on the nature and development of these traits, will impact their vulnerability towards youth gang involvement.

### 2.2.1. Age as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

Gangs are predominantly represented by the youth on a global scale (Hoover, 1999; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016; Wollberg, 2020). In the early 1900's, when gangsterism came to light in South Africa, gang members averaged between 15 and 25 years of age (Hoover, 1999; Michaeli, 2016). However, in contemporary South Africa, the youth are entering gangs at increasingly younger ages (Hoover, 1999; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Michaeli, 2016). In 2001, the South African Police Service (SAPS) identified that the ages of gang members averaged between 11 and 16 years, and that the ages of gang leaders averaged around 50 years (South African Police Service, 2011). However, personal accounts of gang members indicate gang affiliation can begin as young as 9 years (Salo, 2005; Swingler, 2014; Department of Social Development, 2014). In addition to gang membership being disproportionately skewed towards the youth, youth gangsterism appears to be predominantly skewed towards males (Jensen, 2008; Petrus, 2013; Pinnock, 2015; Wegner, Behardien, Loubser, Ryklief & Smith, 2016).

### 2.2.2. Gender as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

Youth gangsterism is a predominantly male phenomenon (Jensen, 2008; Petrus, 2013; Pinnock, 2015; Wegner, Behardien, Loubser, Ryklief & Smith, 2016). On an individual level, male predisposition towards interpersonal acts of violence and aggression is consequent of biological and developmental factors. Biologically, males produce a surplus of testosterone during their youth, as testosterone production peaks in adolescence (Bjorkqvist, 2017). This hormonal surplus, consequent of developmental change, is a risk factor for aggression and violence in males while they undergo transition from childhood to adulthood (Parrott, Choi & Davies, 1994; Pope & Katz, 1994; Van Goozen, Cohen-Kettenis, Gooren, Frijda & Van de Poll, 1995; Yates, Perry, Macindoe, Holman & Ellingrad, 1999; Pope, Kouri & Hudson, 2000; Sjodin, Wallinius, Billstedt, Hofvander, Nilsson, 2018). This predisposition towards aggression

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and violence serves may be a risk factor for youth gang affiliation, particularly within communities in which youth gangs provide a physical means to express these experiences of hostility (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015).

### 2.2.3. Genetics as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

Genetics and epigenetics are the foremost indicators of an individual's psychosocial functioning and well-being; they serve to construct the inherent foundations of an individual's personality, emotionality, and potential psychopathology (Plomin, DeFries, Knopik, & Neiderhiser, 2013). This has significant value in understanding abnormal behaviour, such as gang involvement.

Genetics and epigenetics provide the instructive blueprint for the prenatal development of an individual (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2013; Donnelly & Ward, 2015; Pinnock, 2015). While genes cannot be altered, epigenetics serves to adapt in-utero in response to environmental influence. For example, a pregnant mother who is exposed to extreme environmental stress, such as constant gang violence, may potentially and profoundly alter the epigenetic landscape and biological outcome of her unborn child (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2013; Donnelly & Ward, 2015; Pinnock, 2015). Thus, genetics is a potential risk factor for youth gangsterism.

Ultimately, individuals exposed to such trauma in-utero develop attributes such as "risk-taking, insecure attachments, mistrustfulness, a preference for smaller immediate rewards over larger future ones, aggressive behaviour and affiliation with deviant peers" (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2013; Pinnock, 2015:177). These characteristics are considered dysfunctional in general society, yet they serve as defence mechanisms for survival in threatening neighbourhoods such as those ravaged by gangsterism. Youth, conditioned through pre- and postnatal damage to survive under conditions of environmental stress and trauma, may recognise likeness among one another and purposely group together to form youth gangs (Beaver, Schutt, Boutwell, Ratchford, Roberts & Barnes, 2009; Pinnock, 2015).

### 2.2.4. Racial categorisation as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

The phenomenon of gangsterism has emerged in South Africa as predominantly demographic of non-white populations (Smit, 1985; Kinnes, 2000; Jensen, 2008;

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Petrus, 2013; Roloff, 2013; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). In particular, Western Cape youth gangs are largely characteristic of coloured townships (Smit, 1985; Kinnes, 2000; Jensen, 2008; Petrus, 2013; Roloff, 2014; Pinnock, 2015).

However, despite the predominance of gangsterism among South Africa's non-white population and despite race often being utilised as a variable or classification in research, race is not an accepted scientific category (Venter, 2000; Yudell, 2014). Thus, the predominance of gangsterism amoung South Africa's non-white populations is not indicative of race being a risk factor for gang affiliation, violence or criminality. Rather, the racial demographics of gangsterism are consequent of structural and socioeconomic oppression, which has been largely isolated to South Africa's non-white populations as the result of apartheid and lack of reform under democracy (Petrus, 2013; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014). Race does not predispose an individual to gangsterism; deprivation and dispossession that targets racial groups does (Petrus, 2013; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014). These experiences of deprivation and dispossession are further endured at a meso-level.

## 2.3. MESO-LEVEL RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH GANGSTERISM

The meso-level of the individual's ecological system is represented by the immediate groups within which the individual interacts, such as the family and peer groups (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Germain & Gitterman, 1976; 1980). The value generated by involvement in these groups serves to establish the individual's identity (MacMaster, 2007; Petrus, 2013; Wollberg, 2020). However, the ecological relationship between the individual and the meso-level is complex as the mesosystem will intricately impact the individual's likelihood of youth gang affiliation, even though they function independently (MacMaster, 2007; Petrus, 2013). A dysfunctional relationship between the individual and the groups within their mesosystem may predispose the individual to youth gang involvement, as will be discussed below.

### 2.3.1. The home and the family as risk factors for youth gangsterism

In 2012, the United Nations formally recognised the vital role of the family and the home in the development of appropriately functioning children and youth (United Nations, 2012; Tint & Weiss, 2016). In acknowledgement of this, the United Nations

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called for international promotion of familial well-being as a supporting means of reducing social pathology, such as youth gangsterism (United Nations, 2012; Tint & Weiss, 2016). This familial well-being can include aspects such as love and care, parental attachment, socialisation, parental supervision, and transitional guidance.

Families characterised by open and consistent displays of love, care and protection, encourage the development of emotionally and behaviourally functional youth (Tint & Weiss, 2016). Antonymous to this, children or youth exposed to violent, abusive, traumatic and conflict-rife home environments are at risk of developing socially pathological behaviour, such as involvement in youth gangsterism (Baumann, 1998; Fortune, 1998; Pinnock, 1998; Standing, 2003; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016). Most commonly, this risk of pathological behaviour is consequent of emotional deregulation, as familial conflict and aggression are established as behavioural norms (Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Abbas, 2016). This risk becomes increasingly acute in male youths, as their elevated testosterone levels already predispose them to said conflict and aggression (Pope, Kouri & Hudson, 2000; Sjodin, Wallinius, Billstedt, Hofvander, Nilsson, 2018).

In addition to exposure to violence and abuse, dysfunctional home environments are further characterised by emotional instability and disconnection; this is largely associated with theories of early emotional parental attachment (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu & Thomas, 2013; Pinnock, 2015; Dong & Krohn, 2016; Yoder, Leibowitz & Petersen, 2018). Parental attachment is an internal familial bond that forms a crucial element of the foundation on which a child's emotional, social and behavioural development will build (Cole & Cole, 2001; Townsend, 2011). Defective parental attachment stunts the emotional functionality and resilience of the child, often resulting in experiences of shame, anger, loneliness, alienation and a lack of trust (Burk & Burkhart, 2003; Baker, Beech & Tyson, 2006; Pinnock, 2015; Yoder, Leibowitz & Petersen, 2018). This is most often expressed through violence and aggression, as the child learns this behaviour as a means of reasserting their existence (Pinnock, 2015). In terms of socialisation, this negative emotionality and reactivity becomes a risk factor for youth gangsterism (Miner, Robinson, Knight, Berg, Romine & Netland, 2010; Pinnock, 2015; Yoder, Leibowitz & Petersen, 2018).

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The social behaviour of children and youth is predominantly moulded by the family, as the family is the first institution with which an individual will interact (Bezuidenhout, 2018; Green & Wijnberg, 2014). Accordingly, the emotional, communicative and behavioural functionality of the family guides development of the child's various cognitive frameworks from which they will interpret and understand themselves, others and larger societal interactions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Green & Wijnerg, 2014; Nordin, Mills, Pederson, Hoewe & Witte, 2017). The absence of positive socialisation within the family inhibits the child or youth's ability to conform to the norms of society, thus introducing the risk of dysfunctional socialisation through youth gangsterism (Bezuidenhout, 2018). Youth who are not socialised according to principles of empathy, sympathy and caring tend to gravitate towards other like themselves, such as youth gangs (Miner, Robinson, Knight, Berg, Romine & Netland, 2010; Pinnock, 2015; Yoder, Leibowitz & Petersen, 2018).

Appropriate parental supervision encourages positive socialisation whereby positive norms and cognitive schemas are developed among the youth (Koerner & Ftizpatrick, 2003; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Nordin *et al.*, 2017). However, poor parental supervision and support espouses the child's freedom to engage in deviant or antisocial behaviour without appropriate consequence, thus predisposing the child or youth to engagement in youth gangsterism (Petersen, 2012; Bezuidenhout, 2018; Michaeli, 2016). A lack of parental guidance is thus increasingly detrimental during the transition from childhood to adulthood, as youth require structured support to functionally adapt to this developmental period (Pinnock, 2015; Wollberg, 2020).

It is during this transition from youth to adulthood, which is fraught with cognitive, emotional, physical and relational challenges, that positive parental guidance is vital (Novell, 2014). Healthy adult guidance throughout this transition period is fundamental in ensuring the development of appropriate adult morals and behaviour (Pinnock, 2015). However, in the gang-ridden ghettos of South Africa and particularly the Western Cape, the responsibility and supervision over this developmental transition period is often adopted by youth gangs (Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). Gang practises, initiations, and rituals provide a rite of passage into manhood for male youth seeking to reject the dependency of adolescence but without the legitimate status or resources that would define them as men (Salo, 2005;

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Pinnock, 2015). Ultimately, gang affiliation is often the outcome of an absence of ritualised transition into adulthood (Pinnock, 2015).

A lack of appropriate parental support and supervision is a prominent risk factor for delinquency and antisocial behaviour, such as gangsterism (Petersen, 2012; Bezuidenhout, 2013; Michaeli, 2016). Within the context of South Africa and the Western Cape, a lack of parental supervision is often consequent of children and youth being raised in single-parent households (Bezuidenhout, 2013). The absence of a parent in the household limits the child's availability of love, attention, guidance, stability and supervision, potentially resulting in dysfunctional emotional, cognitive and social development (Bezuidenhout, 2013). This dysfunctional development, associated with a lack of co-parenting, puts the child at risk of engaging in deviant or antisocial behaviour, such as youth gangsterism (Bezuidenhout, 2013).

Within single-parent households of South Africa and the Western Cape, it is most often the father who is absent due to imprisonment (Andersson & Stavrou, 2001; Bezuidenhout, 2013; Green & Wijnberg, 2014). Fatherlessness, consequent of criminality, serves as a risk factor for youth gang affiliation, particularly among boys (Andersson & Stavrou, 2001; Bezuidenhout, 2013). Male youth experience an elevated need to assert their masculinity when exposed to familial criminality and fatherlessness (Nair, 1999; Pinnock, 2015). This need serves as a risk factor for gang involvement in areas of major gang activity whereby gangs project the perceived values of masculinity (Pinnock, 2015). Former leader of the Hard Livings gang depicts this risk:

> We wanted to be gangsters at that time for a number of reasons... We also wanted to be macho guys on the streets, big guys – not like the Wanted Kids. Growing up in poverty as we did, we needed to feel big. We denied our own families for the brotherhood. Most of the guys there – about 80% – came from homes where fathers were not playing their roles responsibility. There was domestic violence, or sometimes fathers were absent – had walked out on their families. This was the key – this neglect – made us want to be big men (Nair, 1999:1).

Ultimately, familial environments that fail to meet the youths' inherent need for love and security, parental attachment and supervision, or appropriate socialisation may motivate the youth to partially or completely reject their family of origin and, instead,

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seek solace amoung a surrogate family of gangsters (Madizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). However, according to Pinnock (1998:3), “the youth cannot be blamed for the way in which they tried to cope with the tough, alienated [families] in which they lived: create surrogate families: gangs”. Ultimately, familial circumstances that fail to meet the needs of the youth may propel an increased value towards peer relations.

### 2.3.2. Peer relations as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

Peer relationships are central to the youth’s emotional and behaviour functioning (Thomas, 2016). The challenges associated with the developmental period of youth causes friction within the family unit. This is a natural means of minimising the importance of the relationship between child and parent (Bezuidenhout, 2018). In substitute of the parental relationship, the youth increasingly value the acceptance and company of their peers (Bezuidenhout, 2018; Thomas, 2015).

Involvement with deviant or delinquent peers serves as one of the strongest predictors of dysfunctional and anti-social behaviour, such as youth gangsterism (Battin-Pearson, Thornberry, Hawkins & Krohn, 1998; Haynie, 2002; McGloin & Shermer, 2009; Thomas, 2015). Delinquent peers thus breed delinquent behaviour. Peer groups assist youth to construct the values, beliefs, and norms during this developmental period, thus serving as a key risk factor for engagement in youth gangsterism. When peer groups ascribe to delinquent beliefs and values, members collectively exhibit delinquent behaviour, potentially being enacted through youth (Keijser, Branje, Hawk, Frijns, Koot, Lier, Schwartz & Meeus, 2012; Thomas, 2015; Bezuidenhout, 2018).

Involvement with delinquent peers, in the form of youth gangs, can be strongly correlated with an inherent need for belonging. This need for belonging refers to exigency to be a valued and accepted member of a family, community or social group (Harrigan & Commons, 2015). An inability to have this need met, serves as a further risk factor for involvement in youth gangs (Williams, 1998; Vetten, 2000; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Van Lennep, 2019). Youth gangs thus serve to provide their members with the opportunity to form part of an organisation in which they gain a sense belonging through shared beliefs, values, and

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behavioural traits (Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014). These collective peer organisations often form along boundaries of schooling and education.

### 2.3.3. Education-based risk factors for youth gangsterism

The schooling experiencing is a key element of socialisation among the youth (Bezuidenhout, 2018). School attendance serves as the foremost influence over the youth's probability of engaging in antisocial or delinquent behaviour, such as youth gangsterism (Dick, Forsyth, Chen, Forsyth, Biggar & Burstein, 2019). Although the family can be viewed as the principal predictor of delinquency and criminality, schooling takes prevalence in the development of criminality during youth through exposure to alternative norms and behaviour (Elliot, 1998; Payne & Welch, 2016; Theimann, 2016; Dick, Forsyth, Chen, Forsyth, Biggar & Burstein, 2019).

Attachment to the educational environment and associated authority and peer relationships have been argued as more influential than parental attachment in the development of delinquent behaviour; poor school attachment is more likely to result in criminality than poor attachment to parental relationships (Resnick, Harris & Blum, 1993; Resnick, 1997; Payne & Welch, 2016; Dick *et al*., 2019).

Poor school attachment is a powerful predictor for engagement in delinquency and involvement in youth gangsterism (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Green & Wijnber, 2014; Payne & Welch, 2016; Dick et al., 2019). Poor school attachment is often associated with a lack of value towards education, thus increasing the likelihood of the youth forfeiting their schooling in favour of gangs (Hirschi, 1969; Hawkins, Smith, Hill, Kosterman, Catalano & Abbott, 2003; Payne & Welch, 2016; Dick et al., 2019). Therefore, if parents demonstrate a lack of value towards education, their children tend to exhibit a similar inclination, consequently placing them at higher risk of delinquent behaviour and involvement with gangs (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Green & Wijnerg, 2014; Nordin *et al*., 2017). When underpinned by the conflict theory, this points towards incongruency between one's need for appropriate parental modelling and their parent's capacity to exhibit such positive modelling behaviour (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958). According to Thornberry and Krohn (2005), as well as Payne and Welch (2016), this is also evident for youth who do not have other supporting risk factors. In keeping with theories of socialisation, positive school attachment is thus

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essential to mitigate youth gang involvement and can be instilled through modelling and reinforcement within the family (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Green & Wijnber, 2014; Payne & Welch, 2016; Dick et al., 2019).

The development of strong and positive school attachment can further be supported by experience of safety and security within the educational environment. Experiences of safety and security are often threatened in South African schools, particularly in the Western Cape, due to youth gangsterism extending from the streets onto school grounds (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Petersen, 2016). As youth gang recruitment occurs predominantly through contexts of similar social environments, the shared proximity between youth gang members and non-members places learners at risk of direct recruitment (Densley, 2012; Gallupe & Gravel, 2016).

Additionally, the violence and trauma associated with exposure to youth gangsterism at school is a motivating factor for dropping out, which places the youth at further risk of being drawn into youth gangsterism (Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Petersen, 2016).

Furthermore, some schools in the Western Cape are notably overcrowded, which leads to youth being denied the opportunity to enter the formal schooling system (Mccain, 2017; Gontsana, 2019). This often forces the youth onto the street, where they are at risk of being drawn into a gang (Pinnock, 1998, 2015; Williams, 1998; Vetten, 2000; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014). According to the conflict theory (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958), this form of recruitment into youth gangsterism is representative of an unmet educational need that remains unfulfilled due to a lack of educational resources within the individual's meso-system (Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Hepworth, et al., 2018).

### 2.3.4. Community socioeconomic status as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

Youth gangsterism is intricately related to the structural socioeconomic features of the mesosystem, resulting in gangsterism becoming increasingly conceptualised along socioeconomic lines (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). Youth gangsterism emerges internationally as a response to poor socioeconomic standing within the context of relative poverty (MacMaster, 2007; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). Lower

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socioeconomic conditions give rise to youth gangsterism as a means of basic survival, establishing masculinity in alignment with dominant social norms, and developing socioeconomic identity (Salo, 2005; MacMaster, 2007; Pinnock, 2015; Wollberg, 2020).

Legitimate and normative economic survival is accomplished primarily through mainstream employment (Gray & Allegritti, 2005; Roloff, 2014). However, South Africa has the highest level of youth unemployment in the world, a crisis that presents as particularly prevalent among youth of lower socioeconomic status (Roloff, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). An alternative economy has emerged among lower socioeconomic communities of the Western Cape, whereby youth gang practises are employed as a substitute means of economic inclusion and survival (Salo, 2005; MacMaster, 2007; Pinnock, 2015).

Involvement in the criminal economy established by youth gangs allows for basic survival (Salo, 2005; MacMaster, 2007; Pinnock, 2015). According to the conflict theory, abnormal behaviour or deviance is the result of incongruences between human need and environmental resources (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958). Thus, the need for economic survival, which cannot be met through legitimate environmental resources, may propel youth into deviance in the form of youth gangsterism. This provides an alternative means of establishing socioeconomic identity and provide for basic survival needs.

The economically deprived youth exist along the socioeconomic margins of society, thus absent of a recognised identity within the larger socioeconomic sphere (Vetten, 2000; Pinnock, 2015). These youth are at risk of gang affiliation, as youth gangsterism provides significant social capital that assists in the establishment of a valid identity within the community and wider society; gangs create demarcated boundaries for the development of personhood (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). The infamy of gang practise, as well as the economic opportunities they create, is recognised by the community and society, thus providing an alternative socioeconomic identity (Vigil, 2002; Petrus, 2013).

Access to material goods, made available through gangs' economic endeavours, symbolise status and respect within the community, as well as economic dominance among wider society (Green & Wijnberg, 2014). Theories of economic dominance

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must consider gender, as males experience increased pressure to assert themselves through economic prosperity (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015).

The search for identity, particularly among male youths, includes the desire for masculine status. Internationally, and within the context of South Africa, ideals of masculine dominance revolve around men's economic roles as the breadwinners and protectors of the family (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). In lower socioeconomic contexts, youth gangs offer the desired values of masculinity (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). Youth gangs exert a social image of toughness, as well as depict economic success through their criminal endeavours (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). Thus, involvement in youth gangsterism provides an alternative means of being recognised as a man within a context of material or symbolic capital (Vetten, 2000; Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). For this, the conflict theory offers an explanation in that the environment's emasculation of the youth inhibits fulfilment of their identity needs, leading to deviance in an attempt to personally meet this need (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958). Therefore, lower socioeconomic status prevents the embodiment of masculinity and thus serves as a risk factor for youth gang affiliation, particularly for male youth.

## 2.4. MACRO-LEVEL RISK FCATORS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH GANGSTERISM

The macro-level forms the outermost realm of the individual's ecosystem and is concerned with the larger social and communal organisations of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, Germain & Gitterman, 1976, 1980; Hepworth et. al., 2018). While this level of the ecosystem does not have a direct impact on the functioning and well-being of the individual, it will indirectly influence the individual's experiences and behaviour through establishing the functioning and norms of the society in which the individual exists (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, Johnson & Yanca, 2010; DuBois & Miley, 2016).

### 2.4.1. Community protection and governance as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) affords each citizen the right to safety and protection. This right extends to include the macrosystem of one's

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community and larger society (Republic of South Africa, 1996). However, when residence in threatening and gang-ridden neighbourhoods hinders the fulfilment of this right, or when this right is not adequately fulfilled through legitimate governance, youth gangs emerge as an alternative means of protection and internal governance (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Kiva, 2012; Kinnes, 2019; Petersen, 2019).

A significant amount of South African and, more specifically, Western Cape youth gangs were formed on the foundation of protection, such as protection from threats inside and outside their communities, as well as from rival gangs (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Petersen, 2019; Van Lennep, 2019). There appears to be no choice in gang-ridden communities, but to join a gang or die by one (Petersen, 2019).

In communities that lack safety and security, youth gangsterism is a form of resilience (Pinnock, 2015). The safety offered by youth gangs often extends to protect the wider community from rival gang violence. According to Van Lennep (2019) a significant number of youth gangs in the Western Cape were founded with the explicit intention of defending their communities. These defence gangs serve, not only to enforce protection, but to enforce structure within disorganised communities (Merrin, Hong & Espelage, 2015).

These disorganised communities are often characterised by low levels of cohesiveness, high levels of socioeconomic strain, dominating gang presence, high levels of crime and antisocial delinquency, and overcrowding (Raby & Jones, 2016; de Jager & Naude, 2018). Social disorganisation theorists have long established powerful and enduring explanations for the relationship between community disorganisation and youth gangsterism (Merrin, Hong & Espelage, 2015). These theories depict how the various elements of community disorganisation increase the likelihood of youth victimisation, trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, serving as risk factors for gang affiliation among youth. This risk is exacerbated by prominent subcultures of disorganised communities whereby violence is normative and criminality is acceptable, thus providing the opportunity for youth gangsterism to flourish (Merrin, Hong & Espelage, 2015).

As youth gangs flourish, organisation and safety within communities is largely determined by the boundaries established through police presence, which is not

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always visible (Pinnock, 2015; Kinnes, 2017). These boundaries, founded on police presence, act as a powerful mechanism in deterring youth gangsterism. However, the police presence in gang-ridden communities of the Western Cape have been noted as ineffective in the development of appropriate and balanced organisation and safety (Pinnock, 2015; Kinnes, 2017; Ground Up, 2018). On 14 December 2018, the Cape Town High Court declared the lack of police presence in gang-ridden areas as unconstitutional (Ground Up, 2018). This inadequate presence of police in violent and disorganised neighbourhoods poses a risk for youth gang affiliation, as it allows youth gangs to flourish as a dominant form of internal control and cohesion within disorganised communities.

Youth gangs gain considerable community support and respect through undertaking protective functions inadequately performed by the state, such as the lack of police presence. This weak state governance consequently provides the opportunity for youth gangs to implement strong criminal governance from a community level (Standing, 2003; MacMaster, 2007; Kinnes, 2019). Within the South African context, this can be traced back to apartheid whereby gang-ridden areas were declared “ungovernable”, causing a deep-rooted animosity towards state governance (Standing, 2003; Pinnock, 2015; Kinnes, 2019).

The lack of adequate policing in Western Cape communities has impacted community perspectives on safety and security (Kinnes, 2017). Community members appear to prefer the youth gang’s kangaroo style court as opposed to formal investigations that risk further gang activity being unveiled and prosecuted. This would risk the collapse of the gangs’ criminal economic endeavours that serve to sustain the wider community (Standing, 2003; Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). The mistrust of state governance and preference of internal gang governance is said to be the glue for social solidarity between the gangs and the community (Green & Pranis, 2007; Hagerdom, 2007; Dowdney, 2007; Kinnes, 2019). According to the empowerment approach, a shift in power relations has the potential to exacerbate deviant activity, such as youth gangsterism (Pritzker, Richards-Schuster & Rodriguez-Newhall, 2018). In the Western Cape, power of policing and governance has shifted from the state to the youth gangs, thus further propelling the phenomenon of youth gangsterism (Pritzker, Richards-Schuster & Rodriguez-Newhall, 2018). Social services have been identified as best suited to address this risk factor, among others. However, social service provisions in

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the Western Cape are lacking (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017).

### 2.4.2. A lack of social service provision as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

Social work services fall under the umbrella of social service provisions. Youth gangsterism is a prominent societal issue that social services espouse dominant responsibility toward (Palm, 2018). However, the continued escalation of youth gangsterism in South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape, indicates a challenge in the deliverance of adequate services targeting the phenomenon (Novell, 2014). This is supported by studies that demonstrate social service's ability to identity individuals at risk of youth gangsterism and their specific needs within the context of their structural meso-system, yet they are unable to directly address these needs (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007). This is consequent of: inadequate guiding policy and legislation, inadequate resources, and lack of understanding underpinning youth gang interventions. This is despite the Constitution for the Republic of South Africa's (RSA,1996) enforcement of policy and legislative commitments to meeting each individual's basic needs in order to ensure societal well-being and the prevention of societal ills, such as youth gangsterism. It is expected that social services deliver on the social and economic rights outlined in the Constitution for the Republic of South Africa (RSA,1996), under the guidance of further social service legislation (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007).

Supporting policy and legislation is inadequate and lacking in direct focus (Pinnock, 2019). For example, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) has been critiqued for being too broad and misleading to forge an entry way for intervention, thus reducing it to purely a legal construct (Pinnock, 2015; Geldenhuys, 2016). The Integrated Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) makes vague and limited reference to youth gangsterism, merely stating that gangs are a significant source of violence within schools. The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2017) has also been critiqued as being suppressive in nature, unimplementable and vague (Pinnock, 2017). Therefore, despite government's attempts to address youth gangsterism through the

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development of policy and legislation, actual prevention services in gang-ridden communities falls short.

The lack of policy and legislation directly seeking to address youth gangsterism, alongside the lack of resources in communities, is a risk factor for youth gangsterism. These gaps may be underpinned by a foundational lack of understanding towards youth gangsterism in communities (ÖksÜz, 2017). While the large majority of interventions targeting demographics at risk of youth gangsterism are undertaken by social services, a lack of understanding towards the phenomenon introduces challenges to effective deliverance of such interventions (Michaeli, 2016).

This lack of understanding further aggravates the youth gang crisis, as those at risk of youth gang affiliation feel hesitant to seek out social work services as they may be misinterpreted or misunderstood (Michaeli, 2016; Palm, 2018). Therefore, it is apparent that social work services lack understanding towards the phenomenon of youth gangsterism and introduces further risks at a macro-level towards individual gang involvement. While this lack of understanding may require first priority, further consideration needs to be afforded towards scarcity of resources within social work services. According to the conflict theory, social service's inability to meet needs due to a lack of resources, forces the youth to engage in deviant behaviour as a substitute means of fulfilling these needs (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958).

While social workers have been identified as dominant role-players in upholding the rights enshrined in the Constitution for the Republic of South Africa (1996), it has been acknowledged that they are doing so under the context of scarce resources (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007; Azzi-Lessing & Schmidt, 2019). Ultimately, the strive of South African policy and legislation related to social services, such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and the Integrated Service Delivery Model (2005), are unimplementable under current financial and human resource constraints (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007; Patel, Schmid & Hochfeld, 2012). Still, the empowerment approach notes that a lack of resources within social services does not represent an excuse for the deliverance of adequate and appropriate services; social services require an understanding of how to address the needs of individuals within the context of limited resources (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; Dubois & Miley, 2016).

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Social services, however, appear to be struggling within the context of limited resources, as can be noted in their ability to only meet priority needs and intervene at a tertiary level (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007; Azzi-Lessing & Schmidt, 2019). This risks exacerbation of youth gangsterism, as the phenomenon requires targeting from a primary prevention level (Department of Social Development, 1997, 2011, 2016; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ward, 2007; National Planning Commission, 2011; Pinnock, 2015; Department of Safety and Security, 2016; Department of Health, 2017; Mccain, 2017; Parker, 2018; Ramaphosa, 2019).

### 2.4.3. A lack of community recreation as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

Positive recreational experiences are undoubtedly beneficial to the prosocial socialisation of youth in terms of peer and adult relationships. Recreational activity allows for interaction with adults with whom the youth can form meaningful and supportive relationships with, thereby allowing the youth to engage with positive role models and develop a healthy interactional basis with authority figures (Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019). In terms of their peers, positive recreational experiences provide opportunity for youth to establish prosocial friendships (Berdychevsky, et al., 2019). Accordingly, positive recreational experiences are a powerful accessory in the effective prevention of youth gangsterism (National Gang Centre, 2010; Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019). Healthy mechanisms of socialisation serve to prevent engagement in youth gangsterism through stimulating the development of self-esteem, belonging, attachment, connection, confidence, character and caring among the youth (Butts, Bazamore & Meroe, 2010; Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019).

Despite the known benefits of positive recreational activities towards the primary prevention of youth gangsterism on meso-level scale, the Western Cape provides limited opportunities for such engagement that would be accessible to the residents of gang-ridden communities (Pitt, 2018). This lack of positive recreation within communities serves as a risk factor for youth gang involvement, as gangs provide the only seeming alternative to leisure and entertainment experiences within the context of their communities (Pitt, 2018). In accordance with the conflict theory, the ungratified

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need for recreation encourages deviant attempts to meet this need, such as through engagement in youth gangsterism (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958).

## 2.5. CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the youth possess extensive and unique needs throughout the various levels of their ecosystem. However, it is apparent that if these needs fail to be met through legitimate means, it is increasing the risk of engagement in youth gangsterism (Fortune, 1998; Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). The next chapter will explore policy and legislative frameworks which seek to guide social work service provision related to youth gangsterism in South Africa and, more specifically, the Western Cape.

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# CHAPTER THREE

# POLICY AND LEGISLATION RELATED TO YOUTH GANG PREVENTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

## 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Policy and legislation can be seen as macro-level interventions which inform micro-level social work services (DuBois & Miley, 2016). Such macro-level interventions have a profound impact on the availability, nature and quality of social work services. Policy and legislation serve as the foundation on which social work service delivery is anchored, thereby having a direct influence on the success and sustainability of service provision (Heubner, 2016). Furthermore, policy and legislation guide the roles and responsibilities of social workers in various fields, including youth gang prevention (Heubner, 2016).

Despite the wide range of policy and legislative frameworks to guide social work practise in South Africa, specific reference to youth gang prevention is lacking (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). This chapter aims to explore relevant legislation and policy related to youth and/or youth gangsterism, which should guide social work service provision.

## 3.2 LEGISLATION GUIDING SOCIAL WORK SERVICE PROVISION RELATED TO YOUTH AND/OR YOUTH GANG PREVENTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996), the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005) and the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) serves as the foundation to protecting children's rights in South Africa. Accordingly, these legislative documents are fundamental in guiding the prevention of youth gangsterism. Additionally, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) is a legislative framework that specifically speaks to gangsterism in South Africa and can, thus, be utilised in guiding youth gang prevention.

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### 3.2.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA,1996)

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) was founded on principles of human dignity, equality, freedom and respect. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996) reigns as the supreme law of the nation. All further legislation, policy, systems, structures, and services are required to align with the provisions enshrined within it. Social work service provision aimed at youth gang prevention thus needs to align with Chapter 2, Section 28 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996), which speaks to children's rights.

#### 3.2.1.1. The Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996)

Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) contains the nation's Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights specifies the rights of each South African, which are required to be upheld, respected, protected, fulfilled and promoted (RSA, 1996). This Chapter is identified as the cornerstone of South Africa's democracy (RSA, 1996).

Section 28 of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996) makes provisions for children specifically. Section 28, therefore, guides service provision to all children, including those at risk of youth gangsterism.

Youth gangsterism is often associated with inappropriate home or family environments (Baumann, 1998; Fortune, 1998; Pinnock, 1998; Standing, 2003; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016), despite Section 28 (1)(b) of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996) making provision for children to be protected and having appropriate family or parental care. Sadly, gangs have seemingly become the care of choice for some youth, as appropriate family or parental care are lacking in their communities. Youth gangs therefore serve as alternative means to fulfil the basic needs which should come from appropriate family or parental care, but is absent (Fortune, 1998; Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015).

These basic needs include basic nutrition, shelter and health care (RSA, 1996), thus providing social workers with a mandate to render youth gang prevention services. This need for social work intervention is further supported in Section 28(1)(c), which

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stipulates that children have the right to social services. Social workers therefore are key role players in upholding the dignity, well-being and freedom of children, in order for all their basic needs to be fulfilled.

Social work services are particularly relevant in accordance with various sections of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996). These include Section 28(1)(d), as youth gangsterism has been linked to family conflict and dysfunction, which include maltreatment, abuse, and neglect (Baumann, 1998; Fortune, 1998; Pinnock, 1998; Standing, 2003; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016). Furthermore, Section 28(1)(e) of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996) stipulates that children have the right to be protected from exploitative labour practises. Youth gangsterism can be considered a labour practise, as youth gangs tend to engage in an illicit economy that has money-earning capacity (Pinnock, 2015). Additionally, Section 28(1)(f)(i-ii) stipulates that children should not be required or allowed to perform work or services that are inappropriate or place their well-being at risk (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Youth gang involvement is illegal, as stipulated by the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) and violent nature of youth gangsterism can be an infringement on this right where children are concerned.

Moreover, Section 28(1)(i) of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996) stipulates that children have the right to not be used in armed conflict and have the right to be protected in times of armed conflict. Youth gangs often use children to engage in violent turf wars involving armed shoot-outs (Standing, 2005; Kinnes, 2017), subjecting children to being victims of stray bullets being fired during gang wars (Pinnock, 2015; Kinnes, 2017), therefore infringing on their right to be protected. It can thus be argued that Section 28(1)(i) (RSA, 1996) provides social workers with a further mandate to render youth gang prevention services.

The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) is, therefore, a guiding mechanism for social work intervention, as youth gangsterism stands in opposition to the fulfilment of children's rights to dignity and respect, their rights to have their basic needs fulfilled, and their right to be protected in times of armed conflict. (RSA, 1996; RSA, 1998; MacMaster, 2007; Department of Safety and Security, 2016).

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### 3.2.2. Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998

The Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) was developed in response to escalating gangsterism in South Africa. This legislative response sought to protect the nation's constitutional right to safety and protection (RSA, 1996) through criminalising gang activities and promoting the allocation of resources towards combatting gangsterism in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

A core tenet of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) is the criminalisation of an extensive range of attributes that presumably evince gang affiliation and activity. These include certain hand gestures, style of dress, and language (RSA, 1998). However, such attributes are often consequent of societal and community norms and trends that are adopted by the youth regardless of gang involvement. The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) and the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) aim to address this consideration. However, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) was not subsequently amended, thus resulting in contradictions between said legislation and policy.

The Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) encourages the criminalisation of trends and activities common to the youth as a whole. However, according to Dubois and Miley (2016), social justice should be promoted through positive efforts of empowerment, rather than through acts such as criminalising the youth. The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) and the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011), therefore, mitigate the criminalisation of youth by advocating for the development and adoption of primary prevention strategies.

These tenets embody aspects of the empowerment approach, in that they seek to promote social justice through preventative measures (DuBois & Miley, 2016). Thus, indicating key gaps in policy and legislative frameworks which may place strain on the development of social work intervention services, as these policy and legislation frameworks are aimed at guiding micro level service provision. These gaps could be perceived as conflicting, thereby very concerning in terms of ensuring adequate youth gang prevention services (Marx, 1859).

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This conflict can further be seen in that the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) affords dominance towards suppression-based interventions, while the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) and the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) affords dominance towards prevention-based interventions. According to the conflict theory, discrepancies or contradictions in power distribution can result in conflict and deviance (Marx, 1859; Meyer, 2013; Van Lennep, 2019), which are characteristics that align with youth gangsterism.

The suppressive nature of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) advocates for interventions that primarily seek to increase public safety through criminalisation, policing and incarceration (Cooper & Ward, 2012; Pinnock, 2015). However, the suppression of gangsterism in South Africa and, more specifically, the Western Cape has failed to solve, diminish or even prevent recidivism of youth gangsterism (Cooper & Ward, 2012). Instead, the suppressive nature of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) has had the adverse effect of provoking gangs into greater cohesion and intensified brutality (Standing, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012).

Furthermore, while the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) recognises gangsterism as primarily a social phenomenon, the Act affords a predominant focus towards the economic aspects of gangsterism. The social aspects of gangsterism are neglected, as the Act is absent of guidance relating to the roles and responsibilities of social work services in the prevention of gangsterism. This oversight limits recognition to the underlying social causes of gangsterism, such as a need for social identity and belonging (MacMaster, 2007; Petrus, 2013). These social causes are closely associated with the basic rights outlined by Chapter 2 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996), and thus ensures continuation of the phenomenon in the Western Cape particularly (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012; Department of Cooperative Governance, 2016; Kinnes, 2017).

Thus, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) is a legal construct that hinders potential for prevention or successful intervention, particularly with regards to youth gang prevention (Pinnock, 2019). It must be recognised however, that the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) was

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not developed to specifically guide social services. Instead, policies and legislation such as the Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2005), and the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the Amendment Act 41 of 2007 (RSA, 2007), primary aim is to guide social service provision.

### 3.2.3. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended by the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007)

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) was developed as a comprehensive tool aimed at the care, protection, development, and promotion of children in South Africa towards the optimal functioning and holistic thriving of children throughout the nation. It is founded on the acknowledgement of children's rights to become well-functioning, well-adjusted members of their community (Donelly, 2008; Ndonga, 2016). It could therefore serve as a fundamental guiding mechanism for social work service provision for youth gang prevention.

Chapter 8 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) directly addresses prevention and early intervention services for children. Section 144(1) stipulates that the purpose of prevention and early intervention services include:

a) Preserving a child's family structure;
b) Developing appropriate parenting skills and the capacity of parents and care-givers to safeguard the well-being and best interests of their children, including the promotion of positive, non-violent forms of discipline;
c) Developing appropriate interpersonal relationships within the family;
d) Providing psychological, rehabilitation and therapeutic programmes for children;
e) Preventing the neglect, exploitation, abuse or inadequate supervision of children and preventing other failures in the family environment to meet the children's needs;
f) Preventing the recurrence of problems in the family environment that may harm children or adversely affect their development;
g) Diverting children away from the child and youth care system and the criminal justice system; and
h) Avoiding the removal of a child from the family environment (Republic of South Africa, 2005).

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These stipulations do not specifically mention youth gang prevention, but address issues related to the reasons why children become involved in youth gangs. These include the need for belonging, economic security, an appropriate family structure, and the need for social work intervention where these needs may be neglected or unfulfilled (Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015).

Section 144 of the Children's Act 38 of 2008 (RSA, 2005) guides social work preservation services in terms of family preservation, therefore giving social work a mandate to render youth gang prevention services as children become involved in youth gangs because family structures are dysfunctional and fail to meet children's inherent needs for safety and love (Pinnock, 1998, 2015; Williams, 1998; Vetten, 2000; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014).

Furthermore, Section (1)(b) of the Children's Act 38 of 2008 (RSA, 2005) highlights the development of appropriate parenting skills and parental capacity towards functional discipline in order to guide children in the promoting of their well-being. This section of the Act would thus address prevention strategies related to education in terms of healthy, non-violent forms of discipline, as violent forms of discipline has been known to establish violence as a norm in the home, which can be seen as a risk factor for youth gangsterism (Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Abbas, 2016).

Section 144(1)(c) of the Children's Act 38 of 2008 (RSA, 2005), goes on to stipulate the importance of appropriate interpersonal relations within the family. The lack of appropriate interpersonal family relation also serves as a risk factor for youth gangsterism (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Green & Wijnerg, 2014; Nordin, Mills, Pederson, Hoewe & Witte, 2017). Additionally, Section 144(1)(d) (RSA, 2005) stipulates the need for appropriate programmes for children to promote their optimal functioning and well-being, thus also serving as a guideline for social work service provision for youth gang prevention as these services promote the rights of children (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007).

It can therefore be concluded that the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) serves as a guide for social worker service provision for the prevention of youth gangsterism, thereby facilitating the care and protection of children. The protection afforded through the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) is further extended through the Children's

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Amendment Act 41 of 2007 (RSA, 2007) which seeks to further provide for the adequate care of children, further advocate for early childhood development, and further indicate what could be considered an offence against children. Accordingly, social workers are further guided towards a role of child protection.

### 3.2.4. The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008

The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) was established with the intent of upholding the basic constitutional rights afforded to children in conflict with the law (Rousseau, Kruger & van Oosterhout, 2018). Most notably, the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) considers how most children in conflict with the law are in need of care and protection (RSA, 2005; 2007; Badenhorst, 2010). This acknowledgement towards unmet needs leads the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) to advocate for preventative approaches to take precedence and for the best interests of the child to be held supreme (RSA, 1996; Badenhorst, 2010).

The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) seeks to protect children in conflict with the law by:

- Raising the minimum age of criminal capacity to 10 years old.
- Ensuring that the individual needs and circumstances of children in conflict with the law are assessed.
- Providing for special processes or procedures, such as securing attendance at court, the release or detention, and placement of children.
- Creating an informal, inquisitorial, pre-trial procedure, designed to facilitate the best interests of the child by allowing for diversion of matters involving children away from formal criminal proceedings in appropriate cases.
- Providing for the adjudication of matters involving children which are not diverted in child justice courts.
- Providing for a wide range of appropriate sentencing options specifically suited to the needs of the child (Republic of South Africa, 2008).

Thus, the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) recognises the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having infringed the penal

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law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth. This reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others (Republic of South Africa, 2008). Furthermore, the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) advocates for the appropriate reintegration of children into society, with the objective of the child assuming a responsible role within larger society (Ballard, 2011). These tenets serve as protective mechanisms, thus supporting a focus on prevention as advocated for by the empowerment approach (Dubois & Miley, 2016).

The progressive nature of the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) was further developed through the subsequent Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019 (RSA, 2019). The Amendment Act was instated in order to further regulate the minimum age of criminal capacity, further regulate decisions to prosecute children, further regulate proof of criminal capacity, and further advocate for diversion – all which stands in the protection of children.

#### 3.2.4.1. The Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019

The protection afforded by the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) was later extended by the Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019 (Republic of South Africa, 2019). For example, the Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019 (Republic of South Africa, 2019) further increased the age of criminal capacity to 12 years, added further regulatory measures to protect children against prosecution, and included increased protective measures for court orders made throughout preliminary enquiries against children. The advancements made by the Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019 (Republic of South Africa, 2019) speak for a preventative approach to be further prioritised.

However, despite this strong focus on prevention within the criminal justice system, the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) and the Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019 (RSA, 2019), fails to make specific reference to youth gangsterism. As gangsterism has been identified as the foremost crime issue in South Africa, and as the youth are the predominant perpetrators of gang-affiliated crime, this depicts a significant gap in guiding legislation. This gap is further apparent within the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) and other related policy documents, as discussed below.

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## 3.3. POLICY GUIDING SOCIAL WORK SERVICE PROVISION RELATED TO YOUTH AND/OR YOUTH GANG PREVENTION

In additional to legislation, social work services are guided by a range of policies. These policies serve to optimise social work service provision in South Africa and, more specially, the Western Cape, in relation to youth gangsterism. These policies will be explored next.

### 3.3.1. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)

The White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 1997) serves as a foremost guiding document for social work service delivery (Department of Social Development, 2019). While it makes limited reference to social work practise within the realm of youth gang prevention, it does identify youth as one of the vulnerable groups for which service delivery should be prioritised (Department of Social Development, 1997). Notably, this document consistently calls for implementation of an empowerment approach towards service delivery targeting youth (Dubois & Miley, 2016).

Emphasis is placed on primary as well as secondary prevention in an attempt to address social issues faced by vulnerable groups such as the youth (Department of Social Development, 1997). Youth gangsterism can be viewed as a social ill which requires social work intervention on both primary and secondary and therefore, although not out-rightly mentioned in the White Paper, should be prioritised for service provision (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ward, 2007; Pinnock, 2015; Mccain, 2017; Parker, 2018).

The White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 1997) outlines the basic needs associated with the youth, thus providing valuable insight into the aspects that require targeting throughout youth gang prevention efforts. These needs include the need for:

- A secure family life.
- Protection from violence and abuse.
- Opportunities to reach their full educational potential.
- Opportunities to participate in the economy.

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- A safe environment.
- Recreation and leisure (Department of Social Development, 1997).

Although these general guidelines should be applied to youth gang prevention, specific reference to the phenomenon is remains limited. There is an acknowledgement for the need to develop programmes that seek to reclaim the youth from gangs (Department of Social Development, 1997), but this is identified at a tertiary level and therefore not preventative in nature. Furthermore, schools are exclusively identified as being primarily responsible for youth gang prevention programmes (Department of Social Development, 1997), which is not in line with the call for youth gangs prevention to be addressed as a nationally collective effort which requires national collaboration (Pinnock 2015; 2019; Ramaphosa, 2019). The role of social work in youth gang prevention thus remains unclear, despite it being declared a state of emergency (Kinnes, 1995; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ramaphosa, 2019).

Policy documents such as the White Paper for Social Welfare has thus not been updated to address this crisis from a social work perspective (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017), this despite the having been reviewed (Department of Social Development, 2016).

#### 3.3.1.1. Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (2016)

The Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2016) was compiled as a means of identifying the challenges, issues and gaps in social service delivery under the guidance of the original White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 1997, 2016). The key question that this policy document seeks to answer is: “To what extent has the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare transformed and restricted social welfare / social development services in South Africa?” (Department of Social Development, 2016:22).

While the Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2016) makes considerable progress in identifying gaps in social work service delivery in South Africa, the document introduces new gaps. This can be noted in how the original White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 1997) made some specific reference to youth gangsterism, while the Review of the

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White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2016) is wholly absent of reference to the phenomenon. This indicates a widening gap in social service delivery targeting youth gangsterism.

The Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2016) makes implicit mention of youth gangsterism through reference to social crime prevention in the form of probation services. However, probation services are at a tertiary level and not preventative in nature, therefore also not adhering to the call for the implementation of primary prevention strategies (Pinnock, 2015; Mccain, 2017; Parker, 2018).

Furthermore, the Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2016) also highlights that social crime prevention and youth development are not prioritised as it only receives four percent of the budgetary allocation for social work service intervention. This has resulted in social crime prevention organisations, such as the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Offender Reintegration (NICRO), scaling back and terminating services due to lack of resources and funding (Department of Social Development, 2016). This can be viewed as yet another failure to prioritise youth gang prevention, thus also failing to align with the national goal of youth gang prevention (Ramaphosa, 2019).

Consequently, the Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2016) does little to guide the roles and responsibilities of social workers in terms of youth gang prevention in South Africa and, more specifically, in the Western Cape.

### 3.3.2. The Integrated Service Delivery Model (2005)

The Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2005) arose from the need to reposition the nature of social development in response to social security being established as an independent entity. Thus, the Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2005) was developed as a means of establishing a national framework that details the nature, scope, extent and level of social service delivery in South Africa, as is evident in the figure below:

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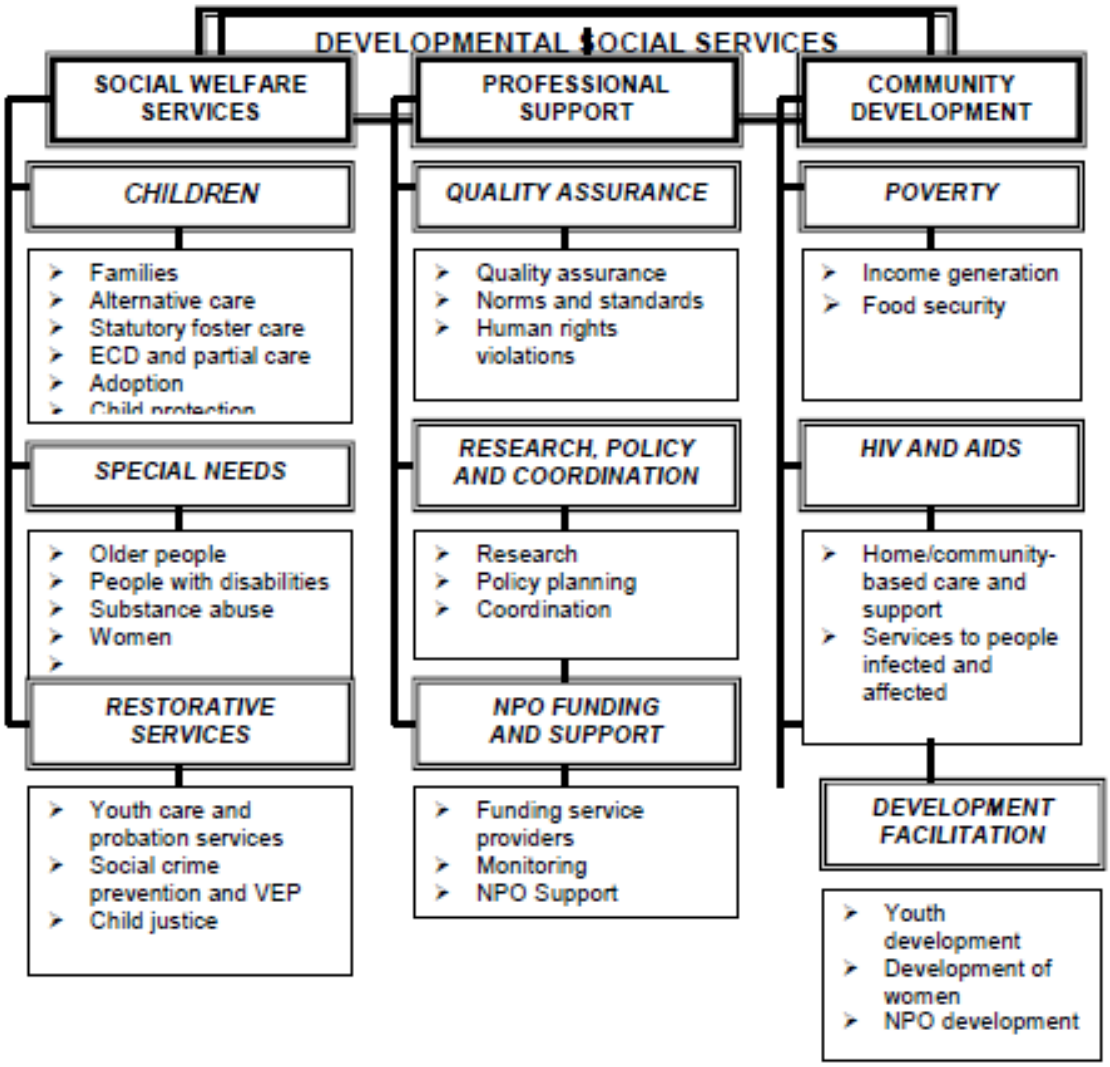


***Figure 3. 1. Fields of Social Service Delivery***

Source: Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2005)

Figure 3.1 demonstrates how the Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2005) guides social work practise through the classification and categorisation of the various fields of service delivery. This guides the roles and responsibilities of social workers by demarcating the parameters of service delivery and target systems, which include children. Explicit mention of youth gangsterism is absent, however, the risk factors associated with the phenomenon are allocated across various social service fields, such as substance abuse, child protection and child justice (Department of Social Development, 2005). These identified risk factors

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can be extended to the practise of youth gang prevention (Cooper & Ward, 2012; Michaeli, 2016; Ramaphosa, 2019). The risk factors associated with child justice, in particular, are further addressed by the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008).

### 3.3.3. The Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (2011)

The Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) was born from the need to respond to the ever-increasing number of youth committing serious offences in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2011). In an attempt to prevent and respond to these crimes, the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (2011) was established as a means of positioning social work services as a supportive pillar in the South African Police Service's (SAPS) efforts to address the context and root causes of crime.

The Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) provides practical guidance towards social work practise in the field of crime prevention in South Africa. Accordingly, the macro-level guidance afforded by the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) trickles down to meso- and micro-level practise, thus linking all three ecological levels (Hepworth et al., 2018; DuBois & Miley, 2016). This guidance is underpinned by a preventative approach that is compelled to focus on the youth who are identified as a vulnerable group (Department of Social Development, 2011).

In this manner, the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) stands in support of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 1997), the Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2005), the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) and the Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019 (Republic of South Africa, 2019). Additionally, the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy's (Department of Social Development, 2011) focus on prevention is supported by calls for a youth-focused preventative approach (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ward, 2007; Pinnock, 2015; Mccain, 2017; Parker, 2018). In this manner, social workers involved in youth gang prevention can be guided in practise.

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Furthermore, the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) seeks to identify and address the underlying causes of youth crime in South Africa. The identified risk factors include family disruption, violence, poor parenting, poverty, inadequate housing and health conditions, poor schooling, truancy, school drop-out or exclusion, peer group activities and pressure, discrimination, and lack of training and work opportunities (Department of Social Development, 2011). These identified risks are directly related to the youth's basic needs, thus supporting the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008's (RSA, 1996; RSA, 2005; Republic of South Africa, 2008) premise that youth-associated crime tends to be preceded by a failure to meet the basic needs of the youth. As needs are not met, they become risk factors for youth gangsterism as there is an incongruency between their needs and the environmental resources, consequently resulting in conflict (Marx, 1859; Dahrendorf, 1958).

In response to this conflict, the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (2011) aims to guides social work practise in the prevention of crime in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2011). Social work services are thus compelled to employ various strategies with the aim of crime prevention which include:

- Providing youth with the opportunity to fulfil their basic needs.
- Ensuring youth are afforded safe and protective homes and neighbourhoods.
- Ensuring youth are afforded opportunities through education, support and nurturing (Department of Social Development, 2011).

It could thus be argued that the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (2011) addressed youth gang prevention as part of social crime (Department of Social Development, 2011). However, specific reference to youth gangsterism remains limited, as is evident in the figure below.

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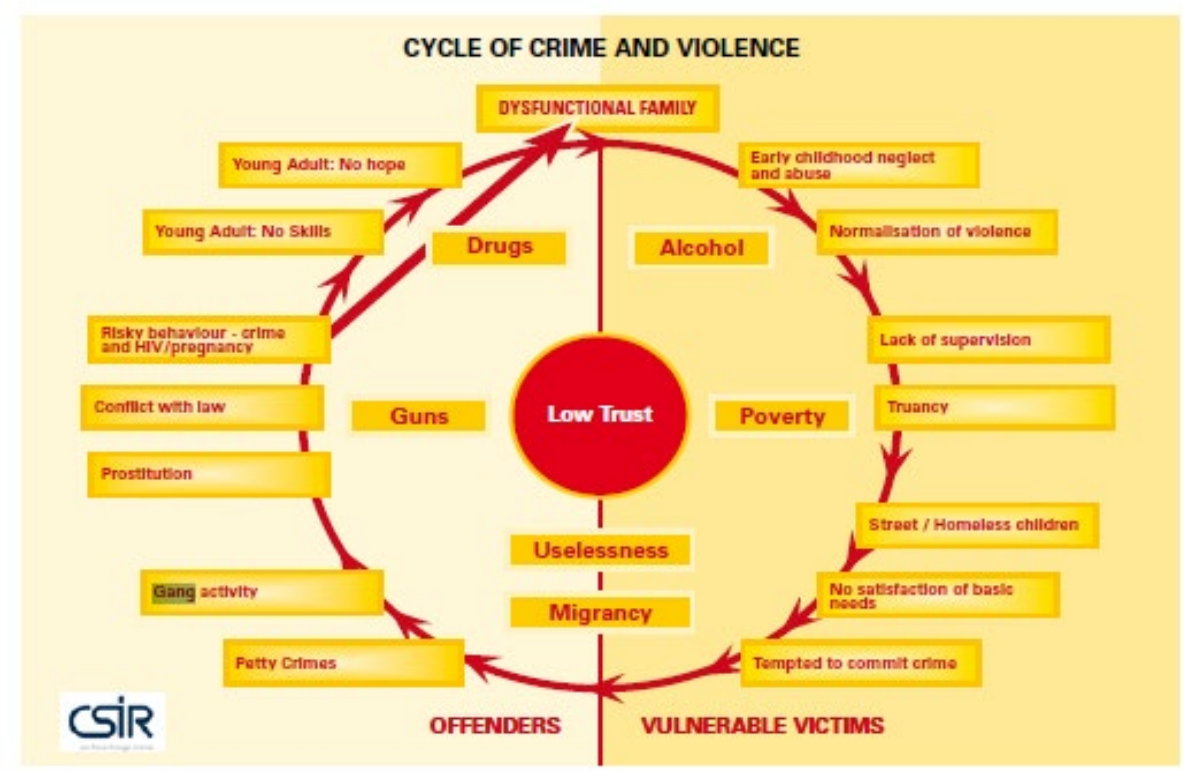


***Figure 3. 2. Cycles of Crime and Violence***

Source: Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011).

Figure 3.2 indicates that gang activity is a crime. Undoubtedly, linking youth gangsterism and criminal activity, obstructs potential entry points for prevention or intervention, as not all South African youth gangs are formed under the pretence of criminality (Pinnock, 2019).

Therefore, while the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) makes significant strides in establishing an understanding of youth crime in South Africa, little direction is provided towards the roles and responsibilities of social workers in the field of youth gang prevention. However, social work intervention is guided by further policies, such as the Framework for Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013).

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### 3.3.4. Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013)

The Framework for Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013) was developed in response to tremendous shifts in South African social welfare following the onset of democracy in 1994 (Department of Social Development, 2013). According to the empowerment approach, such changes may lead to conflict, such as is common practise of youth gangs (Pritzker, Richards-Schuster & Rodriguez-Newhall, 2018). While this transformation was predominantly guided by the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), the Framework for Social Welfare Service (Department of Social Development, 2013) was established as a supporting policy that seeks to further guide developmental social welfare in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2013). Developmental social welfare calls for implementation of the empowerment approach, both of which emphasis practise that considers the needs of vulnerable groups such as youth in order to promote the functioning of youth based on the principles of social justice (Parsons & East, 2013).

The Framework for Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013) succeeds in illustrating the nature, scope, extent and level of social work services. It also guides social work service delivery through the identification of vulnerable groups, such as youth (Department of Social Development, 2013), as is evident in the figure below.

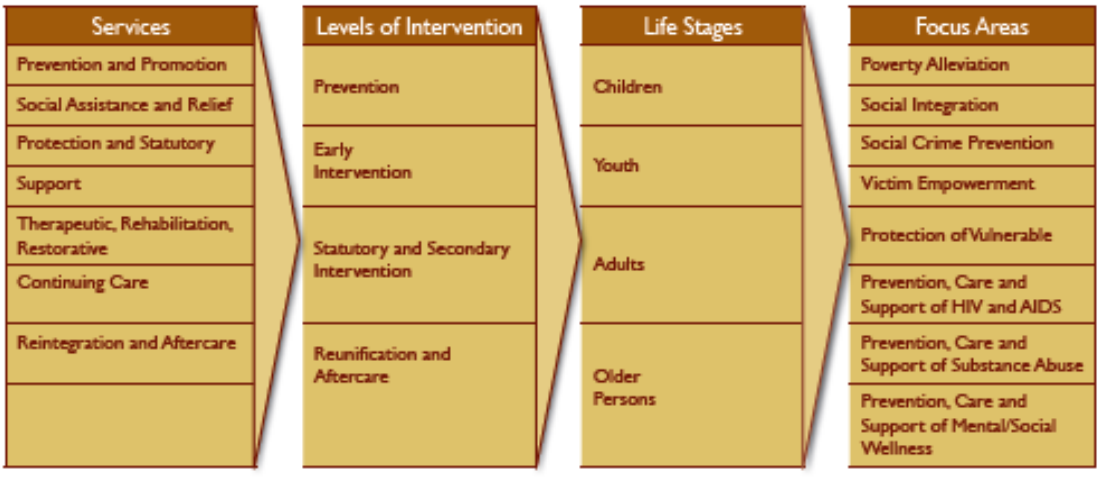


***Figure 3. 3. Service Delivery Fields***

Source: Framework for Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013).

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Figure 3.3 depicts that social crime prevention, of which youth gang prevention forms part, as an area of focus for social work (Department of Social Development, 2013). However, youth gangsterism is not explicitly mentioned. According to the empowerment approach, in-depth engagement is required in order to ensure adequate collaboration for prevention from an empowerment perspective (Dubois & Miley, 2016). This therefore requires explicit identification of youth gangsterism as a problem at macro level in order to adequately inform meso and micro level intervention in the form of youth gang prevention.

In considering this view, the Framework for Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013) provides limited guidance for the role and responsibilities of social work in youth gang prevention in South Africa.

### 3.3.5. The White Paper on Safety and Security (2016)

The White Paper on Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) was developed in response to the review of the original White Paper on Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 1998), whereby the need to establish an integrated and developmental approach to crime prevention was recognised. Against this backdrop, the White Paper on Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) seeks to illustrate the roles and responsibilities of the various governmental departments in crime prevention, in order to promote a collaborative approach to safety in South Africa. However, it should be noted that, while the White Paper on Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) makes extensive use of research conducted by the Department of Social Development (DSD), DSD is not provided with specific guidance towards crime prevention, therefore excluding social work as a role-player.

In terms of youth gang prevention, the White Paper on Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) recognises the prevalence of youth in perpetrations of criminal gang activity in South Africa. In response to this prevalence, youth are identified as a vulnerable target group, thereby providing guidance towards the social work service delivery (Department of Safety and Security, 2016). Again, this focus on the youth is supported by various policy and legislative frameworks

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(Department of Social Development, 1997; 2005; 2011; 2013; Department of Safety and Security, 2016; Department of Health, 2017).

However, the White Paper for Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) recognises the need for further research about youth gangsterism in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In cognizance of this, the White Paper for Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) directs their solutions towards general crime prevention, rather than specific gang-orientated interventions. However, general crime prevention strategies are noted as inadequate in addressing youth gangsterism, due to the highly unique nature of the phenomenon (Pinnock, 2015).

Thus, while the White Paper for Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) is a spearhead policy in its considerable and explicit reference to youth gangsterism in South Africa, it does not provide adequate practical guidance for social work intervention for youth gang prevention at micro and meso levels. This gap may be consequent of the White Paper for Safety and Security (Department of Safety and Security, 2016) seeking to address general safety and security issues in South Africa, with an attempt to address the shortcoming in the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016).

### 3.3.6. The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (2016)

The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) was adopted in succession to the Western Cape Social Transformation, Gang Prevention and Intervention Strategy (2008). The strategy presents a holistic approach to addressing the underlying causes of gangsterism in the Western Cape through enhancing inter-departmental collaboration (Department of Community Safety, 2016).

In pursuit of gang prevention in Western Cape communities, the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) introduces four implementation pillars. These pillars are (1) human development, (2) social partnerships, (3) spatial design, and (4) criminal justice responses. The roles and responsibilities of governmental spheres and social service providers in the implementation of each pillar are demarcated within the strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016). While social work interventions are not mentioned in its

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entirety, implementation responsibilities are afforded to the Department of Social Development under which, and in partnership with which, social workers engage (Department of Community Safety, 2016). Through this affordance, social work intervention is guided towards implementation of gang prevention under the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016).

The Department of Social Development is identified as a key role player in implementing the first pillar of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016), which is human development. To uphold this pillar, the Department of Social Development is responsible for ensuring school safety, social cohesion and sustainable communities, and enhanced service delivery (Department of Community Safety, 2016). These objectives are supported by elements of the empowerment approach, which emphasises the importance of sustainability in service delivery (Dubois & Miley, 2016). In this manner, the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) guides social work practise in the field of youth gang prevention by explicitly demarcating the profession's roles and responsibilities.

The second pillar of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) is social partnerships. This entails the establishment of policies that allow for community safety forums and local structures that address safety concerns (Department of Community Safety, 2016). Again, the Department of Social Development is identified as a foremost contributor towards implementation of this pillar (Department of Community Safety, 2016). Thus, social workers are guided in gang prevention practise, as they are called towards the initiation of safety-orientated communications and policy development.

The third pillar of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) is concerned with spatial design. Social workers are excluded under this aspect of the policy's gang prevention measures (Department of Community Safety, 2016). Seeing that social work intervention does not particularly specialise in material spatial design practise, the exclusion of social work service provision from this pillar may be appropriate. However, as social workers are concerned with the holistic well-being of their target groups and are often actively interacting with the spatial designs of their clients' communities, the profession's knowledge and expertise of the structural

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elements of communities may be beneficial towards the prevention of gangsterism in communities.

The fourth and final pillar of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) focuses on criminal justice responses. The Department of Social Development is recognised as a foremost component in the implementation of appropriate persecution practises, as well as in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders of gangsterism (Department of Community Safety, 2016). While this provides guidance towards social work practise in the field of youth gangsterism, the foundations of this pillar are directed towards tertiary intervention and not preventative in nature, which is needed to address youth gang prevention (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ward, 2007; Pinnock, 2015; Maccain, 2017; Parker, 2018). Tertiary intervention seeks to respond to youth gangsterism as opposed to preventing it from occurring (Bloom, 2013).

While the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) serves as a core guiding policy in social work, the policy is yet to be implemented. Presentations of the policy are available to the public, however, a formal policy document remains yet to be established (Department of Community Safety, 2016). This creates challenges for appropriate implementation, understanding, monitoring and evaluation of the policy. Furthermore, what is known of the policy has been critiqued as being unimplementable, as the strategy provides a broad overview of what must be done but does not succinctly state how this should be carried out (Pinnock, 2016). Finally, the policy has been critiqued as lacking an understanding of youth gangsterism in South Africa and, more specifically, in the Western Cape, as the policy lacks basis in daily reality, thus reducing the policy to an ideological construct (Pinnock, 2016).

Furthermore, the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) lacks a specific focus on the youth, who constitute majority of gangs in South Africa and the Western Cape (Hoover, 1999; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016). The Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017) serves as a policy specifically directed at addressing specific needs of youth in South Africa.

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### 3.3.7. Adolescent and Youth Policy (2017)

The Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017) was established on an understanding that youth remain an at-risk group in South Africa. It was developed to promote the health and well-being of the youth (Department of Health, 2017).

Despite being anchored in a health-based context, the Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017) guides social work practise through the demarcation of youth being identified as a vulnerable target group and requires specific services. Thus, this policy stands in support of preceding policies and legislation indicating the vulnerability of youth, such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 1997), the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011) and the Framework for Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013). Additionally, this youth-based preventative approach aligns with the views of Van Way and Theron (2005); Ward (2007); Pinnock (2015); Mccain (2017) and Parker (2018), who indicate that youth require specific services aimed at youth gang prevention.

The Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017) further provides guidance for social work service provision for youth gang prevention efforts through the prioritisation of violence prevention in families and communities. Thus, the vital role of social work services is identified as the prevention of violence – of which youth gangsterism has been identified as a foremost contributor in South Africa and the Western Cape (Department of Health, 2017; Ramaphosa, 2019; Pinnock, 2019). The Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017) guides social work intervention regarding violence prevention through illustrating the underlying causes of violence in communities. An example being substance abuse, which according to Kinnes (2008); Green and Wijnberg (2014) and Pinnock (2015) is identified as a leading risk factor associated with youth gangsterism in the Western Cape. Furthermore, guidance is provided on how micro- and meso-level risk factors should be addressed in an effort to prevent violence, through positive parenting, conflict management and positive schooling (Department of Health, 2017). In this manner, social workers engage in youth gang prevention.

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Figure 3.4 below provides an indication of how social services and education can play a foremost role in the prevention of violence in South Africa.

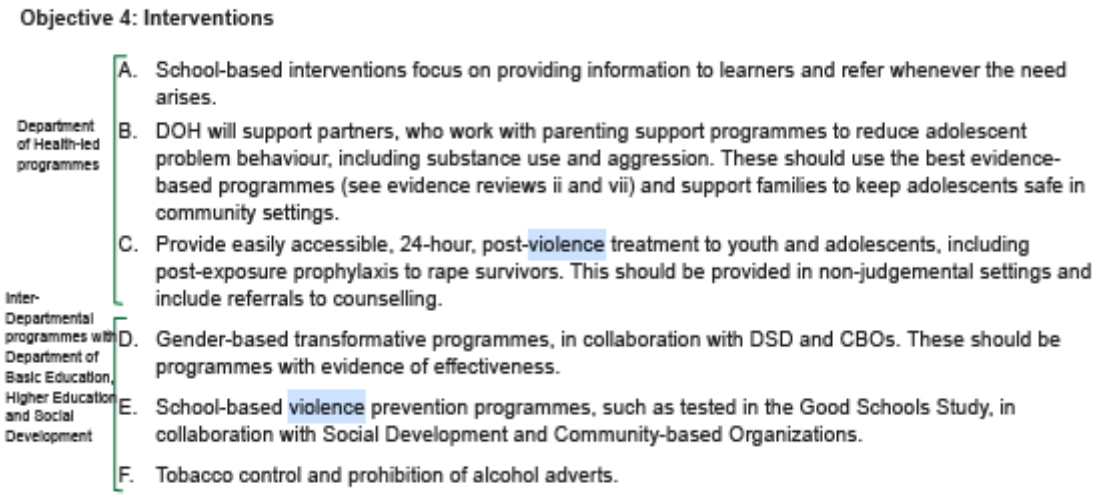


*Figure 3. 4. Interventions*

Source: Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017).

***Figure 3.4. Interventions***

Source: Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017).

Figure 3.4 demarcates the specific roles and responsibilities of social services and education services, thus providing guidance towards the social work efforts to youth gangsterism in the form of violence prevention.

However, despite the Adolescent and Youth Policy's (Department of Health, 2017) significant guidance towards violence prevention, specific reference to youth gangsterism remains absent. Thus, practical guidance for social work intervention for youth gang prevention remains limited. Furthermore, the Adolescent and Youth Policy (Department of Health, 2017) is targeted on a national level, thereby introducing the risk of being inapplicable against the unique contextual backdrop of individual provinces of South Africa, such as the Western Cape. The Western Cape Safety Plan

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(Western Cape Government, 2019) aims to address issues specific to the Western Cape.

### 3.3.8. Western Cape Safety Plan (2019)

The Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019) was developed in response to youth gangsterism specifically, thereby acknowledging youth gangsterism as a foremost problem in the Western Cape. The plan seeks to address this crisis though strengthening law enforcement capacity and tending to the root causes of crime in the province (Western Cape Government, 2019). To this end, the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019) identifies five priority areas, which include:

- Safe and cohesive communities.
- Empowerment.
- Enabling economy and jobs.
- Public transport, mobility and spatial transformation.
- Innovation and culture (Western Cape Government, 2019).

The Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019:13) aims to address violent crime through “prioritised holistic, integrated and long-term actions”. Underlying these actions is the underlying of the complexities of crime and, thus, the plan aspires to respond to the needs of individuals across their lifespan in order to build collective resilience that serves to buffer against criminality and the effects of crime victimisation (Western Cape Government, 2019).

In terms of the role of social workers in the implementation of such actions, the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019) outlines the responsibilities of the Department of Social Development. The Department of Social Development is responsible for identifying, profiling and supporting youth at risk of violent or criminal behaviour (Western Cape Government, 2019). Additionally, the Department of Social Development is responsible for delivering parenting programmes, based on international success, that seek to reduce violence, gender-based violence and substance abuse (Western Cape Government, 2019). These actions serve to support the priorities of building safe and cohesive communities, as well as empowering people (Western Cape Government, 2019).

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However, there are challenges to the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019). The plan has been critiqued as lacking detail, thereby reducing the plan to an ideological construct; it is a vision rather than a concrete roadmap (Payne, 2019). Furthermore, in terms of the role of social work, the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019) compels the development of parenting programmes to be based on international initiatives. The use of international strategies in addressing youth gangsterism has been argued as inadequate in addressing a phenomenon that is notoriously unique to its context (Cooper & Ward, 2012; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014). Finally, concrete implementation of the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019) has focused largely on the suppressive elements of the initiative. Suppression efforts, as has been demonstrated by the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998), tends to provoke gangs into greater cohesion and intensified brutality (Standing, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012). This stands in opposition to other macro-level legislative pieces such as the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008), and approaches such as the empowerment approach, which advocate for crime to be addressed through preventative measures (Du Bois & Miley, 2016).

The suppression efforts associated with the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019) are reflected in how financial and human resources allocated the carrying out of the plan have been streamlined towards law enforcement, thereby neglecting the social and underlying aspects of crime in the province (Somdyala, 2019). Therefore, the Western Cape Safety Plan (2019) has far failed to uphold its objective of holistic intervention and, consequently, fails to support the roles and responsibilities of social workers in the prevention of violent crime, such as youth gangsterism (Kinnes, 2017).

## 3.4. CONCLUSION

Various authors and national documents recognise that youth gangsterism serves as the foremost crime problem in the Western Cape (Kinnes, 1995; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ramaphosa, 2019; Western Cape Government, 2019). However, while social work intervention is guided in practise through extensive policy and legislation, little explicit guidance is afforded to the prevention of youth gangsterism. Thus, despite social workers being identified as key role players in the prevention of youth

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gangsterism, services targeting this phenomenon remain poor and in need of development (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). The rarity of guidance towards social work in youth gang prevention has resulted in the role of the social worker within such services remaining uncertain and inadequately researched. Thus, the views of social workers on their role in youth gang prevention was necessary to examine towards the end of developing an optimal service delivery system that would successfully prevent youth gangsterism in the Western Cape.

The views of social workers on their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape has been explored through the means of an empirical study. The resultant data has been analysed and presented in the following chapter, Chapter Four.

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# CHAPTER FOUR

# EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION RELATED TO THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to meet the third research objective of this study, which is presenting the empirical investigation into the views of social workers on their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape.

The empirical data collection was conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, and the resultant data analysed through an exploratory design. The data of the empirical study will be analysed through a qualitative approach in order to promote in-depth interpretations of the participants' narrative. Analysis of the participants' biographical information is presented in table 4.1.

Interpretations of the participants' narratives will be analysed in reference to the literature study to support correlations and appropriate deductions of the identified themes, subthemes, and related categories.

This chapter is divided into Section A (Research Method) and Section B (Empirical Investigation).

## SECTION A: RESEARCH METHOD

This section presents an overview of the employed research method for the gathering of empirical data.

## 4.2. PREPARATION FOR THE INVESTIGATION

### 4.2.1. Research question

The research question was outlined as "What are the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape?" This research question was determined as appropriate towards seeking an in-depth understanding towards a demarcated capacity and responsibility of social workers in youth gang prevention.

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Additionally, the structure of this research question speaks to the chosen exploratory research design, which is concerned with gaining insight through answering the “what” questions (Mouton, 2001).

The research question served as a strong support structure throughout the empirical data collection process, as it provided an underpinning pillar from which to base all interview questions and further data analysis on.

### 4.2.2. Aims and objectives

The aim of the study was developed according to the research question and, thus, sought to gain an understanding of the perceptions of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape. This aim was supported by four objectives. This chapter sought to address the third objective, which was to empirically investigate the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape.

The data collected was rich in detail and understanding towards the aim of the study. Thus, said objective was successfully achieved through data collection and ensuing data analysis.

### 4.2.3. Pilot study

A pilot study is considered a trial run of the data collection method, which is conducted with a smaller group of participants. It was decided that the pilot study would be conducted in order to bridge gaps, eliminate potential bias, and ensure reliability of, both, the data collection instrument, and the sample criteria (Delport & Fouche, 2011; Delport & Strydom, 2011). The pilot study was thus implemented by the purposive selection of two respondents that allowed for the data collection process to be tested.

Upon implementation, it was deduced that the data collection instrument required altering, in order to be further structured according to the selected ecological perspective and empowerment approach. This restructuring was in specific relation to the levels of the ecological perspective, thus allowing the researcher to gain clearer insight of the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention, at the various level of the ecosystem. The said theoretical perspective and approach was selected as a foundation towards understanding the role of social workers in youth

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gang prevention according to their respective orientations, in order to provide a theoretical background for the resulting data to be understood, analysed, and evaluated. Despite the need for the data collection instrument to be altered, the data collected through the pilot study was included in the data analysis process as it remained valuable and relevant to the study findings.

### 4.2.4. Research sample

The sample comprised of 20 social workers, all of whom, in some capacity, had experience in service delivery within gang-ridden areas of the Western Cape. The selection of this sample was done in consideration to appropriate representation of the said population group in order to reach the desired objective of understanding social workers' views on their role in youth gang prevention. Qualitative research is less concerned with population representation and more concerned with diversity (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Originally, the researcher identified five areas of the Western Cape whereby youth gangsterism was rifest. The sample was intended to be made up of social workers delivering services in these five identified areas. However, the researcher later decided to include social workers from a larger range of gang-infested areas of the Western Cape, in order to encourage further diversity. Prior to proceeding with the change in sample, the researcher obtained a second notice of ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee (Appendix G).

The criteria for inclusion of the sample were therefore that participants were:

- registered social workers who have been rendering services in gang-ridden areas of the Western Cape for one year or more;
- proficient in English.

This criteria for inclusion enabled the researcher to effectively collect data, thus achieving the fourth objective of the study which was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape.

### 4.2.5. Research approach, design, and instrument

A qualitative research approach was employed in order to allow analysis of the discourse and narratives of participants according to identified themes, subthemes,

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and categories. The use of a qualitative research approach allowed for the collection of data to support the perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013), as well as analyse the data from a contextual understanding (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Smith, 2014). This allowed for an empirical investigation into the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention, as well as subsequently allowed for resulting empirical data to be underpinned or discussed through literature control.

Application of an exploratory research design enabled the researcher to approach the research through a qualitative approach, as well as enabled the researcher to explore the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention (de Vos & Fouche, 2011; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). The supportive relationship between said research approach and research design allowed for the collection of rich data through implementation of diverse frames of reference (Alasuutari, 2010). Accordingly, the researcher was successfully able to achieve the third research objective, which was to empirically investigate the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention, thereby contributing to achievement of the overall aim of the study.

The data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix H). A set of predetermined open-ended questions formed the content of the interview schedule, which provided the researcher with the flexibility to ensure ease and comfort to engage with the participants as they shared their views regarding their role in youth gang prevention (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

### 4.2.6. Data collection methods

The empirical data was collected through engagement in a semi-structured interview with twenty participants. Participants were provided with the informed consent form (Appendix E) prior to the interview for personal review. Thereafter, the informed consent form was mutually reviewed on the scheduled date of their interview; confidentiality was assured at that time. The interviews were conducted with each individual participant, telephonically, in order to ensure the safety of all persons involved under the context of COVID-19 safety protocol. The use of telephonic communication was successful and contributed to participant participation, as it encouraged a feeling of physical safety. While the researcher originally questioned the

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capacity of climate setting through telephonic communications, the use of verbal climate setting and assurance proved sufficient towards successful data collection (Johnson & Yanca, 2010). Additionally, said data collection method contributed towards positive participant involvement, as the remote interviews strengthened feelings of anonymity, thereby strengthening positive emotions associated with confidentiality.

The resultant data was analysed in order to identify patterns that formed themes, subthemes, and categories for which to understand and interpret the collected data.

### 4.2.7. Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of organising and structuring of collected data in order to identify underlying meaning and patterns (de Vos, Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Babbie, 2014). In order to understand participants' underlying meaning regarding the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention, Tech's eight steps to qualitative data analysis were applied during the process of data analysis (Creswell, 2014). First, the researcher reviewed the data transcriptions in order for the researcher to make sense of the participants' responses in its entirety. Following this, the researcher reviewed each of the data transcriptions individually in order to identify themes associated with the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention, which were then clustered together and abbreviated as codes. The identified themes were then broken down further into categories that allowed for in-depth understanding to be exhibited through the interpretation of data patterns and interpreted through diverse potential explanations (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In simplified terms, the researcher employed a top-down approach, whereby the data was first reviewed in its entirety before systematically deconstructing it into smaller sections in the form of themes, sub-themes and categories that are expressed through data excerpts and literature control; this allowed for a structured and dense understanding of the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention to be relayed and interpreted.

## SECTION B: PRESENTATION OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

The following sections of this chapter seek to present and discuss the collected empirical data.

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## 4.3. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

This section seeks to present and discuss the biographical information of the participants. The biographical data is presented in table 4.1, in order to provide a clear presentation of the participants. This includes the participants' position in the organisation, years of experience and the nature of their caseloads.

**Table 4.1. Biographical information of research participants**

| Participant | Position within the organisation | Years of experience working in gang-affected areas of the Western Cape | Developmental phase of the client system | Percentage of clients which are youth gangsters | Percentage of clients affected by youth gangsterism |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Social Worker | 2 | Childhood - Adolescence | 10% | 10% |
| B | Social Worker | 3 | Childhood - Adolescence | 25% | 45% |
| C | Social Worker | 12 | Childhood - Adolescence | 50% | 60% |
| D | Social Worker | 8 | Childhood - Adolescence | 75% | 70% |
| E | Social Worker | 2 | Childhood - Adolescence | 20% | 20% |
| F | Social Work Supervisor | 15 | Childhood - Adolescence | 80% | 80% |
| G | Social Worker | 2 | Adolescence to Young Adulthood | 20% | 40% |
| H | Social Worker | 4 | Childhood - Adolescence | 85% | 90% |
| I | Social Worker | 7 | Childhood - Adolescence | 85% | 90% |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | Social Worker | 11 | Adolescence to Young Adulthood | 80% | 85% |
| K | Social Work Supervisor | 20 | Adolescence to Young Adulthood | 50% | 70% |
| L | Social Worker | 10 | Adolescence to Young Adulthood | 75% | 75% |
| M | Social Worker | 18 | Childhood - Adolescence | 90% | 95% |
| P | Social Worker | 8 | Childhood - Adolescence | 30% | 70% |
| O | Social Worker | 30 | Adolescence to Young Adulthood | 80% | 90% |
| P | Social Worker | 3 | Childhood - Adolescence | 75% | 85% |
| Q | Social Worker | 6 | Childhood - Adolescence | 75% | 85% |
| R | Social Worker | 6 | Childhood - Adolescence | 70% | 70% |
| S | Social Worker | 10 | Adolescence to Young Adulthood | 40% | 60% |
| T | Social Worker | 5 | Adolescence to Young Adulthood | 80% | 90% |

Table 4.1. provides a representation of the participants in terms of work experience, as well as an overview of their caseload specific to youth gangsterism. All participants are employed as social workers in terms of registration with the South African Council of Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and, therefore, are permitted to engage in social work practise within the context of South Africa (Social Service Provisions Act, 1978).

It can be noted that participants render services to children, adolescents, and young adults who are either involved in gangsterism or affected by it. The developmental

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phases of the client system are indicative of how young children become involved with or exposed to gangsterism in the Western Cape (Hoover, 1999; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016).

The majority of the participants indicated that more than 40% of the client system to whom they render services are actively involved in youth gangsterism. While the minority of participants indicated less than 40% of their client system are personally involved in youth gangsterism. It should further be noted that none of the participants indicated a complete absence of youth gang involvement in their client systems; all participants indicated the presence of youth gang involvement in their client systems to some degree. The majority of the participants noted more than 50% of their caseload as being affected by youth gangsterism. This indicates that youth gangsterism is a consistent presenting problem in social work service delivery amongst the participants. As participants were selected based on the fact that they render services in gang affected areas in the Western Cape, their caseloads are indicative of service provision to not only those affected by youth gangsterism, but also to youth gangsters themselves. The large prevalence of youth gangsterism ascertained by the participants' caseloads indicates youth gangsterism as a foremost social problem in their areas of service provision (Kinnes, 1995; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ramaphosa, 2019).

## 4.4. THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION

This section provides an exposition of the themes, sub-themes and categories identified through the empirical data collection process. Thematic analysis, based on Tech's eight steps (Creswell, 2014), was applied in order to break down each identified theme into respective sub-themes. These sub-themes were then analysed and discussed according to related categories. The exposition of themes, sub-themes and categories are presented by the use of a table in order to contribute to empirical organisation and understanding (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2013).

Five themes were identified through the data collection process, which was conducted by using a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix H). These five identified

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themes were categorised into sub-themes and categories. The themes, sub-themes, and categories are presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Themes, sub-themes and categories derived from data analysis**

| THEMES | SUB-THEMES | CATEGORIES |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Micro-level social work intervention in relation to youth gangsterism | 1.1. Micro-level risk factors for youth gangsterism | · Age as a risk factor for youth gang involvement<br>· Gender as a risk factor for youth gang involvement<br>· Race as a risk factor for youth gang involvement<br>· Genetics as a risk factor for youth gang involvement |
| | 1.2. Social work case work services in response to youth gangsterism | · Case work contributes to social work assessment and evaluation in youth gang prevention<br>· Case work contributes to social workers delivering integrated services towards youth gang prevention<br>· Case work contributes to the social work role of a direct service provider in youth gang prevention |
| 2. Meso-level social work intervention in relation to youth gangsterism | 2.1. Meso-level risk factors for youth gangsterism | · Family as a risk factor for youth gangsterism<br>· Peer pressure and role-modelling as a risk factor for youth gangsterism<br>· Educational challenges as a risk factor for youth gangsterism |
| | 2.2. Social work group work in response to youth gangsterism | · Group work contributes to meeting social needs in youth gang prevention |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | · Group work as a form of empowerment in youth gang prevention<br>· Group work contributes to the social work role of facilitator and advocate in overcoming resource challenges in youth gang prevention |
| 3. Macro-level social work intervention in youth gang prevention | 3.1. Macro-level risk factors for youth gangsterism | · Community exposure to gangsterism as a risk factor for personal youth gang involvement<br>· Poverty and unemployment as a risk factor for youth gangsterism<br>· Lack of recreational opportunities as a risk factor for youth gangsterism<br>· Larger societal norms as a risk factor for youth gangsterism<br>· Negative governmental role-modelling as a risk factor for youth gangsterism<br>· Inadequate state prevention efforts towards youth gangsterism |
| | 3.2. Social work community work in response to youth gangsterism | · Community work contributes to the social work role of planner in youth gang prevention<br>· Community work contributes to the social work role of advocate<br>· Community work contributes to the social work role of mediator |
| | 3.3. Policy and legislation in guiding the role of social | · Social work perceptions about existing policy and legislation |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | workers in youth gang prevention | guiding social work in youth gang prevention |
| 4. Challenges to the role of social workers in youth gang prevention | 4.1. Inadequate resources in delivering youth gang prevention services | · Inadequate financial resources for youth gang prevention<br>· Inadequate human resources for youth gang prevention<br>· Inadequate supportive resources in terms of recognition of youth gang prevention |
| | 4.2. Novice challenge of COVID-19 | · Increased isolation of youth in gang-ridden community settings exacerbating risk factors |
| | 4.3. The need for specialised training in social work for youth gang prevention | |
| | 4.4. Absence of an established, recognised and designated role for social workers within youth gang prevention | · |
| 5. Recommendations related to the development and optimisation of the role of social workers in youth gang prevention | 5.1. The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be focused on youth empowerment through case work, group work and community work | |
| | 5.2. The role of the social worker should focus on primary youth gang prevention | |
| | 5.3. The role of the social worker should focus on | |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | holistic youth gang prevention services (micro, meso and macro-levels) | |

The five respective themes, its sub-themes and related categories are explored and analysed below.

## 4.5. THEME 1: MICRO LEVEL SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION IN RELATION TO YOUTH GANGSTERISM

Micro-level social work intervention was identified as a theme and is discussed according to subsequent sub-themes and categories which include risk factors for youth gang involvement.

### 4.5.1. Sub-theme 1.1. Micro-level risk factors for youth gangsterism

Participants were asked to provide an indication of the potential risk factors for youth gangsterism on a micro-level, which focused on various characteristics of the youth in relation to individual functioning and behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Germain & Gitterman, 1976; 1980).

The categories that emerged within this sub-theme include, age, gender, race, and genetics. These categories are discussed below:

*4.5.1.1. Category: Age as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

Participants were asked to provide an indication of the role of age as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. Few participants indicated youth gangsterism as an exclusively adolescent or adulthood behaviour. Others indicated that youth gangsterism is exclusively prominent among adolescents and adults. This is depicted in the narratives below:

> *I dealt with a lot of gangsters from the age of 19. But let me say **18 – 28 years old**." (Participant F)*

When youth gangsterism in South Africa came to light in the early 1900's, gang members averaged between 15 and 25 years of age, thereby indicating adolescence

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as the foremost development stage of vulnerability towards this phenomenon (Hoover, 1999; Michaeli, 2016). The narrative above suggests this understanding has maintained static to date. A potential explanation for this is depicted by the following narrative:

> *"Yes, I'd say probably say from teenager to young adult. I think at that age teenagers and young adults tend to be more impressionable and somewhat of a vulnerable group. So,* ***they are looking to fit in and find your place within society*** *and, if there is gang activity around, they found themselves caught up in it. Also,* ***they find belonging in the gangs****." (Participant K).*

It is natural within the developmental period of adolescence that a child's attachments to the family unit minimise and children begin to seek purpose in groups outside the family and larger society (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Bezuidenhout, 2018; Kelly, 2018). This depicts how youth gangs serve to provide their members, particularly vulnerable children with the opportunity to form part of an organisation in which they gain a sense of belonging through shared beliefs, values, and behavioural traits (Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014).

However, the narratives above represent the minority view of participants. Most participants indicated that adolescent individuals are no longer the most vulnerable towards youth gang recruitment. In fact, most participants indicated that youth gang attachment has become predominantly associated with earlier childhood. This is depicted in the following narratives:

> *"The* ***younger children are more predisposed to youth gangsterism****. Once you have reached the age of 18-20 years old, you have already formed a capacity to think for yourself so you may not be as at risk." (Participant D)*

> *"****These children are 8 or 9 years old*** *growing up in that culture, and their mannerisms are already that of a little gangster." (Participant G)*

The above narratives point towards a more contemporary view that gang involvement has changed in terms of age. Younger children are being subjected to gang recruitment and involvement, and ultimately become gangsters themselves. In 2001, the South African Police Service (SAPS) indicated that the ages of gang members averaged between 11 and 16 years, and that the ages of gang leaders averaged

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around 50 years (South African Police Service, 2011). However, personal accounts of gang members indicate that gang affiliation can begin as young as 9 years (Salo, 2005; Swingler, 2014; Department of Social Development, 2014).

Regardless of whether participants believed youth gang attachment presents as most prevalent among children or adolescents, participants agreed that youth gang involvement was becoming increasingly younger, as is evident in the following narratives:

> *"The age is becoming **younger and younger**; they are recruiting them younger and younger." (Participant N)*

The views of participants in this study thus point towards a contemporary understanding of youth gangsterism in South Africa, whereby it is understood that the youth are entering gangs at increasingly younger ages. This view is shared by Hoover (1999), who in the late 1990's already indicated that the entry level for gangsterism was becoming increasingly younger. Van Way and Theron (2005) later supported this finding. More recently, Michaeli (2016) confirmed the pattern of younger gang recruitment, particularly amongst young boys.

*4.5.1.2. Category: Gender as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

The participants were asked to provide an indication of the role of gender as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. Only one participant indicated youth gangsterism as equally represented by males and females. The remaining majority of participants indicated that youth gangsterism was predominantly represented by males, as is demonstrated through the following narratives:

> *"[Youth gangs] is **definitely males**." (Participant A)*

The above narrative demonstrates being male is a risk factor for youth gangsterism. This is synonymous with Jensen (2008), Petrus (2013), Pinnock (2015), Wegner, Behardien, Loubser, Ryklief and Smith (2016), who are all in agreement that youth gangsterism is predominantly a male phenomenon. Some participants shared some insights into why they think being male is a risk factor for youth gang involvement.

> *"Males are most definitely more at risk of becoming gangsters. I think the **boys are more aggressive**, I do not know why. But the boys, uhm, I do not know,*

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> ***they seem to be more frustrated, so they use the gang to be violent and get that out****. Also, it is just the way our society is. These boys are growing up in poverty, but we tell them they must take care of their family, they must be* ***macho****. So, they go to the gangs for money, and because the gangsters are the* ***tough guys****." (Participant T)*

This view that being male is a risk factor is further shared by Yates, Perry, Macindoe, Holman and Ellingrad (1999), Pope, Kouri and Hudson (2000), and Sjodin, Wallinius, Billstedt, Hofvander and Nilsson (2018). They all seem to be in agreement that youth gangsterism is a male phenomenon which could be attributed to a biological surplus of testosterone in males as they go through puberty. This surplus of testosterone can result in male aggression and frustration, which can be linked to youth gangsterism as a means of expressing frustration. This is supported by Salo (2005) and Pinnock (2015) who identify youth gangsterism as a means of expressing feelings of aggression, violence, and hostility. However, a study conducted by O'Conner, Archer and Frederick (2004) found no correlation between natural male testosterone production and violent expression. Thus, the following narrative provides a potential alternative understanding towards the role of gender as a risk factor for youth gangsterism:

> *"I have only ever worked with males who are involved in gangsterism. I think females are more just affected by it.* ***I think that it's mainly males because boys who grow up in poorer communities have the belief that they need to provide as this is their gender role.****" (Participant F)*

Typically, traditional male gender roles are that of the family protector and breadwinner, thus implicating the need for males to be economically successful (Vetten, 2000; Salo, 2005). Thus, males of lower socioeconomic backgrounds are subject to experiences of emasculation (Salo, 2005; MacMaster, 2007). The illicit economic activities of the gangs, as well as the violence they ascribed to, provided an alternative means for men to develop a masculine and dominant identity within their communities (Vetten, 2000; Salo, 2005). Due to the economic dispossession of non-white men during the apartheid era that continues to bleed into contemporary society, this could be a potential explanation which potentially makes race a possible risk factor for youth gangsterism.

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*4.5.1.3. Category: Race as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

Participants were asked if race can be regarded as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. A few participants indicated equal representation of Coloured and Black individuals in youth gangsterism, while majority of the participants indicated youth gangsterism as predominant among the Coloured population only, as can be seen in the narratives below:

> *"Yes, I do.* ***I would say non-whites****. My reason for this thinking is that poverty plays a big role in youth gangsterism. Unfortunately, the more poverty-stricken areas are the non-white areas.* ***I don't think it has anything to do with race itself, but rather that more non-white experience lower socioeconomic circumstances****." (Participant C)*

> *"In my opinion, yes,* ***a lot of coloured and black culture is present in gangsterism****. I do not see a lot of, you know, white gangsters. It does not sound right, but you know what I mean. Yet again, it comes into this experience of displacement and needing to defend yourself because of your race.* ***These were the two races that were displaced and had to defend themselves and got into gang culture to do so****." (Participant G)*

> *"Yes,* ***I think it is more skewed towards coloured and black communities****. I think it definitely stems from the apartheid era and the way that different racial groups were separated because of the apartheid policies. Obviously,* ***certain racial groups were deprived of resources, and the effects of that are still trickling down today****. (Participant M).*

Participants indicated that youth gangsterism is a phenomenon predominantly noted in Black and Coloured communities. This view is shared by Petrus (2013), Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube (2014) and Pinnock (2015). Such as in the case of gender, participants largely attributed this to lower socioeconomic status associated with Black and Coloured population groups. Participants associated this status as consequent of on-going economic oppression and displacement that continues from the apartheid era. During apartheid, social and economic survival was predominantly based on being categorised as white (Vetten, 2000). Apartheid ensured non-white men held claim to neither means of survival through the purposeful stripping of structural, social, economic, and political recognition and support (Salo, 2005; Van Way & Theron, 2005;

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Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014). Youth gangs have rose to prominence as a substitute means of survival (Pinnock, 2015, 2019; Van Lennep, 2019). This economic oppression and dispossession of non-white populations largely originated through apartheid regimes but has continued to date due to limited reform under democracy (Petrus, 2013; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014). Thus, indicating that race may not be a risk factor, but that economic status due to historical background is the potential risk factor for youth gangsterism.

There are, however, participants who were of the opinion that youth gangsterism is exclusive to Coloured communities, as is depicted through the narratives below:

> *"In my personal opinion and professional experience, the **coloured community** seems to be more involved in **gangsterism**. I do not know of any other races being involved." (Participant B)*
>
> *"I think, specifically in the Western Cape, gangsterism is most prominent within the Cape Flats. So, I would day that **it is more the coloured community**." (Participant J)*
>
> *"Yes, youth gangsterism is very predominant within the **coloured community.** Because I think, us as coloureds, we do not really know where we fit in. A lot of the time we do not know our place in society, because we are kind of between races. So being in a gang makes you feel like you have a purpose." (Participant E)*
>
> *"I would say that gangs are quite popular among the **coloured population**. It is not often that you see it among the whites and the blacks. I would say this is because of **unemployment and poverty**." (Participant J)*

In the Western Cape particularly, youth gangsterism has been noted as largely characteristic of the coloured population specifically (Smit, 1985; Kinnes, 2000; Jensen, 2008; Petrus, 2013; Roloff, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). Again, the narrative above points towards race-isolated poverty as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. This can be noted particularly in the Western Cape, which is predominantly represented by the Coloured population who was previously displaced along the Cape Flats and noted by many other authors (Smit, 1985; Kinnes, 2000; Jensen, 2008; Petrus, 2013; Roloff, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). Such deprivation and dispossession had led to soaring youth

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gangsterism among the Cape Flats, thereby positioning the Western Cape as a gang capital (Pinnock, 2015; Zille, 2017).

Ultimately, the majority participants indicated youth gangsterism as predominantly represented by the Coloured population. Yet again, the views of the participants are such that race does not predispose an individual to gangsterism, but rather economic and structural deprivation and dispossession that targets racial groups places children in particular communities at risk of youth gangsterism.

*4.5.1.4. Category: Genetics as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

The participants were asked if they thought genetics played any role in youth gangsterism. Most of the participants indicated that genetics does not play a role in youth gangsterism, however some indicated otherwise, as can be seen in the narratives below:

> *"**I would not say genetics play a role**. But your **upbringing plays a role**." (Participant F)*

> *"In my opinion, no, genetics does not play a role. **I think how you are reared within the household, how you are reared within the family, plays much more of a role**. For example, if your father is a gang boss, the children are exposed to that and some will then also join a gang." (Participant N)*

> *"**There definitely is an intergenerational role in terms of families who were gang members**. It's like, my grandfather was a gangster, my father was a gangster, and now **my path has been set out for me: I'm going to be a gangster**." (Participant J)*

> *"I think maybe in terms of epigenetics. I think there may be past traumas in the family that are past down, and **behaviours that are so often repeated that they become passed down. These things will eventually form part of a genetic make-up**." (Participant K)*

The narratives above indicate opposing views with regards to genetics as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. Some participants indicate that genetics are by no means a risk factor, while others have strong views as to why genetics may be a risk factor. These opposing views are also evident in research. According to Plomin *et al* (2013), pure

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hereditary genetics cannot be altered and thus it is unlikely that they can be skewed towards a predisposition towards a particular anti-social behaviour, such as youth gangsterism.

However, research conducted by Yehuda *et al* (2018) has demonstrated how epigenetics could explain a link between hereditary trauma and phenomena such as youth gangsterism. Intergenerational experiences that are considered to be negative, dysfunctional, or traumatic may condition a child to survive under conditions of environmental stress; these children have been identified to engage in aggressive behaviour and association with deviant peers (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2013; Pinnock, 2015). Accordingly, these children may be at risk of engaging in youth gangsterism as they recognise similarities among each other and purposely group together to form youth gangs.

## 4.5.2. Sub-theme 1.2. Social work case work services as a response to youth gangsterism

The youth require intervention in response to the abovementioned micro-level risk factors in order to mitigate their potential for gang involvement. As youth gangsterism has been identified as a social ill, social work services are sought in order to perform such intervention; social work case work is offered as a means of responding to micro-level risk factors.

Participants were asked to provide an indication of how they use case work as an intervention strategy when rendering services in relation to youth gangsterism. Accordingly, categories emerged from the resultant data that highlighted the value of case work in youth gang prevention in terms of needs assessment, integrative service delivery, empowerment, and acceptance. These categories are discussed below with the aid of participant discourse and reference to relevant literature:

### *4.5.2.1. Category: Case work contributes to social work assessment and evaluation in youth gang prevention*

Participants were asked how the social work intervention method of case work could be valuable in youth gang prevention. The majority of participants expressed the value of case work in terms of assessment and evaluation of their client systems involved in youth gangsterism. This is evident in the narratives below:

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> *"In case work, we get to work quite intimately with the client. This allows us to really go deep into their behaviour and circumstances.* ***We can do a full assessment of their needs; we can identify their strengths and work with these****. I mean, we know that gangs are usually about needs, they fulfil whatever the needs are, and case work allows us to tap into this.* ***If we know the need, we can address it****. And when you are working one-on-one with a person, us as social workers believe very strongly in using someone's strengths, so we get the opportunity to figure out those strengths and use them." (Participant D)*

This narrative serves as an example of how participants utilise case work to render services at a micro-level to youth who are either involved or at risk of being involved with youth gangsterism. It further highlights the importance of doing thorough assessment towards effective youth gang prevention, as this will allow for appropriate empowerment of the client through a focus on the client's strengths which is highligh by Dubois and Miley (2016), for empowerment services. Fortune (1998), Salo (2005), Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube (2014), Swingler (2014), and Pinnock (2015) stand in agreement of the importance of identifying unmet needs in order to render effective youth gang prevention service. The need for said prevention services is further supported through various policy documents that seek to guide social work services, such as the White Paper for Social Services (Department of Social Development, 1997) and the Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2005).

Ultimately, effective assessment in case work is vital in youth gang prevention, as it allows for the social worker to identify and empower the fulfilment of basic needs, as is stipulated through the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The capacity of social workers to utilise assessment towards youth gang prevention supports the tenets of the empowerment approach. This approach was highlighted by participants as a key element in the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention, as is illustrated by the following narrative:

> *"So, uhm, social work cannot solve all your problems. We are actually not there to solve all your problems. But the thing with case work especially, is that we can really start seeing where we can empower these kids.* ***We see "Oh, this is***

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> ***the problem" and then we see "Oh, this is a strength of the client, how do we harness this". It's really empowering, case work**." (Participant E)*

The narrative above speaks to the empowerment approach, often utilised in social work practise. According to the empowerment approach, individuals possess unique strengths that can be harnessed and employed to address needs and challenges experienced by said individual (Dubois & Miley, 2016). This empowers the individual through encouraging personal capacity in the context of their own contexts and circumstances (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; Dubois & Miley, 2016).

In terms of the micro-system, whereby the risk factors for youth gangsterism are intrinsic in nature, effective assessment through social work case work allows for the complexity of such inherent factors to be explored and addressed. For example, the underlying factors associated with the client's age, gender, race, or intergenerational trauma can be effectively identified through case work assessment, thus serving to empower the client through knowledge, understanding and self-awareness. Accordingly, the worker can evaluate how best to intervene with such risk, which speaks to the following category.

*4.5.2.2. Category: Case work contributes to social workers delivering integrated services towards youth gang prevention*

Participants further indicated social work case as valuable towards youth gang prevention as this method of service delivery encourages integrated means of intervention. This is depicted through the narrative below:

> *"In case work, we work closely with the individual. So, it gives us that deeper understanding of them.* ***But social workers, we always want to work holistically as well. So, our case work often involves the family or the schools or whatever. We see the client as a whole and so we have to focus on everything in that whole****, like the family. So yeah, this definitely has value in gang prevention. Because* ***gangs have infiltrated many layers of the [ecological] system. We cannot only look at the individual himself then, we must do it holistically****. And we do." (Participant H)*

The above stated narrative highlights how behaviour related to youth gangsterism occurs within the context of an individual's interrelated systems as is illustrated by the

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ecological perspective (German & Gitterman, 1976; 1980; Johnson & Yanca, 2010). This maladaptive behaviour related to youth gangsterism is the result incongruences between the individual's needs and their ecological environments, thereby calling for a holistic approach that intervenes throughout all levels of the ecological system. This is also mentioned in relevant policy, such as the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019), which calls for youth gangsterism to be addressed through holistic and integrated intervention. Social workers have been identified as key role players in delivering such intervention, as they are most intrinsically involved in the collective life that youth gangs form part of (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017).

Thus, the narrative above points towards the role of the social worker as part of a multi-disciplinary team in the deliverance of youth gang prevention services. Hepworth *et al.* (2018) notes that social workers can form part of a team that is made up of professionals from various sectors in order to provide holistic input towards a client's case. The narrative above makes the example of social workers involving youth's schools in order to ensure service delivery extends throughout all levels of the client's ecological system. In the example provided by the narrative, social workers can work as a team with the educators and management of the youth's school in order to address the youth's needs towards youth gang prevention.

*4.5.2.3. Category: Case work contributes to the social work role of a direct service provider in youth gang prevention*

Participants indicated value towards case work as this contributes towards their role of a direct service providers for youth gang prevention. Majority of the participants noted case work as particularly valuable in implementing the principle of acceptance (Johnson & Yanca, 2010). This view is introduced by the narrative below:

> *"Look, case work means you will be working quite closely with that client. I think the strongest professional relationships can be built through case work. And, in terms of gangsterism, this holds a lot of value.* ***As I said, these people join gangs because they want a sense of belonging, or they are looking for acceptance. The professional relationship gives you this in a positive way because social workers hold themselves to the values of acceptance and non-judgmental attitudes****. That is the first thing you learn as a social worker.*

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> *So yes, we can meet this need through case work, and I think that is quite valuable to gang prevention." (Participant K)*

The need for belonging and acceptance, as described through the narrative above, can be considered social needs due to them being predominantly met through social interactions and relationships. This is a view shared by Tint and Weiss (2016) and Johnson and Yanca (2010), who indicate that social workers hold considerable value towards instilling principles of unconditional acceptance through case work practise. Additionally, social workers hold considerable value towards the fulfilment of social needs, due to social workers' in-depth understanding of the social sphere (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017), which is also evident in the views of participants. Social work applications of principles with include, belonging, and acceptance can be fundamental in youth gang prevention efforts, as it instils a sense of attachment, connection, confidence, and support among client systems – attributes which are often sought through gang involvement when not met traditionally through the family (Butts, Bazamore & Meroe, 2010; Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019). In particular, the application of acceptance through demonstrations of support was noted as essential in social work case work towards youth gang prevention, as depicted through the narrative below:

> *"**I think the biggest thing with case work is that it is supportive**. The client can come see you and they can feel supported. There is a lot of technical skills and everything that go into case work, but at the end of the days, the boys just need some sort of support. Okay, that is not all they need, but I would say it is the first step**. If they can come to the social worker and feel supported, they are less likely to go to the gangs to feel supported. We all need that, that support. Because they do not get that at home. They do not get that at school.** I think that comes in a lot with my case work clients." (Participant J)*

Petersen (2012), Michaeli (2016), Bezuidenhout (2018), and Berdychevsky, Stodolska and Shinew (2019) stand in agreement that various forms of support act as a core protective factor against youth gangsterism. Said authors note parental support, educational support, peer support and community support as vital in the prevention of youth gang affiliation. Thus, the above narrative indicates how social workers can play

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a role in preventing youth gangsterism through offering a healthy and functional alternative to traditional means of support, where this may not be readily available.

Traditional means of support are noted predominantly through familial and peer support during the period of youth (Bezuidenhout, 2018). Social workers play a vital role, as direct service providers in offering an alternative means to such support systems where they may present as dysfunctional or lacking, as will be explored in the following theme.

## 4.6. THEME 2: MESO LEVEL SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION IN RELATION TO YOUTH GANGSTERISM

Meso-level social work intervention in youth gang prevention was identified as a theme and is discussed according to subsequent sub-themes and categories, including the risk factors for youth gang involvement within this ecological level, as well as the role of the social worker in responding to the identified risks.

### 4.6.1. Sub-theme 2.1. Meso-level risk factors for youth gangsterism

Participants were asked to provide an indication of the potential risk factors for youth gangsterism on a meso-level.

The categories that emerged within this sub-theme were indicated through predominant data patterns highlighting the risks of youth gangsterism as family, peer influences, and challenges in the education system.

*4.6.1.1. Category: Family as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

Participants were asked to identify risk factors within the meso-level of the ecological system. Family exposure to gangsterism was identified as a common category within this sub-theme. Many participants indicated that exposure to gangsterism within the family/home environment could contribute towards an individual's own involvement as the result of modelling. The narratives below depict how family modelling of gangsterism can serve as a risk factor for youth involvement:

> *"Another risk factor is if your **parents** or someone in your **family** is involved in a gang, you are exposed to it, so you are at greater risk for joining a gang." (Participant F)*

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> *"I would say maybe, because if you have grown up in a **household** and you have been exposed to a **parent** who has been involved, you may have noticed how that involvement has contributed to your own **family** and your own upbringing as a child. And maybe I would say, it is more modelling…" (Participant I)*

The narratives above reflects the views of not only participants by also that of Green and Wijnberg (2014), Pinnock (2015) and Abbas (2016), who indicate that exposure to dysfunctional or deviant behaviour by family members, such as when a youth's father is a gang member, results in a process of deregulation, whereby the youth is conditioned to believe that said deviant behaviour is a norm. Furthermore, the family serves as the foundational institution from which the youth will learn to interact (Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Bezuidenhout, 2018). Accordingly, youths reared within a family structure exhibiting patterns of deviant socialisation patterns, which is common in gangsterism, will develop cognitive frameworks in alignment with such deviance (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Green & Wijnerg, 2014; Nordin, Mills, Pederson, Hoewe & Witte, 2017). Thus, the youth become predisposed to personal involvement in youth gangsterism.

Exposure to gangsterism within the family was identified as a powerful risk factor for involvement in youth gangsterism. However, a further family-orientated trend was identified through the empirical data collection process. Majority of the participants indicated dysfunction within the family as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. Participants described family dysfunction as abuse and neglect, lack of emotional support, and absent parents.

In terms of dysfunctional family relations, in the form of abuse or neglect, being a risk factor for youth gangsterism, the following narrative depicts this view:

> *"Well, look, the way I see it, **if you are a child who is being abused or you are being neglected, that is traumatic**. You have a deep sense of trauma. There are so many things that come with that, so many feelings. **You could feel like you are nothing, so you go to the gang to be something. Or you may be angry, so you go to the gang so you can be violent. Or you hate your family now, so you join the gang, because they will be your new***

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> ***family**. Yeah, I can see why these kids that are abused join a gang, I get it." (Participant C)*

The narratives above indicate childhood exposure to violence, conflict or trauma within the home environment can contribute to the development of socially pathological behaviour, such as involvement in youth gangsterism. A view shared by many (Baumann, 1998; Fortune, 1998; Pinnock, 1998; Standing, 2003; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016). Again, this typically occurs through the process of emotional deregulation whereby methods of personal expression are normalised through aggression and violence (Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Abbas, 2016). Participants expressed exposure to family conflict and violence as an increasing concern under COVID-19 restrictions and regulations, whereby individuals have been further isolated to their homes in alignment with the Disaster Management Act of 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002). This concern is depicted through the following narratives:

> *"**This [family abuse] is even worse now with COVID. Everybody is in the home. The kids, they cannot leave, the parents are stressed because of money, and the abuse is getting worse**. The kids, I mean, they are seeing their daddies hitting their mommies, or the daddies are hitting them. It is the stress, it is making it worse. And now they are isolated." (Participant P)*

> *"I think **COVID** has been the worst thing for abuse in the home. Because the kids now have to be there. They cannot go to school or to soccer, their activities. They are just at home. And, if something happens, they cannot go tell teacher or tell coach. They are alone." (Participant T)*

As for family dysfunction through a lack of emotional support, majority of the participants indicated this as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. This view is depicted by the narratives to follow:

> *"Okay, so, uhm, the family is supposed to support you through everything. Your **family** is supposed to be the people that are there for you through everything. They tend to your **emotional needs**, not just as a child, but throughout your life. They are the people that make you feel **loved, and accepted**, and that you belong. That is the big thing, belonging. But a lot of these families are just not*

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> *that way. So, the child feels rejected, he needs to find belonging somewhere else, so he goes to the gang to fulfil that need." (Participant H)*

The above narrative indicates involvement in a youth gang as an alternative means of meeting the inherent need for belonging. The family typically serves as the foundational system upon which this need is met. However, according to the narrative, families who fail to provide for this need become risk factors for youth gangsterism; youth gangs serve to provide their members with the opportunity to form part of an organisation in which they gain a sense belonging through shared beliefs, values, and behavioural traits, which is also illustrated in the work of Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube (2014).

Additionally, participants indicated absent parents as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. This view is described through the narrative below:

> *"**Not having parental figures or a stable caregiver or something like that, children are then growing up without discipline or structure or support systems that they should have**. So, if kids are left alone by themselves, they are going to look for that guardian, they are going to look for a parental figure, someone to look up to and guide them if they are not finding that in the family. **Often, they will find that in an older gang member or a gang leader, and they will see them as someone who can guide them and give them some protection and structure that they need**." (Participant K)*

The narrative above is typically consequent of single-parent household, particularly in the Western Cape (Bezuidenhout, 2013; 2018). The narrative illustrates how the absence of a parent in the household limits the child's availability of love, attention, guidance, stability, and supervision, potentially resulting in dysfunctional emotional, cognitive, and social development. This dysfunctional development, associated with a lack of co-parenting, puts the child at risk of engaging in deviant or antisocial behaviour, such as youth gangsterism (Koerner & Ftizpatrick, 2003; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Nordin, Mills, Pederson, Hoewe & Witte, 2017; Bezuidenhout, 2018).

Due to said lack of positive role-modelling within the family structure, substitute peer relations are often negative, thereby further exacerbating the youth's risk of engagement in antisocial behaviour, such as youth gangsterism.

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*4.6.1.2. Category: Peer pressure and role-modelling as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

A further common category within this sub-theme was that exposure to youth gangsterism through peers could potentially lead to personal involvement in the phenomenon. Majority of the participants indicated that exposure to gangsterism within the peer group environment could contribute towards an individual's own involvement as the result of modelling. This view is depicted through the narratives below:

> *"Again, gangs have a lot to do with age. And I think it is because, at that age,* ***you see your friends are doing something and you're going to do it too. So, your friend is a gangster, you are going to be gangster****. We're all like that at that age – do what your friends do." (Participant N)*

The process of peer modelling is similar to that of family modelling, particularly within the developmental period of youth (Thomas, 2015; Bezuidenhout, 2018) which was identified as a central narrative by participants in the previous category. Thomas (2015) and Bezuidenhout (2018) indicate the role of peer groups as being the predominant reference points for individuals during this developmental period; peer groups, rather than family, assist to construct the values, beliefs, and norms of the individual. Accordingly, involvement with deviant or delinquent peers serves as one of the strongest predictors of dysfunctional and anti-social behaviour, such as youth gangsterism (Battin-Pearson, Thornberry, Hawkins & Krohn, 1998; Haynie, 2002; McGloin & Shermer, 2009; Thomas, 2015).

The significance of peer influence during the period of youth is a natural occurrence, as it aids minimization of the parent-child relationship. This is essential for the youth developmental growth towards autonomy and independence (Bezuidenhout, 2013; 2018). In substitute of the parental relationship, the youth increasingly value the acceptance and company of their peers (Bezuidenhout, 2013; Thomas, 2015). In this manner, peer relationships become central to the youth's emotional and behavioural functioning (Thomas, 2015). However, delinquent peers breed delinquent behaviour, consequent of the peer group serving to construct the values, beliefs, and norms during the life stage of adolescence and youth (Keijser, Branje, Hawk, Frijns, Koot, Lier, Schwartz & Meeus, 2012; Thomas, 2015). Thus, participants are in agreement

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that youth who engage with peers who are gangsters are likely to adopt similar lifestyles.

*4.6.1.3. Category: Educational challenges as risk factor for youth gangsterism*

All of the participants indicated educational challenges in the form of school dropout and inadequate schooling systems as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. While some also indicated learning disabilities or challenges as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. These views are depicted though the narratives below:

> *"Also, I think this is a huge risk factor. Uhm, again,* ***a lack of education and a lack of educational services****. There is no accountability to ensure kids are going to school and getting this education. So, you know, when it is not something that you have to do and it is not encouraged, then* ***kids are not going to value education or go to school. So that leaves space to fill with other things, and that is where they look to gangs.****" (Participant M)*

> *"Well, obviously* ***school dropouts are a big risk factor for gangsterism****. But then, it is also the drugs from the moms. Kids who are born addicted to drugs because their moms used drugs while pregnant, or* ***kids born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, they struggle to adjust at school****. Besides that,* ***there may not be a role model at home to encourage them to go to school. So, they lose interest at school and drop out****. So yeah, it could be either one of those. With the kids that struggle, the* ***school does not always have the ability to detect their challenges, so they are left behind and neglected. Then they leave and go to gangs. And also, the other thing is, there is not enough special schools or schools of skill for these children****. I can count on one hand the amount we have, while the kids that need to be there are infinite." (Participant Q)*

The above narratives point towards school attachment or lack thereof as a risk factor for potential youth gang involvement. This view is shared by many others who indicate that the lack of education support or motivational support towards educational accountability can lead to low school attachment (Hirschi, 1969; Hawkins, Smith, Hill, Kosterman, Catalano & Abbott, 2003; Payne & Welch, 2016; Dick et al., 2019). Poor school attachment is often associated with a lack of value towards education, thus

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increasing the likelihood of the youth forfeiting their schooling in favour of gangs. This is a strong motivating factor for dropping out, which places the youth at further risk of being drawn into youth gangsterism (Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Petersen, 2016).

The conflict theory provides further understanding towards how educational challenges may lead to low school attachment and dropping out, thus potentially contributing to youths' involvement in gangsterism. The conflict theory argues that deviant behaviour, such as youth gangsterism, is underpinned by unequal power distributions among various groups (Marx, 1859; Hutchinson, 2013; Meyer, 2013). Youth with educational challenges are considered to non-dominant within the schooling environment, whereby dominance is held by educationally strong learners and authority figures such as teachers (Hutchinson, 2013; Meyer, 2013). Youth with educational challenges may experience alienation, apathy, and hostility from said dominant group, thereby resulting in low school attachment (Hutchinson, 2013; Payne & Welch, 2016; Dick et al., 2019). Youth may leave school as a result or seek out youth gangs as a substitute means of asserting dominance (Mccain, 2017; Gontsana, 2019).

The social interpersonal and social nature of these meso-level risk factors require a service response that accounts for said unmet social or interpersonal needs, which can potentially be met at meso-level through social work group work.

### 4.6.2. Sub-theme 2.2. Social work group work in response to youth gangsterism

Participants were asked to provide an indication of how they use social work group work as an intervention method in responding to meso-level risk factors associated with youth gangsterism. Resulting categories emerged that include the value of group work in meeting social need, facilitating empowerment, and overcoming resource challenges. These categories are discussed below through participant discourse and relevant literature control:

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*4.6.2.1. Category: Group work contributes to meeting social needs in youth gang prevention*

The majority of the participants highlighted that group work is used to meet social needs many clients yearn for, as depicted through the following narrative:

> *"**Gangs are groups. We see them practising in a group setting**… I think it is because of that need for belonging. I guess we are all social creatures and **we each need to feel like we are a part of something. Gangsters are human first, so they have that need to be accepted and loved**. None of us want to be alone. We need that support from each other. **I think that is where the value of group work comes in. We create an environment where these boys can sit together and talk, and they have each other. Look, we will find a way to fulfil our needs. Us as social workers can create that space to do it positively,** so there is no need then to look to the gangs." (Participant B)*

This narrative speaks to social work groups as a valuable method of intervention towards meeting the social needs of the youth, thereby contributing to the prevention of youth gangsterism. This value is underpinned by an understanding of social workers as effective in tending to the social needs of individuals and groups (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). It further highlights how group interaction can serve to meet basic human needs, which according to Maslow (1943, 1954, 1962, 1970, 1987) and the South African Bill of Rights (1996), include the need for belonging, acceptance and love.

When these needs are not met through safe environments, such as within a positive family structure, youth may seek to fulfil said needs through substitute social groups, such as peers (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Green & Wijnerg, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Nordin, Mills, Pederson, Hoewe & Witte, 2017). In areas whereby gangs form the apex of social dominance, vulnerable youth are likely to fall victim to recruitment as a surrogate means of socialisation (Pinnock, 1998, 2015; Williams, 1998; Vetten, 2000; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014).

As these needs are often met in group settings whereby the youth can interact with those who share common traits, circumstances, or behaviours (Madikizela-Madiya &

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Mncube, 2014), social workers have the opportunity to offer group work as a form of intervention to fulfil these needs. In doing so social workers can take on the role of advocate and facilitator (Hepworth et al., 2018; Johnson & Yanca, 2010) in rendering prevention services through group work, which is desperately needed. Social workers thus also fulfil a mandate in accordance with the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996), which affords children the right to dignity, respect, and care. Furthermore, Section 28(1)(c) (Republic of South Africa, 1996) specifically stipulates how children have a right to social services. Group work would thus offer social workers an ideal platform to uphold the rights as stipulated in the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996), therefore providing an intervention platform for youth gang prevention. It further highlights the link between prevention services at meso-level and macro level of the ecology (DuBois & Miley, 2016). Thus, group work may also contribute to empowering youth through addressing unmet needs.

*4.6.2.2. Category: Group work as a form of empowerment in youth gang prevention*

Majority of the participants indicated group work as valuable in responding to meso-level risk factors for youth gangsterism as it allows for empowerment. This view is depicted through the following narrative:

> *"**I think clients find group work really empowering**. I think that they feel a **sense of safety** being with each other, and they can bounce ideas and discussions of each other. Especially when you are young, I think you **feel most confident around people of your own age**, so this is also empowering. Of course, group work always has a specific objective, like it could be gang prevention, and then that **sense of together[ness] empowers the group members** towards that objective. **I think just that togetherness is valuable in gang prevention, they find empowerment in that**." (Participant J)*

The above narrative indicates the value of social work group work in empowering the youth away from gangsterism. According to the global definition for social work, empowerment is a central tenet of social work service delivery (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014; IASSW, 2014). Additionally, the value of group work in youth gang prevention is highlighted, as this method of social work positively mimics the group structure of youth gangs (Beaver, Schutt, Boutwell, Ratchford,

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Roberts & Barnes, 2009; Pinnock, 2015). This serves to empower the youth towards positive means of socialisation.

The views shared by participants indicate that group work offers social workers the opportunity to recreate the social conditions of the youth gang in a controlled environment, whereby the youth are empowered to interact and contribute to society in a positive and meaningful manner. Ultimately, the youth would thus be empowered to meet their social needs through functional means (Miner, Robinson, Knight, Berg, Romine & Netland, 2010; Pinnock, 2015; Yoder, Leibowitz & Petersen, 2018).

*4.6.2.3. Category: Group work contributes to the social work role of facilitator and advocate in overcoming resource challenges in youth gang prevention*

Majority of the participants indicated group work as valuable in responding to meso-level risk factors for youth gangsterism as it allows for overcoming social work challenges, particularly a lack of resources. This view is depicted through the following narrative:

> *"**Group work allows us to reach a wider range of clients. In case work, you often have to work one-on-one, which takes a lot of time and resources. In group work, you can address a common need with 10-15 people at once**. I think a lot of social workers like group work for this reason. **We do not have the time or the resources to address every need on an individual basis alone. Group work helps us to be more efficient, what with the little resources we have**… I do think this has value in gang prevention too. **Gangsterism is so widespread, there is no way we can address it on an individual basis. But we can address it in a group**." (Participant S)*

This narrative highlights the value of group work in overcoming challenges in social work youth gang prevention in terms of limited time and resources available for social workers to engage in youth gang prevention measures. According to the empowerment approach, social workers are required to design effective interventions that account for limitations in resources (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; Dubois & Miley, 2016). The social worker's role as facilitator in groups can serve as a valuable contributor to youth gang prevention, as group facilitation allows the worker to utilise limited resources to impact a larger body of clients.

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This further speaks to the social work role of advocate, whereby the social worker seeks to ensure clients receive services that may not be readily available (Hepworth *et al.*, 2018). Limited resources can impact social worker's capacity towards providing services that may be desperately needed, such as youth gang prevention services. Group work enables the social work role of advocate, as the social worker harnesses whatever resources are available towards a larger group of youth members, thus ensuring they receive appropriate intervention towards youth gang prevention. Social work community can have a similar impact, as will be discussed below.

## 4.7. THEME 3: MACRO LEVEL SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION

Macro-level social work intervention in youth gang prevention was identified as a theme and is discussed according to subsequent sub-themes and categories including the risk factors for youth gang involvement within this ecological level, as well as the role of the social worker in responding to the identified risks.

### 4.7.1. Sub-theme 3.1. Macro-level risk factors for youth gangsterism

Participants were asked to provide an indication of the potential risk factors for youth gangsterism on a macro-level. In terms of the study, the macro-level refers to the larger national and social organisations of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, Germain & Gitterman, 1976, 1980; Hepworth et. al., 2018).

The categories that emerged within this sub-theme were indicated through predominant data patterns highlighting macro-level risk factors for youth gangsterism as community exposure to gangsterism, poverty and unemployment, lack of recreational opportunities, societal norms, negative governmental role-modelling, and inadequate service responses.

#### *4.7.1.1. Category: Community exposure to gangsterism as a risk factor for personal youth gang involvement*

A significant number of participants noted exposure to gangsterism in the community as a risk factor, as it introduces the need for safety and protection that is often met through personal gang involvement. This prevalence of youth gangsterism in the community is depicted through the following narratives:

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> *"… **the kids are scared to be outside in the community where all the gangs are going on**. There is a lot of violence that also plays a role." (Participant J)*

> *"I think that everyone knows **gangsterism is more extreme in the Western Cape**. Even if you are not from the Western Cape, **there seems to be an inherent fear towards the gangs here**." (Participant B)*

Many participants noted that the threat of youth gang exposure in the community is a strong predictor for personal involvement, as affiliation with a gang affords the youth protection. The following narrative develops on this understanding:

> *"**The gangs are everywhere in the community. The gangs, they are the most prominent feature of these communities**. The kids, they are scared of them. There is this idea, **you either join a gang or you die by one**. They would rather join for that protection." (Participant S)*

The above narrative indicates an agreement on the part of the participants with others who indicate the establishment of Western Cape gangs as being primarily associated with a means of protection, which is a view reflected by many others (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Petersen, 2019; Van Lennep, 2019). Western Cape youth gangs have long been founded on the idea of safety and protection from outside threats, as well as protection from internal threats of rival gangs (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Petersen, 2019; Van Lennep, 2019). The view illustrated in the above narrative, further highlights a common choice to be made in gang-ridden communities: join a gang or die by one (Petersen, 2019).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) affords each citizen the right to safety and protection, a right that extends to the community context. However, when exposure to gang-ridden community environments hinders the fulfilment of this right, individuals tend to seek out the solace of youth gangs as an alternative means of protection (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Kiva, 2012; Kinnes, 2019; Petersen, 2019).

A further trend among participants describing the risks of community exposure to gangsterism was the mention of how such exposure introduces accessibility to narcotic substances. This is depicted through following narrative:

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*"**It is easier to get drugs than food** in these communities." (Participant T)*

The risk that exposure to drugs poses towards youth gangsterism is explained by the narratives below:

*"Well, children who are exposed to substance abuse or become involved in this are at risk of joining a gang. **Drugs is also a form of money making in the gang world**. That is how they operate and claim their turf; drug money is power. The movement of drugs is power." (Participant H)*

*"Uhm, the gang members use the youth to sell drugs for them. And also, **the youth use this as a source of income because they are unemployed or their families** are, uhm, unemployed." (Participant O)*

Accordingly, this narrative indicates involvement in drug distribution as a risk factor for youth gangsterism, as it serves as means of financial income towards the support of basic needs. Youth gangsterism has emerged primarily as a response to poor socioeconomic standing within the context of relative poverty, as youth gangs serve as a means of basic survival and socioeconomic identity development (Salo, 2005; MacMaster, 2007; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Pinnock, 2015).

Lower socioeconomic standing is most prevalent among the non-white populations of the Western Cape, as is lingering effect of the racial dispossession imposed during apartheid (Pinnock, 2015). Accordingly, a link can be noted between the above narratives indicating lower-socioeconomic status as a macro-level risk factor for youth gangsterism and earlier narratives indicating non-white races as further at risk of youth gangsterism on a micro-level. This understanding links further to the following category, focusing on poverty and unemployment as a risk factor for youth gangsterism.

*4.7.1.2. Category: Poverty and unemployment as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

The majority of participants indicated that poverty and unemployment are strong risk factors for involvement in youth gangsterism. The narratives below provide a depiction of this view:

*"I think this could possibly come back to the socioeconomic factors: the poverty and how our communities find themselves lacking. If we have really looked at*

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> *the stats and refer to my own experience,* ***most of the gangsterism stems from lower socioeconomic communities. It is our less fortunate communities****." (Participant I)*
>
> *"****And also, the youth use this as a source of income because they are unemployed, or their families are unemployed****. It is such a phenomenon. I had a primary school client, and we did an assignment on what you want to be when you are older.* ***She wrote that she actually wants to become a gangster. I asked her why, and she said that so she can have lots of money and have all the things she never had****. She was recently killed in a gang shooting. It is so problematic;* ***they are doing this to get their basic needs****." (Participant O)*

In understanding the above stated narratives, normative economic functioning is accomplished through mainstream employment, which is a view also held by Gray and Allegritti (2005) and Roloff (2014). However, South Africa has the highest level of youth unemployment in the world, a crisis that presents as particularly prevalent among youth of lower socioeconomic status (Roloff, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). An alternative economy has emerged among lower socioeconomic communities of the Western Cape, whereby youth gang practises are employed as a substitute means of economic inclusion and survival (Salo, 2005; MacMaster, 2007; Pinnock, 2015). Ultimately, involvement in the criminal economy of youth gangsterism allows for basic survival (Salo, 2005; MacMaster, 2007; Pinnock, 2015), which is evidently the view held by most participants. Furthermore, according to Marx (1859) and Dahrendorf (1958), economic dominance within a larger societal structure may alienate those of lower socioeconomic standing, thus resulting in conflict theory. It can therefore be argued that poverty and unemployment may serve as a risk factor for youth gangsterism.

#### *4.7.1.3. Category: Lack of recreational opportunities as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

Most of the participants noted a lack of positive recreational opportunities as a risk factor for involvement in youth gangsterism. This is described through the narratives below:

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> *"**There is nothing for the kids to do after school, nothing fun or productive**. They have nothing to keep them occupied. **So, the only fun thing in the community is the gang**. They hang around on the street with their friends, because there is no park or sports field that is safe, and then the gang recruits them from there. This is a big problem." (Participant R)*

> *"**I also think that sports can be used as a strong protective factor, but it is now a risk factor because our facilities are not safe**. We want these kids to play sports to help them, but then the **parks and sports fields have been taken over by the gangs, so they are, again, at risk. Or it is the gangs that are owning the sports fields or are funding the sports projects. So, is it really helping, or is it another way for them to control the community and recruit the youth**?" (Participant P)*

The above narratives indicate how some communities in the Western Cape provides limited opportunity for positive recreation within residents of gang-ridden communities, a view also held by Pitt (2018). This lack of positive recreation within such communities serves as a risk factor for youth gang involvement, as gangs provide the only seeming alternative to leisure and entertainment experiences within the context of their communities (Pitt, 2018). Positive recreational experiences are a powerful accessory in the effective prevention of youth gangsterism (National Gang Centre, 2010; Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019). Extensive research demonstrates the positive effect of recreation on the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the youth. Positive recreational activities serve to meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of the youth that may go unfulfilled in the context of gang-ridden communities (Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Nichols, 2007; Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019).

Recreational activity allows for interaction with adults with whom the youth can form meaningful and supportive relationships with, thereby allowing the youth to engage with positive role models and develop a healthy interactional basis with authority figures (Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019), which is what participants call for to assist in youth gang prevention efforts. This was noted by the narrative above, whereby it is confirmed that the youth experience an absence of positive recreational

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opportunities, thereby leading to a gap in needs fulfilment that is addressed through youth gang involvement.

*4.7.1.4. Category: Larger societal norms as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

Many of the participants further indicated larger societal norms as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. Most of the participants indicated these social norms along the parameters of gender, particularly in terms of cultural socialisation of males. This view is depicted through the following narratives:

> *"I think it is definitely skewed towards males**. I think that is because of traditional gender roles**." (Participant K)*

> *"Also, in terms of social-economic factors, gangsterism is becoming an increasing source of income. **Males want to be involved financially because that is also their role**." (Participant J)*

This view indicates ideals of masculine dominance as revolving around men's economic roles and the breadwinners of the family. This view has been maintained by various researcher over the past decade. Vetten (2000), Salo (2005) and Pinnock (2015) agree that due to large-scale youth unemployment in South Africa and, more specifically the Western Cape, the majority of male youth have little claim to legitimate economic prosperity. This serves as a risk factor for youth gangsterism, as illegal gang endeavours serve an illegitimate substitute the assertion of the economic role to establish or re-establish their male dominance (Vetten, 2000; Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015).

Additionally, some participants indicated the societal norm of men being violent as a risk factor for youth gangsterism in South Africa, which provides further understanding as to why participants indicated the male gender as more at-risk of youth gangsterism on a micro-level. This can be understood through the following narratives:

> *"I would also say stereotypes, in terms of gender roles or sexuality. In **terms of gender roles, males are expected to be macho and aggressive, so they join gangs**." (Participant L)*

> *"Females are always held to be responsible for their actions. I get very angry about this. For example, you will always see people phoning mothers asking*

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> *why they have not brought the child to school, but they will never phone the father; the men are never held accountable. And we see it with the kids too.* ***The girls are always held accountable; the boys are not. So, the boys think they can do whatever they want; there is a sense of entitlement. They can join the gang, they can kill, they can rape, they can steal – and they know they will be protected because nobody will make them answer for their actions…****We are making excuses for our boys, our men, our fathers, and it just makes the problem worse. We are actually enabling this then." (Participant O)*

These narratives provide an understanding towards how macro-level societal gender norms may impact male youth's predisposition to youth gangsterism on the micro-level of gender. The above stated narratives further point towards how masculine norms are rooted in the idea of men being dominant, potentially due to their gender role of the protector (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). Dominant masculine norms serve as a risk factor for youth gang involvement as an alternative means of being recognised as a man, within a context of material or symbolic capital (Vetten, 2000; Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015). Former leader of the Hard Living street gang further depicts this risk through saying "We wanted to be gangsters at that time for a number of reasons... We also wanted to be macho guys on the streets, big guys – not like the Wanted Kids. Growing up in poverty as we did, we needed to feel big" (Nair, 1999:1). The understanding of aggressive masculinity being considered a larger societal norm speaks to such behaviour being publicly excused, as a norm suggests that which is accepted as true and agreeable on a large-scale (Vigil, 2002; Salo, 2005; Petrus, 2013).

*4.7.1.5. Category: Negative governmental role-modelling as a risk factor for youth gangsterism*

Majority of the participants indicated governmental criminality as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. This view is indicated through the narratives below:

> *"****They [government workers such as the police] are friends with the gang members.*** *You see them hanging out together and having conversations where they are laughing and having fun.* ***When it comes to pay day, you see the gangsters handing [them] an envelope, so what does that tell us?*** *It is not*

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*about protecting the community, it is about making money, and then everyone is happy." (Participant E)*

*"**So, the government, they are little gangs themselves. The do all the things gangs do: steal and cause senseless violence and what not. That is the example they are setting. If my presidents can do that, then so can I really**. The government tells us what is okay and what is not okay, so if they act like crime is okay then it is okay. This is what the gangs think as well. Anyways, a lot of our government officials are known to be working with the gangs, so they are endorsing it. This just encourages everything, man!" (Participant S)*

Criminal role-modelling by national and provincial government indicates ineffective governance. This serves as a strong risk factor towards youth gangsterism as, according to the literature, weak state governance provides the opportunity for youth gangs to implement strong criminal governance from a community level (Standing, 2003; MacMaster, 2007; Kinnes, 2019). The mistrust of state governance and preference of internal gang governance is said to be the glue for social solidarity between the gangs and the community (Green & Pranis, 2007; Hagerdom, 2007; Dowdney, 2007; Kinnes, 2019). An example of this can be noted in the recent murder of Anti-Gang Unit Investigator, Charl Kinnear, in September 2020. The head of the Anti-Gang Unit, Andre Lincoln, highlighted how Kinnear's murder has "opened a can of worms" regarding state department's ability to appropriately govern and truthfully protect communities (eNCA, 2021).

*4.7.1.6. Category: Inadequate state prevention efforts towards youth gangsterism*

Almost all of the participants indicated inadequate governmental responses as a risk factor for youth gangsterism. This is depicted through the following narratives:

*"I think that the injustices in our society can be a risk factor for gangsterism. The way the law works and how people feel they are always at a disadvantage no matter what they do. **If I listen to the gangsters, they have no faith in the law or our country. They do not think that the country will ever help them. So, they would rather try to create a new type of law for themselves and do what they need to do by themselves, because the government is not***

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> ***for them**. The government is not for us so we have to be for ourselves." (Participant E)*
>
> *"**There is a lot of tension in South Africa in terms of politics, race, larger values, and our history**… **I imagine that tension creates a need for an uprising and a need for conflict in order to correct what is wrong and what has been wrong.** There is larger sense of needing justice. That need for justice and that need for correction **gets channelled into gangsterism. I do not think there are more positive ways of decompressing that tension.** Forming part of a gang gives that idea that this is an uprising against the injustices, and we are taking back what is ours and we are taking our community back for ourselves. **Gangsterism is the only way to stand up for yourself in the larger political system. I think it is clear that the politicians are not going to help our communities, or help our schools, so there is a sense of "we will do it ourselves".** If we have to smuggle drugs to get by, we will do it. **There is a huge lack of trust towards the government, and there is a huge knowing that you kind of have to do their job yourself. It is only me and the gang I am in**." (Participant C)*

These views confirm political efforts towards youth gangsterism in South Africa as being inadequate and significantly limited in scope. This is consequent of an enduring focus on suppression and a continued exclusion of social considerations (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012; Kinnes, 2017). Such inadequate responses serve as a risk factor for continued and further youth gangsterism in South Africa and, more specifically, the Western Cape.

The existence of gangs and their entrenchment in South African society cannot be separated from the political system within which it exists (MacMaster, 2007; Jensen, 2009; Petrus, 2013; Pinnock, 2015; Van Lennep, 2019). South Africa's history of apartheid and lack of reform under democracy has largely stripped the country's non-white populations from any structural or supportive means to meet their political needs (Standing, 2003; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Novell, 2014; Michaeli, 2016). Recognition and inherent value from government is vital to the development of youths' identity and purpose (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Kelly, 2018). A lack thereof is highly influential in exacerbating gangsterism, particularly among the youth (Glaser, 2000; Petrus, 2013;

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Van Lennep, 2019). This can result in a snowball effect, whereby limited political responses to youth gangsterism spurs an increase in youth gang involvement as a substitute means to meet their political needs, further leading to youth gangs increasing strength in numbers, at which point they become ungovernable to anyone but themselves, thereby further revoking governmental ability to address the phenomenon (Glaser, 2000; Petrus, 2013; Van Lennep, 2019).

### 4.7.2. Sub-theme 3.2. Social work community work in response to youth gangsterism

Participants were asked to provide an indication of how they use social work community work as an intervention method in responding to macro-level risk factors associated with youth gangsterism. Resulting categories emerged that include the value of community work in offering suitable interventions, building community cohesion, and facilitating community empowerment. These categories are discussed below through participant discourse and reference to relevant literature:

*4.7.2.1. Category: Community work contributes to the social work role of planner in youth gang prevention*

Majority of the participants indicated community work as valuable in youth gang prevention as it allows for the development of suitable intervention, thereby contributing to the social work role of planner. This view is supported by the narrative below:

> *"I think that any social worker will brag about the value of community work. This is where the real change happens.* ***If you want long-lasting or sustainable, widespread change, you have to do community work. There are so many benefits, especially if you are looking to prevent gangs. I mean, you empower the community to come together and solve their own problems…*** *And because it is the whole community, the impact is the greatest. You reach the most people and the impact, you can see the impact then.* ***And the community members will stay in that community for a long time, so they want the impact to last long, so that also makes community work sustainable… This is what we need in gangsterism. Because gangsterism is also a community disease.*** *The gangs live and thrive through the*

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> *community, it is their breeding ground.* ***If you want to prevent gangsterism, you need to empower the community to rise up against it. The community can actually meet every single one of your needs, they just need to be empowered to help each other get there.*** *So yes, community work is the most valuable to me." (Participant D)*

This narrative highlights a common trend in the data which indicates community work as the most effective and sustainable method of social work empowerment towards youth gang prevention. This speaks to the social work role of planner, whereby the social worker maintains close contact with the community in order to identify needs and facilitate the development of effective ideas on how the community can meet their needs (Hepworth *et al.*, 2018). This role can be highly effective in youth gang prevention, which is the view held by all participants. The role of the social worker in community work provides the opportunity for the community to develop effective and sustainable means to meet their own needs. (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; DuBois & Miley, 2016).

*4.7.2.2. Category: Community work contributes to the social work role of advocate*

Majority of the participants indicated community work as valuable in youth gang prevention as it is empowerment-focused, thereby contributing to the social work role of advocate. This is depicted through following narrative:

> *"**I think community work is so sustainable because it is so focused on empowerment**. Empowerment is what makes our work sustainable.* ***You encourage and motivate and facilitate the people to know what to do. And they do it! And if they do it once, if you just help them to see they have the power to do it, they will always know they have that power.*** *The community is who is really going to stop these gangsters, they must just be empowered to do so." (Participant F)*

The narrative above emphasises the views of participants that empowerment is a key aspect of social work intervention, which is particularly relevant in youth gang prevention. In addressing youth gangsterism, there is a need for social change within communities to fulfil basic needs. This view echoes that of the IASSW (2014) which indicates that social change is a form of empowerment within communities. This

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speaks to the social work role of advocate, which requires the social worker to be closely involved in the community in order to identify their presenting needs (Hepworth *et al.*, 2018). Based on the identified community needs, the social work role of advocate stipulates the worker to ensure the community receives services that may not be available (Hepworth *et al.*, 2018). In South Africa's context of limited resources, the social worker can advocate for the community to empower themselves through fulfilling their own needs.

*4.7.2.3. Category: Community work contributes to the social work role of mediator*

Participants indicated community work as valuable in youth gang prevention as it allows for the development of community cohesion, thereby contributing to the social work role of planner. This view is supported by the narrative below:

> *"**We are seeing a large breakdown in community trust and cohesion because of the gangs.** Okay, to be honest, this stems back to the displacement of apartheid, but the gangs are aggravating it today still. **I do not think there is anything else that can be done to fix this, besides community work. Because you are motivating the community to come together to fix this thing. So, they are forced, or let me say encouraged, to build that trust and lean on each other.** Also, because gangs are built on this need for protection a lot of the time. But if you can trust your neighbour or trust your community, what is there to be protected from then? I think community work is so important here. To me, community work could be the key to solving the gangs." (Participant R)*

This narrative depicts the value of social work community work in the development of community cohesion towards youth gang prevention, thereby contributing to the social work role of mediator. Youth gangsterism is rife among communities that present with low levels of cohesion; lack of community cohesion allows for a breakdown in community trust and togetherness, thereby providing the opportunity for youth gangs to rise up as an alternative means of organisation and control (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Kiva, 2012; Kinnes, 2019; Petersen, 2019). Community work allows for social workers to adopt the role of mediator, whereby they can empower the community towards cohesion through clarifying misunderstandings, addressing negative feelings, and applying various communication skills (Hepworth *et al.*, 2018). The strength of

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community and social cohesion is indicated as a foremost protective factor against youth gangsterism (Pinnock, 2015; Kinnes, 2017).

### 4.7.3. Sub-theme 3.3. Policy and legislation in guiding the role of social workers in youth gang prevention

Policy and legislation in guiding the role of social workers in youth gang prevention was identified as a sub-theme. The categories that emerged within this sub-theme include social work perceptions about existing guiding policy and legislation, and the need for specific youth gang prevention policy and legislation. These categories are discussed below with the aid of participant discourse and reference to relevant literature.

*4.7.3.1. Category: Social workers' perceptions about existing policy and legislation guiding social work in youth gang prevention*

Participants were asked to identify policy and legislation focusing on youth gang prevention. Only a few participants were able to identify one legislative document: The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (2016). Participants indicated that legislation lacked focus towards prevention, as depicted through the following narrative:

> *"**I know there is one**. The gang one. **I think it is the National Gang Strategy [National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy]. Yeah, I mean, that is really the only one that I can think of. And, you know, I do not even use it. I work with gangsters everyday probably, but it is still not something I can use.**" [Participant D].*

The view of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (2017) being unimplementable is further supported by the narrative below:

> *"There is only the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy. And look, **that was not made for prevention at all. It was made to address prison gangs, so that is already tertiary**. And you cannot even view the actual thing. I get why they made it that way, I mean, you do not want the gangs to get their hands on that and then know your plan. But, yeah, then it means **we cannot use it in our practise. So actually, we have nothing in terms of legislation that can guide us here**. Because that is the only one, but we do not actually have it.*

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> *Besides, I have worked in a prison setting. The Act was made for a prison, but you cannot even use it there. Do you get what I am saying?" (Participant T)*

These narratives highlight the National Anti-Gangsterism strategy as being unimplementable towards the prevention of gangsterism, as it was established under a tertiary context. Furthermore, they highlight the Act as being unimplementable, even within the context for which it was created. Thus, the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (2016) has been critiqued for being unimplementable due to a lack in focus and lacks in understanding towards the realty of gangsterism (Pinnock, 2016).

In summary, only a few participants were able to identify a youth gang-orientated legislation document. In order to gain further clarity, participants were then asked to identify any policy or legislation, specifically related to the social work profession, which seeks to guide social workers in youth gang prevention. All participants indicated an absence of any such policy or legislation. The narrative below depicts this view:

> *"**We do have policy that guides us as a whole. But there is nothing that is specifically for gangsterism**. It is needed but, at the moment, no, there is nothing like that." (Participant H)*

The argument of there being an absence of social work policy and legislation guiding the social work practise of youth gang prevention is further supported by the narratives below:

> *"**Social work does not have anything that really speaks to gangs, no. Like we have White Papers for so many of these things that we see as a priority, you would think there would be one for gangsterism**, like a White Paper for Gang Prevention. But yeah no, as it is now, we do not have anything." (Participant L)*

There is a range of policy and legislative frameworks which exist to guide the social work profession, however, specific reference to youth gang prevention is lacking (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). Accordingly, participants indicated a need to make use of alternative policy and legislation in youth gang prevention, despite these not necessarily being geared towards this field.

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Upon identifying a lack of policy and legislation specifically guiding the role of social workers in youth gang prevention, all participants indicated the need to make use of available policy and legislative frameworks towards prevention of youth gangsterism. This view is depicted through the following narratives:

> *"No, no, **there is nothing specifically speaking to gangsterism that we can use. But social workers, we are used to getting creative. In this profession, you have to be creative. So, we use the other overarching policies to guide us**. We have the big ones, like the Children's Act and the Child Justice Act. I do not think there was anybody as excited as me when the Child Justice Act was approved. And then obviously we have the White Paper [for Social Welfare]. And, of course, everything has to follow the Constitution [of the Republic of South Africa]. Uhm, so yeah, we just use those instead." (Participant E).*
>
> *"**There are certain things we always go back to. The Children's Act, the White Paper for Social Welfare, those are the ones that always come to mind**." (Participant F)*
>
> *"The big one for me is our **Constitution [of the Republic of South Africa]**. We always have to remember that one. That includes the **Bill of Rights**. Social workers must always uphold people's rights, we are very concerned about the rights of our clients. Then, mainly, the **Children's Act**. Those are the ones I use anyway. Oh, and you can also use the **Child Justice Act**, but it is for when the child is already in crime. So yeah, if you are trying to prevent the gang, then maybe that one is too late. But I would still say it." (Participant I)*

Participants mentioned a range of available policy and legislative documents that can be used to guide social workers in youth gang prevention. These are summarised in Table 4.3. below:

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**Table 4. 1. Participants indicating relevance of various policy and legislative frameworks related to youth gang prevention**

| Policy or Legislation Document | Number of Participant who indicated relevance with policy/legislation |
|---|---|
| Western Cape Safety Plan (2019) | 14 |
| Adolescent and Youth Policy (2017) | 17 |
| The White Paper on Safety and Security (2016) | 3 |
| Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013) | 2 |
| The Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (2011) | 17 |
| The Integrated Service Delivery Model (2005) | 3 |
| The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) | 20 |
| Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 | 19 |
| Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 | 20 |
| Children's Act 38 of 2005 | 20 |
| Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 | 11 |
| Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) | 20 |

Table 4.3. gives an indication of which policy and legislative documents participants view to be of relevance in their service provision. Based on the table above, it can be analysed that the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007, Children's Act 38 of 2005, and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) were identified as most valuable, as all indicated possible implementation towards youth gang prevention.

All of the participants indicated a need for youth gang prevention-focused policy and legislation as a guiding mechanism for social workers, when asked about it. These views are highlighted by the narratives below:

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> *"**We have no idea what to do right now**. Do not get me wrong; we know the risks for gangsterism and we are trained to deal with those risks, but there is nothing concrete in place to guide us. **We need steps, something that we can measure. We need something laid out for us to follow**." (Participant B)*

> *"Right now, as I have said, it is just crisis intervention. We get the client, he is at risk for gangsterism, and we just put out the fire. But is that really making the impact we want? I think that, **if there was something more, like if we had a policy to follow, that could help. I mean, most of the day we are putting out fires, like I said, crisis intervention, we do not have time to make up something on the spot for these kids. I mean the kids who are being recruited to the gangs. We need something that we can learn and follow**. Like, I know the Children's Act off-by-heart. When a child in need of protection is sitting in front of me, I know exactly what to do. We need something like that for the gangs." (Participant M)*

According to these narratives, there is a sense of disorientation when it comes to youth gang prevention in social work. The lack of appropriate policy or legislative guidance in this field appears to create a sense of uncertainty on the role of social workers in youth gang prevention, as well as the appropriate intervention to follow when attempting to practise youth gang prevention. According to Heubner (2016), social work service delivery is anchored in policy and legislation. Thus, the identified lack of such frameworks towards youth gang prevention has resulted in a knowledge gap towards social work youth gang prevention (Jordan, 2003; Heubner, 2016).

Further to the need for guidance, participants indicated the need for youth gang prevention advocacy through policy and legislation. Majority of the participants indicated the need for youth gang prevention-focused policy or legislation as a means of advocacy towards prioritisation of youth gang prevention. The predominant view of this category is presented through the following narrative:

> *"Look, **everyone always wants to talk about gangsterism, but it seems like nobody is actually doing anything about it. It always seems to fall on us [social workers]. Like, I feel so alone**. It is like, why is it such an important thing for us but nobody else wants to pay attention. Like, it makes you feel alone. I mean, like, so, okay, I have this client who is living in Manenberg, and*

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> *there is so many gangs there. And his brother is a gangster, and his brother is saying like "just come to us". And I want to stand up and scream and shout because he must not do that. Like, hello, we are seeing this every day. It seems like all our clients are at risk. And so, we have to prevent it [gangsterism].* ***So, we have to make it a priority, but we are alone out here. Nobody else is making it a priority. So, sorry, let me get back to my point. I think that, if there was something in the legislation pointing this out, then people would be forced to make gangsterism a priority.****" (Participant F)*

A sense of abandonment can be noted in terms of social work youth gang prevention. According to youth gang experts, youth gang prevention requires a collaborative approach (Pinnock, 2015; 2019). This argument has been mirrored on a national level by current president of South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa (Ramaphosa, 2019). Additionally, the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008), the Integrated Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011), and the Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2016) note that crime prevention should occur through collaborative efforts. However, participant's narratives indicate that these calls of collaboration may not be implemented in practise, as social workers are perceived themselves to be the only profession seeking to prevent youth gangsterism. This perception is supported through the following narrative:

> *"****The police like to say they are fighting against gangsterism. But that is the whole point, they are fighting against it. They are not actually preventing it****. Like, just the other day, I heard on the radio that the police had arrested a prominent gang member after he shot someone. Then they were saying how this is crime prevention.* ***That is not prevention if the crime has already been committed****. The police cannot arrest someone after a murder and then say, "oh yes, we prevented murder". No, my friends, the murder already then happened. So, it is just like, everyone is fighting against crime that has already happened.* ***And it is the same with the gangs. They fight against the gangsterism that is already there. Nobody is focused on preventing it actually. It is just the social workers. We are the only ones out in the community trying to prevent these kiddies from joining the gangs in the first place****. We have the world on our shoulders with this. And you know, and*

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> *things claim prevention, but then everything about implementing it is not prevention.* ***So, the Act will say prevention in the name, and then it is all about the police arresting the gangsters. This is not prevention then! So, it is only the social workers that actually do prevention. That is why we need a proper gang policy or Act, so we can actually make prevention a focus, a priority. And it needs to be informed by social workers because we are the ones actually doing it****. Then we can actually start shining the spotlight on this thing. We just need a little more of the spotlight I think." (Participant N)*

The above narrative supports the view of social workers feeling alone in the prevention of youth gangsterism, thereby indicating a lack of collaboration. Furthermore, said narrative highlights a need for policy and legislation to prioritise social work youth gang prevention. Most of the participants indicated the need for prioritisation of youth gang prevention-focused policy or legislation as a means of mobilising resources. This view is depicted through the narratives below:

> *"****Resources is always going to be the biggest problem here****. It is the same old tale. There are not enough resources, financial, human, assets, everything, there is not enough.* ***And I think people, by people I mean government, take for granted that social workers can just work with nothing****. They say "yes, go do the gang prevention" and then give us no resources to do it. If we had a gang policy in social work, then maybe that would force them to give us some resources. And not just the government actually,* ***I feel like everyone responds to the law. So, then we will have other companies and organisations also providing resources to help us****." (Participant P)*

> *"****Social workers take their policy very seriously. And most of what we do is funded by DSD [Department of Social Development]. So, if DSD could see there is something in our policy about gangs, they will actually maybe invest in it then****. This is also why we need something in policy for gang prevention. Because, right now, you know, it is not mentioned and so DSD looks the other way when it comes to funding." (Participant S).*

According to the above narratives, youth gang-focused policy and legislation is necessary in order to secure funding and resources for social workers towards this

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endeavour. The Department of Social Development is noted, specifically in this argument. According to the Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare (2016), the Department of Social Development itself recognises challenges in resources and funding. This is supported in the literature, whereby it has been noted that social workers are practising under the context of scarce resources (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007; Azzi-Lessing & Schmidt, 2019).

Thus, the predominant narratives argue the need for youth gang prevention-focused policy and legislation as a means of mobilising funding and further resources for youth gang prevention services.

## 4.8. THEME 4: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION

Challenges experienced by social workers in youth gang prevention was identified as a theme, which is discussed according to the identified sub-themes and categories resulting from the empirical data. These focus on inadequate resources, lack of capacity, inadequate undergraduate knowledge and training, and an absence of an established role for social workers in youth gang prevention.

### 4.8.1. Sub-theme 4.1. Inadequate resources in delivering youth gang prevention services

Participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of the challenges to the role of social workers in youth gang prevention. Categories were identified according to the resulting data patterns. The predominant categories highlighted inadequate financial resources, human resources, and supportive resources towards the role of social workers in youth gang prevention.

#### *4.8.1.1. Category: Inadequate financial resources towards youth gang prevention*

All of the participants indicated inadequate financial resources as challenges in social work youth gang prevention. This view is depicted through the narrative below:

> ***"Resources is always going to be the biggest problem here. It is the same old tale. There are not enough resources, financial, human, assets,***

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> ***everything, there is not enough**. And I think people, by people I mean government, takes for granted that social workers can just work with nothing. They say "yes, go do the gang prevention" and then **give us no resources to do it**… (Participant P)*

Again, the lack of funding for social work youth gang prevention is noted through policy such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (2011), as well as literature that acknowledges social workers are practising under the context of scarce resources (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007; Azzi-Lessing & Schmidt, 2019).

*4.8.1.2. Category: Inadequate human resources towards youth gang prevention*

Majority of the participants indicated inadequate human resources as a challenge to the role of social work youth gang prevention. Participants largely noted this through a lack of capacity towards the role of social workers in youth gang prevention. All of the participants indicated that the absence of targeted youth gang prevention services in the social work profession was underpinned by challenges in caseload numbers and caseload type. The narratives below depict this challenge:

> *"**There is too much focus being placed on child protection and crisis intervention within this field. We cannot really go beyond that** or place our focus on something else like youth gangsterism." (Participant G)*

> *"Also, **your average social worker is so bombarded with extremely high caseloads that they can focus on those who are considered most at-risk**. Those are not the kids who are at-risk of gangsterism, those are the kids who need statutory intervention. It is the abused kids, or the neglected kids. **I do not think your average social worker even gets a chance to think about gangsterism, and even less about preventing gangsterism – and that is terrible**. It is terrible because it is such a prevalent issue, especially in the poverty-stricken areas. **I think social workers are so overwhelmed, because there are not enough of us to get the jobs done… I just do not think we necessarily can because caseload, admin, and limited resources. We cannot ever get to the community.**" (Participant C)*

These challenges highlight social work as being saturated by child protection cases and statutory interventions; this view is also held by Van Way and Theron (2005) and

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Cooper and Ward (2012). Thus, while social work has been identified as best suited to address youth gangsterism, it appears as though social workers are struggling within the context of limited resources, as can be noted in their ability to only meet priority needs and intervene at a tertiary level (Bozalek, Henderson, Lambert & Green, 2007; Azzi-Lessing & Schmidt, 2019).

Participants' views of child protection being the dominant focus in social work is increasingly concerning when viewed from a human rights lens. While child protection work is vital to youth gang prevention through meeting the safety, security, and well-being needs of children, the prevalence of this field is potentially infringing on youths' right to social service interventions that fall outside this field (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). Inaccessibility to social services can exacerbate risk factors for youth gangsterism that fall outside a tertiary intervention level, as majority of this risk factors for this phenomenon have been identified as requiring a primary intervention approach (Department of Social Development, 1997, 2011, 2016; Van Way & Theron, 2005; Ward, 2007; National Planning Commission, 2011; Pinnock, 2015; Department of Safety and Security, 2016; Department of Health, 2017; Mccain, 2017; Parker, 2018; Ramaphosa, 2019).

However, Dubois & Miley (2016) argue that a lack of resources within social services does not represent an excuse for the deliverance of adequate and appropriate services; social services require an understanding of how to address the needs of individuals within the context of limited resources (Dubois, Miley & O'Melia, 2004; Dubois & Miley, 2016).

> *"**We need an enormous amount of effort and manpower to make prevention successful**. We do not have the manpower or resources for that; **our government does not afford us the right to that.**" (Participant Q)*

Thus, while Dubois and Miley (2016) advocate for social workers to address the needs of individuals within the context of limited resources, participants presented the view that this may excuse governmental laxity towards social work challenges in youth gang prevention. Participants presented the view that such an understanding of how to address the youth's needs from a context of limited resources will not be sufficient in addressing the magnitude of youth gangsterism. Instead, participants argued macro-

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level structural change to social work is required. This largely speaks to participants' views on governmental endorsements, which is explored in the following category:

*4.8.1.3. Category: Inadequate supportive resources in terms of recognition towards youth gang prevention*

Majority of the participants indicated national and provincial endorsement of social work youth gangsterism as being inadequate. This view is depicted through the narratives below:

> *"**There is an issue that has been debated in parliament many times; that the Western Cape is not getting the attention and the resources that it needs to combat gangsterism**." (Participant B)*

> *"**The issue for me lies in political willpower. We, as a province, have the freedom to select areas of priority. But our politicians will not indicate this as a priority**. Our focus has been so much on substance abuse, and so we have got a thousand organisations dealing with substance abuse. The same level should be aimed at gangsterism. **I think this gap is because of a lack of political willpower towards gangsterism**." (Participant N)*

The narratives above speak to the inadequacy of national and provincial responses to youth gangsterism and is grounded in practical responses being misaligned to research, as well as legislative responses being vague and unimplementable (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Pinnock, 2015; Kinnes, 2017; Pinnock, 2019). Again, this lack of political endorsement can be considered legislatively unjust, as Section 28(1)(c) of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996) stipulates that children have the right to social services. Social workers therefore are key role players in upholding the dignity, well-being, and freedom of children, in order for all their basic needs to be fulfilled. However, inadequate political endorsement towards social service provision, in terms of financial and human resources, potentially inhibits social workers' ability to successfully ensure youth are afforded the right to social services. Accordingly, social workers may be inhibited towards the adequate prevention of youth gangsterism.

According to the conflict theory by Marx (1859) and Dahrendorf (1958), social workers' views of government apathy towards their challenges in youth gang prevention can result in dysfunctional relations between said parties. This can have a negative

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snowball effect, whereby the identified lack of collaboration and interdepartmental efforts towards youth gang prevention are further exacerbated (Republic of South Africa, 2008; Department of Social Development, 2011, 2016).

### 4.8.2. Sub-theme 4.2. Novice challenge of COVID-19

Participants indicated a novice challenge related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as was introduced in Theme 2. The emergent categories highlight increased isolation as a risk factor for youth gangsterism, as well as an inability to delivery optimal services. These are discussed below:

*4.8.2.1. Category: Increased isolation of youth in gang-ridden community settings exacerbating risk factors*

Participants were asked to elaborate on how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the youth and their social work services. Participants indicated the view that existing risk factors for youth gangsterism have been exacerbated by the pandemic and, thus, has introduced further pressure towards social work intervention. This view is depicted through the narrative below:

> *"Shjoe, **I do not even know what to say about the pandemic hey**. It really hit us hard. Like, it has made all our problems worse. **Like, everything we should be working against is ten times worse now. Like, the domestic violence** is, I do not know, unimaginable. **And the schools. Just think, if you struggled before in school, then it is even worse now**. They are doing the online learning thing and it is hard. Because, I mean, it is hard to adapt to that. **Or what about the resources. Our boys in these communities do not have laptops and internet at home**.." (Participant Q)*

The narrative indicated further challenges to delivering optimal social work services in terms of social work responses to the exacerbation of identified youth gang risk factors. These include continued exposure to violence desensitises the child or youth to such behaviour, thereby establishing conflict and aggression as a behavioural norm (Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Abbas, 2016). This process of emotional deregulation is likely to manifest in externalised volatile and antisocial interactions and peer relations,

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namely youth gangsterism as described by Green and Wijnberg (2014); Pinnock (2015) and Abbas (2016).

Furthermore some literature indicates school attachment as more influential than parental attachment in the development of delinquent behaviour; low school attachment is more likely to result in criminality than low parental attachment (Resnick, Harris & Blum, 1993; Resnick, 1997; Payne & Welch, 2016; Dick *et al*., 2019), which is also a challenged raised by participants.

The narrative above speaks of challenges experienced by the youth in terms of schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges mentioned, such as intellectual difficulties or resources challenges, has the potential to greatly impair youth's school attachment, thereby increasing their risk of youth gang recruitment.

Participants noted challenges in responding to youth gang risk factors as exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the participants noted an inability to engage in optimal service delivery, due to the related restrictions. This is noted through the narrative below:

> *"I just really feel helpless.* ***We have all these methods, like case work and group work and everything. And we want to use them to help, because people are going through a lot with this COVID thing. But we cannot. Like, we want to do a support group, but we cannot now meet in person, and our clients do not have things like Skype. So, we want to meet up and do home visits, but then you are putting yourself and the client at risk. So, what do we do****?" (Participant O)*

Again, DuBois and Miley (2016) advocate for social workers to address the needs of individuals within the context of limited resources. However, participants previously presented the view that this may not be a viable argument due to the extent of youth gangsterism. Thus, the novice challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic appear to further exacerbate existing challenges of limited resources.

The above narrative also identifies that vulnerable youth may not have access to technical resources, which could be used to overcome the noted COVID-19 challenges to social work services. DuBois and Miley (2016) note the importance of

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considering the contexts and circumstances of the client when intervening, however social workers indicate a lack resources.

### 4.8.3. Sub-theme 4.3. The need for specialised training in social work for youth gang prevention

Participants further noted the generic nature of social work undergraduate programmes as a challenge towards the role of social workers in youth gang prevention. The resultant categories that emerged include the need for youth gang prevention to be a specialised field in social work education. This is discussed below according to participant discourse and reference to relevant literature:

Participants were asked about specific training related to youth gang prevention. The majority of participants indicated that said training was insufficient in developing a theoretical knowledge base towards the youth gang prevention context, as undergraduate social work training is geared towards generic knowledge. Thus, participants were of the view that further specialized training was required in order to build an adequate knowledgebase towards youth gang prevention. This view is depicted through the narratives below:

> *"**I do not remember them ever speaking about gangsterism. I guess we know the general risks for bad behaviour in our clients, but I mean, our four-year degree did not really encompass gangsterism**. So, it is not like you walk out of there knowing what to do with it [youth gangsterism]." (Participant A)*
>
> *"**I think it [youth gangsterism] was mentioned once or twice. But that was never in prevention, that was always in tertiary services. So, the theory does not really prepare you**. There is a lot you can use in social work to indirectly guide you, but **in terms of direct knowledge, nothing was really given to us**. And it is not like we ever really saw it in practice." (Participant B)*
>
> *"It is funny because **gangsterism is such a big issue here**. And social workers are supposed to be dealing with the big issues of our society, **but it was hardly spoken about in our classes**. I am not sure if all the universities are the same,*

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> *but I went to [name omitted] and they did not really touch on it much or show it to us in practical. So, I would not say it was enough for me." (Participant G)*

The narratives above indicate a lack of training specifically related to gang prevention of any kind. Van Way and Theron (2005) and Cooper and Ward (2012) note that social work theoretical knowledge towards youth gang prevention may be lacking, as the profession is saturated by child protection work. While social work undergraduate training affords social workers a large knowledge base towards addressing social needs and social ills, these have been largely acquired under the context of child protection as a focal point (Van Way & Theron, 2005; Cooper & Ward, 2012). Thus, while social workers have been identified as a key role-player in youth gang prevention due to their familiarity in addressing the root causes of social phenomenon (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017), it is evident that a more in-depth focus specifically orientated towards youth gang prevention could benefit this role. Ultimately, participants presented the view that youth gang prevention should be demarcated as a specialised field in social work, as social work undergraduate training was indicated as too generic in nature. This view is depicted through the narratives below:

> *"**I do not feel like what we acquired within the four years of study is sufficient to make anybody an expert in gang prevention**." (Participant P)*

> *"It neglects a lot of the other roles that social workers can fulfil in the field or in practice… **So, I think it needs to be more of a focal point within our studies**." (Participant J)*

Social work has been identified as the profession most involved in the collective life that youth gangs form part of (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). This wide range of knowledge possessed by social workers may be due to the wide generic nature of social work undergraduate training, thereby providing explanation towards the abovementioned views.

However, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2017) notes that social workers are personally responsible for their own professional development. Social workers have the ethical responsibility towards improving the integrity of their knowledge and skills through appropriate study and active discussion (SACSSP,

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2017). Thus, social workers have the responsibility to pursue specialized knowledge of youth gang prevention within their own professional capacity. This can be done through pursuing a post-graduate degree or engaging in personal study and research review.

### 4.8.4. Sub-theme 4.4. Absence of an established, recognised, and designated role for social workers within youth gang prevention

When asked about the challenges to the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention, all of the participants indicated their current role in youth gang prevention as focused on child protection. However, these participants further indicated no designated role for the social worker in youth gang prevention currently. This view is depicted through the narrative below:

> *"Look, child protection contributes a lot to gang prevention. It looks at a lot of the risks. But child protection is its own role in itself.* ***I cannot really say the role of child protection is equivalent to the role of gang prevention*** *because it is just not. So, yeah, child protection does contribute, but* ***there is not really an actual role right now. I mean, there is nothing drawn up to know what our real role is****." (Participant M)*

The above narrative notes an absence of a designated role for social workers within youth gang prevention. The absence of said role may be contributable to the role of the social worker being neglected due to youth gang prevention efforts favouring a criminological approach over that of the social sciences (Erasmus, Magidi & Schenk, 2016). The below supports this view:

> ***"I do not think we really have much of a recognised role. When you think of social worker, you think of child protection. When you think of gang prevention, you think of police. The police have been given a real role' we do not really have one at the moment****. It is not that we are not doing anything, it is more that* ***we are doing something but no one is quite sure where that fits in. Actually, I think we are probably doing the most****. I do not want to seem biased, it is just the truth. Social workers are really important in gang prevention, for a number of reasons." (Participant R)*

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Social workers have been identified as priority role players in youth gang prevention by a range of professionals, experts, research, literature, and legislative documents (Jordan, 2003; Department of Community Safety, 2016; Department of Health, 2017). However, participants maintain the view that this role has not been appropriately defined and demarcated. This can impair social workers' ability to deliver optimal youth gang prevention services, as well as impair appropriate collaboration with interdepartmental bodies (Republic of South Africa, 2008; Department of Social Development, 2011, 2016).

## 4.9. THEME 5: RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT AND OPTIMISATION OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION

Participants were asked to identify what they view as their role as social workers in youth gang prevention, which was identified as the final theme. Sub-themes were identified according to resultant data patterns. The predominant sub-themes highlighted the aspirational role of social workers in youth gang prevention as agents of empowerment, further focus on primary prevention, and further focus on holistic interventions. The indicated sub-themes are analysed and discussed according to their respective categories.

### 4.9.1. Sub-theme 5.1. The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be focused on youth empowerment through case work, group work and community work

Participants indicated that social work interventions should be further focused on empowerment on the client systems. Participants presented the view that empowerment can be further implemented through further incorporation of strength-based services, as well as through the adoption of further support services.

The majority of participants indicated that the aspirational role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be empowerment orientated. This view is depicted through the narrative below:

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> *"Us, as **social workers, we have to be the people empowering these children. A lot of the time, these children join gangs because they do not believe they can do anything else. We have to be their cheerleaders, show them that they are more than that and that they can do anything in this life. We have to believe in them and make them believe in themselves**. I think our role should be very much empowering, you see." (Participant H)*

The development of a positive and confident self-image serves as a powerful protective factor against youth gangsterism (Butts, Bazamore & Meroe, 2010; Berdychevsky, Stodolska & Shinew, 2019). The above narrative highlights the aspirational role of the social worker as one that empowers the individual towards positive self-beliefs that seek to prevent involvement in youth gangsterism. This should be incorporated in case work, group work, and community work services. The narrative below provides further understanding towards the value of empowerment through social workers:

> *"I think that we really need to start focusing more on empowerment. **I think that our role right now is not very sustainable because it is just crisis intervention, you know, child protection stuff. We need to empower these kids and the entire community to be self-sufficient. Then we can know that what we are doing is at least sustainable**. So, our role should definitely head in that direction – of empowerment." (Participant O)*

The above narrative introduces a further value of empowerment when aspiring towards an established role for social workers in youth gang prevention. Youth gang prevention efforts have been encouraged towards sustainability through the development of self-sufficiency in communities. Furthermore, the Western Cape Government has noted empowerment and the development of self-sufficiency as core elements of the social work profession (Western Cape Government, 2019). The large majority of participants indicated that the aspirational role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be empowerment through support services. This view is depicted through the narratives below:

> *"**I think that our role should just be to support them. Support is very strong for prevention**. We can support them in everything they do really, this should be the role." (Participant P)*

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> *"I think these kids need a soft place to land.* ***They need someone to come to for support, because they may not have that support at home or in school or wherever****. So, we need to open our arms and let them know they can come to us for that; we will be there for them." (Participant I)*

The above narratives further highlight how the aspirational role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should seek to support the youth. Poor parental or familial support serves as significant risk factors for youth gangsterism, as the need for support may be met through alternative means such as involvement in a gang (Petersen, 2012; Bezuidenhout, 2018; Michaeli, 2016). Thus, participants have highlighted the need for social workers to act as a supportive figure to the youth. This argument is mirrored through the Western Cape Government (2019) and the Integrated Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2011), whereby it is noted that social workers should strive to afford the youth with adequate support.

### 4.9.2. Sub-theme 5.2. The role of the social worker should focus on primary youth gang prevention

Participants indicated a need for further focus on primary prevention when engaging in case work, group work and community work. Participants were of the view that this can be achieved through further primary and early intervention practices, predominantly focused on meeting the needs of the youth. This view is depicted through the following narrative:

> *"****We need to be starting as early as we can with these kids****. We need to be starting even before the kids, maybe with the parents.* ***We are reaching them too late and then there is not much we can do for them. So early intervention is vital if we want to prevent them from turning to the gangs****." (Participant C)*

The need for the role of social workers to be geared towards early intervention is echoed through the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005) acknowledges the necessity of the early intervention in protecting the needs and well-being of the child. As youth gangsterism has been identified as a response to a need, this provision can be

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extended to the field of youth gang prevention (Fortune, 1998; Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015).

Additionally, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005) highlights how social workers are called towards "Developing appropriate parenting skills and the capacity of parents and care-givers to safeguard the well-being and best interests of their children" (Republic of South Africa, 2005:166).

The following narrative speaks further to the argument for early intervention in social work youth gang prevention:

> *"I just want to go back to the age thing.* ***I think we need to be taking these kids on from a much younger age. I actually do not want to see a child that is 15 or 16 years old in my office. If somebody of that age walks into my office, I am already angry, because I know the system has failed them when they were younger. They should have been in my office when they were 5 or 6 years old, where we could have made a greater impact****. Now they are coming and they have experienced emotional abuse or sexual abuse, and I cannot prevent what has already happened. So, they are traumatized.* ***Yes, I can treat that trauma, but that is not good enough for me. It should have never happened in the first place****." (Participant J)*

Youth gangsterism has been linked to family conflict and dysfunction, often in the form of maltreatment, abuse, or neglect (Baumann, 1998; Fortune, 1998; Pinnock, 1998; Standing, 2003; Green & Wijnberg, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016). The abovementioned narrative is supported by provisions made for children through Section 28(1)(d) of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996), as discussed previously. This section emphasises the child's right to be protected from maltreated and abuse, thereby standing in support of the argument that the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should focus on early intervention efforts in order to prevent youth gang-associated risk factors.

All of the participants indicated that primary youth gang prevention should be focused on meeting the needs of clients at-risk for youth gang involvement. This premise is depicted through the narrative below:

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> *"**At the core of it, gangsterism is about needs,** I think. And, if we know this, **then our role should centre around that**. Because it is not really needs in terms of luxuries, it is needs in terms of basic needs. And **we have a responsibility to fulfil those basic needs because, as far as I know, basic needs are basic rights. So, we have an obligation to make sure they are fulfilled**. Yeah, I think basically that should be our role." (Participant E)*

Youth gangsterism has been an identified as an alternative means to fulfil one's basic needs which may not have been fulfilled through functional means (Fortune, 1998; Salo, 2005; Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). The narrative below further elaborates on this view:

> *"Really, it is just about the needs of the client. I think that is what we should be focusing on. **I have said gangsterism is about belonging, so we then need to look at social needs. Or it is about abuse, then we need to look at the need to be protected. We just need to redirect our focus to the basic needs of the person**." (Participant G).*

The Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996) outlines the rights that each citizen of South Africa is afforded. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996) makes provisions for children specifically. Section 28(1)(d) of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996) advocates for children to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, and degradation, thus supporting the abovementioned view. As rights are made in consideration of basic needs, this echoes how the aspirational role of the social worker should move towards youth gang prevention through basic needs fulfilment.

The need to focus on basic needs fulfilment through primary prevention strategies speaks to parental empowerment. During the period of childhood, parents are predominantly responsible for ensuring their child's basic needs are met. Accordingly, social workers should strive to engage in primary youth gang prevention efforts through empowering parents to meet their child's basic needs.

### 4.9.3. Sub-theme 5.3. The role of the social worker should focus on holistic youth gang prevention services (micro, meso and macro-levels)

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Participants indicated a need for social work case work, group work, and community work youth gang prevention to be further orientated towards approaches that extend throughout all levels of the ecological system. Majority of the participants indicated that the aspirational role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be holistic in nature. This view is depicted by the narrative below:

> *"You know, gangsterism, there are so many elements to it.* ***You see the risk in every walk of life, or every part of life I should say. You see it at home, with the friends, with the school. So, our role needs to really get into all of these things. It needs to be holistic****." (Participant T)*

According to the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety, 2016) calls for gangsterism to be addressed through holistic measures, thus supporting the above-stated narrative. Furthermore, the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government, 2019) calls for youth gangsterism to be prevented through holistic and integrated interventions. In this manner, the aspiration role of the social worker in youth gang prevention being holistic in nature is supported by legislative frameworks.

The need for the aspirational role of the social worker in youth gang prevention to be holistic in nature is further represented by the narrative below:

> *"****Social workers are involved in every field. And, as I have said, gangsterism has infiltrated every field****. There are gangs at the school, and our family members are gangsters, you name it. So, I feel that is where our role should be heading towards. I mean, every field, it has to be holistic in every field, you know." (Participant M)*

The narrative above provides understanding towards the aspirational role of social work in youth gang prevention, in that it should take on a holistic approach. Social workers are identified as being most involved in the collective elements of the life youth form part of, thus indicating them as optimal in preventing youth gangsterism (Department of Community Safety, 2016).

Many participants further indicated that the aspirational role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be collaborative with other professions, thus calling for

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a multi-disciplinary approach to youth gang prevention. This is depicted through the narrative below:

> *"**Right now, gang prevention seems to be only on our shoulders. I think, as we work towards a more established role, that there should be more collaboration. It needs to an interdisciplinary effort**. We need collaboration with individual, other organisations, other professions – it cannot just be the social workers. Because that is not working right now. It needs to be everyone together." (Participant B)*

The prevention of crime – and, thus, the prevention of youth gangsterism – has been declared an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental responsibility (Republic of South Africa, 2008; Department of Social Development, 2011, 2016). This stands in support of the abovementioned view. This view is further elaborated through the narrative below:

> *"I know that the police are said to be helping with the gangs, but it kind of feels like it is only the social workers preventing it. So, even if the police are helping, we do still need help elsewhere. **We need more help. We need to collaborate with other people. Because, at the end of the day, we all have something to add. Every professional is coming from a different background that I think could add value**." (Participant K)*

This narrative further illustrates the aspirational role of the social worker in youth gang prevention moving towards a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach. This view is echoed by President Ramaphosa, as well as youth gang experts, who have called for youth gang prevention to be a collective effort (Ramaphosa, 2019; Pinnock, 2015; 2019).

## 4.10. CONCLUSION

Analysis of the empirical findings was presented in this chapter through an exploration of the identified themes. The six identified themes stood in regard to the risk factors for youth gangsterism, responses to youth gangsterism, policy and legislation informing youth gang prevention, knowledge and training in youth gang prevention, social work in youth gang prevention, and the role of the social worker in youth gang

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prevention. These themes were explored according to their respective sub-themes and categories, in order to reflect on participant narratives and correlate findings with the relevant literature. The following chapter seeks to draw conclusions from said data, in order to provide appropriate recommendations.

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# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the views of social workers regarding their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape. This was achieved through the implementation of four primary research objectives, each of which were depicted and achieved through respective chapters.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and motivation for the study, Chapter 2 provided an overview of the nature and extent of youth gangsterism in the Western Cape, Chapter 3 explored policy and legislation relevant to the role of the social worker within youth gang prevention, and Chapter 4 depicted an investigation into the views of social workers on their role in youth gang prevention in the Western Cape.

This chapter stands in achievement of the final research objective, which seeks to offer relevant conclusions and recommendations towards the role of social workers in youth gang prevention.

## 5.2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions are structured according to the established themes discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, conclusions will be given with regards to the biographical information of participants, risk factors for youth gangsterism, responses to youth gangsterism, policy and legislation informing youth gang prevention, knowledge and training in youth gang prevention, social work in youth gang prevention, and the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention.

### 5.2.1. Biographical information of participants

The biographical information obtained from participants focused on their profession type, position within the organisation, years of experience working in gang-affected areas of the Western Cape, developmental phase of their client systems, percentage of clients which are youth gangsters, and percentage of clients who are affected by youth gangsterism.

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All participants were registered social workers, as per the criteria for inclusion. The large majority of participants had been delivering services in youth gang affected areas for less than ten years, while only some participants were noted as practising in gang-ridden areas for upwards of ten years. This biographical information is significant to note, as it can be concluded that majority of social worker delivering services in youth-gang affected areas have somewhat limited experience in the field. The limitations in experience of social workers providing services to youth gangsters or gang affected youth requires precise demarcations of roles and responsibilities within the field in order to ensure appropriate guidance of beginner social workers.

In terms of participants' client systems, majority indicated their client systems as being predominantly represented by children and youth. This trend is promising in terms of youth gang prevention, as it provides social workers with the opportunity to engage in primary and early intervention with younger client systems. However, it may be significant to note that youth gangsterism requires intervention beyond just the immediate youth client systems.

Moreover, the majority of participants indicated that upwards of 50% of their client system was actively involved in youth gangsterism, and that upwards of 60% of their client systems were impacted by youth gangsterism in some way. It can, therefore, be concluded that youth gangsterism presents as a significant factor for social workers in gang ridden areas of the Western Cape. This information becomes increasingly concerning when recalling participants' narratives of limited capacity towards addressing the phenomenon, as was introduced in the previous paragraph.

In conclusion, the biographical information of participants introduces youth gangsterism as a dominant presence within gang ridden areas in the Western Cape social work practise. However, it can further be concluded that social workers are experiencing immense challenges in their capacity towards successfully delivering youth gang prevention services.

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### 5.2.2. Theme 1: Micro-level social work intervention in relation to youth gangsterism

**Conclusions:**

The data collected from participants indicated that youth gangsterism can occur from early childhood to early adulthood, all within the developmental period of youth. However, the majority of participants note that, while the onset of gang involvement can still occur up until early adulthood, majority of youth gang recruits are becoming increasingly younger in age; the participants indicated that youth gang recruitment is currently predominantly seen in early childhood.

In addition to the micro-level risk factor of age, participants conclusively indicated that youth gangsterism is disproportionately skewed towards males. Participants interpreted youth gangsterism as a male-dominated phenomenon due to a natural aggression associated with the gender, as well as due to larger societal norms associated with the male gender role. Thus, it can be concluded that the micro-level risk factor of gender is influenced by factors associated with further levels of the ecological systems, such as dominant masculine norms that are formulated within the macro-level.

Finally, majority of participants noted youth gangsterism as being disproportionately skewed towards non-white population groups, particularly the coloured population of the Western Cape. Participants were adamant in clarifying that race itself plays no direct role in the development of youth gang attributes or involvement, but rather that South Africa's history of racial oppression has created an environment of displacement and dispossession among the coloured population, which has led to youth gangsterism being used as a means of mitigating experiences of alienation and deprivation.

Specifically, in terms of social work on a micro-level, participants indicated case work as highly valuable towards youth gang prevention. Participants indicated case work as valuable towards their role as a direct service provider, as it provides optimal opportunity for in-depth assessment and evaluations of the client systems. This relates to a previous conclusion, whereby it was noted that children and youth may be exposed to a range of serious risk factors from a young age. Assessment and

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evaluation in social work case work is thus vital for assessing and identifying needs, in order to construct appropriate evaluations towards a plan of intervention. Majority of the participants specifically noted the value of their role as assessors in identifying, not only the risks of their client systems, but the strengths they possess, in order to evaluate optimal means of harnessing these strengths towards youth gang prevention services.

Furthermore, participants indicated case work as valuable towards their role as a direct service provider, as it allows for optimal implementation of social work principles of acceptance in relation to support services. The participants highlighted acceptance as essential in youth gang prevention efforts, as they serve to meet basic emotional needs of the youth. Participants further identified acceptance of the client system for who they are as individuals and not being labelled as gangsters is often unfulfilled through traditional family and peer relations. This further creates a vacuum, thus not fulfilling basic needs such as love, acceptance, caring and belonging, as they are too often labelled as gangsters. Participants noted that social workers' implementation of the principle of acceptance through case work serves as powerful supportive and protective factors against youth gangsterism.

Participants further noted social work case work as valuable towards youth gang prevention as it promotes integrative service delivery. The participants highlighted how case work promotes the deliverance of services to further elements in the client system's environment that directly impact their functioning and well-being, such as the family and the school, thus involving parents and teachers in the intervention process. The participants noted that this allows for their services to become holistic in nature, as their services are targeted towards a range of persons or structures (parents and teachers) that serve to construct the client's environment. However, it was later noted that successful implementation of this case work practise is challenging for social workers, as their professional capacity is hindered by and oversaturation of crisis intervention and child protection services.

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**Recommendations:**

Based on the conclusions presented above, the following recommendations can be made:

- It is recommended that the role of the social worker should be that of an advocate, whereby social workers argue and lobby for said primary prevention services to target non-white male children in the pursuit of appropriate youth gang prevention. Management and supervisors of social work organisations should recognise and prioritise youth as a vulnerable group particularly for youth gang involvement, in order to render youth gang prevention services.
- Social work organisations should prioritise early identification of youth at risk of youth gang involvement through the application of direct service provision. This can be achieved through assessments and referrals for further interventions, such as group and community work programmes that should be instated.
- The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention requires consideration towards the need for case work interventions to be as holistic as possible, in terms of targeting each level of the client system's ecological system; social workers should further consider the interrelatedness of each ecological level (micro, meso and macro) towards youth gang prevention. In terms of policy and legislation, government and policymakers should develop clear demarcations of the role of social workers in youth gang prevention. Appropriate youth gang prevention programmes should be developed in accordance with said demarcations.

### 5.2.3. Theme 2: Meso-level social work intervention in relation to youth gangsterism

**Conclusions:**

The data collected from participants indicated that youth gangsterism can occur as the result of a range of family-related risk factors on the meso-level. These include aspects such as exposure to gangsterism within the family unit whereby the youth experience emotional deregulation and gang-associate behaviour becomes the norm through the development of cognitive frameworks that align with deviance. The same impact was indicated whereby youth experience abuse and neglect within the family home. Thus,

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it can be concluded that dysfunctional households characterised by traumatic conflict and deviant modelling behaviour can serve as a powerful predictor towards youth gangsterism.

Additionally, the participants noted abuse and conflict within the home as a further meso-level risk factor for youth gangsterism, as such family structures tend to be absent of love and acceptance, thereby failing to meet the emotional needs of the youth. Participants further associated a lack of family love and acceptance whereby the youth are reared in single-parent households or whereby the youth experience little parental presence. Accordingly, it can be concluded that youth who lack familial love, attention, guidance, and stability tend to experience feelings of alienation and isolation from their fellow family members, thereby failing to meet their emotional needs. It is common that such unfulfilled emotional needs can lead to involvement in youth gangsterism as the youth seek to simulate a surrogate family.

The data collected from participants further indicated that youth gangsterism can occur as the result of peer pressure and peer role-modelling. The participants highlighted how the youth are strongly influenced by their peer groups, thereby serving as a strong risk factor for youth gangsterism whereby client systems are engaging with peers involved in gang activities.

Participants indicated group work as valuable, as it contributes to the social work role of facilitator in youth gang prevention on a meso-level. It was found that the role of the social worker in meso-level youth gang prevention incorporates the achievement of social needs and empowerment. The social worker's role of facilitator in group work empowers the youth to meet their social needs through functional means. Additionally, youth tend to feel most empowered when they feel safe and understood. Social workers form group along lines of commonality, whereby the group members share common traits such as age or presenting risk factors. The social worker's role of facilitating such groups characterised by commonality serves to empower the youth members, thereby contributing to valuable youth gang prevention.

Additionally, it can be concluded that the role of the social worker in this level of the ecosystem highlights innovation as group work facilitates overcoming resources challenges. Participants highlighted that social work group is highly valuable in utilising limited resources to impact a larger body of clients. Thus, it can be concluded that the

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social worker's role of facilitating groups is valuable towards large-scale youth gang prevention efforts.

**Recommendations:**

- It is recommended that social workers deliver services in gang-affected areas establish groups that specifically focus on youth gang prevention; this should be developed at an organisational level. Social workers should advocate for group work as a preferred method of social work intervention, whereby youth at risk of youth gang involvement can be referred to groups, designed specifically for this purpose.
- It is recommended that government and policymakers demarcate clear guidelines and boundaries for social group work intervention as prevention strategies, thereby highlighting the role of social workers in the prevention of youth gangsterism.

### 5.2.4. Theme 3: Macro-level social work intervention in relation to youth gangsterism

**Conclusions:**

Based on the data associated with this theme, it can be concluded that youth gangsterism can be attributed to community exposure to gangsterism, poverty and unemployment, lack of recreational opportunities, negative governmental role-modelling and inadequate services targeting youth gangsterism.

The data collected from participants indicated that youth gangsterism can occur as the result of a community exposure to deviance and youth gangsterism on a macro-level. The participants highlighted that community exposure to youth gangsterism establishes experiences of threat and lack of safety within the youth, whereby the only apparent option is to join the gang for protection. Thus, it can be concluded that Western Cape youth gangs serve to meet unfulfilled basic needs of safety and security. Ultimately, when exposure to gang-ridden community environments hinders the fulfilment of this right, individuals tend to seek out the solace of youth gangs as an alternative means of protection.

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Participants further noted community access to narcotic substances as a strong risk factor for youth gangsterism on a macro-level. Access to narcotic substances, and the potential to distribute these substances, serves as means of financial income towards the support of basic needs. An alternative economy has emerged among lower socioeconomic communities of the Western Cape, whereby youth gang practises are employed as a substitute means of economic inclusion and survival. Therefore, it can be concluded that youth gangsterism is closely associated with unmet needs. Again, this speaks towards how basic needs exist across all levels of the youth's ecological system, thereby confirming the need for social workers to play an active role in fulfilling needs across all said levels of the ecosystem.

Additionally, participants indicated negative governmental role-modelling as a risk factor for youth gangsterism on a macro-level. Participants highlighted criminal role-modelling by national and provincial government leading to weak state governance as a strong predictor towards youth gang involvement. Ultimately, it can be concluded that weak state governance provides the opportunity for youth gangs to implement strong criminal governance from a community level. Alternatively, this serves as a risk factor through macro-level role-modelling, similar to family and peer role-modelling on a meso-level. The youth identify and recognise criminality in state officials, which established a macro-level norm of deviance, thereby contributing to the normalisation of youth gang criminal practices.

However, participants further indicated that government criminality can lead to innate mistrust of the government. This serves as a further risk factor for youth gangsterism as it inhibits youth's political need from being adequately fulfilled. Thus, it can be concluded that inappropriate governmental actions can lead to youth gangsterism, as inherent value from government is vital to the development of youths' identity and purpose.

Social workers intervene in the macro-level of the ecosystem through the deliverance of community work services. The social work method of community work was found to have significant value towards youth gang prevention as it contributes towards the social work roles of planner, advocate, and mediator.

In terms of the social role of planner, participants indicated that macro-level community work services allow for the social worker to maintain close contact with the community

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in order to identify needs and facilitate the development of effective ideas on how the community can meet their needs. This is similar to the role of direct service provider, which allows the worker to engage in in-depth assessments and evaluations with client systems on a micro-level; the social work role of planner allows for this to be implemented on a large-scale within the community on a macro-level. This social work role of planner in community work was noted as highly valuable towards youth gang prevention, as it provides the opportunity for the community to develop effective and sustainable means to meet their own needs. Furthermore, the social work role of planner in community work is vital in youth gang prevention as it mimics the community context within which youth gangs are formed.

Moreover, participants noted community work as valuable towards the social work role of advocate towards macro-level youth gang prevention. This role requires the social worker to be closely involved in the community in order to identify their presenting needs. Based on the identified community needs, the social work role of advocate stipulates the worker to ensure the community receives services that may not be available. Participants highlighted this as largely effective in terms of sustainability and empowerment.

Finally, participants noted the social work role of mediator in community work as highly valuable towards youth gang prevention. Participants highlighted community work as largely effective in terms of developing community cohesion. Community work allows for social workers to adopt the role of mediator, whereby they can empower the community towards cohesion through clarifying misunderstandings, addressing negative feelings, and applying various communication skills. This is a strong protective factor against youth gangsterism, as lack of community cohesion allows for a breakdown in community trust and togetherness, thereby providing the opportunity for youth gangs to rise up as an alternative means of organisation and control.

However, participants noted the role of the social worker throughout all ecological levels of youth gang prevention is not adequately guided through policy and legislative mandates. It can be concluded that there is a sense of disorientation when it comes to youth gang prevention in social work. The lack of appropriate policy or legislative guidance in this field appears to create a sense of uncertainty on the role of social

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workers in youth gang prevention, as well as the appropriate intervention to follow when attempting to practise youth gang prevention.

**Recommendations:**

- National, provincial, and local government departments, such as SAPS, should include further strategies towards developing protective mechanisms on a community level towards ensuring that said basic needs are met. Social work organisations and social workers should work with these government structures as an inter-disciplinary team towards addressing basic needs for safety and protection towards successful youth gang prevention.
- Structural change is required on a government level in order to available adequate facilities such as youth centres, play parks, and recreation in order to combat risk factors associated with lack of recreational opportunities and environments of community safety.
- The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention requires consideration towards economic and employment opportunities on the macro-level. Government and social work organisations should clearly demarcate the role and responsibility of social workers towards the development of such economic and employment opportunities as a youth gang prevention strategy.
- The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention requires consideration towards how macro-level structures can manifest in risk factors across all levels of the ecological system, such as how macro-level norms associated with masculine identity can manifest in gender-related risk factors on the micro-level. It is, thus, recommended that organisational policy is adjusted to stipulate all social work gang prevention efforts successfully impact all levels of the ecological system.
- The role of the social worker as mediator in youth gang prevention should seek to develop trusting bonds between government and community. Social work organisations should develop further opportunities for government and community to meet, engage and discuss identified challenges and potential solutions, in order to cultivate a mutual experience of trust and cohesion.
- The role of the social worker as advocate should seek to contribute towards policy and legislation outlining the specific roles and responsibilities of social

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workers in youth gang prevention. At organisational level, social workers need to take on the role of advocate and mediator so as to make policy makers and government aware of the lack of guidance social work has towards rendering youth gang prevention services, despite social workers being identified as key role-players in the prevention of youth gangsterism.

### 5.2.5. Theme 4: Challenges to the role of social workers in youth gang prevention

**Conclusions:**

The data collected from participants indicated that social workers are experiencing challenges in delivering youth gang prevention services. Participants highlighted these challenges as inadequate resources, the novice challenge of COVID-19, the need for youth gangsterism to be a specialised field, and the absence of an established role for social workers in youth gang prevention.

In terms of resource challenges, the participants highlighted inadequate financial, human, and supportive resources. It was clarified that social workers are given a foremost responsibility towards youth gang prevention yet are provided with little to no financial resources towards such efforts in the form of government or private funding. Additionally, it was highlighted that an incredible amount of social work manpower is required to adequately prevent the extent of youth gangsterism occurring, for which there is not enough human resources. Participants linked this to earlier narratives, whereby it was noted that social workers are saturated with crisis intervention and child protection services. Thus, it can be concluded that social workers require further financial resources and an increased quota for human resources in order to allow for further capacity towards youth gang prevention services.

Additionally, participants clarified that social workers experience challenges in youth gang prevention as they experience limited supportive resources in the form governmental or government recognition. Thus, it can be concluded that social workers require macro-level recognition and endorsement towards youth gang prevention.

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Participants further indicated a novice challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby their client systems are experiencing exacerbation of existing youth gang risk factors, such as isolation to volatile community settings or isolation to conflict-ridden home environments. Additionally, it was noted that social workers are experiencing challenges in the delivery of optimal social work services in response to these exacerbated risk factors, as strict regulations have been put in place in order to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Additionally, the data depicted the belief that social workers possess the optimal values, knowledge, and skills towards preventing youth gangsterism, which is in line with previous studies and research. This belief is founded on the understanding of youth gangsterism being associated with unmet needs, which participants indicated social workers as being experienced in addressing. However, participants noted such knowledge and skills as being conditioned through training to focus on child protection practises.

Thus, participants confirmed social work undergraduate training to be generic in nature and highlighted the need for youth gangsterism to be established as a specialised field in order to ensure the development of appropriate skills and knowledge towards youth gang prevention.

Based on the data associated with this theme, participants indicated the current role of social workers in youth gang prevention as being largely unestablished. While the participants largely agreed that the role of the social work should focus on primary prevention and early development when seeking to prevent youth gangsterism, it was noted that this role is currently unestablished due to social workers being preoccupied with tertiary interventions, crisis intervention, and statutory caseloads.

**Recommendations:**

- Social worker organisations require adequate financial, human, and supportive services towards implementing their role in youth gang prevention. This requires government to restructure national and provincial budgets and recognition towards adequate financial, human, and supportive resources for social workers in the pursuit of youth gang prevention. Government needs to provide the necessary funding for social work youth gang prevention services,

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thus addressing said lack of financial and human resources towards youth gang prevention services.

- Social workers may require new role development in understanding their responsibility towards responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This should be achieved through further research towards these new roles, that is then appropriately reflected in provincial and national policy and legislation. Furthermore, it is recommended that social work organisations' protective personal equipment (PPE) budget include the need for PPE to be provided to clients, in order to ensure that appropriate engagement with social workers can be achieved. Furthermore, social workers should advocate towards the development of policy and legislation that is structured according to youth gang prevention that considers the circumstances of COVID-19.
- Social workers require specialised training towards youth gang prevention, whether in the form of post-graduate training or professional development in their own capacity. Youth gang prevention services needs to be recognised as a specialised field of service, therefore advocating for government to provide social workers who render services in gang ridden areas with specialised training in this field.
- Social workers require their role in youth gang prevention to be demarcated and adequately defined in order to effectively and optimally deliver on the expectation of said role within policy and legislative frameworks. Special intervention programmes should be developed by government in conjunction with organisations and experts who render services in gang-ridden communities. There should be a focus on developing programmes which include a multi-disciplinary team approach, whereby the role of the social worker in said team is clearly demarcated.

### 5.2.6. Theme 6: Recommendations towards the development and optimisation of the role of social workers in youth gang prevention

**Conclusion**:

In terms of specific focus of the social workers, the participants indicated the role of social workers in youth gang prevention to include empowerment, prevention and early intervention, and collaborative, multi-disciplinary strategies in practise, clearly

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demarcating the role of social work within the prevention strategies. These are elaborated on through the following recommendations:

**Recommendations:**

- The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be focussed on empowerment services for youth. These empowerment strategies require targeting vulnerable individuals, parents/families/caregivers in gang ridden communities.
- The role of the social worker should focus on primary prevention and early intervention. Social work organisations should employ additional staff in order for social work caseloads to be effectively managed. In this manner, social workers may be able to better manage tertiary and statutory intervention, in order for prevention to be considered an equal field of priority. The social worker needs to target vulnerable individuals from as early as developmental period as possible. This speaks towards the role of prevention, as early intervention suggests that the individual's needs will be addressed prior to the development of negative behaviours or functioning.
- At an organisational level, social workers should be empowered with the necessary resources to take on the role of empowerers, facilitators, and advocates for youth who are at risk of youth gang involvement. These resources should include funding, specialised training, and improved human resources.
- The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be further orientated towards approaches that extend throughout all levels of the ecological system. The data has revealed that social workers are faced with strenuous caseloads, making it challenging to extend services beyond the individual. It is possible that this challenge can be overcome through an appropriate withdrawal from casework as a focal point. For example, family conferencing could take the place of meeting family members one by one. Such changes would allow for more holistic practises. At organisational level, the importance of social work case work (micro-level), group work (meso-level), and community work (macro-level) should focus on a multi-level preventative approach in terms of the ecological perspective.

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- The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention should be further advocating for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to youth gang prevention. This would allow for the mobilisation of resources and funding, further recognition towards prevention of said phenomenon, and the overcoming of challenges associated with strenuous caseloads. Government and organisations rendering services in gang ridden areas should collaborate more closely to develop holistic strategies for a multi-disciplinary team approach to youth gang prevention.

## 5.3. FURTHER RESEARCH

In light of the lack of research on the topic of social work within youth gang prevention and, more specifically, that of the role of the social worker in youth gang prevention, the following recommendations are made:

- The field of youth gang prevention should be focused on more readily within the context of prevention, as opposed to tertiary or statutory intervention.
- Specific functions of the social worker in youth gang prevention needs to be further explored, in the light of the identified roles, towards a further concrete understanding of social work within the youth gang prevention context.

## 5.4. KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

In offering a final conclusion for this study, it is evident that the social worker offers extensive value in the field of youth gang prevention. This value can be understood through the identified roles within empowerment, prevention, early intervention, support, holistic practise, and advocacy towards collaborations from a multi-disciplinary perspective. However, there are many challenges associated with the social work profession relating to a lack of resources, lack of recognition, limitations in profession capacity, and inadequate training towards the identified roles when outlying the context of child protection.

Therefore, it can be concluded that although there is potential for social workers to play an essential role in youth gang prevention, further development is required in order for such roles to be successfully and sustainably executed. Towards such

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developments, it is due that social workers employ their skill of advocacy within their own professional context in order to fight for the prevention of youth gangsterism.

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# APPENDIX A

# GATEKEEPERS INVITATION LETTER

## STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

---

**VIEWS OF INTERESTED SOCIAL WORK SERVICE PROVIDERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN DELIVERING YOUTH GANG PREVENTION SERVICES IN COMMUNITIES OF THE WESTERN CAPE.**

To whom it may concern,

I trust that you are well and keeping safe during this unprecedented time.

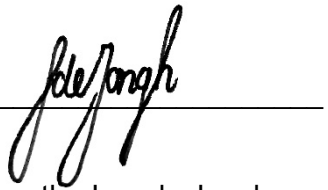
This letter serves as a formal request for permission to recruit participants from the organization of _____ to engage in a research study. The research study is being conducted by Samantha-Lee de Jongh, a Masters student from the Social Work Department of Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will become part of a research report titled: **Views of social work service providers regarding their role in delivering youth gang prevention services in communities of the Western Cape**.

_____ was selected as a potential recruitment organization due to its provision of social work services in a gang-affected area of the Western Cape. Upon acceptance of this recruitment invitation, please forward the attached invitation letter to organization's social work employees in order to request their voluntary participation in the research study. Alternatively, the researcher welcomes you to forward her the contact details of potential participants in order to personally initiate contact.

Participation in the research study is fully voluntary and confidential. Participants will be welcomed to engage in a telephonic interview on a date and time of the participant's choosing. All participants will remain anonymous.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to the researcher via 18962947@sun.ac.za / sldejongh@gmail.com or on 073 620 7559.

Kindly and respectfully,



Samantha-Lee de Jongh
18962947@sun.ac.za / sldejongh@gmail.com
073 620 7559

Stellenbosch University https://scholar.sun.ac.za



# APPENDIX B

# PARTICIPANTS INVITATION LETTER

### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

---

**VIEWS OF INTERESTED SOCIAL WORK SERVICE PROVIDERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN DELIVERING YOUTH GANG PREVENTION SERVICES IN COMMUNITIES OF THE WESTERN CAPE.**

To whom it may concern,

I trust that you are well and that you are keeping safe during this unprecedented time.

This document serves as a formal invitation to participate in a research study being conducted by Samantha-Lee de Jongh, a Masters student from the Social Work Department of Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will become part of a research report titled: **Views of social work service providers regarding their role in delivering youth gang prevention services in communities of the Western Cape**.

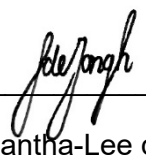
You have been identified as a potential participant due to your delivering of social work services in a gang-affected area of the Western Cape. Your experience is accompanied by valuable knowledge towards the role of social workers in youth gang prevention.

I welcome you to consider accepting this invitation. Upon acceptance, you will be invited to engage in a 30-minute telephonic interview, which will be scheduled on a date and time of your choosing. Participation is fully voluntary and strictly confidential. All participants will remain anonymous.

Please respond with your acceptance or declination.

If you have any further concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher via 18962947@sun.ac.za / sldejongh@gmail.com or on 073 620 7559.

Kindly and respectfully,



Samantha-Lee de Jongh

18962947@sun.ac.za / sldejongh@gmail.com

073 620 7559

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# APPENDIX C

## THEMES FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1) The nature, extent and consequences of youth gangsterism in the Western Cape
    a) At what age are children getting involved in youth gang activities?
    b) What personal factors related to the child encourages gang involvement?
    c) How is geographic location related to youth gang involvement?
    d) What social background factors play a role in children becoming involved in youth gang activity?
    e) What the consequences of youth gang involvement?

2) Policy and legislation related to youth gang prevention.
    a) What are the policy and legislative documents which guide social work intervention to children in an attempt to curb youth gang involvement?
    b) How do these policy and legislative documents guide your service provision?

3) The role of the social worker in youth gang prevention based on the:
    a) Nature of youth gang prevention services on micro, meso and macro levels.
        i. How do you view you role as a social worker for the prevention of youth gang involvement in terms of case work, group work, community?

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# APPENDIX D

# REFLEXIVITY REPORT

Reflexivity can be used to describe the conscious effort towards self-awareness and self-reflection in the reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the participant(s) throughout the research process (Gilgun, 2006). Such a self-awareness contributes towards mitigating any challenges or risks associated with the researcher's personal experiences, circumstances, emotionality, values or biases (Oliphant & Bennett, 2020). This practise is beneficial towards understanding what the researcher's own biographical factors may mean in the research process (Ruokonen-Engler & Siouti, 2016). Six questions are provided by Ruokonen-Engler and Siouti (2016) towards this objective, which I explore below.

1. **What personal experience do I have with my research topic?**

I started my journey with this research study following my final year of undergraduate social work. During my third year of social work practical education, in 2017, I was placed at Brandvlei Correctional Services, whereby I engaged with prison gang members. This served as my first experience with the phenomenon of gangsterism as a whole. However, my first experience with youth gangsterism specifically came in my first year of this master's study, in 2019, when I interned at Chrysalis Academy. There I engaged with youth gang members, as well as those who had fallen victim to youth gangsterism in their communities.

2. **How did I come to study the specific topic in this field?**

I became interested in gangsterism as whole upon my third year practical education experience. However, my interest in youth gangsterism specifically arose through professional and personal interest. I noticed how youth gangsterism had been prioritised in the media, which contributed towards asking myself critical and analytic questions about the phenomenon from a professional perspective. Thereafter, I took a personal interest in the topic as my passion for social work encouraged me to question where this profession fits into addressing such a phenomenon. As I entered the working world, this interest grew substantially as I became further exposed to those involved and affected by youth gangsterism. The prevalence of the phenomenon

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cultivated urgency in me to understand the phenomenon, as well as towards developing an understanding of how social workers could address it.

3. **What is my relationship to the topic being explored?**

As I entered into my master's study as a newly qualified social worker, I began exposing myself to the professional world of social work. Here I personally experienced the prevalence of youth gangsterism, as well as was expected to respond to the needs of youth gangsters and those who fell victim to the phenomenon. However, I experienced as sense of self-doubt and uncertainty towards such practise, as I was unsure of where my professional skills and knowledge fit into this context. While I felt confident in my abilities as a social worker, and felt determined to engage in further professional development where there may be gaps, I found little concrete guidance on my role as a social worker in prevention of youth gangsterism. My relationship with the topic thus became surreal as I needed to explore and understand my role as a social worker in youth gang prevention.

4. **How did I gain access to the field?**

I gained access to my sample participants through purposefully researching areas whereby youth gangsterism was rife. I selected social work organisation within these areas and reached out to their supervisors via email. Once access was granted through their supervisors, my research invitation was forwarded on to potential social work participants within these organisations. Those that were willing (voluntary consent) and able (met the research criteria) to participate formed part of the research sample.

5. **How does my own position (age, gender, class, ethnicity, economic status, etc.) influence interaction in the field and the data collection process?**

Age made little impact on the research process in my opinion. While I am a young researcher, I felt confident in my data collection abilities engaging with participants who ranged in age. While I did not experience any impact associated with gender, I must consider how my being a female may have assisted in climate setting and experiences of comfortability for participants, as majority of the participants were also female. This common ground may contribute towards positive feelings of comfort for

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the participants. As for class and ethnicity, I must note that I am a privileged white woman whose research topic focused on a phenomenon predominantly demographic of lower-income coloured individuals. However, my participants were social workers, and not youth gangsters, which mitigated this factor. Additionally, my data collection occurred telephonically, thus barring me from any definite indication towards the ethnicity or economic status of my participants.

**6. What is my interpretation perspective?**

During data analysis I noted, both, subjective and objective perspective infiltrating the process. In terms of the subjective approach, I noticed myself having fun, agreeing or disagreeing with participant narratives. However, I also noticed an almost automatic process whereby I would question and dispute my own subjectivities. For example, I would professionally dispute narratives I agreed with in my head, or I would adopt the perspective of those I disagreed with in my head in order to understand their perspective. This mitigated any potential bias and encouraged objectivity whereby I may have experienced subjectivity.

I reflect now that I experienced a similar process when compiling my literature chapters. I experienced subjectivity when exploring the literature, as I found myself feeling excited when coming across literature that matched my personal opinions, but feeling frustrated when studying literature that contradicted my ideas and thought patterns. I made an active effort to ensure I mitigated this potential bias by adjusting my thought pattern about literature I resonated with (I would encourage myself to challenge my ideas and the literature), as well as about the literature I did not resonate with (I would encourage myself to study it deeper in order to expand my academic understanding of the topic). This helped me to ensure that both spectrums of the potential literature bias were neutralised and an objective composition of the literature could be presented.

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# APPENDIX E

# INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

---

**VIEWS OF INTERESTED SOCIAL WORK SERVICE PROVIDERS ON THEIR ROLE IN DELIVERING YOUTH GANG PREVENTION SERVICES IN THE WESTERN CAPE.**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Samantha-Lee de Jongh, a Masters student from the Social Work Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will become part of a research report. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a social worker delivering services in a gang-affected area of the Western Cape.

**1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to explore the views of social workers on their role in delivering youth gang prevention services in the Western Cape.

**2. PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to engage in the following:

A semi-structured interview will be utilized to gather information confidentially. You need not indicate your name or any particulars on the interview schedule. The schedule will be completed during a telephonic interview conducted by a student-researcher.

**3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Any uncertainties on any of the aspects of the schedule you may experience during the interview can be discussed and clarified at any time.

**4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND / OR TO SOCIETY**

The results of this study will provide insight into the role of social workers in delivering youth gang prevention services. This information will be included in a final research report that could be used by the organisation for further planning in service delivery.

**5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

No payment in any form will be received for participating in this study.

**6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality

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will be maintained by means of coding where each questionnaire is numbered. All questionnaires will be managed, analysed and processed by the researcher and will be kept in a safe place.

**7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so (for example: if you appear to be experiencing distress of any kind, if you should influence other participants, and so forth).

**8. IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCHER**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Dr T Cornelissen-Nordien (Supervisor), Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch,

Tel. 021-808 2077, E-Mail: nordien@sun.ac.za

**9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

The information above was described to me the participant by Samantha-Lee de Jongh in English. I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. A copy of this form was given to me.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| **Name of Participant** | **Name of legal representative (if applicable)** |
| _____ | _____ |
| **Signature of Participant or legal representative** | **Date** |

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____[name of subject/participant]. [He / She] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| **Signature of Investigator** | **Date** |

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# APPENDIX F

# REC NOTICE OF APPROVAL 1

UNIVERSITEIT
STELLENBOSCH
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**NOTICE OF APPROVAL**

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

19 May 2020

Project number: 14943

Project Title: THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION IN COMMUNITIES OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Dear Miss Samantha-Lee De Jongh

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 7 May 2020 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

**Ethics approval period:**

| Protocol approval date (Humanities) | Protocol expiration date (Humanities) |
|---|---|
| 19 May 2020 | 18 May 2023 |

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

**1. SUSPENSION OF PHYSICAL CONTACT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT SU**

There is a **postponement of all physical contact research activities at Stellenbosch University,** apart from research that can be conducted remotely/online and requires no human contact, and research in those areas specifically acknowledged as essential services by the South African government under the presidential regulations related to COVID-19 (e.g. clinical studies).

Remote (desktop-based/online) research activities, online analyses of existing data, and the writing up of research results are strongly encouraged in all SU research environments.

Please read the REC notice for suspension of physical contact research during the COVID-19 pandemic: http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/sbecovid-19

If you are required to amend your research methods due to this suspension, please submit an amendment to the REC: SBE as soon as possible. The instructions on how to submit an amendment to the REC can be found on this webpage: [instructions], or you can contact the REC Helpdesk for instructions on how to submit an amendment: applyethics@sun.ac.za.

**INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

**If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.**

Please use your SU project number (14943) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

**CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD**

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

**Included Documents:**

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| Document Type | File Name | Date | Version |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research Protocol/Proposal | THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION IN COMMUNITIES OF THE WESTERN CAPE | 01/04/2020 | 1 |
| Recruitment material | RECRUITMENT INVITATION | 01/04/2020 | 1 |
| Informed Consent Form | INFORMED CONSENT FORM | 06/04/2020 | 1 |
| Data collection tool | INTERVIEW GUIDE | 06/04/2020 | 1 |
| Request for permission | ACVV MITCHELLS PLAIN | 08/04/2020 | 1 |
| Request for permission | BADISA ELSIES RIVER | 08/04/2020 | 1 |
| Request for permission | CAPE TOWN CHILD WELFARE HANOVER PARK | 08/04/2020 | 1 |
| Request for permission | CHRYSALIS ACADEMY TOKAI | 08/04/2020 | 1 |
| Request for permission | COUNSELLING AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE BISHOP LAVIS | 08/04/2020 | 1 |

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioral and Education Research

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.*
*The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*

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# Principal Investigator Responsibilities

## Protection of Human Research Participants

As soon as Research Ethics Committee approval is confirmed by the REC, the principal investigator (PI) is responsible for the following:

**Conducting the Research**: The PI is responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC-approved research protocol. The PI is jointly responsible for the conduct of co-investigators and any research staff involved with this research. The PI must ensure that the research is conducted according to the recognised standards of their research field/discipline and according to the principles and standards of ethical research and responsible research conduct.

**Participant Enrolment:** The PI may not recruit or enrol participants unless the protocol for recruitment is approved by the REC. Recruitment and data collection activities must cease after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

**Informed Consent:** The PI is responsible for obtaining and documenting affirmative informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their affirmative informed consent. The PI must give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents, where required. The PI must keep the originals in a secured, REC-approved location for at least five (5) years after the research is complete.

**Continuing Review:** The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is the PI's responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** Once REC approval of your research lapses, all research activities must cease, and contact must be made with the REC immediately.

**Amendments and Changes:** Any planned changes to any aspect of the research (such as research design, procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material, etc.), must be submitted to the REC for review and approval before implementation. Amendments may not be initiated without first obtaining written REC approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

**Adverse or Unanticipated Events:** Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the REC within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. The PI must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants.

**Research Record Keeping:** The PI must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence and approvals from the REC.

**Provision of Counselling or emergency support:** When a dedicated counsellor or a psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

**Final reports:** When the research is completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions), the PI must submit a Final Report to the REC to close the study.

**On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits:** If the researcher is notified that the research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, the PI must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

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# APPENDIX G

# REC NOTICE OF APPROVAL 2

UNIVERSITEIT
STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY

**CONDITIONAL APPROVAL GRANTED**
REC: SBER - Amendment Form

20 October 2020

Project number: REC-2020-14943

Project title: THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN YOUTH GANG PREVENTION IN COMMUNITIES OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Dear Miss Samantha-Lee De Jongh

Your REC: SBER - Amendment Form submitted on 4 October 2020 was reviewed by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE) and approved with certain conditions.

**This conditional approval means that the researcher may proceed with the envisaged research provided that they respond or adhere to the stipulations/conditions.**

**Ethics approval period:**

| Protocol approval date (Humanities) | Protocol expiration date (Humanities) |
|---|---|
| 19 May 2020 | 18 May 2023 |

**REC STIPULATIONS/CONDITIONS:**

The researcher is reminded to obtain permission from the participating organisation(s) before recruitment and/or data collection may commence. Proof of permission must be attached to the REC online application, section 8. [ACTION REQUIRED]

**HOW TO RESPOND:**

Some of these stipulations/conditions may require your response. Where a response is required, you must respond to the REC within **three (3)** months of the date of this letter. Your conditional approval will lapse automatically should your response not be received by the REC within 3 months of the date of this letter.

**For instructions on how to respond to these stipulations, please download the FAQ on how to edit your application and follow the steps carefully:** HOW TO RESPOND TO REC FEEDBACK.

Where revision to supporting documents is required, please ensure that you replace all outdated documents on your application form with the revised versions.

**INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

**If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.**

Please use your SU project number (14943) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

**CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD**

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

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**Included Documents:**

| Document Type | File Name | Date | Version |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research Protocol/Proposal | PROPOSAL AMENDMENTS | 03/10/2020 | 1 |
| Default | INFORMED CONSENT FORM | 03/10/2020 | 2 |
| Default | RECRUITMENT INVITATION | 03/10/2020 | 2 |
| Default | ACVV | 03/10/2020 | 1 |
| Default | BADISA | 03/10/2020 | 1 |
| Default | CHILD WELFARE | 03/10/2020 | 1 |
| Default | GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN | 03/10/2020 | 1 |

If you have any questions regarding this application or the conditions set, please contact the REC Secretariat at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham
Secretariat: Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE)

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.*
*The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*

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# Principal Investigator Responsibilities

## Protection of Human Research Participants

As soon as Research Ethics Committee approval is confirmed by the REC, the principal investigator (PI) is responsible for the following:

**Conducting the Research**: The PI is responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC-approved research protocol. The PI is jointly responsible for the conduct of co-investigators and any research staff involved with this research. The PI must ensure that the research is conducted according to the recognised standards of their research field/discipline and according to the principles and standards of ethical research and responsible research conduct.

**Participant Enrolment:** The PI may not recruit or enrol participants unless the protocol for recruitment is approved by the REC. Recruitment and data collection activities must cease after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

**Informed Consent:** The PI is responsible for obtaining and documenting affirmative informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their affirmative informed consent. The PI must give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents, where required. The PI must keep the originals in a secured, REC-approved location for at least five (5) years after the research is complete.

**Continuing Review:** The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is the PI's responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** Once REC approval of your research lapses, all research activities must cease, and contact must be made with the REC immediately.

**Amendments and Changes:** Any planned changes to any aspect of the research (such as research design, procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material, etc.), must be submitted to the REC for review and approval before implementation. Amendments may not be initiated without first obtaining written REC approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

**Adverse or Unanticipated Events:** Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the REC within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. The PI must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants.

**Research Record Keeping:** The PI must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence and approvals from the REC.

**Provision of Counselling or emergency support:** When a dedicated counsellor or a psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

**Final reports:** When the research is completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions), the PI must submit a Final Report to the REC to close the study.

**On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits:** If the researcher is notified that the research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, the PI must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

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# APPENDIX H

# SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## Biographical Information of Participant

1. Confirmation that participant is a practicing social worker.
2. How many years of experience do you have as a social worker?

## Biographical Information of Your Clients

1. If you had to estimate, what percentage of your clients would you say are involved in youth gangsterism?
2. If you had to estimate, what percentage of your client system may not be actively involved in gangsterism, but are affected by it in some way?
3. In your opinion, does Western Cape youth gangsterism differ from elsewhere in the country/world. If so, how so?

## Micro-Level Questions

According to the structure of my study, the micro level includes the individual directly.

1. What would you say could be considered risk factors for gangsterism on a micro-level?
2. Why could the following be considered risk factors for youth gangsteirsm:
    - Age, and why?
    - Gender, and why?
    - Genetics, and why?
    - Racial categorization, and why?

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3. Are there any empowerment services (not just social work) targeting these individual risk factors that you know of?
    - Do we think these are successful?
    - What are the challenges and gaps?
4. Are there any social work interventions targeting these individual risk factors that you know of?
    - Do we think these are successful?
    - What are the challenges and gaps?
    - Are they accessible?
5. How do you believe these risk factors should be targeted through social work intervention?
    - What value, knowledge and skills does the profession have that could be of assistance in addressing these risk factors?
    - Why aren't we?
6. Do you have any further ideas on how individual risk factors should be targeted?

**Meso-Level Questions**

According to the structure of my study, the meso-level includes the structures closely impacting the functioning of the individual, such as family, peers and schooling.

1. What would you say could be considered risk factors for gangsterism on a meso-level?
2. Why could the following be considered risk factors for youth gangsteirsm:
    - The family, and why?
    - The home, and why?
    - Peer relations, and why?
    - Education, and why?
    - Community, and why?

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- Socioeconomic status, and why?
- Recreational opportunities, and why?

3. Are there any empowerment services (not just social work) targeting these meso risk factors that you know of?

    - Do we think these are successful?
    - What are the challenges and gaps?

4. Are there any social work interventions targeting these meso risk factors that you know of?

    - Do we think these are successful?
    - What are the challenges and gaps?
    - Are they accessible?

5. How do you believe these risk factors should be targeted through social work intervention?

    - What value, knowledge and skills does the profession have that could be of assistance in addressing these risk factors?

6. Do you have any further ideas on how individual risk factors should be targeted?

**Macro-Level Questions**

According to the structure of my study, the macro-level refers to the larger societal and national structure that we form part of.

1. What would you say could be considered risk factors for gangsterism on a macro-level?

2. Why could the following be considered risk factors for youth gangsterism:

    - National governance (policy and legislation), and why?
    - Community protection, and why?
    - The structure of social services, and why?

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3. Are there any empowerment services (not just social work) targeting these macro risk factors that you know of?
    - Do we think these are successful?
    - What are the challenges and gaps?
4. Are there any social work interventions (empowerment strategies) targeting these macro risk factors that you know of?
    - Do we think these are successful?
    - What are the challenges and gaps?
    - Are they accessible?
5. How do you believe these risk factors should be targeted through social work intervention and empowerment strategies?
    - What value, knowledge and skills does the profession have that could be of assistance in addressing these risk factors?
6. Do you have any further ideas on how macro risk factors should be targeted?

**Policy and Legislation:**

1. What policy and legislation guides your everyday practice?
2. Are you aware of any policy or legislation guiding youth gang prevention?
    - In general?
    - In social work?
    - Do you think these policies are adequate and effective?
    - What would you add/change?
    - Why is policy and legislation important in guiding youth gang prevention?
3. What do you think the role of the social worker is in gang prevention?
    - Is this informed by any policy or legislation, or is it more your opinion?
    - What makes you feel like this is our role?
    - Do you think there are any issues to our current role?

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- Is there room for growth, how so?

4. Do the following policies and legislation guide the social worker in gang prevention to your knowledge? (yes, no, I don't know)

    - The White Paper for Social Welfare and the Review
    - Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998
    - The Integrated Service Delivery Model (2005)
    - The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008
    - The Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (2011)
    - Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013)
    - White Paper on Safety and Security (2016)
    - National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (2016)
    - Adolescent and Youth Policy (2017)
    - Western Cape Safety Plan (2019)

5. In terms of the abovementioned policy and legislation:

    - If you don't make use of the any of the abovementioned acts, why not?

**Final Role-Orientated Questions:**

These two questions are linked, so I'll read them both and then you can answer.

1. What do you think the **current role** of social work is in gang prevention?

2. What do you think the role of the social worker **should be** in gang prevention?

**Conclusions:**

1. Do you have any further statements to make that I may not have covered?

2. Do you have any questions or concerns?