

**REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCES OF A  
GROUP OF EMERGING-ADULT VIOLENT  
OFFENDERS AND THE VALUE OF  
INTERVENTIONS IN NAVIGATING THEIR LIVES**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore the experiences and meaning-making process of emerging-adult violent offenders and the value of interventions in navigating the social spaces of their lives. Underpinning this study was a broad view of violence and that communities suffering from historical and persistent violence be viewed as urban war zones. Consequently, young men growing up in such social-historical contexts are often faced with having to navigate multiple spaces fraught with various forms of violence. The consequences of this exposure to violence is manifold, including a readiness for aggressive and violent responses. The response of many young men who engage in violence can be viewed as an exercise in agency in the context of very limited choices. The study was a qualitative study which embraced a Participatory Action Research methodology. 10 emerging-adult male violent offenders from a low-income community on the Cape Flats who had experienced interventions were purposively selected. The process of access and participation was challenged by the systemic realities of working in the context. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participant generated artefacts and reflections in a research journal. The analysis of data was thematic and an ongoing and iterative process.

The young participants in the study revealed experiences of violence, loss, fluidity (instability) and economic survival that were spatially and temporally entangled. Interventions they had experienced were largely insufficiently accessible or effective in addressing this complex reality. Participants offered insights about what can assist transformative processes with young violent offenders in the community. It is the recommendation of this study that consideration be given to integrating their suggested factors into future strategies. In addition, future research with action processes should include the beneficiaries of interventions as collaborators to better grasp what is needed to navigate the complex spaces, to widen their life options with skills to navigate diverse social spaces and to sensitively and effectively include grief and loss processes. Finally, institutions such as schools and police services should be better equipped to respond to the needs and actions of troubled youth.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie poog om die ervarings en die sinmaakproses van gewelddadige oortreders opkomende volwassenes te ondersoek en die waarde van intervensies in die sosiale ruimtes van hul lewens te ondersoek. Die grondslag van hierdie studie was 'n breë siening van geweld en dat gemeenskappe wat aan historiese en aanhoudende geweld ly, as stedelike oorlogsones beskou word. Gevolglik word jong mans wat in sulke sosiaal-historiese kontekste grootword, dikwels gekonfronteer met verskillende ruimtes wat deur verskillende vorme van geweld beland. Die gevolge van hierdie blootstelling aan geweld is uiteenlopend, insluitend die gereedheid vir aggressiewe en gewelddadige reaksies. Die reaksie van baie jong mans wat met geweld betrokke is, kan gesien word as 'n agentskaplike oefening in die konteks van baie beperkte keuses. Die studie was 'n kwalitatiewe studie wat 'n deelnemende aksienavorsingsmetodologie bevat. Doelgerig word tien opkomende volwassenes, gewelddadige oortreders uit 'n lae-inkomstegemeenskap op die Kaapse Vlakte wat ingrypings ondervind het, doelbewus gekies. Die sistemiese werklikheid van die werk in die konteks word deur die proses van toegang en deelname uitgedaag. Data is gegenereer deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, fokusgroepe, deelnemers-gegenereerde artefakte en refleksies in 'n vaktydskrif. Die ontleding van data was tematies en 'n voortdurende en iteratiewe proses.

Die jong deelnemers aan die studie het ervarings van geweld, verlies, vloeiendheid (onstabiliteit) en ekonomiese oorlewing geopenbaar wat ruimtelik en tydelik verstrengel was. Ingrypings wat hulle ondervind het, was grootliks onvoldoende toeganklik of effektief om hierdie komplekse werklikheid aan te spreek. Deelnemers het insigte aangebied oor wat transformerende prosesse by jong gewelddadige oortreders in die gemeenskap kan help. Dit is die aanbeveling van hierdie studie dat daar gekyk word na die integrasie van hul voorgestelde faktore in toekomstige strategieë. Boonop moet toekomstige navorsing met aksieprosesse die begunstigdes van intervensies as medewerkers insluit om beter te begryp wat nodig is om die komplekse ruimtes te navigeer, om hul lewensopsies te verbreed met vaardighede om verskillende sosiale ruimtes te navigeer en om sensitiewe en effektiewe smart- en

verliesprosesse in te sluit. Laastens moet instellings soos skole en polisdienste beter toegerus wees om op die behoeftes en optrede van ontstelde jeug te reageer.

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## CHAPTER 1

### CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In certain contexts of poverty and deprivation a readiness for aggression and the threat of violence is valued as a quality for navigating unsafe neighbourhoods (Roach, 2013; Anderson, 1999). In such contexts, exposure to and the experience of interventions should be valuable for young violent offenders in navigating the complex terrain of their everyday reality.

While the focus of this study is related to the participants' experiences of interventions, be they community-based programmes or the criminal justice system, it was situated within the physical and social context of the community of Duineveld.<sup>1</sup> Duineveld is a historically coloured, low-income, urban community on the Cape Flats that experiences persistently high levels of youth violence and is particularly known for gangsterism (Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Lambrechts, 2012). (In Chapter two I will expand on the history of this community and its relationship with gang culture and violence.)

In the literature, low-income urban communities are often referred to as high-risk or socially disorganized communities, characterised by high levels of poverty, single parent households, racial heterogeneity, a high number of school drop outs, and perceptions of economic exclusion (Regoeczi & Jarvis, 2013; Kingston, Huizinga & Elliott, 2009). In the absence of a formal or informal economy, a criminal or gang economy can dominate which is often concomitant with high levels of gang violence, alongside other forms of violence affecting individuals, families and communities (Dowdney, 2005). Research has shown that young people from low-income urban communities on the Cape Flats, such as Duineveld, are exposed to significantly high levels of violence (Kaminer, Du Plessis, Hardy & Benjamin, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> I am using Duineveld as a pseudonym for the community of interest to, as far as possible, protect the identities of the participants in this study.

It is important to understand the context as the environment plays an important role in incubating violence. This includes understanding the dominant and contextual discourses in and around the community of interest (Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Wilkinson, Beaty & Lurry, 2009; Garbarino, 1999). I align with researchers who argue that the environment often plays a more critical role in establishing vulnerability than do individual innate characteristics (Perry in Garbarino, 2015; Roach, 2013). The literature suggests that children growing up in traumatic contexts often find themselves in homes characterised by high levels of stress and as a result may not form healthy attachment relationships with maternal or other primary caregivers (Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Garbarino, 2015; Renn, 2002). This coupled with the on-going exposure to violence in the community can lead to a disorganised attachment relational style and a dysregulated stress response system within individuals (Perry et al., 2018; Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Renn, 2002). This then forms the basis for meaning-making and shapes how the individual interprets and makes sense of their world. Current research has found that these characteristics of unresolved trauma are present in a large majority of young offenders (Perry et al., 2018; Gould, 2015; Martin, Eljdupovic, Mckenzie & Colman, 2015).

There is an abundance of literature on youth violence, detailing the nature of the problem and presenting approaches to strategies for criminal justice processes and intervention (Morgado & Vale-Dias, 2016; Ward, Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). However, the limited effectiveness of these approaches is suggested by the persistent high levels of youth violence in South Africa (Pinnock, 2016; Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2012). In the face of this failure, Garbarino (2015) argues for a change of perspective and suggests that we view communities with persistent levels of violence as urban war zones. He goes on to argue that there are distinct similarities to conventional war zones especially regarding the effects that living in these spaces has on the people who live in them.

Furthermore, there exists a tension between dominant and contextual discourses around what constitutes normal, legitimate and even heroic acts of violence with that of abnormal, deviant or pathological acts of violence (Wilkinson, Beaty & Lurry, 2009; Morgado & Vale-Dias, 2013; Roach, 2013). Within this discourse emerging-adult males growing up in low-income, urban communities are often considered prone to criminality

and violence, a discourse that often intersects with race and masculinity in Cape Town and elsewhere in the world (Alexander, 2012; Foster, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2009; Jensen, 2006). I argue that this discourse is a simplistic view of the phenomenon and concur with the view that one could consider the response of young men who engage with violence as an exercise in agency, in the context of very limited choices (Cronholm et al., 2015; Garbarino, 2015; Diamond, Lipsitz & Hoffman, 2013; Roach, 2013).

In attempting to address the challenges presented by the increasing growth in youth violence and marginalization, South Africa has developed legislation and policies to enable effective responses to the problem of violence. The Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008) is one of these. Founded on Restorative Justice, it makes provision for young people under the age of 18 to participate in diversion programmes, which are intended to steer them away from the criminal justice system and to ensure the protection of the young person in question. As mandated by the act, diversion programmes are accredited and monitored by the Department of Social development (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). However, there is a critical shortage of diversion programmes, particularly those targeting violent offenders. According to Van der Merwe and Dawes (2012) many of the current diversion programmes are not grounded in evidence-based research nor do they have a sound theoretical base.

It has been my experience that despite current interventions, many youth end up in child and youth care centres or in prison. The 18-25 age group cohort, who can be tried as adults have limited access to resources related to prevention, diversion or protection (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). The result is that young and emerging-adult offenders are exposed to traumatic conditions that can mirror much of their lived experiences including that of "... coercive and abusive interactions with adults ..." (Perry et al., 2018:831). Furthermore, my experience as a community-based interventionist aligns with Ward et al. (2012) who argue that intervention programmes have often been driven by the values, ethos and convictions of the organisations or individuals involved rather than sound scientific theory and they lack credible monitoring and evaluation. This may point to a lack of access to knowledge, resources and capacity rather than a lack of commitment to develop effective interventions. Nevertheless, the disjunction between theory, policy and practice often impacts the effectiveness and sustainability of current interventions and may even be making

already complex problems even more challenging (Garbarino, 2015; Perry et al., 2018).

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

I have a long history of involvement in youth development and throughout this period I have been drawn to working particularly with marginalised young people. This work ultimately drew me into working with youth in the community of Duineveld who were deemed high risk. I have worked in particular with the 18 to 25 age group cohort who have either interacted with the criminal justice system or are at risk thereof. My interest in this particular group developed as a consequence of my work at Pollsmoor prison and my knowledge and experience of the limitations of intervention resources that target this age group cohort (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012).

As a novice community developer, I was encouraged to view working in the community as a collaborative process that actively sought to create spaces that acknowledged the lived realities of the young people I was working with. To this end I immersed myself within the community by working with community-based organizations and individuals. Over time I came to understand that despite my best intentions, my race, class and the language I spoke marked me as an outsider, often accompanied by the assumption that I was a 'boer' (policeman) or a 'larney' (a colloquial term often used to refer to white males in positions of authority within the context). Try as I might, these labels positioned me as an outsider and continue to do so. The challenge then became, how do I embrace the difference between us while attempting to pursue authentic, empathic and empowering engagement? In the course of developing intervention programmes, I came to realise the importance of acknowledging the agency and voice of the beneficiaries. Subsequently I became aware that there exists a limited body of knowledge that forefronts the voices of the young men in relation to their experiences of their community, the criminal justice system and intervention programmes. In addition, I wondered how the dominant and contextual discourses about violent young men influenced the work I was doing and the institutions and organizations with whom I was working. I was, and remain motivated, to make a difference in the lives of these young men and the communities from which they come.

### 1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

After having worked in prison and community contexts with emerging-adult perpetrators of violent crime, I concur with Tolan, Gorman-Smith and Henry (2003) that the individual trajectories to crime and violence are complex. I therefore wanted to move beyond an objectification of violent youth of colour living in high-risk communities, to one that acknowledged the agency that violent youth exercise in navigating a social context fraught with various forms of violence (Wilkinson et al., 2009; Jensen, 2006; Cross, 2003; Mahiri & Conner, 2003). Inspired by Frankl's (1985:24) view that,

*... a man who makes his observations while he himself is a prisoner (does not) possess the necessary detachment. Such detachment is granted to the outsider, but he is too far removed to make any statements of real value. Only the man inside knows.*

I had become uncomfortable with interventions that are done to or on individuals rather than with the beneficiaries themselves. Ward and Bakhuis, (2010) concur with this view that often interventions that are targeted at this group have been designed without considering their perspectives of their lived experiences.

I was also curious about the extent to which poor young coloured men living in high-risk communities had bought into the stereotype that they are destined for a life of crime and violence (Jensen, 2006). Furthermore, being confronted by these young men about my experiences and my motives in working with them caused me to reflect on the degree to which I, as a practitioner, was aligning with the dominant discourse around what sets these young men on a trajectory to a life of crime and violence. This caused me discomfort as it did not sit well with my view of myself as a community activist working in the best interests of my clients.

Upon further reflection I became interested in learning about how the agency these young men were exercising in navigating their contexts, influenced how they interacted with the intervention spaces in which they found themselves. I also considered the value of intervention programmes in facilitating effective and helpful strategies for beneficiaries in navigating their everyday lived realities.

## **1.4 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Research Aims:

1. To magnify the voices of emerging-adult male violent offenders in relation to their experiences of interventions, including that of the criminal justice system.
2. To facilitate the empowerment of participants by creating opportunities for them to influence the interventions that target young violent offenders, in a way that acknowledges and gives insight into the unique and complex dynamics that influence their choices and ways of being.
3. To contribute to and to encourage the intervention space as a dynamic, collaborative space that is influenced by both the participants and the interventionist.

Research Objectives:

1. To understand the meaning-making process of emerging-adult male perpetrators of violent crime.
2. To gain insight into the agency the participants have exercised in navigating their context.
3. To facilitate a reflection around their experiences of interventions including the criminal justice system.
4. To critically reflect on the value of interventions for the participants in terms of re-engaging with their community context after intervention.
5. To ensure their voice is heard in this text and in the recommendations of this thesis.
6. To make recommendations for the development of intervention strategies, programmes and policies.

## **1.5 RESEARCH FOCUS**

Meaning-making fundamentally shapes the way an individual navigates the circumstances in which they find themselves (Daiute & Fine, 2003). This study sought to explore the experiences and meaning-making process of emerging-adult violent

offenders in relation to interventions and their value in helping them to navigate their lives.

In order to do this, the research was driven by the following primary research question: **How has the meaning-making of emerging-adult violent offenders influenced the value of interventions in their lives?**

In order to fully investigate the primary research focus the following sub-questions were explored:

- How has growing up in an urban war zone shaped the meaning-making of emerging-adult violent offenders?
- How did they interact with the intervention space in which they were participants?
- How effective were the interventions for navigating their real-life community contexts?

## **1.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

The uniqueness of this study exists in the fore-fronting of the voices of emerging-adult violent offenders who have interacted with interventions. It has the potential to contribute to scientific knowledge about theory informing practice in intervention programmes; engage with discourses around violence and emerging-adults living in high risk communities and explore interventions in the criminal justice system.

Research has established that violence in South Africa tends to be historical, pervasive and cyclical, with the majority of perpetrators and victims being young men (Pinnock, 2016; Ward et al., 2012). Youth violence in particular is considered an epidemic (Ward et al., 2012; Garbarino, 1999). While a great deal of data exists about violence and the nature of violent acts committed by young people, a limited body of knowledge exists about first-hand accounts of the life histories of violent offenders in South Africa, the impact of their social context on their actions and their experiences of the CJS and intervention programmes (Gould, 2015; Muntingh & Gould, 2010).

I am of the view that Daiute and Fine's (2003) assertion still holds true today, that there is a critical lack of scientific research that reflects the perspectives of the young people themselves and that what is needed is to move beyond "... portraits and explanations

that conceptualise youth deviance ...” to ones that “... report from the standpoint of the youth themselves ...” (Daiute & Fine, 2003:2) and which explore the ways in which they approach and interact with their contexts (Daiute & Fine, 2003). I argue that this is particularly applicable to the 18-25 age group cohort. Their perspectives on violence and intervention programmes, including aspects of the criminal justice system, may provide different insights to those of researchers and practitioners (Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015). Intervention programmes targeting young people involved in gangs “... have been developed without any reference to the views of the young people at whom many of these programmes are targeted ...” (Ward & Bakhuis, 2010:51). Furthermore, recent studies point to the fact that in developing these interventions the voices of intended beneficiaries of these programmes are often further marginalized or even silenced (Benjamin, 2014; Daiute, 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2009; Muntingh, 2008). In my engagement with programmes and practitioners, I have often wondered to what extent practitioners have paid attention to their own experiences and positions of power and privilege and how these have influenced their perception, interpretation and action regarding intervention programmes. The lack of the perspectives of the targeted beneficiaries, scientific theory and critical reflection suggests that action and theory are not informing each other in the intervention domain. As Reason and Bradbury (2008:4) say, “... action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless ...”. This study therefore drew on the experiences of emerging-adult male violent offenders in a way that engaged both theory and practice.

## **1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This qualitative study focussed on the experiences of emerging-adult male violent offenders, from a low-income urban community on the Cape Flats, in order to explore the value that interventions brought for their lived reality. Although qualitative research is limited in generalizability, I am of the view that this study created a platform for the voices of the young men to emerge in a way that can be replicable. It has added value to practices in this field.

I chose to limit the study to the demographic that I had historically worked with, that is males aged between 18 and 25 from a low-income community on the Cape Flats with a history of being violent offenders and an experience of interventions and/or the

criminal justice system. Global and local statistics indicate that this age group of males are the predominant perpetrators and victims of violence (Ward et al., 2012). Furthermore, statistics from NICRO (National Institute for Crime prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders) indicate that this age group make up 33% of the national offender population (NICRO, 2014). In my experience of working in Correctional facilities in the Western Cape, I have found that the overwhelming majority of these emerging-adult offenders, originate from high-risk communities with high levels of poverty and low levels of education.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

My ontological position is that there are multiple constructions of reality that have developed through social interactive processes in which individuals have been active agents (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2014). This social constructivist position is a paradigm that views reality, knowledge, identity and meaning-making as constructed by the individual and shaped in a social, cultural and historical context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2014). Research, therefore, is not simply a case of finding knowledge but rather of co-constructing meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This means that marginalized groupings such as emerging-adult violent offenders, often seen as anti-social or deviant, have perspectives or knowledge that are worthy of attention (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2002). The focus of this research is, therefore, on the meaning-making of individuals in a particular context. The process recognizes and allows for a diversity of voices that can bring new insight and knowledge about the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2014; Fine, 2008). Adopting this research position required me, the researcher, to be cognizant of my own experiences and how my identity and meaning-making process has been shaped within the broader social context, as well as by my position in South African society. This research stance contributed to ensuring that the research process and knowledge generated by it affords an opportunity for the voice of all the participants to be acknowledged (Creswell, 2014; Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

As this study explored the lived realities of emerging-adult male violent offenders, a qualitative research design was considered the best fit. I concur with the theorists that qualitative research enables an in-depth study of the human experience and the construction of reality, meaning and identity (Gill, Butler & Pistrang, 2016; Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016). Working within this paradigm, therefore, afforded me the opportunity to understand the meaning making processes of the participants and how their meaning making process influenced their actions and/or behaviour in and beyond their living context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research also enabled me to engage with the complex and systemic nature of the violence perpetrated by youth.

In addition, qualitative research offered the participants an opportunity for their voices to be magnified and thus contribute to the further development of policies and interventions of which they have been a part (Ward et al., 2012; De Vos et al., 2014; Mishna, 2004 in Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It has been my professional experience that when developing interventions with marginalized youth, very little attention is paid to their voice as beneficiaries of the intervention. This then creates a schism between the practitioner and the beneficiaries. As I have grown as an individual and practitioner working with marginalized youth engaging in violence, I have come to understand the need for creating collaborative spaces that recognize and incorporate different experiences, knowledge and expectations. Social constructivism and more specifically qualitative research methodology afforded me the opportunity to conduct research in which the stories and voices of emerging-adult violent offenders could be magnified (Creswell, 2014).

### **1.8.1 Research design: Participatory action research**

Action Research is a family of approaches committed to a participatory process that brings together theory and practice through cycles of action and reflection, which Stringer (2007) describes as looking, thinking and acting. At its core is the commitment to confronting and addressing social issues that are of concern for people in specific contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Participatory Action Research (PAR) as one of the approaches is founded on the principle of emancipation and views the big picture of research as not knowledge itself but rather the sustained empowerment and development of those oppressed, marginalized and excluded (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In this approach research is viewed as being more than simply for the purpose of contributing to theoretical discourse, it seeks to promote an agenda for social change (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Grant, Nelson & Mitchell, 2008; Swantz, 2008). As a collaborative research process that is cyclical in

nature, the ideal PAR process should involve participants from the outset. However, as an outsider-initiated research project, participants also become involved in subsequent cycles of action and reflection (Grant et al., 2008; Swantz, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The design of PAR is for the purpose of fore-grounding the voice of those previously excluded from knowledge production. It enables the balancing of power differentials since it recognises that knowledge is power and that the perspectives of the excluded, such as emerging-adult offenders, paint a more comprehensive picture of their social reality and the phenomena under study (De Vos et al., 2014; Brydon-Miller et al., 2011). In this process the researcher is considered an engaged participant and therefore inside the research. As a result, to achieve the goals of PAR, the researcher needs to acknowledge their position of power as it "... has an effect on what happens within the shared social space." (Burns, Harvey & Aragón, 2012:3).

An important principle of PAR is the growth of the participants, be that in understanding social processes, increasing their critical awareness of self in the world and/or the development of occupational and social skills (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Significantly it also seeks to create a space for marginalized, often hidden, young people to express their voice in ways that may have previously been denied to them (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Foster-Fishman et al., 2010).

### **1.8.2 Sampling**

The population for this study was an 18-25-year-old cohort often referred to as emerging-adults in the literature (Tanner & Arnett, 2009). This study used purposive and snowball sampling approaches.

Purposive sampling is a method that seeks out individuals selected according to specific criteria in order to provide rich data and insight into the phenomena under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014). The criteria for inclusion in this study was that individuals fall within the emerging-adult age cohort; are male; are from a specific low-income urban community on the Cape Flats; have been involved in violent offending; have intersected with the criminal justice system and/or have participated in some form of intervention programme. The criteria mentioned are associated with what can be considered a hidden population group as they are unlikely

to want to disclose their identity due "... to their involvement in socially sensitive and undesirable activities ..." (Frank & Snijders in Petersen & Valdez, 2005:224).

A form of purposive sampling, often used to access hard to reach groups or hidden populations in contexts of violent conflict, is snowball sampling. Snowball sampling makes use of trusted social networks to engage with specific individuals that meet the criteria. These persons are then requested to recruit other relevant individuals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Barbour, 2008; Petersen & Valdez, 2005).

A total of ten emerging-adult individuals participated in the research process. In qualitative research it's not about the numbers, but richness and depth of data generated (Creswell, 2014). I made initial contact with potential participants through a community organization and key informants. Key informants are those individuals from the community who are well informed, accessible and provide insights that facilitate the navigation of "... the complex cultural territory ..." (Roth & Bradbury, 2008:354).

### **1.8.3 Data-generation strategies**

For this study I used the term data generation as a recognition that the knowledge produced or generated happened through the social interaction of participants and researcher, acknowledging that I, in my position as researcher, impacted on the process as a whole (Barbour, 2008). Furthermore, the data generating strategies were drawn from the understanding that it is the interaction of experiential factors that shape the worldview of people in the environment in which they develop and grow (Garbarino, 1999; Renn, 2002). According to Garbarino (1999:81) it is "... from their surroundings children develop social maps and codes of behaviour." It is these maps that guide individuals in their interactions and the interpretations and meanings they make of themselves and their experiences.

The data was generated through a process that involved semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups. As action research is cyclical and involves the input and direction of participants (not always in the way we imagine), the process as listed below was not as clean and linear as it is described. The unfolding process also contributed to the generation of data (Stringer, 2007).

### **1.8.3.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are useful for gaining insight into complex phenomena as they enable an in-depth exploration of the experiences, perceptions and interpretations of the participants (De Vos et al., 2014). They are also flexible, offering the researcher room to respond to interesting aspects that emerge, including those that have been suggested by the respondent themselves (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014). In this, the interview schedule is a guide and not a directive. It is an interactive process in which the interview is more than a mere information gathering session, it is a "... powerful process that truly engages ..." (Roth & Bradbury, 2008:354) the participants as experts of their own lived reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roth & Bradbury, 2008; De Vos et al., 2014).

I interviewed key informants in order to give me a better understanding of the societal and community processes at play in the social context of the research (Roth & Bradbury, 2008). I interviewed four key informants. Three of these were from the community and could provide me with a rich and deep description of the context. One was from a similar community who had been involved in gang related violence as an offender and more recently as an interventionist. These interviews were guided by a schedule of open-ended questions lasting 45 minutes (appendix 1). These interviews were audio-recorded (see appendix 2 for a sample transcription).

Following the interviews with key informants, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 8 emerging-adult violent offenders. I initiated the interview with a stimulus activity that involved selecting a collection of photographs (see Chapter 4), assigning positions in order to tell a story they saw. The stimulus activity was used to give the participants practice at expressing their voice, which is their physical and socio-political act of expression (Damons, 2014; Barbour, 2008; Chase, 2008). The interviews were then mediated by the construction of a life-map along with the interview schedule (appendix 3). Life-maps are devices that I have used in prison contexts to engage young men in describing their life journey in response to the stimulus question: How did I get here? As I anticipated different levels of literacy, the life map and how information was recorded made it accessible to all. Using this stimulus material also allowed the individual a measure of control over how and what they chose to share. These life-maps are informal versions of the qualitative adaptation of the life-history calendar

(LHC). Traditionally the LHC has been used to collect quantitative data but has been adapted for qualitative research (Nelson, 2010). It is used as a means to "... help explain behaviour, attitudes and emotions ..." (Martyn & Belli, 2002:271-2) and for facilitating the recall of events (Martyn & Belli, 2002; Nelson, 2010). I used Nelson's (2010) adaptation as it emphasises the co-constructive nature of the interview and encourages the participant to steer "... the sequence of the interview ..." (Nelson, 2010:418). Nelson's (2010) adaptation begins with a blank page allowing the participant to determine the nature of the life-map. However, I also offered a map template which helped guide the process but still allowed it to be driven by the participant (appendix 4). The life-map was collected, with their permission, as a participant generated artefact (see appendix 5). Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim (see appendix 6 for a sample transcription). Two participants indicated that they would not like the interview audio-recorded. In this case I asked their permission to make notes alongside the generated life-map.

### **1.8.3.2 Focus group**

Following the interviews, interviewees were invited to participate in a focus group. I hoped to have 4-6 participants in the group, and initially 6 indicated their willingness to participate. However, subsequently only 2 participated in focus group 1 and 3 in focus group 2 (the reasons for this I detail in chapter 4).

According to Barbour (2008) focus groups are commonly seen as group interviews or collective conversations. They have been used for a variety of purposes including marketing research, military research and community development and are increasingly being used with hidden or hard to reach population groups (Barbour, 2008; Valdez & Kaplan, 1999). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011) remind us that when we use focus groups in Action Research it is less of a researcher-directed group interview and more a collective and collaborative conversation with the focus being on content, interaction and the development of democratic and participative relationships. This aligns with the research objectives of my study as it afforded me access to meaning-making as it occurred within a socially interactive arena (Daiute, 2010; Barbour, 2008). This interactive process has the potential to generate data that may not otherwise be obtained through individual interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I knew from my experience of working with this population that establishing trust and cooperation would be fluid and variable within and between contact sessions. Therefore, I used the social activity of eating together to facilitate the development of a level of rapport with one other and open the space for conversation. I also used it as a precursor to the introduction of the idea of creating a fictional story. The story was developed using a storyboard. A storyboard is "... a panel or series of panels on which a set of sketches is arranged depicting consecutively the important changes of scene and action in a series of shots (as for a film, television show or commercial)" (Merriam-Webster, 2019: online, accessed 29/08/2016). The activity offered the participants the options to draw, materials to create a collage and for writing. Drawing and the collage were a means of expression for participants who felt unable or unwilling to verbalise their feelings and/or experiences. It creates an avenue for individuals who may lack written and socio-emotional skills to share their experiences and meaning-making (Damons, 2014). The content of the conversation during the first focus group guided the themes used to generate the storyboard (see appendix 7 for storyboard process).

I planned to use a fictional story for reflecting on experiences and the context since it would "... expand the range of expressive contexts ..." (Daiute, 2010:24). This projective technique minimizes vulnerability through creating distance between them as narrators and their story (Daiute, 2010; Chase, 2008). Elbaz (1987) said that "... autobiography is fiction and fiction is autobiography: both are narrative arrangements of reality" (in Denzin, 2014:14). However, during the activity the participants expressed the desire to use their own lives as the template for the storyboard. I facilitated and participated in the activity. This allowed me, as the researcher, to gain first-hand experience of the meaning-making processes of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The focus group sessions were audio recorded and I recorded my observations in my research journal (see appendix 8 for a sample transcription). These observations were where I recorded details about non-verbal communication, group interactions as well as my own thoughts, feelings and responses during and outside of the sessions (Freeman, 2014; Goldbart & Hustler, 2005).

Throughout the research process I made use of a research journal to record field notes. Field notes are a means for systematically recording details such as events and

behaviours during the research process, along with my experiences and attendant emotions and responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Goldbart & Hustler, 2005).

#### **1.8.4 Data Analysis**

In Action Research data analysis is an ongoing, iterative process as the researcher and participants reflect on and interpret the data generated in a cyclical manner that can influence what happens in the next cycle of the process (Stringer, 2007). It is a continual process of seeking out new ways of seeing things as it "... explores and describes ..." (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:207). The analysis engaged my own processes through journaling my ongoing thoughts, interpretations and actions. In PAR, analysis exists on a continuum of partial to total collaboration that can only be determined in the situation by the willingness and capacity of participants to engage in this process of analysis (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Furthermore, for the purpose of completing the thesis, I continued with analysis on my own after the data generation was completed. I submitted my emerging interpretation to the participants and my supervisor (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

I used a thematic analysis of the narratives and discourse that emerged. Narrative is the human tool for making sense of experiences and feelings in the social world and discourse is the use of language to construct reality. Analysis can give us a view of meaning-making processes within a particular milieu (Souto-Manning, 2014). Analysis of the narrative can be used to understand the construction of social experiences through connecting individual (and communal) experiences and events to "... broader discourses and contexts ..." (Souto-Manning, 2014:162; Chase, 2008). In this way I was able to gain insight into how meaning-making happens and has occurred in relation to violence and the different spaces including the community, the criminal justice system and intervention programmes (Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Chase, 2008).

### **1.9 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) trustworthiness is what gives a study its credibility and validity. As there is the potential of multiple perspectives, I engaged in the following processes to enhance the trustworthiness of this study: I kept an audit

trail in order to document the unfolding research process; I conducted member checks in which I asked participants to check my interpretations, meaning-making and findings; I triangulated through the use of multiple methods of data generation, including interviews, observations, focus group activities, participant generated artefacts and field notes; I discussed my emergent findings with my supervisor and critical friends; and I made plain my position and potential bias (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These processes were to assist in ensuring that the voices of the participants were heard (Goldbart & Hustler, 2005). I am aware that my ethical engagement during this study was also an essential factor to enhance the trustworthiness of the final product (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

### **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical research needs to be aligned with the basic tenets of respect for persons, beneficence (do no harm) and justice or empowerment (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These tenets are for the purpose of protecting the participants from deception and manipulation and to encourage researchers to strive to balance power differentials and engage with strategies that have the potential to develop the participants (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Swartz, 2011).

The values of action research reflect these principles. In addition, the research called on me as the researcher to live it out beyond the research study into the improvement of the human condition, through a process of engagement, reflection and reflexive praxis (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Brydon-Miller, 2008). Ethics in action research, therefore, was not so much a procedure to be followed as it was about the embodiment of the values in the process and practices of research (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Brydon-Miller, 2008).

The starting point in any research study is the critical examination of self and how I as the researcher would be positioned in the research (Creswell, 2014). This is especially so in action research since I, as an outsider, was seeking collaboration with insiders and would be positioned inside the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Burns et al., 2012). Therefore, in this research study I have articulated my positioning, such as my personal position as a white male interventionist-practitioner with a history of

engagement in the community of interest, as a M.Ed student from the University of Stellenbosch as well as my "... locations of power ..." (Brydon-Miller, 2008:204).

How the researcher is positioned has implications regarding power relations in a study. Power relations refer to the power differentials in the researcher-participant relationships which have the potential to distort or silence the voices of the participants and prioritize and promote that of the researcher (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999 in Swartz, 2011). To flatten this power gradient, I attempted to position myself as a learner and developed, as far as possible, mutuality with the participants (Swartz, 2011; Cannella, 2008). Cannella (2008) argues that as the researcher, positioning myself as a learner did not mean denying my education, training and experience, however, its aim was to elevate the knowledge and experience of the participants thereby to position them as the experts of their context and experiences. To that end I negotiated entry into the context and access to the sample group relationally, via preestablished networks.

Brydon-Miller (2008) states that at the foundation of Action Research is "... a deep and abiding respect for persons as active agents of change" (Brydon-Miller, 2008:202). I therefore sought informed consent from the key informants before the interviews and from the participants before the interview and focus group (see appendix 9). In addition, one of the key informants made himself available to translate for participants if needed. To that end he signed a confidentiality form (appendix 10). Furthermore, since the study evolved, informed consent was not a once off step to satisfy procedure but was approached in ways that sought their consent throughout their participation in the research study (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Barbour, 2008). Aware of the tension that could exist between dominant and contextual understandings of legal and illegal activities or behaviour, I informed the participants up front about potential risks, particularly that of disclosing information that could incriminate them or others. I therefore reminded them regularly to change details such as names and locations when sharing experiences or events (Lambrechts, 2014). I held all information shared as confidential, unless a life was in danger or child abuse was involved, in which case I was legally mandated to disclose this risk. An Advocate made himself available for consultation should any issues or revelations have arisen that had legal ramifications (appendix 11). I also informed the participants of this before we commenced with the research and included it in the consent form (appendix 9).

There was the possibility that in the course of conversations related to their experiences the participants could have experienced adverse psychological reactions (Garbarino, 1999). To that end I had negotiated access to a clinical psychologist or trained community-based counsellors who had experience of working in a similar community context (appendix 12). My experience of working with the populace and context had made me conscious of the need to monitor my own well-being and responsiveness to the experience of my participants. I approached a world-renowned specialist, Prof James Garbarino, as a consultant to be part of my circle of critical friends (appendix 13). In addition, I had a debriefing session with a counselling psychologist who had seen me before and who was a different person to the psychologist available for the participants (appendix 14).

I recognized that I would be working in an environment that had the potential for violent conflict and thus followed the guidance and advice of critical contacts and key informants around scheduling contact sessions as well as which individuals could work together because of current or historic gang allegiance. Furthermore, I sought to conduct interviews and the focus groups at venues located in and around Duineveld that were accessible and safe for participants.

The voices of marginalised groups are seldom sought or heard and therefore have had "... little opportunity to articulate, justify and assert their interests ..." (Bergold & Thomas, 2012:197). I, therefore, consciously sought the collaboration, generation and shared ownership of knowledge. While we had different agendas for the study I negotiated with the participants around ownership of the knowledge and how it would be disseminated (Brydon-Miller, 2008). I informed them that I was conducting this study for the completion of a MEd Psychology degree and would acknowledge their participation and contributions to the knowledge generated in it and any future publication in ways with which they were comfortable with. This aligns with the view espoused by Herr and Anderson (2015) that the action researcher is concerned with protecting the integrity of his participants while agitating for social change.

I informed them that participation was entirely voluntary and that they would be free to withdraw at any stage without fear of consequences. I informed them that all sessions would be audio-recorded, with their permission, as well as transcribed verbatim, and assured them of their anonymity through the use of pseudonyms for themselves, family

members, friends and the broader community. I engaged in member checks and, where possible, gave participants access to transcripts pertaining to themselves in order to allow their decision on what they were comfortable with being included in the dissertation. This process commenced after the initial interviews and before the focus groups. I informed them that the recordings and transcripts would be kept securely and on computer with password protection. Finally, I let them know that there would be no payment for their participation, however, refreshments including a light meal, would be offered during focus group sessions. All this information was provided in written form (see appendix 9).

## **1.11 CHAPTER DIVISIONS**

Chapter 2 and 3 provide the conceptual framework for my study. In these chapters I reflect on the literature review that was conducted. Chapter 2 focuses on the context of a low-income urban community on the Cape Flats whilst chapter 3 considers the process of navigating contexts of violence and intervention strategies and programmes that target violent youth.

Chapter 4 is a discussion and justification of my choice of research design and in it I outline my choice of methodology.

The findings are presented in Chapter 5. Here I attempt to honour the participants in their journey by giving a narrative voice to their experiences and insights.

An integration of my findings with the literature is presented in Chapter 6. In this chapter I discuss the findings and share some of my interpretations of the participants' experiences. I reflected on the limitations of my study and concluded with recommendations for future practice and research.

## **1.12 TERMS AS THEY ARE USED IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY**

### **Voice**

Voice in this study is used to refer to both the physical act of speaking as well as the socio-political act of the meaning-making process of participants relative to their social position and context (Chase, 2008).

## **Coloured**

The term Coloured is an Apartheid constructed racial category used in conjunction with Black, White and Indian. It has been an ambiguous term and has often carried negative associations (Jensen, 2006). However, it is also a cultural identity that is filled with "... bodies of knowledge, cultural practices, memories, rituals and modes of being ..." (Erasmus, 2001:21). In this study I will be using Coloured as a reference to a distinct lived identity.

## **Emerging-adult**

A contentious term used in literature to describe the 18-29 age cohort in a way that distinguishes them from late adolescence and young adulthood, in other words a distinctive stage of development (Tanner & Arnett, 2009). In this study the focus is on the age range of 18-25 for some of the reasons listed below. Age cohort definitions are as inconsistent as they are diverse. The United Nations (UN), for instance, defines the age group 15-24 as youth but then only for statistical consistency, whilst in South Africa there is a confusing array of age definitions. The constitution differentiates minor from adult by age 18; the use of 14-28 by the National Youth Commission to define youth; the criminal justice system defining young offender's as 14-25 and then the South African National Youth Policy uses an expanded definition (as does the African Youth Charter) of youth 14-35 years that acknowledges the historical imbalances (National Youth Policy 2020, 2015; Richter & Panday, 2008).

## **Urban War Zone**

An urban war zone is an urban residential area where it is not unusual for residents to attend funerals of young people killed on the streets and where the majority of children have witnessed significant levels and forms of violence (Garbarino, 2015).

## **Criminal justice system**

The Criminal Justice System is the collection of government institutions and processes geared towards the maintenance of social control. This is achieved through the processes of policing, sentencing, punishment and rehabilitation of those involved in transgressing the law. This might take the form of police interaction, court-ordered processes, diversion and incarceration. However, the system often operates less as a

unified whole and more as "... disparate and disconnected elements with varied historical origins ..." (Cartwright & Shearing, 2009:1).

### **1.13 SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have attempted to put forward the rationale for the research project. I have provided background to the context of youth violence in South Africa with particular emphasis on low-income urban communities on the Cape Flats and the associated discourse. Furthermore, I gave some background to intervention programmes, including diversion, that is aimed at young offenders. I have argued that the intervention space lacks the voice of the beneficiaries themselves. The aim of the research, therefore, is to forefront these perspectives through engaging the reflections of emerging-adult violent offenders on their lives and their intervention experience. I then introduced the proposed research design and methodology and discussed and addressed the various pertinent issues of the intended research in relation to trustworthiness and ethics. I concluded with an overview of the proposed chapters for the thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXTS OF VIOLENCE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Context is not only about place and space; it is also about people. Socio-spatial setting shapes and is shaped by individuals, ideas, activities, physical structures and history. It is not static and not necessarily predictive. Instead it is fluid and dynamic, as these elements constantly reconstitute themselves over time within and through the activity of people. (Henriksen & Bengtsson, 2018; Alonso & Hita, 2013; Winton, 2012). This chapter will attend to the socio-spatial context of this study.

Several studies have found that many young people across the world are confronted with having to navigate contexts that are fraught with violence. The literature further highlights the fact that often it is young people who are at the forefront of political, social and/or criminal upheavals, violent or otherwise (Roberts, 2015; von Holdt et al., 2011; Richter & Panday, 2008; Vigh, 2006). It is important to take cognisance of this as research has also shown that it is young men (15-24), from marginalized communities, who are the most likely victims and/or perpetrators of this violence (Abt & Winship, 2016; Ward et al., 2012). A substantial amount of research has considered whether these young people are merely reproducing the violence they experience, or whether it is an expression of their agency in response to threatening circumstances. Research also suggests that the broader society's response to this phenomenon could inadvertently be contributing to the incubation and continuance of this phenomenon in certain social environments (Daiute, 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2009; Payne, 2008; Sandberg, 2008; Anderson, 1999). I align with the position that views this societal response as narrow, as it may minimise the power dynamics at play in a specific context at any given time. This latter school of thought argues that there is a complex array of critical variables that must be acknowledged when considering violence among young people who live in contexts with high levels of violence (Zilberg, 2011; Daiute, 2010; Hagedorn, 2007).

## 2.2 VIOLENCE AS CONTEXT

When considering contexts of violence, Vigh (2011) advocates for a move away from violence as a temporary event to an approach that considers its constancy. He argues that it is "... no longer sufficient to place [violence] in context but ... [we] need to see it [violence] as context" (Vigh, 2011:104). This section of the study will briefly consider some of the discourses around how violence is defined.

### 2.2.1 What we talk about when we talk about violence?

Contexts of violence cannot be separated from the discourses that define them. For example, a tension exists between discourses that view some violent acts as heroic and legitimate, whilst viewing other acts as abnormal and deviant (Triplett et al., 2016; Roach, 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2009). I am of the view that one needs to reflect on what we are talking about when we say we are talking about violence. Tolan (2007) draws our attention to the importance of acknowledging how the way in which we speak about violence has implications for our analysis of and response to it. However, whilst there is a considerable body of literature written about violence, across disciplines such as criminology and public health, there is also a great deal of ambiguity about what violence is (Mitton, 2019; Triplett et al., 2016; Muntingh & Gould, 2010).

Possibly the most widely used definition of violence is that of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The WHO defines violence as:

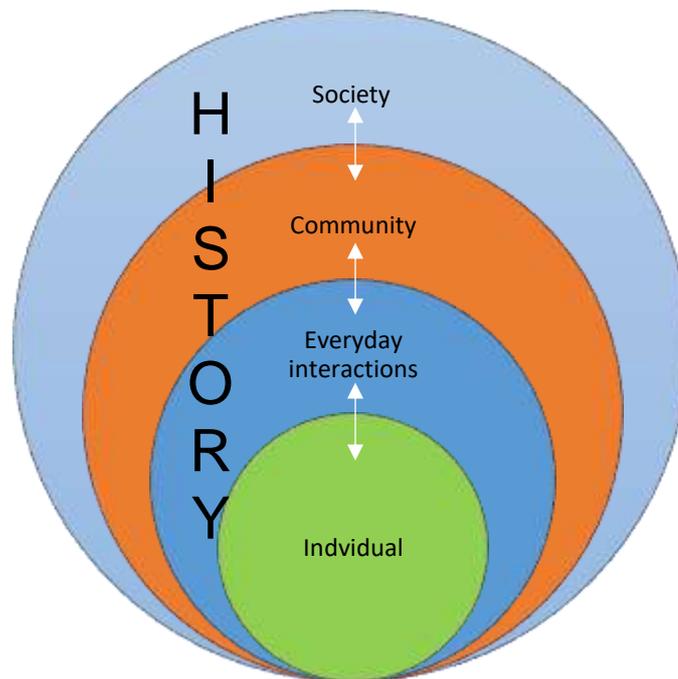
*"... the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, an individual or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002:5).*

There are, however, several researchers who are of the view that the WHO definition is too broad and not specific enough to be practically useful. In addition, they believe that the categories are not reflective of how violence is experienced on the ground (Abt, 2017; Tolan, 2007). Another school of thought alludes to the fact that because of the complex and multifaceted nature of violence, it precludes the use of simplistic definitions. To this end Barrios (2007) offers a more integral definition of violence that incorporates institutional, structural and cultural domains of violence along with

interpersonal and group violence. Similarly, Winton (2004:165) frames violence within political, institutional, social and economic domains, and goes on to say that these categories "... overlap and converge in such phenomena as the drug trade, informal justice and youth gangs." I agree with the perspective that violence committed by young people cannot be "... reduced to physical violence or singular events but viewed as social processes ..." that occur across multiple contextual sites (Henriksen & Bengtsson, 2018:101).

### **2.2.2 Framing the context**

The dominant discourse prevalent in the literature points to the fact that whilst structural and other variables may be considered, the primary focus remains individualistic in understanding and addressing violent behaviour. This view does not always critically engage with the broader influences which include the culture and history of the community in shaping individual behaviour (Garbarino, 2015; Alonso & Hita, 2013; Ward et al., 2012; Daniels & Adams, 2010). The underlying premise of this study is that reality and meaning is socially constructed through interaction with the social, cultural and physical world in which individuals live and move (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998). The Social Ecological perspective, illustrated in figure 2.1, is one way of representing these different variables and their interrelations within the socio-spatial reality of an individual.



**Figure 2.1: A Social Ecology**

*(Ward et al., 2012; Swartz, 2009; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002)*

This perspective views the individual as an active agent within a tangle of relational and structural dynamics, which include people, events, institutions, ideas, culture and history (Swartz, 2009; Daiute, 2006). The contextual dynamic is therefore an outcome of interactions that happen within and between the multiple levels of influence as illustrated above. At the individual level, factors such as temperament, gender and race play a significant role. Whilst race and gender are social constructs, they are also identity markers based on biological appearance, which may interact with and affect the way individuals experience and engage with their environment. The everyday interactions referred to in the model are the associations that occur daily, such as with family, peers and neighbours within the home, the school and the street. The Community level relates to the broader, often indirect, relational influences that influence the individual's lived experience in a space, including socio-economic status, places of employment, the police and access to services such as health. The broader macro influences are reflected at the society level and these include cultural and religious norms, mass media, economic policy and political and global events (Ward et al., 2012; Swartz, 2009; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). However, it is important to note

that the influence of historical processes and how they converge within the current reality of people and their context is often overlooked (see appendix 15 for an example of such a pictorial integration).

### **2.3 A TALE OF TWO CITIES**

This study was conducted in a historically disadvantaged community on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, South Africa. South Africa is a country of great diversity in its people, cultures, geography and where access to socio-economic opportunities varies considerably. Whilst it is often promoted as a place of beauty and celebrated for its relatively bloodless transition from the brutal past of apartheid to democracy, it has also become known for its economic and structural inequality and high levels of crime and violence (Baker, 2019; Swartz & Scott, 2014; Samara, 2011; Altbeker, 2007).

Cape Town, perhaps more than any other South African city, epitomises this dichotomy. To borrow from Charles Dickens, it's *A tale of two cities*. One Cape Town is in popular discourse a global icon and a tourist mecca, with its natural beauty and European-esque hospitality; described on Lonely Planet as "... stunning from sea and sky ... there's nothing quite like Cape Town, a singularly beautiful city." (Lonely Planet, 2019: online). However, the other Cape Town is a city that is described as socio-economically unequal and is regularly included among the top 20 most violent cities in the world (World Atlas, 2019). The contrast between these two Cape Towns is manifested in the socio-spatial differences between the areas of affluence and the areas of poverty. The latter is often plagued by structural underdevelopment, violence and gangsterism. This disparity is considered to be a part of the ongoing legacy of apartheid, which had at its core political, physical and socio-economic differentiation along narrowly defined racial lines (Pinnock, 2016; Samara, 2011; Jensen, 2008; Swartz, 2009).

Situated on the Cape Flats is the historically coloured township of Duineveld, home to approximately 53 000 residents. With a homicide rate of 102 per 100 000, Duineveld is often perceived as a no-go area, a place of danger that outsiders enter at their peril (Crime Stats SA, 2018; Lambrechts, 2012; Samara, 2011). However, Lambrechts (2012) argues that the perception of it being a place of danger is a simplistic and linear one that minimises the complex nature of the community. A closer look shows the

complex co-existence of laughter, children playing, everyday daily routines alongside the ravages of poverty, gang tags, overcrowding and infrastructural decay.

### **2.3.1 A Tale of Duineveld**

As a community that is confronted with a myriad of socio-economic challenges, such as high youth unemployment, low educational attainment, violence and poverty,<sup>2</sup> Duineveld is often classified in the literature as a socially disorganised community (Pinnock, 2016; Daniels & Adams, 2010). Bursik (1999 in Roberts & Gordon 2016:49) defines a socially disorganised community as one that is unable to "... realise the common values of their residents or solve commonly experienced problems." The factors that are involved in constituting a socially disorganised community include structural disadvantage (including decay), concentrated poverty, economic deprivation, residential instability, structural density and many single parent households. Social disorganisation theory initially emerged as an explanation for juvenile delinquency. Whilst the term, disorganised community, is often a contentious one, the argument is that the factors listed above weaken collective efficacy and social controls leaving alienated youth overexposed to anti-social activities (Roberts & Gordon, 2016; Regoeczi & Jarvis, 2011; Kingston, Huzinga & Elliot, 2009).

The dominance of American based research on violence, crime and gangs has led numerous researchers to question the contextual relevance of social disorganisation theory (SDT) for communities outside of the USA (Bruinsma et al., 2013; Winton, 2012; Breetzke, 2010). However, Kingston et al. (2009) counter this, arguing that it should not necessarily negate the transferability of the theory as there is a substantial degree of variation in the USA itself among neighbourhoods with a range of structural disadvantage. A further critique argues that it overlooks forms of organisation within communities, that have evolved as a response to the social-historical processes of marginalisation and intentional spatial inequitable designs within a city such as Cape Town (Winton, 2012; Hagedorn, 2007; Wacquant, 2007).

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<sup>2</sup>According to the youth explorer portal 62% of youth live in income-poor households whilst 28% are multi-dimensionally poor; 68% of youth are unemployed; 19% of those who start grade 8 go on to pass matric and then only 4% with a bachelors pass; 20% of youth live in overcrowded households <https://youthexplorer.org.za/profiles> (accessed 14 March 2018). These figures are based on administrative boundaries and may not be reflective of the residential boundaries.

To gain a fuller picture of the current dynamics at play in Duineveld, the social historical processes involved need to be explored. These include the threads of violence, loss, marginalisation, humiliation, agency and resistance that have been woven into the establishment and evolution of the community (Pinnock, 2016; Daniels & Adams, 2010; Swartz, 2009; Western, 1996).

### **2.3.1.1 *Where did it all start?***

Duineveld was established primarily as a function of the Group Areas Act of 1950. The introduction of this law saw the apartheid government spatially realigning Cape Town along racial lines as defined by the Population Registration Act of 1950 (Lambrechts, 2012; Western, 1996). One of the defining features of the implementation of the Act was forced removals. Over the period, 1966-1982, many of those that had been classified as coloured and black were forcibly relocated to structurally under-resourced areas that collectively became known as the Cape Flats. This process of forced relocation was not peculiar to the apartheid era, in fact one can situate it along a historical continuum stretching back to and beyond the establishment of a Dutch colony at the Cape in 1652 (Pinnock, 2016; Lambrechts, 2012; Jensen, 2008; Western, 1996; See table 2.1 for a selected timeline).

**Table 2.1: List of relevant historical moments from the establishment of Cape Town as a colony and the new constitution of South Africa**

Date	Event/legislation	Description
1652	Dutch establish a colony at the Cape	Although Europeans had stopped at the Cape since the 15 <sup>th</sup> century, it was the Dutch who decided to establish a refreshment station.
1658	Slave trade begins in CT	Although slaves were already present by 1658, this was the year in which the buying and selling of people began.
1828	Ordinance 49 and 50	Ordinance 49 imposed pass controls on African workers in the colony, whilst ordinance 50 ends Khoena indentured labour.
1834-38	Slave emancipation	Although officially proclaimed in 1834 it was only applied in 1838, with former owners receiving compensation and former slaves nothing.
1841	Master and Servants Ordinance	An enforcement of labour contracts through the threat of punishment, effectively ensuring a continuance of racialised economy even if the ordinance itself it was not defined along racial lines
1903-1905	South African Native Affairs Commission	Set up to deal with the 'native question' it was the first official attempt at racial classification and also recommended segregation as an ideal for the society.
1936& 1977	Wilcox Commission and Theron Commissions of Inquiry	These were two commissions of inquiry seeking to deal with the coloured 'problem' in which the definition for coloured continued to be a negative.
1985-1990	State of Emergency	Declared in an attempt to deal with the increasing anti-apartheid protests, non-violent and violent. It involved the use of violent repression, mass detentions and restrictions of freedom.
1994	Elections of new South Africa	After a period of transition and negotiation, South Africa holds its first ever non-racial elections
1996	Constitution of South Africa	Includes the Bill of Rights

### **2.3.1.2 From slavery to apartheid**

Almost from the outset the colony at the Cape bore a racialised structure replete with political, social and economic exclusion of those not of European descent. The practice of slavery and forced servitude, key features of the economy at the time, was characterised by dehumanisation and a cultural fragmentation. It has been conclusively shown by historians that even when the legal status changed, racial distinctiveness and exclusionary practice continued. Post-emancipation, a diverse group of people made up of former slaves, the Khoena and free blacks came to be labelled as a singular entity, 'coloured'. This definition was based on their 'non-ness,' that is being neither white nor indigenous. It was accompanied by a paternalistic and derogatory official and popular discourse in which coloured people became a problem to be solved often associated with immorality, miscegenation and criminality. However, this did not create a passive response and acquiescence. During the colonial period there was resistance in a variety of overt and covert forms, whilst by the 1900's an oppositional culture had developed through the crafting out of an alternative economy to access income along with a nascent gang culture. And even though 'coloured' was an imposed label and identity, there was a great deal of agency amongst those who were known as coloured in shaping and asserting their own culture and identity (Pinnock, 2016; Worden, 2012; Jensen, 2008; Adhikari, 2006; Erasmus, 2001; Reddy, 2001; Bickford-Smith, Worden & Van Heyningen, 1999; Penn, 1999; Martin, 1998; Western, 1996; Elphick & Giliomee, 1989).

### **2.3.1.3 Apartheid**

In 1948 the National Party came to power and with it the introduction and application of the ideology of apartheid as official policy. Much of what was enacted was not necessarily new except that now it was "... comprehensive and compulsory," further increasing political and economic marginalisation (Worden, 2012:105; Adhikari, 2006; Martin, 1998). It can be argued that forced removals did not just remove homes, but also dismantled a way of life for many. Extensive research suggests that it changed the very social fabric of communities; the networks and family structures that had provided support and a cohesive sense of community were no longer accessible in the same way (Pinnock, 2016; Bickford-Smith et al., 1999; Western, 1996). As one resident put it, "... they took our happiness" (Fields, 2001:11). Furthermore, the new

areas were not equipped to deal with the housing needs of the relocated masses, and this resulted in overcrowding and structural densification. In addition, people were now physically further from their places of employment and there was a very limited access to public transport; this subsequently gave rise to increased unemployment. The literature suggests a high correlation between the afore-mentioned and the emergence of a sense of vulnerability and threat on the Cape Flats (Pinnock, 2016; Lemanski, 2007; Bickford-Smith et al., 1999). According to scholars it was from this process of fragmentation, political and economic exclusion and environmental stress that conditions were created for the growth of social violence and the now notorious gangs of the Cape Flats. Initially some of the gangs provided a measure of physical protection for residents and access to alternative means of income through the reorganisation of the informal and criminal economy (Pinnock, 2016; Lambrechts, 2012; Dowdney, 2005; Bickford-Smith et al., 1999) It is worth mentioning that according to Winton (2012), similar processes of fragmentation and exclusion have also been key factors in the formation and growth of gangs and increased violence in areas of Latin America.

Significantly, attempts to reconstitute social structures were undermined by the often repressive and violent nature of the then government's enforcement of its apartheid policies and practices. It is however important to note, that the community in this study and other similar communities throughout the country did not just passively accept these oppressive measures. They actively resisted using a complex combination of peaceful and violent protest (Kinnes, 2017; Jensen, 2008; Altbeker, 2007). Additionally, after the Soweto student uprising in 1976, an increased number of young people on the Cape Flats became actively involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. These youth were relentlessly pursued by the police and parents often had the unenviable task of hiding their children and other youth in the community from the police. The consequence of these experiences was the development of a long-standing antagonism with and distrust of the police. This trajectory of increasing confrontation with the apartheid state resulted in the incarceration of large numbers of youth and adults, especially during the state of emergency in the late 1980's. It is important to note that at that time, there was no policy provision for the separate incarceration of youth and adults (Singh & Singh, 2014; Jensen, 2010; Swartz, 2009).

A number of researchers and social scientist have maintained that during the apartheid era, some of the gangs colluded with the police by providing information on and maybe even assassinating key activists. They contend that as a consequence of this relationship, some gang leaders were allowed to operate with impunity. In addition to this, due to the absence of community leadership because of politically motivated incarceration, death and intercommunity mobility, meant that the gang leaders were often able to further establish their presence and influence in the communities (Kinnes, 2017; Pinnock, 2016; Samara, 2011; Jensen, 2010).

The literature suggests that this intersection of institutionalised racism (sometimes violent), resistance, indiscriminate state sanction and incarceration and criminal and violent gang activity resulted in a generation of young people in Duineveld, and other similar communities, for whom violence became normative and accepted as a part of everyday life (Swartz, 2009; Straker, 1992).

#### ***2.3.1.4 Post-apartheid Duineveld***

The dawn of the new South Africa brought with it an expectation of change and a hope for a better life for all, through new laws, policies and practices. However, at a national and local level, violence persisted, evolving from largely political violence to social violence. This process is not unique to South Africa. Winton (2005) reflects on a similar process in Guatemala for example. In addition, there are ongoing debates around the view that the transition to a new South Africa has not necessarily heralded the hoped-for transformation for communities such as Duineveld where people continue to feel marginalised.

With the end of apartheid, South Africa was welcomed back into the global community. As a consequence of this, South Africa then had to compete in the global economy, both in the mainstream and criminal economies (Pinnock, 2016; Samara, 2011; Standing, 2003). One of the outcomes of this was that the already vulnerable textile industry, once the mainstay of the Cape Town economy, went into further decline on the back of increased regulation and deregulation on importation of cheap clothing, leading to greater unemployment (Samara, 2011; Lemanski, 2007; Salo, 2007; Bickford-Smith et al., 1999). In a parallel process, the newly opened borders also created opportunities for international crime syndicates to enter, challenging the

dominance of the local criminal gangs (Pinnock, 2016; Samara, 2011). The literature suggests that local gangs responded to this threat by reorganising themselves in ways that not only resisted the threat but also exploited the economic opportunity that the international drug market presented (Pinnock, 2016; Samara, 2011; Kinnes, 2000). According to Kinnes (2000) this is often the case in countries in transition. The slower pace of change in the criminal justice system created space for the criminal gangs and syndicates to flourish. It is therefore apparent that the loss of jobs and the growth of gangs and the drug economy radically shifted the power dynamics in Duineveld. Further exacerbating this power dynamic has been the flood of illicit guns onto the market which, despite legislation, has continued unabated (Tham, 2016). In fact, the 2010 Small Arms Survey (2010:115) stated that "... the Western Cape ... probably has the most serious gang guns problem anywhere [in the world]." The combination of gangs, guns and drugs led to a surge in violence across regions of the Cape Flats (Pinnock, 2016; Samara, 2011; Salo, 2007).

#### **2.3.1.5 South African government's response**

The response of the new South African government to the crime and violence since 1994 has fluctuated between the reform of legislation and state institutions (e.g. police service and correctional services) and a commitment to social and economic development; with that of a repressive approach to security. Several scholars have argued that the latter has taken priority, effectively undermining a developmental approach to combating violence (Pinnock, 2016; Samara, 2011; Pelsler, 2008). The tough policing approach was (and still is) headlined with a rhetoric of zero-tolerance and war, following international trends in combating urban crime and violence (Samara, 2011; Jensen, 2010). This was epitomised recently by Bheki Cele, the current national Minister of Police, at the launch of a police operation where he pronounced that "... we are here to declare war on criminality" (Etheridge, 2018: online). Several authors have argued that these police strategies are, in intent and purpose, a continuation of apartheid policing practices and counter-insurgency strategies of the apartheid security forces (Kinnes, 2017; Super, 2013; Jensen 2010). There have been numerous police operations targeting the Cape gangsters since 1994 (see table 2.2 above) with the repeated and stated objective to achieve stabilisation and normalisation (Etheridge 2018; Kinnes, 2017).

**Table 2.2: List of relevant strategies, policies and legislation of the South African Government in response to violence in the country since 1994**

Strategy/Policy/Legislation	Date	Description
National Crime Prevention Strategy	1996	“A long-term programme aimed at creating conditions in which the opportunities and motivation for crime will be reduced, as well as transforming the capacity of the criminal justice system to deal with crime” (South African Government, 1996).
South African Schools Act 84 of 1996	1997	Amongst other things it outlawed the use of corporal punishment in the classroom.
White Paper on Safety and Security	1998, 2016	“A policy on safety, crime and violence prevention that promotes an integrated and holistic approach to safety and security in line with the <b>National Development Plan</b> “ (Saferspaces, 2016:online).
Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (POCA)	1999	Amongst a range of items, the purpose of the act was to combat organised crime and criminal gang activities.
The Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000	2004	Sought to prevent the proliferation of illegal firearms and improve control of legal firearms.
Child Justice Act 75 of 2008	2010	To establish a separate criminal justice process for children to that of adults based on restorative justice principles.
National Anti-Gang Strategy (NAGS)	2017	A national strategy to deal with the problem of gangs.
Police operations on the Cape Flats: <i>Gang-bust, High density, Recoil, Saladin, Good Hope, Crackdown, Slasher, Lancer, Combat, Thunder</i>	1994-	Attempts at winning back the Cape Flats through a tough policing approach (see Kinnes, 2017).
Deployment of SANDF into hotspots around Cape Town	July 2019-	Decision by the national government to deploy the military into hotspots on the Cape Flats in an attempt to quell a surge of violence.

A synopsis of these operations by Kinnes (2017) reveals a limited impact at best, whilst Gould, Mufamadi, Celia & Amisi(2017) question the emphasis on a security approach like this as the murder rate has in fact increased since 2012. Studies from Latin American and the USA argue that instead of addressing the problem of gangs and violence within communities, this zero-tolerance approach can facilitate the evolution of gangs reproducing spaces of domination and fuelling further violence (Mitton, 2019; Zilberg, 2011; Cruz, 2010; Jütersonke, Muggah & Rodgers, 2009). Furthermore, Zilberg (2011:11) found that gang and violence intervention strategies in Los Angeles, be it law enforcement or other, have tended towards a mimicry of the "... structure and practices of the gang itself." This could explain the lack of collaboration and even contestation of the intervention spaces in the community of interest between non-governmental organisations as well as between government departments (Manuel, 2013).

The historical antagonism between the community and the police has also compromised the State's attempts at establishing their legitimacy in the space. This is perhaps best typified by the use of the term 'die boere', when referring to the police. Literally translated 'the farmer,' it has a historical association with white people that lead to it being used as a pejorative term for the apartheid police, since it was predominantly a white institution. This epithet has carried over into the current dispensation, suggesting that the community continues to distrust the police and even question their legitimacy (Super, 2016; Kinnes, 2012; Jensen, 2008). It is worth mentioning that this oppositional relationship with the authorities is not unique to Duineveld or South Africa but is a common factor within many contexts of marginalisation (see Winton, 2012; Zilberg, 2011; Cruz, 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2009).

## **2.4 A CONTEXT OF MARGINALISATION**

In lieu of the social historical processes discussed above it can be argued that the experience of violence and marginalisation has been a constant for Duineveld, even from before it was established (Adhikari, 2006). Practices of dehumanisation and exclusion during the period of slavery changed over time into a paternalistic and negative discourse that has often shaped actions, criminal justice and interventions. An example of this is the way in which young coloured males are often persistently represented within the public discourse as the source of crime and violence in Cape

Town. The term *skollie*, almost always implies a young, poor, coloured man who engages in crime and violence (Pinnock, 2016; Worden, 2012; Jensen, 2008). This practice of racial profiling alongside zero tolerance policing and the presence of gangs has often led to high incarceration rates, including Cape Town, where historically there has been a disproportionate number of coloured men in prison from places such as Duineveld (Alexander, 2012; Jensen, 2008; Steinberg, 2004). This often serves to exacerbate alienation and exclusion from mainstream society often further entrenching a connection to gang culture.

Despite the changes in administration and legislation, there has been very little change in the socio-spatial design of post-apartheid Cape Town, with a continuation of often un-legislated exclusionary practices and processes. An illustration of this has been the emergence of public-private security partnerships, mostly in affluent, previously white areas, attributed in part to a fear of crime. A consequence of this is that often for young men from Duineveld, and other similar communities, spaces beyond their community have remained largely prohibitive, simply by virtue of their being poor, coloured and male. (Brown-Luthango, 2019; Pinnock, 2016; Lindegaard, Miller & Reynald, 2013; Swartz, Harding & de Lannoy, 2012; Lemanski, 2004).

#### **2.4.1 Community streets as a context of oppositional culture**

There are a number of studies that point to the development of a counter, often oppositional, culture replete with its own rules, norms, values and knowledge in contexts where communities have experienced long term, often intergenerational, racial, social and economic marginalisation and exclusion (Fraser, 2013; Sandberg, 2008; Payne, 2008; Oliver, 2006). This view is supported by Bandura (2006:164) who argues that people are not merely victims of their circumstances, instead they are active agents in their own circumstances and will "... create social systems that organise and influence their lives." This dynamic and ever evolving culture is commonly referred to as street culture, street life or the streets. The essence of this culture is that it is a social system of meaning that often includes the regulation and rationale for the use of violence within the public space (this will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 3). It develops over time in response to a loss of faith in the political will or capacity of state institutions to protect citizenry or to mediate in conflicts within the context (Swartz & Scott, 2014; Fraser, 2013; Daiute, 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2009; Anderson, 1999). It

is curious that while there have been numerous international ethnographic studies on street life, and a few in Cape Town, there is an absence of similar analyses of street life within the community of interest. Extrapolating from studies conducted by Lindegaard (2009), Swartz (2009), Jensen (2008) and Salo (2007) one finds indicators that suggest that a street life culture exists in the community of Duineveld.

#### **2.4.2 The Institutional presence of gangs**

An overlapping process that is often associated with an oppositional culture is the presence of criminal gangs, which then often become a defining feature of the community to outsiders. It is important that we not limit this notion to street gangs because a great deal of fluidity often exists between these street-based gangs and prison gangs. Winton (2012) and Cruz (2010) go on to say that, over time, prison in certain contexts has come to be viewed as an extension of the community. Research conducted locally has shown how this has occurred through the infusion of the Number prison gangs, like the 26, 27 and 28's, with the street gangs (Kinnes, 2017; Pinnock, 2016; Jensen, 2008; Steinberg, 2004). Whilst cautious of romanticising the role of gang culture in the context, to my mind this study needs to, however superficially, acknowledge the long, fascinating and complex history and evolution of the Number gangs over time, from a predominantly prison-located system to a more permeable system between prison and community. This phenomenon introduced a sophisticated system of myths, rituals, symbols, discipline and violent practices of the Numbers to the street gangs on the Cape Flats. These exclusive practices have often filled the need for identity and belonging through, it is argued, creating an alternative reality to that of the degradation and dehumanization of prison, poverty and exclusion (Jensen, 2008; Steinberg, 2004). Consequently prison, as Venkatesh & Levitt(2000:437) state, becomes "... another page in street gang mythology ..." instead of a form of correction.

### **2.5 AN APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS**

In the earlier discussion, I introduced the notion of violence as a function that goes beyond interpersonal conflict. Rodgers (2016) maintains that violence can also be viewed as a socially constitutive mechanism rather than solely a destructive force. Similarly, Winton (2012:139) notes that in places of marginality, violence may in fact be a means of "... governing belonging ... and maintaining a specific kind of social

organisation.” Thus, it is worth asking to what extent social disorganisation theory is a helpful framework when seeking to make sense of youth violence within Duineveld. As Whyte (1943), in his seminal work observed, what might appear to outsiders as social disorganisation “... often turns out to be simply a different form of social organisation, if one takes the trouble to look closely” (in Wacquant, 2007:39).

What form of system analysis would be appropriate, relevant and helpful here? In 2005 a comparative global study on children and youth in organised violence was published, which included Duineveld as one of 10 global study sites. These sites were selected as they were not considered conventional war zones yet involved a significant number of young people in violent conflict (Dowdney, 2005). An interesting aspect of the study was the fact that in many cases the number of casualties was higher than in some conventional war zones. It strikes me, that while the community may not be at war in the conventional sense; the effects of the violence are distinctly similar. This notion is not just based on the number of lives lost, but also relates to the effects it has on the community and particularly the children who are growing up in this space. It is for this the reason that Garbarino (2015) suggests the term “urban war zone” when attempting to make sense of the lived experiences of people living in contexts like Duineveld.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter sought to introduce the place called Duineveld and explored literature in relation to the contexts of youth violence. It sought to introduce discourse around violence as a complex phenomenon often rooted in the social historical processes involved in the evolution of a community that wrestles with ongoing violence. We thus explored the roots and dynamics of Duineveld, threading the normalisation of violence and the practices of marginalisation. Chapter 3 will explore the framework of an urban war zone by discussing the effects navigating a war zone has on emerging-adult males and the intervention strategies used. .

## CHAPTER 3

### NAVIGATING URBAN WAR ZONES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Describing Duineveld as an urban war zone carries with it the risk of sensationalising the social violence that occurs there and potentially further entrenches negative perceptions already in existence about the community. In the 15 years that I have been involved with Duineveld, I have often witnessed displays of sociability and affinity juxtaposed with the stark reality of violence. In that way I share Bourgois' (2001:29) reflection that only "... painting positive portraits [of Duineveld] diminishes the real devastation wrought ..." by historical and ongoing violence. This is what underpins the use of the descriptive urban war zone by Garbarino (2015), since the effects of an environment that is pervasively violent shares distinct similarities (and differences) with conventional war zones. In this chapter I discuss the cumulative effects of growing up in an urban war zone and the interventions that target young violent offenders from such contexts.

##### 3.1.1 The effects of the environment on individuals

The literature is clear about the effects that the environment can have on human functioning and behaviour. Several scholars have even argued that social and physical environments play a more critical role than do innate individual characteristics (Antunes & Ahlin, 2017; Garbarino, 2015; Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Roach, 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2009). Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer and Rose (2018) however caution that when considering human behaviour and functioning, one should not reduce it to a nature/nurture binary. Instead, they argue that the process is much more complex.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES), published in 1996, provided compelling evidence linking negative childhood experiences with challenges in adolescent and adult behaviour and functioning (Cronholm et al., 2015; Van der Kolk, 2014; Griffin, Germain & Wilkerson, 2012). Whilst the original study has made a valuable contribution in documenting the long-term effects of the environment, recent scholars have pointed out that the data set used in the study was too homogenous and

argue that more contextually sensitive indicator ought to be included. Some indicators suggested by these scholars include: single parent homes, criminality, poverty, institutionalised racism and exposure to community violence (Cronholm et al., 2015; Wade et al., 2014).

### **3.1.2 Effects of violence as context and not an event**

There is a rapidly growing body of literature that indicates that exposure to violence is especially significant in life choices particularly when the violence is ever-present and not bounded by singular moments, social spaces or even segregated lines of victim, offender and witness (Kaminer, Eagle & Crawford-Browne, 2018; Dawes, Boonzaier, Lamb, Mathews & Warton, 2016; Kaminer et al., 2013; Van der Merwe et al., 2013; Vigh, 2011). Henriksen and Bengtsson (2018:102) describe these as "... temporal and spatial entanglements." The literature suggests that when these entanglements have persisted across generational lines and an individual's lifetime this often results in individual and cultural adaptations to violence that normalise violence in that space (Garbarino, 2015; Diamond et al., 2013; Roach, 2013; Masten & Cicchetti, 2010; Oliver, 2006; Anderson, 1999). Individual adaptations may manifest as aggression, fearlessness, disconnection, impulsivity, lack of empathy and a limited future orientation (or terminal thinking); whilst the cultural adaptation has been shown to be the accommodation of violence as an acceptable form of conflict resolution (Garbarino, 2015; du Plessis et al., 2015; Monahan et al., 2015; Swartz & Scott, 2014; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013; Winton, 2005). This does not however mean that individual violent behaviour is inevitable in these contexts. Garbarino (1999:73) argues that, "... in the matters of human development when the question is *does X cause Y* the best answer is almost always ***it depends***" (author's emphasis).

## **3.2 NAVIGATING A SOCIAL WORLD PLAGUED BY CHRONIC VIOLENCE**

Whilst there is an abundance of literature that considers risk and protective factors involved in the trajectory to violence in youth, how these factors interact is less well understood. What is clear from the literature is that navigating multiple violent or unsafe social contexts is a complex process peppered with a range of potentialities (Henrikson & Bengtsson, 2018; Ward et al., 2013; Van Der Merwe & Dawes, 2007). In addition, Vigh (2006), locates navigation as a constant process of interaction between the

individual and their environment, which involves making sense of and adapting to the immediacy of the moment in any given space. As a consequence, young people, in unsafe spaces often move about with social hyper-vigilance. The literature explains this hyper-vigilance as alertness to an anticipated threat of violence at any given moment (Dill & Ozer, 2016; Garbarino, 2015; Vigh, 2011; Teitelman et al., 2010; Winton, 2005). From this perspective, learning to navigate social and environmental spaces is intimately connected to human development and meaning making.

### **3.2.1 Developmental factors in meaning-making**

Aldous Huxley (in Kegan, 1983:11) wrote that "... experience is not what happens to you, it's what you do with what happens to you". This reference draws our attention to the fact that the meaning-making process is not necessarily constant, but rather something that evolves by means of past experiences and the growth of the individual in context. According to Piaget, meaning-making is tied to the concepts of assimilation and accommodation (as cited in Kegan, 1983). From this perspective, the individuating child is always conversing with their environment and this process shapes and is shaped by a cognitive map. Each new experience then is either incorporated into the existing map (assimilation) or the existing map is adjusted to accommodate the new experience (Garbarino, 2015; Santrock, 1995; Kegan, 1983). Russian psychologist Vygotsky was of the view that development is inherently social and that meaning-making is a consequence of the internalising of social processes (as cited in Garbarino, 2015; Cahill, 2000). These processes are mediated through language and other cultural signs, symbols and practices that have an assigned meaning (Garbarino, 2015; Cahill, 2000; Santrock, 1995). Erikson's psychosocial theory of development proposed 8 developmental tasks throughout the life-span that occur in the interactive space between the individual and their social and historical setting. Therefore, the interpretation of the individual's social world, both influences and is influenced by the relevant developmental task (as cited in Gilleard & Higgs, 2016; Cahill, 2000; Santrock, 1995).

Whilst these perspectives contain differing emphases, they share the view that development does not occur independently from the physical, economic and socio-cultural environment. Navigating these spaces means engaging with the (sometimes conflicting) social and cultural norms, beliefs, values and practices that are transmitted

through social and state institutions. Conventional institutions are widely considered to include the home, religion and school; however, some scholars have suggested that there are "... unconventional social institutions ..." such as street life (especially in marginalised settings) and gangs that significantly influence how social and cultural norms, beliefs, values and practices are shared and internalised (Hagedorn, 2007; Oliver, 2006:918). Nevertheless, it always begins in the home.

### **3.2.2 Family and Home**

Over the past two decades advances in neuroscience have greatly contributed to our understanding of the process of social navigation, emphasising the intersection between the social and the neural (Perry et al., 2018; Ray, 2016). An important principle in neuroscience is that of neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's capacity to adapt and grow throughout the life-span of an individual. This brain process is sensitive to environmental influences and numerous studies have shown that chronic exposure to violence may influence the brain's development (Perry et al., 2018; Cantor et al., 2018; Gleason, 2017; Doidge, 2007). It is widely accepted that the early years of life (and adolescence) are crucial and there is extensive research that suggests that the brain is particularly sensitive to environmental influences at this time. In line with this, the nature of the home environment; and more specifically the infant-caregiver relationship, is considered to play a significant role in the overall development of the individual. An extensive review of the literature suggests that for an individual to thrive, they need to be exposed to a home environment that is characterised by relational interactions that are responsive, predictable and patterned. While a home in which there is "... chaos, neglect, threat and violence ..." may leave the individual vulnerable to a host of developmental challenges which may undermine the individual's overall potential (Perry et al., 2018:819; Cantor et al., 2018; Gleason, 2017; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001). Cantor et al. (2018) however remind us that there is also a body of research which has shown that genetic predispositions, parental behaviour pre- and during pregnancy may also greatly influence this process.

#### **3.2.2.1 *Laying down a foundation for navigation***

There is a growing body of literature highlighting the intergenerational nature of the effects of continual exposure to violence and trauma. The biological processes

involved in gene expression (epigenetics) have been shown to be decidedly vulnerable to environmental input and can be passed on at a familial level. This can lead to biological adaptations that negatively impact the future functioning of an individual in areas such as temperament, behaviour, cognitive ability and physical health (Cantor et al., 2018; Pinnock, 2016; Notterman & Mitchell, 2015; Garbarino, 2015; Champagne, 2010) Research has also established that the actions and emotional regulation of the mother during pregnancy can significantly impact the developing foetus, creating vulnerability for challenging behaviour later in life. The damaging effects of substance abuse during pregnancy is well known; whilst the dysregulation caused by chronic stress levels has also been shown to affect foetal development. In both instances' links have been found with challenges such as hyperactivity, poor self-regulation, cognitive deficits and even aggression in adolescence and adulthood. (La Marca-Ghaemmaghami et al., 2017; Pinnock, 2016; Van der Merwe et al., 2013; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001). Furthermore, Read and Mayne (2017) draw our attention to how family and cultural practices experienced during childhood can inform the rearing practices of the future parent. An example of this is the parents' beliefs around the use of physical forms of punishment. It would thus appear that a complex myriad of contextual factors can create interpersonal and intrapersonal vulnerabilities before an individual is born.

### **3.2.2.2 *Early experiences***

Several studies have highlighted the link between significant disruptions in infancy and early childhood with aggressive and violent behaviour in adolescence and emerging-adulthood. Indeed, these disruptions have been shown to be present in a significant majority of young and adult violent offenders (Perry et al., 2018; Gould, 2015; Martin et al., 2015; Griffin et al., 2012). These disruptions are often the result of extremely stressful contexts that can affect parental actions, especially emotional availability; in these cases, parents are often having to deal with their own struggle for survival. In addition, a child with a difficult temperament or other difficulties can exacerbate the strain placed on the parents, increasing the likelihood of disconnection with the primary caregiver leading to possible trauma from violence, neglect and maltreatment (Perry et al., 2018; Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2007).

### 3.2.2.2.1 Infant-Caregiver disconnection

Garbarino (1999) argues that human beings are fundamentally social creatures, biologically oriented towards connection that is central to individual development and growth. Connection, and its corollary belonging, is not a given and is a function of the attachment relationship an infant has with their primary caregiver (Sroufe & Siegel, 2011; Renn, 2002). Scholars inform us that it is the attachment relationship that lays the groundwork for future development and the social map that mediates future relational interactions, especially with authority figures (Groh et al., 2012; van Ijzendoorn, Schuengel & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1999; Garbarino, 1999). Four patterns of attachment have been identified and are listed in table 3.1 below. Van der Kolk (2014) identifies disorganised attachment as the attachment pattern most associated with psychopathology later in life.

**Table 3.1: The 4 types of identified attachment patterns**

Attachment Pattern	Description
Secure	Infants express their distress to their caregiver who then provides comfort. The infant is soothed and continues to explore their world.
Insecure-Avoidant	The infant will express minimal emotion, appearing as if nothing bothers them, as they expect their expression will be rejected/ignored.
Insecure-Resistant	The infant has an intense expression of emotion seemingly as a strategy to draw attention to themselves and is not easily soothed.
Disorganised	Appear to have no pattern for regulating their distress characterised by contradictory responses

(Van der Kolk, 2014; Hesse & Main, 2006; Renn, 2002).

Humans are biologically determined to seek safety in a person instead of a place. Disorganised attachment, therefore, happens when the caregiver is simultaneously the haven of safety and the source of fear (Van der Kolk, 2014; Hesse & Main, 2006). This results in what Hesse and Main (2006:310) call an "... irresolvable situation ..." for the infant. In addition, there is extensive research that suggests that on average, children from LSES communities are more likely than their peers, to present with disorganised

attachment. It is however important to note that whilst this is not necessarily inherent, it is often a consequence of the chronic high levels of stress and trauma experienced by their caregivers because of challenges such as poverty, unemployment and violence (Perry et al., 2018; Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015; Kinderman et al., 2013; Hesse & Main, 2006; Ijzendoorn et al., 1999).

In addition, disorganised attachment can shape an individual's view of the world. They may come to view the world as unpredictable and threatening, which in turn may lead to behaviours such as aggression, destructive impulsivity and dissociation. Since attachment is vital to connection and belonging, disorganised attachment can compromise future relational interactions through the inability to engage appropriately with others, often because of a lack of trust and emotional dysregulation. This in turn may undermine the acquisition of foundational competencies required for success at school and in the world of work (Groh et al., 2012; Van der Kolk, 2014; Hesse & Main, 2006; Ijzendoorn et al., 1999).

#### 3.2.2.2.2 *Regulation gone awry*

People respond in various ways to challenging or traumatic events. The stress response system, commonly known as the fight/flight/freeze response, is the primary biological tool for individual human survival (Perry et al., 2018; Kinderman et al., 2013; Van der Kolk, 2014). This regulatory response is the brain's capacity to manage impulses and emotions thereby mediating our levels of distress. However, regulation is not an inherent skill but has to be learned from the primary caregiver, who themselves may be dysregulated (Perry et al., 2018; Van der Kolk, 2014). Perry et al. (2018) assert that living in chaotic and violent contexts may over-stimulate the stress response system. This can be further exacerbated by a disorganised attachment pattern with the primary caregiver. There are also research findings that suggest that if this pattern of over-stimulation and inconsistent external response style is continuously repeated it may lead to a state of dysregulation. The long-term effect of this can be one of hypersensitivity to stimuli and a hypervigilance to potential threat, with arousal easily triggered by ostensibly trivial things. This can result in aggressive and impulsive responses and has also been shown to impair learning, memory and psychosocial development (Perry, et al., 2018; Garbarino, 2015; Van der Kolk, 2014; Griffin et al., 2012).

From the afore-mentioned, we can see that the home environment is critical for overall development and in establishing the faculties which the young person will use to enter into and engage with social spaces beyond the confines of the home.

### **3.2.3 Spatial reality of school**

The school is a global social institution with a significant influence on a child's life. Schools are viewed as relational spaces that can facilitate the development of various cognitive, social and cultural competencies. Schools, however, are also dynamic and complex systems, often considered a microcosm of the surrounding community (Osher et al., 2018; Gevers & Flisher, 2012). Mncube and Harber (2013) note that in contexts of violence educational provision is significantly compromised, often because learners may feel that they are not safe at school. Research evidence from schools in Cape Town reveals that a significant proportion of learners regularly experience bullying, threats, assault and robbery. Recent research along with the popular press, have reported an escalation of violence at schools in Cape Town. It is important to note that school violence is not only that which occurs within the physical boundaries of the school, but it also includes experiences that occur whilst travelling to and from school (de Wet, 2016; Equal Education, 2016; Burton & Leoschutt, 2013).

Osher et al. (2018) point out that the impact of pervasive threats can result in learners directing their emotional and mental energy away from learning and socialising thereby undermining the intended developmental and educational outcomes of formal education. This can lead to a cascade of effects ranging from an increased negative view of the self and a sense of not belonging, to decreased motivation, poor grades, poor attendance, truancy and eventually dropping out of school. In addition, learners who have a history of exposure to violence and trauma sometimes present with challenges related to concentration and disruptive behaviours. These may include but are not limited to; oppositionally defiant behaviour towards authority, poor peer relations, inattention, hyperactivity, impulsiveness and aggression (Osher et al., 2018; Gevers & Flisher, 2013; Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

Teachers, working in these contexts, often lack the training required to deal with the myriad of psychosocial issues that arise and often feel unsafe and traumatised themselves. Ill-equipped to deal with the diverse and often complex way in which

behaviour manifests in their classes, some teachers may use classroom management strategies that include, physical, verbal and attitudinal aggression. These classroom management strategies often set learners on a trajectory to marginalisation and eventually even alienation in the school environment (Osher et al., 2018; Gevers & Flisher, 2013). According to findings of research conducted in Western Cape schools, a high percentage of learner's report experiences of corporal punishment, even though corporal punishment has been banned in South African schools since 1996 (Equal Education, 2016; Ward & Lamb, 2015; Mncube & Harber, 2013). International human rights organisations like UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), have cautioned that the use of corporal punishment in schools, reinforces the message that violence is an accepted means for resolving conflict (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In addition, many schools often adopt a zero-tolerance disciplinary approach. The literature related to this kind of approach suggests that it often results in significant numbers of vulnerable youth being excluded from the formal education system (Equal Education, 2016; Fine et al., 2003). These youth may then join the ranks of the ever-increasing number of school dropouts. Figure 3.1 illustrates the increased vulnerability and uncertain future of these school dropouts. Research has also shown, that the aforementioned also increases the vulnerability of young people to being groomed for and recruited into drug and/or gang economies in the community (Daniels & Adams, 2010).



**Figure 3.1: Who catches the ones dropped from school?**

(Source: Gary Varvel, *Indianapolis Star*)

### 3.2.4 The street as an alternative educational institution

Fraser (2013) argues that unemployed and marginalised youth are often constrained and attached to a geographical place because of economic and racial factors preventing their mobility into other spaces. For many this place is the street, with its own norms and values as mentioned in chapter 2 (2.4.1). In his seminal work on the inner-city life of Philadelphia (USA), Anderson (1999:29, 30) describes the street as a place “very much alive with sociability ... and a certain level of camaraderie [however, it is also] a tough place ... where only the strongest survive.” He goes on to posit that over time, a code of the street evolves that guides social relations in ways that may justify the use of aggression and violence. Whilst this is a widely observed phenomenon, Lindegaard and Zimmermann (2017) point out that it is not clear whether the code serves to prevent or enhance the threat of victimisation. Other scholars have shown that some youth are mobile and may have developed a diverse repertoire of responses that allow them to navigate a range of spatial realities. Whereas youth who are relatively immobile are limited to the site of their everyday activities, which may

then become the basis for their identity formation as closely tied to street culture (Lindegaard, 2009; Cahill, 2000; Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998). Payne (2008:5) defines, street life “as an ideology centred on personal and economic survival ... [that includes] a spectrum of networking behaviours or activities that manifest through bonding and illegal activities.” These activities include sport, cultural games, gambling, drug dealing, robbery and interpersonal violence (Fraser, 2013; Payne, 2008; Jensen, 2008; Sandberg, 2008). Sandberg (2008) calls this street capital, a socially and spatially bounded form of social capital, whilst Fraser (2013) uses a Bourdieuan concept, street habitus, to describe the internalisation and embodiment of the social structures and historical relations of inequality, marginalisation and exclusion that result in criminal and violent activities.

Fagan and Wilkinson (1998) argue that within these spaces’ violence plays an especially important role in the development of identity. Several studies across time and contexts also allude to this. So for example, Schneider and Davies, (2019) notes how violence was used to signify manhood on the streets of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Manchester; Gough and Franch (2005) reflect on how violence is key to the battle for spatial dominance on the streets of Recife, Brazil; Baird (2018) found that violence is valued as a means for demonstrating success in Medellin, Colombia; in Denmark, Sandberg (2008) reports that violence is a means for establishing hierarchies of dominance; whilst in the Pacific islands it has been used for inflating social standing (Mayeda & Pasko, 2012) and providing the capacity to stand ones ground and protect identity on the Cape Flats, Cape Town (Jensen, 2008). In other words, violence then often becomes a way of being within these bounded spaces; and crime becomes a means to an end, particularly where youth might have limited access to legitimate job prospects which would enable them to aspire to create a meaningful future in conventional ways (Foster, 2012; Winton, 2005; Anderson, 1999). Daiute (2010), however, cautions that we not view violent offending merely as a process of passive reproduction; but acknowledge the agency of youth in the choices they make.

#### **3.2.4.1 Agency**

Navigation, by definition, necessitates agency. However, agency is a difficult concept to define as there are many variations across disciplines (Fleetwood, 2016; Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Whilst not within the gambit of this study to

engage in a detailed discussion, we do need a working understanding of agency. Hitlin and Elder (2007) suggest an approach that views agency as being about individual action within the context of their immediate environment. Whilst much of what we do as humans is habitual, often the result of internalised social norms, this is not always the case within the flow of activity. Choice is often required in activities to solve problems, perform, identify or navigate relationships in order to maintain or further our place within "... institutions and structures" (Hitlin & Elder, 2007:185). Garbarino (2015) however argues that choice takes place within a context that influences the options available at any given moment. Developmental characteristics, such as immature decision making in adolescence and emerging-adulthood, temporal horizons of the individual (such as terminal thinking) and external realities of a continuous threat (be that physical and/or economic), radically narrow the agentic field of options (Garbarino, 2015; Hitlin & Elder, 2007).

### **3.2.5 Gangs: an alternative social institution**

Research on youth perspectives on joining gangs suggest that young people do so because the gang provides an avenue for the fulfilment of a variety of needs. Key among these are: social recognition and prestige (significance); a sense of belonging usually created through the use of unconventional and exclusionary communication codes, signs and symbols; the opportunity to generate an income through involvement in the drug economy (where violence is often the dominant currency); an opportunity for unconventional success; protection from the threat of violence; and access to rites and rituals through which to achieve a masculine identity characterised by toughness, aggression and violence (Pinnock, 2016; Owen & Greeff, 2015; Winton, 2012; Cruz, 2010; Jensen, 2008). Quoting Jenness and Grattet (2001), Hagedorn (2007:23) also argues that where gangs are social institutions, they provide their "... members with a basic construction of reality so that the way [in which] a particular activity is organised seems obvious, natural and appropriate." From this perspective then, gangs become a developmental and career path for some young men, legitimising their engagement in gang-related activities as a means to access and acquire power, wealth, success and significance which they may view as having been denied to them by society. In addition, gangs in Cape Town are a major access point for guns (see chapter 2) and guns are a contextually critical navigational tool. They are viewed as a symbol of

power, masculine identity and strategy for achieving the goals of respect and safety. In contexts where violence in interpersonal conflict have been normalised to an extent, the accessibility of guns radically increases the risk of lethal violence (Garbarino, 2015; Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998; Shapiro et al., 1997).

### **3.2.6 Navigating the Police**

According to Jensen (2006) the state institution with which young men on the Cape Flats most frequently engage with is the police. The literature points out that within marginalised communities there is often a complex, even paradoxical relationship with the police. A belief that police are necessary is juxtaposed by a low level of trust in and a negative opinion of the police (and other state institutions) (Wilkinson et al., 2009; Jensen, 2006; Winton, 2005; Fine et al., 2003). For example, Winton (2005) reports that youth in Guatemala considered the police the most negative institution along with the gang. Similarly, as noted in chapter 2, there is a long history of antagonism with the police in the community. Other research has found that there was a high degree of scepticism as to the ability and/or willingness of the police to resolve conflicts and therefore residents often took matters into their own hands (Super, 2016; Wilkinson et al., 2009). In addition, research done within marginalised groups, in various places, including South Africa, report experiences of excessive use of force, brutality, harassment and corruption within the police force. Police violence then becomes a part of the community violence that young people experience (Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008). Consequently, the police are then sometimes viewed as an opposing force; another agency competing for legitimacy in the community. Young men may therefore actively engage the police in conflict in order to assert their own legitimacy or as a rite into manhood (Zilberg, 2011; Jensen, 2006).

### **3.2.7 A war zone mentality**

Through their everyday lives, marginalized youth can accumulate experiences of violence and embody it in a way that is emotionally numbing. In addition to spatial entanglements, violence, regardless of position, then becomes trivialized (Henriksen & Bengtsson, 2018). Cahill (2000) posits that in communities plagued by chronic violence, many youth have learnt to navigate public spaces in the community without normalising the violence that occurs. However, for a significant number of youth the

spatial entanglement of violence is a reality that shapes "... the everyday lives and dispositions of marginalized youth." (Henriksen & Bengtsson, 2018: Abstract). For Garbarino (2015) this is a war zone mentality.

### 3.3 FRAMING YOUTH VIOLENCE

Youth violence has largely been conceptualised on an individual level within a framework of deviance, on a continuum of anti-social behaviour that also includes smoking, drinking and stealing (Morgado & Vale-Dias, 2013; Van der Merwe et al., 2013). Whilst Morgado and Vale-Dias (2013) acknowledge that the concept of deviance or anti-social behaviour varies across time and culture, several scholars have contended that the labels anti-social and deviant are often racially and socio-economically skewed (Dill & Ozer, 2016; Alexander, 2012; Foster, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2009; Payne, 2008; Jensen, 2006). Dill and Ozer (2016:538) go on to argue that "... these frames may label youth of colour in high-risk neighbourhoods as deviant when in fact their developmental trajectory and related decisions and strategies are responsive and agentic according to their contextual realities." Similarly, Diamond et al. (2013:100) posit that the problem with the term deviance and/or disorder is that it locates the problem in the person and in the past thereby ignoring the impact of "... real and *external* environmental factors in the present."

I concur with Dill and Ozer (2016) that taking a position against pathological labels is not dismissing the detrimental and destructive effects of violence and a violent context. Instead, as Roach (2013:154) argues, where young men are navigating a world in which "... safety, justice and social reciprocity are rare or transitory," their behaviour, including aggression and violence, can be normal or adaptive reactions to an abnormal context. In addition, Crenshaw and Garbarino (2007) draw our attention to the reality that many young people who are considered to be violent have suffered repeated traumatic loss and that this loss has rarely been acknowledged by the adults in their lives nor have the losses been grieved by the youth themselves. This cumulative and unresolved loss often results in what Anglin (2014) refers to as pain-based behaviour. In addition, Gilligan (1997) argues, from his experience as a prison psychiatrist, that the root cause of all forms of violence is shame, and it is mostly hidden. Garbarino (1999) has persuasively argued that when rejection at home is mirrored in society through racial and class exclusion it can lead to a toxic shame that often underpins the

motivation for violence in young men. Scheff, Daniel and Sterphone (2018) concur with this view, suggesting that this hidden shame can produce a recursive loop of violent revenge, especially within cultures of hyper-masculinity.

What this suggests is that if the psychosocial consequences of living in “... pervasively and immediately violent contexts ...” are taken into account, then an anti-social or deviant nomenclature may not be the most apt or helpful description when it comes to understanding and even designing intervention strategies (Swartz & Scott, 2014; Benjamin, 2014; Stevens et al., 2013:76; Roach, 2013; Gilligan, 1997).

### **3.4 INTERVENTIONS IN CONTEXT**

Several scholars have noted that interventions developed in response to violence, have often demonstrated a tendency towards the criminalisation or pathologizing of marginalised youth of colour. This criminalisation has often led to a repressive security approach, which has for example, seen mass incarceration in the USA and other countries. On the other hand, a pathologizing approach has sometimes led to a problem-to-be-solved orientation; thereby overlooking the potential role that the community can play in driving change. An extensive review of the literature suggests that the dominant approach in intervention strategies, with regards to youth violence, continue to be focused in criminal justice orientation and more recently it has started to incorporate public health (Mitton, 2019; Heitzeg, 2015; Alexander, 2012; Payne, 2011; Welch, Price & Yankey, 2002; Pain, 2003).

#### **3.4.1 Criminal justice**

As described in Chapter 2, the literature has argued that repressive approaches to youth violence, be it in South Africa or elsewhere, are often the default political response to youth violence. Intervention, therefore, focuses on a punitive suppression of violence through targeting suspected violent actors. We know from Chapter 2 how this approach has often intensified violence rather than reduced it. Furthermore, incarceration rates tend to increase under repressive and punitive approaches. And yet incarceration has not demonstrated evidence as to its efficacy for making society safer or as an effective means for rehabilitation. Instead, the evidence is overwhelming as to its negative effects on individuals and communities (Gould et al., 2017; United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2007). This is perhaps even more pertinent in contexts of poverty, inequality and violence, for as Reguillo (in Winton, 2012:146) writes, "... when death, instability, uncertainty, hopelessness and detachment become rooted as everyday experiences punishment by example is irrelevant ...".

In an attempt to counter this repressive approach, South Africa's constitution and bill of rights has underpinned a pursuit of alternatives to the repressive and violent way the youth have been dealt with previously. The past two decades have seen the development of "... a comprehensive framework of laws and policies ..." to guide actions and strategies in this regard. Most notably is the Child Justice Act of 2008 (Gould et al., 2017:10).

The Child Justice Act was legislation aimed specifically at dealing with the procedures and processes for children (under 18 years of age) in conflict with the law, to end harsh punishment and reduce contact time with the criminal justice system. There is abundant evidence that the deeper children get involved in the formal criminal justice system, the more likely they will end up living a life of crime. The Act is underpinned by a restorative justice philosophy and emphasizes that wherever possible children must be diverted away from the criminal justice system, with the purpose of meeting the needs of the child and encouraging reintegration into family and community (Singh & Singh, 2014; Clark, 2012; Terblanche, 2012; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2009). Diversion programmes are one of the key strategies to achieving this goal. These programmes are meant to facilitate participation in appropriate education and rehabilitative activities whilst promoting the dignity and self-worth of the youth. However, although there are a number of diversion programmes on offer, by Government and organisations, such as NICRO, there are still an insufficient number of available programmes, especially those targeting violent offenders. Furthermore, a critique of many diversion programmes is that they are often not specialised, meaning that youth with diverse needs and degrees of seriousness are placed together. This suggests a lack of capacity or willingness to conduct rigorous assessment so that the specific needs and circumstances of the youth are considered (Singh & Singh, 2014; Badenhorst, 2012; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2009). Van der Merwe and Dawes (2013:358) offer a table of principles for effective diversion programmes. This includes matching the risk levels of the offenders, focusing on the relevant needs, a responsive

group of implementors and to be located as close to the community as possible. Furthermore, whilst there is room to extend the application of the Child Justice Act to the age of 21 there is even less available for this age group cohort in terms of access to resources related to prevention, diversion or protection (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). Incarceration then becomes the mean. With the lack of diversion programmes for violent youth, the Child Justice Act stipulates that children should not be incarcerated but kept in secure care facilities. However, the evidence suggests that many of these facilities are a form of incarceration in practice (Hansungule, 2018; Singh & Singh, 2014). Consequently, young and emerging-adult offenders are then often exposed to traumatic conditions that can mirror much of their lived experiences including that of "... coercive and abusive interactions with adults ..." (Perry et al., 2018:831).

### **3.4.2 Public health approach**

Over the last four decades a public health approach has become the dominant violence prevention framework outside of criminal justice. It is a central strategic framework for the WHO (Mitton, 2019; Ward et al., 2012). The public health approach embraces a social ecological lens and thus has identified a host of causal risk factors and protective factors at different systemic levels to guide prevention. To that end it uses the public health prevention standard of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention to guide intervention strategies.

*Primary prevention addresses risk factors associated with violence in the general population. Secondary prevention focuses on sub-populations with risk factors for future violence either as victims or perpetrators. Tertiary prevention attempts to intervene with those already engaged in violent behaviour (Abt, 2016:272).*

Mitton (2019) and Kinderman et al. (2013) caution that whilst the public health approach counters the more repressive security-oriented approach, a disease emphasis model risks overlooking the larger structural factors and the social meaning implicit in acts of violence. Therefore, I concur with Lykes (2010) who argues, that if our long-term goal is transformation it will require an approach that integrates a focus on the structural realities of the socio-economic context into intervention strategies.

Several systematic reviews and meta-analyses have been undertaken to discern what the literature is saying about what works in violence prevention and intervention. Studies vary quite widely in terms of focus and location (developing countries, countries in which armed conflicts have or are taking place and, in the USA) thus making it difficult to establish a generalised picture. As a whole, though, these studies suggest that there are programmes that are promising or have demonstrated moderate success (Brown, de Graaff, Annan & Betancourt, 2017; Atienzo, Baxter & Kaltenthaler, 2017; Matjasko et al., 2012). Limbos et al. (2007) found that intervention strategies appear to be more effective when they move from primary through to tertiary levels. Abt (2016) concluded from his review that whilst a few strategies demonstrated clear efficacy, their effectiveness cannot be viewed in isolation from other strategies. This view is supported by Van der Merwe and Dawes (2007) who posit that single component interventions demonstrate no effect or can even aggravate the challenges. Examples of single component are Wilderness programmes (if used in isolation to other strategies); and deterrence interventions, such as ‘scared straight<sup>3</sup>’, which we are told has the reverse effect and increases the targeted behaviour (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012; Garbarino, 1999). Van der Merwe and Dawes (2012) argue that Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) is considered by many scholars to be the most responsive and effective intervention with young violent offenders. MST is an intensive and comprehensive intervention that requires a psychologist to work closely with the identified individual and their family and school. Whilst there is empirical evidence supporting MST, a systematic review of MST studies by Markham (2018) found that the results were mixed and has raised concerns about how MST is used in different cultural contexts.

### **3.4.3 The challenge of resource distribution**

What is widely acknowledged by scholars is that the best and most comprehensive responses to youth violence are expensive. However, it has also been shown that these programmes are also more cost effective than incarceration (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). The challenge though is resource allocation or distribution. In many countries the most vulnerable communities are often the most under resourced with a

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<sup>3</sup> Usually entails visiting prisons where youth are exposed to conditions and stories about life in prison from inmates as an attempt to ‘scare’ youth away from criminal behaviour.

dearth of human, material and financial resources (Payne, 2017; Gould, 2015; Schoeman & Thobane, 2015; Ward et al., 2012; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2007). It is argued by activists that the problem lies in the lack of social and political will to drive change (Gould et al., 2017; Sood & Berkowitz, 2016). Indicative of this is the amount of resources invested in private and public security, that was close to R200 billion in 2016. In comparison only R9 billion was invested by the government in prevention during the same time period. As Gould et al. (2017) have pointed out, for all the investment made in safety and security it has not delivered the intended reduction in violence (Gould et al., 2017; Super, 2016).

There is a growing number of community located organisations that are working holistically and across sectors in some of the most vulnerable communities in Cape Town such as: Safe-Hub, a football-based prevention and intervention targeting at-risk youth in Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and more recently, Manenberg; CASE (Community Action towards a Safer Environment) a broad-based response working across multiple spaces of violence in Hanover Park; and REALISTIC, a Gugulethu based organisation offering services to at-risk youth and ex-offenders. However, none of these organisations appear to have programmes specifically aimed at violent youth which, again, may be due to a lack of resources.

#### **3.4.4 Silence of the beneficiaries**

To what extent have the interventions taken into account the lived reality of youth, their experiences of violence, loss and trauma as shown in the literature? Rich and Grey (2005) have suggested that the lived experience of marginalised youth, such as the presence of the code of the street, must be incorporated into prevention strategies so as to provide accessible alternatives since it is to the same context to which the youth must return.

While a great deal of data exists about violence and the nature of violent acts committed by young people, the reflections and insights of the impact of their social context on their actions and their experiences and the views of the criminal justice system and intervention programmes is missing (Gould, 2015; Muntingh & Gould, 2010; Ward & Bakhuis, 2010). Furthermore, recent studies point to the fact that in the research and development of interventions the voices of intended beneficiaries of

these programmes are often further marginalized or even silenced (Benjamin, 2014; Daiute, 2010; Muntingh, 2008; Wilkinson et al., 2009). I hold that the assertion of Daiute and Fine (2003) still holds true, that there is a critical lack of scientific research that reflects the perspectives of young violent offenders themselves. Fraser (2013) concurs and argues that there is a dearth of research that explores the experiences and social meanings of violence and gangs for youth. Examples of such research includes Winton's (2005) exploration with Guatemalan youth who pointedly observed that repressive policies do not work and advocated for more rehabilitative processes; and Payne (2008) who engaged in participatory action research with local street identified men to conduct inquiries into the lived experiences of people in the community. Therefore, what is needed is to move beyond conceptualisations of deviance or anti-social behaviour to ones that engage the offenders' perspectives (Daiute & Fine, 2003). Denzin (2016:12) sums it up well when he writes:

*Programs must always be judged by and from the point of view of the persons most directly affected ... [people] mistake their own experiences for the experiences of others. These interpretations are then formulated into social programs which are intended to alter and shape the lives of troubled people ... But often the understandings that these programs are based on, bear little relationship to the meanings, interpretations, and experience of the persons they are intended to serve. As a consequence, there is a gap or failure in understanding ... The programs do not work because they are based on a failure to take the perspective and attitude of the person served ... The perspectives and experiences of those persons who are served ... must be grasped, interpreted and understood.*

### **3.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have discussed the effects of growing up in an urban war zone. The chapter started by examining what the literature says about the effects that the environment has on human behaviour and functioning, with a focus on the effects of continuous exposure to violence. The next section explored what the literature has said on navigating contexts of violence. It showed how navigation is a process that is impacted even before conception and is shaped by developmental processes in a particular social setting. Significant in the discussion was the role of the various social

institutions, conventional and unconventional, in the lives of young people. The discussion then examined how the literature has framed youth deviance and questioned whether such a nomenclature is helpful in contexts of ongoing threat. The chapter ended with a look at intervention, how it is dominated by a criminal justice or public health approach. It concluded by noting the problem of resource distribution and how the voices of beneficiaries have largely been ignored in the development of interventions.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to create a space for the voices of emerging-adult males to be heard, those who have previously engaged in acts of violence and who have had experiences with formal and informal intervention programmes or processes. I worked from the assumption that these young men would be able to provide a critical and nuanced perspective on the social dynamics that had influenced their choices and ways of being. In addition, I was of the view that they would be able to provide valuable insider knowledge and insight into the impact the intervention programmes and processes in which they had participated, had had on their lives.

The study was conducted in the community of Duineveld, in Cape Town, South Africa. Duineveld is a low-socio-economic urban community situated in the area of Cape Town, known as the Cape Flats. It is often described in the media as, "... [a community] living under the constant threat of gang violence, [and is considered] one of South Africa's most dangerous places [to live]" (Tswana, 2017: online). The literature often considers this kind of neighbourhood as being socially disorganised, however, I aligned with the approach that considers communities such as Duineveld as an urban war zone (discussed in Chapter 2). Garbarino (2015) proposes that using the analogy of a war zone is a means of understanding people's ways of being and the choices they make within the context of ongoing violence [I have discussed this in greater detail in Chapter 3] I am of the view that failing to attempt to understand the complex and nuanced dynamics at play in the community, limits a richer understanding of the context in which we do research.

. Having worked in this and other similar contexts, I align with Payne's view (2008, 2017) that there is a need to move away from a purely pathological discourse when thinking and speak of young men who live in violent contexts to a discourse that acknowledges the lived reality of navigating daily threats to one's life. Even though a substantial body of literature exists around the phenomenon under study, a review of the literature points to the relative silence of the voices and first-hand accounts of the

experiences and perspectives of the young people who navigate these spaces. I concur with McIntyre (2000:123) that it is important to create spaces for these voices to emerge as "... [young people] spend a good deal of time surviving violence while negotiating the psychosocial, economic, raced, gendered, classed and sociocultural borders that inform and influence their lives."

I have had extensive experience working with young people in contexts similar to the one in this study and I have found that there is an often-ignored wealth of indigenous knowledge that could make a meaningful contribution to the development of effective and sustainable interventions. A consequence of this is that, there is often a gap between interventions seeking to steer youth away from offending behaviour and the realities that they must navigate in their community of origin.

This study, therefore, sought to engage with emerging-adult men on their perspectives of their lived reality and the violence, crime and interventions they had been exposed to. It sought to create a space in which the researcher could critically reflect with the young men on these interventions and the value they had had in assisting them to navigate life in their neighbourhood. In addition, I hoped that by creating safe spaces to reflect together we could generate knowledge that could inform policy, practice and intervention strategies, including my own knowledge and practice. Throughout the research process, I remained cognisant that the complex nature of violence in this context requires "... nuanced and context-relevant intervention strategies [that promote] sustainable social, economic and human development to redress the effects and to address root causes [of violence]" (Lykes, 2010:239).

## **4.2 THE FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH**

The way we make sense of the world directly affects the way we, as individuals or groups, interact with the people, places and spaces in our lives (Daiute & Fine, 2003). The focus of this study, therefore, was on how the meaning-making of emerging-adult violent offenders influenced their experience of intervention programmes and the value they had (or didn't have) on their lives. In addition, it was an opportunity for me to critically reflect on my own work as a practitioner. I was guided in the research process by my primary research question: **How has the meaning-making of emerging-adult violent offenders influenced the value of interventions in their lives?**

In order to facilitate a fuller engagement of the research focus I also used the following questions:

- How has growing up in an urban war zone shaped the meaning-making of emerging-adult violent offenders?
- How did they interact with the intervention space in which they were participants?
- How effective were the interventions for navigating their real-life contexts?

#### 4.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Early in my work within correctional facilities I was asked a question that set me on a trajectory to questioning what I was doing as a practitioner in that prison space. Following a discussion on a recent incident in the prison, one young man asked without malice, “What would you do [if you were in my shoes]?” This caused me to reflect deeply on *what*, *how* and *why* I was doing what I was doing. At the same time, attempts by myself to follow up with those who had been released from prison, brought me face to face with the stark reality of the challenges they were confronted with in navigating the world to which they had returned. This often left me feeling powerless and hopeless. Confronted with this reality I decided that in order to make a meaningful contribution I had to move beyond reflection to reflexive praxis. The first stage in this new journey was coming to terms with the way in which I had subconsciously bought into the dominant discourse about young men of colour from the Cape Flats.

My experience was not unlike a group of people, as recounted in Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson (2011:2), who observed a man behaving like a duck. What they were not to know, was that he was an ethologist assisting abandoned ducklings to be ducks and the ducklings were at that moment hidden from view. The authors use the story to illustrate that

*“... a phenomenon remains unexplainable as long as the range of observation is not wide enough to include the context in which the phenomenon occurs. Failure to realise the intricacies of the relationship between an event and the matrix in which it takes place ... either confronts the observer with something mysterious or induces him [sic] to attribute to his [sic] object of study certain properties the object may not possess.”*

This quote resonated with me particularly as I am constantly reflecting on the high rates of violence in South Africa and the struggle to manage it. I was curious about the agency of young men who are involved in acts of violence; how they navigated a complex and violent social terrain; and how the interventions they had participated in had influenced or impacted their lived reality. As I progressed on this research journey, I was confronted by the realisation that some of the programmes I had been involved in were not always contextually relevant to these young men's lived realities. It became clear to me that too often intervention programmes are done to and not with those who are deemed to have violated the laws of our society. Young men who have (and still are) engaged in violence in Duineveld, are active agents who have had to navigate a violent space that is complex and multidimensional (Lykes, 2010). It is for this reason that we need to "... pause, listen and allow ..." the perspectives of violent offenders in order to "... generate new ideas ..." about intervention and prevention strategies (McIntyre, 2000:126).

#### **4.4 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This qualitative, participatory inquiry set out to reflect on the experiences of emerging-adult violent offenders and the value of interventions for navigating their lives. It was delimited to a low-income, urban community on the Cape Flats. I chose to delimit the study to the demographic that I have historically worked with, that is males aged between 18 and 25 from the Cape Flats with a history of violence and having had an experience of interventions, which includes the criminal justice system. Global and local literature indicates that statistically, this age cohort (extended 15-29) are the most likely perpetrators and victims of violence (Ward et al., 2013).

This study was not a critical evaluation of programmes or the criminal justice system in South Africa. What it was intended to be was a platform for the voices of a marginalised group to contribute to knowledge. Even though qualitative research is often critiqued for its limited generalisability, Cannella (2008) argues that generalisability lies in the capacity to which research offers valuable lessons to other similar contexts and through provocation to entice the audience to reimagine their own context.

## **4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

To achieve the purpose of this study, a safe space, and an opportunity, was needed for emerging-adult male violent offenders to give voice to their lived experiences and their views on the value of intervention programmes within their context. I, therefore, sought to position these young men as the experts of their own lives and develop a research process that worked with them instead of for or merely about them. I also wanted to critically reflect on my own work through their experience of intervention strategies, programmes and processes that had been designed for them without their input. To that end I embraced a social constructivist, qualitative and participatory methodological paradigm.

### **4.5.1 Social Constructivism**

We can approach the practice of research as existing on a continuum. At one end is the traditional scientific position, that holds that knowledge is discoverable because there is an objective reality (can be observed); whilst on the opposite end is a more recent position that holds that there is no reality and, therefore, everything we know is subjective and ought to be questioned. Every researcher is situated somewhere on this continuum and it shapes their entire research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Crotty, 1998). I concur with Crotty (1998) that these positions on the nature of reality (ontology) and of where knowledge resides (epistemology) are conceptually linked and therefore emerge together in this study. What follows is a brief discussion on where I am positioned on this continuum.

The underlying premise of this study is that knowledge and reality are socially constructed. That is, how emerging-adult violent offenders have made sense of their context and themselves has been shaped through engagement with their social world, a particular cultural and historical milieu (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998). The social construction of reality paradigm is a position held by both social constructivism and social constructionism. Sometimes these are used interchangeably in the literature. Crotty (1998:58) has differentiated between the two, defining the former as "... meaning-making activity of the individual mind ..." and the latter as "... the collective generation and transmission of meaning ...". In Social Constructivism the focus then is on how the individual constructs meaning about their

experiences, identity and place using the social and cultural norms they were born into. This construction, in turn, is the social map that guides and interprets their social world, relevant for grasping how the young men in the study have made sense of violence, their context and intervention programmes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Vianna & Stetsenko, 2006; Crotty, 1998).

Approaches to the social construction of reality can also be plotted along a continuum. At one end are claims that reference points are nothing more than social constructions themselves, the opposite assertion is that there is in fact an objective reference point, even if it cannot be objectively described (Crotty, 1998; Sayer, 1997). My alignment with this latter perspective was informed by Freire (1993) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in which he asserts that poverty, violence and oppression are objective social realities. They are real with real world effects. It is a view supported by Scott (2005:638) who argues that, "... even if the personal and social world is constructed ... this does not imply that all we have left is negotiated meanings because ... negotiated meanings presuppose the existence of something." In addition, I concur with Patton's (2015) position that there are dominant constructions in society that serve the interests of those with power, be that social, economic and/or political. Therefore, even though there are a myriad of interpretations, experiences and understandings of crime and violence, it's the constructs from the margins, often disregarded, that need to be emphasised, such as those of the young men in this study (Payne, 2017; Lykes, 2010).

The Christian writer Paul says, "... we only see in part" (1 Corinthians 13:10). My alignment with that statement is what made social constructivism a relevant position. I was aware that I was bringing my own construct of violence into the social space whilst I sought to gain insight into how the young men from Duineveld have made sense of the violence within their social world. It was a desire to grasp the lived reality of the violent offenders that necessitated a qualitative approach. In addition, qualitative research is also considered the most common form of research used by constructivists (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Crotty, 1998).

#### **4.5.2 Qualitative Research**

The essence of research is inquiry and through curiosity to increase our knowledge about something we did not know beforehand. Polkinghorne (2005:138) states that "... the experiential life of people is the area qualitative methods are designed to study." Qualitative research is a form of inquiry that is founded on describing and interpreting lived experiences. So, whilst this study was interested in emerging-adult male violent offenders and interventions, it did not set out to discover the proportion of emerging-adult males who were violent or how many had attended intervention programmes (albeit interesting on its own). The purpose of this study considered the meaning-making of emerging-adult males in the context of violence and interventions. I, therefore, considered qualitative research as apposite for the purpose of uncovering and understanding how the "... gritty reality ..." of the lives of young men influenced their actions and ways of being (Gill, Butler & Pistrang, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014; Silverman, 2008:168).

In addition, my experience in community development has given me an orientation towards social justice which is aligned with critical qualitative inquiry. This is qualitative research that goes beyond description and interpretation of lived reality to that which is committed to advocating for change and is relevant for those who experience injustice (Caraballo & Lyiscott, 2018; Denzin, 2016). The pertinence of this approach was further emphasised for me during the research process when key informants and participants expressed how they had felt exploited by previous researchers, documentary makers and/or journalists. A basic assumption from a critical perspective is that "... all thought is mediated by power relations that are historically and socially constructed" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:10). Since I would be historically and locally situated within the very phenomena of violence that I would be studying, I required a methodology that complemented a critical qualitative research approach, such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Caraballo & Lyiscott, 2018; Denzin, 2017).

#### **4.5.3 Participatory action research (PAR)**

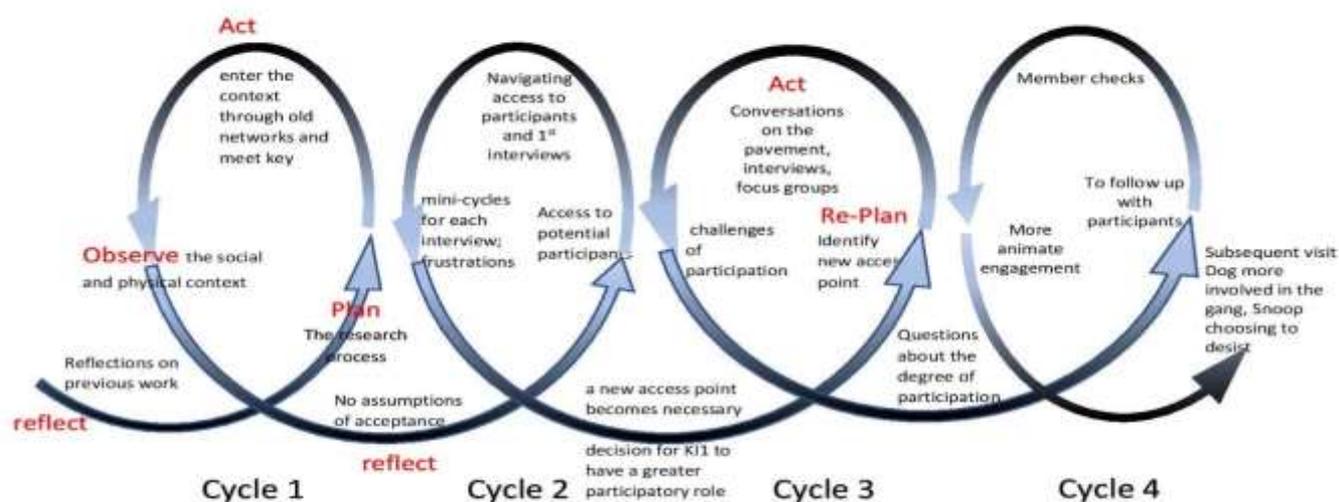
The historical roots of PAR found in community development and social change made it a pertinent methodological paradigm for the goals of this study. PAR prioritises the perspectives of marginalized, sometimes hidden, persons. In this study that meant the

young violent offenders, who have often been overlooked in the development of intervention programmes and strategies that target them (Herr & Anderson, 2015; de Finney & Ball, 2015; Foster-Fishman, Law, Lichty & Aoun, 2010). As such PAR can contribute to policy and practice within the field of interventions regarding youth violence because of its commitment to reflexive praxis (merging of knowledge and practice) through engaging with the experiences of the intended beneficiaries of such interventions (de Finney & Ball, 2015).

Whilst there are different forms of PAR across a range of disciplines and contexts, it is Freire-informed PAR that influenced this study. Emancipatory action lies at the core, which is the sustained empowerment and development of those who have been oppressed, marginalized and excluded (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). From this perspective, PAR views knowledge and action as two sides of the same coin, moving beyond a contribution to theoretical discourse to an explicit agenda for social change. Knowledge can, therefore, be defined as "... actions in pursuit of social justice" (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Grant et al., 2008; Swantz, 2008; Cammerota & Fine, 2008:6). In addition, PAR challenges who the holders of knowledge are and thus actively calls for the inclusion of violent offenders as participants in the research process itself (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott & Morrell, 2017; McIntyre, 2008; Fine, 2008). PAR recognises that the perspectives of the often excluded paints a more comprehensive picture of their social reality and the phenomena under study (De Vos et al., 2014; Brydon-Miller et al., 2011).

PAR is not a singular methodology; instead it is a multi-varied process that includes youth PAR (YPAR) and street PAR, both of which influenced this study. YPAR strongly includes young people as collaborators in research and thus "... gives legitimacy to the youths' experiential knowledge as a lens through which to define problems that have a direct impact on their day to day experiences" (Burke, Greene & McKenna, 2017:590). This is important, as Coser et al. (2014) remind us, that it is an age group whose perspectives have often been disregarded. According to Payne (2017), Street PAR is a methodology explicitly located in low-income contexts and with individuals who are associated with the street and justice system. Their lived reality has often been ignored or dismissed when it comes to policies and interventions.

The complex nature of the setting and phenomenon under study meant the process had to be responsive and flexible. This is what made the cyclical and emergent process of PAR so useful, since it is inherently adaptable. PAR functions on a spiral cycle of reflexive praxis. Whilst there are varied descriptions of this spiral process, common factors involve reflection, planning, action and observation as depicted in figure 4.1 (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014; McIntyre, 2008).



**Figure 4.1: My adaptation of the PAR spiral cycle from Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014.**

Ideally PAR should involve participants from the outset and in every aspect of the research that was not what occurred in this study. However, in the case of outsider-initiated research, participants can become involved in subsequent cycles of action and reflection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Grant et al., 2008; Swantz, 2008). In this study participation was challenging and far from straightforward. Some of the questions that informed subsequent cycles revolved around participation and the frustrations I felt within a dynamic unpredictable environment. It would be easy to make exaggerated claims about levels of participation. Thus, it is important to note that I have chosen to continue to use the term participant and not collaborator or co-researcher as indicative of the low-level of collaborative participation that ultimately occurred during this research process. Structural and material barriers to full participation were not easily overcome, since full participation is dependent on the quality of relationships and relationships require trust. Trust is a relational capacity that

has been undermined by the constancy of violence and poverty and through previous experiences of exploitation by researchers. Even though the process can be diagrammatically represented in a clean way, the process was in fact messy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; de Finney & Ball, 2015; Grant et al., 2008; Swantz, 2008). In addition, the unpredictability of violence, gang affiliation and spatial practices can, and did, limit the extent to which participants were partner researchers, which is not unusual in a PAR process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As such, how to measure the success of a PAR project is problematic. De Finney and Ball (2015) make the case that where there is not full collaboration the study becomes vulnerable to research **for rather than with** (participants). I was thus informed by Stringer (2014:23) who states that PAR "... seeks to develop and maintain social and interpersonal interactions that are nonexploitative and enhance the social and emotional lives of all people who participate."

An important principle of PAR is the growth of the participants, be that in understanding social processes, increasing their critical awareness of self in the world and/or the development of occupational and social skills (Herr & Anderson, 2015). And because this varied, it was challenging to know whether the study was benefitting all of those involved in the process, a central principle and outcome of PAR (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Coser et al., 2014) Whilst I could not measure the way in which the participants' lives were enhanced, I noted their appreciation of being able to freely communicate in a way that did not seek to sensationalise their lived realities. My engagement in the study has changed the lens with which I view the intervention approaches and spaces I navigate.

#### **4.5.3.1 Positionality and power in PAR**

In this process the researcher is considered an engaged participant and therefore inside the research. As a result, to achieve the goals of PAR I needed to acknowledge my position of power as it "... has an effect on what happens within the shared social space." (Burns, Harvey & Aragón, 2012:3). The interrelated concepts of positionality and power are foundational to PAR. Not being conscious of how I was situated or positioned would have compromised the integrity of the research (Reason & Bradbury 2008; Brydon-Miller, 2008; Marshall & Mead, 2005). Positionality is also important in qualitative research since the subjectivity of the researcher influences the focus of the research and how the data is generated and analysed (Lynch, 2008; Auerbach &

Silverstein, 2003). Farganis (1975:483) argues that "... all scientific knowledge about social reality carries with it, either implicitly or explicitly, certain ideological, political and evaluative convictions." What this meant for me in this study was acknowledging and remaining conscious that I did not come into the research context and process as a neutral being. Instead, I was someone who was historically and socially situated, as a white, middle-aged, middle-class, English speaking, tertiary educated male, who because of my experience in youth focused interventions had formed a set of beliefs about the research population (McIntyre, 2000). Taking a cue from Cannella (2008), I embarked on the research with the intention to position myself as a learner, not denying what I brought in terms of knowledge and insight and wanting to elevate the participants as experts of their context and experiences.

Clarke (2005) posits that positionality is not only about how I position myself but includes how the population group in the community positioned me. It was tempting to not pay attention to this as my past association with the community meant I 'knew' how they would position me. Historically white men in the community have often been associated with "die boere" (police) or addressed with the historical colloquial term "my laanie," a man, often white, considered to have access to resources. However, I became aware through a series of community interactions that I was in fact viewed by some as a journalist or documentary film maker coming to Duineveld to learn about gangs. It was reminder of what Lykes (1997) terms 'my situated otherness', that this was a dynamic context where I did not belong. As one person asked on seeing me in the area, "Is dji verdwaal?" [are you lost?] (Research journal 2:57).

As the researcher who initiated the research process and with my socially conferred identities, I also continually had to be wary of the accompanying power (Cannella, 2008). This wasn't easy and I often found that the participants and I would re-enact an old hierarchical pattern. This caused me to reflect on the assertion by Berghold and Thomas (2012:197) that marginalised individuals have often had "... little opportunity to articulate, justify and assert their interests." After all, I had determined the topic and the population group with whom I aimed to work, and I had a schedule for when the research process needed to end. These dynamics challenged my capacity to "... create a safe, generative ... space" for collaboration critical for authentic participation (Carabello & Lyiscott, 2018:7; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Cannella, 2008; Baum et al.,

2006). I worked to mitigate this through being present on a regular basis without enforcing my presence or becoming annoying and also reflecting on my interactions.

The issue of language in this process was important. Language is the means by which we express ourselves, form identity and make sense of the world. Language also has the capacity to determine inclusion and exclusion, a means to assert power (Giroux as cited in Swartz, 2008). This is particularly pertinent in the community where the lingua franca would officially be Afrikaans, but the Afrikaans spoken here was often viewed as an inferior or kitchen (kombuis) Afrikaans. The language spoken in the research community has more recently been referred to as Afrikaaps or Kaaps; this is seen as a move to acknowledge it as a dialect in its own right. Of importance in this process, is that the type of English I spoke was similar to the dominant language used in the media, business and political world; this initially and maybe continuously meant that I was viewed as occupying a position of power. I sought to reduce this imbalance by trying to speak Kaaps in my engagement with the participants in the interviews. I am not proficient in it, and often I missed the nuanced meanings associated with Kaaps; however, my attempt to engage with the participants in this way meant that they attempted to accommodate me in English or more conventional Afrikaans for most of the interview. I was mindful not to appear patronizing and took in good spirits the teasing that was a consequence of my efforts. In addition to the aforementioned language challenges, most of the participants in this study also coded language. One of the most commonly used coded language was known as 'sabella'; a coded language associated with the Number prison gangs. Whilst I had previously been exposed to this code, it was dynamic, and fluid and I came to accept the reality that the participants could use it to exclude me at any time they chose. It was unnerving but I came to appreciate it as part of authentic engagement.

#### **4.6 POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The population for this study was emerging-adult males in a context of ongoing violence. Although the young men in this study could fit into various definitions by their age and position, I chose to use the term emerging-adult, limited to 18-25, for various reasons (this is discussed in chapter 1). It was from this population group that I selected the emerging-adult males to invite into the research process. Qualitative research is purposeful about sampling, seeking to recruit participants according to a specific

criterion, those who can best offer insight into the phenomenon under study. There is also no definitive sample size, which can vary according to the research method chosen, but is usually kept small. The value in qualitative research is depth of knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014; Silverman, 2010). In order to engage with a sample that would best speak to the research focus, I used both purposive and snowball sampling techniques.

#### **4.6.1 Purposive Sampling**

The most common form of sampling in qualitative research is purposive sampling. This method works on the assumption that in order to provide rich data about a subject requires a select group of individuals, a purposeful sample. The motivation is that these individuals have the lived experience and knowledge needed to learn about the phenomena under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014; Silverman, 2010). The criteria for inclusion in this study was emerging-adult males who had a record or reputation for being violent offenders and resided in the Duineveld community; having had some experience of intervention programmes or processes that may or may not have included the criminal justice system. I had initially steered clear of the word offender as I felt it was too limiting, since young people may not have a criminal record for violence. However, I concur with Fleetwood (2016) that the term offender is a broad concept that encompasses the criminalized and non-criminalized. In addition, Valdez and Kaplan (1999:215) makes the poignant comment that in "... ecologically dense [urban] communities ... there is not an obvious segregation of activities."

Ideally the criteria should have specifically included a focus on violence intervention programmes. However, my experience informed me that there is a lack of such programmes in the community and not all offenders have been formally defined as violent offenders. In addition, I view the criminal justice system as a form of intervention, since the department of correctional services defines its mission as "... the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders" (*Mission / Vision / Values*, Correctional Services 2019).

### **4.6.2 Snowball Sampling**

Since the criteria mentioned, describes a population group that would be unlikely to disclose themselves due to the nature of their activities, I chose to use snowball sampling (Petersen & Valdez, 2005). Snowball sampling is a form of purposive sampling widely regarded as an effective technique for accessing and including hard to reach population groups in a study (Waters, 2015; Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Petersen & Valdez, 2005). This method of sampling works through trusted social networks to engage with specific individuals that meet the criteria, who then in turn are asked to recommend other relevant individuals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Barbour, 2008; Petersen & Valdez, 2005).

### **4.6.3 The Story of Access**

Gaining access to the participants was challenging, I concur with Feldman, Bell and Berger, (2003) that access is a relational process where stability can never be assumed and therefore must go beyond initial contact to developing connection. From my experience I knew this would be important in the community, where outsiders are, with good reason, viewed with suspicion. This is especially so with hard to reach individuals. Across the research literature, trust is raised as a very important factor in the process of obtaining access (Waters, 2015; Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Feldman, Bell & Berger, 2003). Trust is hard to establish and easy to lose. This is even more so in communities with ongoing violence where trust has been compromised in relationships for several reasons (Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015). I did anticipate this and was aware, with some trepidation, that building trust would be a long process. In addition, I viewed negotiating access as iterative and understood that participation would likely be fluid for reasons such as scepticism and cynicism regarding my intentions and what was happening in the community at any given time.

There is no short-circuiting the process. However, having people in the community who could vouch for me and help me to communicate my intentions in language that was accessible to the potential participants, helped. My experience in working in this and similar communities made me very sensitive to the fact that who I approached to assist me to gain access would influence my credibility and access. Often people in the community have responded in a way that echoes the reflection of Coser et al.

(2014:733) that marginalised young men are often viewed through "... a problem-centred lens, as unmotivated, difficult, and unreliable, as well as drug users, delinquents, and school dropouts." It was through established networks of people in the community that I was able to access to key informants and participants. Key informants were individuals who gave insight, understanding and access into "... the complex cultural territory ..." of community (Roth & Bradbury, 2008:354). An example of this was the casual way in which the participants used the more complex coded street lingo to get one of the key informants to vouch for me and the safety of speaking in a group with people they did not know. Upon reflecting on what had happened, I came to realise that it was a process that I had probably overlooked many times because I had ascribed such interactions to the dominant as opposed to a contextual script of meeting someone for the first time.

#### **4.6.3.1 *An early and consistent obstacle to access***

At about the time I was working to identify potential participants, gang wars broke out in the area (see appendix 16). This meant that potential participants were limited in where and when they could move about. This then meant that I had to wait for a break in the conflict before I could meet with potential participants. When I did manage to meet with them, follow up interactions were complicated by the challenge of access to means of communication: all of the participants claimed that they did not have direct access to cell phones. Some of the participants provided me with a contact number of a family member or friend which I could use to contact them, I found that often the most effective way was to go to the places where they spent their time and to seek face to face interaction. In order to do this, I often needed to seek assistance from my community networks. Even that proved challenging because some of the young men who had agreed to participate had no fixed abode and moved around quite a lot during the day. In addition, most had no access to a diary and/or calendar which meant that dates and times were relative. Scheduling an interview at a certain time did not mean it would take place that way. Moreover, a few of the potential interviewees were picked up by the police even before interviews or focus groups took place.

#### **4.6.3.2 Meeting the first participants and an early snowball**

Despite initial challenges with the first few interviewees, they were keen to connect me with their friends who fitted the criteria. My first interviewee introduced me to a group of young men in the street where he grew up. There was high degree of wariness at the meet and greet, with probing questions from the group, especially around my intentions. I was subsequently informed that there had been two white men who had stayed briefly in the area, taking pictures and conversing with the young men, only for the pictures to end up in a publication without their permission. One member of that group made contact indicating that he was interested in participating.

#### **4.6.3.3 The Snowball melts**

After the initial success through the first interviewee, the second person introduced me to 3 of his acquaintances, all of whom expressed an interest in participating in the study. Shortly thereafter, one of them was arrested by the police. A second started the process and then withdrew and a third lost interest; I was informed by one of the key informants that I would be "... wasting my time on that one." (RJ2:44). Waters (2015:372-373) points out that "... it is not necessarily the case that rolling snowballs will continually grow and pick up speed ..." and when that occurs other approaches are required to open new access points. Geddes, Parker and Scott (2018) suggest that this means moving horizontally across social networks rather than recruiting vertically. John (KI1) offered to facilitate interviews in an alternative community where his credibility was strong. Because of the sensitive work he does in Duineveld, he was not willing to compromise his relational networks by unwittingly overstepping boundaries. At the time I seriously considered it because the blocked access was creating tension in terms of my timeline for completing the study. However, in consultation with my critical friend group and my supervisor, I decided that doing that would compromise the integrity of this study. It was at this point, that all I had read in the literature about the perils of doing action research became very real. I was confronted with the conundrum of numbers versus depth. Reflexive praxis became much more than a theoretical construct and I had to be much more creative and flexible in how I set about recruiting participants for this study. It is however important to note that I always sought to remain mindful of the ethical parameters of my study.

#### **4.6.3.4 Conversations on the pavement**

Whereas my initial access was gained through trusted individuals who vouched for me, going wider meant that this was not necessarily the case. I was given access to a new area in the community through a local pastor who has a long history of community engagement and with whom I had a long-standing connection. Whilst he facilitated the initial introductions, I did not experience the same level of trusted connection as I had when I was introduced into the space by the other key informants. The assumptions that the young men in that area had about who I was and what I wanted, meant a lengthy process and many informal conversations in which I allowed potential participants to freely question me, take time to vet me and then accept their right to refusal despite the lengthy engagement. They came, they listened. When I returned the following week three of the young men had chosen not to participate. A group of youngsters pointed out that one of them was trying to hide from me (much to their amusement). I told him there was no shame in it and it was entirely within his rights not to be involved. A subsequent conversation, with a man who turned out to be his dad, offered the explanation that they were concerned about what the others in the area would think about them if they were to be interviewed. In addition, John wondered if it was not a gang issue as often meetings are never considered neutral and you can be “*onder die krag*” [under suspicion] if you do participate (RJ2:35). This was a period in which I learnt the patience that was required in navigating the tension between establishing a degree of trust and acceptance of my presence with the demands of study deadlines. In addition, having my integrity and motives held to such rigorous scrutiny, caused me to reflect deeply on how I and the interventions I had previously been involved with, had been received by the intended beneficiaries of those programmes.

### **4.7 DATA GENERATION**

Data in qualitative research involves words, be they direct quotations from participants about their lived experiences or rich descriptions about observed life and behaviour. It can also include artefacts, documents or creations that express experience and feelings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). For this study I used the term data generation to indicate that knowledge is not collected but is co-constructed through social interaction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Barbour, 2008;

Vianna & Stetsenko, 2006). I concur with Gergen's (1985) view that the rich essence of qualitative research is that it is generative.

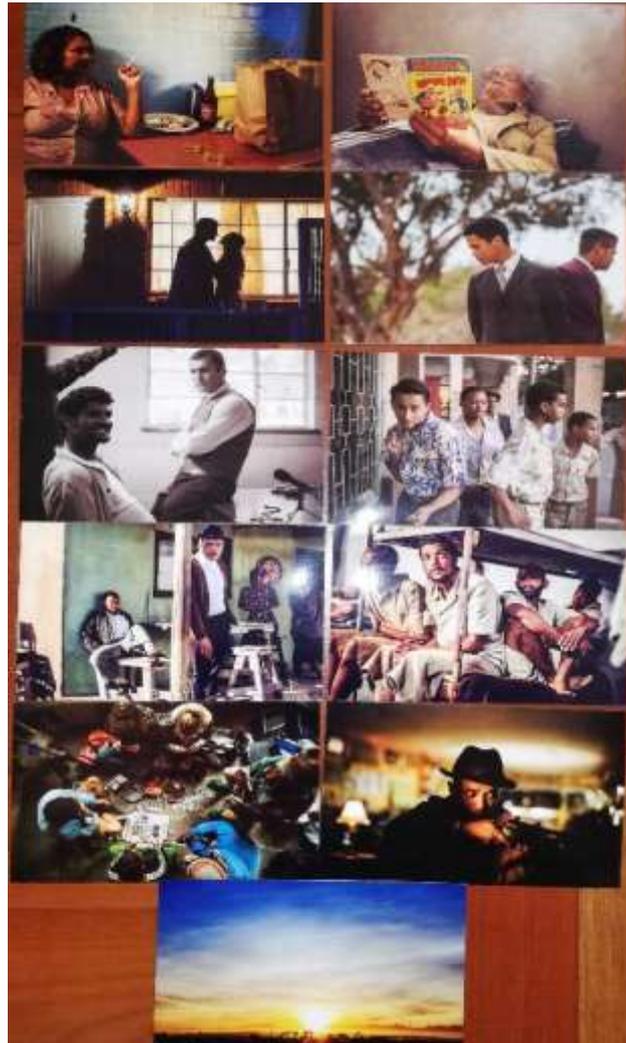
#### **4.7.1 Semi structured interviews**

In qualitative research semi-structured interviews are a means by which I could gain insight into the complex phenomena of violence in a specific community. It enabled an exploration of the experiences, perceptions and interpretations of the participants but was also flexible and responsive to the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014). I approached the interviews as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:2) describe them, that is as "... an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee." The interview schedule was, therefore, a guide for focus and not a directive (see appendix 3). I wanted to create the context of an everyday conversation albeit one with a purpose. The purpose of these conversations was to gain insight into the complex nature of violence and interventions through the eyes of the young men (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; De Vos et al., 2014). It is my contention from working in the field, and with youth in general, that even everyday conversations can be stilted and often require further stimuli to facilitate conversation beyond questions alone.

##### **4.7.1.1 Stimulating the dialogical space**

Stimulus materials are visual, verbal or written stimuli that are used with the aim of facilitating discussion or sharing, especially around topics that may be considered sensitive. These activities should create a space in which participants are able to control how they choose to manipulate the set of materials they are provided with. Doing this is also a means of providing the participants with a way to rehearse their socio-political voice in relation to the researcher (Barton, 2015; Punch, 2002). In the study, I used contemporary media and I offered a collage of photographs of scenes and behind-the-scenes moments from the movie-set of *Noem my Skollie* (see figure 4.2), from which the participants could choose and arrange in order to tell a story. I am aware that in doing so, I opened the study to criticism. However, my experience in working with this demographic, and a review of the literature, led me to the view that whilst it may have limited or even preordained the stories told, I had to open the space with stories and visuals familiar in the context. My aim was to establish rapport and to

open the space for communication rather than to simply dive straight into interview questions. As stated earlier, I was very conscious of being 'othered' in the context and also mindful that some of the participants risked a backlash from their acquaintances for participating in this study.



**Figure 4.2:** *Stimulus activity: full complement of photographs laid out above in a random order*



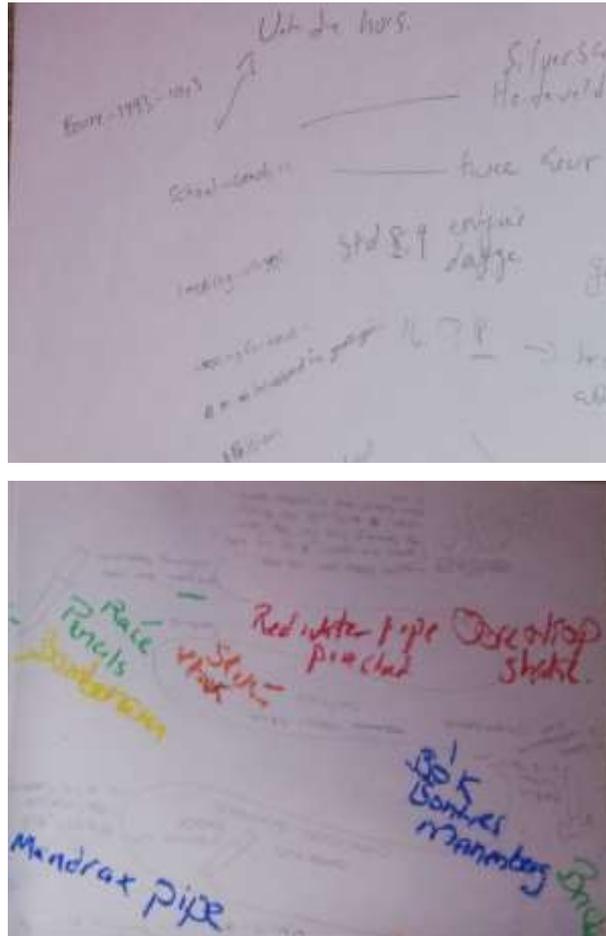
**Figure 4.3: Samples of photos and order as chosen by participants**

*(photos by Lindsey Appollis, official photographer on set of 'Noem my Skollie. Used with permission)*

#### **4.7.1.2 A snap shot of the participants' life journeys**

In addition to the photographs I used a variation of a life-map activity that I have used previously in a variety of youth settings, including correctional facilities. It is a process that requires multiple sessions and therefore, for the interviews I sought to mix it with Nelson's (2010) qualitative adaptation of the life history calendar. Life histories is a method of gaining insight into the lived experience of people and a life-history calendar can help with recall of events and experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Nelson 2010; Martyn & Belli, 2002). As with Nelson's (2010) adaptation, I offered a blank page in which I offered the choice of drawing or not, I also offered a template that would then be filled in (see appendix 4). During the interviews, it provided a focus that was a variation of the question and answer method; this was important as most of the participants had had a previous experience with a structured question and answer type conversations with legal people or social workers. Using this approach therefore allowed for more natural interaction and collaboration in the co-construction of the map and in creating a space for in-interview member checking. Some participants asked for

my assistance in making notations on the life-map. It is important to note that they did not expect me to help them make meaning of their experiences but merely to capture them. The result was often quite messy, even chaotic as reflected in the pictures in figure 4.4 below (see also appendix 5).



**Figure 4.4: Life-map activity samples**

#### 4.7.2 Focus Group

Focus groups originated as marketing research for surveys working with heterogenous group. However, in qualitative research, focus groups have been used quite widely with purposefully sampled groups, seeking to achieve in-depth collective and collaborative conversations about experiences (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). Focus groups are a way of generating qualitative data through informal discussion and have demonstrated a capacity to generate data that may not otherwise emerge through individual interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Liamputtong, 2015). This aligns with the assertion by Daiute (2010) that to understand people requires social interaction. An

example of this was the way in which the participants used coded communication to vet me and the other participants with one of the key informants in my presence. To the untrained ear the conversation sounded like polite conversation, the standard greeting script. The key informant informed me of this later. This experience gave me a fresh insight into the seemingly innocent questions that the young men had asked me previously. I had accepted this question as curiosity but later came to understand that this screening process was considered normal whenever an unknown or little-known person entered a space and sought engagement.

The logistics around convening the focus groups faced many of the same challenges as the individual interviews did. Gang violence, incarceration and daily mobility affected the availability of participants. For example, prior to one focus group session I was advised by a critical friend to cancel that day's focus group as he considered the situation in the community to be too volatile and thus potentially threatening for all participants, including me, but especially for those with any gang association (see appendix 17). Facilitating the focus groups, therefore, took place over a three-month period, during which I was able to facilitate two focus groups. It is important to note that each time I engaged with someone for the purpose of collecting data for this study, I worked through the consent form with them and reminded them that they could withdraw at any time. 6 out of the initial 8 interviewees had expressed a willingness to participate in the focus groups, however the number of participants who participated in each of the focus groups varied. There were various reasons for this such as arrest, fear of the gang volatility or, in some instances, an income opportunity that presented itself on the day of the focus group. The first focus group included 2 of the interviewees and a key informant who had become a significant participant in the process. The second group included 3 young men and I. Whilst a focus group size is usually 5 to 8 participants, Krueger and Casey (2009) posit that mini-focus groups (4-6 people) are not without precedence and may in fact provide a greater degree of comfort. In addition, the literature suggests that when conducting research with hard to access participants around sensitive phenomena, smaller groups may be considered safer spaces.

#### **4.7.2.1 *Breaking bread together***

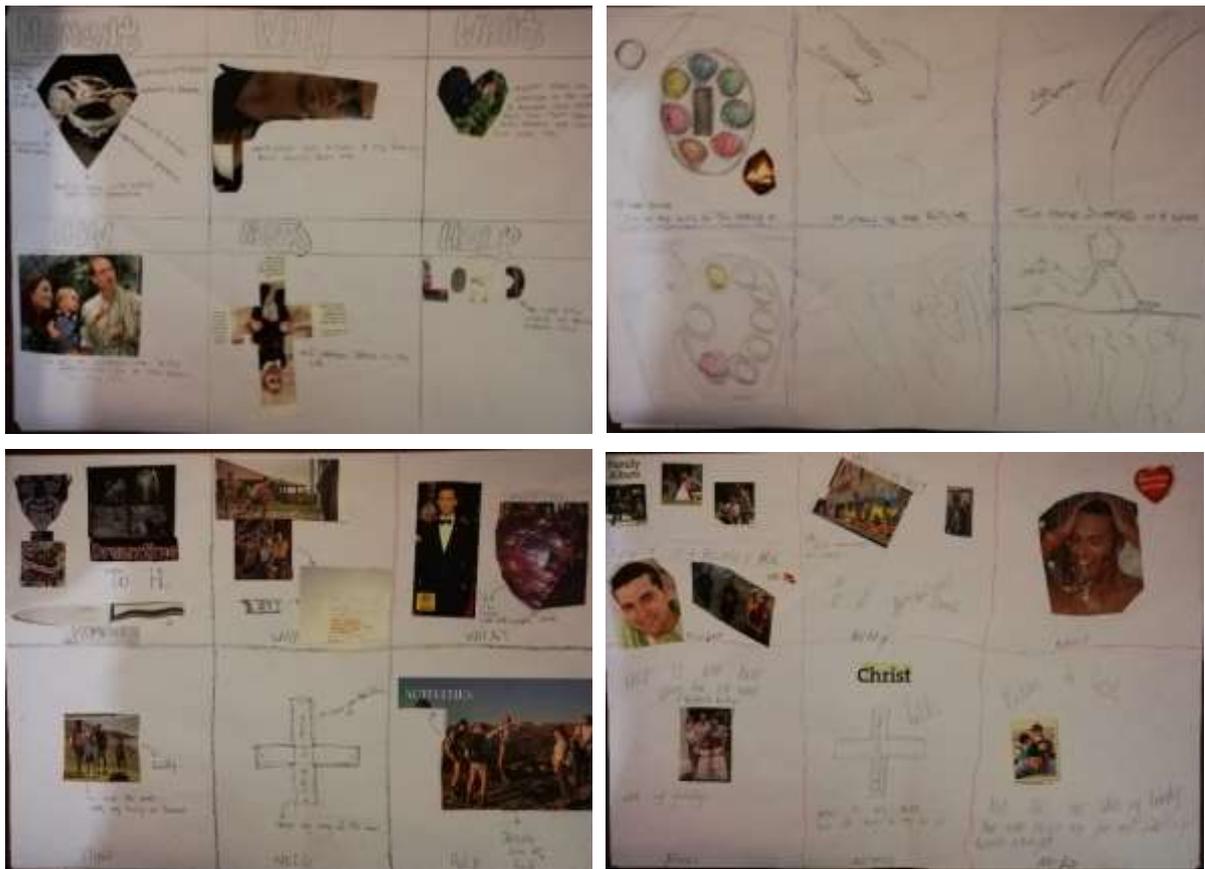
Meals are a global means for connection and for facilitating conversation and Krueger and Casey (2009) advocate for its use in focus groups. This can be used in different ways and at different points in a focus group and in consultation with the participants in this study; it was incorporated into the sessions. The meals were kept informal and also sought to reinforce the notion that participants had a choice in what they wished to share and how much they wished to share. To this end, the participants were encouraged to select from a small variety of fillings how they would choose to construct their rolls. They were also offered a variety of fruit and soft drinks. The meal and snacks also served to provide time to step away from the intensity of the conversations and participants often continued speaking but in a more light-hearted manner.

#### **4.7.2.2 *Storyboard***

A storyboard is "... a panel or series of panels on which a set of sketches is arranged depicting consecutively the important changes of scene and action in a series of shots (as for a film, television show, or commercial)" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Towards the end of the meal time I described a storyboard board by making use of the interview stimulus activity photographs to illustrate the process (see appendix 7).

My idea was that the storyboard would reflect a fictional story about the journey of change. I reflected that during interviews the theme of change was expressed through a variety of motivations. I proposed that we develop a storyboard looking at the journey of change, what it is and why and how it happens. The storyboard was used in a way similar to a projective technique in order to minimize vulnerability. Projective techniques create distance between the participants as narrators and their story (Daiute, 2010; Chase, 2008). However, the participants expressed confusion about why they needed to create a fictional story and expressed a preference for creating a storyboard based on the own experience. I was invited to share my story too, so I ended up facilitating and participating in creating space of shared vulnerability that caused me to reflect a great deal on what had brought me to this place in my life. By experiencing this process first hand, I was very aware of the vulnerability that participants experience in the space. Fortunately, I had spoken to my supervisor and critical friends about the possibility of this happening and therefore was particularly

mindful of how I might be influencing the process as it unfolded as well as when I did my data analysis.



**Figure 4.5: Storyboards**

In this process, each of us took an A2 sheet of card, divided it into 6 panels and created our storyboard using pencils, crayons, pastels, magazines, scissors and glue. Since the floor space was large each person had ample space to do their own thing and yet maintain a degree of intermittent conversation throughout. At the end of the time we each shared our storyboards with as much or as little detail as we wanted. The participants agreed to me audio recording the sessions and gave permission to use the storyboards they had created and shared (see appendix 7a for a sample). I later recorded my observations in my research journal as I had been a participant in both processes.

A final member checking gathering was held with those who had participated in various stages of the research. In the member checking conversation, we shared a local Cape Flats delicacy known as a Gatsby (see figure 4.6). I had initially suggested a local take away in the community to which none of the participants disagreed. However, John

(K11) suggested that we head out to a venue outside of the community. Once John made the suggestion, it seemed to give permission to the participants to acknowledge that they had been nervous about going to the local take-away as they did not feel safe to do so due to gang related allegiances. This experience again reminded me of the value of collaborating with a key informant in understanding the nuanced often unspoken code of engagement in the research context.



**Figure 4.6:** *A gatsby*

### **4.7.3 Research journal**

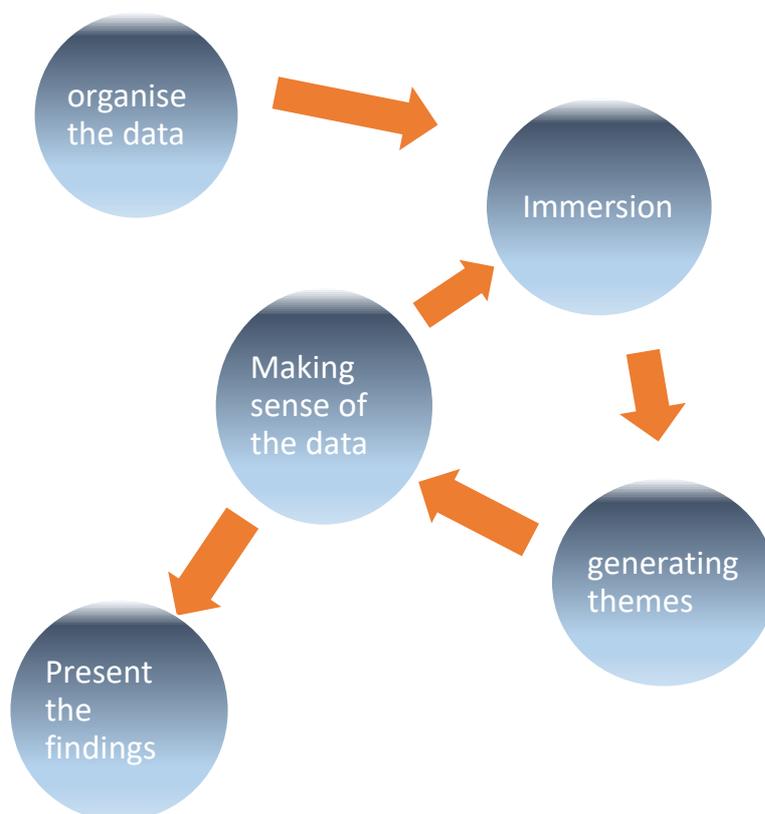
I kept a research journal from conceptualisation and throughout the research process. I used the journal to describe what I observed about my own feelings and responses and my observations of events and experiences in the community and during the interview and focus group sessions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Goldbart & Hustler, 2005). Polkinghorne (2005) notes that journal observations are a way to add to and bring clarification to data generated through the various moments of interaction.

## **4.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

The process of data generation itself does not answer the research question that emerges from analysing the data. In PAR analysis is iterative and forms part of the cyclical nature of action and reflection and should, in part at least, inform the next cycle of the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stringer, 2014). Data analysis is

about making sense of the data and allowing the findings of the research to unfold (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Flick, 2014). Patton (2015) is of the opinion that this is the most difficult aspect of qualitative research since there is no formula provided, only guidance given for the researcher.

Data analysis was a continual process of exploring and describing, making use of a research journal reflecting on my own meaning making through the research and analytical memos to inform the data analysis process (see appendix 18 for samples of analysis process) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In PAR, analysis is often a collaborative process however if it happens that way it can only be determined by the context and willingness of the participants to be part of the process. The difficulty and complications related to access to the participants made a strongly collaborative process impossible. So, whilst discussions about the emerging data were held with participants and with my supervisor, Herr and Anderson (2015) make the point that when writing the dissertation, the final analysis is still that of the student-researcher.



**Figure 4.7: Data analysis sequence**

#### **4.8.1 Organising the data in preparation for analysis**

I collected a large body of data, so creating an inventory of the data was central to the analysis process. Creating an inventory of the data generated is widely recommended in the literature as an important step for keeping a logical record, managing and organising data (Marshall & Rosmann, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, that meant keeping a log of activities such as interviews and focus groups; labelling and storing the audio recordings of the key informant and participant interviews and focus group sessions with pseudonyms to preserve anonymity; labelling, filing or storing the typed transcripts and generated artefacts; a research journal, voice notes and audio discussions with my supervisor and key informants.

#### **4.8.2 Immersion in the data**

Marshall and Rossman (2016:217) encourage researchers to think about "... data as something to cuddle up to ... [and] become intimate with." The first step in immersion was to transcribe the participant interviews myself, which is something Merriam and Tisdell (2016:200) recommend since it is "... another means of generating insights and hunches about what is going on in your data." I then read and reread the printed transcripts, listened and re-listened to the focus group audio in tandem with the artefacts.

#### **4.8.3 Coding and generating categories and themes**

Coding is the link between the data generated and meaning, as it is a way to arrange the data attributing meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). It was an ongoing comparative process in which I considered what I was listening to, observing and reading and in member check discussions with participants. I went back and forth between the various data sets noting repeating patterns, generating codes, themes and categories. (Saldaña, 2013; Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003;).

#### **4.8.4 Making sense of the data**

Making sense of the data was an iterative, repetitive and even messy process that involved constantly revisiting the data (see figure 4.7) and the context whilst also consulting and discussing with my supervisor, John (KI1), critical friends and some of the participants, where practical. This allowed me to reduce the data, analysing the

interview and focus group data thematically, connecting it to the social context. Souto-Manning (2014) reminds us that whilst narrative is the human tool for making sense of experiences and feelings in the social world, it is the social and historical context that gives it meaning. Therefore, it was important that I remained connected to the context throughout this process of analysis. It is through connecting their stories with the social and cultural context of Duineveld that gave me insight into the construction of social experience in relation to the research question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Chase, 2008).

I present the findings of this study in Chapters 5 and 6.

#### **4.9 ENSURING THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) trustworthiness is what gives a study its credibility and validity and thus offers the audience reasons to engage with the study and potentially apply the results. Due to the dynamic nature of reality, of context and human behaviour, traditional notions of validity, reliability and generalisability are not always possible. And yet the trustworthiness of a study is still an essential element to research. The question for qualitative inquirers then has been, how best to realise this (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015). From my review of the literature, what constitutes the trustworthiness of a study appears to be a contested terrain. As a novice researcher I found it challenging to find a compass that would help me navigate this research journey. For the purposes of this study I aligned with the suggestion of Merriam and Tisdell (2016) that the researcher focus on credibility, consistency and transferability in seeking to ensure the trustworthiness of a study. In addition, Marshall and Rossman (2011), recommend that ethical engagement throughout this study is also an essential factor that is needed to enhance the trustworthiness of the final product.

##### **4.9.1 Credibility**

Numerous scholars point to triangulation as an important factor in credibility. Patton (2015:674) argues that "... triangulation ... increases credibility ... by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's blinders." Triangulation in this study was achieved through a multiple methods approach that included key informant and

participant interviews, co-produced artefacts, focus group conversations, participant generated artefacts, observations and reflections recorded in a research journal. A second means of establishing credibility is through member checks. I conducted member checks often during the interviews to ensure I was hearing or understanding the participants as they had intended. After the focus groups I met with some of the participants and discussed with them what I was learning from the interviews and focus groups. It was one of my primary member checking measures. In addition to the aforementioned, I made every effort to be clear about my position and potential bias. In order to ensure that I continued to do this, I built in regular consultations with my supervisor and my critical friends (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011;). Brydon-Miller (2008:205) argue that a lack of awareness of one's own "... process and actions in the world ..." has the potential to undermine the integrity and ethical nature of respectful and interactive inquiry.

#### **4.9.2 Consistency**

This aspect of trustworthiness is about the consistency of the results in relation to the data. Traditional research requirements often centred around the replicability of the study. However, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, replicating qualitative research is not possible, even if it's by the same researcher, in the same context and with the same participants. People and contexts change or differ, and the interactive nature means even each interaction would differ. Hence, it is suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), that what becomes significant is to work towards developing consistency with the data that was generated.

The processes I used to achieve this consistency in this study included triangulation, clearly positioning myself as the researcher and ensuring a well-maintained audit trail. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) tell us that an audit trail is the means by which the process of the study is described, including decisions made during the study, activities used to generate data and the process of analysis. I did this through keeping a research journal in which I kept a record of all the events or incidents that affected the research process and over which I had no control (such as gang fights). In addition, I kept a log of data generation activities.

### **4.9.3 Transferability**

This is usually the question of generalisability or "... the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:253). Some argue that within the qualitative arena the onus should rest on the one seeking to apply the findings to their situation. On the other hand, some qualitative researchers argue against generalisability as a scientific value, since contexts vary so widely at a nuanced cultural and social level (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Cannella, 2008). Patton (2015) though suggests that there is room for the researcher to consider how their findings could be extrapolated to other contexts. Nevertheless, the way in which the findings are presented can offer the reader the opportunity to consider how the study's findings might be applicable to the people in their context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Cannella, 2008).

I used two strategies in this study that are applicable to ensuring transferability. The first is a detailed description of the setting (outlined in Chapter 2), the participants and the findings, with accompanying evidence such as relevant quotes (chapter 5). The second strategy was to carefully consider the study sample. Patton (2015) recommends a sample that maximises diversity; however, I used the option of a specific purposeful sample that may resonate elsewhere and/or contribute to knowledge on the issue of youth violence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

## **4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Patton (2015:706) makes the point that "... the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of those who collect and analyse the data." My trustworthiness as the initiating researcher is connected to my ethical stance and practice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethical research needs to be aligned with the basic tenets of respect for persons, to do no harm and to seek justice for and/or empowerment of those I work with (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These tenets are for the purpose of protecting the participants from deception and manipulation and to encourage researchers to strive to balance power differentials and engage with strategies that have the potential to develop the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Swartz, 2011; Creswell, 2014). It would be true to say that this is integral to PAR and to do otherwise is to undermine one's own methodology (McIntyre, 2008). To be

an action researcher I needed to embody these ethical values in the process and practice of the study rather than to only follow procedure (Brydon-Miller, 2008; Herr & Anderson, 2015). Brydon-Miller (2008:202) states that at the foundation of Action Research is "... a deep and abiding respect for persons as active agents of change."

My starting point then was a critical examination of self. I started with an extensive reflexive process of why I wanted to do this study, and, in the process, I was confronted with the question of what was in it for me. I spent a lot of time speaking to my supervisor and critical friends around this issue. This was particularly important because I critiqued other researchers who came and did research on (and not with) my research cohort. The notion of empowerment caused me to reflect on my beliefs and assumptions around the agency of the community and the participants. Since I worked in contexts similar to this, I had an insider perspective of how I would be viewed in the context. I entered the research space with no illusions of power as I knew that the power relations were very dynamic and fragile in the context. However, as the researcher, I would have the power to decide what I would choose to focus and report on. Marshall and Mead (2005:238) consider this reflexivity to be a foundational practice of and prerequisite to "... any engagement as an action researcher." This is especially so in this study where I was an outsider that was seeking collaboration with insiders, thus taking up a position inside the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Burns et al., 2012). Power relations in the context of this study also refer to the power differentials that existed in the various relationships within the community of interest, among the participants and between the participants and I. According to Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), ignorance of power could have distorted or silenced the voices of the participants and given credence to my own voice (in Swartz, 2011). It is a researcher's tension. I attempted to position myself as a learner through a position of respectful curiosity and as far as I could operate in mutuality with the participants (Cannella, 2008; Swartz, 2011). For example, I created space for participants to critique me on how I was communicating with them and to listen to their suggestions going forward. I also made every effort throughout the research process to scrupulously reflect on my thoughts and experiences in my research journal. I stated my position and power in the text and in honest conversations with my supervisor and critical friends (see appendix 19 for a sample of such a reflection).

McIntyre (2008) informs us that most PAR projects have a long life-span. However, this study was a temporally bounded study restricted by the demands of completing a post-graduate degree and therefore ethical considerations, though not in any way less important, did not need to factor in this longer time frame. However, that does not mean that it will not lead to a longer process in the future. Therefore, how I entered and engaged in the context has implications beyond an ethical review to that of ethical relationships. Research has a history of perpetuating injustice and therefore the onus was on me as the researcher to work towards a just research. This need to engage with ethical and just care only increased in significance as the key informants, the participants and other youth repeatedly shared their experiences and perceptions of having been exploited by researchers from outside the community (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Swartz, 2011; Creswell, 2014).

When considering how I would negotiate access to the community, I knew that I would have to approach a community leader who had credibility in the context and with whom I had had an established relationship. I approached him and discussed the concept and proposed research process with him. His affirming response offered me the impetus to be able to access the participants through him, including key informants and a community organisation that works with the population in question. I was careful to explain to each, the purpose and process of the study and asked them whether they would be willing to assist in accessing participants.

Burke et al (2017) point out that in marginalised spaces there is an emphasised need to negotiate the relational space due to the high levels of mistrust. In addition, Bergold and Thomas (2012) remind us that marginalised groups have been denied the opportunity to express and assert their interests. It was, therefore, incumbent upon me to be conscious about negotiating the space, creating opportunity for the participants to express their interests. The description of the informed consent process below must be seen in the context of regular relational engagement in the community.

At the outset I carefully explained the purpose and process of the research. One of the key informants, who had signed a confidentiality agreement (see appendix 10), had made himself available to explain this content, if needed, in the vernacular of the participants. However, it was often the case that another participant explained the detail and content. I informed them that it was for a degree I was doing through the

Stellenbosch University and acknowledged that the final product would have my name on it. This has caused me discomfort throughout the process as in PAR ownership of the knowledge should be shared. This was further problematised for me by becoming aware of the stories of exploitation that emerged at this time. I offered that I would acknowledge their participation and contribution to the knowledge generated in the study within the bounds of protecting their anonymity, through the use of the pseudonyms that they chose; and committed to consulting them for consent before any further future publications. I informed them that I would be asking them about their experiences and views on violence and interventions and that I would write it up for the university only. I let them know that all sessions would be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim but only with their permission. Two of the participants did not want the interviews recorded. Finally, I let them know that participation would be entirely voluntary and that there would be no payment involved. As a voluntary process I also informed them that they would be free to withdraw at any stage without fearing any consequences, which did occur. In addition to the verbal explanation I left them with a copy of the consent form with them whilst they made a decision as to whether they would participate or not (see appendix 9). It was interesting to note that after one of the young men chose not to participate, I was made aware of his consideration through a conversation with the young man's dad. It was through these small measures that I sought to give them the opportunity to practice asserting their interests.

Boser (2006) notes that the process listed above is an expectation for researchers to perform but it is hard to guarantee. As McIntyre (2008:66-67) argues,

*"... privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, minimizing risks, preventing exposure to danger, and ensuring a safe context for individual and collective reflection and action cannot be assured in a PAR project. This is attributable, in part, to the fact that people are social beings and thus cannot be restrained from either intentionally or unintentionally speaking about their life experiences to people outside the PAR process."*

Herr and Anderson (2015) argue that this should not be done at the cost of the integrity of the participants. Thus, although I sought informed consent from the participants before the interview, I revisited it again at each focus group since the dynamic of the

process and context meant it could not be determined fully in advance and thus had to be renegotiated on an iterative basis (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Barbour, 2008).

I informed them that the recordings and transcripts would be kept securely in my home office and on a computer with password protection. Where it was possible, I gave participants access to transcripts pertaining to themselves in order to allow their decision making on what they were comfortable with having included in the dissertation.

I also discussed before and after the interviews the potential risk of speaking about some of the issues. I cautioned them to change details such as names and locations when sharing experiences or events (Lambrechts, 2014). I told them that I would hold all information shared as confidential, unless a life was in danger or child abuse was involved, in which case I would be legally mandated to disclose. I informed the participants that I did have a practicing Advocate whom I would consult if I was uncertain about any legal issues pertaining to the study (see appendix 11). Furthermore, I was aware of possible adverse psychological reactions as a consequence of the process and I informed them of this up front. I also informed them that if they experienced emotional reactions as a result of the interview and wanted help, I could refer them to a psychologist or community-based counsellors who were available to assist them (see appendix 12).

#### **4.10.1 Emotional and physical safety of the researcher**

Patton (2015) argues that the mental health of the researcher is important for ethical research. My experience of working in the context and among the population cohort meant I was aware of the potential for violent conflict and was thus conscious of the need to monitor my own well-being and responsiveness to the experience of the participants. To that end, I had a session with a counselling psychologist after becoming aware of my emotional numbing in relation to the participants in the study (see appendix 14). In addition, I sought to ensure my own health through regular exercise, sleep and listening to the advice of critical friends or key informants as to the state of affairs in the community. For example, I postponed a focus group on the strong advice of a critical friend who was concerned about the volatility of gang violence that was at play at the time.

#### **4.11 SUMMARY**

This chapter described the research process from the point of its conception up to the presentation of these findings, discussed in chapter 6. As such it provided insight and justification into the choice of the research design and methodology in relation to a hard to reach population group, that being emerging-adult violent offenders. It included a description of the journey of access, the data generation strategies and tools used as well as the data analysis. The chapter was rounded off by a discussion on the trustworthiness of the study and the ethical process that was followed. The next chapter will introduce the participants and discuss the key findings of the study.

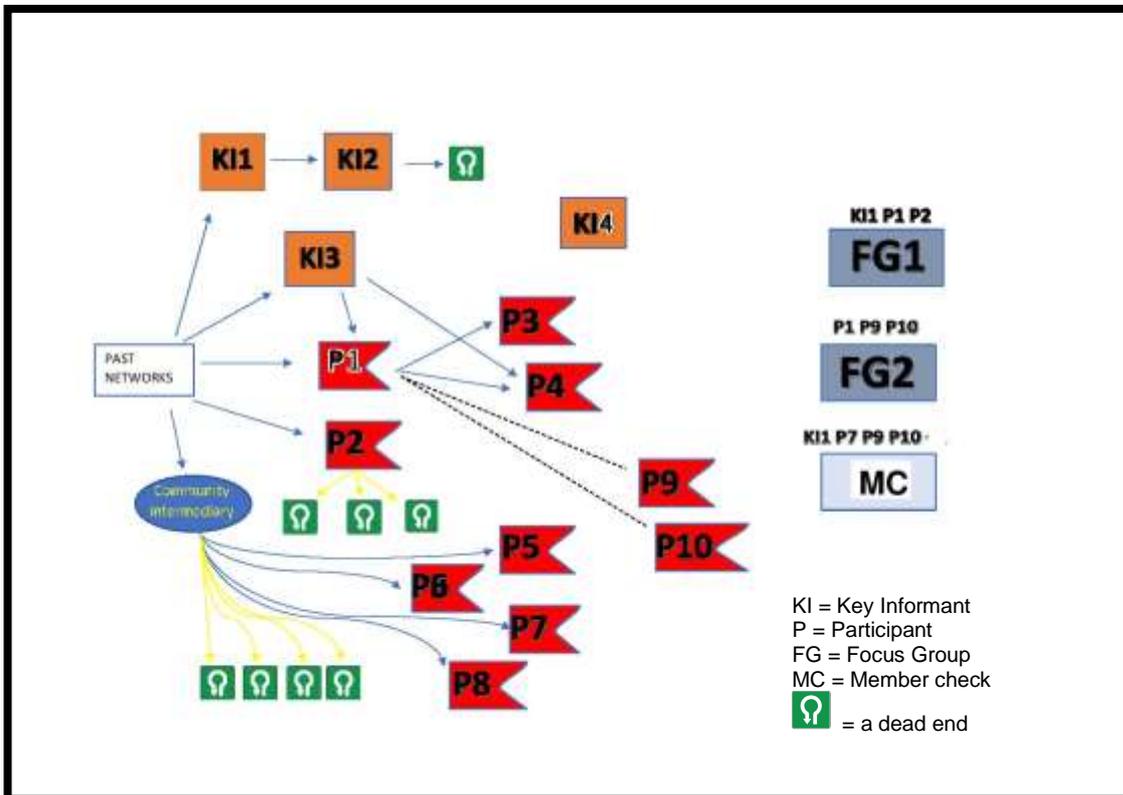
## CHAPTER 5

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY AND PRESENTING THE PARTICIPANTS AND DATA

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to engage in an authentic and participative manner with a population that is considered difficult to access. The participants in this study were emerging-adult males who had been, and in some cases still are, violent offenders; and who have experienced some form of intervention. These interventions may have been life skills and prevention programmes facilitated by non-governmental organisations, diversion programmes court-ordered processes or programmes delivered through the Department of Correctional Services. This study sought to collaborate with the participants in order to gain their perspectives on these interventions and how these intersected with their lived realities. In the process it created a space for the often silent voices of the beneficiaries of these interventions, to emerge regarding the relevance and value of the interventions for their lived reality.

As described in Chapter 4, gaining access to the research collaborators was a delicate and complex process that often felt like navigating a spider's web. My previous experience, as a community-based interventionist, had prepared me for the importance of becoming au fait with the dynamics at play in the context at any given time; in addition to this, I had to remain sensitive to the way in which my middle-aged, middle class, white male identity positioned me within the community of praxis. Moreover, I became cognizant of the fact that the young men I would be working with on this project may be suspicious and cynical about the value of participating in a research process with *someone like me*. It was, therefore, important that I remained authentic and respectful in ensuring meaningful engagement that honoured the voices and experiences of the participants. I was mindful of the importance of gaining an insider perspective about what was deemed to be respectful and authentic engagement in this space. To this end, I utilised already established relationships, formal and informal networks with individuals and organisations in the community. I attempt to illustrate this complex process in figure 5.1 below.



**Figure 5.1:** A graphic representation of the research process

## 5.2 PRESENTING THE KEY INFORMANTS

The key informants played a central role in assisting me to identify potential participants, to navigate the dynamic processes in the community of interest, and in enabling me to understand the shifting dynamics that influenced participants' willingness to participate in the study at any given time. In chapter 4 I discussed how this played out in practice and spoke of the importance of protecting the identity of the key informants. These individuals navigate dangerous spaces and they enjoy a measure of respect within the visible and invisible community networks. In light of the aforementioned, it is very important to present their identities and views in ways that would not harm their future endeavours or potentially place them, or the participants, in harm's way because of their participation in this study.

### 5.2.1 John (KI1)

John, whilst not a resident of Duineveld, grew up, lived and navigated life in a similar and neighbouring community, and has often intersected with the people and experiences in the community of interest in this study. John currently works with an

NGO that is focused on developing innovative strategies to mitigate violence in Cape Town. In addition, his background was relevant not just in the life that he had lived but also in the life he is now living. John spent 18 years in and out of prison during which time he became a ranking member of a prison gang. 16 years ago, he decided to live what he describes as '*a different life*' with all the subsequent choices and challenges that that entailed. Of great importance too is the fact that he has been able to maintain credibility with leaders in the gang world without himself being involved in their activities. This has allowed John to act as a mediator in violent conflicts and as a research consultant into violence and gangs on the Cape flats in Cape Town. I met John through one of the organisations where he works. Whilst he expressed his willingness to assist in this research project, he shared that he was somewhat cynical about how this information would be used and how his assistance would be acknowledged. He ascribed this cynicism to his experiences with researchers in the past who he felt had exploited him for his unique access to and insider knowledge of the context without affording him proper recognition. John went to great lengths to remind me that due to the history of our relationship and the fact that this study sought to forefront the lived reality and voices of all the people who participated, motivated him to be a part of it.

### **5.2.2 Kevin (KI2)**

John introduced me to Kevin, who is a life-time resident of Duineveld. Kevin was born shortly after his parents had been forcibly removed from District 6 to the Cape Flats. John and Kevin became acquainted during their time in prison and whilst serving together on the prison gang leadership. According to Kevin, like John, he had chosen to promote more pro-social life choices among the youth and that his particular area of interest was in ensuring that his and other children in the area do not drop out of school. He views education as a critical route to breaking the cycle of poverty and violence prevalent in his community. Kevin is a voluntary community activist and is employed to do contract work within the community of interest.

### **5.2.3 Jeremy (KI3)**

Jeremy is a young man in his late 20's who grew up in a gang dominated area of Duineveld. I met Jeremy during my initial work experience in the community and I had

witnessed first-hand his own journey of transformation. Jeremy was raised in a home where drug dealing had been a multi-generational family business. Jeremy had dealt with his own challenges related to drug addiction and violent offending and is now considered a role model of positive life choices for other young people in his neighbourhood. At the time of the interview, Jeremy was working with a community-based organisation that works with youth who are considered to engage in high-risk behaviour, in order to afford them an opportunity for an alternative way of being.

#### **5.2.4 Mary (KI4)**

Mary is a resident of Duineveld who graduated from a local high school and went on to obtain a university degree. Her own life story speaks of exposure to various forms of violence as well as family and home fluidity, can bear testimony to the fact that exposure to these experiences are not necessarily pre-determining factors of one's future. Mary is now an active voice on the issue of access to education for disadvantaged youth and the obstacle that trauma is in educational contexts of violence. She is also involved in development work within the education sector.

### **5.3 PRESENTING THE EMERGING-ADULT PARTICIPANTS**

It was interesting to note that a significant number of potential participants and the eventual participants themselves had had some experience with research. Many of them knew about or had interacted with researchers, documentary makers and journalists who had done investigations in the community. Unfortunately, not many were pleased with the way they or the information they had shared had been portrayed. So, I was met with a measure of righteous indignation. It was the key informants and a few participants who played a significant role in vouching for my intentions. It is however important to note that despite that, I felt as if I was being constantly scrutinised and that the participants' decision to participate in different parts of the study remained very fluid. In chapter 4 I share how I attempted to navigate the research space through regular negotiations, iterative data analysis and member checks. This experience also highlighted the importance of not underestimating the ability of participants to decide how they would like themselves and their stories to be explored and presented. In chapter 4 I discuss how this influenced the data collection process and the importance of iterative data analysis and member checks around the data generated and the data

generation techniques used. I am mentioning this here again because it is important to note that the participants were active in asserting their autonomy and monitoring the power dynamics within this study. To this end it is important to note that all the participants chose the pseudonyms that are used to present them in this study. A great deal of thought and discussion went into ensuring that the pseudonyms selected by them were not related to their names or nicknames, and that these names in no way related to how they were seen or known in the context. Some of the participants shared their reasons for the choice of their pseudonyms. So, for example, Stout used a description that he had often been given when growing up; Boyka chose a character from a martial arts film; Rooney a former Manchester United soccer player; and Snoop and Dog, as friends, chose to share the rapper Snoop Dog's name. Table 5.1 below provides a synopsis of the autobiographies of all the young men who participated in the various phases of the study.

**Table 5.1: Demographic data about participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Grade level on leaving school</b>	<b>Criminal Justice System</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Current Employment</b>
Stout	24	Grade 9	Arrested, Police cells, court appearances, 5-year Correctional Supervision ( <i>buitestraf</i> )	Police-run boot camp during school; Court ordered drug rehab and anger management programmes; community based intensive residential programme	Mentoring house; Local business
Gadgets	21	Grade 8	Police cells, court appearances	Court ordered anger management course	Local business
Lucky	23	Grade 11	Awaiting trial for 6 months	In-prison church programme	Casual/contract work
Quinton	22	Grade 9	Police raids, Arrests, Court appearances, Prison	Police-run boot camp during school; Community-based intensive	Casual/contract work

Name	Age	Grade level on leaving school	Criminal Justice System	Intervention	Current Employment
				residential programme	
Boyka	24	Grade 11	Arrested, Court appearances, Prison	In-prison programmes	'skarrel' (look for food or useful resources)
Dancer	23	Grade 6	Police; In and out of prison	Court ordered Anger management; 2x Drug rehabilitation	'skarrel'
Bourne	24	Grade 9	Police; Two prison sentences	n/a	Delivery-truck or 'skarrel'
Rooney	25	Grade 8	Police; Prison	Community prevention programme during junior school; 3-month programme with a wilderness element; In-prison programmes	'skarrel'
Snoop	22	High School	No information	Community-based church programme	Unemployed
Dog	22	High School	No information	Community-based church programme	Dealing

In addition to the brief synopsis provided in table 5.1 above, I am including a description (developed in collaboration) of each of the participants below:

### 5.3.1 Stout

Stout is a 24-year-old young man of faith. Charismatic and social he was quite comfortable in sharing his story and was not afraid to express his opinion on topics in the focus group discussions and with me personally. He spoke fondly of his grandmother and his mother but is most enthusiastic about his girlfriend and his daughter. He has a background of involvement in violence and gang activity with varied experience of intervention programmes and interactions with the police. However,

according to Stout, he turned his life around after the birth of his daughter and through participating in a community and church based intensive rehabilitation residential programme. Stout participated in focus groups 1 and 2.

### **5.3.2 Gadgets**

Gadgets, a 21-year-old young man was introduced to me through a friend and ex-colleague with whom Gadgets works in a business in the community. He was keen to be a part of the process and was very forthcoming in sharing during the individual and focus group sessions. Gadgets has a history of participation in acts of violence, gang related activities and drug use. He had not had much experience with intervention programmes at the time of the research, aside from a brief participation in an anger management programme. According to Gadgets, being present at the birth of his child left an indelible mark on him and influenced his decision to live a different kind of life to the one he had had previously. Gadgets participated in focus group 1.

### **5.3.3 Lucky**

I met Lucky, a 23-year-old young man and neighbour of Stout when he introduced me to a group of his neighbourhood mates. He was part of a group that were very wary of my intentions and was the only one who later expressed an interest in the process. Lucky informed me that it would be the first time that he had ever told someone his life story and was only doing it because of Stout. Lucky has a history of participation in violence and gang activities and spent 6 months as an Awaiting Trial Detainee, his only experience of intervention. He requested that the interview not be recorded and was not interested in the life map activity. He speaks fondly of his daughter, viewing fatherhood and questioning the worth of gang involvement as reasons for making different life choices.

### **5.3.4 Quinton**

Quinton, a 22-year-old young man was introduced to me by Jeremy (KI3). Communication with Quinton had to be via intermediaries as he did not have a cell phone; often did contract work and did not always sleep at the same place. Quinton had a history of violent offending and gang-related activities. He has had minimal experience of intervention programmes and views Jeremy as an important role model

in motivating him to make alternative life choices. He also considers his participation in the community and the church based intensive rehabilitation residential programme where Jeremy works as vital to his own story of change.

### **5.3.5 Boyka**

I had initially been introduced to Boyka's younger brother as a potential participant, he however chose not to be involved. Boyka, a 24-year-old, approached me and inquired about the process and volunteered to be interviewed. He was a fringe gang member who had participated in acts of violence and had spent time in prison. His time in prison was the only form of intervention he had experienced. According to Boyka he no longer participates in gang activities and is focused on doing his own thing.

### **5.3.6 Dancer**

Dancer, a 23-year-old young man, was one of 5 individuals who had participated in a joint meet and greet. He did not want the interview to be recorded and was often reluctant to share details about events and experiences in his life. Dancer had indicated that he was interested in participating in the focus groups but was unavailable to do so because at the time he was in and out of prison. Dancer had a history of participating in violent and gang related activities and of diversion and drug rehabilitation programmes. He has envisioned a future as a member of a gang.

### **5.3.7 Bourne**

Bourne was a 24-year-old participant that I met through time spent in the locale. Softly spoken, Bourne had a history of engaging in violent and criminal activity and had served several prison sentences. According to Bourne he has not joined a gang because when he was younger, he had promised his mother that he would not join a gang. He often does casual labour at the local store or on one of the delivery trucks, and tries to stay out of trouble. Bourne participated in the discussion group.

### **5.3.8 Rooney**

I was introduced to 25-year-old Rooney by the local community intermediary. Rooney had been involved with the gangs and crime and violence and had served multiple prison terms. He also indicated that he had joined a notorious prison gang whilst in

prison. During his teens, Rooney had participated in an intervention programme organised by a local church. According to Rooney he is no longer involved with the gang. Rooney only participated in the individual interview which he insisted take place on the same day he agreed to be in the study.

### **5.3.9 Snoop and Dog**

I had met the 22-year-old friends, Snoop and Dog, through informal road side conversations I had had with young men in the locale. At first Dog lied about his age placing himself in an age bracket outside the research criteria. Whilst Dog was quite vocal and not afraid to confront my perspectives, Snoop was more reserved but not without an opinion. Both of these young men were members of a gang and had previously participated in prevention programmes facilitated by the church. They only agreed to participate in the second focus group. At the time of the interview both Snoop and Dog were active in gang related activities.

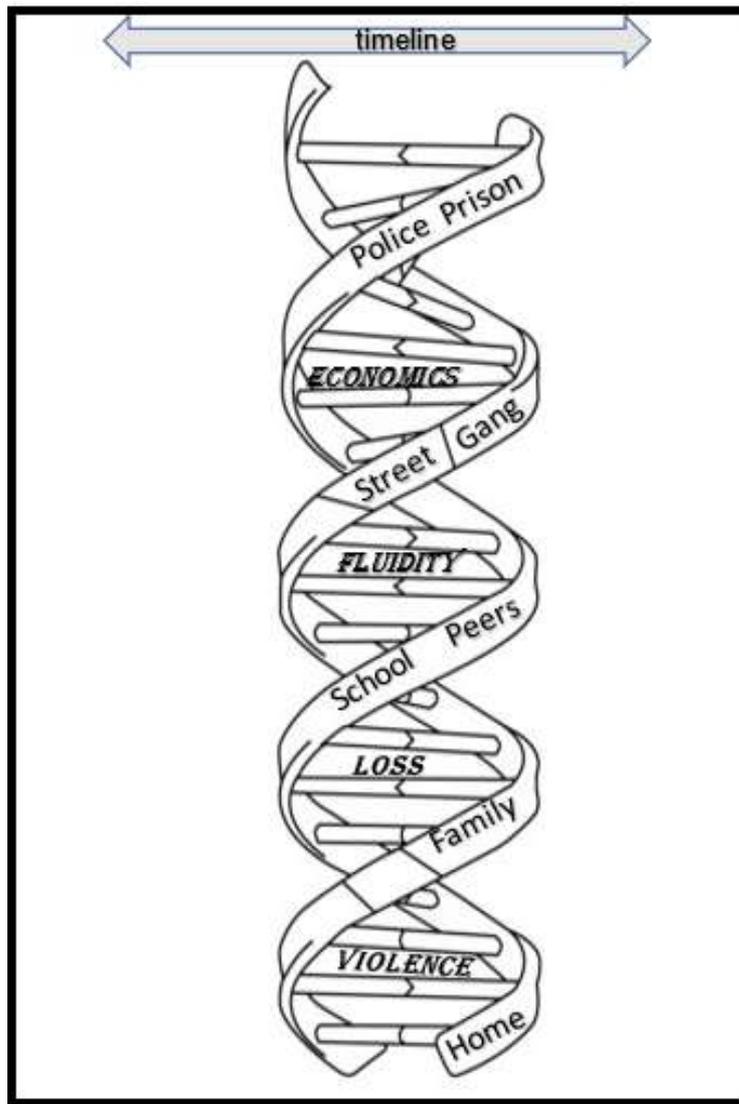
## **5.4 PRESENTING THE DATA**

The data generated in this study needs to be viewed as a collaborative process in which the voice of the participants is scientifically encased to tell the story. The accompanying life maps are reflective of lived experiences that were far from neat and tidy. They were convoluted and chaotic. Some participants requested my assistance in completing the life-map. It is important to reiterate (chapter 4) that they did not expect me to help them make meaning of their experiences but merely to capture them. I attempted, as far as I was able, to interview participants in the local vernacular, some may refer to it as Afrikaans or Afrikaaps (a local informal vernacular). The sessions were also marked by a lot of linguistic code switching, moving between English and Afrikaaps. This was sometimes done to help me but also at times because that is the way in which people within the context often converse with each other.

Throughout the interviews there were occasions when events seemed to be contradictory, or the time period did not fit. Memory is a complex process and the recall of events can get lost in translation because of trauma, substance abuse or even in the performance of the telling of the story (I discuss this in greater detail chapter 3 and will pick up on it in chapter 6). Therefore, it was sometimes difficult to know if it was an

individual or collective memory or if it was a performance for the interview, as is often the case in documentaries on gangs. For example, Quinton reported that "... shooting, that was my part of violence when I became part of the [Gang] ... killing other people, for me that was normal." Similarly, Rooney stated that he was involved in "... many violence ... I shoot every, lot of people dead."

From the information shared during the individual interviews and focus group sessions, it became clear that the journey into and out of violence was not linear. Navigating their context involved a number of social institutions and common lived experiences that were interwoven. For example, movement from the school to the gang was a dynamic and complex process with porous boundaries in which violence was often a common feature of both. To illustrate this process, I have utilised a diagram of a DNA helix, onto which I have labelled participants' experiences and social institutions.



**Figure 5.2: The entangled process of navigation**

*(the DNA diagram is a free to use diagram sourced from Supercoloring.com)*

For the purpose of the thesis I attempt the discussion using themes. It is important to note, however, that these themes never act as blocks of experience. Instead, as illustrated in figure 5.2, the experiential and spatial themes are entangled, a reality that has played out throughout the lifespan of participants, including when navigating alternative ways of being.

## 5.4.1 Experiences of living in an urban war zone

### 5.4.1.1 Fluidity at home

The sentiment of, “*Hierendaa’ ... my ma so geswerf het met my*” [Here and there ... my mother wondered around with me] shared by Stout serves as a good introduction to the fluidity in relationships and space experienced by many of the participants. Fluidity is defined as being in a “... state of being unsettled or unstable” (Lexico, 2019: online).

#### 5.4.1.1.1 Fluidity in family structure

The backbone of the family appeared to be strongly matriarchal. All of those interviewed mentioned or spoke of the role of women in their lives, be that mothers, grannies or aunts. Most of the participants spoke about their mothers’ in passing or did not offer much detail about the relationships they had had with them. Many of the participants did share that they did not experience their mothers’ as consistent figures in their lives. Substance abuse was cited as one of the most significant reasons for this inconsistency. So, for example, Stout mentions that whilst his mother was physically present in his life, she was not actively parenting him. According to him, he lived with his mother for the first six years of his life, but “... *my ma was’ie rerig present in my lewe ...*” [ ... my mother was not really present in my life ... ] (II1, L66). According to him, he felt this way because his mother often drank and partied during that time, leaving him unsupervised. He says that he spent his time playing arcade games at the local shop. Similarly, Gadget shared that after his mother met a man, “... *het hulle twee begin te saam en hy het gelike gerook buttons en* [the two of them started to spend time together and he liked smoking buttons and] afterwards my mother begin to also to use drugs.” (II2, LL216-218).

A few participants also reported an irreparable breakdown in the relationships with maternal figures, even leading to a disconnection from their families.

*Ek so onbeskof met hulle maar agterdaai wat ekna my niggie toe trek toe komeknienog so much na my ma hulle toe so sonie, hoekomelke slag as ekhoor “Rooney het jynie ‘aaigesien, ‘aaigevat’ie” dan is it my suster’s se kind.* [I was so rude with them but after I moved in with my cousin, I don’t

visit my parents that often because everytime I hear 'Rooney haven't you seen this' I hadn't taken it, it was my sister's child]. (II8, LL187-189)

Notwithstanding these experiences, Boyka's reflection on his relationship with his mother is indicative of the nature of many of the participants' maternal relationships.

*Ok nou en dan, dan is jou ma 'aar as jy miskien in bad goedte is, dan help jou ma jou ek sal altyd na my ma toe gaan en so, enige ding wat my sleg laat voel ... Miskien is ek honger gaan ek na my ma toe gaan as sy het 'ie al verstaan ek, [so now and then your mother is there if you happen to find yourself in trouble, then your mother helps; I will always go to my mother, when anything makes me feel sad. If I am hungry, I will go to my mother, but if she doesn't have, I will understand.] (II5, LL 141-145, 151)*

Some of the participants considered their Grandmothers to be the significant adult figures in their lives and identified their grandmothers' as the primary guardians who raised them. This is illustrated by Gadget's account that "... basically I grew up with my granny ..." (II 2, L369) and supported by Stout's statement that "... *my Ouma my groot gemaak het tot hierdie ouderdom.*" [it was my grandmother who raised me up until this age] (II 1, LL68-9). The data suggested that grandmothers were also viewed as protectors who provided shelter and food. Quinton shared that after he had been living on the street for a while, he "... went back and so she took me in again and told me to go get my clothes" (II 4, LL175-179). Stout also recollected how his life changed when he went to live with his *Ouma* [granny]. He recalls thinking at the time that, "... *naai die's n huis, elke aand was 'aar n bord kos gewies.*" [ ... now this is a home, there was a plate of food every night] (II 1, L150).

Almost two-thirds of the participants said that moving between their mothers' and grandmother's guardianship also impacted their access to school, consistent discipline and strategies to keep them safe within the community. Boyka here reflects on the fluidity that the young men experienced in navigating these two worlds;

*My ma was hard gewies, want, hoe kanek se, virenigeiets wat ekverkeerdgedoen my ma was hard gewiesaltydNie my ma nie, was my oumaen my oupaja. Hulle het my geslatelkekeerek stout gewies het [My mother was hard, how can I say, my mother was always hard for anything*

that I did wrong. No not my mother, it was my granny and grandpa. They hit me every time that I was naughty] (II 5, LL 530-539)

Many of the participants, like Bourne, shared that whilst their grandmothers were willing to step into the parenting role, they were often reluctant to have their mothers play a role in their lives at the time. According to Bourne,

It was nice, because my granny was happy with me, the first, the first grandchild you see, she was happy, she was always around me, she didn't want to let me go to my mommy or play with friends or do naughty stuff she always teach me right stuff. (II 7, LL240-244)

Even though the relationships between their mothers and grandmothers were often challenging and fraught with conflict, their grandmothers often challenged the authorities in order to gain guardianship over their grandchildren. Gadgets recalled that his grandmother had not wanted him to leave with his mother when she left his grandmother's house. When he was later placed in foster care because his mother was incarcerated, his grandmother "... struggled to get us but finally she got us." (II 2, LL252)

The data appears to suggest that living with their grandmothers often meant that the young men had to live and move in different spaces for various reasons. So, for example, Stout's grandmother placed him in a high school outside the community in which they lived since "... *sy het gewiet al my maats wat ek van primary school afkomgaan [die hoerskool] toe ...*" [she was aware that all my friends from primary school would be attending the local high school] (II1, LL374-375). Some of the participants expressed the belief that, they thought that by doing so they were protecting their grandchildren from negative peer influences. However, the young men shared that this was not always an effective strategy as "... *commuting nog altyd 2/3 maats saam met my*" [there were still 2 or 3 friends that I always travelled with] (II1, L376). One of the participants also shared that grandmothers also often sought to protect them by sending them to live with family members in different communities. According to Quinton, his "... granny did send me away, that was before that gang fight broke out ... To my aunt in [another community]" (II4, LL 619-624).

However not all the participants had a positive experience with their grandmothers. Bourne shared that after his mother died, when he was 16 years old, his grandmother's attitude towards him changed. According to him, his grandmother "... doesn't care ... *Soos my ouma, ekkrynie kos by haarnie, ekmoet my eie ding kyksoosvanaandekmoetkykwaa' kanekietskry om teiet, vravirmenseen so*" [so my grandmother, I don't get food from her, I need to look out for myself. You see, like tonight I need to check where I can get something to eat, maybe ask people] (II7, LL704-707).

#### 5.4.1.1.2 *Complex father relations*

In contrast to the strong presence of women in their lives, almost all the participants spoke of the absence of male figures in their early lives. Most of them reported complex relationships with their biological fathers, whether they were present or not. Their experiences ranged from growing up in a traditional nuclear family to "*Ek het sonder 'n pa grootgeraak.*" [I grew up without a dad] (Stout, II1, L67). Some of the young men shared that their dads had been killed when they were still young, whilst others shared that although their dads were alive and they knew their identity, there was little in the way of a relational connection. Boyka reflected this complex dynamic when he shared that whilst "... *ekweetwaarhybly maar ekvat'ienog notice van hom of so nie*" [I know where he lives but I don't take any notice of him] (II 5, LL 136-139). The picture painted of their fathers, by those who had contact or a relationship them often reflected stark contradictions. So, for example, Quinton spoke about his dad in a heroic sort of way,

"... a movie filmer, so he made movies. My dad was helping other company out, so he started shooting movies. He was the main guy with Christopher Lambert them, he was with them shooting movies. There's one movie 24/7 ... 24/7 that's a movie that my dad plays the main guy in that movie. (II4, LL301-307)

But he then also described a serious disagreement with his dad over drugs,

Me and my dad had an argument that night because we were smoking together. And I didn't, I didn't want him to let, to let him smoke from the

drugs and so we had an argument ... just shouting. He wanted to throw me ... to kick me out of the house. (II4, LL40-43, 705-706)

These excerpts afford a glimpse into the complex and often painful experiences the young men had with family. This often influenced who and what they were exposed to and how they learnt to navigate their life spaces.

#### 5.4.1.1.3 *Structural Fluidity*

Residential mobility, largely intracommunity, appears to have been a consistent feature in the lives of the young men. Some participants reported that as children their mothers had been “*uitgesit*” (evicted) by their grandmothers for different reasons such as drug use. The mothers often took the children with them. Boyka’s grandmother “*het my ma uitgesit dan moes ek saam met my ma gaan ... toe op n tyd dan slaap ek op die mense se huis, vrinne van my en so*” [put my mother out and I had to go with her ... later on I slept at different people’s houses, including my friends] (II5, LL97-101). Quinton shared that he and his family lived on the street in the Cape Town CBD before returning to live with his grandmother at a later stage. Similarly, Gadgets also left his grandmother’s home and went on a treacherous journey that saw him living in a drug house, the ARK rehabilitation community centre, foster care after his mother’s incarceration and finally back to his granny.

*Ek het hiergrootgeword maar ons het baiegetrek ... [I grew up here but we moved around quite a lot] ... before I went by the Ark ... we were like in a drug house ... but it wasn’t for a long period of time and then my mother went to the Ark ... they took us to like what is that now um like a home that woman is dead now who took us to that home, is like a house ... (II2, LL214-235)*

For some of the participants, similar patterns of structural fluidity have been replayed during late adolescence and emerging-adult years. The young men were also “*uitgesit*”[evicted] because of drugs or conflict at home and then lived on the streets, with other gang members or even in a car. Boyka’s reasons for moving were different and appeared to centre around his ability to make a contribution to the household, he said “*... as ek werk kyk kom ek altyd terug na die huis toe waar ek slaap, as ek (’n) werk het dan slaap ek ook by die huis maar as ek nie werk nie kyk ek vir my eie ding*

*op die pad.*” [when I look for work, I always look after the household and I have a place to sleep, when I don’t work, I have to look out for myself on the street] (II5, LL63-66). Intermittent arrests and prison time had also influenced where and with whom they lived.

A challenge that exercised a great influence on the residential mobility of the young men is related to the fact that many have, and continue to live, in overcrowded and/or informal dwellings. Some of the participants have lived in informal homes as front or backyard dwellers. These homes were Wendy houses (wooden structures that are relatively cheap and easy to set up) or other makeshift shelters made of accessible material such as corrugated iron. Often these dwellings were overcrowded. Rooney shared that he lived in a 2-roomed wendy house with his parents and his “... 4 broers en twee susters ... ma hulle in die een kante ons in die een kante.” [4 brothers and 2 sisters, my mother and the girls on one side and us on the other] (II8, LL150-151). Dancer had a similar experience and said that where he lived a” ... *klomp mense het ‘aar gebly. Die huis het twee kamers en n’ kombuis*” [a lot of people lived there. The house had 2 rooms and a kitchen] (II6, L68).

#### **5.4.1.2 Violence**

The data suggests that violence permeated all the experiences and spaces of their lives; be that at home, school, neighbourhood or the criminal justice system. Gadget’s assertion that, “you always live in violence.” (II2, LL565), is a view reflected in all the participants’ responses. The overall view was that whilst violence was everywhere, how you experienced it varied across time. All the participants shared that at some or other time, one could be a witness, a victim or a perpetrator; and that often these roles occurred concurrently in the same incident. According to all the participants the incidents varied in degrees of severity from verbal aggression to murder and often involved weapons such as bricks, knives and guns.

##### *5.4.1.2.1 Violence in the home*

Almost two-thirds of the participants shared that violence in the home was a common feature. Quinton shared that his parents often were “... fighting also with each other ... with the fist hitting each other ... I told them you can do whatever you want to do, fight with each other as long as you want to fight, I’m going to go out now” (II4, LL1010-

1022). Quinton was not the only one that had witnessed ongoing domestic violence as a means to managing interpersonal conflict in the home. Gadgets shared that he had often attempted to intervene in his mom and his sisters' father's fights, albeit with little success. He recalled an incident from his childhood in which his mom,

stabbed [him] into the hospital ... if he hit her she hit him back ... but he's mos bigger than her and sometimes I also want to hit him if I see he hit my mother but I was small I can't really if I hit him he keep my hand tight I can do nothing. (II2, LL780-802)

A closer look at the data suggests that it was a pattern that seemed to be shaped by ideas on masculinity and traditional gender roles. So, whilst Gadgets was angry as a boy that his mother was being beaten, he then juxtaposed that with a justification of him beating his girlfriend "... at the time I was being abusive towards her when were together. I hit her and so on, it wasn't right ... It's almost like she was asking me to hit her because if I don't hit her then she don't listen to me but if I hit her, she listen to me." (II2, LL750-759). This interpersonal dynamic ultimately ended with a serious injury,

"she broke my phone ... so I did go there so I saw her there at the corner, but I told her to go home because my child is mos at home you must go there. She said no she don't want to I can't tell her what what. So, she make a big thing and I was having this thing on me, so I wasn't thinking properly so I just stab, I stab her here." (II2, LL734-737)

The participants related that drug and/or alcohol use were involved in most of the instances of domestic conflict. One individual reflected on the impact that his father's actions had had on him and the family when he was drunk. Rooney shared that they no longer became upset when his parents fought because they knew that,

when my father is drunk is *hy* [he] in a other mood ... because he drunk too heavy man, strong wine and stuff like that ... Then he and my mother sitting *mos stry'ry* [arguing] maar after that he go sleep, out, and he lay there. Now

my mother must get his shoes out and everything like that and make him closed and everything like that. (II8, LL237-241)

The participants' experience of domestic violence also sometimes involved sibling on sibling violence, especially between brothers. The reasons for this varied from protecting attacks on the self, possessions or other family members. Dancer recalled an incident with his brother in which he felt he had been defending his own and his mother's honour:

After I left school, I looked for work for my own money and bread. Then one Christmas my older brother think that my mother buy something for me, but I used my own money my eie ding gekoop [bought my own thing] but he didn't want to listen and ons het mekaar seer gemaak en dan los ons vi' mekaar. [we hurt each other and afterwards left each other alone] (II6, LL60-66)

Substance use also played a significant role in sibling on sibling violence. One of the participants shared an incident in which he and his brother had become embroiled in a fight whilst drunk. He could not recall what had caused the fight, but he remembered that it had almost led to the death of his brother:

He get me and he take me, and he kicked me under my feet and he hit me. My whole nose my mouth ... was bleeding and I stand up with my bottle and I hit it, teen die [against the] pavement and I go stab him, one here, almost on the clock, here by the heart [indicating], just a little bit away. (II8, LL313-317)

Whilst a minority recalled actual incidents in their own experiences with sibling on sibling violence, all of them shared anecdotal evidence of how common it was in the context.

#### *5.4.1.2.2 Violence at school*

Violence at school appeared to be a common occurrence. The participants shared that at different stages of school life it happened for different reasons. Some participants expressed the belief that at junior school young boys and sometimes girls mimicked the gang fights they had witnessed in the community. According to one of the

participants, said it often started as a game with a “... *groepie groepie maak en die teen aan mekaar, karate, karate teen die African laaities.*” [formed groups and fought against each other using karate, against the African children] (II1, LL221-222). Play fighting is not uncommon in most junior schools; however, on further exploration he indicated that these were not play fights, they were real physical confrontations. All of the participants agreed that once the young men reached high school these school yard fights often escalated to full on gang fights which often involved weapons. Lucky shared that in the early years of high school, he had been “... involved in 3 major [gang] fights at school, group fights that involved fists and knives.” (II3, LL90-91). Another participant shared that one often became involved in school yard violence in order to ensure your personal safety. Quinton recalled that when he joined a gang at high school “... I knew that if someone do anything to me ... and then it will be gang fight on school.” (II4, LL408-410).

All the participants shared that violence at school often escalated beyond the school boundaries and would often involve people who had not been part of the initial school yard fight. When talking about this, Dancer shared that he often got into fights at school and then “... *naskool, op pad huis toe met my vrinne het onsver'erbakleienklippergegooi.*” [ ... after school, on the way home with my friends we would fight some more, even throwing stones] (II6, LL35-37). Another of the participants, Gadgets, shared that he had been stabbed because of a fight at school. The stabbing happened after school in front of his home. He also shared an incident in which his school friend had been shot;

It's on the school and off the school but they shot him off the school. You see it's a gang fight it starts on the school but if you go home you going to gang fight at home also with them, there on the school you can fight on the school also with them so man it's a whole messed up thing. (II2, LL853-856)

Some of the participants felt that the school authorities did not respond very effectively to violence at school. The response to school fights often involved an on-school safety and security service called Bambanani,<sup>4</sup> who would remove offenders from class. According to Stout, this usually meant that his grandmother would be summoned to

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<sup>4</sup>Bamabanani against crime: an initiative by the Dept of Community Safety that was meant to bolster security, supervisory offerings and conflict resolution.

the school and would then give him a “*paksla*” [hiding] when they got home and that was the end of it. Many of the participants were aggrieved by the fact that although educators were not allowed to use corporal punishment, many of them had been on the receiving end of some or other form of physical punishment administered by educators. The young men reported being hit with implements such as a red water pipe or board duster on the bum or across the hands whilst at primary school. This use of corporal punishment continued at high school and some of the participants suggested that it was part of the reason for them not attending all their classes at school. Stout shared that on one occasion he had arrived late for class and “... *toe slat daai Mnr. aan my met n hammer.*” [the teacher then hit me with a hammer] (II1, LL391). He said that after that incident he refused to go back to that teacher’s class. It was however interesting to note that Gadgets agreed with corporal punishment and was upset by the fact that he was often unfairly on the receiving end of it because teachers had missed his learning difficulties. He expressed the view that if teachers

“ ... were doing a greater job I would have been reading and so on, but no one did ... notice I can’t read and so now why can’t they notice? They then the teachers they must know that.” (II2, LL202-204)

Some of the participants shared that educators did not only use physical violence but would often humiliate and exclude learners from their classes. According to Lucky,

they did pick on certain groups dividing into ‘dumb’ and ‘intelligent’ ‘good’ and ‘bad’ ... I felt worthless ... If you don’t know something then the teacher would call you out, maybe with 2 others and make you write it out. They judged those who couldn’t spell. (II3, LL33-40)

A consequence of this appears to have been an increasing sense of alienation within the school environment.

Only one of the participants’ shared a positive experience of educators while at primary school. Bourne shared that “ ... *daar was juffrouens wat altyd vir my gegee het wat ek makeer het, soos boeke, penne, skoene, kleure ... kos en so*”. [there were teachers that ensured that I had all I required, like books, pens, shoes, clothes and food] (II7, LL362-367). He said however that it was unfortunate that when he went to high school

he did not feel he had the same access to teachers and he then became a target for bullying.

A closer look at the data suggests that the various disciplinary practices at school played a role in their decision to drop out of school. The participants shared, in particular, around the role that school practices like suspension and permanent exclusion from school played in their not being able to progress at school. Gadgets said that “ ... I failed one year [grade 8] I failed the second year so I went the third year but so they did suspend me from school, they take me off school. So, I did go on but I wasn't in a class because I'm mos not actually allowed anymore in the school.” (II2, LL100-104). The participants who had had similar experiences to Gadget shared that they often did not understand why they were being punished. Boyka captured this bewilderment, “ ... *'aai juffrou gese, ek moenie ... hulle het net vi' my gese ek kannie meer 'aar by [skool naam] oppie skool gaan. Ek wiet'ie vi' wattie, sieker omdat ek onbeskof gewies or whatever.*” [that teacher just said I can't ... they just told me that I couldn't carry on at that school. I don't know the reason why, probably because I was rude or something like that] (II5, LL261-262).

The experiences of the different forms of violence at school were some of the reasons given for dropping out of school. It is important to note though that although school leaving is not a sudden event, according to the young men, violence or the lack of safety played a very important role. For example, Dancer reported that the fighting at school “ ... became too much and so I told my mother ... but my mother didn't do anything, so I left school” (II6, LL35-37). Similarly, Quinton mentioned that he stopped going to school because “ ... it was getting tougher on school ... “ with a reported upsurge in gang violence around the school (II4, LL460). At this point in reporting on the data, I think that it is significant that at the time of the study one of the key informants informed me that a group of learners from one area of the community were too scared to walk to the school they attended because one of the learners had been stabbed and some others had been stoned. Those learners were not attending school at that time (Research journal 2: 13).

#### 5.4.1.2.3 *Violence in social spaces*

Over time the participants said they developed various adaptive strategies to cope with navigating the perception of the imminent threat of violence. Lucky related that “you can’t show that you are scared of anyone and that you’re someone not to be messed with.” (II 3, LL50-51). The data also suggests that projecting the aforementioned image, was also closely related to the perception of what makes you a man. The following quote by Lucky illustrates this connection between an aggressive orientation and a masculine identity shared by most of the participants. He shared that, “if you can’t stand up for yourself then they would call you ‘moffie’ or ‘bunny’ and say that you are not a man.” (II 3, LL48-50). According to the participants, your masculinity was not something you defined in the space; instead it was very closely related to how people in the context would perceive you.

The need to assert yourself was closely linked with a number of other factors. All the participants expressed the view that how you responded to slights significantly influenced the way you were treated. One individual stated that if someone looked at him in a way he didn’t like, “ ... then I would tell you ‘Jy [you] why you looking me like that and if you wanna come ...’ then I would start fighting with him, I will smack him.” (II1, LL936-7). It appeared that the triggers for conflict were often in response to perceived insults or slights to honour. According to Lucky, these slights could quickly spiral into physical violence as he shared here.

The time I got stabbed, we were in Long Street and was with a friend and his girlfriend. Some guy asked us for a cigarette and then told us “I don’t want your shit” after which I smacked him and my friend hit him and then outside my friend stabbed him and he ran off. We thought he had run away but he came back with his people and it was then that I got stabbed. 13 stitches. (II3, LL115-123)

Another participant recalled an incident in which he felt that a man had overstepped the mark by trying to intervene in a fight that he was having with his girlfriend. The older and bigger man told him that he,

mustn’t do that thing but he was actually telling me the right thing but at the time you don’t want to be told from someone else. I tell him “[expletive] you

don't tell me and so on" and so he said he going to hit me and I say you can come mos hit me I'm going to hit you mos back. So me and him hit each other. (II2, LL597-603)

From this and other data, it appears that whilst some of the participants are able to reflect on the encounters now, at that time the risk of appearing weak often lead them to making choices that resulted in or escalated into violent incidents.

#### 5.4.1.2.4 *Gang-related violence*

The overall indication was that all of the participants had been exposed to gang related violence at an early age. In fact, some of them indicated that they had even participated in gang-related violence at some point in their childhood. One of the participants recalled "... *hoe die gangs mekaar baklei met baksteene gooi, guns skiet en so aan*" [how the gangs fought with each other, throwing bricks and shooting with guns] (II1, LL199-200), on the street in which he lived. Some respondents shared that the young boys often mimicked the gang fights in their neighbourhoods. Quinton shared that he and the other young boys who lived on his street would copy the older gang by fighting "... our street against the back street ... because the guys that's older than us used to fight with that guys ... the big guys were stabbing and we were throwing bricks at each other." (II4, LL267-278). These fights often spilled over from the neighboured to school and vice versa. Almost two thirds of the participants said that as they began to drift in and out of school, their involvement in gang related activity escalated often to the point of violence. For some participants it was initially an escalation of school-related gang conflict. However, as Stout notes, it soon progressed to more serious involvement,

*So het ek ernstig begin raak in die dinge in, gaan nie meer skool'ie, naskool dan gat ons, wag ons vir hulle 'aar agter en miskien baksteene gooi ... as ons eene gekry gat ons miskien stiek met die mes* [So then I got more seriously involved; I didn't go to school anymore, instead we waited for them at the back and threw bricks at them and if we grabbed one of them we would stab with a knife]. (II1, LL561-563)

For some of them the drift into gang-related violence seemed to be motivated by curiosity. Boyka shared that his involvement escalated over time,

*die eerste gang fight klippe gegooiery so en toe na daai toe besluit ek en my anner vrind ons gaan a gun kry en so kom it laat die dag so is en guns geskieter en so aan [my first gang fight involved throwing stones and then after that my friends and I decided to acquire a gun and then when it was late in the day we started shooting]. (II5, LL317-319)*

From the data it appears that this progression often went from fighting with their school peers with bricks and knives to accessing guns and fighting the bigger gangs.

When participants were asked to suggest other reasons for their involvement in violence and gangs, revenge appeared to be a powerful motivator and gangs seemed to have provided the means through which some of the participants were able to gain that vengeance. Lucky shared how his journey into gang membership started with him wanting "... revenge so became gangster. We needed to get guns and it was the [a gang] who got the stuff we wanted." (II3, LL101-104). However, this initial need for vengeance created a vulnerability that saw him get drawn into the other activities of the gang, according to him,

"things got out of hand and we started robbing people and stabbing them, that was during peace so we could smoke, but in war, we fight, seek for our enemies. We wanted to make them sore by shooting them." (II3, LL104-108)

Dancer's trajectory started with curiosity but then escalated into gang related revenge, he related that they were given guns and

*... skiet op n' huis, een van die [gang]. One of the [gang] het dan een van my vrinne geskiet maar hy was'ie selfs n' lid van n' bende. So ek het dan een van die [gang] geskiet. [ ... shot on a house, one from another gang ... one of them had shot my friend and he wasn't even a member of a gang. So I shot one of them] (II6, LL65-69)*

Over time, access to power also seemed to play a significant role in the spiral deeper into violence. So, for example, Rooney recalls that

"from the day I feel the gun for the first time, every time I want to shoot, shoot,shoot,shoot,shoot ... it felt like, "hey! Now I can defeat these people

because they coming with guns dat we don't have now what our brothers bringing us, now we can do also this." (II8, LL269-277)

The data suggests others joined gangs because they were motivated by the perception that membership would give them power and esteem in the community. For Quinton this was the primary motivational factor as reflected in his assertion that,

"Now to get power in the street there by us, because they were controlling the street so if you become one of them you would also be controlling the street ... the first thing you need to do is you need to shoot someone. And so I shot someone but I didn't kill that guy but I did shoot him ... after that the whole of the court (flat) were scared for me."

It is interesting to note that Quinton and Rooney differed in their willingness to talk about their first shooting. Quinton was seemingly quite open to share that in joining the gang he had to shoot someone, which he did. Whereas Rooney, on the other responded to a question about his first shooting experience with "... I can't tell you." (II8, LL272).

The overall indication was that those participants who chose more than a fleeting connection with gangs would start to wear, by desire or pressure, the mark of the gangs, or, as the participants referred to them, gang 'tjappies' [gang tattoos]. Whilst they may have started out in smaller neighbourhood gangs, these smaller community gangs were brought together under an alliance. The bigger alliance required previous group tensions and animosity to be put aside. Both Rooney and Dancer shared this in different ways, "we don't fight anymore we stand together we fight [the other big gang]" (II8, LL350) and similarly "... *nou staan ons saam*" [now we stand together] (II6, LL71). However not all of the participants shared the view that becoming part of a bigger alliance equated more power, in fact Stout said he was quite proud that his old gang had never become part of the big gang even though they were in allegiance with them. Gadgets on the other hand shared the view that the smaller gangs had little choice in deciding whether they would be pulled into bigger gangs or not. His recollection is that,

“Ok we didn’t wanted to go with them but they going to mos hit us, they going to do stuff to us and so and that’s how we ... toe maar ok we join them otherwise they going to bully us the whole time.” (II2, LL462-465)

During focus group discussions participants reflected that older gang members were increasingly recruiting younger boys, many younger than 14. The participants related that they were being purposefully recruited at such a young age because the gangs knew that within the current legal system “*kan (hulle) niks oor komnie*” (nothing will happen to them).

#### 5.4.1.2.5 *Violence at the hands of the State authorities*

Violence at the hands of state authorities was a common feature of the participants’ responses. These recollections ranged from arbitrary arrests to beatings and interrogations. Some of the participants expressed the belief that they were often harassed by the police. One of the participants shared that the police “... come and take you for no reason ... the last they took me, they took me for no reason, they gave me a fine for loitering, for standing on the *hoek* [corner].” (II 2, LL691-693). Another participant recalled that “... *hulle het my alraait getreat but som het my geslaan en so, vas gebooi en geskop, klap.*” [they treated me alright but some of them hit me, tied me up and kicked me] (II7, LL658-659). Whilst yet another said that “... my worst experience was actually with law enforcement officers, the younger ones, they would smack me.” (II3, LL208-209).

A closer look at the data suggests that interrogations were experienced at the hands of the police and wardens and that sometimes these included beatings and the use of Tasers. So, Stout said that the police

would beat us ... ... to talk where’s the guns, they will smack you and they will ask you ‘hey where’s the guns, talk, where’s the gun’ ... they would smack you, ‘where’s the other stuff, where’s the other stuff.’ (II1, LL723-729)

Similarly, Lucky described aggression and interrogation from prison wardens.

“Beaten, mostly with a baton. They were always aggressive, and you can’t say something cause if you do you’d get beaten. And they were always shouting, never in a decent voice, with lots of searches, every week finding

all sorts of stuff. And they would come ask “where’s the phones, the dagga, the cigarettes?” (II3, LL169-175)

It is interesting to note that all who spoke of interrogation emphasised the fact that they had kept quiet; they did not tell the police or wardens anything. According to some of the participants, its gang lore that you do not speak no matter what the authorities do to you. Lucky saw an association between identity and keeping quiet. “[In prison] have to be strong ... if you get beaten it was sore, but you say nothing otherwise you’re a ‘pussy’.” (II3, LL175-177). And even Bourne, though not a gang member, also emphasised his silence

*Ek het gelieg vir hulle, hulle wou gewiet het ja, wat, wat, le die man so en wat is die plek so, waar is die goedtes ek gekoop het en so aan op. Information gehe dit ja, maar ek het nie gese nie [I lied to them, they wanted to know this and that about this person or what this place is and where did I buy my goods and so on. They wanted information but I said nothing.] (II7, LL664-667)*

Although a few of the participants expressed the view that “die Boere” [the police] were just doing their job, most showed indifference or expressed an intense dislike of the police. Arbitrary arrests and beatings aside, there were also blurred lines when the young men would observe the police and prison wardens operating corruptly and yet nothing happened to them. Thus, for some participants, fighting the police was considered a legitimate option. Dancer recalled a time when “... the police came and there was a fight with the police and it even involved other community people.”

#### **5.4.1.3 The reality of loss**

“I lost a friend now just two weeks ago” (II1, L1018) said Stout in a statement that epitomises the loss experienced by the young men throughout their lives. The loss reflected in the data includes the loss of people, of home, food, education, safety and a sense of belonging.

##### *5.4.1.3.1 Loss because of violence*

All of the participants experienced loss of significant others in different ways. Lucky captured the various ways in which he experienced the loss of significant people in his

life when he shared that he, "... started losing friends – one went to jail, another was killed, another also went to jail for shooting another gangster." (II3, LL95-98). Many of the young men have experienced the death of people close to them, the data suggests that this loss was often through violent means. Many of the participants also shared that they had experienced this loss through violence multiple times, one of the participants shared that after he had lost his father to violence, he then also witnessed the killing of his cousin when a man", ... *het vir hom gestiek ... uitgehaal n groot flikmes, tande mes, so ingedruk en draai ... toe gat hy dood voor my.*" [ ... stabbed him ... pulled out a large flick knife with a serrated edge, pushed it in and turned ... he then died in front of me] (II7, LL518-527). Another of the participants shared that, "I saw people die in front of me, I saw my own gang members die ... [name] was shot here through his head, I was there I saw him there laying there trying to talk," (II2, LL515-519) and yet another reflected on the "... *vrinne wat ek ge het het, ek het verloor goeie vrinne wat ek gehet it, verloor it.*" (II5, LL33). [friends that I had, I lost good friends that I had, that I lost]. Stout also shared about the recent death of a friend whilst Lucky recounted visiting a friend and that while they "... were all hanging out at his place. His sister came to tell him that some guy had asked about him and then split. He then got up and went out and was shot [dead]." (II3, LL194-198). These experiences from the not too distant past appeared to have left an indelible mark on the participants.

#### 5.4.1.3.2 *Loss as a result of other factors*

The data appears to suggest that whilst violence played a critical role in the loss experienced by the participants, they also experienced loss due to a number of other factors. The most common losses related include the loss of relationships, the loss of people in their lives because of drug abuse, illness and incarceration. As noted earlier, a few participants experienced the loss of their mothers because of substance abuse. Gadgets recalled how angry he had felt when his mother was involved in a tragic incident that resulted in a 13-year prison sentence. He recalls that he, "... was cross for her because if she listened to me in the first place, none of that would happen" (II2, LL316-317). He did however reflect that perhaps there was a positive side to this, because maybe if she had not gone to prison, she might still be addicted to drugs. Many participants have also experienced friends who have been incarcerated for a number of short prison terms or for extended periods of time. Some of the participants

shared that they had also spent time in prison and that these experiences were also a kind of loss. Bourne recalled how alone he felt during incarceration, he shared that it “... was hard gewies, my mense was’ie daar gewies’ie, niemand het my ko’ visit’ie.” [ ... was hard, my people weren’t there, nobody came to visit me] (II7, LL595-596). For Rooney, the loss of freedom and concern about his family was particularly hard when he was in prison he said, “I think, I think every time I not, I can’t sleep there I think of home in every time, because why I think of my mother and my father what they are doing outside and everything like that” (II8, LL528-529).

The data suggests that for some of the participants, the gangs played the role of a pseudo family, and making the decision to leave them was hard because it felt like walking away from your family. This sentiment is captured by John’s sentiment that,

I thought, ‘no I can’t live without gangs,’ that was more for me than drugs and anything ... : I did cry the day when I have to, and I never cried as yet at the funeral of someone that I loved as the day I had to walk away from prison number things. (FG1, TS)

#### **5.4.1.4 Economics**

Economic survival was challenging for all of the participants. Dancer shared that “*djy moet iets doen om te survive.*” [you must do something to survive] (II6, LL73-74) Very few of the participants have had the experience of family members or themselves having long-term full-time employment. Even when there had been employment, the lack of resources for child care meant that as children the young men had often been left in vulnerable positions. One of the participants shared that because

“Both of them [granny and mother] were machinists. ... This here in the road there was someone here who was looking after me ... the man that lived there he did stuff with me that wasn’t right.” (II2, LL341-353)

According to the participants, there were sometimes opportunities for casual labour in the community, but it often did not pay well and could sometimes be quite risky, as illustrated in this excerpt from a focus group conversation about working on delivery trucks:

Snoop: Waste of your time putting your life at risk for R40, for 4 or 5 hours.

G: So, when you say 'putting your life at risk,' is it because it means you can get shot at while you doing the rounds?

Stout: Ja, your life's in danger, the guys come to the truck they want half a bread, you must defend yourself

Snoop: you drive into your enemy's territory

G: Truck driver's going to drive in there and you got to deliver

Dog: Ja he don't care about you, he's doing his job.

Stout: You at the back in the truck, the guys come there for a bread, now you tell them no I can't give bread.

Dog: he sommer mos take a gun out

Stout: He take a knife out he stab you, the driver do nothing. He just drive the truck. Your life is at risk if you work on that truck (FG2, ts1:25:24 - 1:26:33)

One individual stated that there were other more lucrative ways of making quick money but doing this, often involved selling drugs, carrying guns and affiliating with a group. For some of the participants the exposure to this alternative economy often started in the home, with family members dealing in alcohol and drugs. One of the other participants reported that before his mother converted to Christianity, "*ons het eerste bier of wyn gesmokkel. Dit was eerste wyn wa' ons gesmokkel*" [we first smuggled beer or win. It was first wine that we were smuggling] (II8, L201). Yet another shared that his "... *ouma het gedeal.*" [my granny was a dealer], which even involved him "... *op die ouerdom van 8, 9 het ek begin die mense serve 'aar by die deur*". [when I was 8 or 9 I started serving people at the door] (II1, LL167-172) It is interesting to note that although this participant's granny was sold substances, he did not indicate that she used drugs.

Some participants expressed the view that exposure to drug dealing at home often served as a springboard for selling merchandise at school. School was viewed by some participants as a place where "*klomp gel*" [plenty of money] could be made from selling "*entjies*" [cigarettes]. The data suggests that when participants and their friends were bored at school, they found it exciting to learn how to "*smokkel*" [smuggle] and

how to outwit “*die boere*” [police/authorities]. Stout shared that once, to avoid detection of his supplies at a police search on school property, “... *vat ek my textbook, sny ek al my blaaie uit, stiek my entjies in die textbook in, maak my textbook toe en dan stiek it in my rugsak,*” [I took my textbook, cut all the pages out, stuck my cigarettes in the textbook and placed the textbook in my rucksack] (II1, LL574-575).

Furthermore, gang leaders and merchants were role models in the area which even seemed to impact some participants’ career ambitions. The perception of their power and financial success meant that they were often viewed as role models, one of the participants shared that, “*Ek het opgekyk na ander ouens toe ... ek wil ook soos hulle wies eendag, ek wil ook smokkel, en n’ merchant word*” [I looked up to the guys, I also wanted to be like them one day, I also wanted to smuggle] (II1, LL22-23). Whilst all the participants were aware of the risks of becoming a part of this secondary economy, it was not necessarily viewed as “... *n’ verkeerde ding’ie.*” [as something wrong] (II1, L177).

Almost two-thirds of the participants said that in failing the formal, informal or illicit forms of income, there is also the option to “*skarrel*” [to scavenge] or to steal. Bourne shared that “... *daar’s tye wat ek honger gaan slaap ook, slaap ek, oggend dan skarrel ek dan kyk ek vir n’ vyf rand ‘aar of a twee rand kry ‘aar dan koop ek vir my n’ halwe brood of ek koop ek my tjips ...*” [there’s time when I go to sleep hungry, I sleep and then in the morning I go look around and see if I can find a R5 or a R2, then I buy myself a half loaf or I buy some chips] (II7, LL725-729). Finances or lack thereof also became a source of conflict. Rooney commented that his mother,

“... talk about every time you must go look for work ... we are too old to ask for money every time like that and all that stuff and we still go on and smoke ... she say that you can skarrel for money for dat maar you can’t skarrel for money for your bread and dis and every time you come to me you ask me for your bread and dis and dat.” (II8, LL73-77)

#### **5.4.2 Experience of interventions**

The community is considered a priority location for interventions, thus there have been various interventions targeting youth thought to be at risk of being on a trajectory to offending. These interventions include criminal justice in relation to incarceration,

court-ordered programmes and non-government intervention programmes. The participants in this study have intersected with or participated in at least one such intervention.

#### **5.4.2.1 Criminal justice**

Experience of the criminal justice system is widespread. Experiences of violence from state authorities has already been described. From the data and their experiences shared informally, prison is a common fact of their lived reality. In addition, participants told stories of court appearances, fines, lectures from judges and suspended sentences and community supervision as alternatives to incarceration.

##### *5.4.2.1.1 Incarceration*

Dancer shared that he *“het n’ maand by die gestrafdes gesit”* [I spent 1 month as a sentenced offender], words that are representative of the regular short stints that some participants spent in prison. Descriptions of these experiences varied but only Bourne felt that because of prison his life, *“dit verander het en nie meer verkeerde goed doen nie en so nie, nie steal’ie”* [it did change, I do not do wrong things anymore, I do not steal.]

Lucky’s 6 months as an awaiting trial detainee (ATD) was largely negative. He shares that there were “no programmes, only Sunday church and we would only be let out of our cells for food and ½ hour of exercise.” This it seemed only fuelled his sense of injustice in that “I was lying in prison when I should have been finishing matric.” However, he noted that it was not entirely bereft of education, as he “also learnt some stuff in prison – like how to charge a phone with the lights and how to smokkel in jail.”

On the other hand, Quinton seemed to view it more like a holiday, with a protective network of friends from home.

For me ... it was kind of fun ... because when I came there I saw everyone ... that’s in for years who was living here ... they were talking there for me, saying that ‘no I am here under them they gonna stand for me anything that’s gonna happen they gonna do the talking for me and so ... it was

almost laaik being in a hotel for me, because I did get anything I want, get cigarettes and all that.

#### 5.4.2.1.2 *Court ordered programmes*

Another type of criminal justice intervention that some of the participants had taken part in were court ordered programmes. These participants said that they were required to attend anger management courses. Here a participant describes the make-up of the course,

“we were like a group. Maybe I was here for a stab or for a knife, you were there for shoplifting, you here for your own reasons then we all get together we try to deal with our stuff together communicating with each other and so basically it’s this what we doing now here drawing also and just ... explaining how you feel and so on, stuff like that.”

None of the participants who had been remanded to attend these courses, had in fact completed the course. Gadgets said that “... I didn’t do my intervention finish ... I didn’t feel like going anymore ... My mother give me taxi fare money, I smoke it out and then I say I was there” (II2, LL669-671). Dancer shared that he did not attend his course at all because in order to attend the course it “meant walking through enemy territory and I wasn’t going to do that” (II6, LL91-92). From the data, it appears that none of the participants experienced any consequences as a result of failure to complete their prescribed courses. Dancer did however share that one was able to petition the court that attending the course may put your life at risk and the judge would then take that into consideration when deciding your sentence.

#### 5.4.2.2 *Intervention programmes*

From the data it appears that there are many programmes that target the young at various developmental stages. One of the participants, Rooney, spoke of a community-based programme he participated in whilst at junior school. The initiative was run by a locally based NGO, and “... this programme was here every time is *Michelle*, you must draw like that and do stuff like that ... every time ... come with a taxi ‘Jy we going to go out to that place” (II8, LL565-593). Similarly, Stout recalled that the same organisation,

... *hulle* did programmes ... with the *stoute laaities* [naughty children], [they] did feed us on the streets just to get us there to the programme ... he come bring us bread, there in the street, then he sit with us on the corner. Ask us, do we want to play games, want to do holiday programme. Come we going to eat some more there. Then he take us there. (FG1, TS)

The data suggests that the participants were not always clear about the purpose of the intervention but appeared to have enjoyed the activities and the provision of food associated with involvement in these activities.

Whilst some interventions were preventative, some of the participants shared that they had attended programmes as adolescents. Rooney attended a three-month programme which he refers to as rehab, through the neighbourhood church. Whilst he struggled to recall details, he did remember that it involved a wilderness component. Upon returning though, "*val ek in die gangsters. So skiet hulle my een tjommie dood wat saam in die rehab gewies het*" [I joined a gang. Then one of my friends who was with me on the rehab was shot dead] (I18, L). Other participants shared about participating in a "*boerekamp*" [police camp] in high school that apparently targeted the "*onbeskofte laaities*" [rude children]. These camps took young people out of the community to a designated site and the focus of these camps was physical training, drill training and talks around the dangers of substance abuse and gangsterism. However, some of the participants expressed the view that these camps were not very effective because according to Stout,

*het ons dan n klomp dagga, klomp buttons op die kamp. Hulle skut ons uit, but hulle kry niks ... Ons rook in die nagte innie kamers ... praat hulle saam met ons. "Ja julle wil mos gangsters wies, die's wat gangsterism doen, die's wat dingies doen". But daai's die tyd wat ons al klaar se mind opgemaak het, 'ons is die gang en hulle's die gang en hulle.' Toe is ons al klaar groepies al, 'aai hele 40 laaities wat op 'aai kamp is ... ons al tjappies ... daai's die tyd wat ons ernstig is.* [we had a whole lot of dagga and buttons on the camp. They searched us but found nothing. We smoked during the night in the rooms ... they spoke to us telling us that we just want to be gangsters, and this is what gangsterism does. But by then we had already made up our

minds, we were already in different gangs, all of us that were there ... with tattoos ... it was the time we became serious]. (FG 1, TS 1:35:23 - 1:38:28)

From the data it seems that there was a scarcity of intervention programmes targeting specific youth – there may be many programmes, but they may not be reaching the intended audience. There was also very little indication from the participants that formal intervention programmes had made any real difference in their life choices. In addition, one of the critiques about these various interventions was reflected in this comment by a participant in one of the focus group sessions,

you go home from that programme, you go back to where you came from and what you were busy doing, *wat djy eintlik gedoen het. Djy gaan na die programme toe, dan kom djy terug weer binne in selle goedte wat djy nou net van daan afkom.* [what you were really doing. You go to the programme and then you come back, back into the same stuff from where you came from] (FG 1, TS 1:31:16 - 1:32:06)

#### 5.4.3 Experiences of change

Some of the participants expressed the belief that change ultimately comes from yourself and not from any programme. A few of the participants describe turning points in their lives when they felt that "... I don't want to live so anymore." The following excerpt reflects the views of one of the participants, it was also a view shared by a few others.

*Ek het uit my eie reg uitgeko' het, ek kom uit gangsterism met die die drugs en so en ek het n anger management problem, sukke goedtes het ek 'aai gedoen maar vir my daai nie gehelp het man. Tot ek nou finally besluit "naai genoeg is genoeg, ek wil nie meer nie" sien djy? Daai's al who ek uit gekom het, oppie einde vanie dag kom it van jou self af, sien djy, dit gaan vir iemand anders afhang'ie.* [I came right on my own, I've come out of gangsterism and drugs, and I do have an anger management problem, and so I've attended such courses but they didn't help me. When I decided that enough is enough, I don't want to do this anymore. That's how I got out. At the end

of the day it comes from yourself, you can't rely on someone else.] (FG1, TS)

Whilst some of the participants chose this path, there was also a lot of ambiguity amongst most of the participants about how and if one was able to ever totally step out of this life. Half of the participants felt that they had made clear moves into an alternative way of being. Others reflected that they had made a few changes whilst for others it seemed that change was more focused on leaving gangsterism, not necessarily choosing to avoid violence. The data suggested that despite the changes many of the participants had made, most of them still viewed the use of violence as a justifiable option for dealing with conflict. So for example, even though Gadgets is no longer involved in a gang and is no longer using drugs, he believes that "if you want to hit me I'm going to hit you back, if I see you I'm going to hit you and the community will be with me." (II2, LL616-618).

Over time the participants said they developed various adaptive strategies to stay out of trouble, Bourne for instance shared that in his effort to stay out of trouble,

*Ek het my weg geskyf tot nou nog toe. Soos nou nog ek worry nie met vrinne nie en so aan Ja. Ek sien hulle steal en so aan, worry dit vir my nie, ek involve my in verkeerde dinge nie ... as ek sien hulle vat iets, .hou ek my mond, ek se niks. Loop ek net weg. [I have moved away from that until now. I don't worry about friends. I see them stealing but I don't worry about it and don't get involved in the wrong things. If I see them take something, I keep my mouth shut, I just walk away]. (II7, LL634-648)*

He does however add that whilst he no longer looks for trouble if "... jy my uitvloek en so ek gaan net terug vir jou uitvloek en loop weg. As it my ma wat jy uitvloek gaan ek nou baklei met jou want ek hou nie van daai nie." [If you swear at me, then I will swear in response and walk away. If it's my mother that you a swearing about then I'm going to fight with you because I don't like that] (II7, 765-767).

All of the participants shared that changing your lifestyle was not easy. Whilst some were able to walk away from gangs, not all the participants left the gang-based lifestyle. One of the participants said that even though he is still affiliated to a gang, he is no longer an active member. He goes on to say that because of his previous association

and activity, he still faced constant danger, and therefore he had to "... be *aan die pos* [vigilant] because why I don't know every time somebody come here your enemy is driving past you" (II8, LL282-283). Dancer, on the other hand, sees his future with the gang, he will "... *dala met die* [gang]" [die with the gang] (II6, L104).

#### **5.4.3.1 Stimulus and motivation for change**

The motivation for change varied among the participants. In the stimulus activity that worked with the photographs, Stout tells a story that ends with romantic love as the motivator for change after being in prison, he said, "... *as dji nou uitkom kry dji n lekker girlie en so aan, en miskien dan gat dji jou lewe wil change het en so.*" [when you come out you get yourself a nice girl and then maybe you will change your life] (II1, LL28-29). Many of the participants shared that they viewed the birth of their child as a significant stimulus and motivator for change. For example, Lucky said that "... what motivated me to change was when I became a father." (II3, LL221-222). Whilst Gadgets was there at the birth of his child and that when "... *my kind gebore gewies het was n belangrike oomblik ... Daa's hoe ek begin te try om my lewe heelte mal te change.*" [when my child was born was an important moment. That's how I began to try and change my life] (II2, LL47-49) The absence of their own fathers in their lives seemed to be a major motivating factor for many of the participants to change, Stout shared,

"I don't want her to go the same, through the same things I went through in life I never saw my dad I don't know him ... and the life I was living that could have happened to my daughter also and that made me realise I can't go on like this." (FG1, TS)

However, despite their best intentions, it is clear from the data that all of the participants faced many obstacles on their journey to transforming their lives.

#### **5.4.3.2 Obstacles to change**

The participants related the obstacles they encountered on their journey. One of them, John, shared the view that the difficulty for many is that change is not a simple process. He related that, "at the beginning stage you can't see that as a journey ... I thought I would not make a year out of prison ... [because] immediately you became a zero in

life ... *tussen die ouense djy moet weg loop* [when in the midst of the men you must walk away] ... people that feared you they now challenging you, they not afraid of you.” (FG1, This view was shared by many of the participants who had been to prison, that what helped in the end was accepting that “returning to society, to try and think normally was incredibly difficult.” (FG1, ). From the data it appears that making a mindset shift was one of the biggest obstacles they confronted. Closely tied to that appears to be the challenge of emotional regulation. During his early stages of changing, Stout said that “... in the house aggression played out for the first few 6 months when I was still working on [it] ... if someone made me angry I would get aggressive I want to fight we just feel, then we do.” For Stout and a few of the other participants, inserting the pause to think before acting on their feelings played a significant role in staying away from violent responses. Over time the participants said they developed various adaptive strategies to cope with this.,

### **5.4.3.3 What facilitates and sustains change**

#### *5.4.3.3.1 Pro-social role models*

One of the most significant factors named by the participants was the need for more pro-social role models in the community. In particular the participants felt that having access to people who had managed to come “*uit die ding uit.*” [get out of this lifestyle], would make change seem more attainable. They mention that there is a distinct lack of these role models in the community but also make mention of Jeremy (K13) as someone who has become an inspiration for them and a symbol that a different way of life is possible.

#### *5.4.3.3.2 Faith/religion/spirituality*

Both the participants and the key informants shared that converting to or joining a religion is considered a legitimate means of leaving gang life. John (a key informant) however noted that recently this has changed because of the increased number of pastors who have been used as a front for illicit activities. Despite the perception of the church being a way to get out of this lifestyle, only one of the participants spoke of the importance of God, church or religion as an avenue for change. In fact one of the other participants was cynical about the role that conversion to religion played in

transforming lives. This emerged in a focus group conversation (an excerpt of which is included below):

S: And like that's the thing you don't have to deal to put your child or to give your child a better life. You see, you can do it with Jesus also and Jesus will provide like anything that you need if you ask him,

GA: *Wanner gaan djy dit kry?* [when are you going to receive it?]

S: *Naai ...*

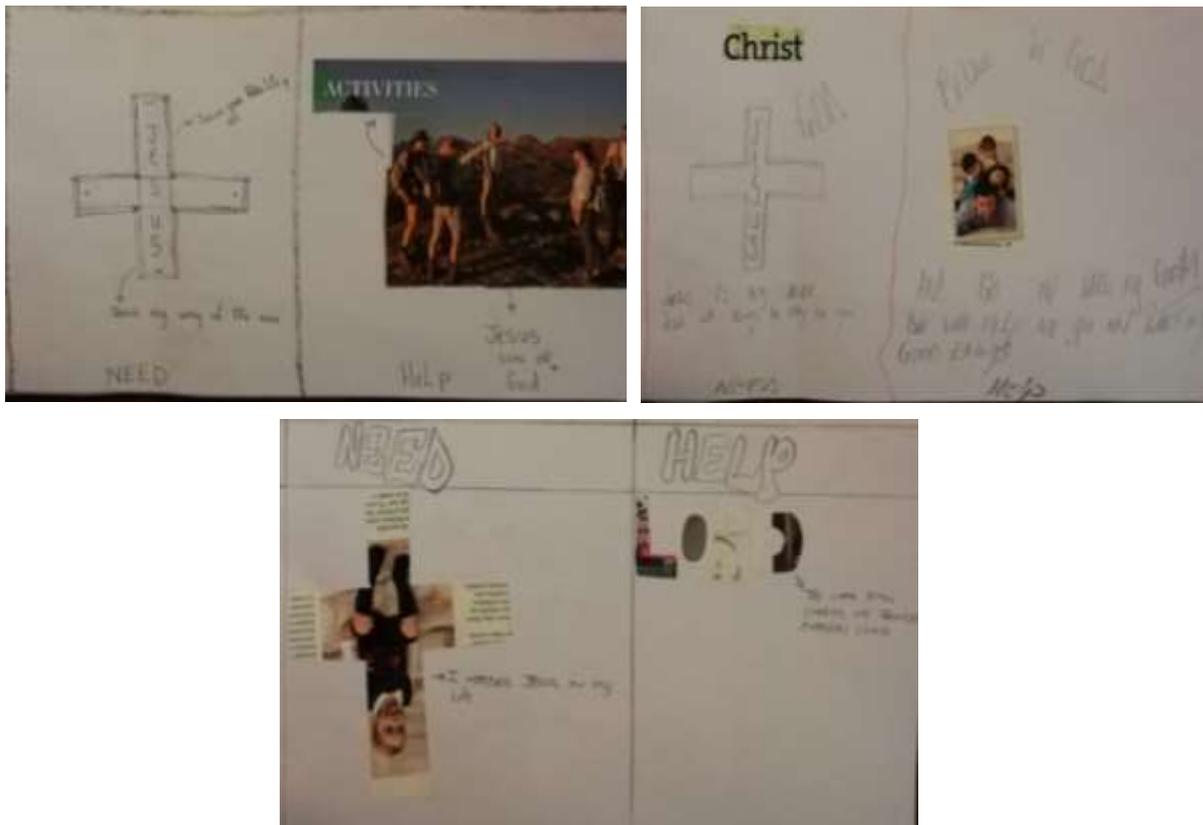
*[snigger from Gadgets]*

S: *Hoe means djy wanner gat djy dit kry? Dis mos God my bru man. Jou faith wat jy het in God in, sien djy, daai's nie gepromise'ie wanner djy sal dit kry nie but as djy glo jou faith groot is en glo, sien djy. dan djy sal die results sien.* [What do you mean 'when are you going to receive it? It's God man. Your faith that you have in God. When is not promised but if you have faith then one days you will see the fruit]. (FG1, TS)

It was interesting that whilst this view dominated in individual and focus group conversations during the storyboard activity, during the second focus group participants indicated that the key factor for change and for sustaining change is faith in Jesus (see figure 5.3). However, in a follow up conversation with Snoop and Dog they said that during the session they had felt judged, perhaps even pressured, by Stout into taking that stance. They shared that they felt that he had forgotten where he had been (the life he used to live) (DG, RJ 17/11/19). John, though, has expressed some support for Stout's perspective and points out how researchers and academics have often dismissed faith or spirituality as an important vehicle of transformation. In his view,

I agree with him (Stout) to a point of where the faith is concerned, cause you know I am also a believer. And with this research stuff and academic stuff I have learned to be careful with who, who's participating because at times you could feel discouraged and you could feel confused, especially when you meet with academics ... they don't really want to talk about the

faith because as *ons* believers *is ons het mos* [if we are believers then we have] a transformation and a renewal from mindset. (FG 1, TS)



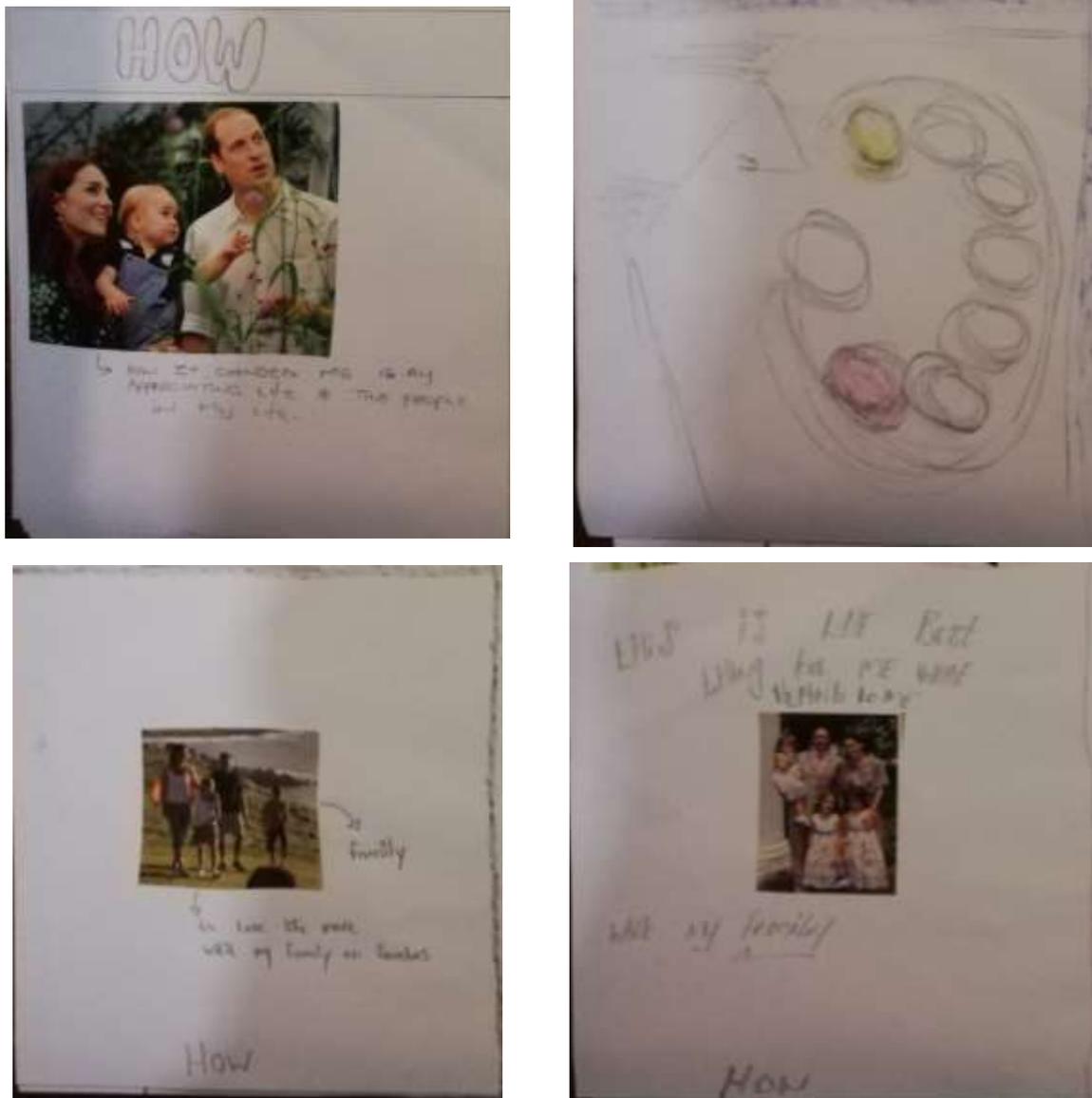
**Figure 5.3: Sections of the storyboards in which faith is emphasised**

#### 5.4.3.3.3 Family, belonging and support

Snoop and Dog's view that Stout had forgotten where he had come from, reflects a view held by some that people in the community often do not make it easy for those trying to change. Some of the participants shared that one was often critiqued when you were working to change yourself. People of said that "djy hou jou self kwaai" [you think you're all that] and did not support them in their efforts to change. All of the participants who took part in the first focus group shared the view that change was not possible and could not be sustained without support from others and a sense of belonging somewhere. This somewhere includes;

*J: You need the support*

*S: You need the support ja: Family, community, you know, you need the support even of the business people*



**Figure 5.4: Storyboard panels indicating family and belonging**

It is interesting to note that on all four posters in figure 5.4, including my own, each panel reflects that change looks like intimacy and belonging. This was summed up by Gadgets when he shared that after he decided he needed to live differently,

*I went home again, I went to my mother, I told my mother I don't want to live so anymore. That's the time she took me back and so on and then my aunties ... come take me away, they say I must come live there with them for a short period of time, just to get me on the right path again. (I12, LL492-495)*

## **5.5 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the participants through a brief biographical description of key informants and the emerging-adults. I then presented the data under the broad themes of their experiences of living in Duineveld, of interventions and what their experiences of change have been. An aim of the presentation of data was to give space for the voices of the participants and hence long quotes, in their own words were used. The next chapter will engage in a discussion on the data presented.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss some of the key findings of the study and relate these to previously conducted research and the experiences of this research context. In doing so I hope to add value to the existing body of knowledge related to the phenomenon and research methodology that creates an enabling research context when working with hard to access populations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Based on my previous experience of working on intervention initiatives that sought to address community-based youth violence, I made an assumption that conducting this research would be a complex and often messy process. Furthermore, my experience suggests that very little space has been created for beneficiaries to enter into conversation around how they experience these interventions. In this study, I set out to gain a deeper insight into the social worlds that emerging-adult males in a low-income community (plagued by violence) on the Cape Flats have to navigate. I hoped that by including the participants in the research, we would amplify their voices and the perspectives of emerging-adult violent offenders regarding the value of the interventions in their lives.

The study was set in a particular context, a low-income community on the Cape Flats. It is important to note in this process that even though I stated my position upfront, as a middle-aged white male conducting this research, I had not anticipated fully how complex and challenging this process would be from the onset up to the presenting of my findings. As I am writing up this study, about the lived experiences of a group of young, coloured males in a low socio-economic context, I am mindful that using the historically racialized term “coloured” could be viewed as problematic. However, I felt that I had to include the term coloured in order to locate the study within its social and historical setting. However, I am also acutely aware of a racialised historical official discourse that has in the past often defined the coloured community as ‘a problem to be solved’ [see Chapter 2] and of current concerns related to white people making generalised claims about people of colour. Thus, even though the goal of this study

was to forefront the voices of emerging-adult male violent offenders from a historically coloured community, ultimately, I am writing and making interpretations from my privileged position. It is important then to emphasise that the findings in this study should not be read as making any definitive claims of coloured peoples' experience or 'colouredness'.

Navigating the research was a complex process that started with defining the focus and research design. I am of the view that because many interventions are developed and facilitated by people like me, that is, a privileged outsider, authentic engagement in the intervention space requires that I listen to and try to understand with the young men their lived reality of the context and the developmental pathways of those who become violent offenders.

Experience gained from working as a youth and community developer led me to seek a research design that would enable a collaborative process. In addition I sought to honour, value, "... pause, listen and allow ..." the perspectives of violent offenders in order to "... generate new ideas ..." about intervention and prevention strategies (McIntyre, 2000:126). Participatory Action Research (PAR) shares much in common with the practice of community development and is committed to prioritising the voice of marginalised groups. Nevertheless, I found the process difficult and often questioned the wisdom of setting out on a PAR process for this study, especially given the numerous obstacles I encountered, not the least of which was time. I do also wonder as to the participatory nature of the study due to the difficulties of access. However, to access some of the participants meant working closely with people and organisations in the community networks that included discussions on the dissemination of this study. In addition, the unplanned journey I have begun with John, initially a key informant and also as research allies, added, in my view, a critical collaborative dimension to the study.

The dominant discourse suggests that young men in urban contexts of violence are prone to criminality and violence, a discourse often intersecting with race and masculinity (Foster, 2013; Alexander, 2012; Jensen, 2006; Wilkinson et al., 2009). I was curious about the agency of the young violent offenders I had historically worked with, and how they had navigated a complex and violent social terrain; and, therefore, how valuable to that social terrain were the interventions they had participated in? The

research was guided by the following research question: **How has the meaning-making of emerging-adult violent offenders influenced the value of interventions in their lives?** I sought to do that through exploring their perspectives on living in an urban war zone and how this then intersected with any intervention strategies and programmes that they had participated in.

My research findings suggest that the trajectory to violence is a complex one that is not necessarily an outcome of being a member of a gang in high risk communities. Failure to take cognisance of the agency that participants are exercising in making the choices they do, albeit with limited options, could result in interventions that are good on paper but are not responsive to the lived reality of the beneficiaries. Wallace and Kotavtchvka (cited in Damons, 2014:186) suggest that we view the young men as being "... the architects of their own lives, free to negotiate their own pathway, to take or avoid their own risks".

## **6.2 SHAPING OF MEANING-MAKING: EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN AN URBAN WAR ZONE**

The shaping of one's meaning-making is shaped by what one sees, feels and experiences and how these interact with each other over time and space. The study's findings support Henriksen and Bengtsson's (2018) framework of temporal and spatial entanglements. However, whilst their framework was focussed on violence as it occurred across time and social spaces, this study indicates that the entanglement extends beyond violence to include other psycho-social factors; that could be termed an entanglement of trauma. Figure 5.1 in chapter 5, portrays this entanglement of violence with various other factors, key among those being, loss, fluidity and economic factors. The diagram also illustrates the different spatial contexts in which this entanglement manifests; these include the home, school, street, gang and state institutions. It is this entanglement that appears to have played a significant role in shaping the meaning-making of the young men who participated in this study.

### **6.2.1 Normalisation of violence**

The pervasiveness of violence experienced by the participants across the social spaces in their lives as reported in this study, is consistent with other studies in the

South African context such as Kaminer et al. (2018), Dawes et al. (2016), Van der Merwe et al. (2013), Burton and Leoschut (2012) and Shields et al. (2008). The findings also support the descriptions of blurred lines between offender, victim and witness (Henriksen & Bengtsson, 2018; Pain, 2003). What was interesting in this study is that in some instances all three positions were experienced in the same incident. This and other data is consistent with a normalization of violence that has been observed in different locations (Monahan et al., 2015; Du Plessis et al., 2015; Winton, 2005). Furthermore, it is important to note that this normalization of violence remains a constant reality, even for those attempting to craft out new pathways of being. In the course of this research process, I witnessed two separate incidents of intergenerational violent conflict; and also noted that most of the participants shared experiences of having been involved in or having witnessed this. From their recounting of the experiences, it appeared that who was involved and how they were related to or connected to the parties involved, influenced strongly their perceptions of what was justified or not. This perception then also influenced their view on their roles in the acts of violence and was used to justify the ways in which they chose to respond.

### **6.2.2 Normalisation of loss**

Loss was a significant and recurring theme in the findings. This was interesting when one considers the relative paucity in the literature of the role that loss can and does play in chronic violence. All of the participants shared experiences of significant and continuous traumatic loss throughout their lives. The experiences of loss ranged from the loss of key maternal and paternal figures, change in living circumstance or places of residence and loss through incarceration or death. There appeared in some recounting of experiences, to be almost a trivialization of violent death. It was interesting to note that when recounting these events, participants appeared disconnected from any emotional and psychological response. Garbarino, (2015), in his findings shares that the disconnection is sometimes surreal. He shares in his work a game called 'funeral' played by young people in a community in Chicago. In their research, Benjamin and Carolissen (2015) concur with Garbarino (2015), that this type of response is not unusual, in contexts which experience ongoing violence and loss. They suggest that it would appear that individuals may often have had to disconnect from their emotions from a young age in order to protect themselves from the effects

of trauma. A lack of adult responsiveness to or shielding from exposure to traumatic experiences, also appears to have influenced how the young men handled ongoing loss. There appeared to be confusion around whether the removal of a significant figure in their lives was good or bad; often receiving conflicting messages from the adults in their lives. The literature suggests that the limited or conflicted way in which the adults acknowledged loss or grief may have modeled the young peoples' current responses to loss (Crenshaw & Garbarino, 2007).

In the course of the research process, I recorded in my research journal and spoke with my critical friends about my concern regarding my own changing responses to participants' stories of exposure to trauma and loss. It appeared that as the research progressed, I was mirroring their response. I was concerned about this and sought out the experiences of other researchers working in similar contexts. I wondered in particular whether researchers, academics and practitioners have sometimes become numb to the suffering that seems to lie beneath so much violence and pain. Greg Boyle (2017: online), who has lived and worked amongst gang members in east LA for the last 30 years, makes the poignant comment that "there is violence in gang violence but there is no conflict. It is not 'about something.' It is the language of the despondent and traumatized."

### **6.2.3 Normalisation of fluidity**

The findings of this study also unveiled a complex network and change or fluidity. Fluidity in this sense refers to the instability and even chaos caused by the ever changing family and community dynamics. This appears to have been a significant feature in most of the participants' lives from early childhood. The high degree of mobility, instability in family structures and experiences of poverty suggest that many of the participants may have presented with a disorganised attachment style as infants. In the literature, this type of attachment style in early childhood, coupled with the ongoing or frequent exposure to trauma and violence, may result in emotional dysregulation (Perry et al., 2018; Garbarino, 2015). In addition, the participants' reflections of their learning and behavioural challenges at school and at home; their substance use and abuse, reflect findings in research conducted by Perry et al. (2018) and Cantor et al. (2018). They suggested that contexts in which there is chaos, neglect

and violence may deprive children of the developmental capacity needed to realise their potential.

#### **6.2.4 The influence of street life**

Many of the participants' stories of their life on the street reflect Payne's (2008:5) conceptualisation of street life "as an ideology centred on personal and economic survival ... [that includes] a spectrum of networking behaviours or activities that manifest through bonding and illegal activities." The participants' made numerous references to feeling that they had had to respond to slights or insults with aggressive confrontation and sometimes violence, in order to be respected or to avoid being victimised. They had to learn how to navigate the different forms of aggression and decide which type of response would be best suited at any given time. So, for example, verbal aggression such as swearing may in one incident be countered by swearing whilst in another incident the same words could get you stabbed. According to the participants you not only had to know the language of the street, you also had to read the mood or energy at any given time. Anderson (1999) refers to this as learning to understand the code of the street. The daily grind for economic survival was another significant aspect of the participants' lives. For each of the participants this meant different things. For some it meant becoming part of the casual labour work force, for others it meant scavenging or begging and yet for others it meant engaging in illicit activities. The participants' economic activities mirror what Jensen (2006) refers to as operating in 'die agterbuurte' [the backstreets]. Understanding or gaining insight into this way of making a living has important consequences for future research and interventions. I often waited for participants to arrive for scheduled appoints to which they did not show up because they had to "put bread on the table". It was interesting to note that nobody questioned too much what this "putting bread" on the table entailed. One was left with the distinct impression that in this space you do not pry into how people chose to survive.

#### **6.2.5 Social Navigation maps**

We navigate our social world through experiential maps informed by our lived realities. Through the narration of their lives the participants in this study have shown the ways in which they have been impacted by the spatial and temporal entanglements listed in

this study. The construction of these context responsive maps is consistent with those found by researchers working in this field. Findings, from this and other studies, suggest that as a result of exposure to ongoing violence, the participants often themselves use aggression and violence in a variety of social and interpersonal settings when navigating their world. Participants in this study often spoke of “being ready in case anything happens”. This hypervigilance is a common theme in research done in various contexts reported in the literature (Dill & Ozer, 2016; Vigh, 2006; Anderson, 1999; Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998). Working in this context and speaking to these young men about what was needed to live where they do, made me as a researcher note significant changes in my behaviour. Previously, in my work as a youth and community intervention practitioner, I had moved around in the community often not mindful of my own state of being. During this process, although I was confident but cautious, after spending time with the young men focused specifically around what it took to survive on a daily basis I was introduced to the complex and dynamic reality of living with the threat of violence and death on a daily basis. This changed how I navigated certain spatial contexts in the community. I noticed that I was often tense and alert, listening, and watching for non-verbal cues of a threat (with my relatively untrained eye). I was also aware that by the very nature of who I was, I represented an authority figure. At first, I thought that being referred to as “larney” was just a colloquial term for an authority figure but as I engaged with the data during the iterative analysis process, I came to understand that for many of the participants, authority figures were people that were “fair game”. The findings illustrate a lack of trust in and often active opposition to authority figures. The participants shared their opposition to parent figures in the home, at school with school teachers and in their interactions with the police. These findings around the participants’ often subtle and sometimes more overt aggression towards authority and authority figures are similar to findings presented in the existing literature on the lack of trust in authority structures in marginalised spaces (see Wilkinson et al., 2009). Garbarino (2015) describes the aforementioned response styles as being similar to those one finds in a war zone. He refers to this as a war zone mentality, an accumulation of moral and emotional effects responsive to the ever-present presence of violence or the threat thereof. Garbarino (2015) goes on to say that this mentality or mindset shapes how people interact with and respond to events and social spaces in their lives.

## **6.3 THE EXPERIENCE AND VALUE OF INTERVENTIONS**

How did they interact with the intervention space and how effective were the interventions for navigating their real-life contexts? In relation to these questions, what is pertinent in the findings is that although all participants had been involved in some form of intervention, including the criminal justice system, their recollection of the experience thereof was limited. In addition, many participants struggled to recall the overall focus or details of these programmes. In fact, when initially asked whether or not they had participated in any intervention programmes, they said no. However, as the interviews or focus groups progressed, they often shared inadvertently, details of previous exposure to intervention programs. I am however cautious in how I interpret this as it is possible that some of the participants may not have understood what I meant when I asked them the question, or I was not clear in how I asked the question. In addition, Van der Kolk (2012) points out that in contexts of trauma there is often a disconnection between the rational and emotional brains, such that memories can be fragments and emotions that are pieced together, but not necessarily as a logical whole. This could offer an explanation to the seeming contradictions and timeline discrepancies that sometimes occurred in the interviews.

### **6.3.1 Experiences of intervention**

The findings suggest that despite the history of exposure to trauma and violence from early childhood, very few of the participants had had any psycho-social support. The reasons as they emerge from the data appear to be related to the normalisation of violence from early childhood; and a lack of available and easily accessible resources. There are also suggestions that parents and schools have limited options available to them when it comes to dealing with troubled or oppositional youth. This often resulted in either physical punishment or practices of exclusion, which then resulted in some of the young men dropping out of school.

The interventions which were more readily recalled by the participants were programs they had attended as children and which had often provided them with fun activities and food. From the findings there is a suggestion that participation in intervention or awareness raising programmes declined. Some of the reasons shared by the participants include involvement in other activities, lack of interest in the programs on

offer, the use of illicit substances, peer influence and having to travel through 'enemy' territory'. The programs on offer therefore appeared to be competing with many other things. However, it appears that often these programmes lacked the gravitas to draw them away or prevent them from initial or further engagement in violence, especially gang involvement. It was even a precursor to gang involvement. One of the programmes that participants recalled in great detail was a programme initiated by the police which they referred to as the '*boerekamp*' [police camp]. From their descriptions of the programme it appeared to be a preventative programme aimed at deterring youth from participating in criminal activity. The negative effect this seemed to garner is consistent with the literature that speaks to the ineffectiveness of deterrence programmes (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2013; Garbarino, 1999). Although none of the participants mentioned diversion programmes by name, from their descriptions and my experience I was able to identify the court ordered programmes such as 'anger management' or referral to in house or outpatient drug rehabilitation programmes. As such, these programmes were reported to contain a broad spectrum of offender types, from shoplifting to violence related, suggesting that the specific needs of participants in the diversion programmes was diluted to accommodate all members. The data appears to corroborate what Badenhorst (2012) and Van der Merwe and Dawes (2013) have critiqued about diversions, that they often lack specificity in focus. There is no evidence to indicate whether this was due to a lack of rigorous assessment or a lack of capacity. What has clearly compromised such state-based interventions has been the experiences of violence and acts of corruption by state authorities themselves. This perception, and the firsthand experience of violence and corruption, has only added to the general lack of respect that participants had for the police since those who were supposed to uphold the laws were often the ones breaking the law and seemingly getting away with it. It is also significant that none of the participants had completed the diversion programmes and had only experienced minimal consequences as a result.

### **6.3.2 Relevance of interventions**

The findings showed that participants could not specify the relevance or value of interventions for their lives now. It may however be that the paucity of interventions undermines the intended outcomes of the interventions on offer. One of the significant

challenges highlighted by some of the participants about these interventions was that there was no post programme support. One of the participants shared that after the programmes you go back into the community or back into the cells, “*djy is terugin’ie ding*” [you are back in the thing], that is, back into the same environment that you have only received a brief respite from, for a couple of hours. There were indications that the participants felt that there were no interventions that could offer them sustainable support in navigating the complex social terrain that was their lives. This highlights the challenge of attempting to steer young people away from violence and gang involvement without engaging with their families, schools and structural realities of poverty and violence. Abt (2016) and Van der Merwe and Dawes (2013) have emphasised that single component interventions, such as those mentioned above, are not effective and can in fact aggravate existing issues. Perry et al. (2018) recommends that a trauma-informed approach is best suited to working with young people who have been exposed to ongoing violence, yet none of the participants made any mention of trauma informed support.

The fluidity of life in this context has significant implications for how interventions are designed and structured, especially in terms of the needs of the participants. The war zone mentality means that survival is often upper most on the minds of many of participants in the intervention programmes. This survival mindset often means planning life for today and not beyond, so according to the participants’ when opportunities for income became available or they needed drugs that became the priority.

The inability of the participants to access both content and programmes suggest that they may have been sceptical about what was on offer, and who was offering it. Many recalled feeling more comfortable attending programmes that were initiated by the local church or the reformed community members. Member checking revealed that participants preferred programmes or people that had been vetted by trusted networks. The language in which the courses were presented; how they were facilitated and whether the participants viewed them as relevant in the context all greatly influenced their willingness to participate. From the example of interventions shared, there was a suggestion that interventions were often time bound by funders or government and, therefore, as my own timeline tension suggests, a lack of flexibility and responsiveness

in the structure of interventions may have undermined their transformative potential. In addition, the participants observed that there was a lack of role models in the community who have been 'in the thing' (violence or gangs) and who have successfully transitioned to an alternative way of being. The facilitation of the program also appeared to play a significant role in participants' perception of relevance. The language used and the facilitator could influence the responsiveness and meaningfulness of the programme, so for example whilst many of the participants often accommodated me by engaging in English, their mother tongue is Kaaps, often characterised by code switching, that is, switching between different languages in the same conversation. However, there was also the switch between 'mainstream' language code and the gang code that I was aware of but not privy to.

### **6.3.3 What participant input suggests would be relevant:**

#### **6.3.3.1 *Emotional Regulation***

Whilst the participants did not use the term emotional or self-regulation, they did communicate that the process of developing ways of being was often undermined by a quick flare up of anger and aggression. Even after many years on the journey, John noted that this was still a challenge for him. As highlighted in chapter 3, regulation is not an inherent skill but has to be learnt. Perry et al. (2018) and Griffin et al. (2012) contend that self-regulation must be one of the first steps in the process of intervention with violent offenders.

#### **6.3.3.2 *Responsibility and care***

A few participants highlighted the role that becoming a father played in the stimulus and motivation to change. It alludes to a sense of purpose but more specifically reflects the feelings of responsibility and care, that another living being needs them. This is supportive of prison-based programmes that have made use of animal care to develop empathy in violent offenders. Garbarino (2015) refers to this as increasing the individual's circle of care. Thus, including a process within interventions that involves responsibility and care may help to stimulate and motivate change.

### **6.3.3.3 *Belonging and support***

Belonging is an important human need and in contexts such as Duineveld this is often provided in a conditional way for young men by the gangs. The need was expressed, by some of the participants, for acceptance and intimacy and not isolation (interestingly expressing an emerging-adult psycho-social task). What this also implies is that if interventions do not replace what the gang provides, it will undermine the intervention process. Similarly, it appears that the journey to alternative ways of being is not possible without support from the community. Aside from the difficulties of overcoming personal issues such as addiction, support is needed to overcome the judgement of others in the community.

### **6.3.3.4 *Increasing access to opportunities***

Snoop and Dog made the point that intervention programmes must focus less on violence and more on education. They argued that the youth in the area were living with continuous violence thus thinking about and experiencing it every day. What is needed, they argue, is education – to learn to read and write. This may be an expression of their awareness of how a lack of education may rob them of access to opportunities and perhaps become a source of frustration. This view is supported in the literature by Winton (2005) who argues that creating access to economic opportunities may serve as a preventative measure. The data then also suggests that participants also sought opportunities for a respite from the violence of their everyday reality.

## **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The main limitation of the study is that it was confined to a specific context with a homogenous sample that involved a group of emerging-adult male violent offenders from a low-income, historically coloured community. Thus, it presented a narrow focus across economic, racial and gender lines. However, from an age and gender perspective it is representative of the cohort most likely to be offenders or victims of violence. In addition, their racial status represents the skewed nature of public discourse in response to crime and violence. Using such a sample therefore can

privilege the voice of those who have been marginalised and excluded about the reality of navigating an urban war zone.

A further limitation is that the sample group have largely been confined to their area of residence and therefore the location of the study and scope did not fully engage and explore their experiences of the broader socio-economic context and thus the depth of how dominant discourses have shaped their view of self.

Another limitation is that it was difficult to know how violent the participants were as access was based on community knowledge not objective fact. However, violence in the social spaces of the participants is wide-spread and they have all engaged in some degree of significant violence.

## **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The difficulty of continuing to live in a context where violence has been normalized and therefore where aggression and violence are often valued, suggests that interventionists need to think more practically about how to teach and model self-regulation, but also how to navigate these moments without escalating the incident. This should be a research and intervention process done in collaboration with the beneficiaries themselves.
- A question that has emerged is how best to integrate some of the insights generated as to what facilitates alternative ways of being in future interventions.
- Informed by Cahill (2000) and Lindegaard (2009) intervention programmes need to diversify the cultural repertoires or social literacies of participants to increase their life options, by widening the social spaces they can navigate successfully. This should include decision-making skills.
- Prevention and intervention strategies need to consider seriously and carefully how to include the skills to deal with grief and loss. This is not simple as individuals have taken measures to avoid emotion as a protective mechanism. Developing such grief processes must go hand in hand with psycho-social tools to be able to continue to navigate a complex and often violent social world.
- The importance of school as a social institution and perhaps the site of the first intervention means increasing the support and resource capacity available to schools, especially schools in contexts of chronic violence. An important aspect of

this capacity building is a classroom management dimension that equips teachers to be responsive to pervasively violent contexts.

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

The birthing of this research came about through the reflections on my own work with young violent offenders, and the extent to which it was relevant to their lived reality. Many young men growing up in contexts of ongoing violence, or urban war zones face an entanglement of trauma where violence, loss, fluidity and economic survival play a significant role in the course of their lives. This interconnected web has meant that these young men have had to learn how to navigate multiple spaces of threat, where aggression and violence can be functional navigational tools. Whilst young violent offenders are often considered deviant, their actions can be viewed as an expression of their agency in the midst of limited options. This research aimed to explore the value of interventions for young men through giving voice to their lived reality and perspectives on interventions. Criminal justice was largely viewed as negative and often abusive, whilst it was notable that there was very little in the way of interventions to 'evaluate.' This suggests a lack of resources and a lack of easy access. On the other hand, the emerging-adult participants had valuable input to offer as to what they believed could make a difference in intervention programmes. There is a definite need to include young violent offenders in the design of interventions targeting them as they have demonstrated thoughtfulness and insight into these as they relate to their lived context. Although what this study suggests is that inclusion is not an easy process. As a practitioner I have often been critical of intervention programmes and strategies, however, it must be noted that community, gang and personal dynamics can undermine even the best content. Therewith lies the future challenge.

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## **Appendix 1: Interview Schedule for the Key Informants**

### **1 Autobiographical information related to life in Duineveld**

- 1.1 In which part of Duineveld did you grow up?
- 1.2 Where do you live now?
- 1.3 What was it like growing up in Duineveld?
- 1.4 Describe your best and worst experiences
- 1.5 What were the biggest challenges growing up in Duineveld?
- 1.6 What or who helped you as you developed?

### **2. *The Context: Duineveld***

- 2.1 Describe everyday life in Duineveld.
- 2.2 What are usual everyday activities?
- 2.3 What do people do for fun?
- 2.4 What are the opportunities in Duineveld?
- 2.5 What are the challenges and frustrations?
- 2.6 What do community people say about Duineveld?
- 2.7 What do outsiders say about Duineveld?
- 2.8 What do you think an outsider should be aware of when coming into Duineveld?

### **3. *Youth, young men and violence***

- 3.1 What is your experience of violence in Duineveld?
- 3.2 What do you think leads young men to get involved in violence?
- 3.3 What do you think leads young people to get involved in gangs?
- 3.4 What other forms of violence are there besides those that are gang related?
- 3.5 As an outsider what should I know about youth culture and gang culture in Duineveld?

### **4. *The Criminal Justice System***

- 4.1 What do you think about the police?
- 4.2 Describe your experiences with the police
- 4.3 What are your experiences of the court system?
- 4.4 What are your experiences of prisons?
- 4.5 What do you think of prisons?

### **5. *Intervention programmes***

- 5.1 What intervention programmes in the community are available for young people who are involved in violence?
- 5.2 How accessible and effective are they to young people?

## Appendix 2: Sample transcription, key informant interview

**Location:** Kevin's home

*(also present was John who had introduced me to Kevin and who was also present as a translator if needed)*

...

- G: So ander mense se 'jy's dit' want, because you live there you, jy's mos deel van daai. Even if you're not
- K: Ja jou is 'ie maar nou miskien die vrinne wat n man loop ook, daai's ook daai peer pressure nou, sien 'aai, 'aai druk word nou op jou gesit hoekom djy loop nou saam met hulle, nie met die doel jy's nou deel van hulle nie, dis maar net, dit is jou vrinne, jy bly saam op een straat maar as jy gesien word met hulle, word jy mos geklas van die ander span, hulle se jy is mos nou deel van 'aai groep. Sien jy as it kom nou van die begin van skool is it baie min wat skool geattend het.
- G: Begin van hierdie term?
- K: Ja van hierdie term. Toe die skool sluit daai dag is daar n hele klip gooi'ry, en hulle het n kind gestiek ook 'aar, n Phoenix kind, amper dood gestiek ja. Dit was in die koerant gewies, boy
- G: Was die kind van hierdie kant af of van daardie kant af?
- K: Die kind was van die kant af. The fear is now in the children because they think if they going to go to school then they also going to be
- J: Intimidate ...
- G: Ok so a lot of them have stayed at home
- K: Ja a lot of them stayed at home. Because other lady she says no she gonna rather look for a college for her son. He is nou maar grade 9. You see she not going to send him back, just change the school.
- G: But he's not in a gang
- K: He's not part of a gang but because he stay here
- G: Is it a case, the nature of it is you live in a street you got friends and some of your friends are involved in gangs but they're your friends
- K: Ja now you also been tied up
- G: Do even the police sometimes think that?
- K: Ja it's like a stugmaar that is here in our community, you see, I hear they also want to close now Silverstream, you see and that going to cause more trouble because now the school's going to be over populated, you see, and what happens at the schools you see like most of the children they are using drugs like smoking dagga, you see and that is the in thing now in our community. Because you see in the morning how they walk, they walk and smoke. So their mindset is not right when they come to school now, you see, as I ... explained already to other people what they should try to do they must try to make like a drug test you see like every three months, you see, then they can see for who needs more help than those who only need teaching you see because that is what bring that thing also by the school amongst the youth. Because lots of children about the age of 12, you can just walk around here during the days and you can see, you see he is in primary school grade 7 that is smoking, you see.
- J: It's socially acceptable op die higher grader om te rook
- K: Ja because that is mos, you see money, not about age or colour you see if a child come and he buy you see you not going to say jy no. Like in our time we cannot go buy by the drug lords. Must send somebody of age to buy for us
- G: So it has changed over time?
- K: Ja but now it change you see no matter if you ten or 12 years old and you come with a R10 or a R20 and you buy stuff, you see, he not going to say 'hey wait i also raise children so im not going to help you' now he's not like that, the way life has changed. you see
- G: Can I ask then what was it like for you growing up. You said you were born here?
- K: Ja I was born here.
- G: And your parents came from District 6 or?
- K: Ja from, my mother's parents came from Woodstock and my father's parents came from District 6.

### Appendix 3: Interview schedule for participant interview

#### Guiding themes and questions:

Starting question: What was a significant event in your life?

#### *1. Family, Neighbourhood, School*

- 1.1 What is your best memory from childhood?
- 1.2 What is your worst memory from childhood?
- 1.3 What was home life like?
- 1.4 Were your parents in the home?
- 1.5 How many other children lived in your home? Who were they?
- 1.6 How was conflict handled?
- 1.7 Describe the world outside your door?
- 1.8 What was your experience of school?
- 1.9 What did you do for fun?

#### *2. Violence, gangs and crime*

- 2.1 What has been your experience of violence?
- 2.2 How did you become involved in violence?
- 2.3 Who else was involved?
- 2.4 What types of violent acts? (prompt: hitting, stone throwing, knife fight, gun fight)
- 2.5 Describe other violent events you have experienced?
- 2.6 How did you feel after these incidents?

#### *3. The Criminal Justice System*

- 3.1 How did you first come into contact with the police?
- 3.2 What have been your experiences of the police and arrests?
- 3.3 What was your experience of the court like?
- 3.4 What has been your experience of prison?
- 3.5 How did prison help you when you re-entered your community?
- 3.6 How was your life changed as a result of prison?

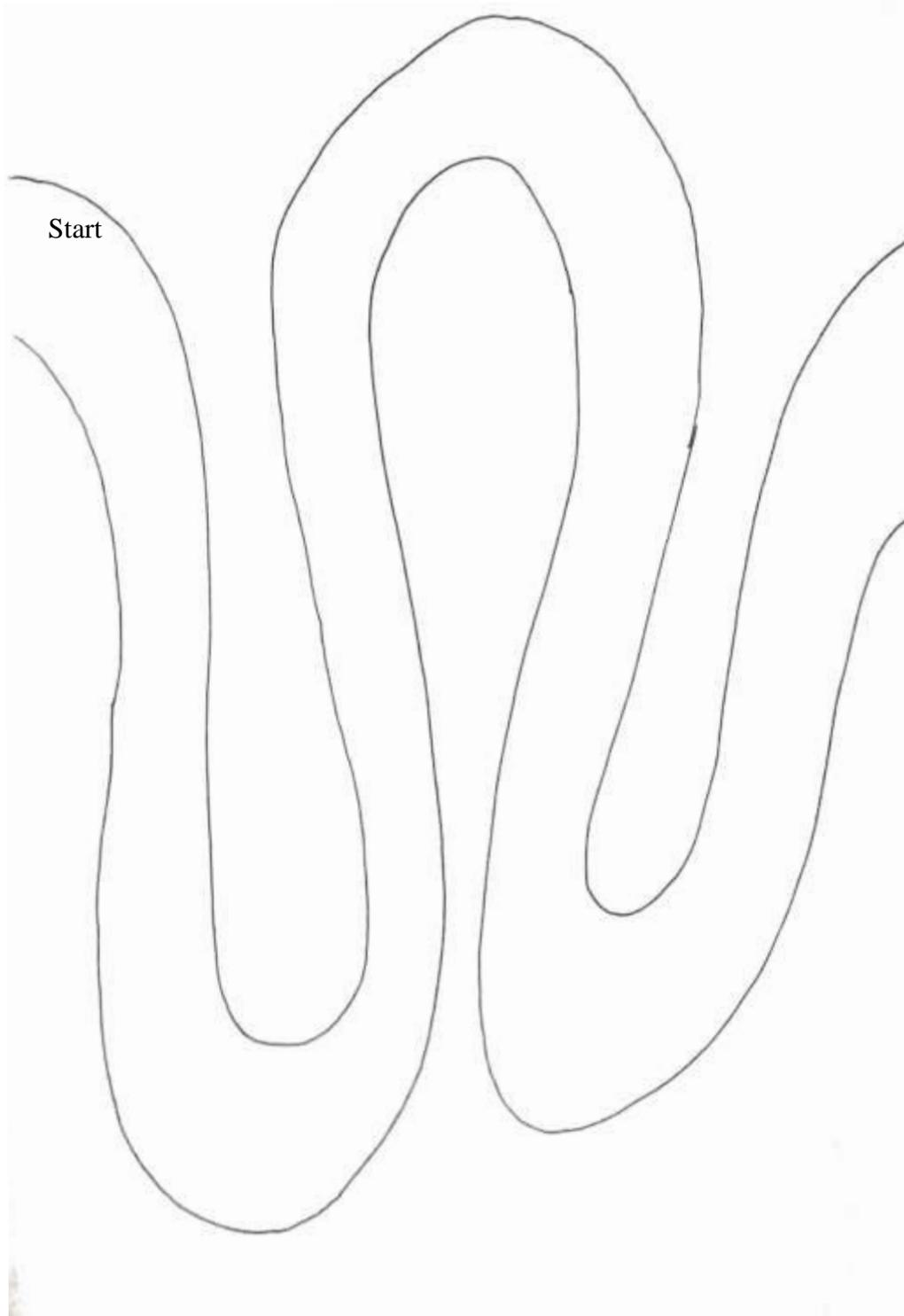
#### *4. Intervention programmes*

- 4.1 How did you come into contact with intervention programmes?
- 4.2 What type of intervention programmes was it/were they?
- 4.3 What were your experiences of the programmes?
- 4.4 What did you think of the people running the programmes?
- 4.5 How did they treat you?
- 4.6 How did you respond?
- 4.7 How did the programme(s) help you to reintegrate into your community?
- 4.8 How did it help you in your day to day living in the community?
- 4.9 If you could have developed an intervention programme for yourself what would you have done?

#### *5. Self perception*

- How do you see yourself?
- Where do you feel you belong?
- What dreams do you have for your future?

### Appendix 4: Life Map Template



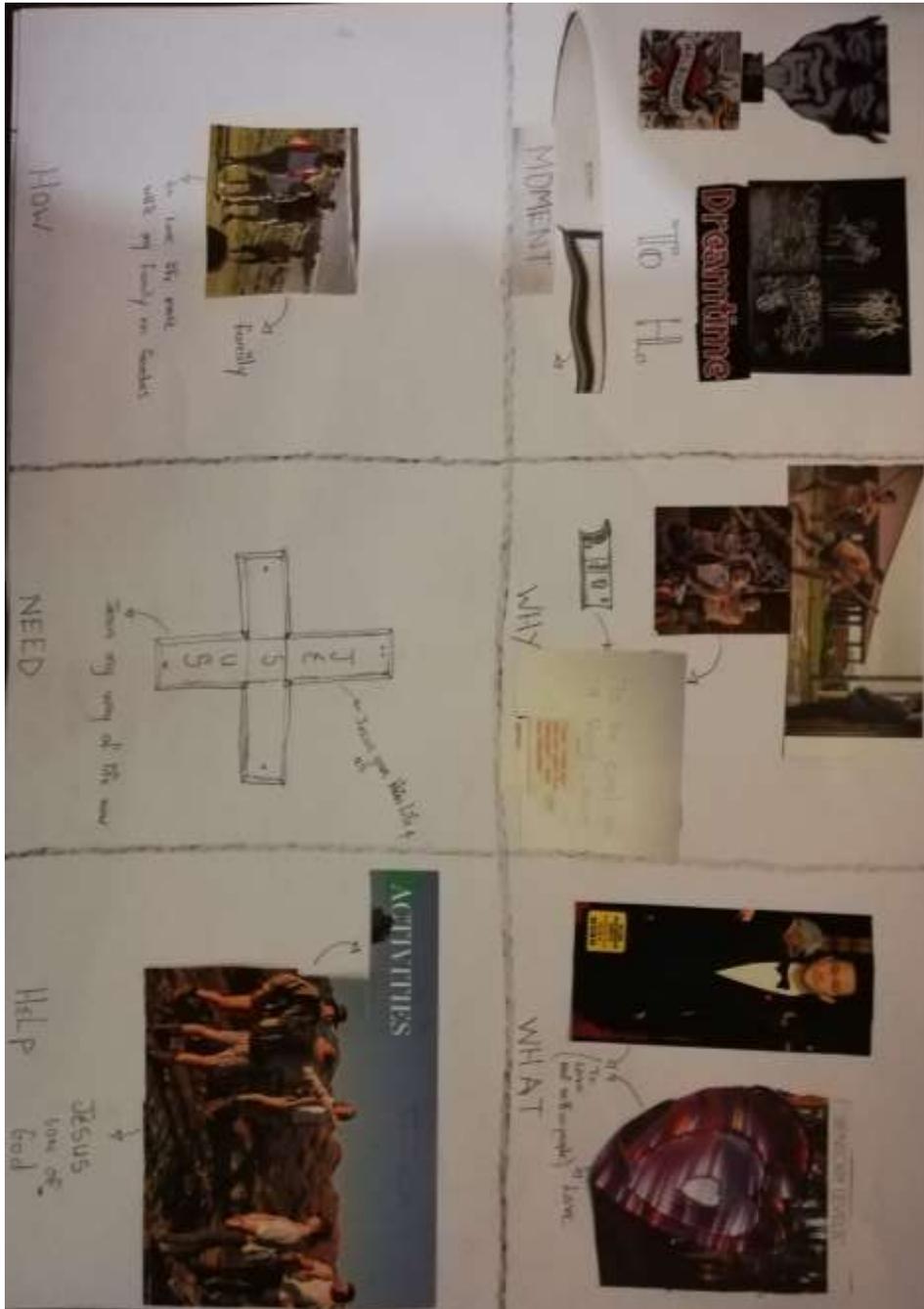


## Appendix 6: Sample Transcription, participant

- 119 Q: I think 2004  
 120 G: 2004. OK. Right, what happened in 2004?  
 121 Q: My granny kicked us, kicked us out of the house here in  
 122 Manenberg, so we need, so we went to live in cape town  
 123 and so we started living there on the streets till 2010.  
 124 G: OK, so 2004 is somewhere...so you were eight years old  
 125 then, round here [ja]. Um, so you want to put there, 2000  
 126 and where ever you think 2004 fits. Um, and you don't  
 127 have to write everything you just have to, you can just  
 128 draw pictures and stuff like thg, ok. Or you can write  
 129 something, um...what would you prefer to do, draw a  
 130 picture or just write a word, kicked out...you can draw a  
 131 picture.  
 132 Q: I can write it out.  
 133 *[pause as he writes]*  
 134 G: So you lived on the streets until 2010, hey? Somewhere  
 135 over there, maybe like...just draw an arrow or something  
 136 and feel free to use colour if you want to. What was, was  
 137 it you and your mom?  
 138 Q: Me and my mom and my sister, my one sister, I only had  
 139 one sister at the time. Ja, four of us  
 140 G: Oh, and your dad?  
 141 Q: Moooo.  
 142 G: What was the reason that your granny kicked you out?  
 143 Q: Because my dad didn't want to pay laaik money to live  
 144 there on the yard  
 145 G: Ok, were you staying in the backyard?  
 146 Q: Ja, there in front  
 147 G: Oh in the front. Ok. Was your Dad unemployed?  
 148 Q: ja  
 149 G: Um, and, um was your granny was that your mom's  
 150 mom or your dad's mom?  
 151 Q: My Dad's mom  
 152 G: Ok. So she said you had to leave because you couldn't,  
 153 you didn't want to pay. And you had nowhere else to  
 154 go? So where in cape town did you then end up  
 155 staying?  
 156 Q: There by Cape Town, there by the half-bridge, there by  
 157 the four-way.  
 158 G: And you just lived on the street there?  
 159 Q: Ja.  
 160 G: And what about school, did you go to school at the time?  
 161 Q: I did go school, to school [where?] from Cape Town to  
 162 [redacted]  
 163 G: Ok so you slept on the streets...  
 164 Q: We travel everyday  
 165 G: You travel every day from...which, which school did you  
 166 to in [redacted]  
 167 Q: [redacted] So what's your memory about this  
 168 time of being kicked out? What was it, what was it like  
 169 for you at the time?  
 170 Q: For me at the time it was good, because I had friends  
 171 also living with us. [cough] It was laaik for me it was  
 172 laaik, fun because I was still small. [cough] But when I,  
 173 when I, when I grew up laaik I told myself that im not  
 174 going to live this life, I'm going to go back to my granny.  
 175 And tell my granny, ja. And so I went back and so she  
 176 took me in again and told me to go get my clothes.  
 177 G: Ok. Was that 2010?  
 178



Appendix 7a: Storyboard sample



## Appendix 8: Sample of focus group transcription

Focus Group

Date: 25 August 2018

Location: The Warehouse Trust, 12 Plantation road, Wetton

Participants: Stout (S), Gadgets (G), John (J), Grant (G)

...

- G: I mean it's like you have a situation, so you're back in the community, jy's buitekant and dan sien jy een van jou vrinne, iemand da skiet vir hulle.
- S: Nee daai het al nou al recently al gebeur al. Maar ek het nou ok n tjommie verloor wat aan die selle gang behoort wat ek behoort het.
- G: So wat het jy gedoen?
- S: Daai's niks met my te doen nie. Hoekom ek het uit daai uit geloop. Is n keuse wat dji maak man, dis jou eie keuse, jou wills krag wat dji gebruik, gat dji daai doen or gatdji retaliate met violence, gat dji revenge vat vir jou tjommie wat dood is. Want nou moet dji so dink waar the thinking processes weer inkom, waar was die bru'se gewies wan ek oppie pad geslaap het? Waar was die bru'se gewies wan ek in a kar vir n jaar geslaap het? Wie het vir my n brood gegee? Wie? Kyk nou by my ma, wie gaan 'aar by my ma kyk? Almal 'aai dinge, wie gat my laaitie support? Wie gat my Ouma bystaan 'aar as ek 'aar is'ie? Wie gat werk 'aar vir die huis? Almal 'aai dinge.
- G: That's the same thing, I remember doing work in prison years ago and the guys all used to tell me, in prison, every one of them, they all told me "no my bra'se in the community aren't really friends because they don't come visit me here in prison, they don't look after my mommy, they don't bring bread." And I said, "so what do you do when you go out?" "Well I don't have a choice because they're the only people that are there. But I mean it's what you kind of saying its almost like they're not real, there's ...
- GA: Dji wiet hulle is'ie rerig waar saam met djou maar dji het nie eint'lik n keuse nie so
- S: ja
- G: It's the only brothers or bra'se that you've got, is that what you know?
- S: Ja but nou in my situasie ek het familie en hulle was die enigste mense wat nou saam in die process in, saam my oppie journey wat ek is, vir my gesupport het. Hoekom die tyd wat ek in buite in n kar ook geslaap het, wie was 'aar vir my? Wan ek 'aar gat in'ie nagte klop my Ouma maak vir my kos ek is honger ek soek nou kos. My Ouma het my nog altyd gee, gegee sy het'ie my gestoot'ie. Is almal 'aai dinge wat my laat dink en kyk, jy die's die mense wat ek altyd de seerste gemaak het wat die liefste gewies het vir my het. Maar ek het'ie dit nie so 'aai tyd gesien wat ek in die dinge in gewies het'ie. Wat nou met almal die goedte wat ek ge gebeur het en deur gegaan het en so ver gedeal het man in my process, met die rejection van my ma, abandonment van my ma en dinge soos 'aai. Het ek kom besef man daai's noggie mense wat laaste 'aar gat wies vir jou. Hoekom ek het n paar keur ko' kry hulle ko' skiet op ons is al my broerse weg is ek alleen. Sukke dinge het vir my laat my oep maak en laaik ek het laaik van my, van my experience af, ek het n sterk gevoel man, laaik in my hart in, dat ek sal'ie retaliate met violence watever 'aar gebeur met enige bra van my nie, hoekom die lewe wat ek nou lewe gee nie nog krag om 'aar te gaan nie, weer te gaan 'aar nie, hoekom die lewe wat ek nou lewe is ver valuable as wat ek gehet it 'aai tyd in. Die wat ek nou het
- [cross talk]
- GA: Daai tyd het dji niks gehet om op te gee nie en so nie maar nou het dji om te verloor so dji gaan nie wil'ie so n effort. Ja. Sien dji
- G: Is that a similar thing for you?
- GA: Dis die selle soos kyk daai tyd nou is jy in gangsterism en so ...
- S: Dji het niks nie
- GA: Dji het niks'ie dji is gevang in drugs en so. Ok dji het familie en so maar dji kyk'ie rerig ag van hulle en so nie, dji verstoot vir hulle vir broerse en so wat'ie rerig 'aar saam met jou is'ie. Maar die moment dji jou oep maak en dji sien wat die ding rerig waar is, dan sal dji sien daar is mense wat saam met jou is en so, en daar is man hoe kan, kan nie nou in n mooi way se nie, maar ja.
- G: Ok, and, and,ah, is that also for you, do you still struggle with aggression and stuff or is it something you have been able to, um, overcome.
- GA: Vir my het ek te veel om te verloor om nog te kan worry van klein goedtes of so, soos mense wat jou gaan vertaart of wou jou terug he en goedtes soos daai. Nie. Soos ek het ook n kind, ek

- het n jongetjie wat ek groot maak, ek het'ie my pa gehet'ie, my pa is nou nog'ie 'aar vir my nie. Ek wil nie hy moet laaik vir my ook 'aai way sien soos ek my pa sien, want my pa lewe, maar hy kom'ie na'eren so nie, hy het gel gesend soos 'aai's nie wat ek wou gehet'ie. Sien djy, want as hy 'aar gewies het vir my ...
- S: die liefde ja
- GA: dan sal ek maklik'ie 'aai looi geloop het en so nie. Verstaan jy al nou?
- S: Hoekom hy's mos die protector
- GA: So ek wil'ie nog my laaitie bestoot en vir hom laat die selle rigting gaan wat ek gegaan het en so nie. So ek kry maar nou n kans, ek kry nou n tweede kans om vir hom te kan ook wys, naai man nie die way nie. So man want ek wiet hoe was it, so. So ek sal'ie nog wil weer terug gaan'ie, dis'ie n kwaai experience ook in elke geval'ie. Hoekom djy verstoot die mense wat close aan jou is wat jou wou help en so, vir mense wat op die ou einde van die dag jou net gaan afdruk en afbreek en waar djy jou dood in gaan kry. So dis'ie werd op die einde van die dag'ie.
- S: En as jou mind geset het man en djy voel sterk daaroor tien aan die goed wat djy nou het, wat djy nooit gehet it'ie man, laaik is vir jou is die valuable hoekom daai tyd wat djy 'aar gewies het djy het'ie die support gehet'ie djy het'ie gehet wat djy nou het'ie. Maar nou ko' sien djy mense wat eens jou broerse, jou vrinne, niks van jou gewies het'ie, is'ie dan 'aar vir jou as n familie lid moet gewies het. Nou nog as ek huis toe gaan daar's som van my aunties hulle praat nou nog'ie met my nie, hulle verstoot my nog altyd; hulle se vir my 'naai hulle's oor my' but agter daai kan ek mos sien man, 'naai die's fake, die's maar net n act wat djy opsit.' But die mense wat ek nou my support vandaan kry, kan ek dan voel, 'naai, die is liefde man, die is hoer'it moet wies in my eie familie, en wat ek nou het en die relationships wat ek nou gebou het in my support in, in die community 'aar waar ek nou is, is ver valuable om weer terug te gaan om weer te gaan reak in violence in as jou tjommie seer kry djy wil hom wys 'naai ek's nog saam met jou,' op die ou end van die dag verloor djy daai relationships deur n simple klein dingetjie, dan djy spuit waar gat djy naar daai, djy het nerens om te gaan'ie, gaan djy weer daar by die gang en dan maar net die selle routine oor en oor, oor en oor. So daai's my dinges.
- GA: En daai mense wat djy ook saam gaan, gaan net saam met jou as djy gel' het of as djy gaan net om vir hulle te gee, maar as djy het'ie, daan jou nie brasse en vrinne nie. Daai's hoe dit gaan.
- [pause]
- S: En soos Grant ook gese 'aai van miskien n man se "naai, hy moet smokkel om sy laaitie 'aar in 'aai skool te kry." 'Aai's sommer n ekskuusi man, 'aai's sommer n moerse ekskuus wat hy maak, hoekom djy hoef'ie om te smokkel om jou laaitie in n kwaai skool te kry nie.
- GA: En jou laaitie makeer ook'ie in n kwaai skool te sit as djy ook 'aar kan is vir hom'ie. Verstaan djy?
- S: Ja, enige skool hy gee die education man, although dis'ie up top soos Camps Bay se skole of so nie, so lank jou laaitie education kry by daai skool en djy kan hom verrer, soos Grant gee nou aan Grant's se kinders home schooling. Nou ons kleure nasie ons is genuig om nie so te dink'ie ons dink net van hier tot daar. Daai's ons laaik, ok dis'ie almal'ie but van my point of view som van ons is net so "naai, ek moet die doen om my laaitie 'aai te gee, ek moet die doen, jy hoef'ie om ...
- G: You can't see other options
- S: Ja, laaik, daai's ... [cross talk]
- G: Is that what, like, like this is my only option that I have.
- S: That's where the blinked horizons inkom, laaik, waar djy groot, djy het miskien n droom gehet. Nou se djy vir jouself, "naai een dag wil ek n pilot wies, eendag wil 'aar airline toe gaan." But nou ko' kry djy jouself "naai man ek het dan'ie gel'ie, ek gaan ?? gesmokkel om 'aar uit te kom wat ek wil wies." Laaik 'aai's blinked horizons man, djy dink net, djy droom hier "naai's die's my lewe nou die, ek gaan nou" sien Grant, djy sien nie jouself in 5 jaar tyd djy gat overseas'ie. So..
- G: Jy kannie vir daai sien,
- S: Ja
- G: Jy sien vir vandag, jy kannie vir more sien'ie. Is 'aai?
- S: Ja
- G: And ... do you know of guys, ken jy vir ouens wat um, wat, cause it sometimes what they talk about, others, actually people want to go to prison, ken jy vir ouens that actually want to get, like their whole motivation is to get into prison so they can get deeper into the gang, are there people you know like that?
- GA: Daar sit een van my vrinne dan nou 'aar want hulle doen klomp onnoorige goedtes net hom 'aai te ko'. Soos Keenan, wat ek geser het wat ek wil he moet, hy sit nou 'aar, maar ok hy's nog jonk maar hy het die gedagte, hy sit nou 'aar op Horizons. Hy's soort van daai, hy doen net goedtes en hy wiet wat hy doen en hy het gewiet ook waar it gaan vir hom beland en hy het

gewag actually 'aar voor. Hoekom hy het met klomp keur moet hy gaan hof toe en goedtes, hy doen it, hy se sommer vi' ons "naai hy wil gaan" hoekom hy glo hy gaan regkom 'aar, ek wiet'ie hoe hy gaan regkom 'aar nie, maar 'aai's wat hy geglo het. Keenan man ...

S: Oh

GA: Ja, 'aai man sit nou op horizons.

S: 'Aar by bosasa?

GA: Ja

[pause]

S: Laaik meeste, ek ken ook some laaities soos, daar's baie bra'se van my. Die een broer wat miskien nou tronk toe hy ko' uit, hy is nou kilikijan ?? dinges dinges. Nou sien hy naai die man is n nou, hy se ook sy self "naai ek kan ook 'aar is wat die man is, ek gaan druk op die ding" nou skiet hy, skiet hy [hands slap in gun shape] ... nog tronk toe

GA: Maar djy's ook net kilikijan 'aar in'ie tronk in, en 'aar in die buitekant het djy niks'ie, hy's nog n ander ding. [cross talk]

S: Sien djy nou?

GA: Soos kyk vir Colin hy, hy sit n 12 goonja binne ne, hier buite hy, hy's n niks'ie man. Soos vir my spesifiek ek is'ie gangster of so nie maar ek gaan'ie laat djy wat n watever is vir my kom en laaik vertel net so djy wil of so nie want hier buite djy is niks. Djy's kla. Verstaan djy? Daar binne kan djy maar n wat is, daai's daar binne, dis'ie hier nie, so dit maak'ie, dit maak'ie sense'ie man.

S: Soos dan nou die ander broers, hulle sien naai die man is nou hier, hy van oppie tronk, hy gee mos experience, "naai ek het so gegaan en so gegaan" nou toe hy loop, nou dink ek ook aan my gedagte maak my voorwerk myself, naai ek dink aan my gedagte naai, ek hou druk op die ding ek kan 'aar uit ko' as die is man, ek kan sommer hoedere as hom nou gaan in die nommer aan en so. Is so wat gebeur naai ek wil ook 'aar uitko' ek wil die man nou n bal wys as ek uitko' ek is hoedere as hom. So, maar as djy uitkom dan is, dan net niemand niks vir jou nie, vir wat het djy dit gedoen. Daai's die mindset agter die ding man om, om te wou tronk toe gaan, hy sien naai jou broer wat n gangster broer gewies het hier buite, hy ko' uit n paar jaar naai die ou is nou, daai ou, nou check djy naai ek gaan vir jou wys, ek kan hoedere as jou inko'. So daai's ons se mindset eindelijk as ons in n groep een is en so.

GA: Maar kyk dan ko' djy weer daar ou uit djy verloor ook die buitekant hoekom die lewe gaan aan dit staan nie stil nie. [cross talk] difference as djy uitkom djy, djy try om in te fit.

S: Daai's wat ek nou se man as djy uitkom man het niks, daai man het al weer aan gegaan met sy lewe wat djy wil gewys het, ek wil betere as jou, 'aai man het aan gegaan dan bou daai man n familie buite want hy hettie meer lus vir die tronk'ie.

**Appendix 9 : Consent Forms for Key Informants and Participants**

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**DEPARTEMENT OPVOEDKUNDIGE SIELKUNDE**  
**DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY****CONSENT TO BE INTERVIEWED****Study Purpose**

You are invited to participate in a research study on the perspectives of young adult male violent perpetrators on experiences they have had with violence intervention programmes and/or prison. I have approached you because you were recommended to me as a person with insight to the culture of the community especially that of young male perpetrators of violence. I am a student from the student from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University.

**Study Procedure** (*what you will be asked to do*)

If you agree to participate in the study I will ask you to meet me at 'Jou Ma se Kombuis' to be interviewed for about 45 minutes. The interview will focus on your insights into the community, violence and young perpetrators of violence. The interview will be audio recorded with your agreement on the understanding that only myself, my supervisor and examiner will have access to these recordings. You may, however, choose to not be audio recorded.

The interviews will be conducted at 'Jou Ma se kombuis' and will last for approximately 1 hour. The interview will focus on your insights into the community, violence and the young perpetrators in your community. I would also ask you to agree that the interview be recorded with the understanding that only the researcher, his supervisor and examiner will have access to these recordings. You may, however, choose not to be audio-recorded.

**Possible Risks**

The research aims to contribute to the well-being of people. As such great care will be taken by me that your welfare will not be abused for the purpose of gaining information and knowledge. If you do have negative reactions because of the interview, you may request to be referred to a registered Clinical Psychologist or trained community-based counsellor for psychological support. There are no costs for participating in the study other than the time you spend in the interview

**Possible Benefits**

There will be no financial benefits for participation. However, the findings of this study may help young men who are involved in acts of violence discover alternative pathways. Furthermore, my hope is that it will in the implementation of new practices to assist young people who are at risk of violent offending.

**Confidentiality**

I will keep any information I get from you in the interview confidential (that is kept private) and only disclose it with your permission or where I am required by law to do so. I will keep your identity hidden using a pseudonym for you. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping all records of your participation (the interview recording, field notes, written reflection and the signed consent form) locked away. Transcripts of the interview will be kept in a password protected computer. I will destroy all audio recordings and transcripts after the research is completed.



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**Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to be in this study you will have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

**Contact details for questions**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me [0824078901 or email [gcstubes@gmail.com](mailto:gcstubes@gmail.com)]. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Lynne Damons, to whom I am accountable [(021) 808 2313 or email: [ldamons@sun.ac.za](mailto:ldamons@sun.ac.za)].

If you have questions, concerns or complaints regarding your rights as a participant in this research, please contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development at the Stellenbosch University.

Signature of Research Participant

*I have read the above or it has been explained to me in Afrikaans by \_\_\_\_\_. I could ask questions which were answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily consent to participate in this research study. I have been offered a copy of this consent form*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Signature of translator (if required)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) declare that I assisted in explaining the information contained in this document to the participant in Afrikaans. He was encouraged to and given ample time to ask any questions which were answered to his satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Translator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## for Participants



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## DEPARTEMENT OPVOEDKUNDIGE SELKUNDE

## DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

#### **Study Purpose**

You are invited to participate in a research study on the perspectives of young adult male violent offenders on experiences they have had with violence intervention programmes and/or prison. I have approached you because you were recommended to me as a person relevant to the study. I am a student from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University.

#### **Study Procedure** (*what you will be asked to do*)

If you agree to participate in the study I will ask you to meet me at 'Jou Ma se Kombuis' to be interviewed for about 90 minutes. The interview will focus on your life and experiences of violence and violence intervention programmes and/or prison. I may also invite you to participate in a group conversation on the same topic at a later stage.

With your agreement, the interview will be audio and video recorded on the understanding that only myself, my supervisor and examiner will have access to these recordings. You may, however, choose not to be audio and/or video recorded.

#### **Possible Risks**

My intention is for your well-being and not your harm. In the process of the interview you may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed talking about your experiences. If this happens you are welcome to take a break or even stop the interview. If you have negative reactions during or after the interview I can arrange for you to see a Clinical Psychologist, Dr Arlene Benjamin or a community-based counsellor for support. There are no costs for participating in the study other than your time.

#### **Possible Benefits**

Although there will be no financial benefits, your participation in this study will give you an opportunity to share your experiences and views. It is my hope that information from this study will make for more valuable violence intervention strategies and programmes that are aimed at young people. Snacks and drinks will be available during the interview process.

#### **Confidentiality**

I will keep the information I get from you in this study confidential (that is private). I will only disclose information about you with your permission or where I am required by law to do so. When the interviews are typed up and reported on, I will use made up names that we agree on for you, your community and any friends and family members you talk about, so that anyone reading what I write or listening to what I say won't be able to figure out who you are. All records of your participation (the interview recording, anything you draw or write, my notes and the signed consent form) will be kept locked away. The typed-up interview will be kept on a password protected computer. Once the research study is completed I will destroy all video and/or audio recordings, transcripts and other relevant material. I will have a follow up meeting with you to check that you are comfortable with what I have written.



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Please note that we may talk about criminal activities which you have been involved in or may be involved in, in the future. If we do, then please don't give me any specific details (such as names, time or place).

### Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to be in this study you will have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. I may, after talking with you, withdraw you from this research if there's a cause for it.

### Contact details for questions

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me [0824078901 or email [gcstubes@gmail.com](mailto:gcstubes@gmail.com)]. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Lynne Damons, to whom I am accountable [(021) 808 2313 or email: [ldamons@sun.ac.za](mailto:ldamons@sun.ac.za)].

If you have questions, concerns or complaints regarding your rights as a participant in this research, please contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development at the Stellenbosch University.

Signature of Research Participant

*I have read the above or it has been explained to me in Afrikaans by \_\_\_\_\_. I could ask questions which were answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily consent to participate in this research study and know that I am free to withdraw this consent at any time, and that doing so will not cause me any penalty. I have been offered a copy of this consent form*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Signature of translator** (if required)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) declare that I assisted in explaining the information contained in this document to the participant in Afrikaans. He was encouraged to and given ample time to ask any questions which were answered to his satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Translator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix 10: Confidentiality agreement for translator



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### **DEPARTEMENT OPVOEDKUNDIGE SELKUNDE**

### ***DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY***

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

This agreement serves to confirm that I \_\_\_\_\_ will keep information relating to Grant Stewart's MEd research study strictly confidential. I will not discuss any details of the study with anyone else, including the participants' names, the names of any friends, family members or associates they refer to in their interviews, and any other personal identifying information.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

as witnessed by \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 11: Letter from the Advocate

ADV M J M BRIDGMAN

Tel: +27-21-424-0899  
Fax +27-21-4235661  
E-mail: [suite805@law.sun.ac.za](mailto:suite805@law.sun.ac.za)

905 Huguenot Chambers  
40 Queen Victoria Street  
CAPE TOWN 8001

8 August 2016

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

**LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR GRANT STEWART**

I have given Grant Stewart an undertaking that I will be available to assist him with help and advice, particularly regarding legal and ethical considerations which may arise in the course of his intended research into violence involving young adults.



**ADVOCATE M J M BRIDGMAN**  
Member of the Cape Bar

## Appendix 12: Letter from the Clinical Psychologist

**26 July 2016**

**To whom it may concern**

**Dear Sir / Madam**

This letter serves to confirm that I have offered my services to Grant Stewart to provide psychological support to participants in his study as is needed throughout the research process.

Community Action towards a Safer Environment (CASE) which includes a team of supervised community-based counsellors are also available to provide psychosocial support and referral to participants in the study.

**Yours sincerely**



**Dr Arlene Benjamin**  
**Clinical Psychologist – PS0069507**  
**MA (Clin Psych) UCT**  
**PhD (Psychology) Stellenbosch**

**Appendix 13: Letter from Prof. James Garbarino**

September 16, 2016

TO: Grant Stewart

FROM: James Garbarino, PhD

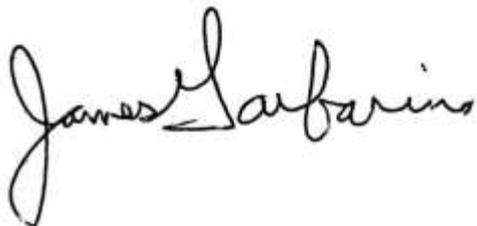
Professor of Psychology,

Senior Faculty Fellow, Center for the Human Rights of Children

Loyola University Chicago

RE: Serving as a consultant for your Master's Thesis

I am writing to confirm that I am willing to serve as a consultant for your Master's thesis project. I will be available to you via email and Skype as needed, and if my travel schedule brings me to South Africa for a face to face meeting with you and your thesis advisor.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Garbarino". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

## Appendix 14: Letter from the Counselling Psychologist

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST

HELEN MALGAS

BA (UCT) MA (SU)  
7611-00000

Tel: (021) 816 3668 - Cell: 073 430 3476  
23 Victoria Road Plumstead 7800  
Email: [hmalgas@sun.ac.za](mailto:hmalgas@sun.ac.za)

04 August 2016

To whom it may concern

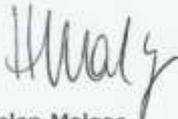
### **GRANT STEWART**

This letter serves to confirm that I will be offering Grant regular supervision/debriefing as part of his research process towards his Master's degree.

I am a Counselling Psychologist with 11 years of experience. Part of my work involves offering debriefing to individuals and groups who work in various NPOs and other organisations. I have done debriefing with a research project linked to Stellenbosch University a few years ago so I am familiar with the challenges faced by researchers working in the field. I have worked with Grant previously when he was employed by The Warehouse as part of the Fusion team based in Manenberg.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

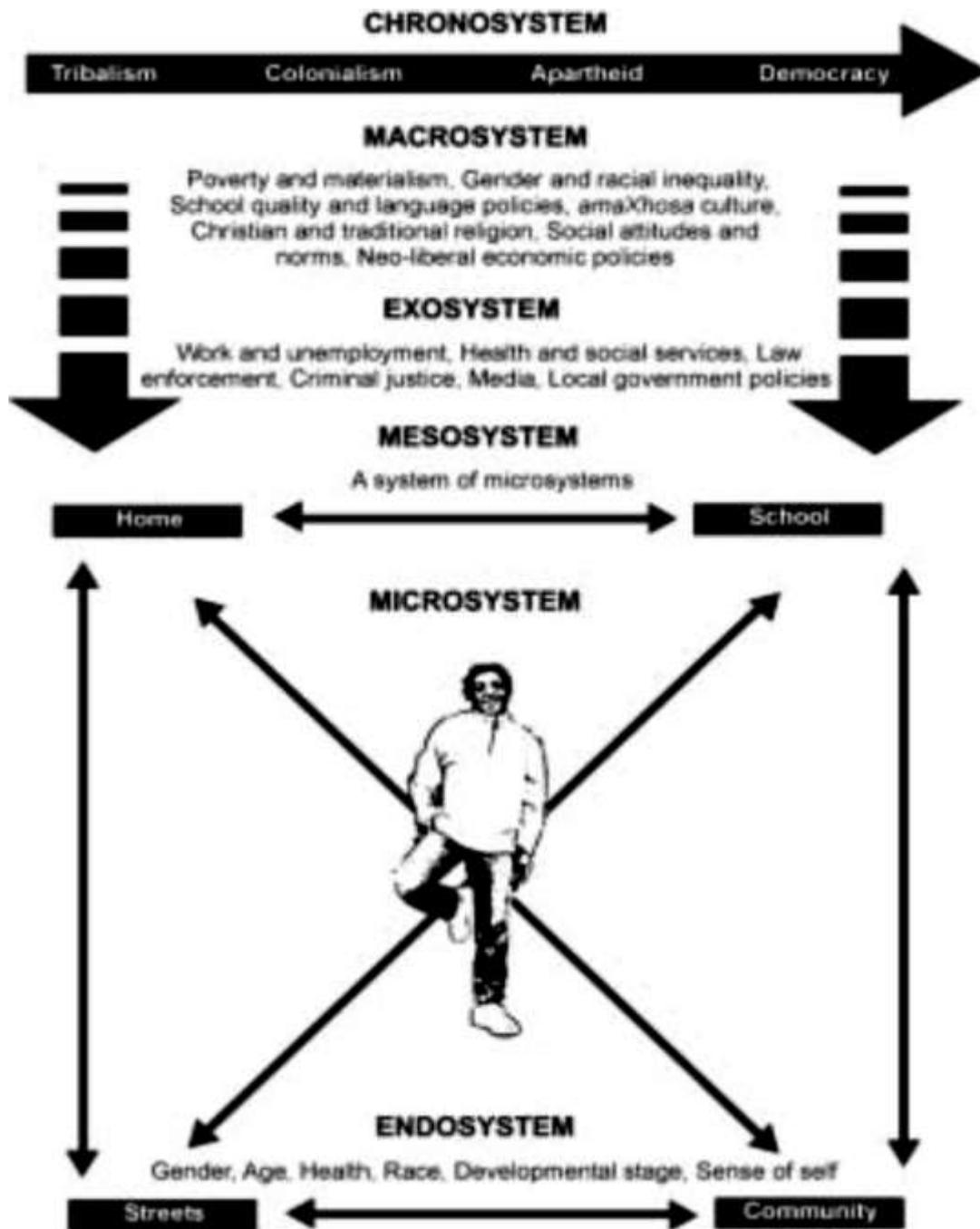
Yours faithfully



Helen Malgas

**Appendix 15: Social ecological with historical integration**

Source: Swartz (2010:311)



## Appendix 16: Media report on gang violence in the community

[https://ewn.co.za/2018/04/09/\[REDACTED\]tense-after-3-murdered-over-weekend](https://ewn.co.za/2018/04/09/[REDACTED]tense-after-3-murdered-over-weekend) (accessed 14 October 2018)

### [REDACTED] TENSE AFTER 3 MURDERED OVER WEEKEND

The community has seen a spike in gang violence since the Easter weekend.



Picture:stock.xchng

Gang violence

Manenberg

Manenberg gang violence

Email

Print

 Tweet

Lauren Isaacs | [6 months ago](#)

CAPE TOWN - [REDACTED] remains tense as deadly gang violence continues unabated.

The community has seen a spike in gang violence since the Easter weekend.

Over the weekend, three people, including two suspected gangsters, were shot and killed.

Two people were gunned down late last week. In one incident, gangsters opened fire on [REDACTED] after he'd confronted them.

[REDACTED] community leader [REDACTED] says the violence continued through the weekend.

Meanwhile, three people were shot and killed in Lentegeur in Mitchells Plain on Sunday night.

(Edited by Shimoney Regter)

## Appendix 17: Media report on gang related violence at the time of the focus groups

<https://ewn.co.za/2018/09/11/1-shot-dead-2-critically-wounded-in-manenberg-shooting> (accessed 18 September 2018)

### 1 SHOT DEAD, 2 CRITICALLY WOUNDED IN ██████████ SHOOTING

A young boy (7) is in a critical but stable condition at Red Cross Children's Hospital.



Picture: SAPS

Manenberg

Manenberg gang violence

Cape Town SAPS

Email

Print

 Tweet

Lauren Isaacs | *7 days ago*

CAPE TOWN - Three people, including a seven-year-old child, have been shot in ██████████

The young boy is in a critical but stable condition at Red Cross Children's Hospital.

A gang member was killed in Monday night's attack.

The police's Wesley Twigg said: "The circumstances surrounding a shooting incident are being investigated after a 32-year-old male was shot and fatally wounded. And a 28-year-old and seven-year-old, both males, elsewhere were shot and wounded last night around 7 pm."

(Edited by Thapelo Lekabe)

**Appendix 18: Sample stages of data analysis process**

had only just woken up. Went to do the interview... he asked that i not record it. As we conversed there were areas of his story he would talk about & then not want to proceed further. In particular he avoided talk about his family & spoke about violence in generalisations. The more longer we chatted the more fidgety he got, then agitated, then not able to sit down.

Initially i wondered about whether there was discomfort in sharing (i'm sure there was some of that) but realised that it was most likely that he had not had his fix for the day yet.

Reflections after interview 1





**Appendix 19: Journal entry after conversation with supervisor around exploitation of those we work with**

In my conversation with Lynn she made some observations about [redacted] that I disagreed with. Call it a naive trust in the goodness of people. Perhaps I'm too involved and can't see - it is not that thin is about [redacted] more about his experiences of being used. It's what I felt people did with [redacted] [redacted]... used for his story as a 28 having changed / 3 he could never it seems be something different. Did it do the same? [redacted] is different in that he made a clear exit from the gang + criminal life + yet has maintained such good connection. and his willingness to help means he is too easily used even if people/researchers don't do it out of malice. The challenge for me therefore is how am I different? He may in fact be asking "So what's in this ~~at~~ for me?" Time to chat... what can come from this for him?