

**ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE RISK AND
PROTECTIVE FACTORS RELATED TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE EXPOSURE IN A
LOW- INCOME COMMUNITY IN CAPE TOWN**

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Abstract

There is widespread evidence that exposure to community violence is escalating at an alarming rate, not only in South Africa, but worldwide. The literature indicates that the cohort affected is primarily children and adolescents. Whilst a significant amount of empirical research focuses on exposure to community violence and the identification of risk and protective factors, there is a paucity of initiatives providing in-depth investigations into the dynamics of these factors. An explorative study grounded in the meanings which adolescents assign to risk and protective factors is essential to provide comprehensive and sensitive care to adolescents exposed to community violence.

The aim of this study was to explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure in a low-income community in Cape Town. The current study utilised the PPCT model as it allowed the researcher to explore the way in which risk and protective factors function within different systems. Data was collected from 50 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15. Five focus groups were used to collect the data, consisting of ten participants each, both males and females. Participants were purposively selected from a high school located in a low-income community in Cape Town. The ethical guidelines stipulated by the UWC and the WCED were strictly followed. Prior to the focus group interviews, informed consent and assent were obtained from both parents and participants. Participants were informed of their rights in the research process. The information collected from participants was analysed by means of a theoretical thematic analysis. This type of thematic analysis aims to identify information gathered, examined and described in rich detail, according to themes from the text, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This study aimed to contribute to the development of effective interventions and to add to the knowledge base of studies focusing on risk and protective factors associated with exposure to community violence among adolescents.

Declaration

I declare that the research *Adolescents' Perceptions and Understandings of the Risk and Protective Factors Related to Community Violence Exposure in a Low-Income Community in Cape Town* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Christelle Larke



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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

Globally, the issue of violence remains an area of major concern, resulting in a range of psychological and social consequences. In South Africa it is a serious public health problem and is growing at an exponential rate, especially within the Western Cape (Dawes, Long, Alexander & Ward, 2006). The harmful effects of violence cause over 1.6 million deaths per year, with at least 16 million cases of harm having been brutal enough to require medical attention (WHO, 2008). In South Africa 15 609 murders, 191 651 cases of assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm and 181 670 common assault cases were reported in 2012 (Information Management Centre statistics for 2012).

Violence can be divided into three broad categories: Self-directed violence (including suicidal behaviours and self-abuse), interpersonal violence (including family violence and community violence), and collective violence (including social violence, political violence and economic violence) (WHO, 2008). Community violence in particular has grown to be one of the most serious social problems in contemporary South Africa. Community violence is defined by McCart et al. (2007, p. 434) as “deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against a person in the community”, and has deleterious effects on families, communities and society as a whole (Lynch, 2003; Salzinger et al., 2002). Overstreet (2000) argues that there is a need for more in-depth understanding of community violence as the cohort affected is primarily children and adolescents.

Persistent exposure to community violence can have damaging effects on victims, particularly on adolescents as they are still developing neurologically and physically and need to perform cognitively on a regular basis (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001). The nature of these effects, however, is multifaceted (Overstreet, 2000). Researchers have portrayed links between exposure to community violence and symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (O’Donnell, Roberts & Schwab-Stone, 2011; Rosenthal, 2000), anxiety (Noni, Jamila & Zelencik, 2011; Rosenthal, 2000), dissociation (Rosenthal, 2000), depression (Rosenthal, 2000; Lambert et al., 2010), suicidal behaviour (Cooley-Quille & Lorion, 1999), increased drug intake (Vermeiren et al., 2003), reduction in children’s positive peer interaction and academic and cognitive performances (Farver, Natera & Frosch, 1999; Schwartz & Gorman, 2003). Although it is evident that exposure to community violence has

detrimental effects on victims (Crouch et al., 2000), not all victims living in the same environment experience similar effects (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998).

1.2 Rationale

Whilst a significant amount of empirical research focuses on exposure to community violence (Dawes, Long, Alexander & Ward, 2006; Lambert, Ialongo, Boyd & Cooley, 2005; Legge, 2008; McAloney, McCrystal, Percy & McCartan, 2009; Pelsner, 2008; Scott, 1999), and on the identification of risk and protective factors (Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Flannery et al., 2007; Gladstein, Rusonis & Heald, 1992; Salzinger et al., 2011), there is a paucity of initiatives providing in-depth investigations into the dynamics of these factors. In a review of studies by Salzinger et al. (2002), risk factors were identified on each level of the ecological system: social disorder in communities, familial contextual factors, parenting, quality of relationships between parents and children, relationship with peers, as well as personal characteristics. Protective factors that have been acknowledged include demographic characteristics of the family environment, family relationships and support, and parenting style (Overstreet, 2000; Richards et al., 2004). According to Gorman-Smith, Henry and Tolan (2004), risk and protective factors are often context-specific and numerous factors may affect the extent to which exposure to violence affects a child's development. Thus, according to Edleson et al. (2007), it is vital to address a collection of child, family and social factors in order to understand the complexities of adolescents' exposure to violence.

Currently in South Africa, early and persistent exposure to violence has attained critically high levels among adolescents (Flannery et al., 2007). Studies focusing on exposure to community violence have a propensity to focus on its effects, or tend to be quantitative in design (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Ozer & Weinstein, 2004). There is a need for qualitative studies that can provide in-depth understandings related to community violence (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998). The choice of a qualitative methodology is crucial in allowing research to focus on how adolescents come to understand community violence. In addition, according to Kuper, Reeves and Levinson (2008), a qualitative methodology allows the researcher to explore and explain the contexts in which they and their participants function, facilitating a more inclusive understanding of the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors associated with exposure to community violence. The Process, Person, Context, Time (PPCT) model which was employed, aimed at providing a stronger foundation for understanding how interaction between factors on each level increase

adolescents' risk or protects them from community violence exposure (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008). Thus the aim of this study was to explore those factors that protect adolescents from, and put them at risk of, being exposed to community violence.

1.3 Aim

The aim of the study was to explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure in a low-income community in Cape Town. The following objectives have been developed to guide the study:

1.3.1 Objectives

- To explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk factors related to community violence exposure.
- To explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the protective factors related to community violence exposure.



Chapter Outline

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Exposure to community violence

2.1.2 Risk and Protective Factors

2.1.2.1 Risk Factors

2.1.2.2 Protective Factors

2.2 Summary of Literature

2.3 Theoretical considerations

2.3.1 The Integration of Levels of Biology, Psychology and Behaviour

2.3.1.2 Person

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a general overview of the study. The current chapter will provide a brief overview of the literature pertaining to adolescents' perceptions and their understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. The review will follow a thematic approach and will cover themes such as exposure to community violence and risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework employed in this study.

2.1.1 Exposure to Community Violence

Recent studies indicate that adolescents are exposed to high levels of community violence, both as witnesses or victims (Dawes et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2005; Legge, 2008; Pelsler, 2008; Scott, 1999). Exposure to community violence includes "witnessing violence occurring to others, falling victim to violence themselves, or experiencing some combination of both" (O'Donnell, Schwab-Stone & Muyeed, 2003, p.1266).

Zinzow et al. (2009) conducted a quantitative study consisting of 3,614 adolescents who were selected from a 2005 national household probability sample in the United States. This study assessed witnessing violence, diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders-IV (DSM-IV), criteria for PTSD and major depressive episodes (MDEs) by means of structured telephone interviews. The results of the study indicated that 37.8% of adolescents had witnessed community violence. In this study, the most recurrent form of witnessed community violence reported was of seeing someone beaten up to the point of necessitating medical attention (Zinzow et al., 2009). Among adolescents who perceived community violence, perceiving several occurrences of community violence, and perceiving occurrences where the victim was a well-known non-relative, were linked to a greater probability of PTSD. Adolescents who had perceived several events of violence at home, or occurrences where they were scared that they might be injured or killed, were more likely to meet criteria for MDEs (Zinzow et al., 2009).

A study was conducted by McAloney et al. (2009), focusing on the frequency of community violence exposure and its link with health and well-being. The study was conducted among 3,828 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 16 years. The results of this study indicated that 77% of participants experienced some type of community violence throughout their lifespan, while almost 64% had experienced one violent

incident within a year prior to the survey (McAloney et al., 2009). Regarding lifetime exposure, 59% of participants reported witnessing violent events, followed by 58% of participants having knowledge of an event, and 30% of participants reported direct victimisation. In this study, the occurrence that was most frequently reported was witnessing someone being beaten up, as 56% reported lifetime exposure to this. In addition, 46% of participants reported being aware of a non-family member being robbed or attacked. This was found to be the second most frequently described event. Awareness of a family member having been mugged or attacked was reported by 32% of participants and therefore was the third most commonly reported event (McAloney et al., 2009). In this study 2,455 individuals indicated that they had been exposed to violence within a year of data collection. Of these individuals, 81% reported witnessing violence, 76% of participants had knowledge of such events, and 62% of participants reported direct victimisation.

Regarding individual violent experiences, a high occurrence of current experience in the twelve months preceding data collection was reported. Results indicated that over 50% of participants were exposed to each type of violent event, and 24% of participants reported being aware of a family member having been killed or murdered in the last year. In addition, 82% of participants reported witnessing someone being beaten up, and 80% of participants reported being aware of a non-family member having been robbed or attacked (McAloney et al., 2009).

The study also presented several limitations. For instance, some of the items incorporated in the community violence measure responses were unclear and therefore do not appear to be a true reflection of violence occurring in that community. Moreover, McAloney et al. (2009) suggest that a more comprehensive analysis through qualitative techniques should be considered. This would provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of young people's direct and indirect experiences and an interpretation of violence specifically within their community.

In South Africa, the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention conducted a study in which they explored the experiences of victimisation among 4,391 South African youth between the ages of 12 and 22 years. Information was obtained through a structured survey questionnaire. The results of this study indicated that adolescents are exposed to community violence from a very young age (Leoschut, 2006). In this sample, 48% of those exposed to community violence, had first witnessed this between the ages of 11 and 15

years, while more than 29% had first witnessed it between the ages of 16 and 20 years. In this study, it was found that 74.2% of the perpetrators of violence within communities were familiar to the adolescents, 47.5% were possibly known to community members, 14.8% were friends or family members, and 14.3% were other family members, not living in the same household as the adolescents. Leoschut (2006) maintains that the high percentage of community and family violence exposure amongst youths suggests that violence has become a typical aspect of the social spaces that young people reside in. (Leoschut, 2006).

In the Western Cape, a study by Ward, Martin, Theron and Distiller (2007) in a high-violence community in Cape Town indicated high levels of both witnessing and being a victim of community violence. Results indicated that 44% of participants reported having witnessed and/or having been a victim of violence, while only 2.12% of participants reported no exposure to violence, and 1.33% reported only being a victim of violence (Ward et al., 2007). In this sample, participants indicated that they had witnessed more than three types of violence, and that they had been a victim of more than one type of violence. Of reported locations for violence, participants pointed to having seen violence in the neighbourhood, followed by in their homes, and at their school (Ward et al., 2007).

Shields et al. (2008) reported similar disturbing trends. In their study, children between the ages of 8 and 13 years were exposed to increased rates of community violence in the form of school violence, neighbourhood violence, gang violence and police violence. In the school context, 91.3% of participants had witnessed someone being hit, 83% had seen someone kicked or shoved. Regarding violence in the neighbourhoods, 92.9% of participants had witnessed someone being hit, 82% witnessed someone being kicked, 76.5% witnessed someone being pushed or shoved and 77% had seen someone in a fight. In addition, more serious forms of violence were reported as 73.2% of participants witnessed someone beaten up, 60.7% had seen someone threatened with a knife or sharp object, 56.8% had seen someone attacked with a sharp weapon, 45.4% had witnessed someone threatened with a gun, 57.4% of participants had witnessed someone being shot at, and 35.5% reported having seen someone killed (Shields et al., 2008).

Finally, in the Third Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS) conducted by Seekings, Alexander, Jooste and Matzner (2004), consisting of a survey from households within the Cape Town Metropole area, as many as 16% of participants indicated that they or someone in

their family had been physically attacked in the past year. In addition, 30% of participants reported that they (or a family member) had been the victim of a burglary or other theft. Seekings et al. (2004) maintain that a high proportion of respondents feel unsafe at home or in their neighbourhoods. In this sample, over a half of women reported feeling unsafe in their homes, while three-quarters reported feeling unsafe when walking in their area at night (Seekings et al., 2004).

2.1.2 Risk and Protective Factors

A substantial amount of international research focuses on a diverse set of factors that protect adolescents from being exposed to community violence, as well as increasing their susceptibility to such violence (Richards et al., 2004; Solberg et al., 2007; Stein et al., 2003; Weist, Acosta & Youngstrom, 2001). Risk factors are defined as those situations or variables related to adolescents having a higher possibility of being exposed to community violence, while protective factors are conceptualised as those conditions or variables decreasing the likelihood that an adolescent will be exposed to community violence (Jessor et al., 1995). Risk factors and protective factors related to community violence exposure apply at individual, family, school and community levels.

2.1.2.1 Risk Factors

Individual-level factors associated with exposure to community violence were documented by Weist et al. (2001). Weist et al. (2001) found that aggressive behaviour might increase adolescents' likelihood of experiencing community violence, as aggressive adolescents may situate themselves in hostile settings or unsafe conditions. In addition, a study by Copeland-Linder, Lambert and Ialongo (2010), established that youth experiencing the highest rates of community violence exposure also had the lowest self-worth. Similarly, in a study by Reinemann and Ellison (2008), results showed that less self-reliant children who are exposed to high rates of community violence reported greater levels of depressive symptomatology than more self-reliant children who experienced similar rates of exposure to community violence.

In addition, Hurt et al. (2001) conducted a study to determine the rates of exposure to community violence amongst 119 inner-city children. In this study, children's feelings of distress and the relationships between exposure to violence and school performance, behaviour and self-esteem were assessed. Results indicated that exposure to violence was linked to increased anxiety and depression. Higher exposure to violence was also associated

with lower self-esteem. In addition, higher exposure to violence was linked with lower academic grades and increased absence from school (Hurt et al., 2001).

Numerous demographic characteristics have been associated with exposure to community violence. Weist et al. (2001) studied the capacity of demographic variables and risk factors (substance use amongst family members, number of people in the household, out-of-home placements, the grades repeated, history of being arrested, and overall life stress) to forecast exposure to community violence. This study was conducted amongst 342 high school students from inner-city Baltimore. The study focused in particular on students that had been referred for mental health care in community centres or in schools.

Findings of this study indicated a relationship between diverse forms of violence exposure (e.g. knowing victims, witnessing violence, being subjected to violence) and certain demographic variables and risk factors. The results of this study indicated that male students were more likely to have witnessed violence than female students, and African Americans more likely than Caucasians. Increased age was also correlated with a higher likelihood of witnessing violence (Weist et al., 2001). Previous arrest history was strongly correlated with increased violence exposure, especially with regard to being a victim and knowing a victim – but not to witnessing violence overall. Furthermore, repeating grades was linked with greater levels of perceiving violence and overall violence exposure. Out-of-home placements were found to correlate with knowing victims of violence, as was total violence exposure. However, the number of people in the home could not be associated with any of the measures of violence exposure. In this study life stress was demonstrated to be the most stable predictor of violence exposure for this sample (Weist et al., 2001).

A report done by the United States Department of Justice (1995, cited in Osofsky, 1999) found that adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15 were more at increased risk of victimisation than any other age group. The study indicated that adolescents are victims at twice the national average. Overstreet, Dempsey, Graham and Moely (1999) describe similar results as high rates of exposure to different types of community violence were indicated amongst the 10 to 15 year age group. Horowitz (1995, as cited in Stein et al., 2003), focusing on 12 to 21 year old urban girls from an adolescent medicine clinic, found that, after the age of 13, twice as many had witnessed a shooting as had before the age of 13. Those over 13 also reported hearing about more homicides of family members, enemies, boyfriends or other loved ones than before age 13.

Being male is often cited as a significant risk factor for exposure to community violence amongst adolescents (Cooley-Quille et al., 2001; Cope-Linder, Lambert & Ialongo, 2010; Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994; Flannery et al., 2007). Gladstein et al. argue that males are generally more exposed to community violence than females. In their sample, it was found that males had witnessed more violence than their female counterparts, as 36% of males had witnessed someone being knifed and 31% had witnessed someone being murdered. Even though rates were lower among females, about one-fifth of women had seen a robbery, knifing, or murder; one-third of women had observed an assault; and over 40% had seen a shooting (Gladstein et al., 1992).

Similarly, a study conducted by Cooley-Quille et al. indicated that male adolescents are overall more exposed to community violence than females. However, the findings of the study also indicated that female adolescents who have been exposed to high rates of community violence might be at greatest at risk of internalising behaviour problems, while males might be at lower risk for internalising behaviour problems. This is mainly because boys are more susceptible to desensitisation than girls, owing to boys' higher levels of community violence exposure in general.

Factors such as family dynamics, family conflict, struggling families, poor parenting practices, low levels of emotional cohesion, single-parent families, children from smaller families as well as low parental involvement have all been found to increase adolescents' risk of community violence exposure (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010; Gorman-Smith et al., 2004; Leoschut & Burton, 2006; Osofsky et al., 1993; Overstreet et al., 1999). Overstreet et al. studied the role that family support plays in diminishing the internalising of symptoms of negative outcomes from exposure to community violence. The sample of the study consisted of 75 low-income African-American children between the ages of 10 and 15. Results indicated that children living in single-parent families were at greater risk of developing symptoms of depression. This is mainly because exposure to community violence increased in these circumstances. In addition, family size was also shown to be a significant moderator of depressive symptoms, but not of PTSD symptoms. The study thus revealed that, in the face of increased exposure to community violence, individuals from small families, tended to be at higher risk of developing depressive symptoms (Overstreet et al., 1999).

In addition to the family context, the literature points to school and peers as important predictors of exposure to community violence (Lambert et al., 2013; Richards et al., 2004; Schwartz & Gorman, 2003). Working with a group of 632 urban youth, Lambert

et al. focused on the degree to which individual, peer, and family influences predicted the onset of community violence exposure in middle and high schools, as well as the indirect effects of early factors. Their results indicated that aggressive behaviour in Grade 1 was associated with earlier witnessing of community violence, and with being a victim of violence in adolescence. Followed by this, the effects of early aggressive behaviour on the risk of community violence exposure operated, in part, through the effects of peer rejection in Third Grade and conduct problems in middle school. Although the effect of poor academic readiness was evident only in the risk of witnessing community violence, poor academic readiness was further associated with peer rejection and conduct problems (Lambert et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Richards et al. aimed to identify contexts that place an individual at risk, as well as contexts that protect individuals from exposure to violence. They also aimed to examine the links of exposure to violence to delinquent behaviours and to symptoms of trauma. Their results indicated that the more time an individual spends in risky contexts, and the less time they spend in protective contexts, the higher the likelihood that they will be exposed to violence. In addition, this study maintained that the more time (unmonitored) young adolescents spent with peers (engaging, for example, in unstructured activities), the higher the likelihood of their being exposed to community violence (Richards et al., 2004).

Adolescents' exposure to community violence furthermore varies according to area of residence. The literature indicates low-income and urban areas as increased risk for community violence exposure, as these areas are characterised by persistent community violence, including recurrent and constant exposure to the use of guns, knives, drugs and random violence in their neighbourhoods (Gladstein et al., 1992; Osofsky, 1999; Weist et al., 2001). In a study comparing violence exposure rates among inner-city with those for middle-to-upper class youth, Gladstein et al. (1992) found that inner-city participants were more likely to be victims, and knew victims, and had witnessed more attacks, rapes, knifings, dangerous events and murders than the middle-to-upper class youth. Weist, et al. (2001) conducted a similar study, examining the ability of demographic variables and risk factors to predict exposure to community violence. Their sample consisted of 342 high school students from an inner-city area who had been referred for mental health care in community centres or in school. In this sample, over 90% of participants could identify at least one victim of a violent act, 77% indicated having witnessed a violent act, and 47% reported past victimisation.

2.1.2.2 Protective Factors

Studies have indicated numerous individual protective factors related to community violence exposure including emotion-regulation skills, self-esteem, self-reliance, emotional social support and a sense of personal control (Kliewer et al., 2004; Reinemann & Ellison, 2008; Rosenthal & Wilson, 2008).

Reineman and Ellison (2008) conducted a study consisting of 95 students. The study aimed to examine the significance of internal and external protective factors, especially in the relationship between community violence exposure and children's adjustment. In addition, this study focused on the extent to which gender and non-violent stressors modify forms of self-control. Results indicated that children possessing higher self-esteem showed fewer overall symptoms of depression than their lower self-esteem counterparts. Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that the interaction between community violence and self-esteem is different for males and females. For males it was evident that high self-esteem was a protective factor with respect to depressive symptoms, as it offers protection against the impact of community violence. For females, high self-esteem served a protective role only under situations of low exposure. In other words, for females, self-esteem loses its protective function as rates of exposure to community violence increased. Results further indicated an association between exposure to violence and external resource factors and youths' psychological change. For instance, personal relationships contributed to developing PTSD and symptoms of depression. This is especially the case with those who reported experiencing challenging peer relations, as they displayed greater levels of PTSD symptoms. However, the quality of relationships with parents were not a predictor of children's PTSD symptoms (Reineman & Ellison, 2008).

Copeland-Linder et al. conducted a study, employing a person-centred analytic approach. The study aimed to identify diverse outlines of community violence exposure, and protective factors on the individual and family level, to predict adolescent mental health. Participants of the study were 504 Sixth Graders who had initially been assessed in first Grade, as part of a longitudinal study. The longitudinal study examined the influence of two school-based preventive intervention trials, which were intended to decrease violent and disrupting behaviour. The results of this study indicated community violence victimisation as being negatively associated with self-worth. In addition it found, through parental reports,

that violence victimisation was positively associated with parents' involvement in their children's teaching (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010).

Hardaway, McLoyd and Wood (2012) examined school environment, involvement in extracurricular activities and positive parent-child relations as protective factors that might alleviate risks related to community violence exposure. They found that high levels of involvement in extracurricular activities and positive parent-child relations have a protective role, as they tend to weaken the positive link between exposures to violence and externalising problems. A study by Gorman-Smith et al. (2004) indicates increasing family functioning, and higher reported availability of family support as positive factors, while Hill and Madhere (1996) point to family education level as an important protective factor in community violence exposure. Hill and Madhere (1996) pointed out that adolescent children of more accomplished parents could be expected to be less exposed to violence in the community. In addition, family education may also decrease the later risk of adolescents becoming involved in interpersonal violence, as parents with adequate education tend to educate their children about the consequences of such behaviour. In a study by Ludwig and Warren (2009), findings indicated that adolescents who identify with their school and who received adequate support from their teachers, tended to have greater hope, irrespective of the level of violence to which they are exposed. Results of this study also indicated that, in order to promote hope and minimise psychosocial distress for youth exposed to community violence, the significance of school factors – mainly feeling attached to and supported in school – should be attended to (Ludwig & Warren, 2009). Similarly, Luthar and Goldstein (2004) indicate that participation in extracurricular activities, positive school characteristics and good parent-child relationships are protective factors in environments where youth come into contact with risks linked with exposure to community violence.

Followed by school and family factors, Lambert et al. (2005) point to positive peer relationships as a protective factor, lowering adolescents' risk of exposure to community violence. Similarly, Salzinger et al. (2011) examined attachment to friends as protective factor to community violence exposure. The study further explored the effect that inner-city community violence exposure has on later internalising and externalising problems. Results of the study indicated that in the case of high levels of exposure to violence, attachment to friends protected adolescents against poor internalising problems. In addition, their results showed that friends provide adequate support for discussing and dealing with exposure to community violence (Salzinger et al., 2011).

Gardner and Brooks-Gunn documented neighbourhood-level protective factors associated with community violence exposure. Using data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighbourhoods (PHDCN), this study aimed at identifying significant converse association among the diversity of youth organisations accessible at the neighbourhood level, and adolescents' exposure to community violence. The sample consisted of youth between the ages of 12 and 15 years, and was restricted to those who were considered at each of the two time-points evident in their analyses (Gardner & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). The findings of this study indicated that exposure to community violence arises less commonly among adolescents who live in neighbourhoods that have a greater variety of youth organisations to offer, as compared with neighbourhoods that offer less variety (Gardner & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). In addition, the study found that the presence of youth organisations in a neighbourhood, irrespective of whether youth partake in the activities offered, may in some way present a protective factor for exposure to violence. Neighbourhood youth organisations may thus protect against violence exposure by reducing occasions for detecting violent crime (Gardner & Brooke-Gunn, 2009).

2.2 Summary of Literature

This chapter has presented an overview of both international and local literature on community violence exposure. From the reviewed literature, it becomes clear that community violence is a vital public health concern, due to the increase in rate of exposure, especially in low-income communities and amongst adolescents aged 12 to 15. In addition, risk and protective factors are related to individual, family, school and community levels.

While the area of community violence exposure has been the focus of a large amount of empirical investigation, there is a lack of qualitative research on the topic. Most of the studies in South Africa focusing on community violence exposure have tended to administer self-report measures, which do not provide any in-depth or descriptive data. Despite the widespread body of literature focusing on risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure, the quantitative nature of most of these studies does not integrate the understandings of adolescents in designing prevention programmes. Numerous researchers have highlighted the need for qualitative research to provide an in-depth understanding of the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure.

Secondly, the literature demonstrates that risk and protective factors are indicative of the individual, family, school and community level. According to Richards et al. (2004), violence is a multifaceted problem and therefore needs to be understood at many levels. Aisenberg and Ell (2005) highlight the importance of a change in the study of community violence and the prevention of this persistent problem. The literature also stresses the necessity to explore and assess vital contextual factors that form the different levels of a child's ecosystem. In addition, Aisenberg and Ell (2005) maintain that the focus on the delivery of resources and services to individual adolescents is not adequate. In fact, poor outcomes often arise when interventions target the child and fail to include parents as dynamic associates in all facets of treatment (Aisenberg & Ell, 2005). For example, interventions that are single-focused, such as the medication of children or lowering the age at which children can be tried as adult criminals, have not decreased or eradicated negative events nor the hazard or fear of community violence (Aisenberg & Ell, 2005). In exploring and describing community violence exposure, the nature of the relationship between parents, family and community-level factors and processes needs to be understood in an attempt to prevent community violence (Aisenberg & Ell, 2005). Bronfenbrenner (1979) maintains that exposure to community violence is a complex event embedded in the interaction of many features, ranging from the biological to the political (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Third, research and professional opinions in the literature strongly suggest that adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15 are at higher risk for victimisation than any other age group. Within this expanded landscape of community violence exposure, the prominence of concentrating more on adolescents is acknowledged. In South Africa, however, limited attention is given to this 'population' (ages 12–15). Exposure to community violence has an excessive bearing on the individual's psychological, physical and emotional wellbeing. In addition, cognitive effects may be particularly significant in adolescents as they develop neurologically, are still attending school and need to perform cognitively on a day-to-day basis.

Lastly, the literature has shown that adolescents from low-income communities are exposed to higher rates of violence than those of other communities, as these areas are characterised by persistent community violence, including recurrent and constant exposure to the use of guns, knives, drugs and random violence in their neighbourhoods (Stein et al., 2003). Moreover, when identifying the gaps within the literature, it is evident that limited research has been conducted within specific communities in South Africa.

From the reviewed literature it becomes clear that community violence is a vital public health concern, due to the levels of exposure, especially amongst adolescents aged 12 to 15. In addition, due to the quantitative nature of most previous research, there is a need to obtain in-depth understandings of the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. When identifying the gaps within the literature consulted, it is evident that there is a dearth of research conducted on adolescents' understandings of risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. The identification of these factors is regarded as vital in designing intervention and prevention programmes.

In order to attend to this issue, the present study explores and describes the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors that are useful for informing interventions. This study focused on factors related to community violence exposure within a low-income community in Cape Town, to contribute to the development of context specific interventions targeting community violence exposure amongst adolescents. In order to contribute to effective interventions aimed at the prevention of community violence exposure, this study employed the Person, Process, Context, Time (PPCT) model.

2.3 Theoretical considerations

For the purpose of this study, the PPCT model was used to support the exploration, as well as to allow for a deeper understanding of the data collected. The PPCT model focuses primarily on the context of the individual (Darling, 2007). In addition, this model views the child's own biology as vital to his/her development and behaviour (Berk, 2000). An underlying assumption of the PPCT model is that adolescent behaviour results from a process of shared interaction between the individual, his/her immediate family/community environment, and the societal and cultural setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The PPCT model considers individuals as nested within interactive systems (Ward et al., 2012). Characteristics on the individual level may influence risk and protective factors, increasing or decreasing adolescent exposure to violence (Ward et al., 2012). However, these characteristics are not limited to the individual. Rather they are bound to multiple interactions and contributions from the environment (Jordahl & Lohman, 2009). Hence, no single factor can explain why one individual is more or less likely to be exposed to community violence. Rather, exposure to community violence is a complex event embedded in the interaction of many features, ranging from the biological to the political (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

2.3.1 The integration of levels of biology, psychology and behaviour

For more than a decade, Bronfenbrenner and his colleagues intended to incorporate the other levels of the developmental system. Bronfenbrenner introduced the biological, psychological and behavioural component and in addition human development was formulated (Lerner, 2005). Bronfenbrenner aimed to bring the features of the developing person into the ecological system he expanded on (Lerner, 2005). The model emerging from the scholarship has four interrelated components.

The first component incorporates the developmental process concerning the vibrant relationship between the individual and the context. The second component entails the person with his or her individual range of biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural characteristics. The third component includes the context of human development, conceptualised as integrated levels or structures of the ecosystem of human development. The last component, time, is described as concerning several dimensions of temporality (Lerner, 2005). The chronosystem consists of ontogenic time, family time and historical time, which controls adjustment through the life course. These four components of Bronfenbrenner's formulation of the bio-ecological theory constitute the 'Process', 'Person', 'Context', 'Time' (PPCT) model. It is employed to conceptualise the unified developmental system, and to design research to study the course of human development (Lerner, 2005). However, in the current study only 'Person' and 'Context' factors, related to community violence exposure, are considered.

2.3.1.2 Person

Bronfenbrenner recognised the importance of the biological and genetic features of the person (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). However, a greater emphasis was placed on personal characteristics that the individuals bring forth into their daily social interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). He divided these features into three categories namely *demand*, *resource* and *force* characteristics:

- *Demand characteristics* are described as characteristics that operate as a direct stimulus to another person – such as age, gender, skin colour, and physical appearance (Tudge et al., 2009). These dispositions can put proximal processes in motion, in a particular developmental area, to maintain and prolong their process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Additionally, these characteristics may influence primary interactions, because of the expectations they instantly create (Tudge et al., 2009).

- *Resource characteristics* on the other hand are not immediately apparent (Tudge et al., 2009). These characteristics are viewed as bio-ecological resources of ability, experience, knowledge and skill, and are vital for the effectual functioning of proximal processes at a given phase of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Examples of such features are those which communicate partially to mental and emotional resources – for instance past experiences, skills, and intelligence – and to social and material resources (access to good food and housing, concerned parents, educational opportunities suitable to the requirements of the particular society) (Tudge et al., 2009).
- *Force/demand characteristics* invite or discourage responses from the social environment of a type that can encourage or interrupt the course of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Force/demand characteristics are those that have to do with differentiation of temperament, driving force, determination, and the like (Tudge et al., 2009). For example, different children may have equal resource characteristics, but their paths of development may be considerably different, especially in the case where one child is encouraged to thrive and persevere in tasks and the other is not encouraged and does not persevere (Tudge et al., 2009).

2.3.1.3 Context

The environment or context of the child consists of four interrelated systems:

- **Microsystem:** This is the innermost level of the environment (Berk, 2000). The micro-system encompasses the activities and relationships with important others experienced by a developing person in a specific surrounding such as the family, school, peer group or community (Berns, 1997). In order to understand the development of the child at this level, one should take into consideration that all relationships are *bidirectional* and *reciprocal* (Berk, 2000). In other words, although adults may affect children's responses, children's characteristics (e.g., their personality styles and ways of thinking) also influence the behaviour of adults. In exploring risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure, this model proposes focusing on the organisation and dynamics of the family and the close social network of the adolescent (school, family and friends) (Scileppi, Teed & Torres, 1999).

- **Mesosystem:** This system involves a set of relationships taking place between two or more microsystems and encompasses the developing person (e.g. the relationships between home, school, and neighbourhood) (Berns, 1997). More specifically, the mesosystem is a system of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For children to develop effectively, child-rearing support must also be obtainable in the larger environment (Berk, 2000). For example, exposure to community violence is not merely influenced by activities that take place in classrooms. It may also be influenced by parental involvement in school life and the extent to which values and information regarding violence are carried over into the home (Berk, 2000). Family has been shown to be one of the most significant socialising settings in childhood and during the course of adolescence (Ward, 2007). Close relatives play a vital role in influencing behaviour, as well as other factors such as poverty, school absence, peer pressure, which may increase the risk of exposure to community violence (Ward, 2007). According to Berns (1997), the number and quality of interrelationships will determine the impact of mesosystems on the child.
- **Exosystem:** This system describes events that have a vital but indirect influence on adolescents' behaviour (Berns, 1997). An example applicable to this study would be high prevalence of gangs in communities or a lack of recreational activities, which might encourage adolescents to engage in violent activities.
- **Macrosystem:** This system comprises more distal effects, such as government policies, norms, ideologies and the economy (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). More specifically, the macrosystem consists of the environment and subculture of the evolving person, including their belief systems, standard of living, and opportunities and patterns of social interchange (Berns, 1997). According to Berk (2000), the values, laws and customs of a culture affect the experiences and the interactions at the lower levels of the environment. For example factors such as culture, work opportunities and the availability of resources within a specific country may influence adolescent exposure to community violence.

Thus, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure, this study employed the PPCT model, which considers interactions on different levels of the system. Moreover, by employing the PPCT model, this study aimed to consider the developmental process,

concerning the dynamic relationship between the individual and the context, as well as the individual range of biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural characteristics. In addition, this model includes the context of human development and simplifies the ways in which the outer social environment influences individual behaviour, placed within the complex interacting arrangement of a system. This theory will be useful in understanding how exposure to community violence is affected by these various systems.



Chapter Outline

Method

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Research design

3.3 Research context

3.4 Participants

3.5 Data collection

3.6 Procedure

3.7 Data analysis

3.8 Reflexivity

3.9 Validity

3.10 Ethics



Chapter Three: Method

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the available literature relevant to the present study, with details pertaining to the theoretical considerations also included. This chapter presents the methodological considerations undertaken in the study. The following areas are addressed in this chapter: the research design, the research context, the participants involved in the research, a description of the procedure employed, and the ethical considerations of the study. The methodology also made use of the PPCT model, which influenced the choice of the data collection technique and the type of analysis used. Considering the nature of the approach employed, the researcher also reflects on the validity and reflexivity of the research process.

3.2 Research Design

Considering the aims and objectives of the study, an exploratory design was followed, using a qualitative methodological framework. According to Mason (1996, p.4) “qualitative research is grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly interpretive in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced.” Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013, p.338) postulate that qualitative researchers “are interested in the lived experiences of the individuals, groups and communities that they study”. Moreover, qualitative research is based on “methods of data generation, which are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced, rather than rigidly standardised or structured, or removed from real life or natural social context, as in some forms of experimental method” (Mason, 1996, p.4). Thus employing a qualitative methodological framework enabled the researcher to facilitate a more inclusive understanding of the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure (Kuper et al., 2008).

3.3 Research Context

This study was conducted in Mitchells Plain, a large township about twenty kilometres from the city of Cape Town, established during the apartheid era (Bamu & Theron, 2012). Historically, the South African “apartheid era” refers to a legal system of institutionalised racial discrimination and segregation (Lipton, 1989). Under the apartheid regime, white people enjoyed better-quality education, plenty of employment options, and a sense of control over their lives. In addition, black people (a group consisting of Africans,

coloureds and Indians) lived in an environment in which their every move was constrained (Barnu & Theron, 2012). Under the Group Areas Act, many of these people were removed from their homes and relocated in far less desirable areas.

In the 1990s, the conflict that permeated South African society gave rise to a “culture of violence” (Hamber, 1999, p.114). The persistent nature of this violence became part of all facets of public life, deteriorating the moral, interpersonal and social fabric of society. According to Hamber (1999), the structural violence produced by the State through the inequities of resource provision and life chances in the past, together with domination, politicised all shapes of social existence (e.g. housing, education, jobs, wages, the delivery of services, etc.). The Cape Flats is an area formed because of segregation policies during apartheid in South Africa. As a way of improving housing shortages for displaced coloured people, Mitchells Plain was built in the 1970s (Bamu & Theron, 2012).

According to Boonzaier and Van Schalkwyk (2011), forced removals created psychological harm and the newly allocated areas became reproduction grounds for gang activity and associated crime and violence (Boonzaier & van Schalkwyk, 2011). Consequently, the socially legitimated use of violence as a means of solving problems has saturated South African life. Although this was more apparent in the 1990–1994 interim period, before the first democratic election, it continues to play itself out in the post-apartheid era (Hamber, 1999). For instance, Mitchells Plain is characterised by numerous psychosocial problems of which violence is of great concern. The March–April 2012 South African Police Service statistics for Mitchells Plain shows 2,814 counts of common assault, 1,036 counts of robbery, and 823 counts of assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm. Murder and rape totalled 66 and 471 incidents respectively (SAPS, 2012).

3.4 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 50 adolescents, both male and female, between the ages of 12 and 15 years. They were selected by means of purposive sampling, as they needed to possess specific qualities or experiences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). According to Devers and Frankel (2000, p.264), “purposive sampling strategies are designed to enhance understandings of selected individuals’ or groups’ experience(s).” Thus, the participants were selected according to certain criteria. A requirement for participation in this

study was that participants had to be between the ages of 12 to 15 and reside within Mitchells Plain.

3.5 Data Collection

Data was collected by means of five focus groups responding to semi-structured questions. The focus groups each consisted of ten participants and were conducted in English. According to Bles and Higson-Smith (2000), focus group interviews allow for open discussions, thus enabling respondents to communicate their own perspectives and understandings. Focus groups were used specifically to obtain detailed experiences through observing interactions amongst individuals, which would not have been possible if interviews were conducted (Morgan & Spanish, 1984). According to Smithson (2008), focus groups are particularly useful when collecting data from adolescents. In addition, Kitzinger (1995) suggests that, by employing focus group interviews, adolescents who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own, may be encouraged. Focus group interviews were therefore considered the most appropriate method of gathering in-depth information regarding risk and protective factors relating to exposure to community violence.

3.6 Procedure

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the University of the Western Cape's (UWC) Research Ethics Committee, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and the relevant school. Permission was granted by all relevant parties, after which meetings were arranged with the principal and a representative teacher to discuss the study. The roles of the school, the teacher and the learners were explained in these meetings. The principal and teacher gave their full participation and support. The researcher then set up a date for data collection, and, based on the inclusion criteria stipulated above, teachers recruited the participants. The relevant documentation that the learners and their parents were to read and complete before they could participate in the study was provided to the teachers to disperse to those who wanted to participate. These were the information sheets (see Appendix A), preliminary questions (see Appendix D) and consent forms (see Appendix C). These forms clearly stated what the study was about, what was expected from the learners and what, if any, the risks were for participation, while also stating that assistance would be provided to anyone experiencing difficulties related to the study. It further elaborated on concerns such as privacy, anonymity and respect, by clarifying that personal information would be kept confidential and unidentified, and that the information collected during the focus groups would be incorporated in the final report of the study.

Once these forms were completed and consent had been obtained, the data collection process proceeded. Before each of the focus groups commenced, the participants' part in the study, as well as the duration of the data collection procedure was explained in detail to ensure that participation was voluntary. Furthermore, the participants were also asked to keep the information shared confidential.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) theoretical thematic analysis: a "method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data", organising and describing data set "in (rich) detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.7). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a "theoretical" thematic analysis is determined by the researcher's theoretical or analytic concern in the area. It is thus more overtly analyst-driven. Therefore, in this study, data was coded according to the specific objectives and theoretical framework utilised in the study. In addition, adolescents' perceptions and understandings concerning community violence exposure were analysed following the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In analysing the data collected, each of these steps was followed.

Briefly, the first phase in the analysis process requires familiarising oneself with collected data. This phase requires that researchers should engage in the data so that they are well acquainted with the degree and complexity of the content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This entails the researcher re-reading the data in an active way, and in this process of active reading examining meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the study the researcher read the entire dataset before coding took place, where ideas and the identifications of patterns were shaped. In addition, the researcher made notes for coding which enabled her to begin a process of more formal coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The second phase entails the researcher generating initial codes from the data obtained. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), each code identifies a facet of the data (semantic content or latent) that emerges as interesting to the analyst. Moreover, this phase commenced after the researcher had read and became familiar with the data, and in addition had created a preliminary list of ideas concerning what was in the data and what was of significance about them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the study, the researcher had worked thoroughly through the complete data set while giving complete and similar consideration to each data item. In addition, the researcher identified interesting features in the data items that might form the foundation of recurrent patterns through the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher coded her data by using highlighters and coloured pens and Post-it notes to

recognise sections of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following this, the researcher identified the codes and then matched them up with data extracts that demonstrated that code. The researcher ensured that all actual data extracts were coded and gathered together within each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The third phase involves searching for themes from the data obtained. It starts when all the data has been coded and gathered, and when the researchers have a long list of the different codes that they have identified across their data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the third phase re-focuses the analysis – at the broader level of themes, rather than codes. It comprises arranging the various codes into possible themes, and collecting all the applicable coded data extracts within the acknowledged themes. In the study, the researcher analysed her codes and decided how different codes might merge to form a central theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, the researcher made use of visual representations (e.g. tables with the name of each code and a brief description) to assist her in sorting the different codes into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The fourth phase, the refinement of themes, starts when the researcher had developed a set of possible themes. In this phase it may become clear that some possible themes are not really themes, while other themes may require breaking down into further distinct themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, the fourth phase includes two levels of revising and filtering themes. The first level entails the researcher reading the collected extracts for each theme and considering whether they appear to form a consistent pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, once possible themes appeared to form a consistent pattern, the researcher moved to the second level of this phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the second level, the researcher re-read the entire data set. This was done firstly to ascertain whether the themes fit in, in relation to the data set. Secondly the data set was re-read in order to code further data within themes that had been missed in the earlier coding stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the end of the fourth phase, the researcher had a comprehensive picture of the different themes present, how they were linked and the overall story they told about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The fifth phase commences after researchers have an adequate thematic map of their data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the study, the researcher defined and developed the themes and analysed the data within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In other words, the researcher identified the fundamental nature of what each theme was about, as well as the significance

of the themes in general, and determined what feature of the data each theme was capturing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to do this, the researcher went back to collecting the data transcripts for each theme and organising them into a sound and internally consistent description, with additional narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, for each theme, the researcher performed and wrote an in-depth analysis. Moreover, the researcher also took into consideration how each theme fitted into the general story being presented about the data in relation to the research question. The researcher furthermore considered sub-themes, which are themes within a theme that often express a hierarchy of meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), it is vital by the end of this phase that the researcher can clearly define what the themes of the research study are, and what they are not.

Lastly, phase six starts once the researcher has fully worked-out themes. This phase entails the final analysis and the writing up of the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, researchers have to tell the story of their data to convince the reader of the value and legitimacy of the analysis. In the study, the researcher selected specific vivid extracts to detail the fundamental nature of the point she was demonstrating, without needless intricacy. Moreover, it is essential for the researcher to create an argument in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8 Reflexivity

In qualitative research the researcher needs to be critically conscious of how their own values, situations and interests affect all phases of the research process (Pillow, 2003). According to Morrow (2005), reflexivity provides a chance for the researchers to recognise how their own understandings and considerations of the world affect the research process. Reflexivity, defined as turning back on oneself, is a procedure of self-orientation (Charlotte Davies, 1999, as cited in Pillow, 2003). According to Cunliffe (2008), engaging with a relationally responsive approach in research encompasses an understanding of self- and critical-reflexivity. In the current study the researcher was aware of how her own bias and rigid ideas might affect all the areas of the research process and therefore remained attentive within the research process to the social setting and preconceived notions about these communities. Bearing this in mind helped the researcher to listen to the participants more actively, probe their responses and ask for clarity in order to ensure that the data that emerged in the study was not a false interpretation of what the participants actually meant to say.

3.9 Validity

Within qualitative research “validity is not a single, fixed or universal concept, but rather a contingent construct, grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects” (Winter, 2000, p. 1). According to Aguinaldo (2004) we should no longer consider validity as a purpose (i.e. “is valid” versus “is not valid”) but rather as a constant process of interrogation. Guba and Lincoln (1985) replace the concept of validity with “trustworthiness” and propose steps to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. In this study, the researcher firstly ensured credibility through “member checks” where data analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions were tested with members of stakeholder groups from whom the data was initially collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Additionally, the researcher aimed at providing exact reports or clarification of human experience. This was mainly done so that people who shared that understanding would immediately recognise the explanations. Dependability was assured by employing an independent reviewer to evaluate the researcher’s transcripts of the interview data (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Thirdly, the researcher aimed to ensure transferability of the study by providing a comprehensive, rich description of the setting that had been studied. This was done so that readers are provided with adequate information to enable them to judge the applicability of the results to other situations that they were acquainted with (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

3.10 Ethics

The ethical guidelines stipulated by the UWC and the WCED were strictly followed. In order to gain access to the school, a letter requesting permission was addressed to the Western Cape Education Department as well as to the principal of the school. Participants were clearly informed about all aspects of the research topic, and were therefore informed of the aims of the study as well as their role in the study. In addition, participants were informed that participation was voluntary. Prior to focus group interviews, informed consent and assent was obtained from both the parents and learners. Participants were informed of their rights in the research process: that they were not being forced to reply to any question they were uncomfortable with, and that they might withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher assured participants that audio-files and transcriptions would be kept in a safe place, that they would make use of identification codes (rather than names) on data forms, and that the researcher would use password-protected computer files. In writing the report about this research project, the participants’ identities were protected to the maximum extent

possible. Prior to conducting focus group interviews, each participant signed a letter of consent, as evidence of their understanding of the above considerations. Counselling services were made available for the participants to access if necessary.



Chapter Outline

Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Findings of the study

1) Thematic category 1: Adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk factors related to community violence exposure

(a) Person-related characteristics

(b) Context-related characteristics

2) Thematic category 2: Adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the protective factors related to community violence exposure

(a) Person-related characteristics

(b) Context-related characteristics

4.3 Discussion/Summary of findings

4.4 Conclusion



Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a description of the methodological aspects of the study. This chapter presents analysis and discussion of the study. The focus group data collected was analysed by means of Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of theoretical thematic analysis – as outlined in the previous chapter. The use of thematic analysis allowed an in-depth understanding of the risk and protective factors emerging from the adolescents' point of view. In essence, themes were identified according to the aims and objectives of the study and gathered within the categories. Each theme was examined in relation to existing literature as delineated in the literature review. The data was conceptualised and located within Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model. The chapter concludes with an interpretive and integrated summary of the key issues derived from the study.

4.2 Findings of the study

An analysis of the data identified a number of emerging themes which were grouped into two thematic categories. These themes, as they have emerged within categories, and framed within Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, are discussed below.

1) Thematic Category 1: Perceptions and understandings of the risk factors related to community violence exposure

a) *Person-related characteristics*

- Low self-image/self-esteem
- Personal identity and status within the community
- Bad coping mechanisms/lack of problem-solving skills

b) *Context-related characteristics*

i) Microsystem

- Experiences of violence and neglect in childhood
- Family conflict
- Lack of social support
- Parenting styles
- Peer pressure/acceptance
- School bullying

ii) Exosystem

- Structural characteristics
- Substance use
- Lack of policing
- Gangsterism

iii) Macrosystem

- Government policies and service delivery

2) Thematic Category 2: Perceptions and understandings of the protective factors related to community violence exposure

a) Person-related characteristics

- Decision-making skills
- Morals and values
- A sense of purpose and future

b) Context-related characteristics

i) Microsystem

- Parental monitoring
- Expression of norms, values and expectations
- Positive peer relations

ii) Exosystem

- Safe school environment
- Education about violence
- Counselling
- Extracurricular activities

iii) Macrosystem

- Religious values and institutions



4.3. Thematic Category 1: Perceptions and understandings of risk factors related to exposure to community violence exposure

This thematic category addresses the participants' perceptions and understandings of the risk factors related to community violence exposure. The emerging themes in this category are person-related risk factors and context-related risk factors.

4.3.1 Person-related characteristics

Adolescents identified a range of person-related characteristics that might place adolescents at increased risk for community violence exposure. These factors are low self-image/self-esteem, personal identity and status within the community, and bad coping mechanisms/problem solving skills.

a. Low-self-image/self-esteem. Adolescents expressed having a low self-image/self-esteem as often contributing to people participating in violent activities.

This is apparent in the following extract:

Facilitator: What do you think drives or motivates people to violence?

Female Respondent: Low self-image (Group 1, p.5).

Female Respondent: If you have a negative idea about yourself, like others will always think of you addresses you or what's up with you (Group 3, p.9).

Self-esteem can be described as a person's general sense of worth and security. In addition, self-image, self-concept and self-perception are closely related terms as they refer to the way in which people view and assess themselves (Louw, Louw & Ferns, 2007). Participants felt that low self-esteem might increase adolescents' risk of being exposed to community violence; as one participant responded, "if you have a negative idea about yourself, others will always think of you or addresses you or what's up with you." In addition, Card and Hodges (2008) indicate that a low self-esteem contributes to exposure to violence over time, most likely to be because aggressors view children with a low self-esteem as "easy targets". Low self-esteem is manifested in extreme concern about what other people think, and in a lack of autonomy and individuality; thus people with low self-esteem are more likely to be influenced by others. Rosenberg (1965) maintains, that low self-esteem is not in itself a direct cause of violence, but when low self-esteem interacts with other factors such as peer influence, it may increase adolescents' risk of participating in violent activities (Rosenberg, 1965). Damon (1991, p.16) maintains that "adolescents' concept of themselves is a

fundamental way in which they organise their social world. It establishes the cognitive grounds for the adolescent's unique role, status and position in society, in other words, their personal identity.”

b. Personal-identity and status within the community was found to be a salient risk factor to community violence exposure. Extracts that provide support to this view are presented below:

Facilitator: What else drives people to participate in violence?

Male Respondent: Jealousy.

Facilitator: Of what?

Male Respondent: Girlfriends, ma'am.

Facilitator: So it's relationship jealousy?

Male Respondent: Yes (Group 4, p.5).

Female Respondent: Jealousy.

Facilitator: With regards to what?

Female Respondent: When you have something like clothes that is better than their clothes.

Female Respondent: Or you like someone else (Group 3, p.6).

The period of adolescence is known for the development of personal and social identity. Adolescents discover, test boundaries, become independent and commit to an identity, or sense of self (Erikson, 1965). Identity development involves the need for adolescents to express who they are, what they feel is valuable to them, and the direction that they want to take in the future (Louw et al., 2007). This identity development is referred to by Erikson as an “identity crisis”. That is, a short-term period of misperception. In this phase, adolescents discover, question existing values, and investigate alternative roles, in order to cultivate their own set of values and goals (Louw et al., 2011). In addition, gender-role identity is a fundamental part of an individual's identity – the roles and expectations associated with their gender (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011). Most often the male identity is linked with achievement, success and status, where males are often taught to do better than those around them, by this

means utilising their dominance over other males. Furthermore, these have consequences for males in economically deprived communities, who often have to seek out alternative means of meeting these expectations, in order to successfully prove their masculinity. The pressure that these expectations create can lead to intense emotions such as jealousy, as mentioned above, and may influence adolescents to take part in violent activities. This may increase their risk of being exposed to community violence (Jantjies & Popovac, 2011).

c. Bad coping mechanisms/Lack of problem solving skills. Participants reported that bad coping mechanisms and a lack of problem solving skills contribute to violence. The following extracts demonstrate this:

Facilitator: What do you think drives people to commit violence?

Male Respondent: Bad coping mechanisms (Group 3, p.6).

Female Respondent: Sometimes they have poor coping mechanisms 'cause maybe their coping mechanisms is like drinking or drugs to stay away from violence but in the end its gonna link back... (Group 3, p.7).

Female Respondent: Some people think that fighting solves everything (Group 2, p.4).

Participants expressed the opinion that a lack of problem-solving skills as well as bad coping mechanisms “like drinking or drugs” increase people’s risk of participating in violent activities. According to Gorman-Smith et al. (2004), adolescents who struggle to cope with adverse life situations such as community violence exposure tend to use substances, often argue or fight with others, enjoy observing others being beaten up, often tend not to express their emotions, isolate themselves, tell themselves that they do not care, and often try to forget about what they had experienced. This was also evident in the focus group discussion:

Facilitator: Why do people participate in violence?

Male Respondent: Anger.

Facilitator: Where does the anger come from?

Male Respondent: Emotional anger (Group 4, p.4).

Facilitator: What do you think drives or motivates people to violence?

Male Respondent: Anger (Group 1, p.5).

Ineffectiveness of active coping has been linked to adolescents' inability to solve problems in a positive and adaptive manner (Robertson, Xu & Stripling, 2010). Sesar, Simic and Sesar (2013) maintain that people who utilise self-reliance and problem-solving skills less, tend to have more internalising and externalising psychological difficulties, which may increase adolescents' risk of participating in violent activities or being exposed to community violence.

4.3.2 Context-related characteristics

This theme relates to adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk factors involved in community violence exposure and is situated within Bronfenbrenner's Microsystem, Mesosystem, Macrosystem and Exosystem (Context) analysis.

4.3.2.1 Microsystem

a. Experiences of violence and neglect in childhood. Two male adolescents felt that child abuse motivates people to commit violence. They reported as follows:

Facilitator: So there is violence everywhere. What do you think motivates or drives people to commit violence?

Female Respondent: ...the hatred they have upon others.

Facilitator: Why do you think they have hatred?

Male Respondent: ...childhood uhm problems and then the parents abuse them when they were younger and then they bring it up when they were and then they are old and they like put the anger out on somebody else that was doing it when they was younger.

Male Respondent: When they was younger they could do nothing, everyone was bigger than them (Group 2, p.4).

Participants expressed the opinion that experiences of violence and neglect in childhood increase adolescents' risk of participating in or being exposed to violence. This corresponds with findings in the literature that children who were abused are more likely to show signs of externalising behaviour problems such as delinquency and violence perpetration (McCabe et al., 2005). Findings of a study conducted by Dodge, Bates and Pettit indicate that child abuse increases adolescents' risk of developing of chronic aggressive behaviour patterns. They further maintain that the understanding of physical harm may lead to a child conceptualising the world in unusual ways that later continue the cycle of violence and increase adolescents'

risk of being exposed to community violence. Ward (2007) maintains that victims of child abuse are more likely to support violence as a common response to problems they encounter. In addition, these children also tend to have problems construing social cues and are more likely to have deviant social goals. When adolescents witness brutal violence, according to Ward (2007), they are also more likely to perceive positive outcomes for aggression. This increases adolescents' risk of being exposed to community violence.

b. Family conflict. Some of the participants pointed to family conflict as the reason people participate in violence. The following extracts demonstrate this:

Female Respondent: They can probably be abused by their spouse and then they will take it out on other people (Group 3, p.9).

Male Respondent: Something happened in their childhood.

Facilitator: Something like what?

Male Respondent: Like maybe their father hit their mother and he thought if he hit other people he will also get away with it.

Facilitator: So he learnt it as a way of resolving problems? Male Respondent: Yes (Group 4, p.6).

Female Respondent: ... and sometimes its uhm situations at home, like maybe they don't have money, or parents goes through a divorce, that all falls on a person and affects the person (Group 1, p.6).

The participants felt that witnessing family conflict in their homes might also lead to adolescents participating in violent activities. Violence is often normalised in families characterised by conflict. Thus it becomes evident that the principles that children acquire to judge violent behaviour may result in indirectly approving violence (Ward, 2007). Adolescents who are exposed to conflict in the family are introduced to the use of violence as well as models that show violent behaviour. The use of violence to solve problems may be found to be successful in the short term, however, in the long term children are likely to learn and model such behaviour (Ward, 2007). This may increase the likelihood of participating in violent activities and in turn increase adolescents' risk of being exposed to community violence (Singer et al., 1998).

Family conflict can be further exacerbated by financial problems. The following extracts illustrate this:

Facilitator: What motivates people to participate in violence?

Female Respondent: Family problems (Group 2, p.7).

Male Respondent: Problems like in their homes.

Male Respondent: Personal problems.

Female Respondent: Like maybe in their houses there is a lot of stress (Group 2, p.7).

Female Respondent: Most likely financial problems in the house, financial problems can lead to stress (Group 3, p.3).

Facilitator: Anything else?

Female Respondent: Domestic personal issues.

Facilitator: Such as?

Female Respondent: What is happening in homes, and financial problems... (Group 3, p.14).

Female Respondent: And sometimes its uhm situations at home, like maybe they don't have money... (Group 1, p.6).

The participants regarded financial problems as causing stress and conflict in families, which in turn motivates people to participate in violence. Similarly, a study by Margolin et al. indicated a strong link between community violence and family to youth aggression. This link was indicated specifically where low family income and high negative life events occurred. Findings of the study conducted by Margolin et al. indicated that youth in families characterised by high rates of life stresses are at increased risk of being exposed to violence (Margolin et al., 2009). In addition, high rates of anxiety within the family, due to financial problems, may increase husband-to-wife violence and in turn increase the risk of child abuse (Margolin & Gordis, 2003). Furthermore, Frojd et al. (2006) found that adolescents' perceptions of family hardship reduce their sense of control and is a major cause of worry. The study proposes two ways in which economic hardship can contribute to stress amongst

adolescents. First, as Frojd et al. argue, adolescents become aware when parents are burdened with financial problems, which in turn causes the adolescent to become anxious. Also, when the adolescents themselves experience financial adversity it tends to weaken their sense of control and may also lead to their feeling inferior to their peers (Frojd et al., 2006). These feelings may lead to youth joining gangs, as gangs often give them access to goods such as brand-name clothing, which are perceived by youth facing economic hardships to be vital to their full participation in society (Ward, 2007). Thus, according to Ward (2007), by emphasising what the perpetrator can gain, the consequences of violent actions are perceived as being minimised. The perpetrator will therefore lack moral judgement, due to gaining what is essential for either physical or social survival. In other words violent behaviour becomes more likely (Ward, 2007). This may contribute to the onset of community violence exposure amongst adolescents.

c. Lack of social support. One female participant perceived lack of social support as motivating people to participate in violence. The following extract demonstrates this finding:

Female Respondent: And your family also, sometimes they will like skell with you, they will tell you, you will never go anywhere and you will never be this, you're hopeless. You will go outside and your friends will tell you no it's fine and you must join their gang and then you will feel like at home there and they will be like your other family but just they show you to the wrong things because your family is not supporting you in whatever you wanna be (Group 5, p.2).

Participants felt that a lack of social support from the family led to adolescents seeking support from gangs. This corresponds with the literature, which indicates that adolescents who grow up in homes characterised by a lack of warmth and support are more likely to be delinquent (Smith & Stern, 1997). Stsevic, Ropac and Lucev (2005) maintain that factors related to unfavourable family relations are one of the most significant risks amongst adolescents for participating in violent activities (Stsevic et al., 2005). Also, parents who regularly deal with family conflict and witness violence, or are targets of violence themselves, are more prone to experience difficulties in being explicitly available, thoughtful and open to their children. Osofsky (1999) maintains that when adolescents cannot depend on the social support that comes from their caregivers, they may withdraw and show disorganised behaviours. Adolescents who observed their parents as less compassionate (i.e., displaying less care, less friendliness, more unresponsiveness and rejecting behaviour to them) tend to have less empathic reactions (both affective and cognitive). This often results

in a greater propensity to engage in violent activities (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2013). Likewise, Sharkey et al. (2011) postulate that a gang satisfies the needs of adolescences that are not met through traditional and socially acceptable means. In other words, gangs may offer many benefits such as “make you feel at home” that are often unmet in homes. Furthermore, they can satisfy basic physiological desires, including housing, through economic advances and offer their members a sense of safekeeping, security and access to resources (Sharkey et al., 2011).

d. Parenting styles. Adolescents identified neglectful, permissive as well as authoritarian parenting styles as family-level risk factors. Two of the adolescents reported that neglectful parenting contributes to community violence exposure. The following extracts demonstrate this:

Female Respondent: And you get people, you get young children whose parents like abandoned them... (Group 3, p.2).

Female Respondent: ...and your parents are not morally supporting you and they don't care about you, sometimes parents are abandoning their children, and then children feel all alone (Group 3, p.14).

The above responses indicate that poor and neglectful parent-child relationships leave adolescents more susceptible to engaging in violent and high-risk behaviours, thus increasing their chances of being exposed to community violence. Maschi, Perez and Tyson (2010) support the idea that a history of child abuse is associated with maladaptive functioning, such as socio-emotional and behavioural difficulties among adolescents. Neglectful parents fail to supervise their children's behaviour or support their interests. These parents often appear disengaged from the responsibilities of parenting (Patten, 2000). Further, adolescents who are being rejected by important people in their lives, such as parents, are at risk of developing inaccurate mental representations of themselves and their environment. This may clarify why these youths are more likely to show antisocial behaviour (Hoeve et al., 2009). Similarly, Perry, Colwell and Schick (2002) maintain that neglected children may display more aggressive behaviour and exhibit discipline problems. This in turn may increase an adolescents' chance of hyperactivity, aggressive behaviour and disciplinary problems. Neglected children might therefore be at a much greater risk of being exposed to community violence (Perry et al., 2002).

In addition to neglectful parenting, two participants expressed the idea that permissive parenting styles may also contribute to community violence exposure:

Male Respondent: His parents is too lenient.

Female Respondent: His mother is always under stress because of all the drugs and he just come and go as he pleases (Group 3, p.9)

Participants' views are in line with earlier research showing that poor supervision is among the best predictors of delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009). Family management and parental acceptance of delinquency and drug use place adolescents at risk of participating in violence (Fagan et al., 2011). Parents' insufficiency in stating and enforcing guidelines and expectations often ends in behaviour problems. This is mainly because they disturb the children's internalisation of parental norms and increase the risk of association with deviant peers (Wang et al., 2011). Adolescents who feel unloved and perceive a lack of supervision and discipline seem unlikely to be involved, both on an emotional and practical manner, with their parents or other family members (Palmer & Hollin, 2001).

There is also an association between escalating problem behaviours and reductions in parental rule making. For instance Wang et al. (2011) suggest that, as adolescents become more offending, they have the tendency to challenge their parents' attempts to supervise their activities. In addition, they also tend to disclose less information to their parents. Delinquent behaviour of adolescents may therefore make parental attempts to supervise and control their children more difficult. As adolescents' behaviour becomes progressively more threatening, parents may reply by being less supportive. Ultimately parents of adolescents with behavioural problems might decide to reject their children (Wang et al., 2011).

Another participant reported that authoritarian parenting styles might lead to participating in violence. The following extract demonstrates this point:

Male Respondent: Sometimes parents are also overprotective and that leads their children to be rebels...rebellious

Facilitator: So overprotection can also lead to violence?

Male Respondent: Yes (Group 3, pp.9-10).

The results of the study are in line with those of Moitra and Mukherjee (2010) who found a link between authoritarian parenting styles and violent behaviour amongst adolescents. When violence occurs in neighbourhoods, parents may become controlling and may not allow their children to go out of their sight. In these instances, parents may find it difficult not to behave in a controlling or even authoritarian manner (Osofsky, 1999). This might increase adolescents' risk of being exposed to community violence. Authoritarian parenting is characterised by a lack in warmth/nurturance, where parents are strict on discipline. These parents tend to communicate less frequently with their children and also have high expectations of their children (Patten, 2000; Rezai & Rahimi, 2013). Okorodudu (2010) maintains that a home with harsh and aggressive parents may make adolescents run away from home and draw them to delinquent behaviours, such as participation in violence. Growing up in such families teaches children to be tough and aggressive. This may minimise the emotional influence of persistent stressors and maximises the children's capacity to endure difficult and life-threatening ecological conditions (Attar, Guerra & Tolan, 1994)

d. Peer pressure/acceptance. Peer pressure was another important theme that emerged from the focus group discussions. Adolescents in this study emphasised the influence peer pressure has on decisions regarding violence. They stated that the need to “look cool” and be accepted by friends drives many to participate in violent activities. They also said that if an individual has friends who are part of a gang, the chances are higher that they would start using illicit substances, as they would feel the need to fit in – or, rather, not feel “out”. Consider the following quotes:

Female Respondent: Peer pressure is influencing violence, 'cause, as she said, if they say you can't fight it's like actually...if you don't wanna fight they actually saying bad stuff about you, so it's like actually like proving yourself. If you fight you are proving you that cool type or something like that (Group 1, p.5).

Female Respondent: ...peer pressure is also part of it (Group 3, p.3).

Male Respondent: Peer pressure (Group 3, p.6).

Female Respondent: ...like the only reason they will stab someone by force is because of peer pressure, like if a friend tells you to do it you don't want to look like the weaker person by saying no, so they just do it (Group 4, p.6).

Female Respondent: Sometimes there is peer pressure upon everybody, because some people think violence is cool so they won't be noticed by those that they think are cool like the gangsters, so they rather do it so that they can fit in with others (Group 2,p.7).

Female Respondent: Sometimes there is peer pressure upon everybody, because some people think violence is cool so they won't be noticed by those that they think are cool like the gangsters, so they rather do it so that they can fit in with others (Group 2, p.7).

Female Respondent: Friends is bad influences and they will tell you: try this, try this this is something new. You will say no, and they will sort of be violent and then you just step down, just say no, don't do it.

Facilitator: So you said there is a lot of people who are committing violence, so what do you think motivates people to participate in violence?

Male Respondent: Friends (Group 4, p.4).

Similarly, when asked whether people commit violence deliberately or whether they are forced, a male respondent explained as follows:

Male Respondent: I think they are forced, because if they don't do it then they get killed, but if they do it they have to kill more and kill more, so if they don't kill the person that they tell you to kill, they would rather kill you (Group 2, p.7).

Facilitator: Do you think people do it deliberately or are they forced to commit violence?

Male Respondent: Sometimes forced.

Facilitator: How are they forced?

Male Respondent: Peer pressure.

Female Respondent: The majority is peer pressure.

Male Respondent: ...like my brother's friends, they are like gangsters and they come over, wanna sell, let him sell drugs and take it – take them to other places to sell drugs but then he refuses, then there becomes a fight and then it lands on the street and a big fight happens.

Facilitator: So what do you think pushed him to actually go and sell drugs?

Male Respondent: I think it is his friends, peer pressure (Group 2, p.2).

These findings agree with earlier results indicating that peer factors (peer pressure and the need for acceptance) are the most common cause of violence (Zimmerman et al., 2004). Likewise, Elliot (1994) maintains that the strongest and most direct reason for the real commencement of severe violent behaviour is participation with an offending peer group. It is these groups in particular that will encourage and reward violent behaviour (Elliot, 1994). The effects of early violence exposure, weak control (both internally and in the family) and violent behaviour patterns established in childhood all influence the kind of friends an individual chooses. In addition, the type of friends one has will fundamentally determine what behaviour patterns will be modelled, recognised and reinforced during adolescence (Elliot, 1994).

e. School bullying. This theme will address risk factors related to school bullying, which contribute to community violence exposure.

Participants expressed the opinion that school bullying was motivating adolescents to take part in violent activities and increase their risk of being exposed to violence. Participants reported their experiences as follows:

Female Respondent: Bullying also motivates (Group 1, p.5).

Female Respondent: It's like uhm one of my friends at school last year uhm like bullies. They also going on and you try not to fight but then they are the ones that pack up and at the end they make it your fault, and sometimes children land in hospitals because of those things, like children bring knives and things to school like that, so there are also a lot of violence in schools, you like experience a lot. There are children that can't control themselves (Group 2, p.3).

Female Respondent: ...and sometimes your classmates, they will pick on you and make fun of you, but they won't think they are doing harm. Maybe they will just be making a joke with you and you will take it serious because you feel they don't know what is going on in your house, so you will feel maybe there is something you can do about it. When you get away from school you can join people who have been through the same things as you, in order to get away from the pain you are facing in school (Group 3, p.10).

Facilitator: So there is a sense of bullying taking place in school? Is there a lot of bullying in the school?

Male Respondent: Yes (Group 3, p.10).

Participants believed that school bullying motivates people to participate in violent activities. Adolescents who are victims of bullying might fight, as a result of being bullied. In addition, participants felt that being a victim of bullying might lead to adolescents joining groups that can relate to their own experience, which might place them at risk of joining gangs. This agrees with findings of a study conducted by Kim et al. (2006) which maintains that psychopathologic behaviour, including social problems, aggression and externalising behavioural problems, is a consequence of bullying experiences. In addition, Liang et al. (2007) found that bullies have the highest likelihood for drinking alcohol and are more expected to become involved in forceful, antisocial and risk-taking behaviours (Liang et al., 2007). Arseneault et al. (2010) maintain that, for some adolescents, participating in violent activities might be a response to being a victim of bullying. In addition, victims of bullying from disadvantaged backgrounds, or victims with symptoms of mental health problems prior to bullying, have fewer resources for coping with stressful situations and might respond by acting in a violent way (Arseneault et al., 2010).

4.3.2.2 Exosystem

a. Structural characteristics. A low social organisation is reflected among participants, as adolescents indicated a lack of social support and cohesion among neighbours and a lack of belongingness in the community (Sheidow et al., 2001). The following extract provides evidence thereof:

Facilitator: Do you feel the community can actually do something about the violence that is happening?

Male Respondent: Yes.

Facilitator: Do they actually?

Male Respondent: No, not, actually they don't. When they shoot and then they rolled away until it's finished and then they go and see what's happening. Like they say it in our road, when there is a shooting "dan wil jy besig wees" [That's when you want to be busy], 'cause you are not there, you don't phone the police and when the

shooting happens and then you will still wait, what is outside and what is happening, and you don't call the police immediately (Group 2, p.9).

Participants believed that their community could contribute to a safer environment. However, they report that this is not the case, as neighbours do not attempt to “phone the police” and as one male reported “when the shooting happens they do not call the police immediately”.

Neighbourhood disorder is associated with youths reporting higher rates of offending (He Len & Steinberg, 2006). Likewise, Reilly (2012) found that disorganised neighbourhoods often lead to an increased risk of participation in delinquent activities. Examples of disorganised communities include those with low levels of supervision, poverty, unsafe neighbourhoods, neighbours who do not know each other, difficulty accessing resources, poor parks and few structured activities (Reilly, 2012). Tolan et al. (2003) suggest that in underprivileged communities and communities characterised by high crime rates there is relatively little felt support between neighbours, a decreased sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, and less participation in the community. Furthermore, Haynie et al. (2006) contend that the physical features of a neighbourhood influence the chances of youth identifying with specific types of peers. For instance, neighbourhood disadvantage and residential variability are associated with an increased likelihood of exposure to violent peers (Haynie et al., 2006). This may increase adolescents' risk of being exposed to community violence.

In addition, adolescents felt that the lack of community cohesion contributed to their exposure to community violence:

Male Respondent: If we all stand together then it will help, but people choose not to for some reason (Group 2, p.9).

Male Respondent: “...in the community we are suppose stand like one, because if we stand together against drugs and gangsterism we can achieve anything...then if we can just stand together we can be more than the gangsters that's actually hurting, if we are a group like more than that gangsters, you have the whole community behind you and you are sure that you are not the only person that gonna get hurt (Group 5, p.9).

In a community where social order is unstable, members are exposed to greater risk of becoming a victim of violence (Estevez, Emler & Wood, 2009). Similarly, Ward (2007) contends that gangs often control communities, through offering them protection, which in

turn may lead to a lack of community cohesion. Thus the community fears gangs and therefore does not report illegal acts of violence, committed by gangs, to the police. This increases community violence exposure (Ward, 2007). Similarly, in the current study participants felt that the fear of gangs contributed to the extent of community violence exposure:

Facilitator: Why do you think people witness violence but they choose to stay out of it, not to help?

Female Respondent: They are scared.

Male Respondent: Fear, of getting hurt and hurting others in the family.

Male Respondent: They are stronger than us and the community is more scared of them 'cause they think about their children and of them 'cause they don't wanna get killed, 'cause they wanna live their life to the fullest, so they won't bother (Group 2, p.9).

Furthermore, participants reported that a sense of hopelessness further increases community violence:

Facilitator: Do you feel that you, knowing that you live in a community where there is a lot of violence occurring, there's drug use, people are stabbing each other, people are fighting over territory and in some houses people are physically abusing each other, do you feel that you can do anything different in your own situation?

Silence.

Facilitator: Do you feel there is nothing that you can do?

Female Respondent: Yes.

Male Respondent: Yes (Group 2, p. 9)

Findings of the present study are similar to that of a study conducted by Oskin (1996), which showed that increased community violence contributes to low levels of hope. These participants felt that being exposed to community violence had a negative impact on them. Snyder (2002) maintains that harmful life events reduce or diminish children's hope for a future. For instance, children who are physically abandoned do not have someone to educate them to reason hopefully (Snyder, 2002). In addition, exposure to violence creates anxiety

and misperception about human relationships. It may therefore lead to behaviour problems and depression (Snyder, 2002). According to Garbarino (2001), community violence and its consequences can make adolescents key candidates for participation in social groups that offer a sense of attachment and safety and maybe retaliation, as gangs most often mobilise and take advantage of the resentment, anxiety, isolation and anger that many adolescents experience while growing up. This increases adolescents' risk of community violence exposure.

b. Substance abuse. Participants reported that fights over drugs and money in the community lead to community violence exposure. Most of the participants felt that fights often start because people do not have money to buy drugs. This leads to more violence in the community and, although adolescents are not directly involved in such activities, it still has a large indirect effect on them (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and increases their risk of being exposed to community violence. This is evident in these extracts:

Facilitator: Do you think people participate in violence out of themselves or are there other motivating factors?

Male Respondent: ... They fight over drugs and money (Group 2, p.7). Facilitator: What else motivates people?

Female Respondent: Drugs (Group 4, p.4).

Facilitator: Why do you think that person came up to you and wanted to rob you?

Male Respondent: They didn't have money for drugs (Group 4, p.5).

Facilitator: What do you think motivates people to commit violence?

Male Respondent: Mostly the drugs that makes them mad. It's an addiction, like they need more and more and more...

Facilitator: So that leads to violence?

Male Respondent: Yes, because if they don't have like the money to buy them, or the supplies to get it, they need to buy it. Say I'm a drug dealer and he needs drugs, he is addicted to it, and then he does not have money and I tell him I need the money like to give him the drugs and he is gonna want to murder me and they steal (Group 3, p.2).

The aforementioned excerpts illustrate that fights over drugs and money, taking place within the community, increase the likelihood of community violence exposure amongst adolescents. For instance, one participant mentioned that they will “murder or steal from people in the community, to obtain money to buy substances”. Another participant felt that drugs “make them mad” and violence is often used as a means to maintain their addiction. Mulvey et al. (2006) propose two ways in which substance use is related to violence. First, substance use may lead to violence, as it may either directly or indirectly have an effect on other factors that enhance the threat of violence (e.g. extreme participation in groups inclined to aggression; tense interpersonal relationships). Second, according to Mulvey et al. (2006), adolescents encountering violent acts may be at increased risk of consuming excessive amounts of substances. For instance, an individual may use certain substances to cope with the consequences of an event. Therefore, not only does fighting in the community over drugs and money pose as a risk factor for community violence exposure, but being exposed to community violence may also lead to adolescents using drugs in order to cope with these events. Ward (2007) maintains that adolescents who are encouraged towards substance abuse are more prone to participate in violent activities. Substance abuse is found to be associated with violent tendencies, and Ward (2007) maintains that there is a relationship between the development of violent behaviour and the use of alcohol over time during adolescence. Furthermore, alcohol abuse often impedes adolescents’ ability to monitor and control their behaviour, and also familiarises them with social surroundings where aggressive behaviour is displayed and rewarded (Ward, 2007). This increases adolescents’ risk of being exposed to community violence. Likewise, Ellickson and McGuigan (2000) found that the greater the frequency of adolescent drug use during high school, and the greater the apparent level of drug use between their peers, the higher the likelihood of recurrent violence. Gudlaugdottir et al. (2004) identified smoking and alcohol consumption as strongly associated with violent behaviour. According to Gudlaugdottir et al. (2004) the use of alcohol or drugs often results in feelings of pleasure and power, which break down the inhibitions and replace the conscience (Burnett, 1999). This may increase the risk of participating in violent activities.

c. Lack of policing. Participants felt that the increase of violence in their community could be partly attributed to the lack of policing within their community as well as to police corruption. The following extract demonstrates this finding.

Female Respondent: Sometimes the police is not always there, and they can also like be corrupt – most of the polices – and if we call them and then they take their own time and the police station is just here by us, close to our house, and then they take their own time to come (Group 2, p.8).

Male Respondent: ...sometimes the police is even with the people, they look like they are confiscating stuff but it is actually it is just for them, so they drive around the corner, they drop it off there...

Female Respondent: Once me and my friend we were walking over the bridge, and two men came and they were asking us a question and as we were walking we heard a lady scream at the back of us and she was walking with children and the children were panicking and then he held a knife up to her and she left everything and he ran with it, and there was a police car there and the police people did nothing and the people just ran past the police, think they were on leave or something.

Facilitator: Does that also make you feel unsafe?

Female Respondent: Yes, even if you're on leave you are still supposed to be helping them, doesn't matter if you are on or off duty you are supposed to be still helping the community.

Female Respondent: If something happens they always take an hour to get there.

Everyone: True.

Female Respondent: When my friend was shot, they took two hours. When they came there, he was laying there half dead. No one came.

Female Respondent: The same with my cousin (Group 5, p.9).

Rothman (2006) contends that many who have been victims of crime are commonly sceptical of the effectiveness of the police. In addition, victims of crime are often concerned about police corruption and not keen to interact with the police. The results of the current study are in line with the findings of a study conducted by Rothman (2006), which indicated that a total of 47% of community participants who had communicated with the police displayed little confidence in the police, while 44% felt disappointed with the service they received from the police. Rothman (2006) therefore concluded that community members are usually sceptical about the police. One reason for this might be because they sense that policing initiatives have

little impact (Rothman, 2006). Additionally Estevez, Emler and Wood (2009) contend that in the case of actual victimisation, which is aggravated by a lack of effective police response, trust in the police tends to weaken. Repeated occurrences could lead to people choosing violent behaviour, either as a strategic response to the perceived danger of victimisation, or as direct action to restore injustices (Estevez et al., 2009).

d. Gangsterism. Participants felt that the social support and security associated with gang membership attracted people to join gangs. The following extracts demonstrate this:

Male Respondent: Most of the gangs they believe that they are there to take care of the people within their community, so they normally stand up against other gangsters who would wanna come and take over (Group 2, p.7).

Female Respondent: And you get people, you get young children whose parents like abandoned them, and they have maybe family or close friends that are in gangs so they will take them in and they will raise them be part of the gang, so they will feel that it's appropriate to be in gangs, because that's like their family for them (Group 3, p.2).

Female Respondent: Or sometimes it's also in the house where the parents are like fighting every time and then the child feels so like it's their fault, and then when they come outside then they feel so angry and they feel like hurting someone 'cause they see it every day and then they go out and hurt children at school and like that.

Female Respondent: It's just like she said, if you feel like you are not communicating well in your home then a gang comes to you and make you feel welcome and that's how it all starts.

Female Respondent: They make you feel like a family.

Facilitator: So social support is also a factor? What else?

Facilitator: Why do people become part of a gang or commit violence?

Female Respondent: When your family is not giving you attention, your friends can like catch up like when you are not feeling so well, you can feel like hitting someone for that (Group 5, p.5).

The need for social support and approval, as well as concerns about personal safety, may draw adolescents towards a gang, despite other negative perceptions of the gang (Reese et al.,

2001). Reese et al. (2001), found that gang affiliation, although not considered the “best practice”, is one way of ensuring oneself of protection from other perpetrators of violence in the community. However, joining a gang for protection does not offer any clear reduction in subsequent violent victimisation for gang members. In other words, youth who become part of a gang experience more violent victimisation while in their gangs than they did prior to joining a gang, or after they leave the gang (Peterson, Taylor & Esbenson, 2004).

Furthermore, when adolescents do not receive adequate support from their families, they might find support from a group of peers, who later initiate them into a gang. This, in turn, may encourage them to become involved in violent behaviour. Tolan, Gorman-Smith and Henry (2003) maintain that there is a strong link between participation in youth violence and gang involvement. They suggest that participation in violence, especially during adolescence, increases the likelihood of gang involvement.

In addition, because gangs provide their members with social support and security, gang members need to prove their loyalty to the gang, often by “killing a family member or somebody of another gang”. The following extract is evidence of this:

Male Respondent: Or they can force like again like in gangs, in some cases when you wanna come into a gang you need to kill a family member or somebody of another gang, just to prove you are willing to... you are loyal to them.

Facilitator: Why are you loyal to them?

Male Respondent: They will kill you.

Female Respondent: They will kill you and the worst part is if you if you uhm... like murder somebody, you will go to jail for depends on how long your sentence, and you come out there then you will be a bigger gangster than the other... That person feels more superior, because he just came out and he shot someone... (Group 3, p.7).

Participants reported that loyalty is an important aspect of gang membership, not only to receive support and security, but also in order to survive. In other words, gangs, in return for loyalty, provide security and safety, and if this loyalty is broken “they will kill you”. These findings are similar to those of Burnett (1999), who found that participants within gangs often experience the gang as their family. Members of a gang are provided with support, and their needs are met in return for their loyalty (Burnett, 1999). In addition, the close

connection between members of a gang and teamwork between gang members becomes vital in “surviving” violence, as gangs offer the individual a social network (Burnett, 1999).

Many of the participants believed that the status associated with gangs attracts people to join a gang and to participate in violence. Some participants remarked that people feel “cool” when joining a gang. These extracts are evidence of this:

Female Respondent: Miss, uhm, adolescents think it's cool to be a gangster, like in the gangsterism make it cool factor, 'cause like they said, all the older people act like this gangsterism, and the majority of the older leaders bring the adolescents in, and uhm more the eight and nine years old, so that they can also carry out what they started out, like with the bigger who started it, they will bring in the smaller ones to carry on and continue this (Group 3, p.2).

Facilitator: Why do you think people join gangs?

Male Respondent: I think because they wanna keep them cool, they think it's cool to be in a gang.

Male Respondent: I think sometimes because they can't stand for themselves, they want to be in a group to do something.

Female Respondent: Pressure (Group 2, p.4).

Facilitator: You guys mentioned that people are shooting in your community and they are fighting in your community. Why do you think is it that they do stuff like that?

Male Respondent: They want to become the top dogs.

Facilitator: Top dogs of what?

Female Respondent: Of the gangs.

Male Respondent: They want to be known.

Female Respondent: Or like maybe someone from the other gang hurt someone in this gang, someone they love, and now they just want to get them back for that (Group 4, p.5).

Participants believed that the status associated with being part of a gang placed people at risk of joining a gang and participating in violent activities. These findings coincide with those of earlier literature, that both gang members and minor youth appreciate social status more than non-gang members (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). Hence the achievement of prestige similar to that of gang members may be the reason why youth become involved in gang activities. As adolescents aspire to be members of a gang, they may feel a need to “prove” themselves to the gang, by imitating what they observe as acceptable gang behaviour (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). Gang members, conversely, do not need to participate in as much violence as is expected of aspirant members, since they can give proof in the way that their status permits (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). The act of fighting well or hurting someone results in relative recognition and self-assertion (Burnett, 1999). Burnett further maintains that violence is often a way of communication, as well as a form of achieving and articulating dominance, or of organising a gang to oppose group violence. In addition, victory is most often measured in terms of the degree of physical harm caused to another person. Katz and Fox (2010) found a relationship between the status of a gang and the early initiation of antisocial behaviour, the intention of using drugs, having disruptive peers, and having peers who are drug users.

Participants believed that the material goods offered by gangs attract adolescents to join gangs and to participate in violent activities. This is demonstrated in the following quotes:

Female Respondent: If you are in a gang and then the headmaster of the gang, they would say if you kill the person we will buy you new takkies, or new phone, and that makes you eager to do it.

Female Respondent: And they get involved in gangsterism because like low-income.

Female Respondent: And they want to be known on the streets.

Female Respondent: Drugs can make you feel better, and if you do this and then they will give you money and they will like tell you, come here join our gang, and then you can rob that person and then we can all share or split the money that you got.

Male Respondent: It's also that once you are in a gang it turn to a status thing, you want to rise up against people, it's like a status.

Male Respondent: You are at the bottom and then you want to get higher so that you can be the main person.

Facilitator: Why do people want to be the main person?

Male Respondent: Because the main person gets all the attention and they get most of the cuts of everything and money, and they always know the drug people and they always know how to supply to people's needs and so on, like people who works for them and people like robbers, they always know how to supply, like if I use tik [methamphetamine], I tell him okay you can go and kill somebody and I can supply. That also leads to violence (Group 5, p.5).

Participants believed that the material goods people obtain from gangs attracted people to join gangs and even participate in violent activities. According to Ward (2007), being poor tends to make material goods more attractive. In addition, Ward maintains that in the context of poor economic conditions, crime often appears to be the only means of attaining those goods. In such a context, gangs become attractive, as they tend to offer a sense of belonging and unity and at the same time provide cash income for adolescents who have limited options for both (Garbarino, 2001). Burnett (1999) found that, although participants are cognisant of the conventional norms, they aimed for other ideals in the gangs, in order to obtain gratitude and material gain within the gang (Burnett, 1999). Thus the presence of gangs within a community increases the risk of community violence exposure amongst adolescents.

4.3.2.3 Macrosystem

a. Government policies and service delivery. Many participants believed that government policies and a lack of service delivery were contributing to increased rates of violence within their communities. The following extracts demonstrate this finding:

Male Respondent: The government is not doing enough to keep people safe.

Facilitator: What do you think they can do?

Male Respondent: I think it was on the radio where they said that the police doesn't need a warrant, they should start doing it, when they have a few witnesses in the area that suspect that they are selling drugs, they should finish that. There is not enough police force to ensure that people are safe.

Male Respondent: They should get an army base here, an army will be better, 'cause the police is sometimes with the gangs and the drugs. If you get the army base you will

get better training, skilled people to, like they can handle a gun and everything much better, and then if you get one of those here in this community everyone will be scared to do that violence (Group 5, p.9).

Facilitator: Is there anything that you guys are thinking about that we are not asking with regard to community violence?

Female Respondent: Sometimes the government is also involved in this, because it is mos now a new world order, and the government is involved in everything around us because for them they are the big people and we are the lower people. We are like the slaves and the workers. That is why they don't actually do nothing in the community.

Facilitator: What's your biggest frustration with regard to violence?

Male Respondent: Jacob Zuma.

Facilitator: What needs to change or what frustrates you in your community?

Male Respondent: I think that we should actually like get this apartheid stuff out because as you can see, the apartheid is starting, they are forcing down the black, the coloureds in the middle, and the whites. Then because we got the black government, black people always get more privilege.

Male Respondent: The racism is always gonna happen. There is nothing, there is nothing we can do about it. We are never gonna get rid of racism completely, it is always gonna be there (Group 5 p.9).

Participants expressed a lack of trust in the Government, as they are not accountable to the demands of their community. Jili (2012) also provides evidence for this, maintaining, for instance, that contemporary difficulties confronting South African society should not only be ascribed to historical factors, but also to poor service delivery. Jili maintains that poor service delivery occurs as a result of poor management, fraud, discrimination, low budget and because of the pro-market policies implemented by the new Government. Thus councillors often put their own needs first and lack accountability (Jili, 2012). As a result of poor service delivery, people tend to use violence (protesting) to reflect their frustration and anger. These findings were similar to findings of this study. Participants in the study stated that public officials, as well as the Government, were not held responsible to their

instructions (Jili, 2012). Seedat et al. (2009) postulate that there is no evident corresponding and comprehensive intersectoral Government management team, to cultivate policy and encourage responses. In other words, accountability for violence and injury prevention are often given a very low level in the hierarchy. The result of such delegation is lack of leadership, lack of engagement with service and research-based agencies, and little or no empirically-based planning, implementation, or assessment frameworks. This often leads to the incorrect use of scarce resources (Seedat et al., 2009). A lack of service delivery thus poses an important risk factor for community violence exposure. Anger is initiated by frustration, which results from unsatisfied opportunities. This frustration then leads to aggression when something activates it (Jili, 2012).

4.4. Thematic Category 2: Perceptions and understandings of the protective factors related to exposure to community violence

This thematic category deals with findings associated with participants' perceptions and understandings of protective factors related to community violence exposure. The emerging themes in this category are both person-related protective factors and context-related protective factors.

4.4.1 Person-related characteristics

This theme addresses those factors related to a person's characteristics which can protect adolescents from community violence exposure.

a. *Decision-making skills.* Participants felt that effective decision-making skills protected them from participating in violent activities. The following extracts are evidence hereof:

Facilitator: So what are some of the factors that protect you from not becoming violent?

Female Respondent: Being aware of the consequences.

Female Respondent: Knowing how to control yourself from not doing those things (Group 4, p.7).

Male Respondent: I'm a person that always think: what's gonna happen if I do this, what's gonna be the outcome of it? Like if I'm already in violence I rather walk away than to continue 'cause I will know if I finish this and then something bad is gonna happen (Group 2, p.5).

Facilitator: So you think about the consequences.

Male Respondent: Yes, the consequences (Group 2, p. 5).

These results are in accordance with those of Guerra and Bradshaw (2008), who found that effective decision-making is related to several individual qualities, including accountability (independence and self-sufficiency), viewpoint (being alarmed about possible consequences and their impact on others) and temperance (self-discipline). In addition, adolescents who have a resilient sense of their own identity and the capacity to perform independently and exercise some control over their own situations, have been shown to be less involved in violent events (Benard, 1993). These adolescents often have the ability to separate themselves from a dysfunctional family environment. One participant felt that her morals and values prevented her from participating in violent activities.

Female Respondent: Your morals and values (Group 3, p.8).

Likewise, Guerra and Bradshaw (2008) argue that the child creates morality over time through social experiences, shaped by cognitive-developmental abilities that increase with age. A crucial element comprises internalised beliefs, that is, the manner in which people in a society should behave in relation to others (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Moral cognition contains decisions about moral issues such as maltreatment, justice, honesty and accountability. It further involves psychological practices such as perspective-taking and empathy. Moral identity is perceived as the linkage that connects moral thinking to moral action. Thus, if adolescents validate a moral course of action and consider that it is essential to their identity, they will act in the light of that belief (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008).

b. A sense of purpose and future. Participants felt that having a sense of purpose and future protects them from participating in violence. As the following excerpts illustrate:

Female Respondent: Our future (Group 2, p.5).

Facilitator: You had something to say.

Female Respondent: It's just uhm... I have grown up with violence since I was small already, so to see those things in front of me is not the person I want to become because with my uncle growing up as a drug addict, and he is so into it that if I watch him it makes me think of the person that he is and what I wanna stop becoming

Female Respondent: Like participating in violence gives you a bad name and a bad reputation as well so people will always see you as something bad and they won't really feel like they want to talk to you or anything, because it will always feel you are going to harm them, so you like lose friends that way as well.

Facilitator: So there is a certain stigma attached to violence that you don't want to be associated with?

Female Respondent: Yes (Group 2, p.5).

Having a sense of purpose requires aims, educational ambitions, perseverance, positivity, and a sense of a bright future (Benard, 1993). Despite living in an environment characterised by high levels of community violence, many of these adolescents did not engage in violent behaviours. The participants, as a way of protecting themselves from taking part in violent activities, have identified a sense of purpose and future. This is similar to the findings of Stoddard, Zimmerman and Bauermeister (2011) who found an association between higher levels of future orientation and less violent behaviours during adolescence. In the same study, higher levels of future orientation were linked with greater decreases in violent behaviour over time. Moreover, findings suggest that during adolescence a hopeful sense of the future can assist positive development and a successful adaptation to adulthood (Stoddard et al., 2011). Furthermore, hope also plays an important role as a protective factor against the adverse effects of community violence. For instance Savahl et al. (2013) found that hope arose as a stronger predictor of wellbeing than violence, and it therefore has the potential to moderate the well-established inverse relationship between exposure to violence and wellbeing. DuRant et al. (1994) found that adolescents who described lower levels of hopelessness had a higher sense of purpose in life and were less expected to report participating in violent activities. Similarly, in a study conducted by Sun and Shek (2010), adolescents were found less likely to be involved in problem behaviour when they had a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

4.4.2 Context-related characteristics

This theme will address protective factors related to context characteristics which protect adolescents from community violence exposure.

4.4.2.1 Microsystem

a. Parental monitoring. Participants emphasised parental monitoring as a protective factor against exposure to community violence. The following extracts demonstrate this point:

Female Respondent: Have you ever experienced violence in your community?

Male Respondent: No my parents don't let me out a lot (Group 1, p.4).

Facilitator: Why do you not participate in violence (Group 2, p.6)?

Male Respondent: My parents.

Male Respondent: Actually, they are very strict when you gets older, they don't want their children to become bad, or become gangsters, so they become strict. So then you feel scared, they gonna become angry with you, then you apologise what you been doing (Group 2, p.10).

These findings are congruent with those of Singer et al. (1998) who found that children who were highly monitored tended to be exposed less to violence and commit fewer acts of violence. Likewise, in a study by Fosco et al. (2012), an association was found between parental monitoring and youth problem behaviour over time. The findings of the study support the understanding that effective monitoring is a foundation parenting practice during adolescence, from families who are cohesive and caring and where parents know what is going on in their adolescents' lives. These adolescents have also been shown to be less likely to have witnessed severe violence, ever used alcohol, tobacco, or drugs, or to have had problems with drugs and alcohol (Kliewer et al., 2006). Furthermore, Kliewer et al. (2006) maintain that families that are consistent are also likely to monitor their children closely. In other words, parents who monitor their children are more successful in preventing opportunities for exposure to violence than parents who do not know what is going on in the lives of their sons or daughters.

b. Expression of norms, values and expectations were also believed to protect participants from exposure to community violence:

Facilitator: What about your parents?

Male Respondent: They teach me the right thing.

Female Respondent: My dad, he was a gangster when I was younger and then he obvious told us about his past and how it was, and he told us being a gangster isn't really nice, because once you get into trouble you think they are with you because they are in your group, but once you come into trouble they will run away and leave you alone (Group 2, p.6).

Female Respondent: Your parents always remind you what's right and wrong (Group 3, p.7).

Female Respondent: Yes, and they will always tell you to look up to your older siblings because sometimes our siblings have lived in a better environment than today's and they will always tell us to look up to them and see them as an example.

Female Respondent: And they know what's best for you (Group 3, p.8).

Male Respondent: ... so mostly it's my daddy that keeps me away from gangsterism and drugs because he does inspirational talks and so does my mommy – but I don't usually listen to her (Group 5, p.6).

Male Respondent: Parents, it's the example that they give, I know that if I follow their way I would end up like that, knowing there is still that hope there that if you work hard then you will eventually.

Facilitator: So they are your role models?

Male Respondent: Yes (group 5, p.7).

When there is attachment in the family, effective teaching of moral values and norms, and effective monitoring of a child's behaviour, adolescents are less likely to be exposed to community violence (Elliot, 1994). Similarly, Reilly (2012) found that family-domain protective factors include parents that provide structure, rules and supervision for their children. In the same study, respondents' experience was that the risk for delinquency decreased where parental structure, rules and supervision were present. In other words, parents who provide supervision for their children are more aware of their peers than parents who are unaware of their children's situation (Reilly, 2012). Parents remain important elements in their child's potential involvement with antisocial behaviours (Smith et al., 2001). While peer influence in adolescence is strong, Smith et al. (2001) maintain that parents should provide a foundation, and should continue to exert their

influence throughout adolescence, by providing guidance as to appropriate standards of behaviour and appropriateness of friend selection (Smith et al., 2001). Similarly Aspy et al. (2004) maintain that parents who attempt to recognise their children's viewpoint, who express love towards their children, who want good things for their children, and who talk with them about their difficulties, decrease the risk of their children becoming involved in violent activities.

c. Peer relations. A female participant expressed the belief that good peer relations, including peer support, protect her from participating in violent activities. The following extract demonstrates this point:

Facilitator: What is it about peers that protects you?

Female Respondent: They are always there for you. I will be there for them, like my friend got sick now. She is always there for me, I will always talk to her, but sometimes other children they just have... They let you do something you will regret (Group 5, p.7).

A female participant emphasised that social support from her friends protects her from engaging with deviant peers and participating in violent activities. This lends support to the earlier findings of Bollmer et al. (2005) that adolescents' friends are a vital part of their development. They contend that friendship offers various functions. These functions include, for instance, friendliness, warmth, nurturance and understanding. The presence of a friendship that is of a high quality, may serve as a protective factor against delinquency, as it offers an outline for healthy peer relationships. Bollmer et al. (2005) argue that children in peer relationships characterised by intimacy, safety and helping become more aware of the feelings of others and may therefore cultivate a better sense of compassion than youngsters who are not in caring friendships. High quality friendships are most important in providing adolescents with an opportunity of acquiring and practising certain social skills that they may not have been taught elsewhere (Bollmer et al., 2005). In other words, as aggressive peers often increase positive attitudes toward aggression and tendencies to use aggression to solve conflict, so also a high quality friendship may support a child in having a negative attitude towards aggression, and in approaching conflict from a more matter-of-fact point of view (Bollmer et al., 2005). This protects adolescents from participating in violent activities.

d. Safe school environment. Participants felt that their school environment was a place where they could feel safe, and as a result protected them from community violence exposure. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

Female Respondent: Schools also part of it, 'cause like when I get to school, it does feel like protection and it feels like it seals you out from the bad things because you know you are here to learn and here to do better things, so you know you won't become one of them (Group 2, p.11).

Female Respondent: Your teachers.

Male Respondent: School.

Facilitator: What about school?

Male Respondent: Coming every day, a place where you gonna know you are safe.

Facilitator: So you feel safe in school?

Male Respondent: Yes (group 5, p.12).

Facilitator: What is protecting you from not participating in a gang?

Male Respondent: Education.

Female Respondent: What about education?

Male Respondent: You always get homework.

Facilitator: So you don't have time?

Male Respondent: Yes (group 4, p.7).

Participants believed that attending school provided them with a place where they could feel safe and protected. Participants' beliefs are in line with the results of Brookmeyer, Fanti and Henrich (2006) who found that school climate serves as a protective factor for student violent behaviour. In other words, when students felt a sense of connection with their school community, they started participating in fewer types of violent behaviour over time. Additionally, a high connectedness to parents and to the school community appears to work together to buffer adolescents from the effects of violence exposure or later violent behaviour (Brookmeyer et al., 2006). Similarly, Sheidow et al. (2001) found that schools that are

regarded as “safe havens” may function as a protective factor for exposure to community violence.

4.4.2.2 Exosystem

This theme will address the protective factors related to community characteristics, which protect adolescents from community violence exposure.

a. Education about violence. Participants believed that the education they received regarding the consequences of violence and gangsterism served as a protective factor, as suggested below:

Female Respondent: Because we have education.

Facilitator: What about education?

Female Respondent: Education teaches us that what gangs can do...

Female Respondent: We get constant reminders every day about what the life outside is all about.

Male Respondent: Because you know what the result is of not going to school, you see it every day in like thousands...

Female Respondent: You don't want your children to grow up like that, you don't wanna show them such environment, you wanna be successful (Group 6, p.8).

Female Respondent: And programmes that they have in the community sometimes, and in the school, they teach you about some drugs and how they might end up (Group 5, p.7).

Education about the consequences of violence was regarded as preventing adolescents from engaging in violent activities. Participants reported that they get “constant reminders of what life outside is all about, as programmes within the community and schools teach about some drugs and how they might end up”. Another female participant stated that “you do not want your children to grow up like that, you do not want to show them such environment, and you want to be successful”. The findings of participants agreed with earlier research showing that communities employing multiple strategies and services, including teaching students that gangs can be dangerous, and providing training for school resource officers in mediating

conflicts, can protect adolescents from participating in violent activities or from joining a gang (Howell, 2011). For instance, campaigns that are educational in nature, and encourage the idea that killings and violence are not acceptable, and which aim to facilitate change in community norms concerning violence, have been shown to be effective in reducing violent behaviours (Howell, 2011). In this way, adolescents are provided with options other than violence, in incidents where gangs and individuals on the street decide to engage in violent activities (Howell, 2011).

b. Counselling. Participants expressed the opinion that counselling provides them with adequate support in dealing with situations and prevents them from joining gangs and participating in violent activities. The following extracts capture this point:

Female Respondent: They give you choices and advice on how to go about with situations.

Female Respondent: Just someone to talk to.

Male Respondent: Maybe there is no one else to talk to, then there is a person that can help you in certain ways that no one can (Group 3, p.12).

These excerpts clearly indicate that counselling provides the participants with choices, advice on how to deal with situations and social support. Providing adolescents with effective support, such as counselling, can reconnect them with the rewards and values within the school (Schwartz, 1996). Counsellors and staff should take a personal interest in the individual members involved in violence, or who are at risk of participating in violence, to help release the hold of the gang. Thus through informal meetings with gang members, and by arranging positive experiences that are lacking in their lives, staff and counsellors can offer youth the same affirmation that gangs offer (Schwartz, 1996). This might prevent adolescents at risk from joining gangs or participating in violent activities.

c. Extracurricular activities. Participants mentioned that the support they receive through workshops, as well as through positive role models within their community, protects from exposure to violence:

Male Respondent: Sports mainly, sports clubs, workshops and stuff like that in our community. We get exposed to that stuff to keep us off gansterism, violence and drug use.

Male Respondent: The counsellor in our community (Group 2, p.6).

Male Respondent: Some people in the community work hard and they achieve their goals and it makes you feel: why can't you? (Group 2, p.6).

Participants reported that the presence of sport clubs, workshops and counselling in their community keeps them from participating in violent activities. Furthermore, positive role models were reported by a male respondent as protecting him from participating in violent activities. Prior research (Hansen, Larson & Dworkin, 2003) showed that youth in community and occupational activities indicated increased rates of positive experiences associated with identity reflection, cognitive skills, leadership, prosocial norms and linkages to community. This was a specifically essential setting for experiences that encouraged adolescents to “think about the future”, learn about the “challenges of being a leader”, and about “helping others”. This in turn might decrease adolescents’ risk of community violence exposure.

Many of the participants expressed the idea that participating in sports activities decreased their risk of being exposed to community violence. Participants felt that after-school activities such as sport create an environment where they feel safe, and that being kept busy motivated them to stay away from violence:

Facilitator: So what stops you from participating in violence?

Male Respondent: Sports (Group 2, p.5).

Male Respondent: They keep us off the streets (Group 3, p.11).

Male Respondent: Mostly because you are not always within the environment, you are always busy and you are also always fit. You don't always see it and at the sporting clubs they also speak to you and motivate you to become a better person and to not become like all the people you see today (Group 2, p.10).

Participants felt that extracurricular activities, such as sports, provided them with an environment where they could feel safe and keep themselves busy. These findings are similar to those of Zaff et al. (2003) who found that extracurricular activities provide adolescents with a safe place to be during the high risk after-school hours. The study indicated that extracurricular activities provide adolescents with an opportunity to engage in positive activities, such as academic clubs, arts clubs, or sports teams. This protects adolescents from

becoming involved with deviant peers. Pate et al. (2000) found that sports programmes promote positive health behaviours and deter negative health behaviours amongst adolescents. They maintain that participation in organised sports promotes health by placing youth in prosocial environments during times that are otherwise available for participating in problem behaviours. Mahoney, Eccles and Larson (2004) maintain that constant involvement in after-school programmes, which take place in a safe environment where a number of competent staff are present, and offer a collective environment, are linked with positive development for the participants.

Other participants reported developing attachments to prosocial role models as protecting them from participating in violent activities:

Male Respondent: I think sports really stops us from drugs because uhm, there is like people that look up to soccer players like Christiano Renaldo, and they support teams and they wanna become like one of them, and be in a team that shows on TV. Manchester and Madrid, they wanna play for the team, they wanna become big and big so that they have the talent to play sport.

Female Respondent: I don't play sports, but I think sports also teaches people discipline, and it shows you where your boundaries are and what you can do and, like you said, looking up to others and seeing that without violence you can get far, because with violence you can get killed any time, but if you like participate in a sport you are always busy and they teach you discipline so you know the rules and you won't go out doing things you shouldn't (Group 2, p.10).

Facilitator: Is there anything else? Why do you think sport is so important to keep you away from violence?

Female Respondent: There is like trophies also and you want to aim for that goal, and it keeps you busy. Also because you get different dates to play for this teams and you get so excited (Group 2, p.11).

Female Respondent: Sometimes you have like for example, rugby players, they have their fiftieth test try. You get like young boys of our age is gonna look up at him and gonna be like that one day, and have dreams to wanna be like him, so that will just push them further to get to his dreams (Group 3, p.11).

It is evident that extramural events minimise the time and energy an adolescent has for taking part in antisocial activities, as these activities take up a lot of their time. Through participation in extramural activities, adolescents are provided with opportunities to be rewarded for activities; they develop attachments to prosocial role models, and internalise prosocial values (Ward, 2006).

In addition, social support was believed to decrease adolescents' risk of participating in violent activities:

Male Respondent: I play soccer, when I go to the field there is often people who are smoking drugs on the field and sometimes they even want to take our ball over and kick it away, but then there is like older people that protects us there.

Facilitator: So you feel protected when you are in a soccer team?

Female Respondent: Sometimes the people you participate within the sport they come out of the same backgrounds and families as you, so you can communicate with them about your problems because they know about your parents.

Facilitator: So it is also a form of social support?

Female Respondent: Yes.

Female Respondent: And most of the games start early on a Saturday morning and ends late on a Saturday afternoon, so for that period you will be on the field or will be engaging with your friends – you will have fun and stuff, and then for the period you will get on the field and will also get other adolescents your age (Group 3, p.11).

Taliaferro et al. (2008) maintain that through the capacity of sport to create feelings of social support and integration, protection against risk factors can be fostered.

In addition, participation in such activities may create a different form of safety against risk factors related to a range of adolescent behaviours. Similarly, according to Fredrick and Eccles (2008), belonging to a positive peer group protects adolescents from violent and deviant behaviour, as positive behaviour patterns development through modelling, strengthening of conservative norms and values, and through a decrease in social alienation. In other words, belonging to such a group provides adolescents with the chance to try on new identities and acquire social skills, such as how to collaborate, and to take on different

perspectives (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Thus, positive peer relations are an important protective factor in dealing with community violence exposure amongst adolescents.

Other participants reported a sense of achievement and feelings of belongingness that they receive from participating in sports:

Female Respondent: And doing sports uhm... it actually gives you a sense of achievement to know that one day you will get as soccer player you will make your own mark.

Facilitator: Do you think it boosts your self-esteem a bit?

Female Respondent: Yes, to know that you are part of something.

Female Respondent: Especially when you achieve a goal and you feel like you...

Female Respondent: Sometimes even if someone smiles at you, you always feel that a sense of there is someone who cares about you, even if someone just talks to you 'cause sometimes you come out of a background that all you ever hear is bad comments and bad things about you, so someone smiling at you, it can boost your own self (Group 3, p.11).

Male Respondent: On the field when you play rugby you will fight on the field but after the game we are all one team. What happened on the field stays on the field, we don't bring it off (Group 5, p.8).

Participants in the study felt that participating in sports, especially the feelings of belongingness and achievement that they get from sports, protects them from community violence exposure. This is similar to findings from other studies. For instance Fredricks & Eccles (2008) maintain that the sense of belongingness that adolescents receive from being part of a sports team leads to the development of high self-esteem. In addition, sports also provide adolescents with multiple opportunities to achieve success and receive public recognition, which may be particularly important during the early adolescent years (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Zaff et al. (2003) maintain that, by working with others toward a common goal and by having confidence in one's abilities to reach that goal, adolescents may develop better community engagement. In addition, adolescents who are involved in extracurricular activities at school may also be more likely to become

involved in other aspects of school life (Zaff et al., 2003). This plays a protective role in community violence exposure.

Besides a sense of achievement and feelings of belongingness, adolescents felt that participating in sport was a helpful means of coping with stress effectively:

Female Respondent: Keeps your mind off things (Group 4, p.8).

Facilitator: Of what?

Male Respondent: Drugs.

Female Respondent: Like I don't know, like what's happening around the community or like maybe of all the stress of all the homework at school or something.

Facilitator: So it helps to release a bit of stress?

Female Respondent: Yes, like take the anger out on the ball that's in your hand or you are handling with your feet or something (Group 4, p.8).

Male Respondent: If you have a game, the adrenalin rush that takes over you, it's better like to take your anger out on sport or something like than rather than hurting someone else, like full contact rugby for example you tackle, you only hurt that person, even though it's wrong they do whatever.

Facilitator: So it's a coping mechanism also to you.

Male Respondent: Yes (Group 4, p.9).

Female Respondent: Also involve in good things like sports also keep you away so that you can occupy your mind (Group 5, p.7).

The findings from the participants correspond with those in a study by Hansen, Larson and Dworkin (2003). For instance the study found that youth activities such as sport may promote emotional learning experiences of adolescents, and indicated that youth activities might help adolescents to manage anger, anxiety and stress. Furthermore, partaking in events with peers may result in enhanced social skills, such as learning to work with others, and conflict resolution (Zaff et al., 2003). Pinhey, Perez and Workman (2002) contend that adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to be

in direct contact with positive adult role models (teachers, coaches, and club sponsors). Non-parent adults may aid the internalisation of positive school values and attitudes, which may comprise re-directing violent desires (Pinhey, Perez & Workman, 2002).

One male participant felt that one could obtain even more status and support within a sports team than within a gang:

Male Respondent: You communicate with more people, okay mostly the girls, because the girls like the rugby players because they have big muscles and so on.

Male Respondent: But actually you don't need stuff from gangs 'cause you actually get even more support, I mean like the pretty girls (Group 5, p.8).

4.4.3.3 Macrosystem

a. Religious values and institutions. The belief systems and ideology of the individual's culture are located in the macrosystem and influence the adolescent in a direct manner. Conversely, the individual probably does not have much autonomy in defining his or her surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Some of the participants reported that religious values protected them from participating in violent activities. The following extracts demonstrate this:

Female Respondent: And also your religion, some religions are very strict and they don't take any nonsense (Group 2, p.6).

Facilitator: You also mentioned religion...

Female Respondent: You turn to your God, man. Most people will always say your god is always there for you. It's like a fact, so you will turn to your god and just pray and you will feel a certain relief, man.

Facilitator: Religion is a relief of what?

Female Respondent: It clears your mind.

Female Respondent: And they know whatever they speak with God will be confidential (Group 3, p. 13).

Male Respondent: Okay, as a Muslim, if you do drugs you might as well, like, no offense to the Christians, you might as well eat pork, so pork is un-halaal to us, so if we do drugs we might as well eat it.

Male Respondent: There are certain things you are not allowed to do in all religions and beliefs, like keep you away from certain things.

Facilitator: What is it about religion that keeps you away?

Male Respondent: Knowing that you will be punished for that and the good things that you know you are going to get rewarded for (Group 5, p.7).

Attending religious services during adolescence has been shown to lower the probability of later participation in violence (Herenkohl et al., 2003). Herenkohl et al. (2003) maintain that, through the involvement with others, adolescents encounter messages of acceptance and peaceful resolutions to problems. This may ultimately lead to accepting values and beliefs that work against violence. Furthermore, religious institutions might raise opportunities for youths to work together with peers and adults who act as good role models (Herenkohl et al., 2003). Likewise, Pearce et al. (2003) found that commitment to private religious practices such as prayer, observing or attending to religious programmes on the TV or radio, and reading religious literature were related to a decline in behaviour problems over time. The findings of the study suggest that the internal mechanisms of religion (i.e. indicators of private practices) could have more important effects on problematic behaviour than external mechanisms (e.g., church attendance).

4.5 Conclusion

The current study used the PPCT model as it allowed the researcher to explore the way in which risk and protective factors function within different systems. The findings presented above were categorised into two thematic categories, based on the objectives of the study. The following chapter conclusions regarding the research study, as well as a discussion of the limitations, and recommendations. This study allowed the researcher to explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. The findings revealed that, more often than not, contextual factors within the community, such as peers, family and gangs, place adolescents at increased risk of being exposed to community violence. In addition, social support (from peers and within sport teams) was found to be a significant protective factor related to

community violence exposure. This study was important as it explored these meanings and allowed participants to share their experiences in a way that was reflective and meaningful.



Chapter Outline

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the study

5.2 Summary of the findings

5.3 Limitations

5.4 Significance of the study

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Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the study

The study endeavoured to explore the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure, from the viewpoint of adolescents in a low-income community in the Western Cape. Considering that risk and protective factors are often context-specific, and a number of factors may influence the extent to which exposure to violence may or may not affect a child's development, it has become increasingly necessary to explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure.

A review of literature regarding the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure clarified a concern of the author's for the lack of qualitative research on this topic, especially within low-income communities in the Western Cape, South Africa. Studies conducted in this area of community violence within the South African context tend to be quantitative in design. Few studies have focused on adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. It is important to pursue studies focusing on the meanings that adolescents assign to risk and protective factors, as they are the ones who are exposed to community violence, who must manage the situation, and process their own emotional struggles. Research of this nature is vital as it may inform policy and interventions, which will assist adolescents in dealing with exposure to community violence. This study aimed to explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings by allowing them to share their experiences. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the perceptions and understandings which the adolescents had of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. The researcher aimed to engage with understanding the meaning which adolescents ascribe to risk and protective factors.

The current study was utilised using Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, as it allowed the researcher to explore the ways in which risk and protective factors function within different systems. The main premise of this framework is that four interconnected components (Process, Person, Context, and Time) construct our world. In addition, it emphasises the interaction between an individual's disposition and the environment, and the bi-directional nature of influences. This framework was well suited to the current study as the participants showed that risk and protective factors occur within and across various settings/systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem). Important to keep in mind is that risk factors and protective factors do not sit in opposition to each other, but rather on a

continuum (Stacy, Newcomb & Bentler, 1992). Risk and protective factors have the main effects, but at the same time interact with other factors to influence community violence exposure.

5.2 Summary of the findings

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model was utilised to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. The PPCT model recognises that various systems interact with one another and structure our world. It emphasises the interaction between an individual's biological disposition and the environment, and the bi-directional nature of influences. This provided a means to situate risk and protective factors – from those that pertained to the person, to the more distal, context-related factors.

The first thematic category used was adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk factors related to community violence exposure. Within this thematic category, adolescents identified person-related risk factors as well as context-related risk factors (which include risk factors within Bronfenbrenner's "Microsystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem").

The second thematic category is adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the protective factors related to community violence exposure. Similarly, in this thematic category adolescents identified person-related protective factors as well as context-related protective factors (which include protective factors within Bronfenbrenner's Microsystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem) (See Table 1).

5.2.1. Person-related risk and protective factors

Within this domain, findings indicated that exposure to community violence is associated with low self-image/self-esteem, personal identity and status within the community and bad coping mechanisms/lack of problem solving skills. Conversely, not all adolescents exposed to such risk factors are necessarily exposed to community violence. For example, adolescents with low self-esteem are less likely to commit violent acts, especially if they possess decision-making skills, morals and values and a sense of purpose and future. In addition, participants also identified protective factors related to community violence exposure: sense of purpose and future, decision-making skills and so forth. However, focusing only on person-related factors might be insufficient in explaining why some participants are exposed to community violence and others not, as community violence

exposure is a complex event embedded in the interaction of many features ranging from the biological to the political (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Aisenberg and Ell (2005) emphasise the necessity of considering vital contextual factors that shape the different levels of a child's ecology. Therefore, in exploring and describing community violence exposure, attention needs to be paid to parent, family and community-level factors and processes.

5.2.2 Context-related risk and protective factors

5.2.2.1 Microsystem

The participants in the study stressed three critical risk factors that contribute to community violence exposure, namely family characteristics, social support and peer pressure/acceptance. For adolescents, parental conflict and experiences of violence and neglect in childhood play a major role in predicting whether individuals will participate in violent activities, as the behaviour of such parents implies that acting in a violent way is acceptable. Family conflict is found to be further exacerbated by financial problems in the home. As a result, parents are often overcome by these environmental stresses, and are exhausted merely from trying to make ends meet by having multiple jobs. This places adolescents at risk of committing violent acts or being exposed to community violence as such parents tend to be neglectful, fail to set clear rules and expectations in their home, and tend to be overprotective. Participants further expressed the opinion that these personal problems may lead to substance abuse. They maintained that alcohol and drug use would aid as an escape from problems that occur in the home, such as family conflict, child abuse or financial issues within the families.

In addition, the importance of social support was emphasised. When adolescents do not receive sufficient support from their families, they are inclined to find alternative support, especially from peers who might later encourage them to become part of a gang. The gang may then introduce and encourage them to partake in violent activities (Elliot, 1994). Similarly, participants in the study believed that a lack of social support in the home is what attracts people to join gangs at the expense of participating in violent activities. According to Elliot (1994), the type of friends one chooses is largely influenced by factors such as early experience with violence, feeble internal and family controls, and violent behaviour patterns established in childhood. In addition, friends will influence the behaviour patterns that a person will model, establish and reinforce during adolescence (Elliot, 1994).

Perhaps one of the most important risk factors cited by participants was that peer pressure/acceptance promoted participation in violent activities. Here, the participants

described in detail how the peer group represents an ongoing risk factor for adolescents, as they do not want to feel alienated from the group. Participants stated that individuals would join gangs or use violence because of a need to “be cool” and “fit in” in a group. Feelings of acceptance and a sense of group identity are a vital part of adolescent development and should therefore be a focus of interventions targeting community violence exposure amongst adolescents.

School bullying presented as another risk factor for being exposed to community violence. According to Arseneault, Bowers and Shakoor (2010), adolescents from deprived backgrounds, or being victimised by bullies, or victims with symptoms of mental health problems prior to bullying, all tend to have fewer resources for coping with demanding situations. Thus such adolescents tend to respond by acting in a violent way (Arseneault, Bowers & Shakoor, 2010). Bullies have the highest likelihood of drinking alcohol and are more likely to participate in forceful, antisocial and risk-taking activities (Liang, Flisher & Lombard, 2007). In addition, participants felt that being bullied might lead to adolescents joining groups such as gangs that can relate to their own experience.

In addition to risk factors, participants maintained the importance of parental monitoring and the expression of values, norms and expectations within the family. In developing effective interventions on this level, these factors should therefore be considered. Positive peer relations were also found to provide adolescents with adequate support in dealing with adverse life circumstances. These peers protect adolescents from participating in violence and being exposed to community violence. Besides peers, participants felt that attending school provides people with a place where they can feel safe and protected.

Furthermore, to understand the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure, we must focus not merely on adolescents and their immediate environment, but also on their interaction with the larger environment.

5.2.2.2 *Mesosystem*

The mesosystem connects the structures of the adolescent’s microsystem (Berk, 2000). A mesosystem is therefore a system of microsystems and comprises the interrelations among major settings, including the developing person at a specific point in his or her life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

No direct association that speaks to the mesosystem was made by the participants, but when considering the finding that parental abuse and conflict can lead to adolescents

participating in violence, a feasible link can be considered. When adolescents are faced with difficulties such as parental conflict, domestic violence and child abuse, they may become confused about whether violence is acceptable or not. This is because their perceptions and attitudes are shaped not only by their parents or caregivers, but also by teachers, friends, community norms and the media, as suggested by systems theory. Confusion might, therefore, emerge in the mind of the child as societal norms and schooling argue against violence, while at home a different picture is modelled (Boeree, 2006). When an adolescent is confronted by role confusion, Erikson maintains, he or she may be suffering from an identity crisis which can lead to adolescents rebelling against the rules and norms of society (Boeree, 2006).

Congruent systems of values, on the other hand, wield more powerful and consistent influences. For instance, if both parents and peers agree that community violence poses certain risks, the adolescent is unlikely to commit violence. Furthermore, parental monitoring and social support from family and friends may protect adolescents from seeking support from gangs, and protect them from participating in violent behaviour. However, the opposite is also true. Adolescents who experience child abuse, witness family conflict and whose family and friends have positive attitudes towards violence, are at increased risk of participating in violent activities and being exposed to community violence.

5.2.2.3 Exosystem

An explicit link was noted between community violence exposure and structures of the exosystem. Some participants held poverty accountable for the incidence of community violence exposure in Mitchells Plain. They perceived financial difficulties, and the personal and social problems that go together with it, as factors that increased the possibility of someone being exposed to community violence. Participants also felt that substance abuse in the community is rife, and financial difficulties lead to people stealing and murdering for money in order to buy drugs. Although this does not affect participants directly, they felt that it was an important indirect factor that contributed to community violence exposure.

Learners generally held the structures of the justice system and policy level structures accountable for the high rates of community violence within their community. They felt that the justice systems and communities are not doing an adequate job in preventing community violence. Estevez et al. (2009) maintain that in the case where actual victimisation is supplemented by a lack of effective police response, trust in the police tends to weaken. This

could have the effect of maintaining a continuing support of violence, either as a strategic response to the perceived danger of victimisation or as direct action to restore injustices (Estevez et al., 2009). Studies have provided various reasons for the lack of effective policing in South Africa. One of these reasons is a lack of resources. For instance, a study conducted by Wiese, Rothman and Storm (2003) indicated that a lack of resources (e.g. staff, money and equipment) makes it more difficult for police officers to deal with crisis situations, paperwork and performing tasks not in the job description, while Storm (2002) found that a lack of resources leads to lower levels of professional efficacy.

Neighbourhood disorder is associated with youths reporting higher rates of offending (He Len and Steinberg, 2006) and increases the risk of an individual's engaging in delinquency (Reilly, 2012). The need for social support and approval as well as concerns about personal safety may draw adolescents toward a gang, despite other negative perceptions of the gang (Reese et al., 2001). Gang affiliation, although not considered the "best practice", was found to be one way of ensuring adolescents' protection from other perpetrators of violence in the community. However, joining a gang for protection does not offer any clear reduction in subsequent violent victimisation for gang members and increases adolescents' risk of being exposed to community violence (Reese et al., 2001).

Gangs within this community offer a sense of belonging and unity as well as financial goods for adolescents who have few prosocial options for either (Garbarino, 2001). Although the participants were cognisant of the conventional norms, they adopted other values in the gangs, in order to obtain gratitude and material gain within the gang (Burnett, 1999). Participants reported that loyalty is seen as an important aspect of gang membership, not only to receive support and security, but also in order to survive. In other words, because gangs provide their members with social support and security, gang members need to prove their loyalty to the gang, often by "killing a family member or somebody of another gang". Hence, the achievement of status equivalent to that of existing gang members may be the main reason that youth become involved in gang activities. Because adolescents aspire to become part of a gang, they tend to feel the need to prove themselves to the gang by replicating what they perceive as acceptable gang behaviour (Alleyne & Wood, 2010).

Furthermore, because of high rates of community violence, the participants expressed a sense of hopelessness. This also poses as a risk for community violence exposure as it makes adolescents prime candidates for involvement in social groups that offer a sense of membership and security and perhaps revenge, as gangs most often mobilise and take

advantage of the anger, fear, alienation and hostility that many adolescents experience while growing up (Garbarino, 2001).

Besides risk factors, the participants also identified numerous protective factors on this level. They emphasised the importance of social support in preventing them from participating in violence. The importance of education about the consequences of violence was emphasised. The participants maintained that adolescents in this community get “constant reminders of what life outside is all about, as programmes within the community and schools teach them about drugs and how they might end up”. In addition, counselling provides adolescents with choices, advice on how to deal with situations, and social support. Providing adolescents with effective support, such as counselling, can reconnect them with the rewards and values available within the school (Schwartz, 1996).

On this level, extracurricular activities were found to be the most important protective factor. Extracurricular activities such as sports were found to provide adolescents with an environment where they could feel safe and keep themselves busy. Thus, rather than being involved with violent peers and events, adolescents are able to engage in positive activities (e.g. sport teams) (Zaff et al., 2003). It is evident that extramural events lead to adolescents spending their time and energy more usefully, thus decreasing the time and energy available for antisocial activities. In addition, extramural activities offer them the opportunity to be rewarded for prosocial activities, to develop relationships with prosocial role models, and eventually to internalise prosocial values (Ward, 2006). Taliaferro et al. (2008) maintain that through the capacity of sport to create feelings of social support and integration, involvement in such activities may construct a distinct form of protection against risk factors associated with a range of adolescent behaviours. Similarly, according to Fredrick and Eccles (2008), being a member of a prosocial peer group may enhance positive development – for instance through demonstrating and strengthening conventional norms and values, and through the reduction of social alienation.

In addition, affiliation provides adolescents the chance to explore various identities and acquire social skills. For instance, how to collaborate and take on different perspectives (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). The participants felt that participating in sports enhanced their self-esteem by offering them the opportunity of becoming part of a group. They also indicated that sports provided them with several opportunities to achieve success and receive public recognition. This is of significance during the early adolescent years (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Lastly, the participants experienced sports activities to be a consistent environment,

where emotional learning experiences, such as learning to manage anger, anxiety and stress, can take place (Hansen et al., 2003). Participating in sports with peers may also result in improved social skills such as learning to work with others, and conflict resolution (Zaff et al., 2003). Hence, results indicate that the community has a big role to play in addressing community violence exposure. For example, if there is a failure at the micro level, a very strong mesosystem and macrosystem are needed so that the adolescents' challenges can be managed. These levels therefore need to work together and be strong in order to intervene in the challenge of community violence exposure.

5.2.2.4 Macrosystem

The findings of this study imply that the macrosystem, which is comprised of cultural values, customs and laws, political and material influences (Berk, 2000), has greatly affected the current state of the broader bio-ecological system of this community. Numerous participants pointed to cultural norms and gangsterism as risk factors for community violence exposure. They explained that adolescents try to be like gangsters, and that to fit into an older social group one often had to participate in violence.

Furthermore, the participants expressed distrust in governmental policies and service delivery, as they felt that the Government is not held accountable to the demands of their community. Jili (2012) also provides evidence that the current problems confronting South African society are the result of the "crisis of service delivery". Poor service delivery is in turn the result of poor management, fraud, nepotism, low budgets and of the pro-market policies that the new Government has adopted (Jili, 2012).

In addition to risk factors on this level, religious values and institutions were found to protect participants from participating in violence. Herenkohl et al. (2003) maintain that through the involvement with others in religious contexts, adolescents come upon messages of acceptance and nonviolent resolution to problems. Ultimately, this may lead to their accepting values and beliefs that work contrary to violence. Furthermore, religious institutions might present opportunities for youths to work together with peers and adults who act as positive role models for good behaviour (Herenkohl et al., 2003).

The conclusions drawn from the findings that have been arrived at in this study suggest that there are interconnected risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. These factors are critical in understanding the complex human endeavour of community violence exposure. The findings suggest that family characteristics are

important factors to consider in understanding community violence exposure among adolescents. Thus family-based interventions can be a valuable resource to adolescents and their families. Social support provided by friends, families, sports and counselling are also very important and should therefore be included in activities, to assist adolescents at risk of being exposed to community violence. School bullying is also a complex problem. Parents should be involved in problem solving at school. Teachers and parents should work together with adolescents to prevent bullying. Education about community violence should be a further target of interventions, as well as promoting religious beliefs amongst adolescents. Lastly, adolescents felt that the lack of policing within their community should be addressed, as well as Government corruption.

These findings thus provide supportive evidence for Bronfenbrenner's theory as it shows (see also Table 1 below):

- i) the role that the family plays in adolescents' lives with regard to community violence exposure;
- ii) how peers may influence decisions regarding violence;
- iii) how relationships between microsystems (such as family and school) may influence community violence exposure;
- iv) how structures of the exosystem such as role models, policing and community characteristics, influence community violence exposure; and
- v) how cultural norms and governmental decisions may influence community violence exposure.

Risk and protective factors have been conceptualised as the opposite ends of a single continuum (Stacy, Newcomb & Bentler, 1992). In addition, risk and protective factors have main effects but also interact with other risk and protective factors to influence community violence exposure. The Table 1 presents a summary of the risk and protective factors influencing community violence exposure.

Table 1: Summary of factors influencing community violence exposure

	<i>Risk Factors</i>	<i>Protective Factors</i>
Individual-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-image/self-esteem • Personal identity and status within the community • Bad coping mechanisms /Lack of problem solving skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making skills • Morals and values • A sense of purpose and future
Micro-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of violence and neglect in childhood • Family conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental monitoring • Expression of norms, values and expectations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of social support • Poor parenting styles • Peer pressure/acceptance • School bullying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive peer relations
Exo-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural characteristics • Lack of policing • Substance abuse • Gangsterism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe school environment • Education about violence • Counselling • Extracurricular activities
Macro-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government policies and lack of service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious values and institutions

5.3 Limitations of the study

This study sought to explore adolescents’ perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure, hence an explorative qualitative framework was purposely chosen. It is imperative to consider the study findings in the light of its limitations.

Firstly, caution should be exercised regarding the generalisability of the findings of this study in that the findings yielded here are confined to the perceptions and understandings of adolescents in the Mitchells Plain area, who are exposed to community violence. Therefore, these findings do not necessarily speak to the perceptions and understandings of adolescents in general who may be exposed to community violence.

Secondly, the fact that the researcher was from another socio-economic background and not familiar with the participants might also have affected the interviewing process and dynamics. In addition, the limited time available for the study impeded the process and made the adolescents somewhat resistant to questioning. The facilitators thus had a difficult time getting the necessary participants together in order to start focus groups.

Thirdly, the participants were all adolescents from a low-income community and although they spoke with ease, their responses were brief. Whilst the information that they provided was sufficient for the purpose of this study, more detail could perhaps have been obtained if the participants had been interviewed individually.

Lastly, focus groups were primarily conducted within a school environment and therefore the researcher was limited in exploring the risk and protective factors faced in this community.

5.4 Significance of the study

The literature identifies high rates of community violence exposure, especially in low-income communities of Cape Town (Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008; Ward et al., 2007). It is evident that there is a lack of qualitative data concerning risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure amongst the age cohort in this study – which provides an incongruity that should be attended to. The importance of researching risk and protective factors regarding community violence exposure cannot be overemphasised. Exposure to community violence has a great bearing on adolescents' psychological, physical and emotional wellbeing. As Mitchells Plain is a community characterised by many social problems, community violence exposure creates further negative impacts. This study aimed to explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors associated with community violence exposure and suggested that there may be a deeper meaning to the factors identified by quantitative empirical research. The current study can act as an antecedent for extending the opportunity of future research projects aimed at studying exposure to community violence.

5.5 Recommendations

The lack of empirical research studies on adolescents' perceptions and understandings of risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure was a challenge, especially during the analysis phase of this study. The lack of literature is considered a reason for conducting further studies in this area. Most research studies in this area have tended to be quantitative in design. This study is an initial attempt to explore adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure in a low-income community and are, therefore, far from conclusive. Yet the research also points out many of the difficulties that future researchers interested in the study of community violence will encounter.

It is important that, based on adolescents' perceptions and understandings from the study, the various and often interrelated ways in which their context influences adolescents' development be considered. In addition, the research directs the attention of researchers and other interested parties to the complex and multifaceted nature of risk and protective factors. Presenting recommendations would require multi-level interventions (Donald, Dawes & Louw, 2000).

A comprehensive intervention strategy is needed, consisting of various interventions aimed not only at addressing the risk factors for community violence exposure, but at the same time increasing the resilience of young people to community violence exposure. Both risk and protective factors function on multiple levels, including individual, family, school and broader societal levels. An intervention strategy would therefore require inter-departmental and cross-agency collaboration.

In the light of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Firstly, interventions aimed at addressing additional coping skills that do not involve substance abuse or further violence, improving self-efficacy and creating a sense of purpose and future amongst adolescents are vital.
- Secondly, bullying needs to be addressed. With regard to bullying, policies within schools should be explored. In order to prevent bullying, adolescents need to be educated about bullying and its consequences. In addition, counselling services in schools should be made available to provide support for both victims and perpetrators.

- Thirdly, children should be educated about community violence to be more aware of the risk and protective factors, as well as of the consequences of community violence and of being part of a gang.
- By focusing on protective factors, adolescents' resilience could be enhanced. Research should be stimulated to investigate the protective factors of exposure to community violence in low socio-economic communities such as Mitchells Plain. Knowing what would decrease the probability of an individual being exposed to community violence would pinpoint areas that could be focused on with interventions, which would empower those in need of intervention, as opposed to only educating.
- In this study, social support has been identified as a key factor in assisting adolescents who are exposed to community violence. Social support within the family and in the school needs to be fostered in order to protect adolescents from community violence exposure. Parents, teachers and counsellors should therefore be encouraged to become involved in adolescents' lives and provide adolescents with adequate support in the face of community violence exposure.
- Within the community, the safety of adolescents should become a priority. In this community, neighbourhood security should be addressed to maintain a sense of security in the adolescents. There is a need for collaboration between schools, parents and children in order to create a greater sense of community safety. This should be an on-going process, in order to create the same sense of security for the generations to come.

Reflection

As a school counsellor, I worked with adolescents exposed to all forms of violence on a daily basis. Adolescents always confided in me when they felt like opening up, however, most of the time the effects they experienced left them silenced. For me this was familiar as I have been exposed to violence almost my whole life. Not only did I experience the detrimental effects as an adolescent, but also these experiences left me silenced. I wanted to understand exactly what adolescents were going through and what the factors are that place them at risk or protect them from community violence exposure. This topic gave adolescents an opportunity to voice their opinions. At the same time, it gave me an opportunity to understand and engage with the silences which I was introduced to.

I believe the standpoint that reality is internal and subjective, and is constructed based on personal experiences. I also recognise that the only way for me to obtain an authentic understanding of the meanings that adolescents assign to risk and protective factors is to investigate this phenomenon from an inside perspective. Focus groups provided participants with an opportunity to relay their experiences in a collective sense and thereby create a sense of comfort and cohesion among themselves and with others who had to bear their struggle. In addition, I have recognised that the findings are contextual. Thus, a qualitative approach incorporating the PPCT model was ideal.

The day before meeting my focus groups I felt a bit anxious, not only about the sessions, but also as I am not as familiar with the Mitchells Plain area. Furthermore, I came from another socio-economic background, and was not familiar with community violence or with the participants. Luckily, I had two co-facilitators who were familiar with the area and had some experience in the area of violence.

In the first focus group discussions, the limited time impeded on the process and made the adolescents somewhat resistant. The facilitators thus had a difficult time getting the necessary participants together in order to start focus groups. The majority of the participants were very open about their experiences and often spoke without any questions being asked. At times, however, it was a challenge for me to get all the participants to take part in the discussions. Not all of them provided their views, but it was clear that they were listening and reflecting on what had been said. The “third person effect” was evident in some participants as they often explained their experiences in more of a generalised manner

by using the terms “they”, “them” rather than “us” (Perloff, 2002). According to the psychodynamic view, people are actually influenced by violence, but are unable to intentionally recognise the influence of violence. In other words, acknowledging the effects of violence would intimidate individuals’ valued sense of self, or reduce their view of control over external events. Therefore, as a result, adolescents projected the effects of violence onto others, possibly to defensively distance themselves from adverse components of self that they would rather not recognise (see Perloff, 2002). There were also moments where I detected extreme emotions of anger, disappointment or sadness, but at the same time hope and determination. As researcher, I had to deal with situations sensitively and respect the participants’ wishes. A debriefing session followed each focus group session and we ensured that participants left with a positive thought.

On a personal level, it was at times overwhelming being immersed in this study. Often during a particular phase of the process I had to create distance between myself and the study. However, these emotions played an important role in the quality of the analysis as they provided clear insight into adolescents’ experiences, as well as allowing me the opportunity of clearly comprehending my own choices. Furthermore, having been myself exposed to violence enabled me to articulate the questions that needed to be asked and the necessary sensitivity in asking them.

I have found the study self-fulfilling as it allowed me to shape my perceptions of the factors which might increase or decrease community violence exposure. The school-learners’ thoughts encouraged other influences that I might not have thought of, but which are still important contributions that can be used to deal with the high rates of community violence exposure, especially in Mitchells Plain. It was interesting to see how much these learners actually knew about community violence and its consequences. Almost every participant was a victim of or had been exposed to community violence. The focus group discussions gave me the opportunity of seeing another world – a world which I had not been exposed to.

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Appendix A



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INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: *Exploring adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure in a low-income community in Cape Town.*

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Christelle Larke at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because your participation in this study may provide us with a better understanding of the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. The purpose of this research project is to get an in-depth understanding of the meanings adolescents assign to risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure. This study is expected to inform prevention and interventions strategies aimed at adolescents within Cape Town.

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

You will be asked to participate in a group discussion consisting of ten adolescents, between the ages of 12 and 15. Letters will be provided to you and your parents for permission to partake in the study. This group discussion will take place in your high school at a time that is most suitable for you and the school. This group discussion will take about an hour.

Questions that will be asked will include for example: What does community violence mean to you? What are the different types of violence in your community? Counselling will be made available if you feel the need to talk to someone.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, the researcher will ensure that audio-files and transcriptions will be kept in a safe place, make use of identification codes on data forms, and will use password-protected

computer files. When writing up the results, the researcher will ensure that your identity will be protected. In addition, as the researcher is bound to legal requirements/professional standards, she has to disclose to the applicable people, should it come to her attention that a child is being abuse or neglected or potential harm is done to you or other learners.

What are the risks of this research?

No risks are associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research?

Results of the study will help the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the meanings you assign to community violence exposure in your community. Participants might also benefit from the study as it may broaden their understanding of community violence exposure and the risk and protective factors linked to it.

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

You can decide whether you want to participate in this study or not. In other words participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate in this research, you may discontinue participating at any time. If you discontinue your participation in the study or if you decide not to participate you will not be penalised. Should you feel that you have been negatively affected by the focus group discussion, counselling will be available to you.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Christelle Larke and at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact me at: christelle.lark@gmail.com

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

Head of Department: Dr. Andipatin

University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.



Appendix B

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FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM

Title of Research Project: Adolescents’ perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure in a low-income community in Cape Town.

This research project involves making audiotapes of you. The audiotapes are made in order to ensure that we capture all the information during the discussion group. Only the researcher, the independent researcher, transcribers and the supervisor will have access to them. To help protect your confidentiality, the researcher will ensure that audio-files and transcriptions will be kept in a safe place, make use of identification codes on data forms, and will use password-protected computer files.

Iagree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

I..... do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

The study has been explained to me and I understand what it is about. I agree to participate spontaneously and willingly. They have answered all my questions that I had about the study. They made it clear to me and I understand that I may pull out of the study without giving a reason at any time and that my identity will not be made known. I agree to be audio-taped during my participation in the study. I will not to disclose any information that was discussed during the focus group discussion.

Participant’s name.....

Participant’s signature.....

Witness's name.....

Witness's signature.....

Date.....



Appendix C



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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence exposure in a low-income community in Cape Town.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

I,, the undersigned, hereby give consent for my son/daughter,, to participate in the research study.

I understand the nature of the research. All my questions about the research have been answered. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. My child's identity will not be disclosed and the researcher will monitor access to the information he/she provides.

My permission needs to be secured to disclose information. The information will be disseminated to the public via publications. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet attached. I give permission for my son/daughter to participate in his/her individual capacity

Signature of Parent/Guardian:.....

Date:.....

Signature of Researcher:.....

Date:.....

This research is being conducted by Christelle Larke at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact me at 076 159 2073. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department: Dr Andipatin

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences: Professor Frantz

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your cooperation



Appendix D

PRELIMINARY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Adolescents' perceptions and understandings of the risk and protective factors related to community violence

Why do people participate in community violence?

Probe - reasons for people committing community violence

What do you think about these causes?

Probe - Do people do it deliberately or are they forced to do it by circumstances, or is community violence natural?

What protects, prevents, hinders/stops you from participating in community violence?

Adolescents' perceptions and understandings of how risk and protective factors contribute to experiences of exposure to community violence in a low-income community?

How do you think the factors that you have just mentioned influence your experience of community violence?

