Cleo Loubser   Student No: 2857429

Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Occupational Therapy Department

Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengagement from gangs and the effect on their occupational performance

A full research thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science in Occupational Therapy.

Supervisor: Professor Lisa Wegner

Co-Supervisor: Professor Jo-Celene De Jongh

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Key words: Disengagement, experiences, explorative qualitative research, gangs, Langa, Nyanga, occupation, occupational performance, perceptions, push and pull factors, young men

Abstract

Street gangs have become a permanent feature of the social landscape in the Western Cape, South Africa. Various strategies have been developed to address the issue of gangsterism. The study focused on one strategy, disengagement. Disengagement is regarded as the process in which active gang members withdraw from their affiliated gangs and re-integrate into society. Much of the research that has been conducted in the area of disengagement has been done internationally, and there is very little research that explores how youth leave gangs within the South African context. Therefore, the current study explored young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs and how occupations facilitate and sustain the disengagement process. In the present study, occupation is defined as activities and tasks of everyday living that give meaning or value to one's life. Occupation is associated with health and well-being, but occupations can also be unhealthy and dangerous.

A qualitative approach, using an explorative research design, was adopted in order to explore the topic within a South African context, namely the townships of Nyanga and Langa, which are located on the Cape Flats. Through the use of purposive and convenience sampling, ten members of two groups, namely, the Peace Team and Project Playground, were invited to participate in the study. The Peace Team was established in 2013 by former gang members in response to the conflict amongst the youth of Nyanga and to encourage gang members to leave gangs. Project Playground is a Non-Governmental Organisation that services the areas of Langa and Gugulethu through a variety of community development projects and after school programmes. An initial focus group was conducted with some of the participants. Thereafter, semi structured interviews were conducted with each of the ten participants (until data saturation was reached). After the individual interviews were completed, a second focus group was conducted with some of the participants to discuss and explore issues that were uncovered during the individual interviews. All focus groups and interviews were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim, and transcriptions were then compared to the recordings to assure accurate reflections thereof. Thematic analysis was used to identify codes, categories and themes. Once transcription was completed coding was commenced. Through the use of codes, the researcher was able to reorganize data in a way that facilitated the interpretation and enabled the researcher to organize data into categories that were analytically useful to the study. Categories were then grouped in sub-themes and finally

themes, based on similarities and patterns. Rigor and trustworthiness was ensured through various means including triangulation of data sources (multiple participants), data gathering methods (focus groups and individual interviews), member checking, keeping an audit trail and reflexivity. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape, registration number 15/7/86.

From the data five themes emerged to form the findings. These themes were: (1) The reason why, (2) The price of gang life… the fine print, (3) Time to get out… I didn't sign up for this, (4) Getting out and staying out, and (5) The price of my freedom. The study contributed to current knowledge in occupational therapy and occupational science regarding how engagement in meaningful occupations promotes health and well-being. In understanding these occupations and what meaning they hold, it assists occupational therapists in planning, implementing and evaluating appropriate interventions to help gang members to disengage from gangs and engage in meaningful and healthy occupations that support their reintegration into the community in pro-social ways.

Key words: Disengagement, experiences, explorative qualitative research, gangs, Langa, Nyanga, occupation, occupational performance, perceptions, push and pull factors, young men

Declaration

I declare that the research: "Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengagement from gangs and the effect on their occupational performance" has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University. All the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

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Cleo Loubser

25 November 2019

Acknowledgement

This would have not been possible without God. To God be the glory, great things he has done. I have experienced many setbacks whilst engaging in this study. Through God's strength and mercy, I have not only been able to overcome these setbacks, but I have come back stronger, and I have learnt the importance of patience and humility.

To Professor Lisa Wegner and Professor Jo- Celene De Jongh, thank you for your constant support and assistance in bring this thesis to life. It has been a long road to say the least, but through your support and mentorship I was able to complete this thesis. Words don't do justice as to how amazing you ladies have been throughout my time at UWC.

To my parents Elizabeth and Leonard, words fail to express how grateful I am to you both. You both have sacrificed so much for me to be where I am today. The late night coffees or checking up on me in the early hours of the morning to see if I am ok. Your persistence and insistence in me completing this thesis and the insistence on perfection and nothing less, regardless of the things that have held me back. This achievement is not mine alone. It is an achievement for us as a family unit, as without the two of you this would not be possible.

To my family and my friends. Thank you for your prayers, thank you for your unwavering support and your words of encouragement. I would not have been able to complete this without every one of you, it takes a village….. I have been truly blessed with the best. Thank you to M&S school of dance, you guys have been a place for me to just let go and slow down. To my kids of the dance school, our moments of laughter and fun have helped me in refocusing my attention and have made me see why my research is so important. Thank you to my friends and family who have gone above and beyond (you know who you are) by giving me a space to let go and debrief, or in the times I truly felt I would not be able to continue I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

To my boys Kenzo, Qaa'id, Mason, Zion and Ezra and my nieces Zoe, Kezia and Kesian you kids have been my place of safety. Your love, hugs and kisses have put me back together in times that I felt that I was going to fall apart. Thank you for making sure that I slowed downs to take in all the beauty of life and the miracles it produces in between. May this thesis serve as an example that anything is possible with God, hard work and the love and support of family.

This thesis is dedicated to my sister Raymonde' Olivia Loubser, you asked me to be better than you and I hope that I have made you proud. I pray that your soul has found the peace it so earnestly longed for.

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Definition of Terms

Disengagement:

Disengagement is regarded as the process in which active gang members withdraw from their affiliated gangs and re-integrate into society (Spergel, 1995; Ward & Cooper, 2012).

Experiences:

Experience is defined as an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on one (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Explorative qualitative research:

Explorative qualitative research is defined as initial research into a hypothetical or theoretical idea, thus the researcher has an idea or has observed something and seeks to understand more about it (Kowalczyk, 2015).

Gangs:

Gangs have been portrayed as an anti-social way of life which demands loyalty to members before loyalty to institutions of civil society such as family, school, the justice system and religion (Dos Reis, 2007).

Langa:

Langa is one of Cape Town's oldest townships, created in the late 1920s as a location to move Black people who were forcibly removed out of Ndabeni in Maitland. When Langa was developed the structures were shabby, roads were unpaved and there was no electricity supply (SAHO, 2000).

Nyanga:

The township of Nyanga is located on the Cape Flats. Nyanga is regarded as one of the most dangerous townships in Cape Town, having amongst the highest rates of murder and rape in South Africa (Gie & Haskins, 2007).

Occupation:

For the purpose of this study occupation will be regarded as activities and tasks of everyday living that give meaning or value to one's life (Law, Cooper, Strong, Stewart, Rigby & Letts, 1996). Occupation is associated with health and well-being, but occupations can also be unhealthy and dangerous (Dickie, 2009).

Occupational Performance:

Occupational performance is defined as the outcome of the dynamic interplay between the components of the person, occupation and environment (Polatajko, Townsend & Craik, 2007).

Perceptions:

Perceptions are defined as the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Push and Pull factors:

For the purpose of this study, push and pull factors will be regarded in terms of disengagement from gangs. Push factors are factors internal to the gang that push the member out, for example: violent occurrences or the death of friends in the gang. Pull factors are external factors that pull the member out of the gang, for example: the birth of a child, marriage or employment (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011 b).

Young men:

For the purpose of this study, young men will be defined as male youth. Youth is defined as young people falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years (National Youth Commission & Youth Desk in The Presidency, 2009).

"The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth."
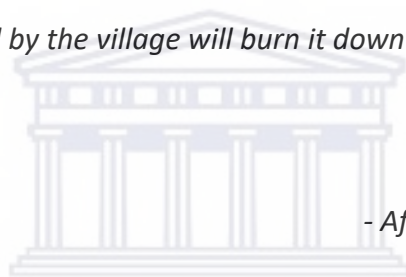
- African proverb

Preface

Reflexivity

Apart from the researcher's professional interest as an occupational therapist in conducting the study, she also had a strong desire to do this study for personal reasons. As part of ensuring trustworthiness, one of the strategies used was reflexivity. The excerpt below comes from the researcher's reflexive journal, which was kept throughout the research process.

"My relationship with my study, as with most Masters' students, has been one with many ups and downs. The topic I had chosen was not by accident. During my undergraduate programme, my thesis group had decided to do our research on the lived experiences of adolescent gang members. This study was an eye-opener for me as each of the young men's stories were ones that I could easily connect with other young men that I knew either from my community or my own family. As a result, when the opportunity presented itself for a master's thesis, naturally the topic of gangs in the Western Cape was the only topic I was passionate about and was the reason I moved back to Cape Town. For two years I had been working in the city of Johannesburg, it was always my dream to move to the big city that was bursting with opportunity, this cosmopolitan city always seemed like the place to establish oneself, as it was so diverse and alive.

During my time in Johannesburg, I would make regular trips home to Cape Town, and what always stood out to me was how things either stayed the same or got worse. There was a steady increase in the numbers of youth at risk. With each visit, there would be another young person who was addicted to drugs; or another young girl who was pregnant. Horrific stories - shooting on the Cape Flats or stories of people I knew who were sent to Pollsmoor prison.

When sitting with Capetonian friends at braais in Johannesburg, the topic of the crime and poverty rate occurring in Cape Town was always a discussion, with tales told of our family members or friends who had died or who were affected by the violence.

I decided then to come back and find out what was the problem at home in Cape Town. The day I arrived back in Cape Town, we had a family lunch to celebrate a significant moment. It was not to celebrate my return from the big city, but rather to celebrate my cousin's safe return from

Pollsmoor prison. It solidified in me the need for a study, to understand the concept of masculinity in young men and the process of disengagement from gangs.

My journey with this study was one that was long and a labour of love or a more apt depiction would be unrequited love. As I laboured with this study, things just never seemed to work, either participants were no longer available, or there was a lack of available literature on the research topic, or there was an increase in violence on the Cape Flats.

During the course of conducting this study, violence on the Cape Flats rose to staggering heights, especially with brutal killings and rapes of young people. It caused great pain in my heart as I felt that these incidents could have been avoided if only proper prevention measures were implemented.

What then really broke my heart was the brutal killing of my God Son's Aunty and her family. They were all murdered by a gang as her son was a witness to a murder in his area.

My family questioned as to why I wanted to help these "barbarians", why was I wasting my time with them, they viewed gangsters as lost causes and expressed that the only way to deal with them was to bring back the death penalty.

But I pushed on, and with each article that I read, and with each interview that I conducted, I could see, these were not "barbarians", they were just young men who had no one to guide them. They were just young men who found themselves caught in a vicious cycle, where there was no opportunity for them to reintegrate into society without having their history branded on their foreheads'.

During the process of my research study, I worked as an occupational therapist in a Psychiatric Clinic. This experience was one that was rewarding, as it gave me a greater appreciation of emotional intelligence and emotional awareness. During my time in psychiatry, I realised how community intervention at a grassroots level could improve the quality of life for many people. I also felt a sense of loss for people who were marginalised by the systemic injustice of poverty, as they were not afforded the opportunities for assistance in the area of mental health. The only time they would truly be assisted would be during psychotic episodes or when experiencing severe mania. There was and still is a lack of understanding in the area of mental health, identifying mental illness and avenues of dealing with it or coping with it. It became evident that

if mental health services were not made more readily available, and the stigma of mental health not removed, many people would remain to suffer, undiagnosed and not living out their full potential. It also became apparent that if emotional intelligence, interpersonal effectiveness, mindfulness and distress tolerance were recognised as a treatment modality. These treatment modalities would assist in improving the quality of life for many and assist in reducing engagement in toxic coping mechanisms employed by those who are stuck in the cycle of systematic poverty and injustice.

This study is close to my heart, as it has shown me the flaws in our country's systems. Our country does not have a future if it does not assist those who have been in gangs or who are convicted criminals in reintegrating into society. Our communities need to be taught skills to assist them in overcoming poverty and addiction. As well as skills such as emotional regulation, distress tolerance, self-awareness and interpersonal effectiveness and communication.

With these tools, we as a country would be able to work together to realize the future of a new and inclusive South Africa that our forefathers had fought to get for us."
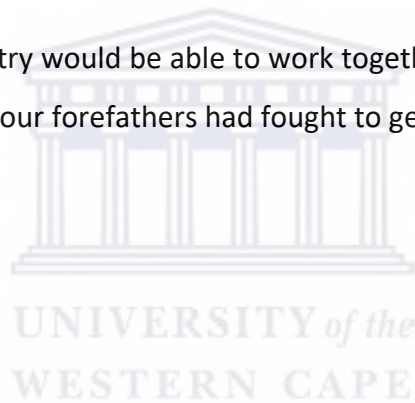
Chapter One- Introduction

1.1   Introduction

For many young men, the transition from boyhood to manhood is a rocky road, filled with many ups and downs, distractions and pitfalls. One of the biggest pitfalls for many young men of colour in the Western Cape is that of gangsterism. We live in a world where street gangs have become a permanent feature of our social landscape (Covey, 2010). The Cape Flats is home to the most notorious street and prison gangs of South Africa. It is estimated that there are 137 active street gangs in the Western Cape with membership at around 100 000 members. These street gangs are responsible for more than 70% of the crimes committed (Kinnes, 2000). According to Kinnes (2000), gangsterism has been an issue for the Western Cape for more than 20 years. Still, over time the gangs' acts of violence and criminal activities have worsened, creating a war zone in which even law enforcement is too afraid to enter, and as a result, the residents are at the mercy of the gang lords.

In the field of occupational therapy there has been some research conducted in the area of gangs, specifically focusing on how the occupations of gang members are influenced by their involvement in gangs (Wegner, Behardien, Loubser, Ryklief & Smith, 2016) and the experiences of previously gang involved young men in Nyanga (Wegner, Brink, Jonkers, Mampies and Stemmet, 2016). Both studies refer to the need for further research to be conducted in addressing the lack of knowledge in the area of young men disengaging from gangs and the effect on their occupational performance. Also, much of the literature in the field of gangsterism and disengagement that does exist falls within the realms of sociology; psychology; and criminology, thus creating a gap for occupational therapy to fill. In order for holistic community-based occupational therapy programmes to be developed, sufficient research needs to be conducted using an occupational lens, so that a comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors that support the process of disengagement from gangs, and inversely the factors that prevent or disrupt this process, can be established.

Through this research, a thorough body of knowledge can be created that conceptualises the person; the environment and occupation holistically. From this body of knowledge,

recommendations that are realistic and relevant can be made, to create significant and meaningful change.

Much of the research that has been conducted in the area of disengagement from gangs has been done internationally, and there is very little research that explores how youth leave gangs within the South African context. As there is a lack of research in the area of disengagement from gangs, the focus of the current study will be to explore how young men disengage from gangs within a South African context.

The term disengagement has been defined as the act or process of withdrawing from involvement in a situation, activity or group (Oxford University Press, 2015). Pyrooz and Decker (2014) stated that the process of leaving or disengaging from a gang rarely follows a seamless, linear transition. As such, the process of disengagement is complex, dynamic and consists of different factors and stages. As the gang member progresses through these stages, he eventually transforms from a gang member into an ex-gang member. The term transformation has been defined as a marked change in nature; form or appearance (Oxford University Press, 2015). Brink, Jonkers, Mampies & Stemmet (2014) stated that the participants in their study underwent a shift in their mindset when disengaging from gangs, which led to a change in the occupations (or meaningful activities, tasks and roles) in which they engaged. The stages of transformation and the factors affecting disengagement will be discussed in more detail in the literature review chapter.

1.2   Background

To contextualise this study, a background that explains the history of gangs in South Africa would need to be provided, and the strategies for addressing the issue of gangs.

1.2.1 History of gangs in South Africa

Gangs have a long history in South Africa, with some prison gangs dating back to the early 1900s (Steinberg, 2004). Crime, violence and gangsterism have increased over the past 115 years, with the murder rate at present at an all-time high with an estimated 47 murders occurring daily in South Africa (Khoza, 2015). It is estimated that there are tens of thousands of gang members

within Cape Town and with the initiation of every new gang member comes to the rites of passage. These include the rituals of raping and killing (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2007).

South Africa is a country of diversity and a country with a long legacy of struggle and poverty. In South Africa, there is a growing gap between the affluent and the destitute, with 1% of the population holding 42 % of the wealth of the country and 66.6% of the population living below the upper-bound poverty line (Businesslive, 2017). Even with the downfall of the oppressive regime of Apartheid. Twenty-five years later people of colour are still marginalised and are left in impoverished communities that are barely resourced with the essential fundamental conditions and resources for healthy living as displayed in the Ottawa Charter and the World Health Organisation in 1986. These are the communities of blue colour workers who earn under the poverty line, making less than R115 per day (minimum wage agreement of South Africa) or families living off a South African Social Security Agency grant of a maximum of R1700 per month. These communities have become breeding grounds for not only disease but also for crime and violence.

During the Apartheid era, due to the forcible removals of people of colour as a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950, many families were displaced to further areas of the Cape, such as the Cape Flats, leaving the prime real-estate for White people to own. This created a void for many families, as parents had to travel vast distances to get to work (blue-collar work in factories or as chars in the suburbs). As a result, many youths were left unattended for large parts of both day and night. Due to financial strain, both parents were expected to work and would arrive home late due to the long commutes they needed to travel to and from work each day.

The close-knit communities that people of colour grew to know and love were no more. They lived in communities where they were strangers to their neighbours, and as such, this became the perfect breeding ground for gangs to step in and fill the void created by the absent parents (Dos Reis, 2007). Reckson and Becker (2005: 114) describe gangsterism as one of the obvious "manifestations of historical oppression", this quote in itself is compelling as it depicts gangsterism as the result that was created through systematic denial of fundamental human rights caused by oppressive systems such as apartheid. This historical oppression gave rise to

fertile ground for gangs to develop. To add to this already fertile ground was that of substance abuse, specifically that of alcohol use amongst predominantly the men in these communities.

Living under the poverty line coupled with stressful work (the need to increase production in factories and other developments) combined with the stress of everyday life, trying to make ends meet and the feeling of hopelessness, resulted in many men of colour engaging in risky behaviour such as drugs and alcohol use to cope with the hardships of poverty (Pinnock, 1997). As a result, many fathers although being present were absent due to their risky lifestyle, and also many fathers were absent, leaving their children to be raised by a single parent (mother) household (Pinnock, 2017).

In the book *Gangs, rituals & rites of passage,* Don Pinnock (1997) looks at the different rituals that young men go through in order to transition into becoming a man. One of the notable quotes by Joseph Campbell that Pinnock makes reference to in his book is: "Boys everywhere require ritual marking their passage into manhood. If society does not provide them they will inevitably invent their own" (Pinnock, 1997: 2). The quote highlights the importance of the transition from boyhood to manhood. It also highlights the need for ritual making and the need to show the transition from boy to man. The period of adolescence is so important, as this is a confusing time where the adolescent is no longer a boy, but yet he cannot be considered a man either. The implication is that for a boy to transition into a man, he cannot do so without the active intervention of an older man guiding him through adolescence (Pinnock 1997). Pinnock makes an interesting statement showing that young men not only need present fathers, but they also need positive role models, of which there is a shortage. This becomes a problem for young men when they are fatherless, either as a result of an absent father or as a result of a present abusive one, they both amount to an absent father. For young men, the absence of a father leads them to question themselves and their self-worth, resulting in both anger and shame (Pinnock, 2017). As a result, young men are left to find their own guides into manhood, and coming from the township of the Cape Flats, it appears that there are not many possibilities or choices available for good male role models as guides (Wegner et al., 2016).

 Social media plays its own role depicting the life one should strive for, the cars, shoes, the clothes and women; thus, creating an unrealistic lifestyle that celebrates violence and risky living (Pinnock, 2017). Being bombarded with all of this sort of media or warped ideals on a daily basis

leaves these young men with a distorted picture of what it means to be a man. As a result, gangs become very appealing to them as they are viewed as strong and feared, but also have the physical resources that young men may want (Wegner et al., 2016). Gangs become the vehicle for the attainment of respect from these older men and also a possible guide into manhood (Pinnock, 2017).

Gangs have evolved over the years from mere street gangs to crime families and drug syndicates, rubbing shoulders with the likes of the Italian Mafia and South American drug cartels (Kinnes, 2000). These gangs have evolved in their dealings by expanding from the drug trade and armed robbery to contract killings, money laundering and the sex trade (Kinnes, 2000). In some cases, gangs have also been linked to advancing political party agendas (Kinnes, 2000). The most powerful gangs have also been known to control some members of the Police who act on their commands (Kinnes, 2000). Gangsterism has been a problem for the Western Cape that has managed to extend its reach to all areas regardless of races, gender, socioeconomic status, culture, creed etc., therefore methods of addressing the issue of gangs are required.

1.2.2 Addressing the issue of gangs in society

As part of an effort to address the problem, researchers have investigated strategies for the assuagement of gangsterism in society. Four strategies have been developed to address the issue of gangsterism, namely: prevention, disengagement, suppression and mixed methods (Ward & Cooper, 2012). Prevention includes programmes specifically aimed at preventing youth from joining gangs. Disengagement programmes are aimed at helping those already involved in gangs to withdraw and re-integrate into society. Suppression programmes are run by law enforcement agencies and seek to keep gang activity to a minimum by way of enforcement and punishment. Lastly, mixed-method programmes are a combination of all three methods (Spergel, 1995; Ward & Cooper, 2012). Each of these four strategies targets a different stage of engagement in the course of gang life. Still, research has overwhelmingly supported the notion that prevention is the most effective and cost-efficient means for reducing the growing number of gangs (Spergel, 1995).

However, it is also critically important to assist young men to disengage from gangs. If there is no assistance in helping them to disengage, these young men will remain stuck in an unforgiving

cycle of violence; substance abuse; risky behaviour and poverty. Also, by remaining engaged in gangs, they themselves remain ambassadors for this dangerous lifestyle, making gangsterism an acceptable way of life to younger impressionable boys. Thus it is vital to invest in researching this area. Not to only prevent the scourge of gangsterism, it would also assist in bringing an end to the cycle of gang life. As gang life seems to only end in incarceration or death.

1.3   Problem Statement

During the past few years, there has been an alarming increase in violence and gang activity on the Cape Flats. This resulted in the current President Cyril Ramaphosa dispatching the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to ten high-risk areas of the Cape Flats. The SANDF is still currently operating in these areas as the number of murders in and around the Western Cape remains at a staggering rate (Petersen, 2019). Young men who engage in gangs do so for personal, financial, safety and other reasons; however, this affects their ability to engage in other meaningful roles and occupations (Wegner et al., 2016). When they realise that the gang life is not what they expected or what they want for their lives anymore, and want to disengage, they may be met with many difficulties. However, disengagement from gangs is an under-researched phenomenon in South Africa as most of the research that does exist has been done internationally (Wegner et al., 2018). Much of the previous research in this area has been conducted in Western contexts such as the United States of America (USA) which is a first world, a high-income country with readily available resources and contextual factors that differ from the South African context. As such, previous research conducted in Western contexts may not apply in South Africa. Furthermore, there is a gap in research in this field from an occupational therapy perspective. Therefore, the current study aims to explore young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs and how occupations facilitate and sustain the disengagement process.

This study sheds much-needed light on the topic of disengagement from gangs, specifically in Cape Town, South Africa. In exploring the process of disengagement from gangs and the effect on the occupational performance of young men, as well as how occupation facilitates and sustains their disengagement, this study serves as a means to inform the development and design of relevant disengagement programmes. In turn, this could assist young men who would like to

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disengage from gangs to engage in healthy and meaningful occupations that help facilitate and sustain their disengagement from gangs and related activities.

1.4   Research question

The research questions addressed in this study are: What are young men's experiences of the process of disengaging from gangs? How is occupation influenced by disengagement? How does occupation facilitate and sustain their disengagement?

1.5   Aim and objectives

The study aims to explore young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs, how occupation is influenced, and how occupation facilitates and sustains their disengagement.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Explore young men's reasons for disengaging from gangs;
2. Explore young men's perceptions and experiences of the process of disengaging from gangs;
3. Explore how young men's occupations are influenced by disengagement from gangs;
4. Explore how occupation has facilitated and sustained young men's disengagement from gangs;
5. Develop recommendations regarding the disengagement process using an occupational perspective.

1.6   Significance

This study focuses on the perceptions and the experiences of young men who have disengaged from gangs by exploring how their previous occupations as gang members have affected their occupational performance, as well as how occupation has facilitated and sustained their disengagement from gangs. By understanding how they have sustained their disengagement it provides a positive outlook for others who are still engaged in gangs. Understanding how disengagement affects ex-gang members' occupational performance in their new occupations and how engagement in occupations facilitates and sustains their disengagement from the gang contributes to current knowledge in occupational therapy and occupational science regarding how engagement in meaningful occupations promotes health and well-being. It assists

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occupational therapists to better understand how to provide meaningful occupation-based programmes to help sustain young men's disengagement from gangs. This study serves to inform government departments, policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders about alternative strategies to help young men leave a life of gangsterism. Finally, the study provides information regarding the support structures that could be implemented in the community to help young men sustain their disengagement from gangs and support their reintegration into the community in pro-social ways.

1.7   Overview of thesis

Chapter 1:   Introduction: In this chapter, the research topic is highlighted and contextualised. The background and problem statement of the study are provided. This is followed by the research question, aim, objectives and significance of understanding young men's perceptions and experience of disengagement from gangs and the effect on their occupational performance. Lastly, an excerpt from the researcher's reflexive journal is presented.

Chapter 2:   Literature Review: In this chapter, a comprehensive review of literature is given pertaining to the history of gangs and their current structures; with an overview of the processes of disengagement from gangs; and a review of the concept of the grey area between being a young man and the concept of masculinity. Lastly, the theoretical framework that underpins the study is presented.

Chapter 3:   Methodology: Comprises of the research approach and design that were adopted, an overview and description of the research setting, participants recruited and the selection criteria they needed to meet in order to be eligible for the study, the approach adopted for data collection, and the data analysis process that was executed. The chapter concludes with rigour, trustworthiness and the ethics procedure.

Chapter 4:   Findings: The participants' interpretations of their lived experiences of disengaging from gangs as young Black men in Cape Town, as well as the researcher's pursuit to interpret the participants' experiences, are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5:   Discussion: The findings are interpreted and discussed as per the objectives of the study, and compared to the relevant literature that exists. The study is also then conceptualised through the lens of Occupational Therapy, specifically through the use of the Person-Environment-Occupation model. Lastly, the chapter is concluded with the limitations of the study.

Chapter 6:   Conclusion and Recommendations: In this chapter, the researcher produces an overview of the study and provides an answer to the research questions, followed by the recommendations for future practice. The researcher then concludes by specifying the significant contributions of this study to its field.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

For any study to truly bear weight, an audit or review needs to be conducted on the existing relevant literature related to the study. Through such a review, the study is contextualised in light of existing research in the area, and at the same time, this also highlights under-researched areas. This provides support for the study to be conducted in order to fill a specific gap in knowledge that the literature review unearths. Through such a review, a solid foundation for an expansion of knowledge is created. This literature review aims to provide an understanding of current knowledge in the following specific areas:

- Gangs and their origin: how Apartheid had facilitated their growth and how they have expanded over the years.
- Disengagement from gangs: specifically unearthing the process, the factors that influence disengagement, and what programmes exist to support disengagement.
- Young men: understanding this period of Erikson's stages of development, and exploring the concepts of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity.
- Occupational performance: the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) frame of reference and how occupational performance is depicted (Law, Cooper, Strong, Stewart, Rigby & Letts, 1996).

In order to obtain literature that was current and applicable, the following electronic databases were searched: EBSCOhost; Sabinet Reference platform and Sage Journals online. The researcher was able to find articles that were relevant to the research topic by using the key words of the study (disengagement, experiences, explorative qualitative research, gangs, Langa, Nyanga, occupation, occupational performance, perceptions, push and pull factors, young men) to focus the literature review.

2.2 Gangs of the Western Cape

Gangs are a phenomenon that occurs all over the world, although they might not be labelled as gangs; for example, the gangs in Italy are called Mafias, in Columbia, they are known as Cartels, and in the Far East, they are known as Triads. Gangs have been defined as "an anti-social way of life that pitches loyalty to the gang against loyalty to institutions of civilised society, such as school, family, the church and the justice system" (Standing, 2005: 10). Standing (2005) wrote a

paper titled *The threat of gangs and anti-gangs policy* for the Institute for Security Studies. The paper took the form of a policy discussion paper. Therein, Standing (2005) expands on the aforementioned definition by noting that the culture of gangs could be considered as a selfish culture, as they take from others without regard of their circumstance or the ramifications of their actions on the unfortunate party. In their illegal trade and activities, the profits that are made are spent frivolously on objects such as jewellery and cars (Standing, 2005; Dos Reid, 2007)

Much research exists about the gangs in the USA, but as the study is set in South Africa, one would need to understand the rich history and context of gangs within this country. One of the first gangs of South Africa is the Number gang. The following is a summary of the research study by Jonny Steinberg in 2004, titled *Nongoloza's Children: Western Cape prison gangs during and after Apartheid*. This is an important study and provides the foundation of the history of the Number gang, as well as the influences of apartheid on the formation of gangs in general. Steinberg conducted the study over a 27-month period from 2002 to 2004 in Pollsmoor Prison. His aim was to capture the oral history of the Number gang in a narrative monograph and develop an understanding of the function of the culture of extreme violence that characterises Western Cape, prison gangs.

2.2.1. The history of the Number gang

According to Steinberg (2004), contrary to popular belief, the Number gang has its roots dug deep in the history of Black South Africans. The story of the Number gang begins with a wise man or seer named Ngulugut also known as Po, who set out to understand why the young men of the village who left to find work in the gold mine never returned. This was a problem for him as these young men were the next generation of leaders of the village. The wise man left his village to spend some time in a same-sex mine-compound. This is where he found out what was happening to his village's young men. He found that the work the young men were doing underground was not fit even for brutes, as it was extremely dangerous and exploitative. In the process of making the White men rich by digging up gold, young Black men were dying due to horrendous working conditions.

The wise man then fled to a cave on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg to seek solitude and to digest what he had learned. He then plotted and invented a new secret language. He realised

that in order for him to be successful in saving the young Black men of his village, he would have to communicate with them without the Whites understanding what was happening between the soon to be followers and the wise man.

One day the wise man came across a young man who was on his way to one of the mines. The wise man asked the young Black man his name, and he replied Nongoloza. The wise man asked him where he was headed, and Nongoloza replied off to the mines. The wise man warned Nongoloza that "the work will kill you in years to come". Nongoloza, unsure of what he should do, asked the wise man for his advice, the wise man told him: "the gold of the White man is good, you should take it, but not from the ground. You must rob it from the White man himself".

The next day the wise man came across another young man named Kilikijan. The wise man told Kilikijan of the death that awaited him if he went to the mines and persuaded him to join him as Nongoloza had chosen to. The process repeated itself until the wise man had gathered 15 young men and instructed them in the secret language he had created. He told them of the pay wagon that would come to the mine on Fridays. He then taught his followers the art of highway robbery.

The young men were successful in their plot against the mine and managed to steal the wages. They retreated to a cave and used it as their hiding grounds. The men realised that to be successful, they would need supplies. The wise man formed a plot to attack the colonial army camp that was located at the perimeter of the mining town. The young bandits were successful in their plot against the colonial army camp. They were not only able to obtain supplies such as food and uniforms but in addition 303 rifles, bayonets and the rank structure of the colonial military.

Over time the young bandits and the wise man had made a name for themselves and the Whites had placed a bounty on their heads. To avoid detection, the bandits became nomads moving from place to place, staying in the hills outside of the mining towns to remain undetected. The group of bandits decided to split up into two groups. Seven men were grouped with Kilikijan as their leader, and they would rob during the day. And the second group of 6 who was led by Nongoloza would rob at night.

They worked like this for a while, until one day, the two groups went out together. Nongoloza told the group that he was unwell and was not going to join them. He asked that one of Kilikijan's

men named Magubane to stay behind to take care of him. The rest of the 13 went on to rob and to plunder while the two stayed at their camp.

When Kilikijan returned later that afternoon, he found Nongoloza making love to Magubane. Enraged by this indecent assault to one of his men Kilikijan challenged Nongoloza to a duel. Nongoloza refused and said that it was part of their laws that permitted a man to lay with a man as he considered women to be poison and believed that they should choose wives from the young men in their rank.

Kilikijan was enraged by this and began to fight with Nongoloza. The wise man heard them fighting and came to stop them. The wise man was angered that they were fighting each other and ordered them to stop and explain themselves. To solve this issue, the wise man ordered Kilikijan to go to the mines to find out whether it was true that men were sleeping with men. The groups of bandits went their separate ways. Kilikijan left Magubane with Nongoloza, leaving his group of men at 7 and Nongoloza's group of men at 8, hence the gang numbers 28's and 27's. They say the 2 comes from the 2 leaders Nongoloza and Kilikijan who were the first 2 that the wise man had chosen.

 The two men went their separate way with their group of men and did not talk again after the dispute. Many years later Kilikijan and Nongoloza met again in Point Prison. Here there was a group of 6 men that were not affiliated to any of the gangs. They were called "Birdies" or "Franse" because they didn't belong to either the camps and they would sit together in a group flipping silver coins. Grey was the name of the young man who led this group. One of the first practices to be introduced by the Number gang was to confiscate any belongings the *Franse* or non-gang members had. When doing so, Nongoloza heard that Grey had refused to give his silver coin. Nongoloza then approached Kilikijan to find out why Grey refused, as Kilikijan was at Point prison before Nongoloza. He informed Nongoloza that flipping coins was a method of gambling and this group of *Franse* were trained in the art of acquiring valuables and smuggling.

A dispute existed between the two camps, the 28's and the 27's as to what happened, but as the story goes, the 27's believed that Kilikijan feared for Grey and his men. He feared that if they became part of the 28's, Nongoloza would sodomise them and use them as wives and for their skills as great smugglers, whereas the 28's believed that Nongoloza gave Kilikijan permission to start a third camp to be known as the 26's. With this, Nongoloza had several other rules to be

put in place. He named them 26's so that they would be beneath them and they would be the last camp to be formed. After the 26's there would be no other camp to be established. The rest of the prisoners without a camp would be known as a *Frans, and* lastly, the 27's would be responsible for the actions or conduct of the 26's. Nongoloza made it known to Kilikijan that the 28's would come after the 27's if the 26's wronged them, and Kilikijan made it known to Nongoloza that if the 28's wronged the 26's the 27's would come after them.

The three camps were established, and with it they formed their own self-made rules and philosophies of the three camps, and they were each assigned roles as a camp. The role of the 26's was to accumulate an abundance of riches and distribute it throughout the camps. In acquiring these riches, it had to be done through trickery and cunning planning and not through violence. The 28's role was to stand up for all three camps against the prisons for better living conditions for all of them, and they were permitted to have sex with men in their ritualised 28 manner, but they were never to lay a hand on the 26's. The 27's, on the other hand, did not believe in men sleeping with men. They felt sex between men was a pollution and a symptom of the unnaturalness of work that White men forced Black men to perform. Kilikijan had found out that in the mines that weaker men would let stronger men sleep with them as payment for helping the weaker men fulfil their work tasks that were too hard for them to complete. The 27's would become the guardians of the laws of the gang and were charged to keep the peace within the Number gang. They had to learn all the laws of each camp, and they needed to learn the rules of engagement between the gangs. The 27's were to right the wronged and when blood had been spilt, they were to correct it by taking the life of those responsible.

The history of the Number gang shows that the formation of their gang was caused by the poor work circumstances in the mines and also due to their land being stolen from them by the British Colonizers. Steinberg's study is relevant to this study as it brings to light concepts of power and toxic masculinity, as well as topics such as occupational injustice. These topics will be further elaborated on under the heading of masculinity as well as occupational injustice in the literature review as well as later in the discussion chapter.

2.2.2   Black gangs in Cape Town.

In the Western Cape, the well-known street gangs are mostly found in Coloured townships, whereas 'cliques' and 'crews' are generally found in Black townships (Roloff, 2014). As the

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current study was conducted in Nyanga and Langa, which are predominantly Black townships, the focus will be on cliques and crews. Roloff in 2014 conducted a study on the typology of gangs in the Western Cape, with the hope of shedding light on the various gangs that exist so that programmes could be developed to target the specific gangs effectively. Roloff states in his study that crews are not organised around a common cause, but might instead engage in crimes of convenience such as mugging, theft, breaking and entering, but usually just to feed their drug addictions. There are no official leaders or organizers of the crew. The crew might have an influential member but rarely do crews have a main official leader. Cliques are similar to the makeup of a crew, except that cliques are more organised and engage in contract crimes, such as robbery and other forms of typical illegal acts for money. In cliques, there are also no formal leaders but rather one would find a few more influential or active members. Cliques generally keep a low profile and keep to specific private locations. In their organized structure and dealings, they are still an informal group as members move in and out of the group. One significant difference between cliques and crews is that cliques are infamous for being highly dangerous and are often contracted out by other gangs to kill people, including other gang members. As such, cliques have good ties with formal and informal networks within Black and Coloured townships (Roloff, 2014).

2.2.3 Addressing gangs in the Western Cape

While understanding the reasons gangs exist, it is also important to understand the measures that national and provincial government have put in place to address the terror of gangs. During the process of reviewing current literature, there were no policies found pertaining specifically to addressing the criminality of gangs. What does exist are the following strategies that have been employed to address the concern of gangsterism.

Gangsterism is indeed an epidemic for the Western Cape and South Africa, as it is composed of many factions of crime. This varies from petty theft to grander scales such as money laundering and sex trafficking (Kinnes, 2000). The network that gangs operate on varies, as such the manner in which gang operations are addressed also needs to be versatile or resourceful. Thus, for example, the measure used in addressing petty theft cannot be the measure used to address the criminal network of sex trafficking.

As such the South African Police Services (SAPS) founded a strategy to address gangs, this strategy is called *Western Cape Gang Strategy Operation Combat.* The strategy consists of four pillars, these four pillars were introduced as a measure to holistically address all areas of the criminal factions of gangs (SAPS, n.d.).

1. Gang criminal investigation
2. Strategic visibility policing deployment
3. Community Mobilization towards development
4. Focused information/ intelligence management.

Gang criminal investigation specifically addresses evidence collection on specific targets who are suspects of gang involvement and engaged in the criminal network of gangs. In the area of investigation, the aim is to collect as much evidence and employ good record-keeping , which they refer to as the "threat files" of their identified targets. If enough information has been collected the evidence is then submitted to the National Prosecuting Authorities, where the inquiry will be processed through the justice system (SAPS, n.d.).

The pillar of *strategic visible policing deployment* seeks to have police on the ground to be able to monitor the progress of any suspects. By being on the ground, this would allow them to respond immediately to any gang-related incidents. These officers sole focus would be on activities explicitly related to gangs, so to better gain intel and plot the progress of any gang development (SAPS, n.d.).

Community mobilization towards development pillar of addressing gangs seeks to gain intelligence from the community and mobilize stakeholders of the community in identifying possible suspects or target areas that need specific attention. This pillar strives to create options for preventing social crimes through programmes either facilitated by SAPS or in conjunction with other NGOs or schools etc. To truly mobilize the community, SAPS would be expected to work together with the community and other agencies that are aligned in the goal of creating a safer community. These agencies would work with SAPS to provide real-time intelligence as well as support in creating a presence in the community so that gangs are less likely to engage in anti-social or criminal behaviour (SAPS, n.d.).

The last pillar is focused on *information/ intelligence management*. This pillar focuses on pooling intelligence databases by using intelligence from other available agencies, and these would include agencies across all provinces. Other forms of intelligence would be gained from key informants who move in the circles closely related to those who are in the gang as well as those who operate in the arenas that gangs operate in (SAPS, n.d.).

Other measures that have been incorporated to address gangs in the Western Cape include prevention measures as well as suppression measures.

In the Western Cape, there are currently many prevention strategies being employed to prevent young people from engaging in gangs as well as other risky behaviour. These vary from programmes that are formal in their structure, whereas others are informal and are run by community members seeking to provide alternative after school activities. Other more professional prevention measures are done with professionals who have conducted research in the programmes they have implemented to maximize their opportunities for a positive response. Both of these prevention strategies may have full to partial funding from the government, the provenience or private funding. Some of these prevention programmes or strategies may be fully funded by these Non-Governmental Organizations or privately owned entities that facilitate these programmes . One of the formal placements for addressing high-risk behaviour to prevent gang involvement in the Western Cape is Chrysalis Youth Academy. Chrysalis offers a wide range of programmes that span over a five-year period, these programmes are intensive and aim to equip these vulnerable young people with skills that make them employable, as well as providing these young people with coping skills to deal with the high-risk communities they come from (Cooper & Ward, 2007).

The last measure that is incorporated to address the issue of gangsterism in the Western Cape is the suppression measure. In 2019 President Cyril Ramaphosa received criticism for not addressing the ongoing violence and criminality of gangs' sooner. The President then deployed the army to ten key areas of the Cape Flats. This measure was meant only to be employed for three months but has continued into 2020. This suppression measure has been estimated to cost the country R23 400 000.00 (Makinana, 2019). The efficacy of this measure is still to be determined. The President has received backlash with regards to the effectiveness of the army deployment. An article written by Ashraf Hendricks titled *The army deployment was a waste of*

time and made no change, says Cape Flats residents reports on residents of the Cape Flats'
experiences of the army deployment. In the article a reformed gang member of the community
comments on the army deployment being not only a waste of time but also a waste of
resources that could have preferably been used on bettering the community through
programmes for young and old alike. These programmes could have assisted the community in
developing personal skill to better themselves as well as their community (Hendricks, 2020).

All these measures play a role in addressing the scourge of gangsterism, as it is a multi-faceted
ill. Addressing gangsterism requires many strategies. These strategies would need to address or
assist those who are at risk of gangsterism, or victims of gangs, as well as those who are active
gang members and are perpetrators of gang violence or criminality. Bernardo (2020) in the
article *Measuring the success of the Cape Flats army deployment* from an interview with Dr
Kinnes, explained that the only way that the existence of gangs can genuinely be addressed is if
the factors that support gangs are removed. These factors include unemployment, poverty, lack
of education, lack of suitable housing and lack of health services (Bernardo, 2020).

2.2.3   The reason young men join gangs

Behardien, Loubser, Ryklief and Smith (2011) engaged in a qualitative study that explored the
different reasons why gangs are so attractive to young men, through the use of semi-structured
interviews to gain thick descriptions of the participants' experiences. Behardien et al. 's study
provided an insight into the stories of four young men and their lived experience of being gang
members and offered an understanding of their individual reasons for joining. These four young
men each found meaning and purpose in joining the gang that differed from each other. The
main attraction to gangs for these young men were associated with their home and families
environments. One young man joined a gang because he felt that it was his path into manhood.
His father was also a gangster, and as a result, it was considered a rite of passage for him. The
choice to enter into gangsterism was supported by his father and other members of his
community. One of the other participants had joined the gang as he had an abusive father, who
would beat him and his siblings as well as his mother, he found acceptance in the gang as well as
a family who "cared" for him. He felt that he did not have someone who would look out for him,
but in the gang, he found a sense of belonging and a surrogate family. The third young man did

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not join the gang but was forced into it as a means to an end. The young man had fallen into the life of drugs, he was introduced to drugs when he was playing soccer for a community soccer team. He found himself addicted and unable to pay for the drugs. As a result, to clear his debt, he needed to join the gang. The fourth young man entered the gang because he found the gang lifestyle appealing. He felt a sense of meaning and purpose in the gang structure and their dealings, and he also felt a sense of power when killing people.

These young men's stories may differ, but the reasons they engaged in the gang are important. The elements that drew them to the gang lifestyle, as well as the factors, that kept them active in the gang were: a sense of belonging in the gang; financial independence; access to drugs and alcohol; a sense of power or feeling like a man; having people fear them; a sense of meaning and purpose and having their own place to stay that gave them a sense of security (Behardien et al., 2011).

2.3   Disengagement from gangs

As stated previously in the introduction chapter, there is a great deal of research that exists on preventing young people from engaging in gangs, but a lack of research on disengagement from gangs and the positive effect of young men disengaging from their gang, specifically from a South African context. Disengagement has been defined as the process of withdrawing involvement in or from an activity, group or situation (Oxford University Press, 2015). In terms of gang theory, disengagement is precisely that, withdrawing involvement or activity from the gang the person finds him or herself affiliated to.   Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten and Moule (2014) conceptualize the disengagement from gangs as the event of gang membership de-identification and the development of actions towards declining gang embeddedness. This is the process whereby a member moves away from actively engaging in gang duties to a point in which the gang member engages in little to none gang-related occupations. This process may range from weeks to months to years.

One of the main advantages or benefits that are gained from young men disengaging from gangs is, that as they disengage from gang, there is a high correlation with them disengaging in criminal activity (Decker et al., 2013; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011a).

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2.3.1   How do gangsters disengage from their gangs

The next element of disengagement that needs to be explored is understanding why gang members find disengagement so appealing. In understanding gangs, there are many advantages to being a gang member but also there are very many real life long consequences too. Understanding the participants "why" speaks to the heart of the study, as it explores the ex-gang members' personal motivation behind disengagement, and also their experience and their perception of disengagement. Many of the writers in the field of disengagement discuss two specific motives or factors for disengaging from their gangs, these are what is known in gang disengagement theory as "push" and "pull" factors, and forms part of what is referred to as life course theory (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011b). Life course theory looks at the undeniable demise of the role of gang members as it no longer serves meaning or purpose in their lives, as they have out-grown this role and found new meaning and purpose in other roles.

Push and pull factors are linked more to experiences that redirect the gang members' attention elsewhere than the gang. Decker, Pyrooz and Moule (2014) explain push factors as the internal changes that occur in the gang member, these are changes such as tiring of gang violence and other events that came between individuals and their gang, serving as a wedge to push them away from and out of the gang. These internal factors are numerous, from the duties of gang life such as robbing others, killing people, selling drugs or any other violent activities. These internal events also include injury and losing loved ones to gang violence.

Violence has repeatedly been cited as a push factor for many young men in gangs. Decker et al., (2014) stated that for many adolescents, violence experienced whilst in the gang takes a toll, creating substantial doubts regarding their membership in the gang. Doubts such as these eventually weaken effective ties to long time comrades or brotherhood and challenge the core identity accumulated from their experience in the gang. Push factors have also been attached to other experiences that ex-gang members have had such as: wanting to avoid trouble, feeling tired of the gang lifestyle and feeling tired of needing to constantly watch their back (Decker & Pyrooz, 2014). Due to the nature of gang life, many gangsters found themselves being harassed by law enforcement. They also found that they no longer felt free to move around due to territory restriction, which could leave them vulnerable to be attacked by rival gangs. These cons of gang membership became the factors that pushed them from being active gang members to disengage.

Pull factors, in contrast, are factors external to the gang that pull the member out of the respective gang. Decker and Pyrooz (2011b) define pull factors as situations of circumstances that attract the gang member to alternative routes, these factors typically operate outside of the control of the gang and are viewed as "pulling" individuals away from the gang and redirecting them toward new activities and alternative pathways. Adams & Daniels (2010) conducted a study with three participants aged 24 and 26 years who were from the townships of the Cape Flats and had disengaged from their respective gangs. This study explored the participant's experiences of disengagement and what their reasons were for disengaging from their gangs. Adams & Daniels (2010) discussed the concept of push factors and how they were instrumental in leading the ex-gang members to disengage from their respective gangs. In each of the men's lives, a series of personal events happened that challenged their positioning as men in the world. Death of a family member or the birth of a child were two acutely personal experiences that influenced the young men's decisions to walk away from their lives as gangsters (Adams & Daniels, 2010). The concept of family; romantic relationships or taking on real-life responsibilities such as maintaining consistent employment have been emphasised in literature as gang member's catalyst or motivation for pulling themselves out of the gang. Pyrooz and Decker (2014) stated that the factors that pulled individuals away from such groups included a desire for a conventional life, maturation, mitigated career opportunities, and family responsibilities.

When put together, or when one of these push or pull factors becomes too much to bear or becomes undeniable, they serve as what is known as the "turning point" or "hook for change" (Decker & Pyrooz, 2014). These authors stated that pull factors usually take on a turning point-like feature as they are of extreme significance in the life of the gang member; examples of turning points include having a child, finding lawful employment, or even the experience of violent events. Similarly, MacRae-Krisa (2014) stated that members who leave the gang are influenced to do so after experiencing a pivotal life event and states that their reason "why" is arguably the "hook for change" that produces a cognitive transformation.

2.3.2   Process of disengagement from gangs

It is essential to understand the process of disengagement and how this takes place. Multiple writers in their various fields who have studied the area of gang disengagement have come to the conclusion that there are two processes as to how people disengage from their respective

gangs: "knifing off" and the other is a more gradual process of becoming less involved and less embedded in the gang (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011b).

Gang embeddedness is a complete concept of its own, and in itself has its own complexities that effect the person's ability to disengage from their gang. Pyrooz et al. (2013) has defined the first element that impacts gang embeddedness as the immersion of the individual in their respective gang and reflecting varying degrees of their identification, involvement and status among gang members (the adhesion of the gang members to the gang). Pyrooz and Decker (2014) delve deeper into the concept of gang embeddedness. Stating that gang embeddedness is constructed of five items: the importance that the individual is able to afford the gang; the time spent or contact the individual has with the gang; the position the individual holds within the gang; the level of participation with which the individual engages in gang activities such as assault; and the number of non-gang friendships or out of group relationships (Pyrooz & Decker, 2014). These five items are important especially in understanding how to assist those who are heavily embedded in the gang in how to either become less embedded or devising another method of disengaging. This will be further elaborated on in the discussion chapter.

Pyrooz et al. (2013) elaborate on how gang embeddedness affects the individual's ability to engage in other occupations outside of the gang. "The central implication is that gang embeddedness inversely reduces exposure to and involvement in other networks, reducing information flow, opportunities to fill structural holes, and the ability to accumulate prosocial capital" (Pyrooz et al., 2013: 243). In understanding this, Pyrooz and colleagues show a direct correlation to the negative effect of being heavily embedded in the gang, and how it could negatively affect their ability to disengage from the gang. Thus it is of great importance to assist the gang member in reducing their gang embeddedness. Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten and Moule (2014) stated that reducing embeddedness correlates with de-identification as a gang member. Decker and colleagues (2013) elaborate how it is far easier for members who are weakly embedded in their gang to leave or disengage than those who are more entrenched. By creating a gap in their ties to the gang, it would create a manageable opportunity for disengagement for the individual.

The "How" of disengagement is a fundamental concept, as it addresses the participants in the current study's experience of disengaging from gangs. The concept of knifing off is easily

understood as cutting oneself off completely, severing all ties with the gang. This includes severing all their relationships ties as well as any income sustained from gang involvement; protection that was afforded to them would also be removed as well as other perks such as their ranks and the respect attached to their active membership (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011a). In an article titled *Amputation or Reconstruction? Notes on the Concept of "Knifing Off" and Desistance from gangs,* Maruna and Roy (2007) state that the concept of knifing off has been used in many areas of criminology and in the field of disengagement from gangs studies. Maruna and Roy (2007) state that substantial change in personality and behaviour could be triggered by dramatic changes in one's life circumstances such as a change of work opportunities; geographic location, romantic partner, or ideally all of the above. Maruna and Roy (2007) delve in deeper into the concept of knifing off, exploring the core structures involved in the process of knifing off. These were divided into five sections: the past; social roles; associates; disadvantage; stigma and opportunities. The section pertaining to "past" is defined by Maruna and Roy (2007) as the awareness of their past or former self, and the self-awareness of their former behaviour and coping mechanisms that they need to accept as the former in order to move beyond their past. If the gang member doesn't "knife off" or cut ties with his past and past behaviours, he will inevitably knife off his future by repeating past patterns and behaviours.

Social roles address the roles that the person engaged in, mainly delinquent roles. Knifing off in this regard would be to knife off from participating in these self-destructive roles. The writers have viewed the section regarding associates as knifing off destructive relationships that keep the ex-gang member tied to their past behaviours and roles. Maruna and Roy (2007) use the analogy of divorcing oneself from these associates, linking explicitly to how the process of divorce can be complicated as there is still a past. The ex-gang members' and their ex-gangs' history might be rekindled or cause a sense of toxicity between the two parties, as such when knifing off the person needs to be aware of these past associates and the effect on his ability to move forward.

The third section of knifing off is disadvantages. This section addresses the knifing off of one's disadvantages, or the things that might hold one back from moving forward. This is to compensate for the person's social deficit, or address their needs that they may lack due to their past gang member. This section includes education or skills development so that they are equipped with skills to move forward in the new roles they are engaging in (Maruna & Roy, 2007).

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The fourth section is stigma. This section discusses the concept of knifing off the stigma attached to one's past life and is identified as the process of "de-labelling" oneself. It discusses rebuilding one's social capital within their community, also a sense of de-rolling from the deviant label that they may have internalised, so that they can re-integrate back into "normal" society (Maruna & Roy, 2007).

The last section is opportunities, in its most basic form, Maruna and Roy (2007) define it from the point of one having to knife off old opportunities to give rise to new opportunities that fit with ones' new roles and benefit one's new self. Boundaries would need to be created to limit one's engagement in roles or occupation that were affiliated or closely interlinked with the "old lifestyle" so that the "new" self is not tarnished by the "old" way of coping or surviving.

The concept of knifing off produces a rich understanding of the expectations and the measures to employ to assist individuals in their process of disengagement. The concept of knifing off creates an awareness into the importance of assisting ex-gang members in reintegrating into their community and the greater society.

In understanding the concept of knifing off, one of the methods that has come up specifically in the realm of disengagement from gangs is that of leaving one's community to knife off. This is done to assist the individual in severing ties with their respective gang fully and to rebuild their image, so to solidify their new course they have taken. Pyrooz and Decker (2014) state that physically leaving the neighbourhood or moving to a different city is often part of the abrupt changes that knifing off requires. In certain instances, dramatic change environment is essential. Neighbourhood ties are crucial in processes such as this, as influences from their neighbourhood could have adverse effects on individuals who are interested in disengaging from their affiliated gang.

2.4   Exploring the developmental period of young men

This study would have no merit if the concept of young men was not explored. In times such as this in which society has taken a stand with campaigns such as #Me too and #Times up, and the concept of toxic masculinity which has trended worldwide, it is important to explore and understand the development of young men psychologically, and the role that masculinity plays in how young men view themselves and other men. As such, it would be a

disservice to this study if the important topic of young men was not deconstructed. Therefore, this topic will be reviewed through the lens of relevant psychosocial stages of developmental by Eric Erikson. This will be followed by exploring the concept of hegemonic masculinity, and lastly, exploring the concept of toxic masculinity and how it applies to the occupation of gangsterism.

2.4.1 Erikson's psychosocial stages of development

Erikson was one of the most influential psychologists of the 20th century. His contribution to the field of Psychology is the theory of psychosocial development. Freud, the father of Psychology, developed what is known as the psychosexual stages of development which starts at birth and ends with the stage of adolescence. On the other hand, Erikson's psychosocial stages of development start with birth and end with death. Erikson was the first to propose a model of human development that covered the entire life-span through the use of eight consecutive psychosocial stages (Skotol, 2009). Each of the eight stages of psychosocial development is associated with a crisis or a conflict that needs to be resolved in order for development to proceed. Erikson stated that one re-emerges from each crisis with an enhanced sense of inner wholeness and an increase in ones' judgement, as well as an enhancement in the capacity to do well to ones' own standards and those who are significant to oneself (Erikson, 1968). For the purpose of this study, the two stages of psychosocial development that will be unpacked will be identity versus role confusion and intimacy versus isolation, as these are the psychosocial stages of development that occur during the period of adolescence into young adulthood.

2.4.1.1   Identity versus role confusion

According to Erikson (1968), identity versus role confusion is the psychosocial development stage that occurs during the period of adolescence, if the development of an identity does not occur the result would be role confusion. In this period the task at hand is to formulate one's own identity, questions such as who am I, arise and other questions such as where is my place? Where do I fit in? These questions are pertinent to the formation of identity as well as the role one plays in society (Sokol, 2019). Identity versus role confusion is the psychosocial stage in which one is meant to search for meaning and purpose in one's existence. Meaning being found in identity, in 2002 Hoare referred to Identity as a sense or an awareness of self, an understanding of who one is not just as a single entity or as a person. Hoare further explores this concept of identity as who one is as a contributor to society in the macro and micro

sense. Understanding how one contributes to society speaks to one's' purpose or role, and occupation one engages in.

Sokol (2019) engages in a discussion on the works of Erikson on the psychosocial stage of identity vs role confusion and why this stage is so important. Sokol expands on Erikson's work by discussing the importance of feeling at home in one's body and the sense of having direction and purpose in ones' relationships and their communities to graduate to the next stage of psychosocial development. This is of great importance as the period of adolescence, specifically the adjustment into adulthood, is filled with many physiological and psychological changes, as such feeling comfortable and at home in one's body is important. This assists in: self-acceptance, forming ones' identity, the manner in which one engages with others and ones' search for meaning and purpose. This relates to roles and occupations one engages in, the direction and goals one sets for oneself or the course one sets for one's life.

In this time also acceptance of self fits with acceptance of the group. In the period of adolescence, there are many pitfalls in the area of acceptance of self, versus acceptance of the group. When one does not formulate an identity that he/she finds acceptable, one then seeks out acceptance and validation from others. This becomes a downward spiral as the search for social capital can end with a lost sense of self. In a book written by Sergiovanni (2001) titled *Leadership: What is in it for schools*, he explores the hook that gangs and other cliques provide that causes young people to want to engage in them. Sergiovanni explores the concept of social capital and states that gangs and other cliques offer a social capital that schools and communities should be providing. This social capital comes at a price, a price that requires young people to adopt the norms that have been created by the gang or clique, even if they go against the norms of their community; society or even their family. This then develops a code of behaviour that works against that of the norms or expectations of society.

2.4.1.2 Intimacy versus isolation

The next stage of psychosocial development is that of intimacy versus isolation. Erikson defines this stage as the young adult who has now emerged from his/ her search for identity to one who is now enthusiastic and eager to fuse their identity with others. Intimacy from an Erikson theoretical standpoint is defined as the ability or capacity to commit oneself to a steadfast affiliation and partnership, and to develop one's ethical strength and fidelity to preserve and

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stand by such commitments, regardless if the commitment may require sacrifices and or compromises (Erikson, 1963).

This stage of development moves beyond the need of self to want to engage with others. It is a need to connect on a more profound and meaningful level that goes beyond acceptance but requires a sense of authenticity and loyalty. Intimacy versus isolation is the stage of development that exceeds the sense of self and signals a move to care and responsibility for others.

This stage can be applied to gang theory as being a reason to stay in the gang, as members find a sense of acceptance and loyalty that they are unable to receive in other areas. Inversely this stage of psychosocial development could also be the reason for disengaging from the gang. Research has shown that over time this quasi family is not as loyal to its members as it proclaims to be (Wegner et al., 2016). As such many young men choose to disengage from gangs as they now find themselves longing for a deeper connection and a genuine sense of loyalty that can only be found in an intimate relationship.

2.4.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

The current study focuses on young men. To better understand what it means to be a young man, the concept of masculinity must be investigated, to provide a holistic understanding. The field of masculinity from an academic standpoint was an under-researched area that only gained momentum in the late 20th century. This drive was as a result of the positioning of gender as a social construction that was galvanised by the feminist movement. In understanding the concept of masculinity, the premise needed to be broader than just that of gender studies. As a result, other roles needed consideration such as culture; race; generation (historical periods of time) and class, as gender behaviour is more than the construct of biological factors (Van der Walt, 2007). Each of these elements forms different types of masculinities, and each of these types of masculinities differs in their value system. One might value physical health more than another or value status, wealth or knowledge. Even in the area of physical health, the value system still may differ vastly. One group might value speed, whereas another might value strength or agility. Each differs based on their resources and their value system.

Thus different masculinities have limitations and are not necessarily complemented or supported by one another. Connell (2000) explored the relations between the diverse masculinities and found that a hierarchy existed between them, where certain forms of masculinity were regarded

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as dominant, and others were regarded as subservient. Connell (2005) defined the complete cultural dominance of a society in its entirety with regards to the concept of masculinity as hegemonic masculinity. Pollack (1998) defines hegemonic masculinity as the stereotypical notion of masculinity that in turn, shapes socialization and the aspiration of young males. In further understanding, the concept of hegemonic masculinity one needs to understand that for the hierarchy to exist there needs to be branches or groupings of masculinity that are marginalized compared to others that are offered better standing.

As stated previously, masculinity is more than the concept of gender, it moves beyond the biological factor of sex, but includes the concepts such as class; race; culture; economic status etc. These factors contribute to what is defined as hegemonic masculinity in any given area. Morrell (1998) states that these factors are constitutive of the form that masculinity takes. As such, there are multitudes of masculinities that exist, and they are shaped by time; society; culture and other factors. Each of these masculinities does not yield the same amount of power. Still, as much as a dominant form may exist, it is never totally dominant, nor does it ever have complete control over its subordinates.

2.4.2.1 Toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity has been a term that has gained much momentum of late. Studies have been conducted to dissect the concept and understand its inception, as well as its presentation. Monumental movements such as the #MeToo campaign was established because of the outcry of vulnerable people who suffered at the hands of men . Multibillion-dollar companies such as Procter and Gamble released their advertisement for their razor brand Gillette, confronting toxic masculinity in our society, to raise awareness about toxic masculinity (Topping, Lyons & Weaver, 2019). This has become a term that has gained praise but also backlash, as it calls attention to the concepts of masculinity specifically the negative behaviour associated with it. But what is toxic masculinity? Kupers (2005) defines it as the features of hegemonic masculinity that promote the domination of others and are therefore socially destructive. Aspects of male proclivities unfortunately associated with toxic masculinity involve greed, extreme competition, insensitivity or lack of consideration of the experiences or hardships of others or their feelings, a deep desire to dominate and control others, an unwillingness or dread of dependency, an inability to nurture, an eagerness to resort to violence and the stigmatization and subjugation of homosexual men or men who present feminine characteristics and Women (Kuper, 2005).

These are the features of toxic masculinity, but this does not imply that masculinity as a whole is toxic, rather features of it, just as there are features of masculinity that are beneficial (Kuper, 2005). But when factors of masculinity become radical and or oppressive, these become toxic. An example of such radical behavior would be a man who experiences chronic feelings of disrespect in the workplace and perhaps in his community and other spaces, uses alcohol to numb his pain, then proceeds to abuse or physically assault his wife and or children whilst screaming that all he wants is to be shown some respect (Kuper, 2005).

These features are what is known as toxic masculinity and these features are seen in the behaviour of gangsters. Thus understanding the power dynamics and shift between young men disengaging from gangs would give a great deal of insight into the mind shift or perhaps the feature of behaviour that could be toxic when disengaging. This could be useful in creating realistic recommendations to assist those who are reintegrating into their communities to align themselves with pro-social masculinity.

2.5   Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was used to guide this study was the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model developed by occupational therapists Law and colleagues (Law et al., 1996). In the PEO model, occupational performance is viewed as the results formed by the dynamic relationship between people, their occupations and roles, and the environments in which they live, work and play (Law et al., 1996). The person is understood to be dynamic, ever-developing, motivated and composed of body, mind and spirit qualities (Law et al., 1996). The environment in the PEO model comprises cultural, physical, social and institutional elements (Letts, Rigby & Steward, 2003). Occupation has been defined as self-directed tasks and activities that a person engages in to meet his or her intrinsic needs for expression, self- maintenance and fulfilment, within a variety of roles (Letts et al., 2003). These three spheres each affect one another and form what is known as occupational performance, which is defined as the result of the dynamic relationship between the person, environment and occupation (Letts et al., 2003). Strong, Rigby, Stewart, Law, Letts and Cooper (1999) describe occupational performance as being the dynamic interdependence between person, occupation and environment. The authors describe the congruence that is found in the person-environment-occupation relationship as depicted by the inter-connection or overlap that occurs between these three components. If the

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interconnection between all three components has a greater surface area, the more harmonious the fit is. This results in more optimal occupational performance in the person, and enhanced ability to engage in occupation within a supportive environment. Although if the adverse were to occur, this would result in a lesser surface area occurring between the dynamic relationship of the person-environment- occupation relationship. This would result in a lesser degree of, or less optimal, occupational performance due to the lack of congruency in the three components of person-environment- occupation (Strong, Rigby, Stewart, Law, Letts & Cooper, 1999). Therefore, for example, if the home environment is affecting an individual negatively, it would have a negative effect on his/her occupational performance.

As such, the PEO model is an excellent model on which to base the current study as it supports the notion that there is a definite dynamic relationship that occurs between the person, environment and occupation. The PEO model works well with the topic of young men disengaging from gangs and the effect it has on their occupational performance, as previously it was explained that occupational performance is the result of the dynamic relationship between the person, environment and occupation. As such, this model was used to effectively guide this research in understanding how young men disengage from gangs and the influence on occupational performance.

The theoretical view was further informed by the conceptual framework of meaning and dimensions through occupational engagement. In a study conducted by Whalley Hammell (2004) titled *Dimensions of meaning in the occupations of daily life,* the aim was to explore the renewed understanding of the term occupation as a dimension of meaning rather than its traditional perception as divisible activities focused on "functional" self-care, leisure and productivity. The concept of occupational theory seems to be dependent upon the concept of meaning rather than purpose. It became apparent to Wilcock (1998) that some theorists of the field viewed occupation as consisting of goal-directed purposeful activities. In contrast, she viewed occupation as a synthesis of doing, being and becoming. This theory of doing, being and becoming was expanded on to include the concept of belonging. Hammell (1998 a) defines the concept of "doing" as goal-directed, purposeful task or activity. The word "doing" is synonymous with occupation and traditionally has been viewed as a preoccupation of occupational therapy (Hammell, 1998 a). In a study conducted by Hammell (1998, 2004 a) explored the experience and meaning through "doing" by participants with physical impairments. The results reflected that

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the dimensions "doing" contained the opportunity or need to: have something to wake up to, engage in something that occupies their time, exploring new opportunities, provide for others, and conceive or envision future time engaged in meaningful activities.

Hammell (1998 a) expands further by defining "being" as the time taken to reflect, search oneself introspectively or engage in meditation, searching or rediscovering oneself and engaging in mindfulness. The concept looks at engaging in activities in a thoughtful manner and enjoying time with oneself or with someone else and/or others. "Being" has been identified by Hammell (1998 a) as an essential component of living well, when living with an impairment or severe illness. "Becoming" on the other hand, is described as the idea or vision one has for one's future self, and the possible life one want to lead. It explores the new opportunities and ideas about who one wishes to become over the course of one's life, and the ideas and concepts or experiences that would deem one's life worthwhile (Hammell, 2004). The last concept "belonging" was later added to the dimensions of meaning. The concept of "belonging" speaks to the importance of relationships and the connection to the experience of meaning in everyday life as a central theme into living with impairment or illness (Hammell, 2004). "Belonging" within a supportive social network can establish both the capacity to do and contribute and/or improve one's pleasure and or meaningfulness in the experience of "doing" (Hammell, 2004).

These concepts will be further explored in the Discussion chapter, analysing the participants' experience of doing, being, becoming and belonging.

2.5.1 Occupational Justice and Injustice

As this study is viewed from an Occupational Therapy perspective, an occupational justice lens will be used to conceptualise the experiences of the young men when they disengage. This lens will also be used to formulate recommendations to assist occupational therapists in understanding how they could alleviate the occupational injustices faced by many who are affected by the scourge of gangsterism.

To conceptualize occupational justice, an overview of social justice will first be provided, as occupational justice was derived from social justice. Social justice has been defined by Watson and Swartz (2004) as the need to develop and maintain a fair allocation of resources and, if necessary, compensate for lack/loss of opportunities, discrimination or exclusion. Occupational

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justice is closely aligned with social justice but is described as the recognition of, and the provision for, the occupational needs of the individual and that of the community, as part of a fair and empowering society (Watson & Swartz, 2004). Wilcock and Townsend (2011) define occupational justice and social justice as complementary ideas that share a common belief in the need for societies or communities to be governed justly, through a set of moral, ethical and civic principles related to empowerment, fairness, responsibility and equitable access to resources and sharing of rights and responsibility.

Occupational justice consists of six principles: enablement of occupational potential; empowerment through occupation; inclusive classification of occupation; diversity; social inclusion; and sharing advantages of occupational participation (Hess-April, 2013). Enablement of occupational potential refers to supporting people in developing their potential in their engagement in occupation. This could be achieved through occupation-based practice for the enablement of justice, health and well-being. Empowerment through occupation is based on the view that society is the determinant of peoples' opportunity for engagement in everyday occupations and supports the concept of equality in power-sharing. Inclusive classification of occupation addresses the approach in which occupations are categorized. The last three principles of shared occupational participation; diversity and social inclusion are viewed as key concepts within an occupational justice lens. These three concepts bring attention to the occupational differences that exist between those with, and those who are without, resources for engagement and participation in occupation (Hess-April, 2013).

To truly frame this study through an occupational lens, it would not be sufficient to discuss the concept of occupational justice, without exploring the concept of occupational injustice. Much criticism exists about the exact definition of occupational injustice. It would be ill-advised to consider that the definition of occupational injustice was the direct inverse of the definition of occupational justice. An article by Whalley Hammell and Beagan (2017), *Occupational injustice: A critique,* explores the initial definitions and the evolution of the definition of occupational injustice, as well as the factors it comprises. The term occupational injustice was initially explored by Townsend and Wilcock in 2000 - defined as socially created, ie: in its nature, socially-formed circumstances give rise to demanding and disrupting occupational experiences. This definition was found by other scholars to be limited, and thus exploration into this concept needed to be undertaken. In 2010 Nilsson and Townsend revised the understanding of occupational injustice

by expanding on the concept. It was defined as a result of social procedures and other forms of governance and is composed or arranged of how power is utilized to restrict engagement in the everyday occupations of populations or communities and individuals (Nilsson & Townsend, 2010). The consequences of occupational injustice are occupational alienation; occupational deprivation and occupational imbalance, which can result in occupational marginalisation (Whalley & Beagan, 2017).

Occupational alienation is a result when a person's experience of daily life is experienced as purposeless and or meaningless (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004). This could be further explored as the individual no longer experiences a sense of desire to engage. As a result, the individual restricts their engagement in this occupation or the quality of their engagement in this occupation. A study conducted by Marx in 1964 explores occupational alienation from a fascinating point of view. Marx views the concept through the lens of loss of choice and control in the areas of one's occupational environments they engage in. Due to the lack of autonomy the person experiences an impact on their psychological, emotional and physical well-being. This results in the person experiencing their work as lacking satisfaction or interest.

Occupational deprivation was initially defined by Whiteford in 2000, as conditions or circumstances which prevent or restrict engagement in fundamental and/or meaning occupations due to factors that are outside of the immediate control of the individual. Occupational deprivation can also be viewed from a social lens in which individuals or communities are restricted from engaging in certain occupations (be it fundamental and or those that bring meaning) due to social exclusion.

Occupational imbalance has been described as an experience of being over-occupied or overburdened, where others may experience it as being under-occupied, this could be closely linked with being occupationally deprived. The concept of occupational imbalance is still quite contentious as it has received a fair amount of criticism, as who decides what balance is? In certain cultures, one's balance might be viewed as overburdened, or deprivation by another culture or by other scholar communities (Whalley Hammell & Beagan 2017).

Occupational marginalization was described by Townsend and Wilcock (2004b) as vocalising the need to exercise micro to everyday decision and choices making powers as they engage or

participate in occupations. The concept of occupational marginalization was expanded on by Stadnyk, Townsend and Wilcock (2010) by exploring the concept specifically from the experience of specific groupings. The concept was described as the injustice experienced by a group being socially excluded by another group or population, restricting the group from experiencing autonomy through the denial of choice-making in their occupational engagement or occupation as a whole. This experience becomes the norm and the standard opposed to the exception. Browne, Varcoe, Smye, Littlejohn, Goodwin and Lennox (2012) further expands on the concept of marginalization as a group or population not necessarily being marginalised; instead, that there are marginalizing conditions that establish and sustain and or maintain inequities. Thus marginalization should be viewed as a result or consequence of inequity and not due to the nature or character of specific populations or groups.

Understanding the concept of occupational injustice and the history of the Number gang, it becomes apparent that there was a great deal of occupational injustice experienced by people of colour, specifically the young Black men who were forced to leave their home to work in mines to sustain themselves and their families. The result of this was that they experienced occupational alienation, deprivation, marginalization as well as occupational imbalance. These concepts will be explored in relation to the current study findings in the Discussion chapter.

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Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.1   Introduction

The methodology chapter provides a description of how the study was conducted. The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the procedures that were used in order to meet the aims and objectives of the study, as well as the measures used to ensure that the study maintained the ethical requirements. This chapter consists of a description of the approach and design that was employed, as well as the settings in which the study was conducted, the criteria that were used for selecting the participants, as well as the method of collecting data. Lastly methods that were used to perform the data analysis, and ethics procedures are described.

3.2   Research Approach

The research approach includes the plans and procedures for the duration of the research, starting at its infancy stage of broad assumptions developing to the detailed methods of data collection; analysis and the interpretation (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate for the study. The purpose of a qualitative research approach is to explore and in turn, understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or a human problem (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, it allows for exploration and understanding of the meaning that the individual or group gives to a situation. This speaks to the nature of this study which aims to understand the participant's perceptions and their experiences. Creswell (2014) goes on to further explore the concept of qualitative research approach by stating that this style or form of inquiry (qualitative) supports a way of looking at research that honours an inductive style, the focus is placed on the individual's meaning, and the importance of providing a description of the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2014). This description of Creswell speaks to the aim of this study, which focuses on the meaning, and the importance of the complexities of the different circumstances that may have arisen during the participants' time in the gang and their experiences of disengagement. This allows the researcher to focus on developing an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and their perceived meanings that are attached.

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This study will not only be using a qualitative research approach but more specifically, an interpretivist qualitative approach. An Interpretivist researcher discovers reality through his/her participants' views through their own backgrounds and experiences (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The aim of the interpretivist researcher is to explore and accept multiple perspectives and have the ability to be open-minded to change (Willis, 2007). The heart of this approach is understanding each participant's subjective experiences. This approach thus connects well with the aims and objectives of the study, as the aim of this study is to create an understanding of the participants' perceptions and their experiences of disengaging from their various gangs. How this approach was implemented will later be discussed in the section on data collection.

3.3   Research Design

In this study, an explorative qualitative research design was adopted. Blanche & Durrheim (2004) states that an exploratory design is implemented with the aim of producing preliminary investigations into a relatively unknown area of research, an explorative design employs an open and malleable inductive approach to research, as the researcher attempts to search for new insight into a phenomenon. This resonates with the purpose of this study, as disengagement from gangs and the area of Black gangs specifically, has been an under- researched topic within the South African context. As this is an under-researched phenomenon the purpose of this study is to understand the participants and their experience, as such proceeding from what emerges from the data collection process and drawing conclusions from the data. Kowalczyk (2015) defines exploratory research design as the initial research into a hypothetical or theoretical idea. Thus the researcher has an idea or has made observations and seeks to understand more about the data. An exploratory research design attempts to lay the groundwork that will lead to future studies or to determine whether what is being observed might be explained by a currently existing theory (Kowalczyk, 2015). The exploratory approach is thus appropriate as this study has utilised an occupational perspective to explore each participant's process of disengagement from his respective gang and his perceptions of the experience.

3.4   Research setting

The study was conducted with members of the Peace Team in the township of Nyanga and with members of Project Playground in Langa. These are both Non-Governmental Organisation programmes that are located on the Cape Flats. The Cape Flats has been defined by Jensen (1999)

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as an enormous area, developed during the 1960s and 1970s in direct response to the Group Areas Act of 1950 as a dumping ground for people of colour. De Swardt, Puoane, Chopra and du Toit (2005) described the Cape Flats as a sandy expanse that separates the wealthy northern and southern suburbs, while simultaneously thoroughly dependent on the city's economy and deeply marginalized within it. Through the social engineering created through Apartheid, the spatial planning and rural-urban migration created the urban sprawl and the expansion of racialized economic geographies that have persisted well after the transition to the democratic republic we are today. Within the Cape Flats itself, there is further racial, economic and spatial segregation, the racial composition of the Cape Flats consists of Coloured (an ambiguous term for lighter-skinned mixed-race people devised by the architects of apartheid) communities, and the less populous but more densely populated Black townships (Standing, 2003). South Africa's long history of political struggles and its history of the oppressive regime of Apartheid still reflects today, specifically in the settings in which this study was conducted, being Nyanga and Langa.

3.4.1 Nyanga

Nyanga is situated between the townships of Guguletu and Crossroads and is approximately 5km from Cape Town International Airport. This creates a juxtaposition of a picture of sophistication created by the state of the art airport with lavish private airport lounges and the picture of poverty created by overcrowded shacks lacking infrastructure and basic sanitation. Nyanga is regarded as one of the most dangerous townships in Cape Town, having the highest rates of murder and rape (Gie & Haskins, 2007). The word 'township' is defined as a residential and industrial site, but in South Africa, the word township was a creation of the Apartheid system which was aimed at keeping racial groups living in separate areas in order to maintain its predecessor regimes of white rule (Bond, 2008). Nyanga also holds the title of being one of the poorest African suburbs of Cape Town, still affected by the impoverishing effects of the legacy of Apartheid and the failure of the post- Apartheid economy to address the poverty created due to the lack of essential services and infrastructure (de Swardt et al., 2005). Nyanga is approximately 3.09 square kilometres and densely populated with a population of approximately 57 996 (City of Cape Town Census, 2011).

3.4.2 Langa

Langa is one of Cape Town's oldest townships, created in the late 1920s as a location to move Black people who were forcibly removed out of Ndabeni in Maitland. When Langa was developed the structures were shabby, roads were unpaved, and there was no electricity supply (SAHO, 2000). Langa is approximately 3.09 square kilometres and is home to 52 401 residents (City of Cape Town Census, 2011). Langa is situated off the N2 highway opposite the Athlone wastewater treatment works and between the areas of Bontheuwel; Epping industry and Bridge Town (Google, n.d.).

In order to provide a clear picture of how densely populated the townships of Langa and Nyanga are, a comparison is made with the middle-class suburb of Plumstead in Cape Town. Plumstead is relatively larger than Nyanga and Langa at approximately 4.58 square kilometres, and its population is only 20 178 residents. In Table 3.1, a breakdown of the demographic comparison of the three areas is presented.

Table 3.1: Demographic comparison of Nyanga, Langa and Plumstead

	Nyanga	Langa	Plumstead
Size	3.09 km²	3.09 km²	4.58 km²
Population	57 996	52 401	20 178
Households	15 993	17 400	7080
Matriculation rate of those 20 years and older	31 %	40 %	75%
Unemployment rate	45%	40%	6%
Predominant race make up	Black	Black	White
Majority household's monthly income	R1 – R1600	R1– R1600	R12 001 – R25 600
Percentage of formal dwellings	67%	58%	99%

(City of Cape Town Census, 2011).

3.4.3 The Peace Team in Nyanga

The Peace Team was a community group established in 2013 by former gang members in response to the conflict amongst the youth of Nyanga. The purpose of this group was to assist

and encourage gang members to leave their gangs and to assist them in reintegrating into society, exploring new occupational pursuits and engaging in previous occupations that now had new-found meaning and purpose (Brink et al., 2014). At the time of data collection for the study, the Peace Team was running an after-school programme at one of the High Schools in Nyanga to improve school safety. This school gained notoriety at one point. It underwent police supervision as war broke out between two rival gangs leaving staff and non-gang member students in fear (Sephali, 2013).

3.4.4 Project Playground in Langa

Project Playground is an NGO that was founded in 2010 by Princess Sofia of Sweden in response to the need for holistic care of the young people of Langa aged between four and eighteen years (Project Playground, 2016). The Princess had specifically chosen Langa as she found in her research that townships were still underdeveloped, and even though Apartheid had been over for more than 20 years the children of Langa were still forced to grow up in the legacy of Apartheid. It was also found that the children that Project Playground intended to assist came from abusive families; broken homes without basics such as sanitation; electricity; food or even adequate housing. The vision of Project Playground is to strengthen children and youth in their personal and social development, through after school activities, including sports programmes and other supportive programmes.

3.5 Participant Selection

Sampling selection is an important aspect of any research study. A sample is defined as the procedure of recruiting segments of a population relevant to the study being done for the process of measuring the attributes or components, such as the beliefs and attitudes (Rahi, 2017). In the current study, purposive sampling, together with convenience sampling, was used.

Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who can purposefully direct and inform the understanding of the research question and the aims and objectives, as well as the core phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2007). Convenience sampling has been described as selecting from an available population that is easily accessible to the researcher, thus making it convenient for the researcher to use said population (Rahi, 2017). According to Dörnyei (2007), convenience sampling is a non-probability or non-random sampling in which the members of the

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target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet the inclusion criteria. Of importance is that the sample is not only available but needs to meet the inclusion criteria in order to be considered for the study. In line with purposive sampling, the study made use of inclusion criteria to select the participants (Creswell, 2014). The inclusion criteria for the study were as follows:

- Young Black men aged 18-35 years;
- Identified themselves as having disengaged from gangs for a minimum of six months preceding the data collection;
- Affiliated to either the Peace Team or Project Playground;
- Living in either Nyanga or Langa.

As disengagement comes with its own process of tethering and falling back into the gang, participants needed to have at least disengaged from the gang for a minimum of six months. This would allow them sufficient time to experience how occupation had sustained their disengagement from gangs, as well as factors that made disengagement easier or more difficult.

3.6   Participant recruitment

The researcher's supervisor from the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) had established a good working relationship with the Peace Team over the two years prior to the study. As previously stated, convenience sampling requires the researcher to select participants from an available population that is easily accessed; therefore, the relationship that already existed between the Peace Team and the Occupational Therapy Department of UWC allowed for convenience sampling to take place. In addition, the researcher used purposive sampling to ensure that members of the Peace Team fit the inclusion criteria. Originally ten young men from the Peace Team were invited to take part in this study, but ultimately only five of the young men agreed to participate. As such more participants were needed to conduct the study. As a result, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called Project Playground (PPG) was approached in the hope of gaining more participants. A meeting was set up with the social worker of PPG to assist in facilitating a meeting with the researcher and one of the facilitators of the PPG after-school programmes. This facilitator had an in-depth understanding of disengagement from gangs as he was an ex-gang member and he was the

coordinator of a programme called Grey Corner, which was established with the purpose of preventing youth in Langa from engaging in gangs and assisting those who were in gangs to disengage from them. The facilitator was able to provide a list of young men who were former gang members who were involved in some of the programmes provided by Project Playground. A meeting was conducted with each of the men, and those who met the inclusion criteria were invited to join the study. This resulted in an additional five men from Langa volunteering to participate in the study.

3.7   Data Collection

The method used for data collection is a critical element of the study, as the methods used establishes the protocol under which the data will be collected in the study (Creswell, 2014). In this study, two methods of data collection were used: focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

3.7.1   Data Collection Methods

Kitzinger (1995) defines focus groups as a form of group interviewing to capitalise on communication between research participants with the aim to generate rich data. Focus groups are also conducted to create a dialogue between the research participants and not just between each participant and the researcher, this then allows the participants to share in each other's experiences and point of view (Kitzinger, 1995). In this study, posing the questions in a focus group created a shared dialogue, also allowing other participants to be made more aware of certain experiences in their own stories by hearing the responses of other participants. This process also connected with Yalom's principles of group therapy; even though the focus group was done for the purpose of gaining data, group discussion was also allowed and certain therapeutic factors were elicited, thus creating the opportunity for more in-depth data to be collected. In Yalom's therapeutic factors discussed in *Handbook of Group Counselling and Psychotherapy* (DeLucia-Waack, Gerrity, Kalodner & Riva, 2004), Yalom's therapeutic principle of universality is defined as members in a group sharing or perceiving similar problems. This factor was vital for gathering data, as through this therapeutic factor being elicited participants felt comforted in their experiences as it was shared by others, as such, they felt comfortable in sharing their experiences too.

Semi-structured interviews are a useful data collection tool, as these interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering the participants the chance to explore issues which they feel are important (Longhurst, 2010). Semi-structured interviews were used as this form of data collection aligns with data collection methods of the interpretivist research design that was adopted for this study. Chapman and Smith (2002) stated that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to engage with the participant in a dialogue that allows the initial questions to be modified in light of the participant's response. As a result, the researcher can probe interesting and vital areas that may have come up during the interview. Chapman and Smith (2002) expand on their reasoning behind the use of semi-structured interviews, stating that semi-structured interviews also offer flexibility by allowing more time to be spent on the participants' discussion on their understanding or experience of certain questions.

3.7.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure consisted of three phases:

Phase one - the initial focus group;

Phase two - the semi-structured individual interviews;

Phase three - the follow-up focus group.

These phases provided a sufficient period of engagement to ensure that data saturation was achieved. To protect all participants in the study the two parties (The Peace Team and Project Playground) were never placed together, firstly to protect anonymity but also, as gangs are governed by territory and rival gangs, for the safety of all participants it was felt best never to engage both parties at the same time. This was also done to protect the researcher and the research itself as if conflict were to arise with the participants it could have created a toxic relationship between the researcher and the participants of either side. Thus keeping these two groups separate was for the safety and anonymity of all.

A follow-up focus group was not able to take place with participant members of the Peace Team (discussed as part of the limitations of the study in Chapter Five).

All focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted in English, as the researcher's home language was English, and she was not able to express herself fluently in Xhosa. This

created a limitation in the study, as even though the participants were able to understand English, it was not their home language and as a result limited their ability at times to fully express their experiences. This has been elaborated on under the limitations of this study.

An outline of the data collection procedure is presented in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Data collection procedure

Date of interview	Langa/ Nyanga	Interview	Duration of interview
25/11/2015	Nyanga	Focus group	56 min 28 sec
24/04/2016	Langa – Brad	Individual interview	21 min 32 sec
17/05/2016	Nyanga – Themba	Individual interview	29 min 58 sec
17/05/2016	Nyanga – Anele	Individual interview	12 min 48 sec
17/05/2016	Nyanga – Zola	Individual interview	11 min 50 sec
21/06/2016	Langa – Love	Individual interview	17 min 33 sec
24/06/2016	Langa – Choice	Individual interview	25 min 53 sec
29/07/2016	Langa – 1997	Individual interview	16 min 24 sec
01/08/2016	Nyanga – Thabo	Individual interview	21 min 52 sec
01/08/2016	Nyanga – Unati	Individual Interview	12 min 48 sec
18/08/2016	Langa – Hashtag	Individual interview	29 min 13 sec
01/09/2016	Langa	Focus group	54 min 20 sec

Phase one

The initial focus group was conducted with the participants of the Peace Team from Nyanga. This focus group with the Peace Team was conducted at UWC in the Occupational Therapy department as there was no formal safe space available to conduct the interviews in Nyanga. UWC Occupational Therapy department had an available lecture room that allowed for the focus group to be run in private, allowing the participants to feel free and safe to discuss their experiences. Two key open-ended questions were posed in the initial focus group: What is it like to leave a gang? How does this happen (the process)? The purpose of this initial focus group was to generate and refine questions for the semi-structured interviews that followed.

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The initial focus group interview was transcribed (from the audio recordings) verbatim, and then analysed. The questions generated for the individual interviews were derived from the analysis of the focus group.

Phase two

In order to gain a thick description of the participants' experience of disengagement, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants in total (five participants from the Peace Team and five participants from Project Playground).

The questions used for the semi-structured interviews were broken up into four sets in order to meet the aims of the study and provide an understanding of the participants' experiences. As indicated previously, the questions posed in the semi-structured interviews were developed from the analysis of the responses of participants during the initial focus group that was conducted with the Peace Team.

The first set of questions was to understand the importance of gangs and the participants' reasons for being part of gangs. This was important as it established the basis for understanding why the participants joined the gang. The questions focused on the key question:

- Why did you join the gang?

The second set of questions were asked for the purposes of understanding the participant's reasons for leaving the gang and the process involved. This was important as it was the main aim of the study, to understand not only the process of disengaging from the gang but also understanding their experience of the process.
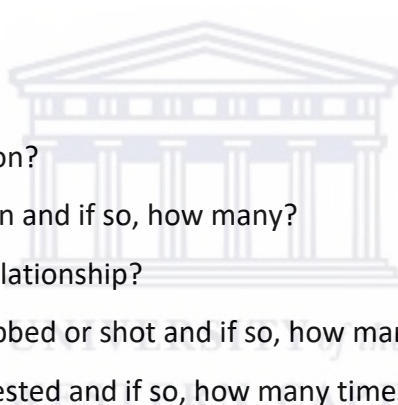
- Why did you leave the gang?
- Was there a process in leaving the gang?
- What did you do to stay away from the gang?
- How did you leave the gang, for example, did you immediately leave the gang and cut all ties, or was it a slow process?

The third set of questions was aimed at understanding the aftermath of leaving a gang, this involved understanding what consequences (good or bad) the participants experienced when

disengaging and what life was like for them (engaging in community and their experience of engaging in their occupations).

- How did things change for you since you left the gang? i.e. can you still go to the places you used to and engage in your regular routines and leisure activities?
- What did you do to help you stay out of the gang (support structures)?
- How did your community receive you after disengaging from the gang? Did they still view you as a gangster?
- When you were active in the gang, were you able to move freely?
- Do you still have ties to the gang, i.e. friends or family?

The fourth and final set of questions served as demographic information, with the purpose of understanding if there were any common factors in the population other than their inclusion criteria.

- Age?
- Highest level of education?
- Do you have any children and if so, how many?
- Are you in a romantic relationship?
- Have you ever been stabbed or shot and if so, how many times?
- Have you ever been arrested and if so, how many times and when was the last time?
- Have you ever been to prison?
- Have you used illegal drugs?
- Are you employed and if so for how long?
- Where do you live?
- Do you live with other family members such as grandmother; mother; father; siblings etc.
- What is your relationship like with your father? Your mother?

The individual interviews with five members of the Peace Team were conducted at UWC Occupational Therapy department in one of the available office spaces, to create a safe environment for the participant and the researcher. Due to the lack of availability of participants in the Nyanga setting, more participants were needed in order to reach data saturation. As the study was already underway, it was decided to continue with individual interviews when more participants became available in Langa. Accordingly, a further five participants from Langa were

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selected as described above and agreed to be interviewed individually. As Project Playground is an NGO with its own building and consultation rooms, all the interviews with participants from PPG were conducted on-site at Project Playground. The social workers provided their consultation space, which was a safe, non-intrusive private space. All interviews were digitally recorded.

Once all ten individual interviews were completed, they were transcribed and analysed. The researcher also used the opportunity to gauge if there were any gaps in the data. The researcher then reflected on the aims and objectives of the study, also taking into account relevant information that came up in the reading and reflecting on literature that was relevant to the study. Through this process, new questions were composed that enabled the researcher to explore further the complexities of emerging issues in a second focus group.

Phase three

The questions composed for the second focus group were as follows:

- What does it mean to be a man?
- What makes you a man?
- What roles do you have as a man?
- Did you join the gang to become a man, or to be treated like a man?
- What roles and activities changed since you left the gang?
- How has leaving the gang affected your abilities to engage in your roles and activities as a young man?
- Have you ever wanted to go back to the gang and if so, why?
- What has this interview process been like for you?

The questions that were posed addressed the concepts of power and masculinity. The individual interview questions looked at understanding the process of disengagement and the participants' experience of disengagement. This included how they felt their community treated them after disengaging as well as any consequences (good or bad) of disengaging. The individual interviews focused on the aspect of disengagement but lacked depth in understanding the effect of disengagement on the participant's occupational performance. The second focus group questions were different as they focused on the concept of masculinity and the concept of power.

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These were relevant concepts to understand as during the data collection in the individual interviews, what became very apparent was the reason that most of the participants engaged in gangs was to feel like a man. As such, understanding their perception of what it meant to be a man was a crucial concept to unpack because it spoke to their roles as men and how disengagement affected the occupational performance in being a man. This line of questions created the opportunity to understand if the participants' perception of power and masculinity had shifted or if the occupations in which they engaged in had shifted in order to attain or retain their power and masculinity. Understanding this would address the gap in the research in how the participants' occupational performance was affected.

These new questions were then posed in the second focus group that was conducted with the participants from Project Playground. All the participants were not able to avail themselves for the final focus group, as two of the participants had prior commitments, this will later be discussed in the limitations of the study. This second focus group was conducted in the Project Playground hall in Langa. The hall was allocated to the researcher, as staff felt it was a bigger space and would be a better fit for a focus group due to the size. The hall was booked, and a notice was put up so that the focus group would not be disturbed and participants would feel safe to participate in the focus group.

3.8   Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data collected from this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing data; and reporting patterns or themes that are found in the data.   Thematic analysis is a guideline to not only organise the data that is retrieved but also gives the researcher a format in which to interpret the diverse features of the topic being explored (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis consists of six phases. In the first phase, the expectation is for the researcher to familiarise herself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke (2006) state that this is achieved by the researcher immersing herself in the data to the extent that he/she is familiar with the depth and the breadth of the content.

As both focus groups and all interviews were audio-recorded, these were then transcribed verbatim to follow the structure of thematic analysis. Transcribing is a lengthy and time-consuming process which is an excellent opportunity for researchers to connect and familiarise

themselves with their data, thereby adhering to the first phase of thematic analysis which is to immerse oneself in the data (Riessman, 1993). Data analysis took place during and after each of the three phases of data collection. After the initial focus group, the data was analysed in order to formulate the questions for the semi-structured interviews. In the second phase, after each interview was conducted, the interview was transcribed and analysed. Through this process, it became apparent that data saturation was reached, but there were still gaps in the data that had not been addressed. This then led to the third and final phase in which the second focus group was conducted. During this focus group, new questions were posed to the participants that had not been addressed in the semi-structured interviews. Through these three phases, a holistic perspective was obtained that spoke to the aims of this study.

The researcher engaged with phase one of data analysis by transcribing all interviews (from the audio recordings) verbatim, in order to not only retain the information needed but also to record the data in a manner that was true to its original nature, so to stay true to the thematic analysis approach.

The aim of phase two of a thematic analysis is to have the researcher familiarise his/her with the data and by doing so creating their own initial ideas about the data, what ideas come to mind or what is relevant about the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that in this phase, the researcher would need to engage with the data to produce the initial codes. Braun and Clarke (2006) clarify the concept of coding, stating the purpose of coding is to identify aspects of the data that present as striking or thought-provoking to the analyst. Boyatzis (1998) describes it well by stating that a code is the most basic element or segment of the natural or unprocessed data that can be assessed in a purposeful way regarding the phenomenon. The researcher was able to achieve the aim of this phase by first coding each interview individually. As the researcher was able to work through each interview individually, she was able to engage meticulously with the data paying close attention to the nuances of each interview but also being aware of what patterns were being formed across all the interviews, thus allowing substantial commonalities within the data to surface.

The third phase is regarded as the phase where themes emerge. Braun and Clarke (2006) define this phase as the time when the researcher re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, broadening the lenses that were focused on codes that surfaced from the data. In this time the

researcher is expected to scrutinize or examine the different codes into potential themes and then assemble or compose the coded data extracts within the themes that have been identified. The researcher categorised all the codes into a spreadsheet, grouping relevant codes together. Through this process a pattern of categories materialised creating a picture of possible themes, in this process, some codes became irrelevant as they were only applicable to one participant and thus were not as relevant to the study as codes that were common in most of the participants.

In phase four the purpose is to review the themes, understanding what makes each theme different, but also the expectation is to refine each of the themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that in this phase some themes will need to be refined more as the researcher will find that the theme may not have enough data to support it. Alternatively, the data may be too diverse; as a result, some of the themes may collapse into another theme that may be similar, or some themes may be too broad and may need to be separated in order for more diversity and depth. This process allowed the researcher to refine and create a flow of ideas between the themes that were created; giving order and structure and allowing the data to present itself in a methodical format. In this time the themes became more refined and this process made it evident that certain themes were not as relevant to the study, these themes still were useful in understanding the participants as individuals but did not integrate well with the aims and the objectives of the study, and as a result, they were removed from the study.

In the fifth phase of thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the expectation is to define and refine the themes. By identifying the quintessential elements of each theme (meaning and purpose), it also resolves what aspects of the data each theme epitomises. The researcher was able to ascertain all relevant codes to the study, grouping them into categories of the same kind. Once that process was complete, the researcher was able to reflect on the data and became aware that the data had followed the same process as of that of the pattern of a life cycle. The themes were refined into a logical flow that followed this life cycle pattern that had emerged. Through this pattern, a harmonious description was formed. Through the use of in-vivo coding, headings or titles were developed to name themes that not only encapsulated the theme but added an edge to express the emotion or essence of each theme.

In the final phase of thematic analysis, the aim is to tell the story of the data that was found. The data is presented in a manner that persuades the reader of the validity and integrity of the researcher's analysis. Extracts need to be entrenched within an analytic account that stimulatingly illuminates the story that the researcher is telling about the data, and the researcher's analytic account needs to go beyond a mere description of the data, but also needs to make an argument in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher was able to achieve this through a thick description of the data in each theme and supporting the arguments with relevant and hard-hitting quotes from the data. This highlighted the very essence of the theme, thereby producing a methodical presentation of the accounts of the participants' perceptions and their experiences of disengagement from gangs and the effect on their occupational performance.

3.9   Rigour and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is defined as a matter of persuasion, whereby scientists are viewed as having made their practices visible and, therefore, auditable and rigorous (Rolfe, 2004). Trustworthiness comprises credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Rolfe, 2004). Credibility has been defined by Sheton (2004) as seeking to ensure that the study assesses or measures what it intended to. Sheton (2004) defines dependability as assessing whether the results of the study are dependable, in other words, if the study were to be repeated in the same context with the same population and using the same method, the same or similar results would be obtained. Transferability is defined as the external validity of the study, and enables readers to decide if the findings of the study can be transferred to, or be applied to, a wider population (Sheton, 2004). Confirmability is defined as the steps taken to ensure that as far as possible, the findings are the results of the experiences or the perceptions of the participant, instead of the beliefs or preferences of the researchers (Sheton, 2004).

In the study, credibility was established through member checking which is a process whereby "the final report or specific description or themes" are taken back to the participants (Creswell, 2009: 191) to offer them "an opportunity to provide context and an alternative interpretation" (Patton, 2002: 561). As such member checking was done by having the participants read through the findings once analysis was completed to verify if their statements were depicted clearly in

the analysis. The analysis was also discussed with the participants in a member checking group in both Langa and Nyanga.

Throughout the data collection process, a reflexive journal was kept to record the experiences of the researcher during the research process. Creswell (2014) defines reflexivity as the researcher's reflection on her biases; values and personal background, such as culture; race; history and other factors that may have shaped her interpretations that were formed during the study. The reflexive journal is in its purest form an account of the relationship or journey the researcher has had with the study. This was done to reflect on how the researcher processed her thoughts and perceptions about the research in order to maintain trustworthiness.

Transferability is defined as the extent to which the findings may be applicable in other contexts or with other respondents (Babbie, Mouton, Voster & Prozesky, 2007). This was achieved by giving sufficiently detailed descriptions of the research setting as well as the data collected (thick description) in order for judgements to be made by the reader regarding transferability of the findings in other contexts.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher (Babbie et al., 2007). This was achieved by having an audit trail. All information, articles, field notes and other data sources were recorded and saved in the event that information needs to be provided to validate any statements, ideas or concepts brought through in the research.

Dependability refers to providing evidence that if the study were to be repeated with the same or similar sample in the same or similar context, the findings would be the same or similar (Babbie et al., 2007). This was achieved by providing a dense description of the participants' experiences and perceptions, as well as the methods and theories that were used in the analysis of the data.

3.10   Ethics

Ethics approval to conduct the study was given by the UWC Higher Degrees Committee (Registration number: 15/7/86). The Peace Team and members affiliated with Project Playground were then approached and invited to participate in the study. Members who fit the inclusion criteria and who wanted to participate in the study then received an information letter (Appendix

1) detailing: the aims and the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, confidentiality and how it would be maintained, that their participation was voluntary and how the findings of the study would be used. Also consent forms (Appendix 2) were provided for participants to sign, whereby it was expressly stated that participants understand their rights and that their input is voluntary once signed. In addition, by signing they would be agreeing to understanding the purpose and how they will contribute to the study. As Nyanga and Langa are predominantly Black Xhosa communities, the information letter and consent form were provided in both Xhosa and English.

Autonomy refers to the obligation to respect the decision making capacities of autonomous persons (Beauchamp, 2003). This was achieved by making it known to the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time without negative consequences, and that their involvement in the study was on a voluntary basis. Non-maleficence refers to the obligation to avoid causing any harm (Beauchamp, 2003). As the interviews were open-ended and required the young men to discuss their experience and perceptions of disengaging from the gang, this may have evoked suppressed feelings and memories. Therefore, details for the counsellor at the Etafeni counselling facility in Nyanga were provided to all participants. For the participants in Langa, it was discussed with PPG that if any trauma arose from the interviews that PPG would provide one of their Social Workers to debrief with the participant, as they already had trained counselling staff on site. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of a focus group confidentiality agreement (Appendix 3) that the participants and researcher had signed, which stated that participants in the focus groups agreed to maintain confidentiality regarding what was discussed in the group. Participants chose their own pseudonyms to keep their identities confidential.

All recorded material was saved in a password-protected file and was only to be viewed by the researcher and supervisors. All recorded material will be destroyed after a period of two years.

Chapter 4 – Findings

4.1   Introduction

In chapter four, the findings from the analysis of the data are presented. Firstly, a description of each participant and his life story of disengagement from the respective gangs is presented. The participants' stories are presented at the beginning of the chapter to contextualise their experiences of entering, and disengaging from, gangs. This is followed by a description of the themes and categories that emerged from the analysis, supported by relevant quotes from the participants.

4.2   Participants' stories

During the selection of the participants, five of the participants were selected from the Peace Team, and five participants were selected from Project Playground. Each of the participants was previously affiliated to a gang and had been disengaged from the gang for more than six months. An overview of the participants' demographic information has been provided in Table 4.1 below. The participants ranged between the ages of nineteen and thirty-six years of age, and their level of education ranged from grade ten to tertiary education. Each of the participants had been injured with either a knife or a gun, all the participants had been arrested, and only one had not engaged in drug use. Five of the participants were currently employed, and only four of the participants were raised in a two-parent household.

Table: 4.1 Participants' demographic information

Pseudonym	Age	Highest level of education	Number of times shot	Number times stabbed	Ever been arrested	Substance use	NGO affiliation	Employment	Father present in life
Unati	21 years	Grade 11	0	3	Yes	Dagga	Peace Team	No	Yes
1997	19 years	Grade 12	0	2	+	None	Project Playground	Yes	Yes
Thabo	25 years	Grade 12	0	2	Yes	Cocaine Dagga Tik	Peace Team	No	No

Hashtag	31 years	Grade 11	4	1	Yes	Mandrax Tik Cocaine Heroine	Project Playground	Yes	No
Anele	21 years	Grade 10	0	6	Yes	Dagga	Peace Team	No	No
Choice	36 years	Grade 12	0	1	Yes	Mandrax Dagga Tik Ecstasy Glue	Project Playground	Yes	No
Themba	21 years	Grade 12	1	3	Yes	Dagga	Peace Team	No	No
Zola	25 years	Grade 12	0	2	Yes	Tik	Peace Team	Yes	Yes
Love	22 years	Grade 10	0	4	Yes	Mandrax Dagga Tik Ecstasy Cocaine	Project Playground	No	No
Brad	22 years	Grade 12	0	1	Yes	None	Project Playground	Yes	Yes

* Pseudonyms were chosen by the participants themselves.

4.2.1   The story of Unati

Unati was a young man whose story was a bit different to the rest. Unati had moved to a new school in Nyanga and found it difficult to make friends in his new school. He noticed the boys who were in gangs always dressed well, he stated that: "so I started to join a gang, I thought it was going to be fine like they always eat nice food, nice food, they are group, they in groups. I was alone, so I started to go with them" He saw them as the cool guys, and he decided to befriend them as he had no friends. They welcomed him into their circle of friends and invited him to join them for a meal. He felt that he needed to be like them, he needed to be one of the boys, so he

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started smoking, as this was a norm amongst his friends, one could even go so far as to say it was an expectation of the company he kept. He thought life was good, even though his friends may have done some things that were possibly criminal and which he did not like or agree with, but he felt that he was not involved in any of the criminal activities like his friends, and at least he was one of the boys.

One day at school before Unati started writing his exam, police officers had interrupted the exam as they came to collect one of the students for questioning. Unati stated: "The gang kills, I think it kills someone and they said it was me and it wasn't me. So the police they take me, I didn't write even that exam I was going to write".. Unati and the rest of the students were all intrigued as to who the suspect was. As they waited it was then that Unati name was called to the Principal's office, Unati was named as the suspect for murdering a rival gang member. Unati was then taken into Police custody for questioning. During the questions Unati was able to provide evidence that he did not murder the rival gang member. He was able to account for his whereabouts on the day of the murder and was able to prove his innocence. The Police officer then told Unati that it was, in fact, one of his "friends" who had given his name up. His gang members, his so-called friends, had turned their backs on him and wanted Unati to take the fall for their crimes. Unati was not charged as the Police officers found the culprits, but Unati needed to move away from Nyanga as it was no longer safe for him as the gang wanted to kill him for not lying for the gang and owning up to the crime he did not commit. Unati moved to Delft and stayed indoors. During his time in Delft he found he had a talent in writing poetry and wrote more and more. He discovered that he loved music and started rapping. Once things calmed down in Nyanga Unati moved back and joined the Peace team and started rapping and getting involved in the after school programmes. Unati stated: "So now now I started to write to write songs, so so I'm a singer now. A rap singer".

4.2.2   The Story of 1997

1997 was an ex-gang member who was involved in the after school programmes that Project Playground (PPG) offered in Langa. 1997 found himself having to be part of a gang, as it was the only way to survive in his community, he stated: "I didn't know what to do, I was confused, peer pressure just to be in this game here in the township". Originally the gangs were just groups of young boys playing games against one another that at the time resulted in fights and some bad blood, but as time progressed these games had evolved into a feud over territory and women.

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Once in the gang 1997 was taught to hurt people, but as the years progressed so did their weapons and methods of harming people. His other responsibilities were to sell drugs to make money for their gang. 1997 realised he was playing a dangerous game that could lead to him losing his life. He finally decided that he was going to leave the gang after getting stabbed in the stomach, a near-death experience which made him reassess his life choices. He stated: "I left the gang because, the time I was stabbed here in the stomach and I was almost killed with a gun, so I decided no, now it's time I step to being a gangster". The only easy way for him to get out of the gang was to be out of sight. 1997 stayed indoors for seven months, and after that time the gang lost interest in him, but he needed to be careful where he went, as he still had enemies.

He then decided to join Project Playground and get involved in their after-school sports programmes. During his time at Project Playground, he found that he had a natural ability in playing soccer, but he had difficulty managing his temper. The coach noticed that he was talented but cautioned him that if he did not learn to manage his temper, he would be kicked off the team. 1997 knew he wanted to be a good guy and as such needed to make a change in his attitude and behaviour as he did not want to lose his second chance. 1997 continues to live a clean life by playing soccer for a club and works at PPG as a soccer coach. His life outside the gang is summed up by this statement: "I'm very happy to be not a gangster. I can do whatever I want now. I'm no longer in those gang, so While I was in the gangs I didnt have too much things to do, only thing I was told to hurt people, stab people and do some stupid things, but now I am free I can do whatever I want to do".

4.2.3   The Story of Thabo

Thabo is one of the young men involved with the Peace Team located in Nyanga. As a young man Thabo got involved in gangs through his friends. He was influenced by his friends because he wanted what they had. He stated: "I was influenced by my friend, cause I see those guys, how they live. How they always comes with new cars in the community in the hood". He loved the life they lead, money, girls and cars, and decided to join. His friends then took him to a spot and gave him a screwdriver, and he started to steal cars. This then escalated to robbery, home invasions and murder. In the life of crime, one makes enemies, and with each criminal act, he began to make more and more enemies. His last criminal act was the last straw for him. His friends had planned the robbery of a cash-in-transit vehicle. During the robbery, two of his friends were shot, and the police caught one. He then decided he could no longer live this life of

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crime as it would only lead to death. He stated: " I say ok, I want to stop to be a gangster now because I'm gonna die".

Leaving the gang was not an easy task, as such he relocated to Delft and stayed there until things cooled down. He stated: "I have to change the place that I was staying, then I stay, I go and stay with my aunt. So it is how I win gangsterism". Thabo was able to move back to Nyanga when the last friend of the gang had died, and no one could come after him for leaving the gang.

Thabo then found his love for music and got involved in the Peace Team. He stated: "Ja, My music saved me". The Peace Team was able to assist him in getting into the studio to record some songs. Thabo then got involved with the Peace Team's programmes in the community and in the High Schools in the area and has been out of the gang for more than two years now.

4.2.4 The Story of Hashtag

Hashtag was never interested in gangs until a rival gang murdered a close friend of his who was part of a gang. Enraged by the loss of his friend Hashtag decided to join his late friend's gang to avenge his friend's death. He murdered the man who killed his friend, and just like that he was part of the gang. Hashtag became a fully-fledged member of the gang and not only killed the man who killed his friend but many other people. He started getting a reputation for robbing people; violence; home invasions and murder. His violent crimes and reputation finally caught up with him, and he was charged with attempted murder and murder. He stated: "Uh we were making a lot of murders, so whereby that I the police were looking after for us and I just uh get arrested and then I was sentenced 15 years for active murder".

Prison left Hashtag with a lot of free time, and during this time he did some introspection and found himself and God. Hashtag realised that in order to never end up in prison again, he would need to make some serious life changes. He came to understand that the gang was not for him as although they had promised him when he needed them the most they were nowhere to be found. He also came to realise that if he wanted changes to occur in his life, he would need to make them happen himself. Hashtag was released on parole, he stayed in contact with one of the programme facilitators who had run life skills groups with the prisoners. He got involved in the NGOs programmes to keep him busy and away from the gang. When he was not involved in the programmes, he was busy working selling fruit, trying to make an honest living even though

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it was not a lot of money, but it allowed him to make ends meet. When Hashtag was home in his community, he decided to cut ties with the gang. He did this by facing them and speaking to his friends who were affiliated to the same gang as him. He told them: "So it's whereby one of them you see, one of my friends and then ask me, what happened you see? And then I say I found myself not interested anymore with gang, cause I have to find myself and then after I find myself, I see lot of things that I have, uh I must done for myself, cause the time when I was in prison one of you haven't even attempt to to go visited me, so I take it that like uh you are not my really friends". . He then made them aware that he needed to move in a different direction, but because they were friends before the gang he would still help them, but he was no longer going to be involved in criminal and gang activity.

During his time back in the community Hashtag realised that no matter how much he tried there were always going to be community members who viewed him as a gang member and would always blame him when things went wrong. Hashtag did not want to be sucked back into gang life and decided that it would best for him to move away from his community and to start afresh where no one knew him, where he would not have to worry about rival gangs.

4.2.5   The story of Anele

All Anele wanted as a teenager was to be famous, to be known and to be respected. That's all, he wasn't sure as to how or what he would do, all he knew was that he needed to be known. Anele grew up without a father, and as a result he felt that the only way to prove he was a man and to gain the respect of others in his community was to join a gang. He joined the gang to be famous, to be known not only in his community but everywhere and to be known by the ladies. This is best described through his description in the interview: "the reason why I joined the gang uh because of, I want to be famous a man, ya like know by, by other places, ya. So I want to be famous in, in the ladies ya around in the community uhm. Somebody uhm gonna respect me when I'm a gang". Joining a gang came with its own set of risks, Anele got involved in criminal activities such as robbery, and he engaged in drugs.

In order to maintain his respect, he needed to fight off rival gangs and got involved in many fights, assaulting gang members and sometimes assault with a deadly weapon. Due to these actions he also found himself on the receiving end of the violence by also being attacked by rival gangs . One night Anele was involved in a fight that resulted in him being stabbed seven

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times. During the time he was recovering his mother begged him to leave the gang as it was too dangerous and she did not want to lose her only son, she wanted him to have a better life.

But Anele would not listen, he continued with his gang involvement until his grandmother had a stroke. When sitting in the hospital waiting to hear if his grandmother would be okay, Anele sat there and reflected on his life and the decisions he had made, during this time he came to realise the real price of his actions and decided that a change needed to be made. He realised that he needed to do more with his life, more than just chasing girls and robbing people. He needed to do something positive with his life, if not for himself then for his family. He stated: "I chose to leave a gang was because of my family, ya. Cos they were stressing lot of the time like when I'm doing a crazy uh thing, like robbing people or chasing people or stabbing my, my enemy". He then chose to move away from Nyanga and went to live in Delft, as he knew the gang members of the gang he was affiliated to would not accept or tolerate him leaving the gang. He stayed away for a year, long enough for his gang to lose interest in him and long enough for the rival gangs to forget about him. In his time away, he spent a lot of time at home and made new friends who were not involved in gang activities. He found his passion for music and poetry, he started writing poems and learnt how to mix music. When enough time passed, he moved back to Nyanga and got involved with the music activities at the Centre in Nyanga and started DJ-ing at parties. He stated: "I'm changing now ya, cos erm I'm not the person that I was before ya cos I'm doing better things".

4.2.6 The story of Choice

Choice was born to parents who did not want him. His mother's family raised him as both his mother and father had abandoned him. He grew up feeling as though he was an outsider and longed for a family who loved and cared for him. As a teenager Choice then decided to join a gang. He joined because he wanted to be part of something, he wanted to belong to a family. He stated: "the gang was sort of a like an.... an a escaping sort for me. Where I know I can gain power and I can be respected back". In the gang they took care of each other, they wore nice clothes, drove nice cars and always had beautiful women around them.

Life was going well for him for a while, but the life of a gangster was not easy, Choice started losing more and more friends. Finally, his actions caught up to him, and he was sent to prison. In prison, he learnt that he was to become a father. This changed Choice's perspective on life and

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the gang. He was to have an actual family, and this was exciting for him. He stated: "I told myself over and over that I have got a son I've got a son I was proud about that". He was to become a father, but what kind of father was he going to be? Was he going to be like his father and be absent, or was he going to be the father that he always wished he had? This was one of the pivotal points in Choice's life, he realised that there was no way that he could be a good father and still be a gangster, he would need to leave the gang in order to be a respectable role model for his son. Choice traded one family for another.

Choice faced many struggles in his journey to leave the gang and become a better man, one being the struggle of power because when you leave the gang, you need to leave your power behind too. The struggle for him was his past life, and past sins still followed him, where rival gang members did not care that he was no longer out of the gang, they still wanted to kill him. He also struggled immensely with people, especially those in his community, doubting him and bringing him down. He stated: "They still believe any time anywhere anyhow I can still do you know what gangsters do or maybe something bad you know".

Choice had been out of the gang for some time while he was in prison, and he completed his time. When he was released on probation, he realised he needed support to sustain his disengagement from the gang by getting involved in prosocial programmes. These programmes assisted in facilitating his sustained disengagement from the gang through different activities and skills development. Choice found that he had a talent for dancing and got involved in other NGO programmes to keep youth from risky activities. He stated: "I form a group around some other guys where we can be able to do gumboots dancing, amongst those guys who were in these uh uh facilities rehabilitation, so so so activities in fact I will say kinda play a major role in in my in my trannsfo....transformation". Choice was employed part time with the NGO facilitating programmes to assist young people at risk.

4.2.7   The story of Themba

Themba just wanted to be respected, he wanted to be treated like a man. Themba's father died when he was seven years old, and like so many young people, he grew up with a single mother. When Themba was in grade nine he decided to join a gang. He did this partly because if he was not in a gang, his peers would view him as less and as a result, he would not be respected. If he was not respected, he would be open to disrespect from others or even physical attack. Themba

stated: "I saw one of these guys bullying and robbing us at school and when we are not in gang we are not gonna be respected even other students around us". The older boys at the school that Themba attended would bully the younger boys and would call them names such as 'Lytie' (little one) or 'Moffie' (lady boy). So to protect himself as well as to gain respect he decided to start spending time with some of the boys who were in gangs. The boys invited him to smoke with them, and the boys then decided he was cool and he got to join them. He would eat with them and hang out with them in and out of school.

One day a fight broke out, and the gang ran to fight, Themba ran with them and saw how his friends pulled out their knives to stab the rival gang. He joined them by throwing rocks, Themba found the experience exhilarating and enjoyed fighting. The next day after the fight when they went to school, everything changed for him, as the other students feared him and he felt powerful. When he wanted things from the other students, he would just take them, because the other students knew that it was not wise to deny Themba, as there would be consequences. "I see you got something nice to see (clicking sound) I, I, I took it er took it then when you come back to me like ah you come maybe you came ah ah you report me to the principal or school a teacher then I come back to you and say after school I will deal with you and then I make sure before the school like after the school end I, I, I will be waiting for you outside".

Themba and his crew were living the life smoking drugs, meeting new girls and stealing things. One day they came up against a gang that was better equipped than they were. They thought they were just fighting a normal township gang until they started fighting and found out that they were not only outnumbered but also out-gunned. Themba was shot three times and then decided that the gang life was no longer for him. He had lost friends, and the gang life was getting old for him, so he looked for help by attending programmes for youth at risk that an NGO in the area was facilitating. He learnt skills in drama and music, and he used them to better himself. He stated: "I was doing acting in school and music so I just like think this is an opportunity and I took it to go back to what I was doing so I started joining them and ask the facilitators how can I join drama". He has been out of the gang for some time now and is involved in programmes to help young people to stay out of gangs.

4.2.8 The story of Zola

Zola, a young man from Nyanga, got involved in gangs for many different reasons. His first reason was that in Nyanga, his hometown, it is part of the culture for a young Black man to be part of the gang. The second reason was to be cool. He felt that his image was everything, and if he wanted to be seen as the "cool" guy, he would need to be part of the gang. He stated: because I, I wanted to, to fit in, into the community because gangsterism is something that's happening in the community. It's like a culture, and I wanted to be part of that culture, and secondly I just wanted to be cool in a sense". After a while the gang life was no longer entertaining as it had previously been, Zola's friends were becoming few as they were either getting killed or being sent to prison and some even sentenced to life in prison. This was his turning point, he was able to see that there is no future in being a gangster and decided the best thing for him and his future would be to leave the gang and start focusing on viable options for his future. He stated: "seeing one of our colleagues in gangsterism being killed and urm being arrested and sentenced to life sentences I think one has to really consider the consequences of gang involvement".

To make the gang understand that he was no longer part of them he stopped spending time with them, this meant staying away from them when they were robbing people or when they were fighting, or even when they were hanging out and having fun. He chose to show his lack of interest for the gang by not spending any time with them. He then later got involved in prosocial organizations such as NGO's and volunteered for a while and learnt from them. He did this as he knew he needed to keep busy to prevent him from engaging in risky behaviour. He stated: "I got involved in pro-social organisations such as Nickrow, realistic you see to make sure I engage in kind of volunteer in, in programs that are happening in the community you see and focus more on finding, finding a goal finding a vision you see that I will work on build on so I had to make sure I don't stay idle".

Over time Zola won back the support of his community and has become a respectable member of society, to the extent that he had arranged and facilitated marches against burglary and has become very involved in his community. Zola has started his own business and has been helping other young men who wanted to disengage from their gangs.

4.2.9   The Story of Love

When Love was a young boy, he wo3uld play fight with his friends and some of the other boys from the surrounding areas of their community. It was harmless and innocent until their play fighting yielded real wounds and real rivalries. As they grew older the fights became more serious and also the feud amongst them, and this once innocent play became territorial battles. They became a serious gang, robbing people and killing rival gangs. Love was entrenched in the gang, and as a result of the crimes he had committed due to gang involvement, he was arrested and sent to prison for eight months. He stated: "One person died to us, and we go again and kill three persons to them and then get arrested stay in jail".

While serving his sentence, he was left with much time to think, he did a lot of soul searching and realised that the gang life was a waste of time and his potential. He decided that once he was out of prison, he would be done with the gang forever. When he got out, he was good on his word and distanced himself from the gang, he stayed at home and would only go out to go to the gym and to play soccer. He eventually had to confront the gang as they all lived in the same area, and he told them that he was no longer interested. The gang mocked him and told him he was not a man, but that did not deter him from his decision. He stated: "You know they say you're a sell-out, you know stuff...they swearing you". He decided to get involved in an NGO programme for young men who want to leave the gang and he specifically got involved in their soccer programme. He continued playing soccer and his coach saw potential in him enough to get him invited to the Vodacom team. When he was not playing soccer, he was involved in the gang intervention programme. Assisting young people to disengage from gangs and he also did talks with young people to encourage them that there is life after gangs and that one does not need to be in a gang to have respect or to be a man. He stated: "I was in the Grey Corner helping children to get out of the gang, from the Grey Corner not to be a gangsters, and I still have those children here. They are a walking here, they come here to Grey Corner. They were gangster, and I helped them, they are here now. They are not gangsters anymore".

4.2.10   The story of Brad

Brad got into the gang because of a long feud between two areas of the location he was from. For as long as Brad knew there had been a feud between these two areas in the location he lived in, one being Black City and the other being White City. Brad told a story of this feud going back at least three generations, where they would fight over their territory. No one knows how this

feud began, all they knew was that they didn't like each other. Brad got involved in the gang in his location. He did so because his brother was in it and so were his cousins and their uncle before them. It was almost expected for Brad to join, at the age of twelve he started with his initiation into the gang his family was affiliated to. As he got older he became more involved, from throwing stones at rival gangs, his gang involvement escalated to fistfights, then to stabbing resulting in serious injuries and death.

After a while, Brad realised this was no longer a way to live. One evening of fighting, Brad and his friend were running home, his friend suddenly collapsed and died in his arms. He explains his experience in this quote: "you call those pain and some of the times you got some trauma maybe your friend got stabbed in a fight and then like he tries to run away and then sudden he falls on the way home. And then when you try to help and then he dies from the "sport/ spot" so from those traumas from those pains you started to realise uhm why did I started to be a gangster first of all". He decided that there needed to be more to life than just killing each other. The gang does not like people leaving, as such the best easiest way to disengage was for Brad to leave, he moved away for a time and concentrated on his schooling and on playing soccer.

When Brad would come home for a visit he didn't stay long as he did not want to engage with his ex-gang members, eventually, he met with his old crew and made excuses for his whereabouts. Whenever he came home and saw them, he would make himself unavailable, until one day they figured out that Brad no longer wanted to be part of the gang anymore. He stated: "started to realise... that's not the life to live when you are a normal person because you don't have any future...you don't have any future in a gangsterism life. Because you don't know when you're gonna die and stuff". He was called many different names and told that he is not a man for stepping away. They would still come around to tell him when a friend was killed, even though he was enraged by the death of a friend, he still chose not to go back because he knew it would be a trap, even though the ex-gang members made convincing arguments. He knew at the end of the day that it would be the same thing over and over, they kill one we kill two, they kill three, it's a scoreboard that will go on till everyone dies or gets bored. Brad decided to get involved with an NGO in his community, helping youth at risk stay out of trouble and motivating those in gangs to get out. He stated: "I became involved in an organisation that deals with children for afternoon based care". He is also busy with his tertiary studies in computer science.

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4.3   Themes and categories

Five themes emerged from the analysis of the data: Theme 1: The reason why; Theme 2: The price of gang life … the fine print; Theme 3: Time to get out … I didn't sign up for this; Theme 4: Getting out and staying out; and Theme 5: The price of my freedom. The themes and their related categories are presented in Figure 4.1 below.

The reason why	Acceptance I want what they have The perks of being in a gang The need for recognition… "I wanna be famous" I did it because of my friends
The price of gang life…the fine print	To be one of us you need to … The disadvantages of being in a gang
Time to get out…I didn't sign up for this	Turning point I need to get out
Getting out and staying out	Out of sight out of mind Positive influences … I need a new crew Engagement in new occupation
The price of my freedom	The price of leaving the gang I can't go there anymore I'm free but I'm not free Relationship with the gang now, my brothers have become my enemies Community perception…. I need to build my reputation

Figure 4.1: Overview of themes and categories

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4.3.1   Theme one: "The reason why"

The first theme "The reason why" focuses on the period before initiation into the gang, and the aim of this is to lay the foundation in understanding why the participants joined the gang, as well as to create an understanding for the reader as to what the experience was like to become part of the gang.

In the period before initiation, many important concepts have emerged from the analysis. These include the concepts of why the participants joined the gang, and what made gang life so appealing to them, even though the participants knew that being involved in gangs included engagement in risky and criminal activity. The five categories that will be discussed are: *(1) Acceptance; (2) I want what they have; (3) The perks of being in a gang; (4) The need for recognition… "I wanna be famous" and (5) I did it because of my friends.* An overview of the theme and related categories is presented in Figure 4.2 below.
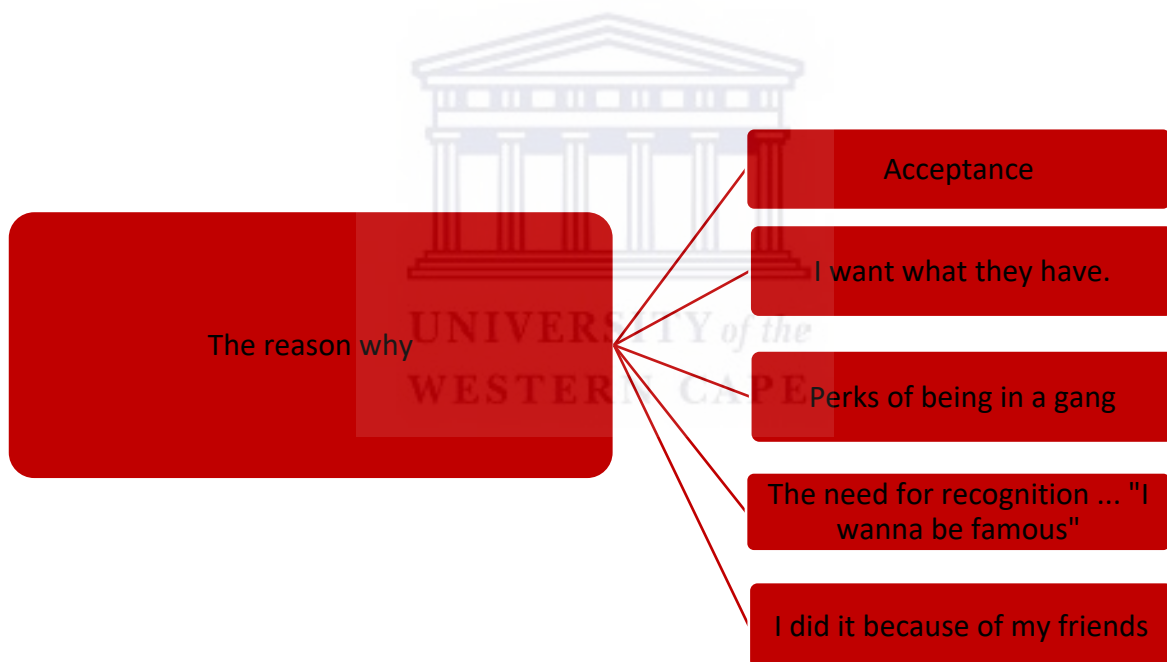

Figure 4.2: Overview of theme 1 and related categories

4.3.1.1 Acceptance

The first reason for joining the gang was that of "acceptance". The participants felt that they needed to be accepted by their peers. They needed to do so in order to be recognised, even if acceptance or recognition was only obtained through engaging in anti-social activities. Participants wanted to be more than individuals, they wanted to connect to the sense of belonging - belonging to an entity that was bigger than they were as individuals. In the townships that the participants were from, it is expected that one joins a gang in order to survive and also to be considered 'cool'. Gang life was part and parcel of the township life.

In the following quote, the participant states that being in a gang is considered a norm in his community, and if he wanted to be accepted and wanted to be recognised he needed to be part of a gang, because with gang membership comes status and its own set of privileges.

> *"I wanted to, to fit in, into the community because gangsterism is something that's happening in the community. It's like a culture and I wanted to be part of that culture and secondly I just wanted to be cool in a sense."*   *(Zola)*

4.3.1.2 I want what they have

The second category in this theme was the desire and the need to have what the gangsters had: *I want what they have … I want their life*. In this category, the participants were drawn to the flashy lifestyle the gangsters had. They were drawn to the money, the girls, the substances and the cars that the gangsters of their community possessed. These things spoke to the physical and immediate tangible needs that some of the participants were not able to access themselves due to financial constraints or physical access.

In the following quote, the participant discuss being drawn to the material wealth that the gangsters possess, and the benefits that are associated with having those things. For these young men cars were not just appealing but also a sign of status and power, having a new flashy car would make the participant feel important and give him access to other things, like women and the respect of other men in his community.

> *"I see those guys, how they live. How they always comes with new cars in the community in the hood."*   *(Thabo)*

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The participant describes the advantages that gang members have open to them. Whatever they want is available to them, and he also expressed his experience of the power that came with being a gang member and how that power made him feel.

> *"the gang everything is just out there, you know, my smoke will make me high, my power to the gang will make me feel special, you know."*   *(Choice)*

The participant explores the perks of being in a gang. He discusses being able to take from others without repercussions. He knows that if he gets caught, he could just intimidate the person, or he could just assault them because he has the power to do this.

> *"if er I see you got something nice to see (clicking sound) I, I, I took it er took it then when you come back to me like ah you come maybe you came ah ah you report me to the principal or school a teacher. Then I come back to you and say after school I will deal with you. And then I make sure before the school like after the school end I, I, I will be waiting for you outside just to make sure other students to see how am I powerful to you how like I'm gonna er take out my knife to say beat you up"*   *(Themba)*

The participants felt that belonging to a gang enables them to be providers. The participant specifically speaks about being able to provide for himself the things he wanted, but also the thing he wanted. Still, he couldn't get as his family was either not able to get him or just chose not to provide for him, as such he was now able to provide these things for himself as a result of being a gang member.

> *"The things in the gang that we do … that makes money and will buy me the thing that I wanted to buy that my family didn't buy me."*   *(Choice)*

Participants felt that they could make big money quickly. This is important to keep in mind when looking at the circumstances the participants come from. They come from impoverished communities, where service delivery is slow, and availability of resources to improve one's self is scarce. Overcrowding of classrooms and even sometimes availability of, and access to, quality education services are nowhere to be found, as such the participants are left at a disadvantage when it comes to higher education and the open labour markets.

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4.3.1.3 Perks of being in a gang

In better understanding the reason for entering into the gang life, this category will take a deeper look at the benefits attached to gang involvement. What emerged were not only the reason for joining the gang (pull factors), but these benefits also became part of the reason the participants stayed as long as they did in the gang. When coming from an impoverished community where money is not always available to buy essentials, let alone luxuries, the ability to eat nice things was very appealing to the participants. The tangible elements were not the only reasons these young men stayed in the gang. Some found themselves addicted to the intangible aspects that could only be found in the gang, such as the aspect of power. These intangible concepts such as power, worth, and a sense of purpose, made some participants want to not only actively engage but rise in influence and potential.

For this participant, he found that being able to have access not just to food that would sustain him, but "nice food", not only drew him to the gang but made him want to stay in it.

> *"like they always eat nice food, nice food, they are group, they in groups."*   *(Unati)*

Yet again, poverty is an underlying factor to the participants wanting to stay in the gang. In this quote, the participant looks at the important concept of being able to earn his own income to provide for his family. He finds it to be necessary to not only be able to provide for himself but also his family, and he understands the consequences of his action if it means being able to provide for his family.

> *"I needed to do those things, so that I could put something on my family and put some bread on the table."*   *(1997)*

The concept of power comes up but in a different manner. In this instance the concept of power is linked to that of being a man. Being able to feel invincible, the feeling that he can't be told or the idea that he is no longer a boy, he no longer has to ask for permission.This is closely linked with the concept of fear, people feared him, and as a result, would not dare question him or his actions in fear of retaliation. He was feared, and as a result, he had the freedom of movement because he had made a name for himself through his ruthless actions. He was no longer the young boy who was being robbed or beaten up. He now had the power.

4.3.1.4 The need for recognition...”I wanna be famous”

This category introduces and discusses the concept of recognition, acknowledgement and affirmation. This seemed to be vital for the participants as being a gangster meant people knew who they were, people feared them and "recognised" them, some people in their community even wanted to be them or just be around them. The participants considered themselves as important because they were in a gang. When comparing the participants to their economic environment of poverty, where access to basic human needs is scarcely available, where people are murdered and not a word is mentioned in the media, where their memory becomes nothing but a statistic, participants found the need to make their mark and be respected, feared, and identified as a formidable force.

The participant in the following quote brings up a new way of understanding gang involvement as an escape. This is an interesting concept when considering the impoverished community the participant comes from. In his gang in his community he is viewed as rich and powerful, but when compared to the greater Cape Town he's not recognised at all, no one outside of his community is going to respect him for his actions as a gangster. So the idea of escaping into the illusion of power created by the community he lives in makes him feel powerful and recognised.

> *"the gang was sort of a like an.... an escape for me. Where I know I can gain power and I can be respected back."* *(Choice)*

One of the concepts that came up many times and drew the participants into the gangs, is that of respect. In this quote the participant looks at being respected but also in a sense feared. The advantage of being in the gang was that the people in his community knew who he was, they knew what he was capable of, and as a result, they dared not disrespect him or stop him.

> *"Other people must respect for me, even though I walk there, they know how Hashtag is walking there, yet he's the man. He's doing his thing, so we respect them."* *(Hashtag)*

In this quote, the participant brings up an interesting topic of being acknowledged but also of power and respect. He wants to be viewed by his community and enemies as being such a

formidable force that even white men who have money, influence and status would fear him. It also brings up an interesting view on power and race, the difference between robbing his own people in their community and then robbing and murdering white people. This was perceived to make them more powerful.

"If you are a gangster you need to be that guy that even if the white person come to your house you are able to just kill and destroy everything, then they will respect you"   *(1997)*

In this quote, the participant brings about the idea that the only way to be truly respected and known in the community, is through engagement in gangs. Respect is somehow closely related with fear and engagement in antisocial behaviour. The participant joined the gang because he wanted to be respected, he wanted to be known by others and wanted to be revered. The need for recognition and affirmation seemed very important for the participants. The participants also explores the idea that he doesn't care , but he is assured that someone will respect him for being a gangster. Women in his community would want him or be attracted to him because of his affiliation to the gang.

> *"I want to be famous a man , ya like know by, by other places, ya. So I want to be famous in, in the ladies ya around in the community uhm. Somebody uhm gonna respect me when I'm in a gang."*   *(Anele)*

In the next quote the participant brings up the idea again of the connection or the confusion between the concept of respect and the concept of fear. The other concept that surfaces is the idea that respect and recognition can only be ascertained through the antisocial act of gang involvement, it seems to relate to the idea that one is only considered popular or accepted if one engages in risky or self-destructive occupations such as smoking; drinking; unprotected sex or engagement in drugs. Participants felt that one is not respected and not viewed as powerful if one engages in prosocial occupations.

> *"my class mate he is not gonna respect me because I, I'm not involved in gangsterism"*
> *(Themba)*

This quote describes the idea that in the township it is a natural occurrence, gangs are a norm, they are a natural expectation. If young men want to be respected in the township, they would

need to be affiliated to a gang. Without it (gang affiliation) they are not going to be respected because the concept of being a man in the township is attached to gang affiliation.

"we respect you in our township when you are involved in gangsterism"   (Themba)

4.3.1.5 I did it because of my friends

The next section of initiation and gang involvement looks at the concept of influence of friends or relationship and ties with friends resulting in gang initiation as well as gang involvement.

In the next quote, the participant brings across the interesting relationship between friends and the close ties. The participant was never involved previously in gangs before losing his friend, who died in a gang fight. The only thing that drew him to the gang was the loss of his friend and the need for justice and revenge. Nyanga is the murder capital of South Africa, as a result, many murders go unsolved, as by informing on the gang could cause one to have a target on their own back. As a result, in order for justice to be served, the only way for it to occur efficiently would be to take the law into your own hands, and in turn, sealing one's fate as a gangster.

"my big buddy, cause we were sharing a lot and he died and after his death. I have to take the revenge. So it's how I joined the gang."   (Hashtag)

4.3.2 Theme two: The price of gang life … the fine print

The participants explained that they entered into gangs with the idea of being feared; making lots of money or being a ladies' man, but what the participants did not take into consideration was the price of gang involvement. The theme *The price of gang life…the fine print* focuses on the occupations the participants needed to engage in in order to be considered a gangster, as well as their performance in these roles. The theme gets expanded by exploring the disadvantages the participants experience by being labelled a gangster. This theme aims to understand their lived experience. These experiences later become part of their push factors that push them out of gang involvement. The categories that will be discussed are: *(1) To be one of us you need to… and (2) The disadvantages of being in a gang.* An overview of the theme and related categories is presented in Figure 4.3 below.
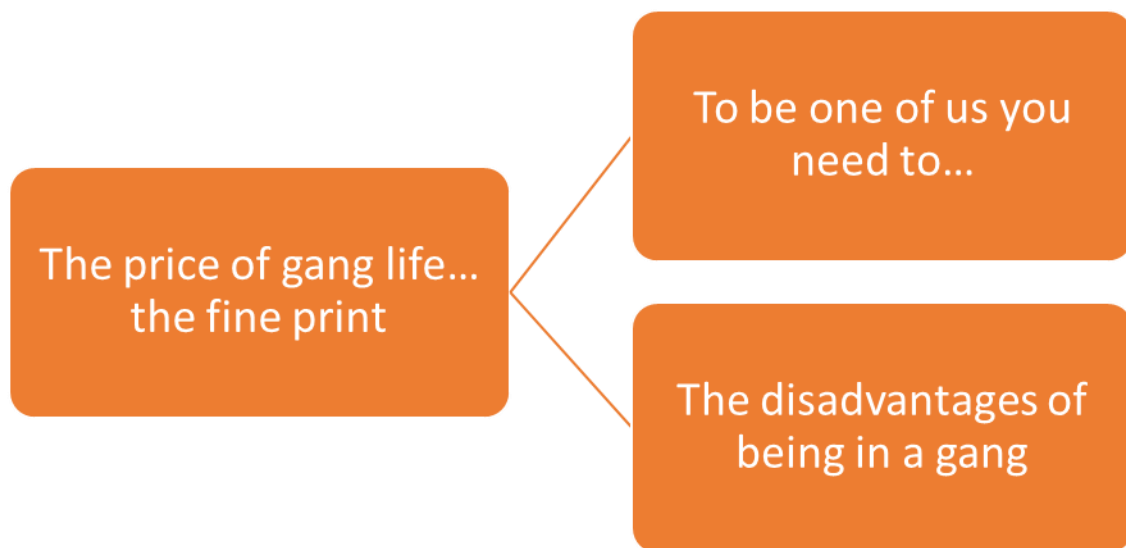
Figure 4.3: Overview of theme 2 and related categories

4.3.2.1 To be one of us you need to…

This category explores what criteria participants needed to meet in order to be accepted by the gang. This category discusses the expectation of other gang members on the participants, as well as the roles the participants were expected to fulfil. These often entailed engagement in risky behaviour and activities.

In order to be accepted by the other gang members, the participants needed to engage in drugs or substance use. For the participants, drug use was a normal part of gang culture, a way of socialising and also a coping mechanism. By engaging in drug use, the participant in the quote below would show the other gang members that the he was a "man". As such denying the gang's request to engage in drug use would make the participant look weak and make him look like a "lytie" (a child) and not like a "Mdotha" (a man).

> *"to join us you must smoke and I started to smoke."*   *(Unati)*

Gang membership consists of many diverse roles, one specific role was engaging in criminal activity and violence. In this quote, the participant was required to sell drugs at a young age, and he was also required to assault others. The participant reflects on the experience of selling drugs, it was considered to be part of his duties as a gang member and also was the source of his income,

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but in hindsight he realises how much he resents what he had to do (sell drugs). The roles he needed to fulfil for the gang were not always things he agreed with and went against his own moral compass. Nonetheless, these roles still needed to be fulfilled, or he would have to face the consequences for non-compliance

> *"I sell drugs at the age of thirteen, it's not good thing. So I did some things that I really love and others I didn't love them because I sold drugs at a young age. Not good."*

> *(1997)*

The next quote looks at the expectation of criminal activity, specifically that of taking life. It was expected of the participants not just to engage in criminal activity or to engage in physical violence, but also to show no mercy. The participant needed to be hard, to leave his own value system behind and to dedicate himself to the gang, regardless of the consequences that may occur.

> *"Because of the bad things I was doing, I was doing. I thought like eh now I'm drowning now. I'm drowning, because the things that we was doing, was doing housebreaking, robbing that you know when you in the street. Get inside the house and then you take the money and then you kill."*   *(Thabo)*

In this quote, the participant discusses the code of the gang. The member has to do what the gang orders them to do, even if the order goes against his own morals or values. The participant was not comfortable with causing physical harm to people and found it stupid or a waste of time. Still, it was expected of the participant to fulfil his roles as gangster even if it conflicted with his other purposes and beliefs.

> *"I was told to hurt people, stab people and do some stupid things"*   *(1997)*

4.3.2.2 Disadvantages of being in a gang

The next section of the theme *The price of gang life…the fine print* explores the disadvantages the participants experienced while being part of the gang. The "brotherhood" and the "family" that was promised when entering the gang started to fade, as participants realised the truth that

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gang life presented with its own downfalls and expectations. In this category, the focus is on these expectations and the effect it had on the participants and the mind shift they experienced, which made them question their affiliation and loyalty to the gang.

In this quote, the participant shows the price of being part of the gang. It is not uncommon for a less embedded gang member to take the fall for a higher-ranking gang member's actions. As a result, the participant was caught for a crime he did not commit and a crime (murder) that came with a severe consequence.

"The gang kills, I think it kills someone and they said it was me and it wasn't me."

(Unati)

The next disadvantage of being in a gang that was evident was the issue of rival gangs, and the effects of gang affiliation. By affiliating to a gang, the participant experiences some limitations. He was not seen as an individual but as the gang, therefore if a rival gang saw him in their territory he would be vulnerable to attack and assault even if he had done none of them harm. Not because of his action but because of the actions of his gang. He would be painted with the same brush as his gang, he was no longer an individual, his name was lost, his new name was that of his gang.

"the gangs if they saw me they want me, they want to stab me because I…. I the member of another gang."   *(Unati)*

This part of gang life is generally minimised in the sense that gang members talk about it in glorious terms such as they "cheated death", or that they are "invincible". Their experience of being assaulted, or their fear when being assaulted was never discussed. Their accounts of their experience of battle with rival gangs never included the fear they may have experienced when they were stabbed. In this category, these near-death experiences and the fear they felt during this process become the turning point for many of the participants. The idea that they might die and that they have squandered their lives caused many of the participants to question their decision for joining, and also questions their loyalty to the gang (as will be seen in the next theme).

Participants spoke of the physical violence that is caused by gang affiliation. This participant was stabbed and almost shot.

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"I was stabbed here in the stomach and I was almost killed with a gun"

(1997)

In this quote, the participant was caught in the crossfires of his gang and a rival gang. The assault caused him to question his loyalty to the gang, as well as whether it was still a meaningful role. He was aware that his actions in the gang could have negative consequences on himself and others, and this caused an internal conflict or disruption for him. This disadvantage was one of the factors pushing him out of the gang.

"Because of the bad things I was doing, I was doing. I thought like eh now I'm drowning now."

(Thando)

In this quote, the participant connects with an important aspect of occupational engagement. Being a gang member affects his ability to engage in normal occupations and his engagement in his role. A task related to his role as a son or a father was to buy electricity. Still, now he was unable to fulfil that role because rival gangs might attack him as the only nearby place to buy electricity might be in rival gang's territory. The participant's quote also delves into occupational areas or activities that he can't fulfil anymore such as travelling, it was unsafe for him just to take a taxi, as by doing so he might make himself susceptible to an attack from a rival gang.

"Ya...When I was in the gang, I cannot even go and buy electricity for home. Cannot go to the station, transport, cannot go to catch a taxi to go to Town, Mowbray you see."

(Love)

In this quote, the participant describes an instance where he felt a sense of fear as he describes it as the feeling of being hunted. He constantly needed to look over his shoulder as it could be possible that he might be attacked. He described a sense of needing to always be on his guard. A sense of never being able to walk freely because of his past gang affiliation. Even without committing any crime or retaliating against a rival gang, just by bearing the name of his ex- gang.

"if you living a life of gangster, you living a life of being hunted. You see? You don't walk freely, when you walking you must look. Right and left, back you see? You know which grounds you must walk, you know on which grounds you not walking you see?"

(Hashtag)

4.3.3 Theme three: Time to get out…I didn't sign up for this

As explained in theme 2, for all participants there came a time when they realised they no longer wanted to align themselves with the gang. The expectations of being part of the gang far outweighed what the participants were able to give or bear responsibility for. This theme focuses on the turning points that lead the participants to realise they no longer wanted to be affiliated with the gang and also their need to get out and the urgency that came with it. The two categories that will be discussed are: *(1) Turning point and (2) I need to get out.* An overview of the theme and related categories is presented in Figure 4.4 below.
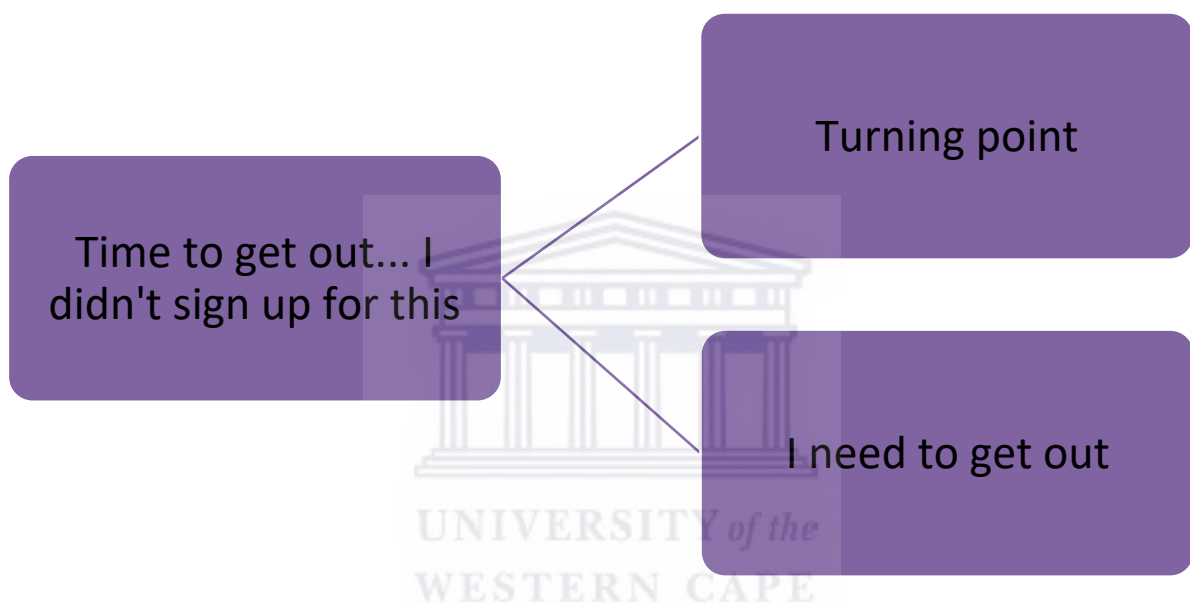
Figure 4.4: Overview of theme 3 and related categories

4.3.3.1 Turning point

This category characterises the participants' realisation that the gang was no longer suitable for them. The participants were at the point of re-evaluating their position in the gang. This was as a result of experiencing a turning point or gang life was just no longer a viable option for them, the risks far outweighed the benefits of being in the gang, disengagement was not just inevitable but essential for their survival.

In this next quote, the participant is aware that if he continues to engage in the gang and the occupations that are associated with gang involvement, that he will eventually be killed. He was

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able to connect with the true risks attached to gang involvement and realised that he does not want to pay that price anymore.

"I want to stop to be a gangster now, because I'm gonna die." (Thabo)

The participant was sentenced to prison time for a crime he committed while engaging in gang activities. During his stay in prison, he finally realised the price he paid with regards to joining the gang. In this time, he also realised that the role of being a gangster was no longer as meaningful to him anymore.

"time I was in prison I have made my mind what I'm going to do. Now I'm out! So what is the, what's the point now." (Hashtag)

This quote encapsulates the participant's traumatic experience of his friend dying in his arms after coming home from a fight they had with a rival gang. The participant realises the seriousness of gang involvement, the seriousness of his actions, and he experiences the pain of losing his friend, in this the true price of gang involvement is seen in one's life. Through this experience, he questions his loyalty to the gang and whether it was truly worth the trauma he experiences or even his life. This became his turning point as he lost someone who was more important to him then the gang as a whole.

"he falls on the way home. And then when you try to help and then he dies on the "spot" so from those traumas from those pains you started to realise uhm why did I start to be a gangster first of all?"

(Brad)

The participant experiences for the first time the effects of his gang involvement on his family. The participant was no longer present in his family and was more loyal to the gang than his own biological family. He neglected his role as a son, brother, and grandson. Only through the experience of almost losing his grandmother, did he realise the effect of gang involvement had on his ability to fulfil his other meaningful roles. This experience made him question his role as a gang member and the importance thereof. He realises that this occupation had serious consequences, and there were better prosocial occupations he could rather engage in.

"my grandmother, apparently uh got a stroke ya so that's why I sit when I'm alone I sit and then think about uh like what I want to be in life ya. So that why I was thinking of uh I was gonna leave the gang ya, and do better things for my family"

(Anele)

In this quote, the participant finds out that he is to be a father, and as a result, he has new responsibilities and a new role that is more meaningful to him than the gang. There are now people who are dependent on him, and as a result, he has a newfound purpose and responsibilities.

"I have impregnated, impregnated a woman and and that give me so... source of you know responsibility."

(Choice)

The participant reflects on how his actions no longer only affected him, his actions now affected his family or other, this became a serious turning point as he was affecting the lives of others by his affiliation to the gang, and thus he needed to get out, not just for himself but for the safety of his family

"if those guys they don't get you they shoot, they shoot whatever they get from, from your home, maybe my sister is busy cooking they are, they came looking for me I'm not here and they shoot they shoot the sister."

(Themba)

4.3.3.2 I need to get out

In this next category, participants realise that they could no longer engage in the gang, it was no longer a viable option for them, and as a result, they needed to leave the gang. They had reached a turning point, and they had reached their final straw.

At this point, in the next quote, the participant was traumatised by all the friends he had lost due to gang violence. He had lost enough friends through gang violence to realise that gang involvement came at a very high cost, a cost that he was no longer interested in paying.

"So that's where we realised that we must stop now. Because you come again and you have to bury another guy tired of that bury.....bury....burying.....burying"

(Love)

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The participant realised in this quote that the gang is no longer the lifestyle he wants to lead. As a result, he starts "stepping back", he began to be less present in the gang, and be less involved in order to slowly start disengaging from the gang to change his life.

"I started to step back because I.. I wanted to change uh... my life."   (Brad)

In this quote, the participant no longer finds the gang lifestyle appealing as he once did when he started engaging. As a result, he wanted out of the gang. The quote speaks about being sick and tired, as though he had reached his limit with regards to expectation or duties he had to fulfil as part of being a gangster or having to deal with the consequence of being a gang member.

"I said I am sick and tired of being a gangster now guys."   (Thabo)

4.3.4 Theme four: Getting out and staying out

In this theme, the process of disengagement that the participants had experienced is described. The theme focused on the actions that took place in order for the participants to disengage from the gang. This theme also discusses what participants did to sustain their disengagement. The three categories that are discussed are: (1) *Out of sight out of mind; (2) Positive influences….I need a new crew; and (3) Engagement in new meaningful occupations…..my passion saved me.* An overview of the theme and related categories are presented in Figure 4.5 below.
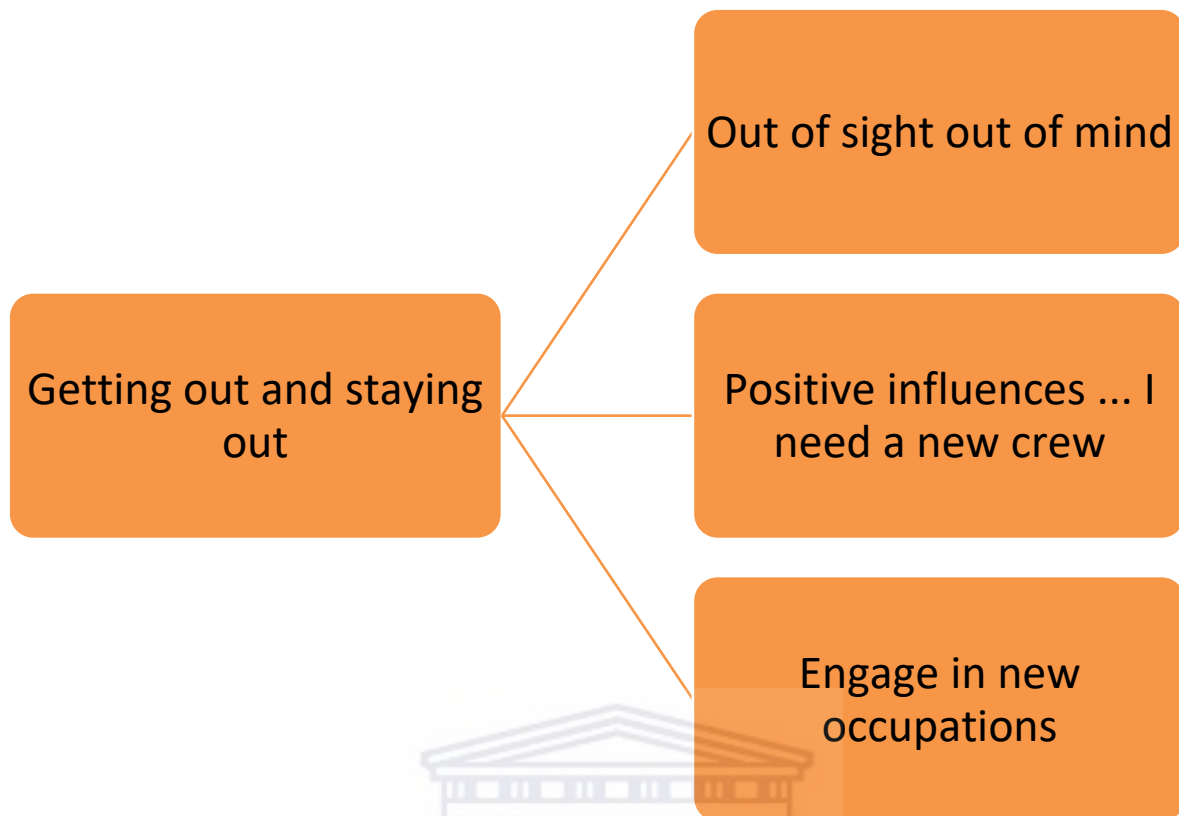
4.3.4.1 Out of sight…out of mind

During the period of disengagement, the participants had to leave the gang. The most common approach in disengagement that was found was participants physically leaving their communities. This went on for months on end to get away from the gangs. By distancing themselves from the gang they hoped to stay away long enough for the gang to forget about them. Once enough time had passed, it would be safe for them to return home. By that time the gangs would have more pressing matters to deal with than the participant's return to the community.

In this quote, the participant moved far away from the gang. Far enough for them not to find him, but he also stayed away long enough for the gang to lose interest in pursuing him. By the time he returned, the gang had no interest in him anymore, and it was safe for him to move back to his community.

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"Yes I did move to Delft. So I came back to Nyanga, so when I see there is nothing happening anymore now."　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*(Unati)*

In this quote the participant made sure not to tell anyone, he just disappeared and moved away. He did this so that he wouldn't be tracked. He was able to gain his fresh start without any factors from his past to restrict him or to distract him from his new occupational engagement.

"That's the problem so you have to just disappear to quiet"　　　　　　*(Themba)*

The participant was forced to leave home, and his family as he was not only wanted by rival gangs but also law enforcement, as such the only way to disengage was to leave and hide out until enough time had passed and it was safe for him to return.

"I was most wanted in the township by the police you see then I had to had to leave home, leave my family and had to go in exile like that to go and hide out"　　　　*(Zola)*

4.3.4.2 Positive influences…I need a new crew

In order for the participants to sustain their disengagement they required to engage with a "new crew" or group of friends, as by engaging with the same friends from the gang, it would make it very difficult if not impossible for the participants to disengage from the gang fully. Therefore, the participants needed to engage with positive influences to help them sustain their disengagement. By surrounding themselves with positive influences, they would be able to model their prosocial behaviour until it became the norm and have someone who could hold them accountable to the change they have decided to make. These positive influences could be other young men who had made it out of the gang and were productive members of society. Or they could be NGO based programme facilitators who were running therapeutic groups or introducing the participants to new occupational pursuits in their community.

Through the engagement with positive influences, the participants were introduced to prosocial occupations that not only brought a new sense of meaning and purpose, the prosocial occupations also increased their social capital. This was very important for them, as this meant that the community was able to see that they had truly changed, and it was not merely just words but also actions. The following participants were able to see the value in engaging with positive influences and in the engagement of these new prosocial occupations.

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"So I decided here in the PPG is the place that will change me. I have achieved a lot in this project. They helped. This is the place."   (1997)

In this quote, the participant was exposed to new occupations through the relationship fostered with a new positive influence. This positive influence of engaging in music helped sustain the participant's disengagement from gangs. It helped keep the participant from engaging in risky occupations, also introducing the participant to new occupational pursuits that gave him meaning and purpose.

"[name of another gang member] helped into my music career. So all the time, I'm always with him" (Thabo)

Through the engagement with a positive influence, the participant was exposed to skills development in the form of life skills, these skills assisted him in sustaining his disengagement and his exposure to new prosocial occupations.

"I've met uh other lady inside the prison, she was making uh she was making a programme of life skills. She taught us how we can handle life when I leave, life out of gangsterism outside. So she was involved in another NGO called "Young in Prison"   (Hashtag)

In this quote, the participant gots exposed to playing soccer for a semi-professional team. He was exposed to a meaningful prosocial occupation that had the potential to become a legitimate income for himself. He was exposed to these opportunities through a positive influence that invested in him. Through this he found meaning and purpose but also someone to sustain his disengagement from the gang.

"the guy who was the manager here, take us show us and then we love it. That's where I managed to get out of the gang."   (Love)

4.3.4.3 Engagement in new occupations…My passion saved me

In this category, the participants are exposed to new occupations to engage in that are not only prosocial but also meaningful. These may also be occupations they previously engaged in and may have been meaningful beforehand. Still, the participants were not able to fully engage in

them due to their commitments to the gang. As a result, the participant had not received exposure to, or developed their interests in, these occupations. By disengaging from the gang participants finally had the opportunity to engage in new occupational opportunities due to their engagement with other people (positive influences).

The participants were previously restricted in their ability to engage in other occupations outside of the gang. But now that the participant had disengaged from the gang, he was able to engage in new occupations, and the participant felt that engaging in meaningful occupation saved him.

"Ja, My music saved me" *(Thabo)*

In this quote the participant is now a more involved father, now being out of the gang he is able to engage better in his role as a father and be more present. When he was an active gang member he did not make as much time for his children, now being out of the gang he was able to fulfil his role as a father better than before, he has a newfound respect for his role and has gained meaning and purpose from it.

"after I left gangsterism, it made me realise that charity begins in the home. All terms and conditions of home I must look after it. My children, cause my child couldn't ask me at that time of anything you see? But now he can. I have time to go and watch my child playing soccer. That time I didn't have the time." *(Hashtag)*

By disengaging from the gang, the participant in this quote was able to further his career by engaging in more community projects. He was able to engage with community leaders and was respected by them because of him disengaging from the gang and because he sustained his disengagement. He was able to not only find meaning and purpose but respect without the use of fear. These new opportunities that were now available to him also came with the opportunity to grow personally by allowing him to travel overseas. This gave him an invaluable experience as well as an opportunity to further develop his skills.

"keep myself busy with activities that's happening in and around my community, like sports, some community meetings and stuff. Ja so uh uhm major roles that came in and they like it gave me so a lot of opportunities even to go abroad to experience another life."

(Brad)

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The participant was now able to engage in many different activities that were available at the NGO in his community. As a result, he was able to expand his occupational engagement, from not just engaging in sports programmes but also had the opportunity to participate in the NGO's skills development programme so that he could grow and become a facilitator in the organisation itself.

> *"the afternoon you can go to the gym to the practise where you play sport. Or become like Coach. Or become involved in any kind of organisation that deals with children for afternoon based care. Uh where you learn some different stuff so that you can stay away from the bad things."* *(Brad)*

4.3.5 Theme five: The price of my freedom

This theme describes the participants' difficulty in leaving the gang as well as the price they paid for their freedom. Leaving the gang was a choice and one they each felt was essential, but leaving the gang came with its own terms and conditions. The focus of this theme is participants' experience of life out of the gang, as well as the disadvantages they experienced when they disengaged. The categories focus are: (1) *The price of leaving the gang; (2) I can't go there anymore; (3) I'm free, but I'm not free; (4) Relationship with the gang now … my brothers have become my enemies,* And finally: *(5) Community perception….I need to build my reputation again.* An overview of the theme and related categories are presented in Figure 4.6 below.

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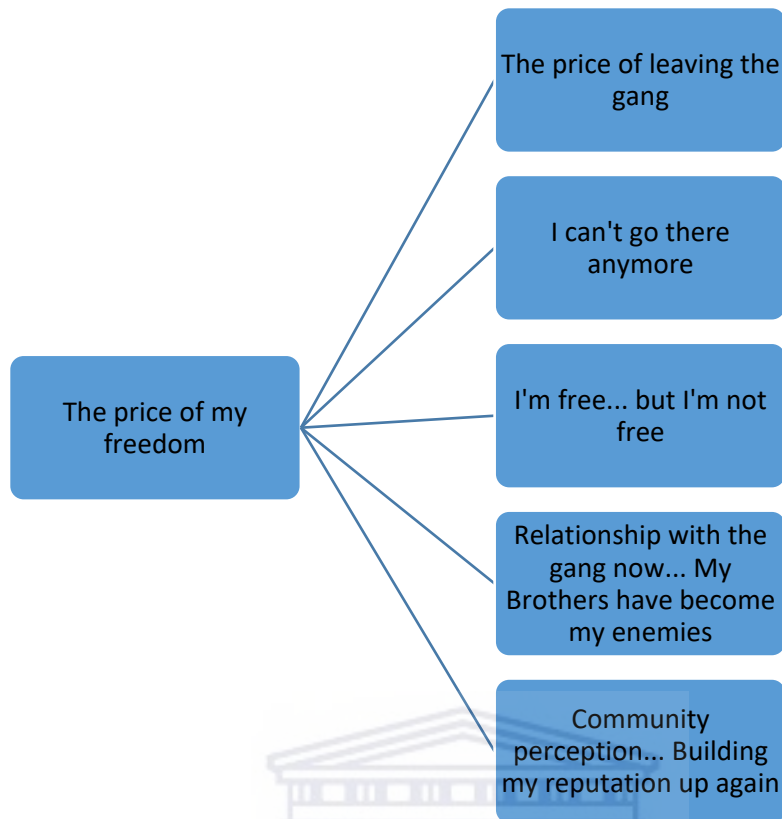
Figure 4.6: Overview of theme 5 and related categories

4.3.5.1 The price of leaving the gang

This category discusses the participants' process in leaving the gang. It also discusses the consequences the participants experienced due to turning their backs on the gangs they were affiliated to. This category also brings to light the cost the participants had to pay to leave the gang. It also reflects upon what the participants had to leave behind in order to be out of the gang.

Part of the perks of being in the gang was a sense of power. When the participant disengaged from the gang, he had to leave behind his power and influence that he received while he was in the gang. This the only way for him to sever ties and break free from the gang. What was interesting was that the participant only lost some of his power or as he states half of it, since he was out of the gang he still had power but a different kind. As previously stated, power in the context of gangs was closely linked with fear. Outside of the gang the participant's power may

have differed, as it was no longer linked with the aspect of fear, thus people may not have feared him as they did before, but instead they may have respected him without the sense of fear.

> *"half of the percent of my power was taken away from me cause I am no longer in this game anymore."* (1997)

In this quote, the participant struggled with his new lifestyle outside of the gang. In the previous quote, the participant discussed the concept of power and its link with fear. The participant struggled with the cost of leaving the gang as now he was vulnerable to attacks because he was no longer a gang member and therefore, he was no longer feared. The participant also needed to learn not to react in anger, as he would have done when he was an active gang member. When in the gang, the participant was not restricted in how he reacted to situations. Outside of the gang, he needed to practice restraint in his reactions, as he stated he would be returning to that state of mind and action of being a gang member.

> *"I felt like when I was a gang no one could rob me but now this is happening. So it was quite a pain and I knew that they were just showing me you know you …are you are you are toegesluit (naïve) you … are a moego (Idiot) now you know."* (Choice)

In this quote, the participant faces a real issue in leaving the gang. Even though the participant had disengaged, he still had to live with the consequences of the things he had done while he was a gang member, the rival gang still perceived him as an enemy or a threat even though he was not affiliated to the gang.

> *"the rivals will not see like I'm not a gangster even though I have stopped."* (Brad)

The participant opens up the area of disrespect in this quote. When leaving the gang, he was no longer feared. As a result, others started disrespecting him, thinking that he would react. The participant was resolved in his decision to disengage. The disrespect the participant experienced would not deter him from staying out of the gang.

> *"You don't like associate yourself with violence, so they start to disrespect you in a kind of way, thinking that you've gone soft. They like, try to test you or anything, but as a man, I know that, Eh I have principles, so instead of paying attention to them"* (Choice)

4.3.5.2 I can't go there anymore

During the data gathering process, one of the consistent factors that came across was the description of "I can't go there anymore". In this category, the focus is on the restriction of gang disengagement; even though the participants had left the gang, they are no longer able to enter certain areas due to rivals they may still have. The participants may bear no ill feelings to other rival gangs, but their enemies may have still perceived the participants as a threat and wanted them to pay for crimes they may have committed when they were in the gang. This resulted in the restriction occurring in the participants' engagement in meaningful occupations, as well as basic activities of daily living.

In this quote, the participant is aware of his previous actions and understands that even though he may have changed, his enemies have not forgotten him or his actions. As a result, he needed to check if it was safe for him to enter certain areas even though he had not been involved in gang activity and had sustained his disengagement from the gang.

> *"Sometimes I have too not go to that community because I know I've made a lot of murders there. So I don't even go there, even though I'm not participating, because if I'm going there, it's like I'm going to to check them, like what they going to do you see? So I have to be wise what I'm doing."*   *(Hashtag)*

The participant in this quote had left the gang and had started a new life, but his rivals still saw him as a threat. As a result, the participant was aware that he was restricted from certain areas for his own wellbeing.

> *"when I'm there and think Yoh! I cannot go to this area because I know these guys no matter I quit they don't know you know what I mean."*   *(Love)*

4.3.5.3 I'm free, but I'm not free

In this category, participants discuss being free from the gang but not feeling free. The gang no longer harassed the participant, but the participant was not free from the label of gang member. He was forever branded as a gang member.

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The participant discusses in this quote not knowing when "is your day", he referred to his actions catching up with him. He may have been out of the gang for a long period but he may still experience backlash from rival gangs, or someone who he had killed might have a loved one who is still waiting to take revenge. There are also things he had done (crimes) that he may not have been caught for, and as a result, he lives in waiting, waiting to see if the authorities or even rival gangs would ever catch him.

> *"There is a place, there's a time I don't feel free, even though I am out of the gang, because you don't know when is your day."*   *(Hashtag)*

In this quote, the participant recognised that he might have been freed from the gang but he was still not free. He was not free from the community's perception of his gang involvement or others who may know of it. He may not have seen himself as not a gang member anymore, but others may not share the same view, others, including his family; friends; community; law enforcement or rival gangs. Even though he disengaged, he still was treated like a gangster, who was engaging in risky behaviour.

> *"me I can say now I'm free, but outside I'm still not free."*   *(Thabo)*

The participant in this quote had made such a name for himself when he was a gang member. There was still a sense of fear associated with his name in his community. This made him a target as he was still feared for the violent acts he had done while he was in the gang. As a result, young men wanting to make a name for themselves found him to be the perfect target. If they could kill him, they would make a name for themselves.

> *"now we are old and these boys are new you know, their blood is still fresh, so if they want you guys, they will hunt you and get you. You know, even now there is quite a rival going there."*   *(Choice)*

4.3.5.4 Relationship with the gang now…. My brothers have become my enemies?

When leaving the gang, the participants each faced some sort of backlash from their gangs, as the gangs wanted them to stay. This so-called "family", that the participants had now treated them as outcasts, and in some cases treated the participants as their enemies.

In this quote, the participant discusses what the expected result would be if the gang knew about his intentions to leave, the gang would treat him no longer as a brother but as an enemy. If he was not for them, he was automatically against them, and he needed to be removed or taught a lesson.

> *"when you say you don't want to be any gangster anymore, they want to kill you or burn your house or some stupid thing."*   *(1997)*

The participant in this quote understood that by leaving the gang, he was aware that the relationship with the gang would not be the same and as such he knew what their intention would be for him now, and these intentions would be to cause him harm. The participant thus avoided all contact with the gang, by seeing them he knew he needed to get away from them.

> *"if they see me in the streets they will come to me and I will run away from them, because they could kill me, they could do anything."*   *(1997)*

The participant in this quote did not fear physical harm from his gang but also knew that he was no longer part of them, and as such, his ex-gang could not be trusted. But he did not want to cause friction between him and his gang, as such he kept a superficial relationship with them.

> *"I know that they can pretend to me, so I pretend.. So I push them away. And then just talk with them..."*   *(Love)*

The participant in this quote had a different relationship with his ex-gang, he did not fear them but rather they feared him. As a result, they knew that it would be unwise to try and hurt him or to keep him from disengaging. He was a high ranked member of the gang, whose major role was to kill others and therefore they knew his power and knew where the boundaries were.

> *"no one would come to me in the gang and say, you a moffie. Because they know me, how kind I am."*   *(Hashtag)*

4.3.5.5 Community perception….I need to build my reputation again.

The community's perception of the participants is a crucial component in assisting the participants in sustaining their disengagement. Many of the participants had to win back their community's trust. Some participants had committed so many heinous crimes in their communities. Regardless of what they did to improve their social capital, they were never going

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to win their community back. As a result, they needed to move to a different area because their actions caused a toxic relationship with their community.

In this quote, the participant expresses his experience of being branded socially as a gangster. As a result, he understood that he was not always going to be accepted by everyone. And as a result understood it would be foolish to try and win every community member over, regardless what he did, there would be someone who did not believe that he had legitimately disengaged from the gang.

> *"people they not going to like you all of them. Some they going to like you, some they not going to like you. Some they going to see me as a gangster, some they going to see me as like, you know he has changed."*   *(Hashtag)*

The participant describes that only by getting involved in community development projects, was he able to win the support of his community. It was his actions that changed the community's perceptions, not his words.

> *"I was in the grey corner (Anti-gang afterschool programme) helping children to get out of the gang, from the grey corner not to be a gangster, and I still have those children here. They are a walking here, they come here to grey corner. They were gangster and I helped them, they are here now. They are not gangsters anymore. So they see that I'm changed because I changed their children."*   *(Love)*

In this quote, no matter what the participant did, he was not going to win his community over. Even though he sustained his disengagement from the gang, any fault he made in his community was gossiped about, and people said that he had not changed.

> *"they were loving it...that what they said it is it is... I have not changed, look at me now, I another attempt again I'm back in gangsterism."*   *(Choice)*

Chapter 5-Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the discussion chapter is to synthesise literature with the findings and relate it to the objectives of the study. Therefore, the findings are interpreted according to young men's reasons for disengaging from gangs; young men's perceptions and experiences of the process of disengaging from gangs; and how young men's occupations are influenced by disengagement. In addition, the findings are discussed in terms of the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This study endeavours to bridge the gap in the literature concerning understanding the process of disengagement from Black gangs within a South African context. The last objective, which is to *develop recommendations regarding the disengagement process,* will be explored in the recommendations chapter.

5.2 Young men's reasons for disengaging from gangs

The first theme *The price of gang life… the fine print,* related to the objective of *exploring young men's reasons for disengaging from gangs.* In this theme, the categories that are relevant to this objective are specifically: *To be one if us you need too…* and *The disadvantages of being in a gang*. In the second theme: *Time to get out… I didn't sign up for this,* the categories that pertain to this objective are *Turning point,* and *I need to get out.*

The theme *The price of gang life… the fine print* discusses the realities of gang engagement and the effect on young men's occupational and role performance, while offering a rich understanding of their experiences within the gang that made this once meaningful occupation now redundant and dangerous. The category *To be one of us you need to…* highlights the risky and dangerous activities that young men needed to engage in to be considered an affiliate of the gang. The activities dealt mainly with drug use and the involvement in narcotics sales and distribution, violent crimes such as home invasions and robbery, as well as of grievous bodily harm and murder. The engagement in these activities caused the participants to experience a sense of incongruence, as their actions did not align with their own values. This then in comparison to Strong, Rigby, Stewart, Law, Letts and Cooper in 1999 work on *The application of the Person-Environment-Occupation Model* would depict a lack of congruency in the interaction of the Person-Environment-Occupation of the participant. This could be due to a lack of interest

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in the occupation that it is no longer as meaningful as it once was. This may also be related to the person, and the adverse effects caused to the person resulting in an undesirable outcome. The lessening of the sphere of the person would naturally result in a smaller surface area in the occupational performance, as one of the three spheres is less congruent with the other two spheres.

The second category *The disadvantages of being in a gang* explores the activities of gang life which have caused the participants to re-evaluate their gang status. These events included being blamed for a murder they did not commit, being assaulted by rival gangs, attempts on their lives by rival gangs, dealing with the psychological trauma of the violent crimes they were ordered to do as gang members, the inability to move freely in their community due to rival gang territories and lastly the sense of feeling hunted by rival gangs or even other members affiliated to their gang. These experiences relate well with the theory of gang disengagement, specifically that of push and pull factors. Pyrooz and Decker (2011b; 2014) explore how there are factors or expectations within the gang that push individuals to want to disengage, these are the internal workings of the gang that cause a great deal of discomfort for the members or a sense of internal turmoil. Conversely, pull factors are considered factors that are outside of the gang that pull the members out of gang life. These are factors such as their family, job opportunities, new experiences or occupations outside of the gang. These push and pull factors that were introduced and discussed by Pyrooz and Decker (2011b, 2014) relate to the experiences of the participants in this study. The factors that related to their desire to disengage either made gang engagement no longer desirable, thus pushing them out of the gang. Conversely the pull factors were factors external to the gang that became more meaningful to them than gang engagement, thus pulling the participants out of the gang.

The second theme *Time to get out… I didn't sign up for this* shows how the participants' experiences had taken a toll on them, to the extent that gang life was no longer a viable option or way of life. They then resolved to disengage from the gang they were affiliated to. The categories that are relevant to this objective are: *Turning point* and *I need to get out.* In the first category *Turning point,* the participants discuss their experiences that caused a mind shift. They realised that disengagement from the gang was not only a realistic option but one that would have more benefit to their future. The turning points for the participants were the realisation of their mortality. Participants had near-death experiences in which they realised that the

engagement in gangs was no longer as meaningful as they previously found it to be. Other experiences included time spent serving their prison sentences in institutions such as Pollsmoor prison. The sentences they were serving were between two to five years. One of the participants stated that his turning point was the trauma experienced from losing friends to gang violence. For many participants, their families were their turning point to disengaging. For some participants, it was the risk they were putting their family in. Either through the stress of being injured or by their families becoming targeted. This was a result of their rivals not able to attack them specifically and as a result, harmed their families to cause them emotional harm. For some participants, it was the experience of the birth of their first child. Participants saw their children as the new generation, that needed to be protected and brought up in a safe environment away from the chaos and violence of gangs. Families became a central feature in redirecting the participants from their current path. The participants realised there was more at risk than themselves and more to life than the trivial workings of gang life.

The second category of *Time to get out…. I didn't sign up for this* is *I need to get out* encapsulates the participants' deep earnest desire to disengage. This category depicts monumental moments in which their experience of gang engagement solidified the participants' decision to disengage. Participants discussed experiences of losing loved ones and the excruciating pain of laying these family members and friends to rest. These loved ones were active members of the gang and their death related to gang involvement. These moments became reflective moments for the participants, as they realised their death could have been prevented, and the cause of their deaths were unnecessary. These experiences were considered to be very unsettling to the participants and made them reflect on their level of gang involvement, and became the catalyst in seeking out exit strategies for disengagement as well as support.

This theme and its two categories relate well with the literature, as Pyrooz and Decker's (2011b; 2014) studies revealed participants' experiences of turning points were when they had found engaging in gangs was no longer meaningful. As a result, they shifted from considering disengagement to actively planning how to disengage and seeking out support. MacRae-Krisa (2011) also discusses experiences of gang members when disengaging, the participants of this study stated that one of their main turning points for disengagement had related to the experience of being betrayed by their respective gangs. This experience was also found to be a significant turning point for some participants in the present study too. In a study conducted by

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Daniels and Adams (2010) the main turning point that was experienced by the participants was their families. Their families were their catalysts for change. This was either through experiences of losing family members or the birth of their first child. The participants of this study realised that their position as men in this world was challenged. Gang involvement was now considered to them as opposing their roles as men within their family and holding them back from their future potential.

Participants' description of their experience of gang involvement could also be viewed through the theoretical lens of occupational alienation as discussed by Hammell and Beagan (2017). The participants no longer found engagement in gangs meaningful. Their engagement in gang activities restricted their ability to engage in occupations which were more meaningful and/or healthier to them. The participants' experiences could also be linked to the concepts of occupational imbalance as their engagement in gang activities created an imbalance in their ability to engage in other meaningful occupations, as they were over-occupied by gang engagement.

5.3   Young men's perceptions and experiences of the process of disengaging from gangs

In order to ascertain and to compare the process of disengagement from gangs, time was taken to allow the participants to connect to their own perceptions and experiences of the disengagement process. The theme that was relevant to this objective was: *Getting out and staying out.* The specific category that related to this objective that will be discussed in this section is: *Out of sight, out of mind.* The theme documents the participants' experiences and methods they employed as their exit strategy when disengaging from the gang. The primary strategy that was common in most of the participant's stories was that of disappearing from the area. Participants would either seek assistance from family members who lived in another suburb or a different location or would find new accommodation, again also far away from their community or the territory of their gang. By staying away from the gang, the participants were not involved in their ex-gang's dealings. It also assisted the participants in avoiding the wrath of their ex-gang for disengaging. Participants stayed away from the gang anywhere between 6 months to 2 years, their aim physically and socially distance themselves from their gang. And the hope was that by the time the participants returned home, their ex-gangs would have inevitably had more pressing matters to deal with than to waste time in policing them. Participants needed to sever all ties with the gang, so that they would have no contact with . This would allow the

participants to start afresh without any ties holding them down or keeping them back from the potential they had to engage in prosocial and more meaningful occupations. This form of disengaging from gangs relates well with disengagement theory, specifically to work done by Pyrooz and Decker (2011b). In an article called *Motivation and methods for leaving the gang*, Pyrooz and Decker (2011b) discuss the concept of *knifing off* as the process whereby the participant severs all ties with their gang, making a 180˚ turn from being an active gang member to not being an active gang member. The concept of "knifing off" is also discussed by Maruna and Roy (2007) as a preferable manner of disengaging as it would allow the ex-gang member the opportunity to sever ties with their past and assist them in the process of removing the label of gang member. It would also assist the participants in reorienting themselves to new opportunities outside of the gang, as well as assist with self-development. The findings of the present study support this, as the participants employed this disengagement strategy that actively removed them from their communities, away from their gang, severing all connection to the gang. By moving away, the participants were able to start over without fearing for their lives or without distractions that might make gang life seem more appealing. Some participants did not knife off in the traditional way as described by literature but disengaged in their minds. Some of the participants had made it known to their ex-gang that they wanted to be disengage, but they would still support their friends who were still affiliated. Some of the participants of the study did not feel the needed to create distance between themselves and their friends who were active gang members, as they were resolved in their decision but also they did not fear their ex-gang. The participants had stated that their ex-gangs knew who they were and what they were capable of doing, as such it would not be in their best interest for their ex-gang to retaliate against them.

In 2014 Pyrooz and Decker wrote *Disengagement from gangs: Implications for practice*, and discussed the concept of knifing off. They also describe a slower process of disengagement whereby the gang members slowly become less involved until they no longer are identified as an active member of the gang. However, this gradual process of disengagement was not found in the findings of this study. Disengagement theory discusses hostile and non-hostile forms of disengaging from gangs. Knifing off was noted by the participants of the current study as the less hostile form for them. By knifing off, the gang would not be able to harm the participants for

their decision to disengage as they would not be able to find them, as the participants had relocated.

Another theory of disengagement that also related to the study was that of becoming less embedded in the gang as discussed in Pyrooz and Decker's (2011a) *Leaving the gang: Logging off and moving on.* In the findings of this study, some participants stated that when they experienced their turning point, they found themselves wanting to be less involved in gang activity. These participants were entirely embedded in their affiliated gang. Some participants felt it would be best to become less involved in certain aspects of the gang. The actions of the gang began to impede on the values of the participants, as a result the participant found gang activities to have no or less meaning or value anymore. The participants became more aware of the gang activities they engaged in, and they became even more aware of the consequences of engaging in certain gang activities. This resulted in the participants of this study chose rather to fall back than to be actively involved in the frontline. Participants also stated that by doing this, it was a statement to display their lack of interest in gang activity. However, the participants of this study still primarily used the knifing off strategy of disengagement.

The process of disengagement could be analysed through the occupational lens of "becoming". Under the occupational lens of becoming it describes the idea of the person envisioning a future self whereby their past self no longer restricts them. This relates to the participants as during their time of disengagement they were able to explore new possibilities outside of the gang, opportunities in which they were able to explore their future selves free of the gang and the labels attached to gang membership.

5.4   The effect of disengagement on young men's occupations

Disengagement is a process that has considerable advantages, but it also has significant disadvantages. This study sought to explore and discern the effects that disengagement from gangs had on the participants' ability to engage in their meaningful occupation. The relevant theme that relates to this objective is *The price of my freedom.* The categories that will be explored in this section are: *The price of leaving the gang; I can't go there anymore; I'm free but I'm not free; Relationships with the gang now… my brothers have become my enemies and Community perception… I need to build up my reputation.*

The price of leaving the gang documents the personal experience they had to endure due to them disengaging. These experiences included being made a target by other young men who now felt comfortable with robbing them, as the participants were restricted in their actions, especially those who were now on parole. These young men that may have previously feared them now viewed them as a stepping stone to make a name for themselves. Participants could not use their coping skills or protective instincts they may have employed while they were active gang members, as by doing so it would result in them being viewed as active gang members. The concept of power was also one that was a constant account of the participants. Participants discussed one of the prices they paid was giving up their power, whilst they were active members within their affiliated gang, they had created a name for themselves within their gangs, with their rivals as well as within their communities. As a result, when they chose to disengage, they needed to disassociate themselves with the same name that brought them power, as this same name brought them a sense of shame or no longer had meaning or value to them. Pyrooz, Decker and Web (2010) discuss in their article *The ties that bind*, that many ex-gang members experience victimisation due to their status of being an ex-gang member. There was a shift in role performance and expectations that left them vulnerable not just to rival gangs but also law enforcement. This was also experienced by some of the participants in the present study. The other common experience that was described previously in the literature and experienced by the participants was retaliation of rival gangs. Pyrooz and Decker (2014) explored the experiences of ex-gang members and noted that many experienced retaliations from rival gangs even though they were no longer active members. The rival gang still felt that the ex-gang member owed a debt from when they were active in their affiliated gangs. It was also found that participants were restricted to certain places or territories. For their safety many would not enter into rival gang territory as it would leave them open to possible attacks from their rival gangs. MacRae-Krisa (2011) also explored gang members' experiences of disengagement and noted that participants feared violent incidents occurring to them due to their decision to disengage. These concepts link closely with the literature presented on toxic masculinity. Kupers (2005) noted the features of toxic masculinity, some specifically being a deep desire to dominate and control others, an unwillingness or dread of dependency, an eagerness to resort to violence. Due to their process of disengagement, participants needed to readjust to their lives. This involved readjusting their coping mechanisms as well as becoming aware of the toxic behaviour they once engaged in when they were affiliated to the gang. Participants needed to learn how to accept not

being seen as the dominant in order to be freed of the shackles of gang life. The features of toxic masculinity that the participants were so eager to engage in had now become the reason they wanted to disengage.

In the category titled *I'm free, but I'm not free,* participants discuss their feelings of being out of the gang. Participants noted that they might have been out of the gang, but they were well aware of the actions they took while they were active gang members.   It was not unrealistic for loved ones of those they may have murdered, to want to seek revenge, or for rival gangs to want to, at any point, seek out revenge for their past actions.   One participant discussed that due to the name they had created for themselves that it was not unheard of for young, up-and-coming gang members to come after them, as a means of creating a name for themselves. This meant that the participants always felt that they needed to be on their guard. Participants stated that this left them feeling uneasy as they were never sure when their luck might run out or when their actions might catch up with them. Brink et al. (2014) support the findings of the present study, as they discuss the experience of their participants needing to look over their shoulder, as they knew they still had enemies even though they may have been disengaged from the gang for a long period. This inevitably affected the participant occupational performance as the participants experienced less congruency in their sphere of person-environment-occupation. By examining the experience of the participants, the lack of their occupational performance was a result of the incongruence found in their environment sphere. The participants naturally did not feel at ease in conducting their normal engagement in occupation, as the environment they were in was not supportive. This resulted in the participants needing to be in their guard for any attacks. This then resulted in a lesser surface area in their occupational performance.

Relationships are considered an important element of human existence and survival, and this is also true with regards to the relationship participants experienced with their ex-gang. Pyrooz and Decker (2014) stated that individuals might experience push back from their gang when disengaging whereas some might not, and may have a good relationship with their ex-gang members. Brink et al. (2014) stated that participants felt that their ex-gang members who were their friends were now their enemies. Pinnock (1997) discusses that once anyone leaves their gang, they automatically lose the protection of their gang. This supports the results of the present study as many participants experienced backlash from their ex-gang, including threats of harming them (the participants) to threats of the gang burning the participants' homes down.

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Other participants stated that their ex-gang would chase them to cause them harm. The common experience was that their ex-gang was no longer a healthy or a safe relationship for them to engage in. The experience of some of the participants also relates to Maruna and Roy's (2007) article titled *Amputation or reconstruction? Notes on the concept of "knifing off" and desistence from crime.* In the article the concept of ex-gang members "knifing off" their relationships with their gang members is examined. This experience related to the participants' experiences as the participants still lived in the communities where their ex-gang members were living. Some participants were able to sever all ties with their ex-gang members while others retained either a cordial relationship with their ex-gang to reduce any friction and bad blood between themselves and their ex-gang. Some participants maintained a relationship with their ex-gang. As stated previously, the gang consisted of members who were related or who may have been long time friends. Knifing of relationships such as these would be hard if not impossible. As such some members maintained relationships with their ex-gang members, but these relationships were within boundaries, i.e. the participants were not going to get involved in any gang activities or hang out in gang spots. But they would only be there to support their ex-gang members as friends.

An important experience that was highlighted in this study was the participants' experience with their communities when they wanted to reintegrate. These were the same communities in which they had previously created violence and chaos, and in which they had incited fear. The participants needed to develop a new relationship with their communities as they needed to prove that they had changed. This was necessary so that the participants may reintegrate into society as a law-abiding citizen, and no longer be shunned by their community. MacRae- Krisa (2011) discusses the external hurdles that ex-gang members experienced when disengaging. One specifically is the stigma attached to being a gang member, and the community no longer trusting them. The communities still viewed the ex-gang member as an active member. Brink et al. (2014) stated that for ex-gang members to be reintegrated into their community they needed to prove through their actions that they had changed. This change needed to be sustained, any actions associated with gang activity would automatically be perceived by the community that the person returned to their gang. The findings of the present study related to the literature, some participants experienced positive feedback from their communities when engaging in pro-social activities and assisting in community projects. Other participants found that regardless of their

engagement in prosocial activities, the relationship between their community and themselves was not reconcilable, as a result, some chose not to return to their communities at all.

The effects the participants experienced on their occupations due to disengagement relates well with the theory of occupational injustice, specifically occupational marginalization and deprivation. The participants were marginalized due to their past affiliation to the gang. The theory of occupational marginalization addresses the experience of social exclusion of certain populations from choice of occupations they may engage in. This theory relates well with the experiences of the participants as they found themselves marginalised by social groups such as their ex-gang, their rival gangs as well as their communities. Even though participants disengaged from the gang and all the duties and roles attached to it, they were now restricted or limited in their freedom of choice of occupations they could engage in. This limitation also included how some participants expressed themselves or their experiences. If they expressed themselves in any manner that could be associated with gang behaviour, they would automatically be viewed as active gang members. These experiences may be considered an occupational injustice, specifically as occupational deprivation. Participants expressed experiences whereby they were deprived of engaging in meaningful or necessary occupations due to their past gang affiliation, a situation which they could not change.

5.5   How occupation facilitated or sustained disengagement

Disengagement is considered the biggest step for ex-gang members, but an equally important step is sustaining their disengagement from the gang. As such, exploring the role of occupation in facilitating and sustaining the ex-members' disengagement from gangs was considered essential for future planning and execution of relevant and realistic prevention measures. The theme that was considered relevant to this objective was *Getting out and staying out.* The categories that were specifically relevant to this objective were: *Positive influences… I need a new crew* and *Engagement in new occupations.*

The first category deals with positive influences, and a multitude of writers explore how new relationships assist in facilitating and sustain disengagement. MacRae- Krisa (2011) specifically discusses how families assist ex-gang members in sustaining their disengagement. The family has been explored at different levels as it has been noted to be an intensely motivating force for those disengaging from gangs. It was found that family members had a vested interest in this

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relationship, as now their family members (ex-gang members) had returned. The ex-gang members were now able to re-engage in their roles again and in addition, the once strained relationship due to their gang involvement overtime may be repaired. Pyrooz and Decker (2014) support the family as being a positive influence in deterring ex-gang members from re-engaging in gangs and discuss the concept of other positive impacts being needed in order to facilitate and sustain disengagement. This study relates to the literature as it associates with the idea of positive influences, participants note a multitude of positive influences, from facilitators of life skills programmes to coaches or other ex-gang members mentoring the participants on their road to disengagement.

The last category that is relevant to this objective is *engagement in new occupations*. Albert Einstein once stated that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result (Albert Einstein, n.d.), inversely if our participants wanted a new life they would need to engage in new things they have not done or that they may have not engaged in for a long period of time. Daniels and Adams (2010) stated that engaging in new roles as well as occupations were the reason for their participants sustaining their occupations as they gained a newfound purpose in their engagement in these new occupations. Brink et al. (2014) highlight engagement in occupation as the catalyst for sustained change in their participants. This literature supports the findings of the present study which revealed that a newfound sense of meaning and purpose was gained from the participants' engagement in new occupations. These occupations included work as a facilitator in community programmes to engagement in the role of being a father; son or spouse. Other occupations that were found profoundly meaningful were engaging in self-expressing occupations such as music and dance or sport. In studies conducted by Pyrooz and Decker (2011b; 2014) many participants had planned their disengagement strategy by seeking out support structures such as mentors, programmes or even new accommodation outside of their area so that they would not be followed or harmed by the gang. Other support the participants of this study explored were NGOs to assist them in skills training or actively engaging in occupations they previously found meaningful such as work; school or leisure activities such as sport or music. The participants of this study went through these lengths to assist their process of disengagement and to sustain their disengagement.

How occupation facilitated or sustained disengagement relates well to the theory of dimensions of occupation, specifically that of "belonging" and "doing". The participants expressed the need

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to surround themselves with individuals or groups who were positive influence and/or like-minded. This relates well with the concept of belonging. The theory relating to belonging is related to the connecting with others. These connections are in the form of friendship, engaging with others, social interaction, the feeling of inclusion and the reciprocal support in relationships etc. These connections are seen as imperative or fundamental to all, as it improves one's life satisfaction as well as their occupational performance (Rebeiro, Day, Semeniuk, O'Brien & Wilson, 2001). This sentiment was echoed through the participants' experiences, participants reflected on the support they had experienced from loved ones, other young men who had disengaged, sporting and cultural groups as well as NGO programmes and facilitators. These connections created a sense of belonging which impacted the participants' occupational performance as well as their life satisfaction . The concept of "doing" is described in the occupational therapy framework as including purposeful, goal-directed activities, but also incorporates the experience of meaning (Hammell, 2004 a) . The action of "doing" brings about or facilitates the experience of meaning through engagement, which can create a sense of motivation and or a sense of purpose (Hammell, 2004 a). Through the "doing" the participants found a new sense of meaning and purpose in the occupations they were now able to engage in, as well as an enhanced feeling of self due to the quality of their engagement in their new occupations.

5.6   Discussion of findings in accordance with the Person-Environment-Occupational model

The research questions that this study addressed are: What are young men's experiences of the process of disengaging from gangs? How does disengagement influence occupation? How does occupation facilitate and sustain their disengagement? In order to answer the research questions, the theoretical framework of the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model (Law, et al., 1996) is used to discuss the constructs underlying the findings, thus offering unique insight and perspective into the issue. Through this, informed recommendations are made to remediate the factors that cause young men to be excluded or restricted from engaging in meaningful occupation and society after disengaging from gangs.

The PEO Model was used to provide an occupational perspective of the process of disengagement and conceptualize the synthesis that occurs between the three constructs (person, environment and occupation) and how occupational performance is affected. This

provides an understanding of the enablers and barriers that may occur so that informed recommendations can be made.

Person

The participants were Black males from Nyanga and Langa between the ages of 19 and 36 years, (the participants' demographic information is available in Table 4.1). Law et al. (1996) describes the person as bringing a set of attributes (performance components) and life experiences that affect the synthesis of the person with the environment and occupation, resulting in what is described as one's occupational performance. The attributes of the person include self-concept, personality style, cultural background, identity and personal competencies. Christiansen (1999), describes identity as having three aspects. The first being interpersonal aspect, this comprising of the roles and responsibilities of an individual. The second aspect being possibility or potential of who the individual may become in time. The third aspect being values, this aspect considers the importance of the ability of choices and decisions making. The participants had undergone a dramatic change in themselves as a person, in order to disengage themselves from the gang. They needed to disengage their mind-sets from their previous way of living and the survival measures they had put in place in order to transform themselves and their lifestyles.

Identity consists of three elements (Christiansen, 1999). The first element of identity is the interpersonal element; during their disengagement process the participants experienced multiple transformations in roles and responsibilities. Participants found that engagement in gang related roles were not only no longer meaningful, but were also detrimental to their health and safety. During their gang involvement participants were physically assaulted, stabbed and some shot. Participants also experienced psychological trauma through the loss of friends and family due to gang violence or other psychological trauma due to the experiences of engaging in violent acts associated with their roles within the gang. Their responsibility to the gang caused some of the participants to have to endure imprisonment. In this time, participants stated that this caused a mind shift for them, as their loyalty to the gang was misplaced. The participants found that the gang they had promised their allegiance to were nowhere to be found, and the only support that they had was that of their biological family. This caused the participants to realign themselves with roles that would be beneficial to their future and to those they were

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responsible for, such as being a father. Through this process they transitioned into roles that they considered more meaningful.

This over time improved the second element of identity that Christiansen (1999) discusses, which is potential or possibilities.   Over time through the sustained engagement in prosocial occupations and sustaining their disengagement from gangs, the participants increased their potential in the new occupation or roles in which they were engaging.   This is seen in the participants who engaged in sport, music, school programmes or as facilitators of gang prevention programmes.

The last element of identity that Christiansen (1999) discusses is that of values and choice or decision making.   Participants discussed this as being difficult for them, as many had specific strategies they would employ when dealing with conflict. Participants found that these strategies were no longer acceptable and needed to adjust in how they engaged in conflict management as if they did not, their actions would cause their community, families and others to consider them as unchanged or as active gang members. Many participants experienced difficulty in adjusting as they valued themselves as less powerful as their view of masculinity was closely linked with violence and fear. As a result, they struggled with how they saw themselves as men and needed to redefine that for themselves through engagement in other positive masculine activities that were prosocial and also improved their social capital. Participants also experienced a shift in values, they were no longer impressed by egregious acts of violence or the tyranny of the vulnerable that they would engage in. They found themselves tormented by their previous actions and in need of absolution. As a result, participants found themselves engaging in roles that were contrary to those that they engaged in while they were in the gang. These roles were aligned with their newfound value system and choices that allowed them a sense of independence from the gang.

Environment

The participants were residents of Nyanga and Langa, both being townships of Cape Town.   As stated in the methodology chapter, these communities are low socio-economic areas that struggle with issues of safety and service delivery. Law et al., (1996) stated that environment is defined as the contexts and locations which occur outside individuals and evoke responses from

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the individual. Law et al. (1996) expanded on this by stating that environment is more than just the physical (natural and built physical environment). It also includes one's personal and social environment which entails factors such as cultural, socio-economic, institutional and additional aspects such as one's household, community or their neighbourhood.

The participants stated the difficulties they struggled the most with when disengaging was their physical and their social environment. In order to effectively disengage they needed to remove themselves from their communities so that their gangs would not have access to them in order to harm them or to manipulate them into staying affiliated to the gang. The participants found that by removing themselves, they were able to remove the temptations of gang life that caused them to initiate in the first place. Once participants' respective gangs lost interest in them and their choice to disengage, they were able to return home. Once they returned, the participants found the second environmental barrier they needed to address was their community. Many of the participants required to regain the trust of their community.Due to the heinous crimes or actions they had engaged in whilst in the gang, this caused the participants to be labelled as pariah or stigmatised by their communities. Being labelled by their community also created certain set- backs, as it caused them to be treated unjustly by law enforcement and other community members. This included being suspected of crimes without just cause or restricted from engaging in activities due to community members' unwelcoming attitudes toward the participants. Participants also found themselves constrained in their role engagement as they were no longer able to enter certain areas within their communities. These areas were either territories that their ex-gang were operating out of, or these were the territories of their rival gangs. It was, therefore, safer for the participants to steer clear of these areas. Even though by doing this it affected their ability to engage in meaningful occupation or affected either effectiveness of their engagement in occupation. Occupational deprivation is described as the lack of engagement in occupation due to certain external restrictions (Watson &Swart, 2004). This points to the experiences of the participants, as the external restriction they experience is that of territory. The participants are deprived of engaging in meaningful and somewhat necessary occupations due to territory restriction. This then affects their ability to perform necessary roles and daily occupations, thus affecting their efficacy in daily living.

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Occupation

Occupation has been defined in multiple ways as part of different schools of thought and through the lens of literature. In the specific area of Occupational Therapy, occupation is defined as groups of self-directed, functional activities and or tasks in which a person engages over their entire lifespan (Law et al., 1996). Law and colleagues expand on this by stating that occupations in this context are characterised as the activities that one engages in to meet one's intrinsic needs for expression, self-maintenance and gratification or fulfilment, and these can be carried out within the context of multiple environments or individual roles.

Occupation was found to be the main factor in assisting the participants to sustain their disengagement from the gangs they were affiliated to. Through meaningful engagement in occupations outside of the gang, participants were able to develop a new sense of meaning and purpose. These prosocial occupations were also a means for the participants to rebuild their relationships with their family and friends. These relationships may have been estranged, coupled with rebuilding their communities' trust. Engagement in these new occupations allowed the participants to engage in occupations that they were previously restricted from by the gang such as school or other forms of learning, formal employment and activities that helped improve their communities and those who lived in and around it. Occupation was their opportunity not only for a fresh start but also an opportunity to learn and employ new coping skills.

Occupational Performance

Occupational performance is a result of the transaction that occurs between the person, environment and occupation. It is defined as the dynamic experience of one engaging in meaningful activities and or tasks within an environment (Law et al., 1996). The occupational performance of the participants has improved as they were able to engage in occupations that were meaningful and that they were previously unable to due to their gang affiliation. Participants found themselves having more opportunities opened to them than previously and some felt that they were making a positive impact on their communities through the prosocial programmes they were involved in, specifically the gang prevention programmes and the after school activities. Participants also stated that they were present in their families and were

contributing through engaging in tasks within their homes, as well as actively participating in their various roles within their families, which gave them a great sense of meaning and purpose.

It should also be noted that the increase in the congruency of the three spheres of person-environment-occupation was a result of the participants experiencing less restrictions in each of the three spheres. This resulted in a larger surface area in their occupational performance. Even though the participants experienced an increase in their occupational performance, limitations still existed for them in the three spheres. Earlier in the literature review chapter, the concept of occupational justice was introduced and discussed. The findings of the current study showed that the participants had experienced occupational injustices that resulted in them engaging in gangs. However, once they disengaged from gangs, they still experienced occupational injustices that at times may have caused them to question their status of being disengaged. These injustices included occupational deprivation which restricted them from gaining formal employment due to their prison record. Other injustices noted in the current study findings were occupational marginalization, due to the lack of available resources in the participants' communities to better themselves, and availability of, and access to, educational facilities. The *Insight Newsletter Issue 13* that is published by the Department of Government Communications and Information Systems stated that the deliberate exclusion of Black people under the apartheid regime resulted from poor educational systems, and skilled occupations has contributed to the high levels of unemployment that still exists today in South Africa (Department of Government Communications and Information Systems, n.d.). This creates not only a gap in opportunity but also an injustice as other population groups have had far greater access to basic education, thus creating a larger gap of inequality.

Other occupational injustices the participants experienced was discrimination, due to their history of gang involvement or their time spent in prison, these experience negatively affected their social capital. These, coupled with scars of fights as well as tattoos they may have from the gang, affected their ability in entering the labour force. This injustice was noted as one of the biggest that the participants experienced, as this directly affected their ability in providing for themselves, thus creating a sense of impotence. As discussed earlier, the concept of power was one that was reiterated through the participants' stories. By unjustly being restricted to the certain labour force due to their prior history, this could enforce the participant's feelings of

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impotence, thus increasing the risk of the participants re-entering the gang or engaging in risky behaviour or occupations.

5.6   Limitations

The study had several limitations. One of the most important limitations experienced within this study was the language barrier between the participants and the researcher. Some of the participants had difficulty in expressing themselves fully as their home language was isiXhosa and the data collection was conducted in English. They were not able to express themselves as effectively as they would have if the study was conducted in their mother tongue. The researcher attempted to overcome this limitation by assisting the participants with different words to express their experiences.

The second limitation was a lack of empirical research on disengagement from gangs within the South African context as well as a lack of literature specifically on Black gangs. Due to this, conceptualising the experiences or trends of disengagement and the experiences of the inner workings of Black gangs was limited. The available literature in the South African context is largely drawn from the media and from stories accessed from the internet. Therefore, this provided the rationale for conducting the present study.

The third and final limitation was that of access to participants. Originally participants were meant to be recruited from Nyanga solely. This was not possible, as those who previously stated that they would be interested in participating were no longer interested. As such, the participant pool was extended to include Langa.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs, how occupation is influenced, and how occupation facilitates and sustains their disengagement. This aim was achieved through conducting a qualitative study in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experience. An explorative approach was used as this was an under-researched field and the intent was to explore the participants' experiences of disengagement from gangs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow the participants the freedom to examine and explore their experiences to the extent they were able to connect with past events that they might have suppressed in order to cope. Debriefing was offered to the participants who felt that the experience might have re-traumatize them. None of the participants made use of the debriefing facilities but did state that the experience of telling their story was somewhat cathartic and allowed them to reflect on how far they have come.

The results of the study yielded a great deal of information and a rich depth of information with regards to the participants' experiences. The thematic analysis of the participants' experiences revealed that their main reasons for disengagement were related to their negative experiences within the gang, as well as pressure external to the gang such as family responsibilities. Furthermore, participants' reasons for disengaging included a measure of maturity, and no longer finding meaning in gang life as they once did when they were initiated into it. Participants' experiences of the process of disengagement revealed that many opted for a completely fresh start by moving away from their communities, and away from the snares of their ex-gang without informing them. This was done to protect themselves and so that they could devote all their attention to the new lifestyle they longed for. Other participants who were more embedded in the gang felt that they had no need to fear the gang, but rather that their gang needed to fear them. As such, they opted to stay in their communities but experienced backlash from their communities who did not trust them due to their previous gang engagments.

The study also explored how the participants' occupations were influenced or effected by disengaging from their gang. The main element the participants discussed was that of power.

Participants explored how they felt that a portion of their power was taken away from them when they disengaged. This was found to link closely with the concept of masculinity. By disengaging some members of their community viewed them as less of a man and as a result, would attack them or rob them. This was as a result of knowing the participants were no longer gang members, and as such, the amenities of gang membership were no longer extended to them.

As part of the study was understanding the process of leaving the gang, it was necessary to understand how participants sustained disengagement from gangs. The findings showed that for participants, what was essential to sustain their disengagement was positive influences and engagement in meaningful occupation. By having a positive influence, participants had someone whom they could model their behaviour on as well as someone who could support them when they were tempted to go back to their gangs. Engagement in occupation was found to be of great importance as it was occupation and the engagement in roles that gave the participants a new found sense of meaning and purpose. Engaging in their roles such as father, son, brother, and partner gave them a sense of pride and purpose as men. Participants also discussed their engagement in other occupations such as community projects, sports, arts and music as well as vocational activities as expanding on how they saw themselves as people and how they felt about themselves. This sense of being able to practice mastery gave them a sense of accomplishment that spoke to their sense of self and not just the sustainment of their disengagement.

6.2   Recommendations

This section provides specific recommendations for occupational therapy practice and education, community organisations and non-profit organisations, as well as for the Department of Social Development. In addition, recommendations for future research are given. The recommendations align with the aims and objectives of the National and Western Cape Provincial policies and strategies for young people.

The National Youth Policy for 2015 – 2020 (2015) is aimed at supporting the youth of South Africa to allow them to push through the shackles of oppression (social and economic) and strive towards a better future. It specifically deals with the areas of: economic participation and transformation, education skills development and providing second chances to complete

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education, health care and combating substance abuse, nation-building and social cohesion through better implementation of national youth services, broadening sports and recreational opportunities, and lastly providing effective and responsive youth development institutions. The Western Cape Provincial Strategic Plan for 2014 – 2019 (2015) is aimed at addressing and bridging the gap for young people that inhibit them from reaching their full potential. The specific strategies are to: create opportunities for growth and work; improve the education outcomes and opportunities for youth development; increase wellness and safety and tackle the social ills, and lastly to enable resilient, sustainable, quality and an inclusive living environment for all.

6.2.1 Recommendations for Occupational Therapy Practice

- Client-appropriate, gender-specific, occupation-based groups should be developed and implemented in order to provide sufficient treatment for all clients specifically in the area of emotional intelligence and distress tolerance techniques. These skills would assist the young men who disengage from gangs to deal with stress, and provide them with effective coping techniques so that they would not have to resort to risk behaviour to deal with uncomfortable emotions or experience. The Western Cape Provincial Strategic Plan's (2015) third goal is to increase wellness and increase safety as well as tackling social ills. The plan goes on to specifically discuss the social ills of gangsterism and substance abuse. This recommendation aligns specifically with this goal as it strives to remediate the social ill of gangsterism and equip young men disengaging from gangs with the necessary tools to sustain their disengagement.

- As part of community integration Occupational Therapists can facilitate community-based projects incorporating young men who disengage from their gangs to engage with their respective communities in pro-social, community-connecting activities. These projects could include sports, creative arts, dance, drama or leisure-based projects, incorporating the skills the young men have to offer. Other activities could include re-developing community facilities, by cleaning, fixing or rebuilding these facilities so they could be better used in the community. This recommendation is aligned with the Western Cape Provincial youth strategies as this recommendation aims at building a safe and inclusive community.

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6.2.2 Occupational Therapy Education

- It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on theory such as Occupational Justice as well as concepts such as doing, being, becoming and belonging, in the education of student occupational therapists. These concepts will assist the students to conceptualize their clients through an occupational lens, as well as promote their understanding of the effects of occupational injustice on the person, group and community.

6.2.3 Community and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

- State-owned or privately-owned community organisations should develop and facilitate programmes within the community, such as: after school programmes, sports groups, creative arts projects, leisure and recreation programmes, that provide for exploration and create spaces for free play, leisure and personal self-development. It is also recommended that these organisations consider employing an occupational therapist to facilitate these programmes, as the occupational therapist through facilitating these programmes would create safe spaces for young people to engage in meaningful occupation and reduce risk behaviour. This aligns with the Western Cape Provincial Strategic Plan (2015) in the second strategic goal, as it specifically looks at after-school programmes for young people. The National Youth Policy (2015) also aligns with this recommendation as it also speaks to creating safe spaces for young people to develop themselves and improve their educational opportunities, as well as providing opportunities for young people to engage in pro-social recreational and sports activities.

- Community organisations should consider assisting youth who are without work to engage in possible work readiness tasks with supervision, this could assist these young people with skills development as well as a work opportunity. This recommendation aligns with the Western Cape Provincial Strategy (2015) and the National Youth Policy (2015) as it addresses the area of work for young people, by providing them with work readiness skills to assist them in attaining work.

- Community integration for those who have disengaged from gangs should be encouraged by involving them in community service projects. The aim of this would be to assist those who have disengaged in rebuilding their image with their community and improving their social capital. This also aligns with Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous

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principles which look at the concept of service and humility. This creates an understanding of the suffering of others as well as an understanding of humanity and humility. This is to encourage sober thinking in the sense of the effect of one's actions on others and a reflection of how one's actions have positive effects on others. This recommendation aligns with the Western Cape Provincial strategies as well as the National Youth policy as it addresses the area of substance abuse, by assisting young men who have disengaged from gangs with their addictions as well as rebuilding their ties with their community for better integration into their community.

6.2.4 Department of Social Development

- In order to improve the quality of life of members in the community, it is recommended that Community Occupational Therapists be employed by the Department of Social Development in communities at risk to assess the main issues of the communities, develop and implement community-development strategies, and monitor and evaluate the efficacy of these strategies. An important component of a Community Occupational Therapist's function would be to mobilize the stakeholders of the community and facilitate community-driven resolutions. Specifically in the case of young men disengaging from gangs, Community Occupational Therapists would be able to offer relevant life skills programmes along with work training programmes, for example. In addition, providing prosocial leisure opportunities for young men allows for engagement in safe occupational opportunities. This will also provide opportunity for engagement in meaningful occupation and possible skills development for possible future vocational opportunities. These leisure activities could be provided as afterschool and weekend or holiday programmes. These programmes could facilitate in improving young people's education, physical, and artistic abilities. The National Youth Policy as well as the Western Cape Provincial strategies specifically align with this recommendation as the policy and strategies address the issues of risky behaviour by having young people engage in prosocial recreational activities, as well as wanting to improve young peoples' ability to engage in the open labour market.

- Substance abuse is an element of gang life, with all of the participants stating they engaged in some form of substance use. As a result, it is recommended to provide referrals to substance abuse rehabilitation centres, to assist in addressing the scourge of

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substance abuse. As substance abuse is one of the mentioned issues in the Western Cape Provincial strategies this recommendation aligns with it, as well the need to address the social ills of gangsterism.

- It is recommended that young men disengaging from gangs be provided with opportunities for them to complete their schooling or refer them to possible FET courses that they could complete in order to improve their opportunities for work. Also providing young people with work readiness courses such as CV writing, tax and financial planning, as well as interview skills. The National Youth Policy specifically speaks of creating second chances for those who have not completed their education by providing them with opportunities to develop the necessary skills so that they are able to find employment opportunities.

6.2.5   Future research

Several possibilities for future research emerged from the current study. These include the following topics:

- Exploring the effect of gang engagement on young men's psychological wellbeing and occupational performance.
- Exploring how social conditioning of culture and post-apartheid South Africa influences men of colour's view of self and role performance, in the South African context.

These areas are of concern particularly in South Africa, with the increase in gang violence and the increase in gender-based violence. Research in these areas would contribute to making informed decisions within government and legislation, as well as provide services in creating a safer South Africa for all. It would also inform the practice of occupational therapists who engage in therapy with men who come from impoverished areas as well as those who experienced trauma though gang involvement.

6.3   Conclusion

This study was conducted as the scourge of gangsterism was increasing in its brazenness and atrocious acts of violence and crime, turning communities into warzones in which the only solution was to deploy the armed forces, so that residents could feel safe. Gangs have for far too long held the community hostage, whereby residents did not feel safe in performing daily

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occupations as they fear being caught in the deathly showers of bullets. However, when young men do attempt to disengage from gangs, the findings of the current study highlighted a picture of fundamental exclusion and limited access to necessary services as well as access to prosocial public figures and role models.

In order for true change to occur, a mind shift would need to be created. We still live in a very divided land. As such access to resources as well as access to education would be the key that unshackles us from our past of not just social oppression but the psychological oppression that many people struggle with still today. Mandela once said "*Education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world*" *(1990).* This quote speaks to the fact that education needs to be taken up by all and used as vigorously as one would use when at war, to not only defend oneself, but to use it to advance one's position in life. May we do the same for ourselves and encourage others to do the same, in order to build a country that strives to bring back values of Ubuntu.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you would like to go far, go together

African Proverb.

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DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

18 January 2016

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:
Ms C Loubser (Occupational Therapy)

Research Project:	Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengagement from gangs, and the effect on their occupational performance.
Registration no:	15/7/86

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

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

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

A place of quality,
a place to grow, from hope
to action through knowledge

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 3151, Fax: 27 21-959 1440
E-mail: lwegner@uwc.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: **Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs and the influence on their occupational performance.**

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

Participant's name………………………..

Participant's signature……………………………

Date………………………

Consent Form   Version Date: 15 September 2014

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: **Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs and the influence on their occupational performance.**

Olu phando ndilucaciselwe ngolwiimi endilwaziyo kwaye endiluqondayo. Yonke imibuzo yam malunga noluphando iphendulwe. Ndiyaziqonda izizathu zokuthatha inxaxheba koluphando, kwaye ndiyavuma ukuba ndingenela ngokuthanda kwam. Ndiyaliqonda igama lam liyakuba yimfihlo kwaye aluxelelwa mntu ngumphandi. Ndiyaqonda ukuba ndinalo ilungelo lokuphuma koluphando nanini na, ngaphandle koloyiko nokunika isizathu.

Igama………………………..

Signature……………………………….

Usuku………………………

Consent Form   Version Date: 15 September 2014

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Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 3151, Fax: 27 21-959 1440
E-mail: lwegner@uwc.ac.za

FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM

Title of Research Project: Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs and the influence on their occupational performance.

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

I hereby agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.

Participant's name……………………………………..

Participant's signature…………………………………..

Date………………………

Focus Group Confidentiality Binding
Form

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Igama…………………………………………….

Signature…………………………………..

Usuku………………………

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<u>INFORMATION SHEET</u>

Project Title: Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs and the influence on their occupational performance.

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Occupational Therapy Department at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have disengaged from gangs (you have left the gang) and have sustained your disengagement through the use of healthy occupations (you have stayed out the gang). There is a lack of research in the area of disengagement strategies from a South African context. And through the use of your story of leaving the gang, it will help further research in understanding how young men leave gangs and stay out of them.

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

You will be asked to talk about how you left the gang, what the process of leaving was like. And what you do to stay out of the gang, there may be some follow up interviews to discuss some things previously discussed in more detail. The interviews will take place at the Oscar Mpetha High School where the Peace team conduct their groups. The focus group and the interviews will be conducted for an hour session at a time. The duration of the interviews may span over a year depending on the information give, as some information given by you may need to be discussed in more detail. The interviews will all be video recorded or voice recorded. The recordings are done so to keep a record of your exact word and as evidence for the research study. Without the recordings the researcher will have no proof to support the research study. As such it is important to have the interviews recorded. Once all the interviews are completed the researcher will transcribe (write out) exactly what is said on the recordings. The transcription will be used as written evidence to support the research.

___   I agree to be [videotaped/audiotaped] during my participation in this study.

___   I do not agree to be [videotaped/audiotaped] during my participation in this study.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, your identity will remain unknown through the use of pseudonyms (code name). Pseudonyms are used to identify each participant in the study and track what they have said in the interviews and focus groups, this will then be used in the research. Only the researcher will know your identity

To ensure your confidentiality, all recorded material such as video recordings or voice recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet in a storage facility at the University of the Western Cape in the Occupational Therapy Department. The only persons authorised access to the recoded material will be the staff who are involved in the study.

If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others in the future. In this event, we will inform you that we have to break confidentiality to fulfil our legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

This study will use focus groups therefore the extent to which your identity will remain confidential is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study. During the interview process you may be asked to speak about things that may bring up repressed memories or feeling. This may cause you some distress. In the event that this occurs debriefing facilities have been identified in Nyanga. You can attend this centre to help you deal with what you have experienced so that you will not experience any harm due to the study.

Etafeni Day Care Centre Trust: 021 386 1516
Sihume Road Nyanga
Cape Town
7750

After working hours 16:00 – 8:00

Lifeline SA: 0861 322 322

What are the benefits of this research?

The benefits to you include the opportunity to tell your story of engaging in gangs and being able to leave the gang life behind. Your story is important as it is a story of hope that shows one is able to make a change and make a difference in other's lives. It also gives you an opportunity to reflect on how far you have come and hopefully this will encourage you to continue on the path you are on.

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about how one disengages from gangs. Through this research we hope to have a better understanding of what it's like to leave a gang. This research could assist in developing disengagement programmes for people who are in gangs who want to leave gangs but are unable or unsure how to. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of disengaging from gangs.

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

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

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Cleo Loubser from the Occupational Therapy Department

at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Cleo Loubser at Tel: 021 959 3151 email: cleo_loubser@yahoo.com

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

Prof Lisa Wegner

Head of Occupational Therapy Department

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

lwegner@uwc.ac.za

Prof José Frantz

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

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

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 3151, Fax: 27 21-959 1440
E-mail: lwegner@uwc.ac.za

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Young men's perceptions and experiences of disengaging from gangs and the influence on their occupational performance.

Oluphando lungantoni?

Oluphando lwenziwa yiDeoartment yeOccupational Therapy kwi Dyunivesithi yeNtshona Koloni. Siyakumema uthathe inxaxheba koluphando ngesizathu sokuba utshintshe ubomi ngokuzikhupha kubomi bobugintsa kwaye ukuza ughubekeke ukuphila ubomi obutshintshileyo, obusempilweni ngokuthatha izigqibo nokwenza izinto eziphilisayo

Luncinci kwaye lunqabile uphando olwenziweyo emMzantsi Afrika ngobomi bokushiya ubugintsa. Ngokuthatha inxaxheba koluphando, kwaye nangokuva ibali lakho, uyakube unceda abaphandi babe noqondo olungcono malunga nabantu abangotata kwaye nabafana abashiya abatshintsha iimpilo zabo gnokushiya ubomi bobugintsa.

Ithini imibuzo endizakuyibuzwa ukuba ndithathe inxaxheba koluphando?

Uzakubuzwa ngokushiya ubomi bobugintsa, nohlobo owenze ngalo ukushiya obobomi. Kwaye uzakubuzwa ngendlela oqhubekeke ngayo ungabuyeli kobobomi. Kungabakho imibuzo ezakulandela le, ukucacisa ezinye izinto kakuhle. Imibuzo iyakwenzelwa eOscar Mpetha High School apho iqela lePeace ludibana khona. Lendibano yoluphando iyakuthatha iyure enye ngezesha. Ubude boluphando buyakuxhomekeka kwizinto ezivelayo kwezindibano zoluphando. Kuzakusetyenziswa ivideo nevoice recorder ukugcina imibuzo neempendulo zoluphando. Ngaphandle kwe. Ukugqitywa kwemibuzo, umphandi uzakuyimamela yonke into ethethiweyo aze ayibhale phansti ngohlobo ethethwe ngayo. Yonke imibhalo izakusetyenziswa koluphando.

___   Ndiyavuma ukurecordwa **[**videotaped/audiotaped**]** koluphando.

___   Andivumi ukurecordwa **[**videotaped/audiotaped**]** koluphando.

Inxaxheba endiyithathayo koluphndo izakugcinwa iyimfihlo?

Umphandi uyathembisa ukugcina igama nenxaxheba yakho iyimfihlo ngokukunika igama elingelolakho koluphando. Eligama lizakunceda ukugcina yonke into ethethwe nguwe koluphando. Izakuba ngumphandi yedwa olaziyo igama nobuso bakho koluphando.

Ukugcina igama lakho nenxaxheba othe wayithatha kolupohando, zonke iirecordings zizakutixelwa eDyuniversity yeNtshona Koloni, apho kungekhomntu onokufikelela kuzo, ngaphandle komphandi.

Ukuba kukho into ekhutshwa emaphepheni ngoluphando, igama lakho liyakuba yimfihlo.

Ngenxa yokulandela imithetho nemigaqo, siyanyanzeleka sichazele abantu ababekekileyo ukuba kuthi kuvele izinto ezidibene nokuhlukunyezwa kwabantwana, kwaye nabanye abantu. Ukuba kungenzeka njalo, umphandi uzakuxelela xa enyanzelekile azise abantu bomthetho ngegama lakho.

Oluphando luzakusebenzisa iqela labantu abazawthi baxoxe imibuzo ebuzwayo. Ubuso bakho buyakuvela kweloqela kuphela.

Zintoni izinto ezimbi ezingenzeka koluphando?

Ngexesha lemibuzo, ungacelwa uthethe ngezinto ezingavuselela umphefumlo kakubi. Leyo into ingakwazi ukuphatha kakubi. Ukuba kungenzeka njalo, zihkona iindawo eziseNyanga ezingakunceda uthethe. Ungaya kulendawo ukwenzela ungaziva kabuhlungu ngenxa yokungenela kolphando.

Etafeni Day Care Centre Trust: 021 386 1516
Sihume Road Nyanga
Cape Town
7750

Emva kweyure zomsebenzi 16:00 – 8:00

Lifeline SA: 0861 322 322

Zintoni izinto ezintle ezingenzeka koluphando?

Koluphando, uyakufumana ithuba lokubalisa ibali lakho apho uthe waphumelela ekushiyeni ubomi bobugintsa ngemva kwakho. Ibali lakho libaluleke kakhulu ekuncediseni abantu babe nawo amandla nesibindi sokuthatha isigqibo esifana nesakho. Kwaye ngokubalisa ibali lakho, ufumana ithuba lokujonga umgama osowuwuthathile ekutshintsheni ubomi bakho.

Oluphando alwenzelwanga ukunceda, kodwa iziphumo zalo zinganceda abaphandi babe noqondo olungcono ngabantu abathi bashiye ubomi bobugintsa, nezinto ezithi zenzeke kubo ekushiyeni ubomi bobugintsa. Oluphando lungancedisa abaphandi ekuqaleni iindlela ezingathi zincede abantu abafuna ukushiya ubomi bobugintsa. Sithemba ukuba bangabakhona abantu abangancedwa loluphando ekushiyeni ubomi bobugintsa.

Kunyanzelekile ndikhona koluphando, kwaye ndingayeka nanini na ndifuna?

Ukuthatha inxaxheba koluphando kuxhomekeke kuwe. Unalo ilungelo lokungavumi kwa ukungenelela kwasekugaleni. Ungakhetha ukuphuma ninini na xa uthe waziva ungasafuni ukuqhubekeka noluphando.

Ukuba ndinemibuzo?
Oluphando lwenziwa nguCleo Loubser kwiDepartment yeOccupational Therapy kwiDyunivesithi yeNtshona Koloni. Ukuba unayo imibuzo malunga noluphando, ungamtsalela umnxeba kule nombolo
Tel: 021 959 3151 email: cleo_loubser@yahoo.com

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Ukuba unemibuzo malunga noluphando, kwaye namalungelo akho, okanye ufuna ukuchaza ingxaki othe waba nazo ngoluphando, dibana okanye bhalela ababantu:

Prof Lisa Wegner

Head of Occupational Therapy Department

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

lwegner@uwc.ac.za

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Private Bag X17

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Oluphando luvunywe yi Senate Research Committee yase Dyunivesithi yeNtshona Koloni.

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