Young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during adolescence

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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Declaration

I, Marie-Louise van Heerden, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, the internet or any other source), the work has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements and the requirements of the University of Pretoria.

Marie-Louise van Heerden

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this mini-dissertation to all the residents of Cloetesville. Thank you that I could enter into your world for a short while.

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I would like to express my gratitude to:

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ABSTRACT

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Children and adolescents' have a right to safety, which should be provided in their home and schools as well as in their broader community. A safe environment helps to promote their well-being, both emotionally and physically. In South Africa, many communities are characterised by high levels of community violence. Adolescents, especially, are at high risk of exposure to community violence as they tend to spend more time in the community than in previous life stages. Research indicates that community violence can be experience in three different ways, either by victimisation, which is a direct form of exposure to community violence and by witnessing or hearing about community violence, which are both indirect forms of community violence.

Being exposed to community violence in any way can cause adolescents to experience, emotional, social, academic and physical difficulties. Gestalt theory, which formed the theoretical framework for the study, thus emphasises the holistic impact of community violence on adolescents. In addition, community violence negatively affects families and the entire community. This study focussed on adolescents' experience of community violence. For this purpose, data were collected from young adults who experienced community violence during their adolescent years. The goal of the study was to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during adolescence.

A qualitative study was conducted to gain information on the perceptions of a sample of young adults of community violence that they were exposed to during their adolescent years. The research findings are intended to inform social work practice, therefore, applied research was applicable. The instrumental case study research design guided the research, and data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews based on an interview schedule. Purposive sampling was used to select participants that had experienced community violence during their adolescent years, and snowball sampling were used to recruit 14 participants in Cloetesville, Stellenbosch.

The research findings showed that the participants were directly and indirectly exposed to high

levels of community violence. The participants described how this exposure affected them as adolescents, amongst others their emotions, freedom of movement in the community, trust in others, their social interaction and schoolwork, which still had an effect on them as young adults. However, high levels of community violence also affected the entire community. From the research findings, it is concluded that community violence can have detrimental effects on adolescents that could influence their current and future well-being and functioning.

Recommendations for practice include creating awareness in communities about the harmful effects of community violence, and implementing preventive and supportive services for individuals, families and communities to minimise the risk of exposure to community violence and mitigate the effects thereof. It is recommended that future research focus on the effects of community violence on persons from different age groups, for example children in middle childhood and the elderly, as well as on interventions that will empower individuals, families and communities to deal with community violence.

Key concepts:

Community violence
Types of community violence
Effects of community violence
Risk and protective factors in community violence
Exposure to community violence

SONG VIR SMARTIETOWN

The researcher conducted the data collection interviews in Afrikaans. Quotes from the interviews were translated into English to make the information accessible to a larger audience. The poem below was inspired by remarks by the participants and serve as an ode to all the participants in this study who shared their experience of community violence with courage in Afrikaans, their home language.

Song vir Smartietown

Dan vra ek Nênna, wat is dit wat so maak
dan sê sy nee tog, dis dan niks nie my kind
dan sê ek nee Nênna wat is dit wat so raas
dan sê sy dis seker die weer of die wind
dan sê ek, nee Nênna, dis mense wat praat
dis mos weer ‘n gunfight hier bo innie straat
dan sê Nênna my klong lê net stil en bid sag
dat die dwaalkoeëls ons mis in die huis, hierie nag
Dan sê ek, maar Nênna, wat van krismis dan nou
sal ons nog steeds more die krismis kan hou.
En sy sê
Ag Jirre hoe lyk dit vir Jóú?

Deur Linda Brink

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a country that is characterised by an extremely high prevalence of violence (Pelser, 2008:2; Western Cape Government, 2013:11). Violence involves the actions or threats involving physical force or power that are intended to cause physical or psychological harm to the self or others (World Health Organisation, in Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002:5). Community violence refers to acts of violence that are committed in the community with the intention to cause harm and result in injury, psychological harm, or death (Guerra & Dierkhising, 2011:1; Visser, Coetzee & Claassen, 2016:279). Community violence is committed outside a person's home, occurs in the community, in schools and other settings and is usually committed by persons outside of the family circle who may or may not be known to the victim (Krug et al., 2002:6). Community violence can include acts such as assault, being mugged, chased or attacked with a knife, hearing gunshots, and riots (Dinan, McCall & Gibson, 2004:733 & Kaynak, Lepore & Kliewer, 2011:258; Visser et al., 2016:279).

Community violence is characterised by its deliberate nature, meant to cause harm. Furthermore, community violence happens without warning and has negative effects on the intended victim/s as well as on the whole community (Hamble & Goguen, 2018). The negative effects of community violence can be experienced even though a person is not a direct victim thereof. Exposure to community violence can occur by directly experiencing the violent acts by others or indirectly by being a witness to or hearing about violence to other people (Sui, Massar, Kessels, Reddy, Ruiter & Sanders-Phillips, 2018:3). In this way, community violence is dividded into three subtypes: victimisation, witnessing community violence, and hearing about community violence (Fowler, Tomsett, Braciszewski, Jaccques-Tiura & Baltes, 2009:229).

Victimisation, also referred to as direct victimisation, refers to a person being the victim or object of harm caused by another person (Fowler et al., 2009:229; Sui et al., 2018:2). This type of community violence can include being the victim of assault or attempted assault, being chased, robbed, threatened, stabbed or shot (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby & Kracke, 2009:2, 7; Fowler et al., 2009:229). *Witnessing* community violence is a form of indirect exposure that involves seeing violent acts towards others, such as a person being threatened or injured, or harm to property. Witnessing can occur in person, social media platforms such as Facebook, or on television (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:297; Finkelhor et al., 2009:6). *Hearing* about community violence involves gaining knowledge about it through others by word of mouth and is also an indirect form of exposure (Fowler et al., 2009:229; Sui et al., 2018:2).

In addition, some authors distinguish between a narrow and a broader definition of community violence based on the location of the violence. The broader definition refers to violent incidents that can occur in the home, school, media and community, and includes both short-term and long-term or chronic exposure to these incidents. The narrow definition involves violence in public places by people not related to the person and excludes violence in the home, school and media (Louw & Louw, 2014a:420-421). This study focused on elements of both narrow and broad definitions of community violence, including either single events or long-term incidents of community violence in the wider community, in schools (excluding bullying at school) and on university campuses.

Community violence is a world-wide phenomenon and children worldwide, including children on the African continent are exposed to it (Bailey, 2011:144; Brown & Walklate, 2012:343; Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:295). This form of violence is also one of the most prevalent forms of violence that children in South Africa are exposed to (Collings, Valgee & Penning, 2013 in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:294) and numerous studies highlight South African adolescents' exposure to community violence in their neighbourhoods (*c.f.* Kaminer, Du Plessis, Hardy & Benjamin, 2013a, Martin, Revington & Seedat, 2013, Shields et al., 2013, as cited in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:293). In all ethnic groups, violence is more prevalent in low socio-economic areas (Hertweck, Ziegler & Logsdon, 2010:207; Otwombe, Dietrich, Sikkema, Coetzee, Hopkins, Laher & Gray, 2015:6; Van der Merwe, Dawes & Ward, 2012:77).

The study focused on young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during adolescence. Adolescents are the most vulnerable age group for exposure to community violence and are victimised at double the rate that adults experience victimisation; a situation that is especially true for violent crimes (Pelser, 2008:2). Numerous factors make adolescents more susceptible to community violence. It is a tendency all over the world that children from low economic and poorly resourced communities and communities with high levels of alcohol and drug abuse, as well as children exposed to multiple types and events of community violence are the most vulnerable to be exposed to direct and indirect community violence (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:63, 65; Bailey, 2011:114-115; Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner & Holt, 2009a:323-325; Wilkinson & Carr, 2008:1045). Furthermore, parenting practises such as supervision of children and discipline of their children, walking to school, association with deviant peers as well as personal factors such as gender, age and poor self-control can put children at higher risk for exposure to community violence (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:66; Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:301; Lane, Rubinstein, Bergen-Cico, Jennings-Bey, Fish, Larsen & Robinson, 2017:455).

Community violence tends to have harmful effects on adolescents' overall well-being. Firstly, community violence is seen as a traumatic event that may result in symptoms related to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM-5, 2013:17). Furthermore, numerous studies point to the negative effects of exposure to community violence on the different domains of children's and adolescents' functioning; the emotional, cognitive, social, physical and normative domains. Exposure to community violence has been linked to psychological problems such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); externalising behaviours such as aggression and anti-social behaviours; academic problems, as well as physical problems such as sleeplessness, psychosomatic problems and injury (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:300; Bailey, Delaney-Black, Hannigan, Ager, Sokol & Covington, 2005:345; Fowler et al., 2009:227; Louw & Louw, 2014a:421). Furthermore, exposure to community violence is associated with poor academic performance and school-related problems and the normalisation of violent behaviour (Borofsky, Kellerman, Baucom, Oliver & Margolin, 2013:382; Hart & Kirstonis, 2006:3).

Community violence does not only affect an individual, but it impacts on the whole community. Community violence can bring forth emotions of anger, fear and suspicion (Foster, 2012:25). The harmful effects of community violence can have a negative influence on a community's economy and resources. Community violence can, for example, impact on the sustainability of small businesses, negatively affect the property market in the neighbourhood, and increase health care costs (Centre for Disease… 2013). The vandalism caused by community violence can have a significant impact on school structures, and unnecessarily depletes the education department's available resources to rebuild or replace what was damaged (Ngqakamba, 2019).

Violence is modelled behaviour, and children and adolescents repeat the violent behaviour they witness in their communities and at school. If that behaviour is not punished, it is strengthened and the culture of violence continues (Burton & Leoschut, 2012:iii; Ward, 2007:27). Violent behaviour is also strengthened when people want to solve most of their problems by using violence, of which rioting about University fees is an example (Otwombe et al., 2015:7). With the high levels of violence in South Africa, Donenberg, Donenberg, Naidoo, Kendall, Emerson, Ward, Kagee, Simbayi, Vermaak, North, Mthembu & Mackesy-Amiti (2020:145) view the exposure of the fast-growing adolescent population in South Africa as a public health crisis. A specific concern is that adolescents' frequent exposure to community violence may result in desensitisation; thus, blunting of their emotional responses to violence and normalising violence as normal (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Savahl, Isaacs, Adams, Carels & September, 2013:589).

Although most children seem to be resilient and function well amidst conditions of community violence, it is important to explore and enhance protective factors that can reduce risk and lower the impact of community violence on the well-being of children and adolescents (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:303; Copeland-Linder et al., 2010:178). Protective factors can be found in individual characteristics such as an adolescent's internal locus of control and self-esteem; family characteristics such as warm and positive parenting styles; a supportive school environment and positive peer interactions and community characteristics such as supportive social networks and positive adult role models (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:305-307; Ahin & Antunes, 2017:75-76; Copeland-Linder et al., 2010:3, 10; Donenberg et al., 2020:146; Jain, Buka, Subramanian & Molnar, 2012:122).

The participants of this study were young adults who were asked to reflect on their experiences of community violence during their adolescent years. Adolescence is known as a time where many changes happen, which include physical changes like rapid growth and changes in the way that adolescents think and view the world (Arnett, 2016:448; Louw & Louw, 2014b:306-307). As adolescence is the transition between childhood and adulthood, adolescents are expected to become increasingly independent and self-reliant in preparation for their adult roles in society (Louw & Louw, 2014b:303-304). Although their cognitive development allows them to think more like adults, the processes in adolescents' cognitive development also make them more prone to risk-taking behaviours (Arnett, 2016:366-367; Louw & Louw, 2014b:323-324). Adolescents' social environment widens, and the peer group and peer influence become a more prominent aspect of their lives (Santrock, 2009:395; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:426). Their movement into the wider social environment may increase the likelihood that adolescents may be exposed to community violence. Both male and female adolescents are likely to be exposed to community violence (Aisenberg, Ayón & Orozco-Figueroa, 2008:1571).

In young adulthood, many changes also occur. These changes are characterised by emotional and financial independence from their parents (Arnett, Žukauskienė & Sugimura, 2014:569). The reason why young adults were selected as the sample for this study rather than adolescents, was because of the increased cognitive development of young adults. They are thus better equipped to reflect on their lives since they can process information about themselves better (Diamond, 2002:491; Santrock, 2009:433). Since adolescents are the age group that is most severely affected by community violence, knowledge about adolescents' experiences and thought processes on this matter can provide insights that can help social workers and other professionals to provide more effective services to lessen the adverse effects of community violence.

1.2 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts that will be used throughout the study will be explained below to ensure that the meanings of all the words are understood within the context that the researcher intended.

Community violence: Violence is defined as an intentional act that causes harm (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002:5). Community violence can be defined as "deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against a person in the community (i.e., neighbourhood, school, other public places)" (McCart, Smith, Saunders, Kilpatrick, Resnick & Ruggiero, 2007:434). Aisenberg et al. (2008:1557) define community violence as violent occurrences in the person's environment outside the home. Community violence is thus different from domestic violence since domestic violence is perpetrated by family members and usually done within the family home. **Exposure to community violence** can be experienced directly through victimisation or indirectly through either witnessing it or hearing about it (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby & Kracke, 2009b:1). The focus of this study was on direct and indirect exposure to community violence in the community, as well as witnessing or hearing about in on television and the social media, but excluded domestic violence, as indicated in the above definition, and bullying in schools, which are much-researched topics in itself (*cf.* Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Lucas, Jernbro, Tindberg & Janson, 2016; Makhosazana Kubeka, 2008; Salmivalli, 2010; Schraft, Kosson & McBride, 2013).

Adolescent: A child is considered an adolescent when he or she is between 12 and 18 years of age. In this life phase, considerable biological and psychosocial changes occur. These changes are essential to prepare the adolescent for life as an adult (Louw & Louw, 2014b:304). The physiological changes that adolescents experience include, among others, a growth spurt and sexual maturation. Although these changes are physical, adolescents need to accept it on an emotional level as well (Louw & Louw, 2014b:306, 310). Furthermore, adolescence involves the development of independence, the formation of a personal identity and, on a cognitive level, the development of logical and abstract thought (Santrock, 2009:17).

Young adult: Arnett (2016:27) defines young adulthood as the stage where adolescents are becoming adults and taking on adult responsibilities like choosing a career or choosing a life partner. In the literature, the term 'young adult' is associated with various ages. Some describe a young adult as a person between the age of 18 and 29 years (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008:604; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010:5). Others consider a young adult to be between 18 and 22 years old (McRae, Gross, Weber, Robertson, Sokol-Hessner, Ray, Gabrieli & Ochsner, 2012:11) and yet other researchers sees young adults as a person between the ages of 22 and 27 (McAdams, de St Aubin & Logan, 1993:226) or between 18 and 35 years of age (Arnett

in Santrock, 2009:417). For the current study, a young adult is defined as a person between the ages of 20 and 25 years old.

Perception: The Oxford Advanced Learner's Encyclopaedic Dictionary (1992:664) defines perception as the ability to see, hear or understand concepts and the quality in which to do so. Perceptions are how a person sees and understands a situation. Perception is thus a subjective concept that is unique to each individual. A person's perception can change when new information occurs or with growing intellect and understanding of that specific situation. Dhringra & Dhringra (2011:63) states that a person's perception helps him or her to give meaning to the environment; this is done by being aware of one's surroundings and making use of their senses. In this study, perceptions will refer to how young adults interpret the community violence to which they were exposed during adolescence.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gestalt theory formed the theoretical framework for this study. Gestalt theory was developed by Fritz Perls (1893-1970) and his wife, Laura Perls, as a reaction to psychoanalytical theory (Corey, 2013:193; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:215; Fall, Holden & Marquis, 2010:203). The Gestalt perspective assumes a positive view of people as having the ability to successfully cope with their lives if they are aware of themselves and of their environment (Corey, 2013:196; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:216).

The fundamental Gestalt principle *holism* state that "people are an entity, both within themselves and in their environment" (Blom, 2006:22). The person as a total organism functions as an entity, including the body, emotions, thoughts, language and behaviour, but is dependent on the environment for meeting his or her needs (Blom, 2006:22; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:217). Holism implies that all elements in the world are interrelated and that a person is an active part of the complex ecological system consisting of people, animals, plants and things (Blom, 2006:22). People must therefore be understood in the context of their continuous interactions within their environment (Corey, 2013:194). Parlett and Lee (2005:55) point out that the self and the environment is so interchangeable that it can be challenging to identify where the one begins, and the other one ends.

Homeostasis is a state of being where a person's needs are met, and where a person relies on the ability to make contact with the environment. This state of being can only be achieved through *self-regulation*, which refers to the process in which a person meets his or her needs (Blom, 2006:23; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:217). Self-regulation implies that an individual will continuously experience physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs, and that these needs will cause an individual to experience discomfort up to the point where these needs are satisfied, and a stable equilibrium or *homeostasis* is reached (Blom, 2006:24).

Needs can be met either from within the self or from the environment. For self-regulation to take place, a person must have full *awareness* of the self and the environment to become aware of a need and make *contact* to meet the need. According to Gestalt theory, awareness implies that in a certain set of circumstances and at a certain time, an individual will make full use of all five senses, namely smell, vision, touch, hearing and taste, whereas contact refers to the person's engagement with the environment to meet a need that he or she has become aware of (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:217; Schoeman, 2019:59). Contact, which is seen as a central element in life, is made through the functions of looking, touching, listening, tasting, smelling, talking, and moving. Contact occurs at the *contact boundary*, which refers to the psychological boundary that forms the exchange between the person and the environment (Corey, 2013:199; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:218).

Gestalt theory believes that people strive towards self-regulation and have the capacity to be self-regulating and to develop and grow (Corey, 2013:194; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:216; Schoeman, 2019:11). A person's ability to self-regulate will depend on the resources within the person's environment, as well as the resources within the person (Corey, 2013:197). When an environment is not supportive, it obstructs self-regulation and hinders a person from living as a holistic entity (Blom, 2006:24). Fall et al. (2010:206) explain that different elements in the environment can be experienced on a continuum; from supportive to toxic, with a neglectful environment someplace between the two. A supportive environment will provide what will be required to meet the person's needs; however, the person's needs cannot be met in a neglectful environment. The toxic environment refers to a harmful environment in which a person's needs are met in unhealthy ways.

As a protective mechanism, a person may experience interruptions and resistance when continuously in contact with an adverse environment (Corey, 2013:199). This reaction occurs as people adjust the functioning of the contact boundary to the nature of the environment; either becoming too penetrable, too impenetrable or fluctuating between the two (Fall et al., 2010:206). In Gestalt theory, these interruptions are known as *contact boundary disturbances* and can include projection, retroflexion, introjection, egotism, confluence and desensitisation (Blom, 2006:32-39; Corey, 2013:199-200; Schoeman, 2019:43). Because of contact boundary disturbances, people no longer have the ability to be aware of the self and the environment and they cannot make sufficient contact, which impairs their ability to self-regulate and to meet their needs (Blom, 2006:31). In an environment that is chronically unsupportive, the continued prevalence of contact boundary disturbances leads to maladjustment (Fall et al., 2010:209).

Gestalt theory therefore emphasises the person's experience in his or her environment. Reiterating the principle of holism, a person cannot be understood in isolation from the

environment. Henderson and Thompson (2016:216) state “there is no meaningful way to understand a person if that human is considered apart from the person’s interactions with environment or interpersonal relations.” In addition, Gestalt theory emphasises the importance of the person’s interpretation of his or her experiences. As explained by Fall et al. (2010:203), Gestalt theory “is grounded on the assumption that meaning is best derived and understood by considering the individual’s interpretation of immediate experience."

From a Gestalt perspective, community violence creates adverse environments which may have negative effects on people’s awareness, contact and self-regulation. Within the framework of this study, community violence can be associated with the development of non-supportive and toxic environments, may impact on the holistic functioning of adolescents, and increase the risk of maladjustment. In this regard, evidence supported by literature indicates that community violence has a negative effect on the psychosocial adjustment of individuals (*cf.* Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Louw & Louw, 2014a:422; Savahl et al., 2013:589).

The effects of community violence on people’s holistic functioning can be linked to the Gestalt principles of phenomenology and existentialism. Phenomenology focuses on the person’s perceptions of his or her reality, whereas existentialism focuses on the person’s lived experience or reality and their capacity for growth (Corey, 2013:194). The goal of the study was to explore and describe the participants’ perceptions of (and thus the meaning they ascribe to) their lived experience of community violence during their adolescent years

1.4 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa as a country that experiences high levels of violence (Foster, 2012:23) and research points to the high prevalence of community violence in the country (*cf.* Du Plessis et al., 2015; Kaminer et al., 2013a; Otwombe et al., 2015; Statistics South Africa, 2016; Stansfeld, Rothon, Das-Munshi, Mathews, Adams, Clark & Lund 2017). Although community violence can happen in any neighbourhood, it is more likely to occur in low-income communities (Hertweck, Ziegler & Logsdon, 2010:202; Kaminer, Hardy, Heath, Mosdell, & Bawa, 2013b:326; Malherbe & Häefele, 2017:108). Many young people in South Africa cannot escape the grip of community violence and are exposed to it on a daily basis (Kaminer et al., 2013b:321; Savahl et al., 2013:579). Collings, Valgee and Penning (2013 in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:294) identified community violence as one of the most prevalent types of violence that South African children are exposed to. Donenberg et al (2020:145) view the high level of community violence as a public health issue in South Africa. Adolescents, both male and female, are at higher risk of being exposed to community violence as they move into the wider social environment (Aisenberg et al., 2008:1571).

Community violence has substantial effects on adolescents' lives and can affect different domains of their development and functioning, namely the physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and moral domains. Exposure to community violence can put adolescence at risk for physical problems such as insomnia or injury; cause them to experience internalising problems such as PTSD, anxiety and depression, and externalising problems such as aggression; lead to poor academic performance and school drop-out as well as involvement in high-risk groups or gangs and substance abuse (Kaminer et al., 2013b:320, 327; Louw & Louw, 2014a:421; Savahl et al., 2013:582). The Gestalt principle of holism explains that every part of an adolescent's life is connected. If adolescents, for example, have been victimised as a result of community violence, it may affect their emotional well-being as well as their trust in other people (Henderson & Thompson, 2011:228). This principle highlights that exposure to community violence affects adolescents' entire well-being.

High levels of exposure to community violence can further cause adolescents' reactions to the violent events to change over time. These reactions can include blunting of emotions, desensitisation towards violence, and a general perception that violence is normal (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Mash & Wolf, 2016:301; Savahl et al., 2013:589). Emotional numbing and changes in perceptions may be used as a way to protect themselves against the impact of community violence (Donenberg et al., 2020:150; Gaylord-Harden, Cunningham & Zelencik, 2011:717). Over time, this mentality can make adolescents believe that violence is the only way to solve a problem because that is the daily example they receive from their communities (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7); an aspect that can have a spiralling effect and contribute to increased violence in communities. Donenberg et al. (2020:145) advise that the harmful effects that community violence can have on the fast-growing adolescent population in South Africa, should be mitigated to contribute to future stability in the country.

In South African, social work follows a developmental approach to social welfare, in which developmental social work "aims to promote social change through a dual focus on the person and environment and the interaction between the two" (Patel, 2015:127). To give effect to the developmental approach, the Framework for Social Welfare Services provides guidelines for the implementation of welfare services in the country (Department of Social Development, 2013:5). The Framework explains different levels of service delivery, namely prevention, early intervention, statutory/residential/alternative care, and reunification and aftercare (Department of Social Development, 2013:29-30), of which the first two levels are highlighted for the purpose of this research study. Prevention focuses on "strengthening and building the capacity, self-reliance and resilience of service beneficiaries while addressing individual, environmental and societal factors to create conditions that enhance or support wellness" and

thus the prevention of problems; whereas early intervention focuses on “the early identification of risks, behaviour and symptoms in individuals, groups and organisations that could negatively impact on social well-being” and thereby mitigate the impact of risk and prevent the progression of social problems” (Department of Social Development, 2013:29). Information on how adolescents perceive community violence could provide valuable insight into appropriate interventions on these two levels of service delivery.

The aim of this study was thus to explore young adults' perceptions of community violence that they were exposed to during their adolescent years. In their study on children’s perceptions on violence in New Zealand, Carrol-Lind, Chapman & Raskauskas (2011:12) emphasise the importance of exploring children’s views on the topic, as the meaning that they assign to their experiences does not necessarily correlate with the meaning that adults attach to them.

The **research question** that will guide the study will be: *What are young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during their adolescent years?*

1.5 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to explore and describe young adults’ perceptions of community violence experienced during adolescence.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To theoretically conceptualise community violence and contextualise it within the South African context
- To explore and describe how participants were exposed to community violence during their adolescent years
- To explore and describe participants’ perceptions of community violence as a phenomenon during their adolescent years
- To explore and describe participants’ perceptions of the effects of community violence on them during their adolescent years
- To make recommendations for social workers who provide services to children, adolescents and families exposed to community violence.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used to inform the study and place focus on the experiences participants have and the meaning they assign to it. This approach enabled the researcher to gain knowledge of real-life experiences of community violence that young adults experienced during adolescence (Fouché & Delport, 2011a:63; Ivankova, Cressswell & Clark, 2016:309;

Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:53). Interpretivism was used as the research paradigm because it stems from the belief that a person's reality is formed by their environment rather than being determined by facts (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60-61). Applied research was appropriate for this study because the data that was gained might be used to guide service providers to render services to address community violence (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94-95). The researcher explored the participants' perceptions on the topic and present a description thereof in this research report, in line with an exploratory and descriptive purpose of the study (Bless eat al., 2013:60-61; Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95-96).

A case study design was best suited for this study since allowed the participants to share their perception in a personal manner with the use of interviews (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:81-82). This design enabled the researcher to understand the phenomenon of young adults' perceptions rather than focusing on a specific case (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). Therefore, an instrumental case study design delivered the best results as it allowed the researcher to explore and describe the participants' perception of the phenomenon of community violence (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321-322; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82-83).

The population for the study included young adults in South Africa who have been exposed to community violence as adolescents, either directly or indirectly (Strydom, 2011a:223; Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012:272). Implementing a non-probability sampling method, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who matched the inclusion criteria, and the best way to gain access to the participants where the researcher did not have knowledge of the sampling frame, was through snowball sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198; Strydom & Delport, 2011:393). The final study sample consisted of 14 young adults between the ages of 20 to 25.

To obtain rich, detailed information from the participants on their perception of community violence during their adolescent years, semi-structured interviews were conducted as it was the most suitable data collection method (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:92). An interview schedule with 11 open-ended questions guided the interview and allowed the researcher to elaborate on questions and themes when the participants were unclear or when the researcher felt more information was needed to gain a better idea of what the participant described. (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012:277). To ensure the effectiveness of the interview schedule, a pilot study was conducted with one participant (Strydom, 2011b:237). Thematic analysis was used as a data analysis for this study (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015:223-224). Trustworthiness formed an important part of this study to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of the research findings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123;

Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:419). Ethical aspects were maintained throughout this study and included aspects such as voluntary participation and informed consent, avoidance of harm, confidentiality, debriefing and no deception (Babbie, 2017:64; Kumar, 2011:218; Strydom, 2011:115-124).

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher identified the following limitations of the study:

- The sample size was small; it consisted of 14 participants. All the participants were from the same geographical area. Furthermore, all the participants were from the same race, and all were from a low economic background.
- Rich data were collected; however, the above factors imply that the research findings cannot be generalised to the larger population.

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The research report consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1: General Introduction to the research report

In this chapter, a brief overview of the study was given as a background to the following chapters. The chapter included a general introduction to the research topic, a description of the theoretical framework of the study, the rationale and problem statement as well as the goal and objectives of the study. Lastly, a brief summary of the research methodology was provided, and the limitations of the study were stated.

Chapter 2: Literature review on community violence

In this chapter, a discussion of community violence based on existing literature will be provided and will include aspects such as the conceptualisation of community violence and the effects of community violence with specific reference to the possible effects that community violence has on adolescents, as well as risk and protective factors related to adolescents' exposure to community violence.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and research findings

In the third chapter, information will be given on the research method that were used in the study. The ethical considerations that guided the researcher in the implementation of the study will also be discussed, and the empirical findings will be presented and discussed.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and recommendations

The key findings of the study as well as the conclusions and recommendations that come from the findings will be presented in the fourth chapter. The researcher will furthermore indicate how the objectives of the study were accomplished and the research question was answered.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Community violence is a complex and challenging phenomenon that has adverse effects not only on the victim, but on the entire community (Hamble & Goguen, 2018). Adolescents are the most vulnerable age group for exposure to community violence. Thus, for many adolescents in South Africa, community violence has become normalised. It becomes part of their culture since they have been exposed to community violence in many different environments that were supposed to be safe, like their homes, schools and immediate neighbourhood (Pelser, 2008:2).

The study focused on young adults' recollection of their experience of community violence during their adolescent years. This chapter contains a review of literature on community violence and its effects, with specific focus on adolescents. Community violence will be conceptualised, the prevalence of and risk factors associated with community violence will be discussed, and the effects of community violence on adolescents will be highlighted. In conclusion, a brief overview of the adolescent life stage and young adulthood will be provided.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Community violence can be experienced either directly through victimisation or indirectly by witnessing violence or hearing about it from others (Finkelhor et al, 2009b:1). The effects of community violence are widespread. It overwhelms families and destroys communities; it also rips apart the social fabric of society (Western Cape Government, 2013:2). The focus of this study was on different forms of community violence in South Africa as experienced or observed in the community, or observed in images on television or social media, but excludes violence in the home and bullying in schools.

To develop a clear understanding of what community violence is, violence *per se* will first be defined and then the term community violence will be explored according to its three subgroups, namely victimisation, witnessing it, and hearing about community violence. Lastly, the three subgroups of community violence will be explained practically to see how they tie into one another.

2.2.1 Defining violence

Before community violence can be explored, the term violence must first be understood. The World Health Organization (in Krug et al., 2002:5) defines violence as follows:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

There are three broad categories of violence: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. Each of the above categories can be organised into sub-categories (Krug et al., 2002:6):

- *Self-directed violence* can be divided into self-abuse and suicidal behaviour. The latter includes suicidal ideation which includes suicidal thoughts as well as attempted and completed suicides. Self-abuse includes harmful acts such as self-mutilation. Self-directed violence can thus be seen as acts where a person is causing harm to the self.

- *Interpersonal violence* consists of the following two categories: family and intimate partner violence and community violence. Family and intimate partner violence is defined as violence primarily between family members and intimate partners. This form of violence usually takes place in the home and can include but is not limited to violent acts such as elderly abuse, intimate partner violence and child abuse. The second category of interpersonal violence, namely community violence, entails violent acts mostly committed outside the home in the community, schools and other institutional settings, by non-family members. The perpetrator may or may not be known to the victim.

- *Collective violence* is the last type of violence and has three sub-categories, namely social, political, and economic violence. This type of violence can be executed by large groups of people, by individuals or by the government, and there is usually a greater motivation behind these violent acts. Social agendas that might contribute to collective violence are hate crimes by organised groups, mob violence and terrorist acts. War is an example of political violence. Economic violence is mostly committed in large groups, and the goal is to disrupt economic activity by creating division and fragmentation; this can be done by denying people access to vital services.

The researcher believes that interpersonal violence, as well as the subdivisions in collective violence, can also be seen as community violence since those violent acts will instil hurt in not only the intended victims but also innocent bystanders. Therefore, it can be said that community violence can be distinguished as a type of violence but cannot be separated from violent acts.

2.2.2 Community violence as a type of violence

Guerra and Dierkhising (2011:1) define community violence as social acts of violence that are committed in the community to intentionally cause harm. Visser et al. (2016:279) view community violence as *interpersonal violence* and provide the following definition thereof:

> *… community interpersonal violence … [is] defined as physical violence that occurs in the community and is committed by a stranger/strangers resulting in injury, death or psychological harm. Community violence refers to violence experienced in society by individuals from the same geographical setting or from other or distant regions. In this context, community interpersonal violence revers to being a victim or experiencing violence such as assault by strangers, vehicle hijacks, property crimes, shooting, or murder. This definition does not include domestic violence, child abuse, or sexual violence.*

Hamble and Goguen (2018) make a distinction between community violence and other trauma by saying that community violence is irregular and happens without warning. The unpredictable nature of this violence causes communities to experience an increase in fear and concern about their safety. Community violence has an extensive range and impacts on the community as a whole, instead of just affecting an individual or a small group of people. A final distinction made by Hamble and Goguen (2018) about community violence, is that this violence is always intentional and meant to cause harm. Community violence can include but is not limited to: assault, getting slapped, hit, punched, being chased by gangs or older children, being beaten up or mugged, riots, being subjected to severe physical harm or emotional abuse, hearing gunfire outside when in or near a home, harm to property, being shot, drive-by shootings, vehicle hijacking, being attacked with a knife and widespread sexual assault (Dinan et al., 2004:733; Hamblen & Goguen, 2018; Kaynak et al. 2011:258; Visser et al., 2016:279; Thomas, Carey, Prewitt, Romero, Richards & Velsor-Friedrich, 2012:55).

Community violence can be experienced directly, referring to personal experience of violent acts by others, or indirectly, referring to witnessing or hearing about violence to others (Sui et al., 2018:3). As such, community violence is generally divided into three subtypes, namely victimisation, witnessing, and hearing about community violence (Cecil, Viding, Barker, Guiney & McCrory, 2014:846; Kliewer, Lepore, Oskin & Johnson, 1998:207; McDonald, Deatrick, Kassam-Adams & Richmond, 2011:925; Voisin, Bird, Hardestry & Shiu, 2011:2488). Each of these subgroups will be explored in more detail below.

2.2.2.1 Victimisation

The first subgroup of community violence is victimisation. This type of violence is referred to as direct victimisation (Sui et al., 2018:2) since the person is the direct and intentional recipient of the harm caused. Fowler et al. (2009:229) define victimisation as “having been the object

of intentional acts initiated by another person to cause harm." In this case, the victimisation is thus directed towards the child or person, rather than the incident being witnessed or heard about (Finkelhor et al., 2009a:7). Different types of victimisation can include being chased or robbed, assault or attempted assault by another child, or being threatened, beaten, shot or stabbed (Finkelhor et al., 2009a:2, 7; Fowler et al., 2009:229). Other forms of victimisation may include vehicle hijacking, property crimes or murder (Visser et al., 2016:4).

Finkelhor et al. (2009b:1) conducted a study for the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV), which was a national survey to explore the wide range of violence that children in the United States of America have been exposed to in different age groups, settings and timeframes. Of the children who participated in the study, 38,7% reported having been a direct victim of violence. What is more concerning, is that those children who have been exposed to direct victimisation had a considerably higher risk to be exposed to another type of violence later in life. It was found that children's exposure to incidences of victimisation increased as they grow older (Finkelhor et al., 2009:8).

Victimisation is usually not an isolated event in children's lives. Finkelhor et al. (2007:19) use the term poly-victims to describe children who are exposed to more than four types of victimisation in a given year. For example, a child will experience assault and verbal abuse by peers, physical and emotional abuse by educators, sexual victimisation at home and community violence in the neighbourhood, such as hearing gunshots, all in a short period. These children, who have been labelled 'poly-victims,' are not rare. Poly-victimisation tends to persist over time (Finkelhor et al. 2009a:316). Kaminer et al. (2013a:120) found that poly-victimisation has become a common phenomenon in South Africa and for adolescents, high levels of poly-victimisation seem to be of the order of the day. Poly-victims are also more at risk of developing complex trauma during their lifespan (Finkelhor et al., 2011:2).

Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor and Hamby (2016:208) conducted a study in America to explore clusters of youth with specific victimisation profiles. They sampled 2 312 adolescents ranging from 10 years to 17 years in age. They first conducted a telephonic interview with the caregivers to get background information and subsequently with the youth participants. The results from the interviews were as follows: 8,4% of the participants were victims of violence in the home, 20,8% were victims of school violence, 21,3% were victims of violence in the home and school, 5,4% were victims of community violence, and lastly, 17,8% of the participants were poly-victims. That leaves a relatively low percentage (26,44%) of the participants who were not a victim of a crime.

Victimisation undermines adolescents' normative beliefs, as well as their stability and support. It also undermines adolescents' perception of individual agency, it disrupts their social

network, and it increases negative ideation among adolescents (Macmillan, 2001:19). Furthermore, there is a direct link between violent victimisation and the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Dinan et al., 2004:727-728).

2.2.2.2 Witnessing community violence

The second subgroup of community violence is witnessing community violence, which is an indirect form of exposure to violence in which the adolescent was not the intended target of the violence but was affected by the violence in some manner (Sui et al., 2018:2). Witnessing violence entails that one physically sees violence being inflicted upon others, for example being an eyewitness to events involving injury or threats of injury, death, or harm to property (Fowler et al., 2009:229). Social media platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, have made it possible to witness violence from within one's own home. This form of exposure to community violence tends to increase as children grow older and their social environment widens (Finkelhor et al., 2009:6).

In a study by Voisin et al. (2011:2484) where they conducted in-depth interviews with 23 African American high school learners it was found that gun violence was the most common form of violence exposure in the community. There were three possible explanations for this; one is that young people use guns as their weapons of choice. The second explanation is that witnessing gun violence might be more memorable since it is more dramatic and traumatic. Finally, guns might be more accessible in communities that are known to be violent.

Staub (2018:97) highlights the notion that witnesses of violence know what is happening and can thus intervene in the event. The author believes that people often do not help others, because they have learned to suppress their reactions in public or feel less responsibility towards other people (Staub, 2018:98). McMahon and Banyard (2012:11) summarise previous research that revealed that witnesses of violence will base their decision to help a victim on the size of the group of people and whether the witness is known to either the victim or the perpetrator. The decision to help a victim or not is not a simple one, as there are other reasons why a bystander does not help victims, for example, the witness might be afraid, be in disbelief of what is happening, or does not know what to do (Van der Zande in Ngakane, 2012:44). Another reason people do not get involved when they witness community violence is because they have a sense of loyalty to the perpetrator committing the violent act (Anthony, 2018). Witnesses will help a victim if the rewards will be more than the barriers to helping the victim (Anthenien, Neighbors & Rosa, 2017:28).

McMahon and Banyard (2012:10) suggest that witnesses to violence should be proactive so that social norms can change and that communities can be created that do not tolerate violence. In America, there are numerous programmes to help witnesses become proactive in

violent situations. During workshops, people are taught to assess a situation and then to intervene safely so that the witness and the victim are not injured. The Green Dot programme is one of these interventions (Coker, Cook-Craig, Williams, Fisher, Clear, Garcia & Hegge, 2011:4). C.R.I.M.E, which is another programme, aims to instil values of compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation and empathy in bystanders to reduce violence. The programme also aims to instil the above values in perpetrators of violence by making them aware of their harmful behaviour so that they seek out help for that behaviour to change (Hellum, Siler, LaTierra Tellis, Ratcliff, Shannon & Bulanda, 2011:27).

Witnessing community violence can also occur in the daily news and reality shows. Watching the news on television can have more negative than positive effects on adolescents. If adolescents regularly see their community in the news for being violent and cruel, they can internalise a sense of marginalisation, powerlessness, and despair (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:297) which will negatively affect their self-esteem. Research that was conducted after the Boston Marathon bombing in the United States, showed that regularly seeing violence in the media can also make an adolescent hyper-vigilant and always searching the media to see if the area that they are visiting is safe. This constant state of stress can have long term effects on adolescents, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or even developing cardiac problems (Holman, Garfin & Silver, 2014:95).

Social media has also become a widely accessible medium where adolescents can be exposed to community violence. Meyrowitz (1985:6) explains that the natural boundaries that existed between electronic media and the community have almost become non-existent. Access to and the use of social media has reached new heights since Meyrowitz made his observation. Marwick and Boyd (2011:115) suggest that social media have changed how information is accessed. People can now immediately react to wrongdoing they come across in communities and have the freedom and the platform to express their negative feelings about the wrongs they observe in their communities. King, Walpole and Lamon (2007:67) have a more negative view of the influence of social media. They state that the internet has provided a platform for anti-social behaviour to thrive. Community violence has become entertainment, and the internet platform makes it easy for people to feed off the shame, humiliation, and pain of others. Social media has an influence on gang-related violence as well. In a quantitative study, King et al. (2007:66) found that 74% of gang members that were respondents in their study stated that they were frequently on the internet to establish an online presence to gain respect for their gang. Access to social media means that community violence can be witnessed in a child's home without the parents even knowing about it. Since community violence can be witnessed on the streets, in homes, and on social media, some children have nowhere they can feel safe (Perry, 2001:1).

Kliewer and Lepore (2015:10) found that adolescents who witnessed community violence are more reluctant to talk to their parents about what they saw. The authors provide different reasons for this reluctance; one being that adolescents are scared that their parents might exert more control over their lives. Another reason might be that parents could restrict their activities and thus limit their freedom, and finally, adolescents could be frightened of their parents' reaction if they told them what they have witnessed (Kliewer & Lepore, 2015:10).

Although this section focuses on witnessing community violence, either in person or via electronic media, note can be taken of the views of Gentile (2014:134) on the main effects of watching violent entertainment. Firstly, violent content can cause an adolescent to become desensitised. That means that an adolescent will have a reduced cognitive, emotional, or behavioural reaction in response to watching a violent incident. Being desensitised can cause a witness of a violent act (in the media or real life) to have less empathy with the victim of violence. On the other hand, adolescents can become more violent due to watching violent content. They can also become fearful and perceive the world as a violent place against which they need to be protected. Finally, watching violent content causes one to want to watch more violent content, whereby a person develops a desire for violence (Gentile, 2014:134).

Adolescents who play violent games are more affected by its violent content than they would have been by watching violence on television; a phenomenon ascribed to the interactive nature of games. Games of this nature can increase aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and can lead to a decrease in prosocial behaviour (Gentile, 2014:151; Louw & Louw, 2014c:217; Stadler, 2012:337-338). Cartoons contain an alarming number of violent acts; 20 to 25 violent acts per hour to an average of six violent acts in most family orientated shows. The same tendency is true for movies, with animation movies containing far more violence than non-animated movies (Louw & Louw, 2014c:215).

It should be noted that not every adolescent who watches violent content and plays violent games will be affected by the adverse effects of this type of violence. Adolescents that are at risk to display negative outcomes are those adolescents who have ineffective problem-solving skills, poor emotional regulation and who tend to have a hostile personality. Weak parental control will also affect whether an adolescent shows adverse symptoms (Louw & Louw, 2014c:217). Adolescents who extensively watch violent television shows, and who then identify with the violent heroes in the show, can become more aggressive. They will also be likely to imitate violence, crime, and even suicidal ideation that they have seen on the screen (Louw & Louw, 2014c:216). Research has found that it is not the extent to which adolescents watch media but rather the content of what they watch that can influence their behaviour (Louw & Louw, 2014c:180; Ward, 2007:16). Although watching violent media content is not the

primary risk factor for aggression and violence, it still is a contributing factor to that type of behaviour (Anderson, Bushman, Bartholow, Cantor, Christakis, Coyne, Donnerstein, Brockmyer, Gentile, Green & Huesmann, 2017:143). Stadler (2012:338) highlights that adolescents who are exposed to violence in their homes and the community will be more vulnerable to the violence that they see in the games they play. Being exposed to different types of violence daily can make violence seem normal.

2.2.2.3 Hearing about community violence

The third subsection of community violence is hearing about violence. As with witnessing violence, hearing about community violence is also an indirect form of exposure to this form of violence (Sui et al., 2018:2). Hearing about violence requires a person to gain knowledge of violent acts performed upon others, through word of mouth (Fowler et al., 2009:229).

Although researchers recognise hearing about community violence as a method of exposure, not many studies have been done on this type of exposure. Scarpa, Hurley, Shumate and Haden (2006:7) pointed out that they were the first researchers, to their knowledge, to do research solely on the effects of hearing about community violence. The researchers used surveys to indicate the lifetime exposure to community violence that 518 male and female undergraduate students faced. The results were sorted into high, moderate or low scores of hearing about community violence. The study concluded that 97,8% of the respondents heard about community violence at least once in their lifetime, whereas most of the respondents heard about more than one incidence of community violence. The respondents in the study reported that most community violence that they heard of was committed close to their home and school, and that most of the perpetrators of community violence in the study were non-family members. The violent act that the respondents heard about in the study was being chased, being threatened, mugged, attacked or stabbed with a knife, being sexually assaulted, being shot and being killed (Scarpa et al., 2006:13). The findings show that the more the respondents heard about community violence, the higher their symptoms of depression, PSTD, aggression and interpersonal problems (Scarpa et al., 2006:17, 19).

Kennedy and Ceballo (2014:74) believe that adolescents who hear about community violence will have the same symptoms as they would have if they were victims of or if they witnessed violent events, though to a lesser degree. However, it is generally accepted that closer proximity to incidents of community violence may result in stronger psychosocial effects on children (Fowler et al., 2009:229). The authors refer to different studies that confirm that children who were closer to the violent events experienced stronger effects than those who were not. Victimisation, for example, thus showed higher levels of depression and PTSD

symptoms when compared to witnessing or hearing about community violence (Fowler et al., 2009:229; 250).

Scarpa et al. (2006:17) were also interested in finding out if the location where the violent event took place had an effect on the symptoms that the respondents experienced. They found that the location did not have a significant effect on the symptoms, except for higher levels of PTSD found when they heard that someone had been chased close to their home, as opposed to close to the school, and higher levels of both depression and anxiety when they heard someone was carrying a gun or knife at school versus at home.

Horowitz et al. (1995:1357) conducted a study where 79 urban adolescents were asked to fill in a survey about community violence and domestic violence in order explore a possible link between a violent event and PTSD symptoms. The respondents for the survey reported that they heard about community violence between 200 to 400 times, however, this number was difficult to quantify because the respondents mentioned that they heard of community violence "all the time." The study found that some of the respondents would minimise the importance of hearing about community violence because they thought it was less significant than witnessing or being a victim of community violence. However, the combination of hearing about community violence every day and being victimised themselves made the respondents feel that they have experienced the violent event that they heard of themselves or that they are helpless to prevent it from happening to them in the future. Being exposed to community violence daily, left them with a lowered sense of safety. The respondents indicated that they did not receive much support from people outside of their family. The girls in the study indicated that they did not trust their peer group. Coping strategies to deal with community violence involved isolating themselves from the community by denying and avoiding what has happened (Horowitz et al., 1995:1359). The study lastly found a disconnection between the respondents' dreams and their reality in that their dreams served as a fantasy to draw hope from rather than a goal-orientated plan to aspire to (Horowitz et al., 1995:1360).

In conclusion, research highlights the negative effects of exposure to all types of community violence on children's socio-emotional functioning. In general, victimisation was found to result in higher levels of externalising and internalising problems and poorer emotional regulation than witnessing or hearing about community violence, while no difference was found in the prevalence of PTSD symptoms in exposure to the three types of community violence (Fowler et al., 2009:249-250). Voisin et al. (2011: 2494) found that while boys are more likely to witness and be victims of community violence, girls are more likely to hear about violent events in the neighbourhood. This finding can be because parents more closely monitor girls and girls attempt to deal with the violence that they have heard about by staying indoors. Girls are at

high risk to develop mental health symptoms when they hear about violence done to someone they know (Javdani, Abdul-Adil, Suarez, Nichols & Farmer, 2014:244). Aisenberg et al. (2008:1571) report that males and females experience community violence in the same way and that the negative effect of community violence can come from either witnessing or being a victim of violence. Although more research is needed on the precise dynamics of exposure to community violence, research shows that multiple levels of violence may have the strongest effects on the person (Fowler et al., 2009:250).

2.2.2.4 Connecting the three subgroups of community violence

In South Africa, Harris (2001:3-4) conducted a comprehensive study on vigilante behaviour, particular in Cape Town. Through an explanation of what vigilantes are and the methods they use, a clear picture could be obtained of all three subgroups of community violence, namely victimisation, witnessing violence and hearing about violence done to others.

In the post-1994 era, vigilantes were considered to be community members fighting crime. This view has, however, changed, and although the term ‘vigilante’ still stayed the same, the meaning behind the term is different. Vigilantes are people from the community that see themselves as "filling a policing gap" in the community. They believe that they are fighting crime. Vigilantes work according to a model of instant and punitive justice. They react emotionally, and their actions are based on hearsay evidence. Vigilantes share the following qualities: their methods are public, there is always violence or a threat of violence present, their methods serve as a punishment as well as a warning, and they generate fear and control through suppression in the community (Harris, 2001:4, 40).

One example of vigilante behaviour is when a criminal tried to break into a resident's home. The resident woke up and caught the burglar. He tied him up. The resident’s neighbours woke up from the noise, and they went to the resident’s house. The resident was assaulting the burglar. Some of the neighbours came to help the resident to assault the burglar, while the rest watched what was happening. After four hours of beating the burglar, the resident and the witnesses took off the burglar’s clothes and painted him. Then they led the burglar outside and tied him to an electrical box for the rest of the community to see that a crime had been committed (breaking and entering) and that punishment had been given (Harris, 2001:24). Although only one man was victimised and a few men witnessed the act of the assault, this event affects the whole community since everyone is going to discuss the painted man and what happened to him the previous night. The description of this situation illustrates victimisation (of the perpetrator of the crime), witnessing the public violent situation by the bystanders, as well as hearing about the violence when people start to talk about the incident in their community.

2.3 THE PREVALENCE OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Community violence is not a problem only in South Africa, but it is a worldwide phenomenon. In this section, an overview of the phenomenon internationally as well as in South Africa will be presented.

2.3.1 The prevalence of community violence internationally

Children worldwide are being exposed to community violence (Bailey, 2011:114). The World Health Organization (WHO) compiled a report, the Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014, that highlights data from 133 countries, covering 6.1 billion people and representing 88% of the world's population (Butchart & Mikton, 2014:viii). The findings of the report show that there were an estimated 475 000 deaths in 2012 as a result of homicide. Sixty percent of those who died were males aged 15 to 44 years; homicide was the third highest cause of death for males in this age group. Regions of America had the highest number of homicides, followed by regions in Africa. The study found that women, children and older people are the primary targets of violence worldwide, falling victim to physical, sexual and psychological abuse.

It is unclear how much of the reported crime in the WHO report (Butchart & Mikton, 2014:viii) was community violence. With such high crime rates, however, it is clear that people's lives are imbued with community violence in some form or another, since hearing about community violence also qualifies as exposure to violence (Horowitz et al., 1995:1358). Bailey (2011:115) states that children living in urban communities are more likely to experience community violence either directly or indirectly; therefore, children who live in poor socio-economic communities are also at higher risk of exposure to community violence.

International studies highlight that children's exposure to community violence is a world-wide problem. Studies in the United States of America found that an estimated 38% of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 years had witnessed community violence (Zinzow et al., 2009 in Wright, Austin, Booth & Kliewer, 2017:364). Aisenberg et al. (2008:1556) describe community violence as "a persistent and significant public health problem throughout the United States, especially with regard to children and adolescents."

A literature search by the researcher suggests that most of the studies on community violence have been conducted in the United States of America. In terms of violence in Europe, Sethi, Raciopppi, Baumgarten and Vida (2006:7), in a World Health Organization report on injuries and violence in Europe, found that there is limited data available. The study does not refer to community violence as a specific type of violence. In a study on Palestinian youth, Haj-Yahia, Leshem and Guterman (2013:16) report that nine out of ten Palestinian adolescents have

witnessed some form of community violence. A large percentage of the youth have also been exposed to direct community violence in the form of victimisation. A significant portion of the youth in Palestine has been exposed to a lifetime of community violence.

In terms of research on community violence on the African continent, Foster and Brooks-Gunn (2015:3) refer to studies in four African countries that show high levels of exposure to community violence by children and adolescents in these countries. Children and adolescents in South Africa and in Gambia experienced high levels of exposure to community violence. One study in South Africa, for example, found that 68% of the young adolescents in the study witnessed or were victims of violence (Ward et al., 2007 in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:295). In Gambia, 86% of children have witnessed acts of violence in the community, and 48% were victims of community violence (O'Donnell, Roberts & Schwab-Stone, 2011 in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:295). Children in Sierra Leone and Rwanda were more likely to be exposed to war-related violence (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:296). The authors conclude that more international studies on children's exposure to community violence must be conducted and point specifically to "other areas in Africa as well as the Global South inclusive of the Middle East, Latin America and developing Asia" (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:297).

2.3.2 Prevalence of community violence in South Africa

South Africa has a problem with violence in the country (Foster, 2012:23). Community violence is identified as one of the predominant types of violence that children in South Africa are exposed to (Collings, Valgee & Penning, 2013 in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:294). The youth in South Africa experience violence in all areas of their life, in their home, school and the community. Violent behaviour is often rewarded in all areas of the adolescent's life, strengthening the pro-violent models and messages that even the political leaders convey (Ward, 2007:27). In a national school violence study, it was revealed that by the time adolescents go to high school, most of them have already been exposed to violence either directly or indirectly. In the study, the authors draw a direct correlation between violence in the community and violence at school. It is rare that an adolescent will display violent behaviour at school if he or she did not first experience violence in the community or at home (Burton & Leoschut, 2012:iii).

Foster and Brooks-Gunn (2015:293) summarise the findings of quantitative studies on community violence that were conducted in Cape Town. In one study, it was found that 68,4% of adolescents have been exposed to community violence, either as a witness or a victim of the violence (Ward et al., 2007 in Foster & Brooks-Bunn, 2015:293). In a study by Shields et al. (2009 in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:293) on the exposure of children and adolescents to community violence in their neighbourhood, 58,1% of children and adolescents indicated that

they have seen someone being attacked with a weapon and 92% indicated that they have seen someone hitting someone else. Other South African studies on children's exposure to community violence (Kaminer et al, 2013, Martin, Revington & Seedat, 2013, Shields et al., 2013, as cited in Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:293) found that 32,5% to 40% have seen a person being killed or have seen the corpse of a murdered person in their neighbourhood.

In Soweto, South Africa, Richter, Mathews, Kagura and Nonterah, (2018:181-182) conducted an extensive longitudinal cohort study, collecting data from more than 2000 participants from birth until they were 22 years old. The researchers identified 280 data points relating to exposure to and committing violence in the analysis of their data, looking at the following categories: exposure to violence by seeing or hearing about it in the community, school and home; exposure to peer violence; being a victim of violence excluding sexual violence; being a victim of sexual violence; and perpetrating violence. At the end of the study, only 1% of the sample did not have any exposure to violence in any of the categories. Furthermore, two-thirds of school-age children were exposed to community violence such as seeing someone assaulted or hearing gunshots and this figure was higher among adolescents. These findings emphasise that community violence in South Africa is an epidemic and that few children can escape from this epidemic scot-free (Richter et al., 2018:184-185).

Altbeker, as cited in Ward, Van der Merwe and Dawes (2012:5), states that it is not the volume of criminal activity that is worrying in South Africa, but rather the extraordinary violence that comes with the crime. This point is emphasised in a study by Harris (2001:24) when a community member from a township in Cape Town explained that when they see someone in the community getting beaten up and the witnesses start to scream, the perpetrator will stop beating the victim and start to beat the witness that made a noise. In South Africa, it is thus hazardous for a witness to intervene in the violent acts that they observe since they can put their own lives in danger. Furthermore, there is a tendency in South Africa that people think that their voices can only be heard when violence is present in their communication, for example when there is a violent protest about wages or when people show physical violence in a bar fight (Otwombe et al., 2015:7). Children of South Africa are thus being exposed to violent images throughout the day (Akande, 2000:74).

Violence is more prevalent in low socio-economic areas in all ethnic groups (Hertweck et al., 2010:207; Otwombe et al., 2015:6; Van der Merwe et al., 2012:77). Females are more prone to witness and experience violence in the family, while males are more prone to witness and experience violence in the neighbourhood. Male adolescents also seem to have greater involvement in violence, due to them spending more time in the neighbourhood (Kaminer et al., 2013a:121; Western Cape Government, 2013: 12). According to a study in Johannesburg,

it was more common for adolescents in that study to witness violence rather than to experience it physically (Otwombe et al., 2015:6)

In South Africa adolescents from the Black, White and Coloured population groups are more prone to experience violence than adolescents from the Indian population group. This tendency is seen to have a direct correlation with alcohol consumption that is less in the Indian culture. Alcohol and violence usually go hand in hand - if alcohol consumption is reduced, violent behaviour will most likely decrease (Otwombe et al. 2015:6,236; Ward, 2007:16). Fincham, Altes, Stein and Seedat (2009:198) point out that Black and Coloured adolescents experience more community violence than White adolescents. The reason for this is because the majority of Black and Coloured adolescents are living in neighbourhoods that are characterised by substance abuse, poverty and repeated exposure to violence. In Coloured neighbourhoods, violence is even more widespread since there is a high prevalence of gang activity. It is possible that many adolescents who live in Coloured communities have family members who belong to a gang (Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008:598). These adolescents are thus frequently exposed to violent behaviour and influenced by violent thoughts.

Crime and violence are not new occurrences for South Africa. Cunliffe-Jones (2013) gives a brief overview of the crime rates in South Africa, confirming this statement. In the mid-1980 period crime levels in South Africa dramatically increased. It was between 1994 and 2002 that South Africa became known as a country with one of the highest levels of violent crime in the world, and crime levels reached a peak in 2002/2003. From 2002/2003 through 2012/2013 reported crime levels started to decline, although this decline was not reflected in the neighbourhood's sense of safety. Cunliffe-Jones (2013) concludes that the decrease thus could not be attributed to lowered crime levels but rather to inaccurate statistics that were provided by the Government and the South African Police.

Crime statistics in South Africa are reported in four broad categories, namely contact crimes, contact-related crimes, other serious crimes, and crimes detected as a result of police action (South African crime stats ..., 2019). All the above categories can include community violence since it is a matter of where the crime took place, rather than what the crime is, that qualifies it as community violence as per its definition. There is not a specific category for community violence in the country's crime statistics; thus, it is unclear how many of the crimes reported in South Africa qualify as community violence. Underreporting of crime in South Africa is of great concern in the country. Crime will only be reported if either the victim or the perpetrator feels the violent behaviour needs police attention. Even if the crime is reported the police can disregard the claim and state that it is a personal matter (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:8).

The annual police report on the crime rates in South Africa is given for the term 1 April of the previous year to 31 March of the current year. Both murder and sexual offence crimes have increased in 2016/2017. The police recorded a total of 19,016 murders for this term. The statistics for 2017/2018 show that this rate has risen to 20,336 murders, showing an increase from 34.1 per 100,000 people to 35.8 from the previous term. In 2017/2018, an average of 56 people were murdered every day. The sexual offences category include crimes such as rape, compelled rape, sexual assault, incest, bestiality, statutory rape and the sexual grooming of children. These categories experienced an increase in numbers. In 2017/2018, a total of 50,108 sexual offences were recorded by the police; this number has increased from the 49,660 in 2016/2017. The highest incidence of the sexual offences recorded was rape (Factsheet: South Africa's …, 2018). These numbers are a clear indication that both crime and violence in South Africa are still huge problems and that a feeling of safety in the country cannot be derived from these statistics.

South Africa is an extremely violent country. A person is six times more likely to be murdered in South Africa than in an America. Police officers are not excluded from these statistics. Police officers in South Africa are also six times more likely to be killed in the line of duty than in America. South African police officers are twice as likely to use lethal force as American police officers (South African police …, 2015). Merten (2008) reports that during the 2017/2018 financial year 759 deaths were caused by a police officer, where 201 people died in police custody and the remaining 558 people died as a result of police action. What is more, 43 on-duty police officers were investigated for rape and 217 complaints of police torture were made; showing that South Africa police officers also take part in criminal activities. Knoetze and Grant (2019) explain that when a police officer commits a crime, the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) must investigate the case. A whistle-blower from the organisation, however, reported that from 2014 to 2016, cases were prematurely completed for the statistics to appear better than what they actually were. Knoetze (2019) reveals that between April 2012 and March 2019 there were 42 365 criminal complaints against the police in South Africa, which included charges of torture, assault, killings and rape, and only 531 of those cases resulted in convictions. In 2019 a report showed that the South African Police Service is the most corrupt public service sector, overtaking the health department, schools and local government. The two main offenses by the police force are an abuse of power (35,7%) and accepting bribery (30,6%). It is alleged that, due to the patronage network of corruption within the police force, corrupt police officers are protected, and the whistle-blowers, in turn, are vulnerable (South African police…, 2019). It appears that the rise in crime rates against persons in South Africa is being met with limited police response (Dinan et al., 2004:278).

South Africa has laws to protect the human rights of every person in the country. The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2, sections 7 to 39, in the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996), ensures that fundamental human rights are being upheld. The Bill of Rights is arguably the part of the Constitution that has the most significant impact on life in this country, stated as follows: "This Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom" (The Constitutional Court of South Africa, 1996). Section 24 of the Constitution of South Africa states that “everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing." Section 28 of the Constitution states that "every child has the right (d) to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation." The research results on South African children’s exposure to violence and community violence, as discussed earlier in this chapter, suggest that the vast majority of children and adolescents are not living the life that the Constitution has set out for them.

2.4 RISK FACTORS FOR BEING EXPOSED TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Numerous factors make children and adolescents more susceptible to exposure to community violence, including parenting styles and family characteristics, poly-victimisation, entering school, and peer interactions. There are personal factors as well as community characteristics that contribute to children’s higher exposure to community violence.

2.4.1 Parenting styles and family characteristics

A parent’s influence on an adolescent’s life can either serve as a risk factor or a protective factor in terms of children’s exposure to community violence and how a child experiences violence (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:63; Liang, Yu, Chen, Xie, Wu, Xing, Huang & Dou, 2019:7). Parenting practices, discipline, and routines play a significant role in determining their children’s experiences, behaviours and outcomes (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:65). Parenting styles have a significant impact on adolescents and the way that they view violence. In a home where a parent cares for the child's needs, that child will grow up with positive values such as empathy and guilt. In a home where a parent does not care for a child’s needs and where the discipline is harsh and unreasonably strict, a child will not develop empathy and guilt, which would make them more predisposed to violent behaviour (Lamb, 2019:376; Ward, 2007:17; Ward & Ashley, 2013:44). Hitting children as a form of discipline can influence the way a child perceives violence, and it can cause more harm than good later in the child’s life (Foster, 2012:47). Aisenberg and Herenkohl (2009:301) mention that low parental monitoring and supervision is a risk factor for outcomes of exposure to violence for youth.

The parents’ role in how their children are exposed to violence is even more than their parenting practices. Parents who are dysfunctional open their children up to be vulnerable to

be mistreated, not only in their homes, but also in the community (Turner et al., 2016:213). Of importance, is that community violence can also affect parental well-being and their capacity to fulfil their parental role adequately. Parents who are overwhelmed by stressors or affected by trauma my feel overwhelmed, which limits their ability to safeguard their children (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:302). Children who are raised in an unstable home environment have a higher risk of being exposed to violence (Turner et al., 2016:213). Finally, Foster (2012:47) emphasises the vital role the family plays in forming the violent scripts that a child will carry with him or her through adolescence to adulthood, if the script is not changed along the way.

2.4.2 Poly-victimisation

Some children are at risk for different types and multiple events of violence. Finkelhor et al. (2009a:323-325) identified four risk factors with regard to poly-victimisation. Firstly, living in communities that are characterised as being dangerous, typically a low-income community, increases children's risk of exposure to multiple violent events. Secondly, living in a family that is prone to violence will affect an adolescent's risk of being exposed to violence in the community as well. Thirdly, violence is more likely to occur in households where there are difficulties such as unemployment, marital problems, financial problems, and substance abuse, and lastly, adolescents who experience emotional distress and have problems to regulate their emotions and behaviour will be more frequently subjected to all types of violence, including community violence. Foster (2012:47) has identified further risk factors: firstly, he repeats that a low socio-economic status community plays a role in violence exposure. The second risk factor is a patriarchal ideology that continues to persist in South Africa, which refers to the belief that a male should dominate over a woman in a way that a male sees fit. This mentality, if not stopped, will flow over to the next generation and thus the violent cycle of domination or perceived domination will continue, thereby adding to the violence that far too many women and children already experience. Donenberg et al. (2020:149) confirm the high rates of community violence exposure and poly-victimisation among South African adolescents.

2.4.3 Entering school and peer interaction

Another risk factor for being exposed to community violence is merely entering school in Grade 1 and again entering secondary school. As children and adolescents enter these establishments as being the youngest in the school and not having a previously established friendship networks, it makes them more vulnerable to violence at school. Violence at home can also increase in those years since parents must deal with the demands of the school and the child and with adolescents' newfound independence. Many parents resort to violence to cope with this stress, and may use violence as a method of punishment, either emotionally or

physically (Finkelhor et al, 2009a:235; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7). Lane et al. (2017:455) refer to earlier research that found that walking to school can put children at higher risk of being exposed to community violence.

Adolescents who drop out of school can become more vulnerable to exposure to violence since they can be bored and take part in high-risk behaviour (Ward, 2007:22). Generally, association with deviant peers, especially if socialising is unstructured and without any agenda or supervision, can increase a young person's risk for exposure to community violence. Such an environment increases the risk for young people to themselves become involved in criminal activities and heightens their risk for violent victimisation (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:66).

2.4.4 Personal risk factors

Children's individual characteristics can be a significant predictor of exposure to community violence (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:65). Research shows that personal factors such as gender, age and developmental level can influence risks related to exposure to community violence. It has been consistently found that males are at higher risk of exposure to community violence than females (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:298). This was also found in a South African study, where boys are significantly more exposed to community violence than girls (Donenberg et al., 2020:149).

Adolescents are less likely to avoid harm and consider the negative consequences of their behaviour, which makes them more susceptible to risk-taking behaviour (Ward & Ashley, 2013:44). Therefore, adolescents' age can be a risk factor since they are more prone to experience community violence and more likely to hear about violence than younger children (Shields, 2008:599). Adolescents tend to spend long hours per day on the internet, playing computer or video games, and watching television. Watching violent media content is not the primary risk factor for aggression and violence; however, it still is a contributing factor towards aggressive and violent behaviour (Anderson et al., 2017:142-143).

Van der Merwe et al. (2012:55) point out that some adolescents are more likely to experience community violence due to individual characteristics. These factors include the adolescent's personality traits such as being more dramatic, having a short attention span or being hyperactive. Youth who are impulsive and have poor self-control are at higher risk of exposure to community violence (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:65). Substance abuse also affects adolescents' exposure to community violence. Being under the influence of a substance can impair adolescents' ability to monitor and regulate their behaviour, which increases their risk of becoming either a perpetrator or a victim of community violence (Otwombe et al., 2015:2; Ward, 2007:16). Being victimised plays a role since children who have experienced community

violence are more predisposed to experience violence again (Van der Merwe et al., 2012:55; Lane et al., 2017:455).

2.4.5 Community characteristics

Lastly, community characteristics can present risk factors that make violence more likely to happen in one environment and not in another. One of these characteristics is the absence of informal social control, meaning that the members in the community do not follow norms and the law that is commonly accepted in society. Characteristics that go against prosocial norms include alcohol and drug use, the presence of lethal weapons, the lack of law enforcement responses, and the role that events play in shaping violent scripts that contribute to destructive norms being followed. Other contributing factors include group solidarity and loyalties and the absence of a resolution to violent conflict amongst opposing sides. All the above factors contribute to a more violent community (Wilkinson & Carr, 2008:1045). To be able to decrease violence in the community, the community's attitude towards violence as both a means to an end and a symptom of the community must change (Cooley-Strickland, Quille, Griffin, Stuart, Bradshaw & Furr-Holden, 2009:142). Staub (2018:109) states that the environment will have a less harmful effect if the social culture is positive and people's attitude towards each other is kind.

Community characteristics such as concentrated poverty, densely populated urban areas, poor housing conditions, limited economic opportunities, limited resources, substance abuse, the availability of firearms, high levels of inequality, and lack of social cohesion and informal social control, can contribute to higher levels of community violence (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:298-299). Children from poor and disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more likely to be exposed to community violence as these neighbourhoods have fewer resources and positive role models (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:63, 65).

Furthermore, adolescents living in rural areas are more likely to experience community violence (Foster, 2012:44; Meinck, Cluver, Boyes & Loening-Voysey, 2016:912). Ozer, Lavi, Douglas and Wolf (2017:362) point out that in many rural neighbourhoods, shootings take place in public places, for instance near stores or schools and even close to people's homes. That makes it difficult for adolescents to navigate their daily life and safety and increases their risk of experiencing violence (Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2015:298).

Warford (2009:1) explains that being a victim of community violence either directly through victimisation or indirectly through witnessing or hearing about violence, can have intensely damaging effects on adolescents. These effects are discussed next.

2.5 THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE ON ADOLESCENTS

Adolescents in South Africa are exposed to large volumes of direct and indirect violence daily (Shields et al., 2008:598). Violence exposure impairs adolescents' functioning and development as well as their physical, mental and social health (Centers for Disease …, 2013; Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Lambert, Boyd, Cammack & Ialongo, 2012:1; McGill, Self-Brown, Lai, Cowart-Osborne, Tiwari, LeBlanc & Kelly, 2014:1; Savahl, et al., 2013:579; Sui et al., 2018:2). Research on adolescents' exposure to community violence confirms the detrimental effects on aspects such as their safety, health, and their psychosocial functioning (Aisenberg & Herekohl, 2009:297). The effects of exposure to community violence on the mental health of South African adolescents is regarded as "gravely concerning" (Donenberg et al., 2020:149). Because of that, adolescents may present with multiple symptoms (Suliman et al., 2009:125). Ward (2007:16) believes that in South Africa there is not a sufficient emphasis on education about the harmful effects that violence has on human life. Different effects of community violence will be discussed in this section.

2.5.1 Community violence as a trauma-causing factor

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) sees exposure to violence as a form of trauma. According to the DSM-5, exposure to traumatic events could entail either direct exposure to the traumatic event, witnessing the event, or learning about the trauma that happened to other people (DSM-5, 2013:271). That means that the three types of community violence, which is victimisation, witnessing and hearing about violence (Cecil et al., 2014:846) all qualify as a traumatic experience. It is, however, important to note that trauma is subjective, and therefore people experience situations differently. However, people who are traumatised will, nevertheless, display adverse effects because of that situation (Black et al., 2012:192).

Children older than six years, adolescents and adults who have been exposed to traumatic incidents, may display symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM-5, 2013:271). The symptoms may include but are not limited to experiencing intrusive memories, flashbacks and recurrent dreams about the traumatic event as well as avoidant behaviour, either avoiding talking about the event or the feelings that went with it or avoiding things that serve as a reminder of the experience, such as place, people or objects. Trauma can also cause mood and behaviour change in people, for example having anger outbursts or the inability to feel happiness. It can also cause physical symptoms like hypervigilance, sleep disturbances, or difficulty to concentrate (DSM-5, 2013:271-272).

Suliman, Mkabile, Fincham, Ahmed, Stein and Seedat (2009:125) report that girls are more likely to show symptoms after a traumatic event than boys. They also found that being exposed to multiple traumatic events will increase the likelihood of experiencing PTSD, anxiety or

depression as opposed to experiencing one traumatic event. Briere and Scott (2015:517) explain that trauma is complicated and that different traumatic events will lead to different symptoms. The age of a person during the traumatic event will also have an influence on the type of symptoms that will be exhibited; most likely, a cluster of symptoms will be experienced.

Evidence exists that witnessing violence, and not only being a victim of violence, can have adverse effects on children and adolescents. For example, a National Survey of Adolescents found that 32% of boys who had witnessed violence participated in delinquent behaviour during their lifetime, as opposed to 6,5% of delinquents who had not witnessed violence (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:297). Lynch (2003:270) summaries previous research that point to similar findings: there is a correlation between exposure to community violence and juvenile delinquency. Male adolescents who have been exposed to community violence are more prone to delinquent behaviour (McGee, 2003:309; Zinzow, Ruggiero, Hanson, Smith, Saunders & Kilpatrick, 2009:7). In threatening situations, some adolescents adopt the mentality of "kill or be killed" (Perry, 2001:11). Horowitz and Marshall (2005:365) point out that due to multiple traumatic events, many adolescents think their life is normal for all adolescents. Some do not register that witnessing or hearing about family or friends getting shot counts as a traumatic experience.

Adolescents are more likely to hear about and witness community violence than being victimised (Calvert & Orue, 2011:47; Haj-Yahia, Leshem & Guterman, 2013:2239; McDonald, 2011:931). Adolescents who witness community violence involving a family member are more likely to experience psychosocial consequences than they would have when witnessing violence towards a stranger (Lynch, 2003:270). Girls who witness violence inflicted on a family member or friends will display more externalising symptoms than when witnessing violence inflicted on a stranger (Javdani, Abdul-Adil, Suarez, Nichols & Farmer, 2014:244). Kennedy and Ceballo (2014:74) point out that there are no differences in symptoms between hearing about and witnessing community violence, as opposed to being victimised.

To elaborate on the above, the effects of community violence on adolescents will be discussed according to the following developmental domains: the emotional, cognitive, social, physical and normative effects of community violence.

2.5.2 Emotional effects of community violence

Children who are consistently exposed to community violence are at an increased risk of psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, PTSD and general psychological distress (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:300; Borofsky et al., 2013:3, Fowler et al. 2009:248; Kaminer et al., 2013b:328). Adolescence is a developmental period marked by a heightened vulnerability for emotional problems (Borofsky, Kellerman, Baucom, Oliver & Margolin,

2013:9). Du Plessis et al. (2015:14) identify different ways in which young people can react to community violence and indicate that adolescents can become more emotional, unsettled, and indecisive when they are exposed to community violence.

High levels of violence lead to high levels of anxiety (Gaylord-Harden, Cunningham & Zelencik, 2011:715). Due to the unpredictable nature of community violence, adolescents are in constant fear for their safety as well as the safety of their loved ones. This state of fear causes adolescents to experience high levels of hopelessness, depression, anxiety, perceived stress and suicide ideation (Sui et al., 2018:15-16). Lambert, Nylund-Gibson, Copeland-Linder and Ialongo (2010:12) are of the opinion that depression and impulsive behaviour are both signs that adolescents have been exposed to high levels of community violence.

The proximity of the adolescent to the violent event will have an impact on the severity of the symptoms that he or she experiences (Fowler et al., 2009:229). The closer the adolescent is to the violence, the more severe the trauma he or she will experience (Kennedy & Ceballo, 2014:75). In a study involving interviews with 185 children between the ages of eight and fifteen years old, Shields et al. (2008:598) conclude that exposure to violence through victimisation and witnessing violence result in psychological distress in adolescents. Lambert et al. (2012:7) came to the same conclusion and suggest that hearing about violence resulted in the same effects as victimisation or witnessing violence. Shields et al. (2008:599) contribute the similar effects to the fact that adolescents will hear more about violence than actually observing or personally experiencing it. Hearing about violence consistently makes adolescents feel unsafe and unprotected in their environment. Reid-Quiñones, Kliewer, Shields, Goodman, Ray and Wheat (2011:63) found that a victim of community violence is prone to anger, while a witness of community violence is more likely to experience fear.

In a study by Cooley-Quille, Boyd, Frantz and Walsh (2001:203), it was found that adolescents who are exposed to community violence experience a significant amount of fear. The participants highlighted different fears, for example fear of the unknown, fear of danger and fear of injury. They were also fearful of living in hostile environments and the unpredictability that comes with it. Adolescents who act out of fear will act differently than they would have if they were not afraid, which could lead them to be more violent in their actions and reinforce the perception that violence is a practical problem-solving technique (Lane et al., 2017:455). Cooley et al. (2019:891) also highlight the development of aggressive behaviour due to exposure to community violence. Adolescents who experience anxiety and emotional dysregulation are also likely to engage in aggressive behaviour. Donenberg et al. (2020:150) believe that adolescents act violently to suppress feelings of fear and helplessness.

Shields et al. (2008:599) found no gender differences in the symptoms that adolescents displayed due to the trauma that they were exposed to in their neighbourhood. They explain that this is because both genders are exposed to the same high volumes of violence every day. In their study, Sui et al. (2018:18), however, found that girls tend to show more symptoms of depression, anxiety, perceived stress, and suicide ideation than boys. In this respect, Fincham et al. (2009:198) hypothesise that boys are less likely to report when they suffer from psychological symptoms because it can seem “unmanly”. Voisin et al (2011: 2486) mention that some adolescents do not tell their parents when they witness violent crimes due to fear or because they were not asked about what is happening in their life. Donenberg et al. (2020: 150) found gender differences in terms of a correlation between low parental attachment and exposure to community violence, where boys with poor parental attachment were found to be more likely to experience externalising problems than girls.

The phenomenon of desensitisation is not an unfamiliar reaction to stress. Desensitisation is defined by Akande (2000:72) as "a form of respondent conditioning in which stress-provoking situations are paired with inhibitory responses"; in other words, a person does not react appropriately because they experience high levels of stress. Gestalt theory views desensitisation as a contact boundary disturbance that serves as a coping strategy (Blom, 2006:32-39; Corey, 2013:199-200). This coping strategy may relate to the fact that adolescents can experience a great deal of helplessness after high exposure to community violence (Schiavone, 2009:103). Fowler et al. (2009:228) summarise research findings that show that regular exposure to community violence can cause adolescents to become desensitised and suppress feelings of sadness or anxiety. In a qualitative study by Schiavone (2009:103), adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 years shared that they felt alone in the world and that there was no one to protect them from the danger that community violence presents. They also mentioned that they used distrust, avoidance, and detachment to cope with the confusion, distress and fear that surrounds them.

Kaminer et al. (2013b:333) conducted a quantitative study amongst Xhosa-speaking youth to explore how violence affects them. The results of the study indicated that only adolescents who have been directly exposed to community violence showed symptoms of PTSD. This finding is inconsistent with the findings by researchers that state that victimisation as well as witnessing and hearing about community violence harm adolescents (Fowler et al., 2009:228; Shields et al., 2008:559). Kaminer et al. (2013b:333) concluded that the respondents in their study were desensitised because of high exposure to violence, to such an extent that they did not show symptoms of PTSD.

Donenberg et al. (2020:150) and Gaylord-Harden et al. (2011:717) agree that adolescents may use emotional numbing or cognitive denial to protect themselves from the violence that they experience. This protective behaviour can be supportive in the short term as it can help an adolescent to walk through an unsafe area without being scared. Long-term numbing and denial are, however, ineffective and can lead to problems in other areas in the victim's life such as having problems with aggression, interpersonal relationship difficulties and lower academic achievement. These behaviours suggest that exposure to community violence negatively affect the adolescents' ability for self-regulation (Blom, 2006:23; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:217). Warford (2009:45) is of the opinion that due to the high volumes of community violence that adolescents experience daily, they unconsciously do not recall their experiences when they are asked about it. Even violent video games can lead to desensitisation (Brockmyer, 2014:74).

In the study by Schiavone (2009:103), the participants indicated that, although they sometimes become angry because of the high incidence of violence, they continued to have empathy and concern for others. Van der Kolk (2005:408) explains that children and adolescents who have experienced trauma should be taught new ways to cope with their experiences, to act differently to the same experience and also how to attach different emotions to the same experience. It is important that adolescents receive intervention after they have been exposed to community violence to address the many levels in which community violence can impact their development and to prevent PTSD from developing later in their lives (Fowler et al., 2009: 252).

2.5.3 Cognitive effects of community violence

The emotional effects that adolescents experience because of exposure to community violence will have an effect on their cognitive functioning as well. If young people experience high levels of anxiety, they could have problems related to their cognitive capacity such as slowing, scrambling or blocked thought processes or having word or memory failure (Visser et al. 2016: 15). Research findings then show a link between community violence and poor school performance.

Apart from affecting children's ability to concentrate on their schoolwork, exposure to community violence negatively affects their school engagement; a concept that refers to their enjoyment of school, feeling interested in school, and helping out at school (Borofsky et al., 2013:382; Thomas et al., 2012:59). Adolescents who are exposed to high levels of community violence tend to have a poor attitude towards school, and display attention-seeking behaviour in class. These young people display PTSD symptoms, which include re-experiencing of the trauma and hyper-arousal. Those symptoms prevent them from effectively engaging in school

activities and assignments. Avoidant symptoms prevent adolescents from engaging with their teachers or peers, further intensifying their negative attitude towards school (McGill et al., 2014:5).

In their study on community violence, Sharkey, Schwartz, Ellen and Lacoe (2014:215) report that Black students were more prone to experience a decline in their academic performance than students from other races. The authors suggested two possible explanations for this situation. One reason is that violence in Black communities is more noticeable, and that these students are thus witnessing more incidents of community violence. The other reason is that Black students get less social support after experiencing community violence and thus could not work through the trauma, meaning that the trauma that they are exposed to will be more on their foreground. According to Gestalt theory, a strong foreground need may prevent a person to make contact in the present moment and thus his or her effective functioning (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:218; Schoeman, 2019:38). The lower the levels of community violence in an area, the better the adolescent's academic achievement is expected to be (Milam, Furr-Holden & Leaf, 2010:463).

Borofsky et al. (2013:11) highlight that the academic challenges that adolescents face due to the amplified symptoms of psychological distress caused by community violence can have a lasting effect on their future. Community violence has a harmful effect on a youth's academic development. Cognitive impairment and poorer academic achievement because of exposure to community violence can result in higher school failure rates (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:301). School failure and its effects on an adolescent's sense of self-efficacy can lead to greater involvement in risk-taking behaviours, and also has detrimental consequences for the child's development as a productive adult in society (Borofsky et al., 2013:381-382).

2.5.4 Social effects of community violence

Community violence is associated with the development of externalising behaviours in adolescents and affects their interactions in the social environment, their sense of safety, and their interactions within their families and in their peer group. Furthermore, adolescents may adopt negative behaviours to gain a certain status among their peers and other community members. These aspects are discussed as social effects of community violence.

In adolescents, exposure to community violence often result in *externalising behaviours*. Donenberg et al. (2020:15) describe four ways in which externalising behaviours may develop because of community violence. Firstly, social learning theory explains that aggressive behaviours may be learnt through modelling the perpetrator's behaviour. Furthermore, aggressive behaviour may be adopted to deal with feelings of fear and helplessness;

aggression may become seen as a valid way to deal with conflict; and adolescents may become desensitised because of constant exposure to community violence.

Aggressive behaviour is an external symptom of community violence (Calvete & Orue, 2011:46; Cecil et al., 2014:853; Kennedy & Ceballo, 2014:70). Boxer, Morris, Terranova, Kithakye, Savoy and McFaul (2008:891) contradict the above authors by reporting that in their study they found that victimisation did not lead to aggressive behaviour. There are, however, more studies that suggest that community violence exposure has an influence on aggression than those who state the contrary. Other symptoms of community violence exposure include fighting, carrying weapons, acts of violence, suicidal ideation, antisocial behaviour, social withdrawal, and substance use (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:300-301; Copeland-Linder, Lambert & Ialongo, 2010:178; Savahl et al., 2013:582).

An adolescent may also experience moral disengagement, which could affect their *interactions in their social environment*. Moral engagement allows a person to react to a threatening situation in an appropriate manner. Moral disengagement, on the other hand, is when a young person does not have the skills or ability to handle a situation appropriately. Exposure to large volumes of violence causes adolescents to form a certain perception of community violence, and this perception becomes their violence script. If adolescents only see problems being solved in a violent way, that will form part of their violence script. If they are then in the same or a similar situation, the adolescent will act violently even though non-violent options could also have been successful (Bradshaw, Rodgers, Ghandour & Garbarino, 2009:200; Wilkinson & Carr, 2008:1046).

Continually being exposed to violence narrows adolescents' problem-solving skills and thus also impairs their creative thinking capabilities. Adolescents react to violence in the violent manner that they know (Bradshaw et al., 2009:207; Hertweck et al., 2010:202; Pelser, 2008:8; Schwartz & Proctor, 2000:679). Moreover, such adolescents act violently because through their violent actions, they feel they can achieve something that they otherwise would not have achieved, such as gaining respect, status or a sexual partner (Pelser, 2008:8). Another social dilemma that some children face is what to do when they are being attacked. Horowitz et al. (2005:360) report that children said that they will not fight first but that they will hit back when they are in danger, because if they do not, the situation will worsen as they might continually be victimised. Some adolescents may protect their peers from community violence whereas other adolescents will encourage their peers to be more exposed to community violence by motiving them to witness violent events (Rosario, Salzinger, Feldman & Ng-Mak, 2008:59). Adolescents can thus be a buffer against community violence, or they can be responsible for

an increase in community violence as they can promote witnessing or being a perpetrator of violence.

Community violence affects adolescents' ability to place trust in people. Due to high exposure to violence, adolescents are more likely to put their trust in dishonest people and find it hard to engage in positive relationships with trustworthy individuals (Siegel, Estrada, Crockett & Baskin-Sommers, 2019:5). Adolescents may thus also experience an increased risk of substance abuse (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:300). Generalised distrust in others can result in a culture of mistrust forming in a community due to individuals taking on the characteristics that they observe in others. This situation can have a visible negative effect on the entire community (Besbris, Faber, Rich & Sharkey, 2015:4997).

Exposure to community violence can affect adolescents' *sense of safety* in their community. Horowitz et al. (2005:360) report that children have essential social and security questions that they have to deal with every day, such as: "Is there anyone I can trust?", "Is it safer to be alone or in a group?" and "Is it better to be friendly with the gang members or to avoid them?" Some children do not feel safe anywhere in the neighbourhood, not even in their own home. As a protective mechanism, children may avoid certain areas of their neighbourhood to prevent further exposure to violence. The fear of being exposed to community violence thus takes away children's freedom to walk around freely in the community. Horowitz et al. (2005:360) continue by stating that girls are more likely to stay indoors at the request of their parents to keep them safe. When boys are allowed to go out, they are warned to keep safe and stay away from danger. Not only do children not feel safe in their neighbourhood, but they have also lost faith in the ability of their community to protect them (Aisenberg et al., 2008:1573). Pelser (2008:6) points out that due to the high volume of violence that South African adolescents experience, there are few places where they can feel safe. This feeling of unsafety can lead to social isolation.

Community violence furthermore has an influence on children's *interactions within their families*. Lane et al. (2017:445) explain that families who live in communities with high volumes of violence struggle to thrive and to care for their families in a way that is needed. Community violence creates unmanageable stress for the whole family. Lynch (2003:279) indicates that being exposed to community violence can change the way in which children perceive and interact with their caregivers. The mentioned author found that children who have been exposed to community violence can recall more negative maternal attributes than those who were not exposed to community violence.

Community violence often result in *problematic peer interactions*. Schwartz and Proctor (2000:678) suggest that children who have been exposed to community violence are more

prone to having negative social interactions within the peer group. It is more likely for these children to be socially rejected, bullied by their peers, and be exposed to aggression. Being exposed to community violence negatively influences children's emotional and behavioural reactions amongst their peers, which causes them to have problematic social functioning (Calvete & Orue, 2011:47). Adolescents who have been victimised as a result of community violence are more likely to be bullied at school and to be rejected by their peers, as opposed to children who were not victimised due to community violence (Lynch, 2003:270). High rates of community violence result in a lower self-worth in adolescents (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010:184; Lynch 2003:278). Because of being a victim of or witnessing community violence, adolescents assume the worst of other people's behaviour and emotional responses (Calvete & Orue, 2011:46). These effects can hamper their interactions within their social environment.

Adolescents who are exposed to community violence may identify with high-risk groups, be involved in fighting, create discords, and engage in antisocial behaviour to *gain a certain status in their community* (Lynch, 2003:287; Savahl et al., 2013:582). A possible reason for this situation, is that adolescents will willingly boast that they are in a gang or claim to be in one to avoid being assaulted in specific environments (Pinnick, 2016:92). Furthermore, adolescents may engage in violent acts when it is seen to improve their self-image and to gain status amongst their peers (Wilkinson & Carr, 2008:1046). Pelser (2008:7) explains how this wish to connect with or fit in with their environment can form a framework for a new "normal" and the development of a self-identity that will determine the adolescent's views and understanding of what is "normal", "routine" and "everyday." This process forms the basis for the development of a specific group culture for young people, whether prosocial or antisocial.

When adolescents see that violence in the community has a positive outcome, they are more inclined to respond in the same manner (Schwartz & Proctor, 2000:679). For example, violence becomes more attractive when the gangsters in the neighbourhood have gunfights and gain vast sums of money, without any consequence to them. Being exposed to community violence over time may cause adolescents to become emotionally desensitised and may lead them to think that violence is the correct way to respond to conflict. The normalisation of violence makes it easier for young people to become involved in gangs, where a culture of violence is celebrated and enforced (Pelser, 2008:8).

Adolescents' boys are more prone to socialise outside of their family context and are thus more likely to gain problem solving skills, communication rules and behaviour control strategies from their peers and members in the community. Girls on the other hand are more likely to look at their parents to gain these skills (McDonald et al, 2011:930). Donenberg et al. (2020:150) agree with this view and state that the influence of community violence has a more

significant impact on boys' social interaction with peers. When boys witness community violence, they are likely to seek out friends that accept high-risk behaviour as part of the group culture. Girls seem to be more protected from this type of mentality.

Gender thus plays a role in creating a culture of violence. Boys are more likely to be associated with direct violent exposure, and they are therefore perceived as more dangerous than girls. This stigma around adolescent males spreads fear in the communities as they are "expected" to partake in violent events (Voisin et al., 2011: 2484). Boys are also more likely to conform as a coping strategy than girls are; therefore, an adolescent male is more vulnerable to join a gang (Voisin et al., 2011: 2485). Adolescent males may also hold up a front for being "tough" and carrying a weapon with them, because if they are perceived as being weak, it may increase their chance of being victimised (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2011:716; Voisin et al., 2011:2486). These coping skills might be effective in the short term but may have negative long-term costs. The physical aggression that male adolescents use to cope with exposure to community violence can have the opposite effect to what was intended, putting them at risk to be victimised and even to incur fatal injuries (Voisin et al., 2011: 2486).

2.5.5 Physical effects of community violence

The effects of community violence can be experienced physically. The impact of community violence can have an immediate physical toll on adolescents. They may experience difficulties such as appetite and sleep problems and are more susceptible to headaches and stomach pains (Bailey et al., 2005:345). These symptoms can occur not only when a physical threat of violence is present, but also when a perceived threat of violence presents (Fairbrook, 2013:26). Kliewer and Lepore (2015:10) found that children who witness community violence tend to experience sleep problems. In a research study by Bailey et al. (2005:346) it was found that, although direct exposure to violence has an effect on adolescents, merely witnessing violence caused adolescents to develop headaches. The mentioned authors explain that different mechanisms may be at work in the body when an adolescent hears about, witnesses and experiences community violence. Victimisation can lead to children having nightmares of being hurt, raped, or stabbed (Horowitz, McKay & Marshall, 2005:360).

Wright et al. (2016:374) indicate that in addition to an influence on adolescents' sleep patterns, exposure to community violence can also negatively affect their blood pressure and can cause asthma. Furthermore, exposure to community violence can cause physical injuries and can lead to hospitalisation. These injuries may in turn lead to illness, disabilities, reproductive health problems and other health consequences (Mahlangu & Gevers, 2014:74; Ramchand, Marshall, Schell & Jaycox, 2008:676; Rosenberg, Butchart, Mercy, Narasimhan, Waters & Marshall 2006:758). Injuries may either be minor and easy to self-treat, or serious, requiring

hospitalisation. Lifelong disabilities such as amputation of limbs, brain damage or paraplegia can also pose a threat to the adolescent (Rosenberg et al. 2006:758).

Long-time exposure to community violence can lead to an early death. Many leading causes of death such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, and HIV/AIDS are the result of victims of violence adopting behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, and unsafe sex to cope with the psychological impact of violence (Butchart, & Mikton, 2014:viii). The effects of substance abuse and especially alcohol abuse are threefold. Firstly, alcohol lowers inhibitions, which makes it easier for people to act violently. Secondly, alcohol lowers motor-coordination and cognitive perception, which causes intoxicated people to be at higher risk of becoming victims of community violence. Thirdly, it is common that both victims and perpetrators of community violence use alcohol as a coping mechanism (Western Cape Government, 2013:13). The impact of exposure to community violence can thus have a long-term adverse effect on the adolescent's health and physical well-being.

2.5.6 Normative effects of community violence

It is crucial to understand how adolescents come to the perceptions that they have of community violence and who will be the role players in forming these ideas. Forming a perception about anything, let alone violence, is a complicated matter. Hart and Kristonis (2006:3) summarise Bandura's Social Learning Theory to help understand how a perspective of violence can be formed. The theory has three main elements. The first is that behaviour must be learned. Secondly, a person learns through observing others, for instance family or community members. The third element indicates that behaviour can be learned through symbolic modelling, which can be obtained through the media and the social flow of values, ideas and behaviour. It is proposed that learning from repeated behaviour is inevitable.

What is more, if a person sees that violent behaviours are repeatedly met with reinforcement such as social approval or financial gain, the observer unconsciously imprints the behaviour that took place and is likely to repeat the seen behaviour if finding the self in the same or similar situation. For social learning to effectively take place, three features need to be present. In the example of community violence, there must firstly be similarities between the observer and the person being violent. Then, the observer must be able to identify with the perpetrator's perspective and share in his or her experience and perspective. Lastly, there needs to be a parasocial connection between the observer and the perpetrator, for instance, there must be a friendship or a bond between them (Hart & Kristonis, 2006:3). This explains why not everyone that sees a violent event repeats it. However, children who see extensive amounts of violence interpret violent actions as normal, appropriate, inevitable and inescapable (Woollett & Thomson, 2016:1068). This situation does cause a problem in communities where

many people know each other and where many people come from similar backgrounds (Otwombe et al., 2015:10).

Skinner's social learning theory also helps to understand how a person's perspective can be formed. McLeod (2007:1-2) summarises how one element, namely reinforcement, can influence a person's behaviour. There are two types of reinforcement. The first is positive reinforcement, such as when behaviour is strengthened by supplying a consequence that a person finds rewarding, for instance, power and respect. A person will repeat the behaviour to gain the reward. The second type of reinforcement is negative reinforcement, and that is when a negative consequence of behaviour is removed. Behaviour is repeated because there is no unpleasant experience attached to the behaviour (Hinduja & Ingram, 2009:408). In a policy brief, it was explained that many people who are arrested never go to trial and that even when the perpetrator goes to trial, the conviction rate is not very high (Gould, Mufamdi, Hsiao & Amisi, 2017:8); this phenomenon could serve as a negative reinforcement for people to continue with community violence.

Piaget believes that human infants build and refine psychological structures or schemes through their perceptions and motor activities (Berk, 2013:226). Many South African adolescents grow up with the idea that violence in normal because of the way in which their family behaves and the community views violence as the only way for change to come about. In some communities, vigilantes will 'redo' the work for the police if they felt that the police did not handle a situation effectively (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7). Graham, Bruce and Perold (2010:95) point out that violence is also normalised when parents and teachers tell their children that bullying behaviour in the school and community is to be expected, and when people keep quiet about the violence around them or state that it is a private matter. When adolescents are surrounded by constant violence, they can feel powerless and angry, leading them to either turn their behaviour inward or outward, which puts them at risk to partake in violent behaviour themselves. To help adolescents to cope better with violence around them, it is essential for them to receive social support that can help them to build resilience (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013: 17-18; Richter et al., 2018:185).

Fowler et al. (2009:228) propose that community violence can model violence as being an appropriate way to behave. Violence has formed part of South Africa's culture. This aspect was demonstrated by the Centre for the Studies of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in a workshop about identity that they presented in a township in South Africa. The authors asked Grade 10 learners to describe how they perceive themselves. The responses that came from the adolescents are an indication of the effects of the community violence on them: "I am afraid", "I am unsafe", "[o]ur headboy was shot in the head on Valentine's day" (Harris, 2003:3-

4). Violence has become such a large part of adolescents' life that it has formed part of their identity. It is a part of them that that they take with them wherever they go. The normalisation of community violence leads to normalisation of aggressive responses, which in turn leads to higher levels of aggressive behaviour (Boxer et al., 2008: 890). Adolescents exposed to community violence may therefore later engage in delinquent acts and even become perpetrators of violence (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:297).

Another deeply rooted normative perception that could influence and contribute to violence in communities, is the discourse of "boys will be boys." This mentality holds high significance since it socialises boys to think that they should express and defend their masculinity (Ngakane et al., 2012:44). In a study based in Cape Town, Coloured male adolescents awaiting trial for violent crimes were interviewed. All the participants came from a low socio-economic community. They all defined masculinity as strength, accepted gang-related activities, and showed an obsession with guns and shooting (Foster, 2012:43). Mathews (2014:29) summarises that the patriarchal views of South Africa, which is carried over from generation to generation, normalises violence against woman and children and gives men a sense of superior power and control; this mentally endangers the lives of many people.

In conclusion, the adverse effects of community violence are undeniable. Community violence affects adolescents in all aspects of their development and makes it more difficult for them "to navigate the various challenges of adolescent development" (Borofsky et al., 2013:392). Aisenberg and Herenkohl (2009:301) assert that not all forms of community violence exposure will have the same effects on children and families, which makes it difficult to predict the impact of particular events. Factors such as the child's developmental status, relationship to the victim, previous trauma, and the physical proximity to the violent events may determine the impact of community violence on the person.

2.6 RESILIENCE AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Donenberg et al. (2020:145) propose that exposure to community violence is a public health crisis for South Africa and, therefore, it is critical for the country's future stability to mitigate the effects of violence exposure on the mental health and well-being of the "burgeoning population of adolescents" who transition into adulthood. The role of resilience and protective factors to enhance the well-being of children and adolescents exposed to community violence will be discussed in this section.

2.6.1 The role of resilience

Despite their exposure to many forms of violence, adolescents do not necessarily have to fall victim to the adverse effects of community violence (Schiavone, 2009:103). It is reported that

50% to 80% of children can overcome the adverse experiences that they face in their lifetime (Louw & Louw, 2014a:430). The aspect that they need to be able to overcome their difficulties is called resilience. Resilience refers to the process of adapting well despite trauma, adversity, or stress (Thomlison, 2010:4). Differently put, resilience is the ability to handle and overcome hardships in life (Louw & Louw, 2014a:430). Aisenberg and Herenkohl, (2009:303) conclude that "most children exposed to violence and other stressors are "resilient" in some form; that is, they function better than one would expect given their vulnerability and exposure to one or multiple risk factors."

Whereas earlier studies on resilience focused narrowly on individual characteristics, current studies have a more holistic focus that also involves the child's social and physical environment (Ungar, 2019:2-3). Resilience features are thus threefold. Resilience is dependent on an individual's character traits, the current stressors that are being experienced, and the external support received at a given time. Resilience is not something that can be achieved. It is a continuous process, meaning that a person can be resilient in one situation but not in another. This can be attributed, for example, to changes in one's support system (Yule, Houston & Grych, 2019:407). Resilience is a way of thinking and behaving; it can be taught and developed in adolescents and is a continuous process that needs sufficient time and effort to develop (Thomlison, 2010:4).

Fincham et al. (2009:198) found that resilience serves as a buffer for PTSD symptoms for children exposed to abuse and neglect, but that resilience could not moderate the adverse effects of high levels of stress, both in actual and perceived threats of violence. Adolescents who are exposed to community violence are thus still vulnerable to developing PTSD symptoms, regardless of how resilient they may be. However, various studies point to resilience as a factor in buffering in effects of community violence on children and youth and point to certain factors in the child's environment that can enhance their resilience. Different studies confirm that aspects such as social support, positive relationships and parental involvement build resilience in children and young people and can decrease the symptoms of exposure to community violence (*cf.* Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001; Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis & Ramirez, 2001; Hertweck et al., 2010; Jain, Buka, Subramanian & Molnar, 2012; Kliewer et al., 1998; McDonald et al., 2011).

Ungar (2019:5) advises that to effectively consider resilience in children, one must adopt a holistic perspective that includes the complex risks that young people are exposed to as well as promotive and protective factors and processes (PPFP) that are relevant to the specific context. Risk factors associated with children's exposure to community violence have been

discussed earlier in this chapter (refer point 2.4). Protective factors in contexts characterised by high levels of community violence will be discussed next.

2.6.2 Protective factors amidst exposure to community violence

Protective factors can promote resilience and in doing so, reduce risk or buffer the impact of stress on an adolescent's well-being (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010:178). Protective factors are universally beneficial and can improve the life of every adolescent, regardless of whether he or she experienced a traumatic event or not (Yule et al., 2019:419). Protective factors are "those experiences, relationships, opportunities, and individual qualities that are thought to promote resilience in vulnerable children" (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:303). Ahlin and Antunes (2017:64-65) divide protective factors into three levels, namely individual, family and neighbourhood factors.

- **Individual characteristics**

Certain individual characteristics have been found to serve as protective factors in terms of exposure to and mediating the effects of community violence. An internal locus of control, where the adolescents see outcomes as a result of their actions, as opposed to youth with an external locus of control who ascribe outcomes to fate or luck, can act as a barrier against exposure to community violence (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:65-65). Youth with an internal locus of control may be more likely to make choices that help them to avoid high-risk situations. In their study, Ahin and Antunes (2017:76) found that youth with an internal locus of control were more likely to choose to be involved with positive rather than deviant peers.

Copeland-Linder et al. (2010:10) point to the importance of self-worth, stating that a positive self-concept can protect an adolescent from internalising negative beliefs and perceptions due to their exposure to community violence. Scorgie, Baron, Stadler, Venables, Brahmbhatt, Mmari and Delany-Moretlwe (2017:62-63) observed that when adolescents who are exposed to high levels of inner-city violence can reframe their perceptions of their circumstances, they are more hopeful about their lives. Thus, the way adolescents think of a situation can impact how they choose to act and react in specific situations (Sakakibara & Endo, 2016:184).

Additionally, when adolescents have a positive self-concept, they possess other internal tools that can build resilience. One of these tools is hope. When adolescents have hope, they also have a sense of purpose and are less likely to be depressed. Savahl et al. (2013:11) describe two types of hope, namely robust and naïve hope. The former refers to realistic hope which is grounded in the knowledge that hard work and persistence are needed to achieve goals. The latter, naïve hope, is impractical and only focuses on the positive end goal, and not on the possible obstacle-driven journey to reach that goal. Having hope can serve as a buffer against

the adverse effects of community violence and can increase an adolescent's well-being. When adolescents have hope for their future and have a positive goal to work toward, they are less likely to develop psychosocial problems despite high exposure to community violence (Gaylord-Harden, Voisin & Scott, 2018:738). Adolescents with a plan for their future are also less likely to be aggressive and to be involved in risky behaviour.

- **Family characteristics**

Research indicates that the family can play a significant role in protecting and supporting children who are exposed to community violence. Various studies emphasise the importance of a positive parent-child relationship for providing an emotionally safe environment for adolescents to grow and to foster resilience (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010:3; Yule et al., 2019:420). Warm and positive parenting styles can serve as a buffer against external symptoms of exposure to community violence, such as becoming involved in gang activities, substance misuse and aggressive behaviour (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:75; Hardaway, Sterrett-Hong, Larkby & Cornelius, 2016: 1317; Liang et al., 2019:2; Ozer et al., 2017:361; Shields: 2008:599). Therefore, enhancing parent-child relationships can be targeted in interventions to build children's resilience against exposure to community violence (McDonald et al., 2011:6).

Support by parents and family members can reduce the negative effects of children's exposure to community violence (Jain et al., 2012:123). When a culture of support has been established in the home, and adolescents feel that they can talk to their parents, they are more likely to reach out when they need emotional and instrumental support. This process can help adolescents to learn healthy coping mechanisms and can reduce or prevent internal symptoms of distress (Howard, Budge & McKay, 2010:74; Ozer et al., 2017:362). McDonald et al. (2011:5) emphasise the important role of the mother in protecting children – girls as well as boys - from negative outcomes of community violence exposure and for enhancing children's healthy development amidst contexts of high community violence.

Families that are well organised and exercise control over the children in the household can reduce children's exposure to community violence and thus the harmful effects of the exposure (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010:3; Yule et al., 2019:420). Parental monitoring seems to be more effective in communities with a lower expectancy of community violence (Lambert, 2010:13). Parental monitoring seems to be more effective to prevent exposure to community violence as it does not necessarily lessen internal symptoms that occurred due to the child's exposure to community violence (Hardaway et al., 2016:1317; Löfving–Gupta, Lindblad, Stickley, Schwab-Stone & Ruchkin, 2015: 545; Ozer et al. 2017:361). However, having a constructive family structure and parents with positive mental health can lessen the development of

symptoms such as PTSD and depression following exposure to community violence (Ozer et al., 2017:361).

Barbarin et al. (2001:9) conducted a study on the effects of vicarious and direct family, political and community violence on the adjustment of Black six-year-old children living in South Africa. They found that a parent's involvement in building children's resilience lessened the adverse effects of community violence. They also looked at the mothers' reactions to community violence. Their research findings showed that when a mother has low levels of distress, her children were less likely to experience problems with attention and aggression and were less likely to struggle with anxiety and depression.

McDonald et al. (2011:5) conducted a study on positive youth development (PYD) amidst children's community violence exposure (CVE). Based on the findings of their study, they concluded that "[f]amily functioning had the strongest influence on PYD in the context of all the different types of CVE" (McDonald et al., 2011:5).

- **Characteristics of the peer group and school**

As adolescents become older, the peer group and school environment become key aspects of their lives. Peer groups become the foundation of adolescents' support, acceptance, and encouragement, which fosters their social and emotional capabilities (Yule et al., 2019:420). Jain et al. (2012:122) agree that peer relationships which are positive can increase emotional resilience, especially for adolescents who have been victims of community violence. Adolescents with positive friendships and high peer social support also reap educational benefits since those adolescents are more likely to finish their high school career (Howard et al., 2010:75; Jain et al., 2012:123).

As children grow older, schools can have a strong influence in promoting their resilience for dealing with community violence, for example in enhancing academic achievement, self-esteem and problem-solving skills (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:305-306). Jain et al. (2012:123) found in their research that external factors like participation in after school activities like sport can serve as a buffer against the adverse effects of exposure to violence and build adolescents' resilience.

Teachers do not only play an essential educational role in adolescents' lives, but they can also aid in enhancing the emotional well-being in adolescents, which in turn may build resilience. This is especially true for adolescents who do not have supportive parents (Yule et al., 2019:420). Unfortunately, the positive effects of teachers' emotional support are less effective against the adverse effects of poly-victimisation. This should, however, not discourage teachers from lending support to adolescents exposed to poly-victimisation, but should rather

encourage them to be even more supportive, since these learners are in great need of both emotional and educational support (Herrero Romero, Hall & Cluver, 2019:15). Löfving–Gupta et al. (2015:545) found that when adolescents feel that their teachers support them, they have a lower risk for developing post-traumatic stress.

- **Community characteristics**

Research point to several measures that are seen to strengthen communities in their response to high levels of community violence. These measures include neighbourhood supervision of children, supportive social networks in communities, collective positive norms, and adult role modelling (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:305-307). Cohesion among residents and informal social control measures in communities are associated with lower levels of violent crimes and can thus reduce adolescents' exposure to community violence (Ahline & Antunes, 2017:65). Adolescents' resilience can be enhanced when they have positive mentors and role models, especially within their communities (Graham et al., 2010:98; Savahl, 2013:190). On community level, interventions can move away from deficit models of risk and focus on aspects that strengthen communities (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:305-307).

Supportive and mentoring services to parents, empowering parents for positive coping and family cohesion, and involving the school and peer group can enhance the resilience of children who are repeatedly exposed to community violence (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:304). Parents can play a significant role in creating an environment to protect children against exposure to community violence and to promote their well-being in the home and in the community. Positive parenting practices will include setting boundaries, limiting children's unsupervised time in the community, parental support and warmth, parental monitoring of their children, positive family attachment, especially a positive relationship between the mother and children, and promoting activities that shape the routine of the child (Ahlin & Antunes, 2017:65, 75). Research provides evidence that parents who show acceptance and warmth and actively monitor their children, can effectively protect their children against negative environmental influences and lower the levels of externalising and internalising problems in children (Donenberg et al., 2020:146).

In conclusion, Fergus and Zimmerman (2005 in Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:303-304) advise that consideration of protective factors for children exposed to community violence should not adopt a narrow focus on single factors, as this presents a limiting perspective. Protective factors should include a focus on individual and contextual factors, from micro to macro level, as children's coping with community violence will also be influenced by the social environment and its impact on the child and family.

2.7 A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Community violence is a complex phenomenon and cannot be considered from one angle alone. A holistic approach is needed to look at the phenomenon from more than one perspective. Gestalt theory, which forms the theoretical framework for the study, emphasises the concept of holism, which indicates the interrelatedness between a person and his or her environment (Blom, 2006:23).

Blom (2006:23) explains holism as follows: “The sum total of their [children’s] physical, emotional and spiritual aspects, language, thought, and behaviour is more than its components. These components can be distinguished, but they cannot be separated." Holism implies that adolescents’ experiences, for example exposure to community violence, influences their whole being. As indicated in the effects of exposure to community violence on adolescents (refer point 2.5), the effects can include all domains of their development and functioning such as the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral domains.

However, interventions should look beyond the individual to understand people’s experiences and the effects thereof on them, and preventive and promotive strategies should consider the risk and protective factors in the child’s environment (Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:297; Ungar, 2019:3). A holistic approach proposes that a person functions in many systems, as is also referred to in the ecological systems theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (Espelage, 2014:257). The adolescent’s direct environment can be seen as the home and school. Parental support and monitoring can help increase an adolescent’s resilience (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:304). The risk or supportive factors in the microsystem are related to the parent-child relationship, inter-parental violence, peer relationships, school connectedness, and the school environment (Hong & Espelage, 2012: 315). It was found that a teacher's participation in their students' academic and social lives significantly decreased students' feeling of stress and the feeling that they are unsafe at school (Hong & Eamon, 2012:435).

It should also be considered that parents who are victims of violence may suffer injuries, either physical or emotional. These injuries might require medical treatment, and if the injuries are serious, an employed person would have to stay away from work, which could result in a loss of income or even their job. After the physical injuries have healed, the victim can still have psychological problems like anxiety or depression, which could impact on a parent’s employment or making the parent emotionally unavailable and unable to properly care for their children (Gould et al., 2017:9). If in this scenario, the victim was an adolescent, he or she would have missed school, which can affect his or her academic performance. Violence thus has a significant influence on different systems in a person's environment.

In South Africa, there is excellent legislation (the macrosystem) to protect children and adolescents from violence, such as the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010:387). The application of that legislation is, however, slow and seems to be ineffective (Hsiao, Fry, Ward, Ganz, Casey, Zheng & Fang, 2018:6), which may result in children and adolescents being at higher risk for exposed to violence in their direct environment. Akande (2000:65) states that violence and poverty influenced by decisions made in the macrosystem and that children and adolescents are caught up in the process.

Although apartheid has been abolished, it still affects communities due to the country still being segregated by class and race, leaving many adolescents and adults from a low socio-economic class to drive towards crime and gang involvement (Ward et al., 2012:4-5). The legacy of apartheid also left many community members with mistrust and fear, which some interpret as justification to act violently (Harris, 2001:4). Dinan et al. (2004:737) propose that another effect of the apartheid legacy is that a culture of violence exists in South Africa where people endorse and accept violence as a way to solve problems and to reach personal goals. Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is that aggressive police action may enhance adolescents' traumatic experience rather than increasing their feeling of safety and security (Voisin et al., 2011:2484).

Other effects of community violence include an increase in health care costs, decreases in property values, and the disruption of social services. It also influences school attendance and the viability of businesses (Centre for Disease … 2013). Community violence thus has the ability to undermine the country's economic growth (Hsiao et al., 2018:6).

Vandalism is an anti-social act of aggression which leads to damage or loss of property. It does, however, not always have legal consequences (Bhati & Pearce, 2016:91). Ngqakamba (2019) reports that the Gauteng Department of Education declared a loss of more than R120 million due to theft, burglaries and vandalism. In the 256 schools in the Gauteng Department of Education, there have been 262 cases of theft and vandalism since the beginning of the school year in 2019; this leads to a significant loss in resources that should have been used to enhance learning in the schools.

Vandalism affects communities in more than one way. Vandalism makes people feel unsafe, since it is a sign of crime in the neighbourhood and conveys a sense that there is no social order present in the community. Vandalism is mainly perpetrated in impersonal public spaces, for instance, bus stops or abandoned buildings and not at private homes; however, it still decreases property value and community violence instils fear, suspicion, terror and anger in communities (Ceccato & Wilhelmsson, 2012:191-192; Foster, 2012:25).

Vandalism is not only limited to buildings, but nature also falls victim to this devious behaviour. Richardson and Shackleton (2014:425) examined the phenomenon of vandalising street trees in the Eastern Cape. They found that 46% of the newly planted trees in the 11 towns where they conducted the study had been snapped. Residents explained that a lack of appreciation of trees, the collection of wood, boredom and misbehaviour were among the reasons for the trees being vandalised. As a result of the behaviour of a small section in the community, the whole community is left without the benefits of big, shady trees in the streets. Frequently having to replant trees, increases the municipality budget, which is money that could have been spent elsewhere.

The pervasive effects of community violence provide support to the earlier statement by Donenberg et al. (2020:145) that effort should be made to mitigate the effects of community violence, as well as the advice by Fergus and Zimmerman (2005 in Aisenberg & Herenkohl, 2009:303-304) the identification of protective factors for adolescents exposed community violence should adopt a holistic focus. Mitigation of risk and strengthening resilience resonates with social service delivery on prevention and early intervention levels described in the Framework for Social Welfare Services in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2013:29). This focus is also aligned with the holistic perspective of Gestalt theory and the theory's focus on the strengths and capacity of the person (Corey, 2013:196; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:216).

2.8 THE ADOLESCENT LIFE STAGE

During this study, the focus was on how young adults perceived their experiences of community violence as experienced during their adolescent years. For this study, an understanding of the adolescent developmental stage is thus needed as a background to understanding their perception of community violence. As the interviews were conducted with participants in the life stage of young adulthood, this section will be concluded with a brief discussion of the life stage of the young adult.

2.8.1 The adolescent

Adolescence is related to more than just the age of a child; this life stage is influenced by the physical and social-cultural environment as well as by individual differences. The broad age range of adolescence is from 11 to 21 years. In South Africa, however, the legal age of adolescence is up to 18 years. Louw and Louw (2014b:304) indicate that "[a]dolescence has been described as a stage beginning in biology and ending in society." This statement means that adolescence starts during puberty with its related physiological and bodily changes, and it ends when a child can take up adult responsibilities by accepting social norms like getting a job and being independent (Louw & Louw, 2014b:304; Kheswa & Tikimana, 2015:12).

Adolescence is associated with rapid **physiological and physical** changes. One of these changes involves a growth spurt, meaning that adolescents experience rapid physical growth. The onset of puberty or sexual maturation results in the development of sex organs. Environmental factors like nutrition, stress and physical exercise can influence physical development. Stressors in an adolescent's life, such as family conflict, can also affect their development (Louw & Louw, 2014b:306-307). Physical changes must be accepted on an emotional level (Louw & Louw, 2014b:310).

In terms of **cognitive development**, adolescents are in the formal operational phase according to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. In this phase, adolescents develop the ability to think logically, systematically, abstractly and hypothetically (Berk, 2013:253-254). Adolescents can now find hidden messages in metaphors and can find richer meaning in literature and other media like songs (Arnett, 2016:448).

Elkind (in Martorell, Papalia & Feldman, 2014: 451) explain that although adolescents have the ability for higher thinking, they are still flawed in their reasoning. Adolescents tend to be idealistic and critical. They tend to believe that they know better how to solve problems that they come across; they are fond of arguing and will look for opportunities to try out their reasoning abilities. Furthermore, they also tend to be indecisive, and they want options but cannot always make choices. They do not always follow through on their beliefs; they may thus state things that they are passionate about, but then do the opposite of that. For example, they would say that the earth needs to be saved from pollution, but then they will discard paper on the ground. Adolescents tend to be extraordinarily egocentric and believe that everything in life must be in their favour. Lastly, adolescents believe that they are special and unique, and that rules do not apply to them. Their reasoning, therefore, makes them more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours (Berk, 2013:255; Ward & Ashley, 2013: 43)

According to Erik Erikson's theory of **psychosocial development**, adolescents enter the stage of identity versus role confusion. Identity development involves that adolescents find out who they are, what is important to them, and what they want to do with their life (Louw & Louw, 2014b:342). The achievement of an own identity is a critical task during adolescence as the identity guides a person in becoming unique with a clear sense of self and a purposeful role in society and will help adolescents to find a constructive way to succeed in their environment and becoming a productive adult (Berk, 2013:468-469; Martorell et al., 2014:473). A further task that adolescents need to fulfil in this time is the achievement of autonomy, which will help them to develop a sense of being a separate, independent person. Although adolescents strive for independence, they are still reliant on adults to guide them (Berk, 2013:577, 579).

As adolescents' interactions with their peer group grow, the peer group becomes of more importance to them, and they assign high value to that relationship. Adolescents find great worth in peer relationships due to their great need for a sense of belonging (Louw & Louw, 2014b:367). That need is more challenging in a multicultural country like South Africa since adolescents need to find their sense of self within their culture and ethnicity as well as in the broader context of South Africa. Adolescents first identify with others based on race, then on a language level, followed by religion, occupation and personal levels (Louw & Louw, 2014b: 346). From these criteria, adolescents usually find their friends. Their friendship is, however, also based on their shared interests, attitudes, values and personalities. Loyalty and emotional connection are evaluated, since adolescents will share their feelings with their friends rather than with their parents (Louw & Louw, 2014b:371). During adolescence opposite gender friendships become more common; this makes it easier for members of the opposite sex to talk to one another since talking in a friendship group is less threatening than talking to a person individually (Louw & Louw, 2014b:368).

The importance they assign to the peer group makes adolescents more susceptible to peer pressure (Pfeifer, Masten, Moore III, Oswald, Mazziotta, Iacoboni & Dapretto, 2011:1029). Peer pressure involves that adolescents feel that they must conform to the peer culture in aspects such as dress code and participation in social activities (Berk, 2013:626). Conforming to the peer group is beneficial in helping adolescents to achieve autonomy; however, excessive conformity to the peer group may harm the development of a personal identity and autonomy and may even lead to involvement in high-risk behaviour (Louw & Louw, 2014b:370). Allen and Antonishak (2008:157) agree that peer pressure is inevitable, and adolescents can have either a good or a bad influence on one another. It is therefore crucial that adults instil positive values in their children, making it more likely that they will be influenced by good peer pressure rather than negative peer pressure.

Due to inadequate family monitoring and low school safety, adolescents in South Africa are at risk of influencing each other to engage in violent behaviour. Adolescents who are bored due to few positive recreational activities in the community tend to affiliate with gangs and delinquents (Ward, 2007:22, 28). These adolescents are more likely to walk around aimlessly in the neighbourhood, making them a target for direct or indirect exposure to community violence.

Adolescents are in Stage 4 of Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of **moral development**. In this stage, adolescents are focused on what is right and what is wrong according to universal law and order. They have the mentality that a person must fulfil his or her duty and respect authority, and that they must not act wrongfully by harming someone else. Adolescents

therefore tend to conform to the social norms and expectations of the family, group or society (Berk, 2013:501; Louw & Louw, 2014b:370, 381). One of the essential tasks of adolescents is to cultivate a personal value system. This value system will influence adolescents' behaviour and guide them to behave in a moral and socially responsible way. To gain personal values, adolescents must evaluate what existing values they want to integrate and make part of their identity (Louw & Louw, 2014b:379) Adolescents' home, school and their community have a substantial influence on their moral development (Louw & Louw, 2014b:385-387). Hardy, Padilla-Walker and Carlo (2008:219-220) highlight the essential role adults, parents and teachers play in adolescents' moral development, stating that when adults and adolescents have a warm relationship, they are more likely to accept positive values that they are taught as their own. The emotional expectations that are placed upon adolescents also influence the way that they make morel decisions. Adolescents who are expected to act morally are more likely to act in a pro-social manner, than adolescents who are not expected to be moral. As adolescents grow older, their decision to act morally is less influenced by guilt than it was when they were younger (Krettenauer, Jia & Mosleh, 2011: 366).

As stated in the goal of the study, data for the empirical study were collected from young adults. A brief discussion of young adulthood as relevant to this study, is presented next.

2.8.2 The young adult

Young adults are in a life stage where they have to gain both financial and emotional independence from their parents as they enter adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014:569). Arnett (in Santrock, 2009:417) state that young adulthood, often referred to as emerging adulthood, spans the ages between 18 and 35 years; however different authors provide different age ranges when referring to young adulthood (*cf.* Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008:604; Lenhart et al., 2010:5; McRae et al., 2012:11).

Young adults generally share the same characteristics, namely that they have a definitive dream, they have a life plan and goals that they set out for themselves; they need a mentor, a person to look up to and help them in their life path; they develop a career, and they are looking for intimacy (Louw & Louw, 2009:161). Arnett et al. (2014:570) on the other hand summarise that young adults are still in an exploration phase and that they try out different possibilities of what type of life they want for themselves. According to authors such as Arnett et al. (2014:570) and Santrock (2009:417), young adults do not have their life figured out, as Louw (2009:161) implied. For many, young adulthood is a time of experimentation and exploration, and thus an unpredictable time due to all the changes that are happening in young adults' lives (Arnett et al., 2014:571; Santrock, 2009:417). Young adulthood is the period of time where a person undergoes the most changes, romantically and career-wise.

Arnett et al. (2014: 572) suggest that young adults are in a phase where they feel "in-between." They are no longer adolescents, but do not yet feel like adults, and they gradually learn to take responsibility for their own lives. Cauley (2016), a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, explains that although young adults are leaving home and becoming independent, they still have a desire to know what is happening in the lives of their family members remaining at home. In most cases, young adults are worried about what the family dynamics will be when they leave the home. They might worry about practical aspects like who will feed the dog and who will accompany their mother to church. Young adults are thus in a complicated life stage where they want freedom from their parents, but they still need guidance and protection from them. There are thus similar traits between young adults and adolescents.

Cauley (2016) adds that young adults have a better sense of who they are, they can set better boundaries, and they can take responsibility for their lives. Young adults' self-esteem will also grow and become better during this life stage (Orth, Trzesniewski & Robins, 2010:653). These developments take place because young adults typically have time to be more self-focused since they do not have to report to their parents or teachers about their every move. They do have responsibilities, but these are not as many as it would be later in life when they get married and have children. Thus, in young adulthood, people get the opportunity to grow into the person they envision for themselves (Arnett et al., 2014: 571). Their work or career play a significant role in how they define themselves and influence aspects such as their self-esteem, their lifestyle, housing, financial position, friendships and health (Santrock, 2009:436).

Young adulthood is characterised by an increase in the person's cognitive development. Young adults will have more control over their thoughts, attention span and their actions. They are also more advanced in the way that they handle information about themselves, and thus, they will be able to reflect more accurately on their life (Diamond, 2002:491). Some authors ascribe this development to the young adult's exposure to the world of work, where their confrontation with the reality that work requires leads to a decrease in their idealism (Labouvie-Vief, 1986 in Santrock, 2009:433). Furthermore, young adults can consider the opinions and perspectives of others, which is characteristic of the reflective and relativistic thinking that is "an important indicator of cognitive change in young adults" (Santrock, 2009:433). A key aspect of the cognitive development during this life stage is the adoption of an individual worldview, however, with understanding that their worldview is subjective and that others may have different worldviews from theirs. It is said that the level of young adults' reasoning will be affected by aspects such as their level of education (Labouvie-Vief, 2006 in Santrock, 2009:433). In the context of this study, young adults would be able to reflect on their experiences of community violence during their adolescent years and thereby provide information relevant to the focus of the study.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains an overview of the literature on the phenomenon of community violence. Community violence was conceptualised and contextualised and risk factors for exposure to community violence were discussed before the effects of exposure to community violence on adolescents as described in literature sources, were highlighted. Exposure to community violence can have adverse effects on an adolescent's cognitive, emotional, social, physical and moral functioning and development. Resilience can, however, minimise the harmful effects of community violence and thus requires that note be taken of protective factors that can prevent exposure to and the harmful effects of community violence. Akande (2000:74) made the statement that a good sense of the effects of violence cannot be gained without the perspective of the children. Based on young adults' more advanced ability for reflective thinking and the emotional distance that the time interval brings, the goal of this study was to collect data from young adults in order to gain insight into adolescents' perceptions of community violence. The research methodology, the ethical considerations and the empirical findings of the study will be presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

From reviewing the literature, it is clear that community violence has become an epidemic in South Africa (Savahl et al., 2013:579). Community violence takes place in adolescents' homes, schools and their neighbourhood, leading to many adolescents constantly being surrounded by violence (Pelser, 2008:2). Being exposed to community violence in any form, i.e. by direct victimisations, by witnessing events or by hearing about it from a third party, can have adverse effects on adolescents such as cognitive effects that lead to poor academic functioning and psychological problems that include depression, anxiety and PTSD (Diana et al., 2004:8; Finkelhor et al., 2009b:1; Guerra and Dierkhising 2011:3; Foster & Brooks-Gunn 2009:73; Kennedy & Ceballo 2014:70; Lane, Rubinstein et al., 20017:445; Western Cape Government , 2013:6).

Adolescents are at a higher risk of exposure to community violence, making them more susceptible to developing adverse effects caused by violence (Pelser, 2008:3). This study focused on adolescents' perception of community violence, as described by participants as young adults. The research question that guided the study was as follows: What are young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during their adolescent years? In this chapter, the research methodology and ethical considerations of the study will be discussed, and the empirical findings of the study will be presented.

3.2 SECTION 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology that was utilised to during the implementation of the study will be discussed in this section. The researcher will describe the research approach, the type of research, the research design, the research methods, as well as the ethical aspects considered during the implementation of the study.

3.2.1 Research approach

The goal of the study was to gain the participants' perceptions of community violence which they experienced during their adolescent years. As peoples' perceptions are based on their subjective interpretations of their world, the research paradigm of the study was interpretivism. Interpretivist studies aim to explore the meanings that people assign to their experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60-61). Therefore, a qualitative research approach was followed. Qualitative research focuses on the subjective meaning that people assign to their experiences and situations, described in their own words, which is seen as a sensitive and

meaningful way of exploring people's experiences (Fouché & Delport, 2011a:66; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:58; Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:53). This approach was best suited to gain knowledge of real-life experiences and to better understand young adults' perception of community violence as they experienced it during adolescence (Fouché & Delport, 2011a:63; Ivankova, Cressswell & Clark, 2016:309; Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:53). Qualitative research was applicable for the study in which the researcher wished to gain an understanding of the participants' perceptions on the topic.

3.2.2 Type of research

Applied research refers to studies in which the motivation with the study is to apply the research findings to solve specific problems or challenges faced by communities (Bless et al., 2013:59; Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94; Jansen, 2016:9). Several studies point to the high incidence of community violence in South African communities (*cf*. Sui et al., 2018; Kaminer et al., 2013). The information that was obtained from the participants in this study provide insights that could be used in social work services in communities that are challenged by high levels of community violence, whereby the study was applied research (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94-95).

The study furthermore had an exploratory and descriptive purpose. Exploratory research was applicable to the study as the researcher attempted to become familiar and gain an understanding of the research topic, whereas descriptive research was applicable as the research report provides a detailed description of the phenomenon (Bless eat al., 2013:60-61; Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95-96).

3.2.3 Research design

Bless et al. (2013:395) describe the research design as "the procedures that guide the researcher" during research process. The researcher wished to collect data to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of the participants of community violence experienced during their adolescent years, therefore, the case study design was a relevant research design for the study (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:81-82). The case study design provided the researcher with a strategy to explore and describe the unique experiences of a small sample of participants (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320). Although criticism against case study designs point out that the findings of the study cannot be generalised, it remains an appropriate design for gaining information about a particular phenomenon (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). The goal of the study was to explore the perceptions of the participants on community violence so as to gain an understanding of this social phenomenon. Therefore, an instrumental case study design guided the research study (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321-322; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82-83).

3.2.4 Research methods

With consideration of the research approach and research design, the research methods of the study will be described in this section. The following aspects will be discussed: the study population and sampling, the manner of data collection, the method of data analysis and trustworthiness of the findings, as well as the pilot study.

3.2.4.1 Study population and sampling

The study population was young adults in South Africa who have been either directly or indirectly exposed to community violence in their community during their adolescent years (Strydom, 2011a:223; Wagner et al., 2012:272). The study was conducted in the Cloetesville area of Stellenbosch since there has been an increase in community violence over the past 15 years in that community (Williamse, 2016). The rationale for including young adults in the sample was that they might be able to provide a more objective account of their perceptions regarding their exposure to community violence during their adolescent years. The target population was therefore young adults between the ages of 20 and 25 years who were exposed to community violence, as these individuals would be the population that the research would focus upon (Bless et al., 2013:164; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2012:126).

As the researcher had no way of knowing which individuals in the population have been exposed to community violence during their adolescent years, the research participants were recruited by means of snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling method (Strydom & Delport, 2011:393). Snowball sampling is a relevant sampling method in instances where the researcher does not have knowledge of the sampling frame (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198; Strydom & Delport, 2011:393). In the first phase of snowball sampling, the researcher made contact with one person from the study population who was expected to provide information relevant to answering the research question (Atkinson & Flint, 2003:275; Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198; Welman et al., 2012:69). This person was purposively selected from the target population according to the following inclusion criteria for the participants in the study (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198):

- The participants should be males or females between the ages of 20 and 25 years.
- Participants should be able to converse in English or Afrikaans.
- Participants must have been exposed to community violence in the South African context; directly exposed (victimisation) on at least one occasion and/or indirectly exposed (witnessing or hearing about community violence) regularly.

The participants were not recruited from the researcher's work environment or social work caseload. The researcher identified the first participant in a social environment to which she had access. This participant was requested to identify one or more other potential participants who complied with the sampling criteria and were members of the study population (Welman et al., 2012:69). Only those persons who agreed to voluntarily participate in the study were then contacted by the researcher. The researcher would repeat this process until the appropriate number of research participants was included in the study (Strydom & Delport, 2011:393). However, the community members of Cloetesville seemed to have a deep-seated mistrust of people, especially when people are not from the community. Thus, the researcher struggled to get participants to refer other potential participants. The researcher was put in contact with a community worker in the area. With her help the researcher was able to make contact with participants who were willing to be interviewed. The community members trusted the community worker, so then by proxy they trusted the researcher as well. The sample size for the study was 14 participants, which proved to be a sufficient sample size for obtaining data saturation (Bless et al., 2013:164; Curtis & Curtis, 2011:37).

The researcher was aware that with snowball sampling, all the participants could be from the same social network as they would be referred by persons known to them. This situation could lead to the collection of biased information, which is seen as a disadvantage of snowball sampling (Kumar, 2011:190). To address this disadvantage, the researcher, with the help of the community worker, recruited participants from three different areas in Cloetesville. According to the community worker, the areas differed in the frequency and type of community violence that was experienced; therefore, the researcher could obtain a good representation of how community violence was experienced in Cloetesville.

3.2.4.2 Data collection

As the researcher aimed to gain information on the perceptions of the participants on a particular topic, namely community violence as personally experienced during their adolescent years, semi-structured interviews were regarded as the most relevant method of data collection (Greeff, 2011:351; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:92). Semi-structured interviews had the advantage that the researcher could probe responses that she wished to clarify and, also, to ask follow-up questions to gain more complete information (Ayres, 2012:811; Welman et al., 2012:167). The researcher was aware of the disadvantages of this method, namely that the lack of a strict structure could lead to discussions diverting from the topic (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:93). The use of an interview schedule (see Appendix A) allowed the researcher to prepare for the interviews (Greeff, 2011:352; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:93), which were useful in focusing the line of exploration on information that was relevant to the research topic. The use

of semi-structured interviews was particularly beneficial to this study, since there was a great deal of community culture that could be clarified and explored. One example of this is that the researcher heard that gang members controlled where people are allowed to walk in the community or not. By exploring this theme, the researcher was able to collect information on a pattern, namely that participants experienced a lack of freedom in the community.

The semi-structured interviews were constructed around several open-ended questions listed on an interview schedule that was developed before data collection (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:93). The semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to focus on specific themes related to the research topic but allowed for flexibility for further probing of certain information to gain more detailed information (Greeff, 2011:353; Welman et al., 2012:166). The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants to ensure that data were collected accurately, and the researcher made field notes to complement the information obtained by the verbal discussions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:94).

3.2.4.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was regarded as a suitable method of data analysis for this study that followed an interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research approach (Clarke et al., 2015:223-224). This method of data analysis is relevant to data collected through interviewing and reflects the meaning that the participants communicate (Clarke et al., 2015:225). Thematic data analysis occurred in six recursive phases (Clarke et al., 2015:230).

- **Phase 1: Familiarisation**

The researcher transcribed the audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews. In the first phase of data analysis, the researcher read and re-read the entire data set to gain familiarise herself with the contents (Clarke et al., 2015:229; Schurink et al., 2011:409). The data were read in a questioning manner in order to identify patterns and key concepts, making reflective notes to document her observations and emerging insights (Clarke et al., 2015:231-232; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:115).

- **Phase 2: Coding**

The second phase of data analysis involved a systematic coding process, which formed the foundation for the development of themes in the data. For this purpose, the researcher looked for information that could be relevant to answering the research question and assign a code to it by using a single word or short phrases (Clarke et al., 2015:234-235). The researcher thus looked for information that could either be a meaningful word or group of words, salient themes and recurring patterns that contained information that were meaningful to the study's focus (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:116; Schurink et al., 2011:410). With consideration of the codes,

the data were divided into analytical units, changing and refining the codes and labels to enhance the researcher's awareness of the data and to judge the relevance of the data to answering the research question (Clarke et al., 2015:235; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:118).

Phase 3: Searching for themes

In searching for themes, the researcher searched for content in the data that has common meaning and clustered similar codes together to form main themes and sub-themes (Clarke et al., 2015:236; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:119). Each theme therefore presents a "central idea that unified" the perceptions of the participants (Clarke et al., 2015:236), and resulted in the identification of core themes in the data (Schurink et al., 2011:415). To make sure that the themes together form a coherent picture, the researcher made use of a thematic map to identify main themes and sub-themes and how they relate to each other, and created theme names (Clarke et al., 2015:238; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:120; Schurink et al., 2011:415). This process is regarded as a central characteristic of qualitative data analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:119).

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Next, the researcher critically reviewed the themes to decide whether the data themes would shed light on the research topic, thus on the participants' experiences of exposure to community violence during adolescence (Schurink et al., 2011:415). The researcher firstly focused on each individual theme and then on the entire set to make sure that the data were central to and useful for answering the research question (Clarke et al., 2015:238; Schurink et al., 2011:415). In the process, the researcher could make minor changes and make sure that the findings were put together in a logical structure (Clarke et al., 2015:238; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:120).

- **Phase 5: Defining and naming themes**

As a starting point for writing up the research findings, the researcher wrote theme definitions for each theme, which involved a short description that would portray the essence of the theme and serves as a "road map" for writing up the results (Clarke et al., 2015:240). The theme definitions helped the researcher to remain focused on the meaning of each theme (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:120). Furthermore, the researcher finalised a theme name for each theme to indicate the central idea of the theme (Clarke et al., 2015:241).

Phase 6: Writing-up the research findings

Clarke et al. (2015:241) explain that although the writing up of the research findings is the last step in the data analysis process, there is in fact no clear separation between this phase and

earlier data analysis phases. In this phase, the researcher interpreted the findings by integrating the research findings with existing literature on the topic (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:121). The researcher considered the study findings together with information of the literature to determine the "lessons learned" through the research study (Schurink et al., 2011:416). The presentation of the research findings is supported with direct quotes from the interviews with the participants to reflect the unique reality and perspectives of the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:121). The researcher kept in mind that the written research results should enable her to obtain a clear understanding of the meaning of the research participants' experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:122).

3.2.5 Data quality

Researchers are responsible for taking measures to enhance the data quality or trustworthiness of their data analysis, research findings and conclusions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:123). The researcher attended to the following constructs to enhance the quality of the data: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Bless et al., 2013:236; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123; Schurink et al., 2011:419).

- **Credibility**

Credibility refers to presenting the research findings in an unbiased manner to depict the meanings that the research participants ascribe to the phenomenon under study (Bless et al., 2013:236; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). Credibility was enhanced by the researcher adopting established research methods that were appropriate to the implementation of the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:123; Schurink et al., 2011:420), as described in Section 1 of this chapter. In addition, the researcher implemented the following strategies to ensure that the participants' information on their experiences of community violence during adolescence was accurately presented: reflexivity, dealing with researcher reactivity, and peer debriefing (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191-192; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123; Schurink et al., 2011:420).

The researcher engaged in *reflexivity* by being aware that her own actions and preconceived ideas could have an influence on data collection and data analysis (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191-192). To address possible *researcher reactivity,* the researcher conducted the data collection interviews in a respectful manner, with sensitivity to the participants' experiences and their views, and analysed the data in accordance with the prescribed steps in the data analysis process (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). The researcher furthermore engaged in *peer debriefing* by discussing the research methodology and data analysis in debriefing sessions with colleagues, which contributed to reflexivity (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:196; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123).

- **Transferability**

Transferability relates to the generalisation of research findings and the extent to which the findings may be relevant to other situations outside of the research setting (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:123). Because of factors such as purposive sampling methods and small study samples, it is not possible to generalise the findings of qualitative research studies in the same way as in quantitative studies (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195; Schurink et al., 2011:420). As a strategy to enhance transferability, the researcher made use of *thick description* of the research methods and findings, which would allow other researchers to compare similarities in other situations or contexts (Bless et al., 2013:237; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195).

- **Dependability**

Dependability is concerned with the logical and accurate documentation of the research process to instil trust that the research results are dependable (Bless et al., 2013:237; Schurink et al., 2011:420). The researcher provided a detailed description of the research methodology, including the implementation of the research design and methods of data collection and data analysis, which will enable others to follow the researcher's reasoning (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:124). Furthermore, discussions with the research supervisor provided opportunities for *peer debriefing* as a strategy to enhance dependabiity (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:196). Whereas a detailed documentation of the research study can enhance the replicability of the study, Schurink et al. (2011:421) regards the exact replication of qualitative studies as problematic due to ever-changing constructions of the social world.

- **Confirmability**

The confirmability of the study refers to the objectivity of the researcher, in which the research findings reflect the participants' perspectives and are not influenced by the interests, motivation or bias of the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:125; Schurink et al., 2011:421). Confirmability implies that other researchers who conduct similar studies in similar contexts, are likely to obtain similar findings (Bless et al., 2013:237). To enhance the confirmability of the study, the researcher aimed to enhance the objectivity of the research findings through *peer debriefing* and *reflexivity* during the implementation of the research process (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:197; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:125). To support a *thick description,* the researcher included verbatim quotes by different participants to present the variety of perceptions as fully as possible and in this way provide evidence in the data that will support the research findings (Clarke et al., 2015:241-242; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:197).

The researcher followed the above strategies during data collection and analysis to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. A pilot study was also implemented before data collection commenced with the aim of enhancing the quality of data collection.

3.2.6 Pilot study

To determine whether appropriate data could be collected by means of the interview schedule, the researcher conducted a pilot study by interviewing one person who complied with the inclusion criteria of the study (Fouché & Delport, 2011b:75; Strydom, 2011b:237). The pilot study enabled the researcher to consider the applicability of the research methodology, sampling, data collection instrument and analysis of the data and whether any changes would be needed to the planning of the research study (Bless et al., 2013:394; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:74; Persaud, 2012: 1033). The researcher considered aspects such as the relevance and clarity of the questions in the interview schedule and whether sufficient information could be gathered for answering the research question (Strydom & Delport, 2011:394-395). The pilot interview was transcribed and analysed for this purpose.

During the pilot study, the researcher realised certain pitfalls that needed to be addressed. In the pilot study, the participant struggled to talk about only his own experiences as an adolescent. He kept coming back to his perceptions of community violence as he experienced it in the present. The researcher had to keep on reminding the participant that the conversation is a reflective one. To address this problem in following interviews, the researcher made a poster with the word "adolescent" on it and the age to which it referred. Having a visual aid available made it easier for the participants to talk about that age only, unless the questions asked otherwise. Another pitfall came about when the researcher asked the participant what type of community violence he was exposed to. He had trouble in recalling any. The question was too general. To address this aspect, the researcher compiled a table from literature about different types of violent actions. The researcher then went through the table with the participants, asking them directly whether they, for example, had seen someone being stabbed. If the answer was "no" the researcher moved on to the next act on the table. If the answer was "yes", the researcher explored the participant's reaction toward the act before moving on to the next one. One participant mentioned that many community members throw stones at one another. That was then added to the table. Some participants mentioned that they had been unintentionally caught in the middle of stone-throwing in some or other manner. The visual aids were implemented in a respectful and non-leading way by explaining their purpose in being helpful for the researcher.

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical standards in research guide researchers to balance scientific inquiry with protecting the participants' well-being (Bless et al., 2013:28-29). Ethical considerations are especially important in research with human beings and research studies that involve sensitive topics (Babbie, 2017:64; Kumar, 2011:218). The Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria approved the research (Appendix B). The following ethical aspects were adhered to during the implementation of the study:

3.3.1 Voluntary participation and informed consent

Participation in research should at all times be voluntary and participants in the study have the right to receive comprehensive information about the research (Bless et al., 2013:32). The researcher ensured that no participant was forced to participate in the study and provided them with detailed information on the study, including the purpose of the study, possible risks, what participation would entail, that participation was voluntary and that they could decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. The participants also received information on confidentiality, the storage of and future use of the research data, and they were requested to provide their permission for the digital recording of the interviews (Strydom, 2011c:117). The information was stipulated in a letter of informed consent (Appendix C) so that the participants could make an informed decision in terms of their participation in the study (Bless et al., 2013:32; Strydom, 2011c:116-117).

In terms of giving their informed consent, the researcher made sure that the participants knew what they had signed for. She went through each line of the informed consent form with the participants, making sure that they understood the content of the form. Afterwards, she asked all the participants if they had questions. Some participants had questions about the study which the researcher then answered; others, however, did not have any questions. One potential participant wanted to confirm that the participation was voluntary. When the researcher confirmed this, he stated that he did not really want to be part of the study. The researcher then in a friendly and respectful manner accepted his wish.

3.3.2 Avoidance of harm

Bless et al. (2013:29) state that avoidance of harm to participants is the "most basic principle of research." The researcher kept in mind the substantial adverse effects of violence on the well-being of children and adolescents, which could increase their risk for emotional harm during the data collection interviews (Clarke, 2012:83; Savahl et al., 2013:580; Strydom, 2011c:115). The researcher ensured that the participants were fully informed about the study in the written letter of informed consent, which was also discussed with them before the

interviews began. The participants thus were fully aware of what the study was about and also about the possible risks and impact of the study. All the participants were ensured that they could withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to, without any negative consequences for them (Babbie, 2017:63; Strydom, 2011c:115).

The researcher experienced an incident where a participant gave consent to participate in the study after the researcher and the participant read and discussed the letter of informed consent. When the participant saw the table of different types of violent acts and realised that it formed part of the first question, she said that she would not be able to participate in the study since she had been exposed to all the violent actions on the list and that it would be too difficult to talk about it. As it is advised that persons who are deemed too vulnerable to participate in the study should not be included as participants in the study (Strydom, 2011c:115), the researcher ended the interview and tore up the consent form and deleted the audio recording that had already been made. The researcher thanked the participant for her honesty and her time and ensured that she would contact the community worker for referral for counselling if she wished to.

Furthermore, the researcher was sensitive to any signs of possible discomfort experienced by the participants during the interviews; however, guarded against being overly sympathetic (Babbie, 2017:66; McLaughlin, 2014:65). The researcher arranged with a psychologist within the geographic area of the target population to provide counselling free of charge for participants who might experience emotional distress (refer Appendix D), and thus guarded against taking on the role of a social worker for these participants (Bless et al., 2013:33; McLaughlin, 2014:67). The researcher provided this information to all participants, regardless of their emotional state at the time of the interview, since it could happen that distress occur only after the interview has been completed and time has passed.

3.3.3 Violation of privacy/confidentiality

The researcher upheld the principle of privacy by allowing the participants to choose the extent to which they wished to share information during the interviews (Strydom, 2011c:119). The participants were given the opportunity to make contact at a level that was comfortable for them. In Gestalt theory, contact making is both giving information and withholding information that the participant is not comfortable with sharing (Blom, 2006:89).

Confidentiality was important to the participants and some of them made statements like *'Since it is confidential, I will be able to share this or that with you*.*'* Furthermore, the researcher ensured that she protected the identity of the participants so that no one, apart from the researcher, will be able to link a specific response to a participant (Bless et al., 2013:32). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher used pseudonyms to identify the participants and

ensured that the transcripts of the interviews as well as the informed consent letters were stored securely at all times during the research (Strydom, 2011c:119-121). At the completion of the study, the transcripts and informed consent letters are stored in accordance with the stipulations of the University of Pretoria.

The researcher ensured that the interviews were conducted in a safe and private environment (McLaughlin, 2014:67). Although most of the interviews were conducted in people's homes, the participants were comfortable with the situation and the inhabitants of the homes respected the privacy of the researcher and participant and did not interfere in the interview.

3.3.4 Debriefing of participants

The researcher debriefed the participants after every interview to answer questions they might still have, to correct any misconceptions that they may have, and to lower the risk of negative consequences of their participation in the interviews (Babbie, 2017:71; Curtis & Curtis, 2011:40; Strydom, 2011c:122). Debriefing involved that the participants were provided with an opportunity to discuss their experiences of participation in the research and discuss their feelings and what they learned before, during and after the interviews (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:41; Strydom, 2011c:122). To the researcher's surprise, all the participants experienced the interview as positive, although the topic focused on their experiences related to community violence. The researcher, however, kept in mind that the participants may discover something new about themselves during the interviews which could lead to distress (Strydom, 2011c:122) and reminded the participants that they were free to talk to a psychologist whose business card they had received.

3.3.5 Actions and competence of the researcher

The researcher's skills and competence for conducting the study was enhanced by her attendance of an advanced theory module in research as part of the degree MSW Play-based Intervention, as well as by conducting a comprehensive literature review on community violence and the effects thereof on people and communities (Strydom, 2011c:123). Furthermore, the researcher's conduct was guided by the ethical responsibilities and code of conduct as a registered social worker with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (n.d.). The researcher engaged in continuous self-reflection and supervision, which enabled her to conduct the study with respect for the participants' dignity, culture, and gender, and to treat all participants equally and without any value judgements (Bless et al., 2013:30-31; Strydom, 2011c:123-124). The research findings, including negative findings, are reported correctly, the limitations of the study are acknowledged, and the researcher acknowledged the work of other authors to avoid plagiarism (Bless et al., 2013:35; Strydom, 2011c:123).

3.3.6 No deception of participants

The researcher was continuously aware that deception could occur when researchers intentionally or unintentionally misrepresent information, provide incorrect information, or withhold information from participants to ensure that they participate in the study (Bless et al., 2013:34; Strydom, 2011c:118-119). To avoid deception, the researcher ensured that the participants were provided with accurate information on the study. The researcher did not become aware of any incidents of unintended deception that occurred during the study, however, the debriefing interviews immediately after data collection provided the participants with the opportunity to clarify any uncertainties that they might have (Strydom, 2011c:119).

3.3.7 Publication of findings

This research report is important for communicating the research findings to the reading public (Bless et al., 2013:36). The research findings are presented openly and honestly to add to the knowledge base on the perceptions of community violence as experienced during adolescence (Babbie, 2017:72; Bless et al., 2013:36; Strydom, 2011c:126). In line with applied research as the type of research for this study, the research findings may provide insights into social work service delivery to children, adolescents, families and communities exposed to community violence (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94-95). The research report is available in the library of the University of Pretoria.

3.4 SECTION II: PRESENTATION OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The empirical findings of the study will be presented in two sections. Firstly, a brief description of the biographical details of the participants will be given and, secondly, the qualitative research findings will be presented.

3.4.1 Context of the study

The study focused on young adults' perceptions of community violence as experienced during their adolescence. The interviews took place in Cloetesville. Cloetesville is situated approximately four kilometres north of Stellenbosch on the R44 towards Paarl. The first primary school was opened there in 1969. There are now three primary schools and one high school in Cloetesville. The community also has multiple small businesses, such as the Breughel Theatre, guesthouses and spaza shops as well as a library, a sports complex, and parks for children to play in and adults to exercise in (Pathfinda, 2019).

Cloetesville consists of an area of 1.72 km² and according to Census 2011, 15 390 people reside there. The population consists of 52,02% female and 47,98% male residents, 88,08% of the people living in Cloetesville are coloured, and 94,41% of the residents in Cloetesville

have Afrikaans as their home language (Census, 2011). The Integrated Developmental Plan 2017-2022 (Stellenbosch Local Government, 2018:183) indicate that the population in the area has almost doubled over the past 10 years. The area experiences challenges of unemployment and an increase in crime and social disintegration in the wider municipal area (Stellenbosch Local Government, 2018:184). According to Crime Stats (2018), murder, attempted murder and drug-related crime have drastically increased in Cloestesville in the past year, while robberies and sexual assaults have gone down. Gang presence in Cloetesville is growing stronger, and the township has become more and more dangerous to live in due to the increase of community violence. The situation in Cloetesville reflects that of the wider environment within the Western Cape Province in which it is located. Donenberg (2020:145) describes the prevalence of community violence in the province as follows: “Community violence across SA is widespread, but western Cape Province suffers disproportionately from gang violence and homicide among 15 – 19-year-olds.”

3.4.2 Biographical profile of the participants

The study sample consisted of 14 participants who were young adults who resided in Cloetesville. Eleven of the participants grew up in Cloetesville. Three of the participants, however, resided elsewhere as adolescents and moved to Cloetesville later in their life. The biographical profile of the participants is presented in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Biographical profile of participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Home language
1	Male	23	Afrikaans
2	Female	22	Afrikaans
3	Male	21	Afrikaans
4	Female	22	Afrikaans
5	Male	24	Afrikaans
6	Male	22	Afrikaans
7	Female	20	Afrikaans
8	Male	22	Afrikaans
9	Female	21	Afrikaans
10	Female	21	Afrikaans
11	Female	22	Afrikaans
12	Male	25	Afrikaans
13	Female	20	Afrikaans
14	Female	25	Afrikaans

The participants were between the ages of 20 and 25 years and the average age of the participants was 22 years. Two participants were 20 years old, which was the minimum age stated in the sampling criteria for the study, and two participants were 25 years old, which was the cut-off age to be a participant in the study. Most of the participants were in the age groups of 21 years (3 participants) and 22 years (5 participants).

The study sample consisted of six male and eight female participants. During the recruitment of participants, the researcher found that males in the community were more reluctant to participate in the study. Despite this, there was a good representation of both genders in the study sample. Except for one male participant, the researcher experienced that the interviews with the male participants were generally shorter than those of the female participants, since they tended to talk less. The female participants were also quicker to freely share their

perceptions and experiences of community violence, where it took slightly longer for the male participants to share their views on the subject.

All the participants' home language was Afrikaans, and the interviews were thus conducted in Afrikaans. The quotes that the researcher selected for the presentation of the empirical findings were translated into English by the researcher and a colleague who helped the researcher with the language editing of the research report. The researcher experienced that the participants tended to mix Afrikaans and English in their everyday language and used particular words or phrases in a unique way of talking that is associated with the Coloured people of the Western Cape. To retain the spirit of the participants' unique way of talking, the quotes used in support of the empirical findings are not always presented in grammatically correct English. In this way, the researcher and the language editor decided on the best-suited English equivalent words to represent the unique way of talking of the participants. Much energy went into the translation of the quotes, so that the participants' words could still come to life in the manner that they expressed themselves.

3.4.3 The empirical results of the study

In this section, the empirical results of the study will be discussed according to the themes and sub-themes identified during data analysis. Themes and sub-themes will be supported with direct quotes from the interviews. The themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: Exposure to community violence	1.1 Direct exposure: being a victim of community violence 1.2 Indirect exposure: witnessing violence 1.3 Indirect exposure: hearing about community violence 1.4 Indirect exposure: community violence in social media 1.5 Frequency of exposure to community violence
Theme 2: Perceived causes of community violence	2.1 Substance abuse and related activities 2.2 Gangsterism and gang activities 2.3 Violence becomes a norm 2.4 Lack of parental involvement and supervision 2.5 Material gains and status 2.6 Lack of community action 2.7 Discontent in communities
Theme 3: Participants' reactions to incidents of community violence	3.1 'Keep quiet. Do not interfere' 3.2 Curiosity and excitement 3.3 Avoiding scenes of community violence 3.4 Accept community violence as a normal part of life
Theme 4: Distrust in others	4.1 Distrust in people 4.2 Distrust in the community 4.3 Distrust in the police service
Theme 5: Effects of community violence on the participants	5.1 Fear for own safety 5.2 Fear for safety of family members and friends 5.3 Constant fearfulness 5.4 Emotional distress 5.5 Sleeplessness 5.6 Limited freedom of movement in the community 5.7 Social isolation and school absenteeism 5.8 Negative attitude and behaviour
Theme 6: Effects of community violence in young adulthood	6.1 Exposure to violence still has an effect 6.2 'One gets used it'
Theme 7: Effects of community violence on the community	7.1 Unsafe neighbourhoods 7.2 Lack of a shared sense of community 7.3 Damage to property and infrastructure 7.4 A sense of helplessness
Theme 8: Recommendations by the participants	8.1 Communities must stand up against community violence 8.2 Instil positive norms and values in children 8.3 The police must do their duty
Theme 9: Managing the effects of community violence	9.1: Participants' handling of the effects of community violence 9.2: Participants' experience of the data collection interviews

The nine main themes, each with a number of sub-themes, which were identified in the data, will be discussed below. The themes include aspects such as the participants' exposure to and views on the causes of community violence, their reactions to incidents of community violence, and the perceived effects of community violence on themselves and on the community.

3.4.3.1 Theme 1: Exposure to community violence

The participants were exposed to different types of community violence during their adolescent years, for example shooting, stabbing, fighting, robbery and mugging, having stones thrown at them, and threats, as will be discussed in the sub-themes to this theme. The findings are in line with research that indicates the high exposure to community violence of adolescents living in South Africa (Kaminer et al., 2013a:112).

Sub-theme 1.1: Direct exposure: being a victim of community violence

Some participants told of incidents in which they were victims of community violence. Two of the participants were robbed, and a person attacked one with a knife, while another one was chased and then stoned. They elaborated more on their experience of these acts.

> *Yes, I was robbed once. I was 15 … Me and my pal came from school in Riettenboch (a primary school in the community), we went to the backyard shop … Then one of the young guys there grabbed my phone out of my bag and ran away and then I ran after him, but I didn't catch him*. (P3)

> *I was once attacked with a knife … 16 years [old] … I was in the road ... My pals helped me that night. They put a bandage on and cleaned the wound, kept me warm with a blanket around me …. I went to the clinic a week later cause it [the wound] looked so raw. So, I had to have stitches put in. They put in about five stitches.* (P6)

> *When I was 18, I was robbed in front of my own house. Me and my girlfriend were standing in front of my house, I had money in my wallet and my phone was in my pocket. Then two men came and asked for a lighter and then they asked what the time was and when I looked down, they took out a gun and then they said, "Stand still, I want everything." Your life is in danger, you can't scream …. Nearly like a shock, everything in you shakes, so wobbly, like a vibration, so the shock in it was another kind of experience.* (P12)

> *Me and one girl, we were on the way to buy school shoes for her, and then there were two big girls. I don't know why, we were just walking along peacefully, we never bothered them. So, then they just decided to chase us and throw stones at us.* (P9)

Adolescents are at high risk of being victimised, not only because South Africa is known to be a country with high levels of violence, but also because youth aged 12 to 22 in South Africa are twice as likely to be victims of violent crimes (Pelser, 2008:2; Western Cape Government, 2013:11). Being a victim of violence is unlikely to be a one-time occurrence. Finkelhor et al.

(2009b:1) explain that children who are victims of direct victimisation are at higher risk to fall victim to another type of violent act later in their life. The theme of multiple exposures to community violence came across clearly in the study. The participants who were victims of direct violence were also victims of other types of direct and indirect violence.

Sub-theme 1.2: Indirect exposure: witnessing violence

Some participants provided information on incidents where they directly witnessed violence. They saw different types of violent acts, and they reacted to these in different ways.

> *Gun shooting … robbing, stabbing, hitting one another. … Yeah well, in the Cape, that's more or less how it goes*. (P1)
>
> *At the school where I am, I have seen violence. Kids stabbing one another and so on, and also shooting … then I have also seen with, like, older people, that they attack and hurt each other and so on … but it did not really affect me physically.* (P2)
>
> *It was actually about the guy's own money, that's why they stabbed him …. I was standing there, but it was a nice distance away, so I just shouted, I shouted to them to stop … it took about three or four minutes for them to stop.* (P9)
>
> *I have also seen kids throwing stones at buildings and stuff like that …. When I was a teenager, they were throwing lots of stones at the clinic down there, they were throwing stones, and if you look at them, they throw the stones at you as well. So, you just have to stay away.* (P11)
>
> *Yes, by gangs, yeah, I was about 16 [years old], they were chasing him [a man] in front of me, and then they stabbed him, the gangsters. They stabbed him, they stuck more than 24 holes in him, it was just here in his body [shows middle of body]. Then they stabbed him in the shoulder, I saw [the wounds] when they took the knife out. The knife was shiny and about like this [shows about 40 cm] the handle is thick like, like this [shows about 2 cm]. They stabbed the guy in front of me. I was watching. When they say, "Little guy, rather run away, man" then who do you think will argue?* (P12)

As explained in the literature, witnessing violence means that the violence that was seen was not directed at the adolescents; they were merely caught in the conflict of a bad situation. Seeing violence inflicted upon someone else will still affect the witness (Fowler et al., 2009:229; Sui et al., 2018:2). The participants in this study have witnessed multiple types of community violence. When considering the term holism, which means that a person is a whole and cannot be separated from experiences, it is more evident that witnessing violence will have an emotional effect on adolescents (Blom, 2006:23). The distance at which an adolescent observes crime can influence the intensity of the symptoms they may experience. Adolescents will experience greater trauma the closer they are to the event that they have witnessed (Fowler et al., 2009:229; Kennedy & Ceballo, 2014:74). Adolescents living in an urban community suffer a higher risk of being exposed to community violence (Bailey, 2011:115; Foster, 2012: 44; Meinck et al., 2016: 912). The research site, Cloetesville, is an urban community that experienced high levels of crime (Stellenbosch Local Authority, 2018).

For some participants, community violence affected their family or friendship group. The participants either directly observed the violent acts or they observed the effects of the violence on the victim.

> *I was 18 years old. Me and my pals were drinking, then two other guys came over, and they were badmouthing me and my pals. So, my pal takes out a knife and he stabs him, right through the head.* (P5)

> *I saw my pals standing there under the trees … I saw a group of people coming down the hill and they were shouting, but they were actually enemies… I saw this one guy, he took two bottles full of beer and he slammed it in my friend's face. … When he tried to stop them, they stabbed him in his back and in his hip … Then we called the ambulance, but he was so paralysed, he couldn't deal with it anymore. He has already been stabbed so, so many times. Then they had to go to the hospital.* (P13)

> *And so, they [the thugs] hit my father. I didn't know they had hit him, I only saw afterwards, because I went to look for him among the other people, then I saw he wasn't there, so I walked through the wine shop, I was standing on the steps [then I saw him], then I took his hand. He was bleeding. Then I started to cry and cry. Then we went home.* (P3)

> *My mother was wounded by a gunshot, in her upper leg, with my little brother on her arm … I was worried because my little brother was on her arm. When they fired again into the yard, my mother pressed my little brother up against the wall and she stood in front, for her it was nearly like, so rather shoot me than shoot my child, I would rather [die] but my child stays. But that's not how it turned out.* (P7)

> *My friend, my friend was attacked with a knife ... Then they wanted to take his eye out and then they stabbed him … on his mouth [long silence]. Another one in his lung … but he survived … I wasn't on the scene.* (P6)

Aisenberg et al. (2008:1571) and Kennedy and Ceballo (2014:69) explain that, among other factors like the type of violence and the frequency of violence exposure, having a personal relationship (family or friend) with a person being victimised will impact the witness's perception of the violent act. Lynch (2003:270) proposes that witnessing violence towards a person close to an adolescent will cause the adolescent to have more psychosocial symptoms than they would have if they saw that same act done to a stranger. Participant 9 explained his experience to this situation as follows: "If you don't know the person you don't need to feel bad, but if you know someone, you will feel bad. But there is actually no difference; whether you show more or less [emotion], you always have a bad feeling." The participant's statement emphasises the impact witnessing violence has on adolescents, no matter what the connection between them and the victim of violence may be.

Sub-theme 1.3: Indirect exposure: hearing about community violence

Hearing about community violence was not uncommon for the participants. They heard about it in different places and from different sources, as explained by the following participants.

Yes, I have often heard about people who died, who died from the violence. And then I always want to know how it happened, because maybe somebody could have done something to prevent it. Or someone who got hurt very badly, but they didn't die, and now they have hard times because of the violence that happened. (P10)

They [people in the participants' environment] knew all about what happened, and they spoke about what happened and then I always heard what happened. So, you just heard about something, then you keep going on with the story as if you were there, like that. (P13)

You hear about it the next day [from people in the community who freely discuss the violence]. (P8)

Sometimes they, the gangs, throw people in front of the trains ... Then they say, no, the train hit him, but you hear that they [the gang members] actually cut him up. (P12)

As stated by the participants, hearing about community violence was a common experience in their lives. Hearing about community violence done to others can sometimes be minimised and considered as less noteworthy than witnessing or being a victim of community violence. This is, however, not the case; frequent hearing about community violence can make adolescents feel unsafe and overly vigilant. After hearing about community violence, adolescents might be scared they will fall victim to crime or they can feel like they have already experienced a particularly violent act, since they have heard about it many times (Horowitz et al., 1995:1357). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, 2013:271), hearing about community violence is considered a traumatic event.

The participants also told of them frequently hearing gunshots in their neighbourhoods and how it affected them.

I always asked, 'Nanna, what is that noise? Is it you carrying on in the house?' Then they just say it's [nothing] then I say but then it is raining here. Then it is like they don't want us to know that stuff like that goes on in the community. Then I say 'no, don't lie to me, you must tell us, otherwise we are walking in the road tomorrow and it really happens.' Then they say it's the weather, or whatever. But then she says no, it's people who are shooting, and we must watch out for stray bullets or whatever … one year at Christmas we would have gone away, then they started shooting one another, then my mother was wounded in the shooting and the lady standing in front of her was shot in the ankle. (P7)

That time I felt scared… I was always in the house when I heard stuff like that, I wasn't even outside. (P9)

That's how things are done, drinking of alcohol, that's the time when it happens…. I was very frightened, and it keeps going through your head, who is it who was shot now and who was hurt in the process. (P10)

I have often heard it when I am lying in my bed at night … it mainly happens at night, but you hear them shooting … I am happy that I am at home … I just pull the blanket over my head. (P11)

> *Yes, a lot … a lot … [feeling] just scared and feeling I must go home now, just to get out of the danger area. I prefer to go home and stay at home. … We have often heard it. Okay, there are some shots fired, then we wonder who was shot and so on.* (P13)

As described by the participants, gun violence frequently happened in Cloetesville and can be heard over a long distance. Possible reasons for frequently hearing gun shots are that guns might be young people's weapon of choice, that the use of guns is more dramatic and traumatic, making it more memorable, and that guns are easily accessible in urban communities (Voisin, 2011:2484). From the participants' views it can also be concluded that gun violence can be so memorable due to the lack of control a person has over it. In this respect, Participant 7 said that they must be on the lookout for stray bullets and Participant 11 explained that the only thing to do when hearing gunshots when one is in bed is to cover oneself. This information implies that hearing gunshots can make a person feel unsafe even in a place where an adolescent usually can feel safe, namely their home. Of interest to this situation, is the view of Oaklander (2007:238) that adolescents do not express all their fears and that for every fear that is verbalised, there are many more that are not being stated because adolescents may see expressing fear as being a coward. Some adolescents may experience fear when they have no control over a situation (Oaklander, 2007:239). This notion may be the reason why many of the participants displayed fear of hearing gunshots: they have no control over it.

Sub-theme 1.4: Indirect exposure: community violence in social media

Some participants expressed that they were shocked to see the extent of community violence in South Africa broadcast on television. Others heard about community violence in their immediate communities via social media such as Facebook or MXit.

> *Yes [news of violence in community on Facebook], lots of people write stuff like for instance, Ann was stabbed or did you hear in that or that place there was murder. I just saw that stuff vaguely, you know, vaguely I would hear it from my auntie, what they read, and so on*. (P7)

> *One of my friends said on MXit that he was stabbed. He explained what the person looked like. I knew that person. Then we sent each other photos of that man. The man (my friend) is dead now, his whole spine was broken, he was paralysed … For me that was not good to murder someone who didn't [deserve] it, to die like that.* (P12)

> *[Seeing violence on TV] was very scary … How the people shot babies, how the people shot one another in the Cape. I was about 14 when that came on TV.* (P11)

> *It was just wow, the people are fighting just like that on TV, South Africans, so much violence ... [Facebook], yes, there is violence every day.* (P8)

Seeing the community where the adolescent lives for being violent and cruel, can have negative effects on the adolescent, which may include experiencing powerlessness and despair. Other side-effects of continually seeing one's community in a negative light can be that adolescents become hypervigilant and develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Holman et al., 2014:95). Louw and Louw (2014c:216) point out that being in contact with community violence in that manner can cause adolescents to identify with violent characters and that might impact their behaviour, causing them to become more violent as well. In that way, television, the internet and especially social media make it easier for violent behaviour to flourish (King et al., 2007:67). The internet gives people quick and easy access to other people's pain, shame and humiliation, and stories of community violence are spread as a form of entertainment. Participant 12's experience about learning about his friend's stabbing via MXit, is an example of the powerful influence of social media in exposing people to incidents of community violence involving persons they know.

Sub-theme 1.5: Frequency of exposure to community violence

The research findings show that there was a high frequency of direct and indirect exposure of the participants to community violence within their communities, excluding exposure to community violence in social media.

> *Every day, two or three times a week. Like maybe from today [Tuesday] to Sunday nothing will happen, but then next week something happens. So, there is never a time when nothing happens. (Laughs) It is there every day, but more at night.* (P2)
>
> *Yes, it happens every weekend, then, then you hear that one was attacked with an axe, or that one was stabbed to death.* (P7)
>
> *Time and again yes, violence happens. ... Yes, December, festive times … that time of the year you always get violence.* (P8)
>
> *Most of the time, every week. Even if stuff happens in Smartietown or Tenneville (both are suburbs in Cloetesville) the news always gets here. 'That ons was killed yesterday' or 'that happened somewhere here'. Mostly weekly, it also mostly happens over weekends.* (P13)
>
> *Weekends, it was always over a weekend, the weeks are always quiet.* (P14)
>
> *It usually happened two or three times a month. It wasn't all the time – like in every day or so. But then sometimes it will [happen] three times a month, that I saw.* (D11)

From the above statements, it was clear that some areas in the community were more prone to community violence than others and that the frequency of exposure to violence differed among all the participants. It appears that community violence occurred daily in some areas, where in others it escalated during the weekends. However, there is consensus that community violence was experienced at an alarmingly high rate by the participants. It is often

difficult to calculate the exact number of times an adolescent was exposed to hearing about community violence, since the answer to that question may be that they hear about it “all the time” (Horowitz et al., 1995:1357). Akande (2000:74) state that adolescents come in contact with violence every day. Furthermore, adolescents in South Africa are prone to experience high rates of poly-victimisation (Kaminer et al., 2013a:120).

3.4.3.2 Theme 2: Perceived causes of community violence

The participants shared their perceptions of the possible causes of community violence, highlighting aspects such as substance abuse, gangsterism, and violence that has become a norm in the community. A lack of parental involvement and supervision was also mentioned as one of the perceived causes of community violence together with aspects such as material gain and status, a lack of community action, and discontent in the community.

Sub-theme 2.1: Substance abuse and related activities

According to the participants, consumption of alcohol and other substances was the root cause of many violent acts that take place in the community. There are different ways in which substance abuse leads to violence and the participants mentioned a few of them.

> *They stab one another over drugs, or they shoot at one another just over drugs.* (P11)
>
> *So, I think it is people who were smuggling in the streets. The one makes more money than the other one, or the one did something the other one doesn't like, so now they begin shooting.* (P3)
>
> *Yes, lots of people have booze in their bodies, then they start going out and then they start looking for trouble. Then they hit each other and stab one another, and then another group turn up that were close and then they start getting involved.* (P7)
>
> *I would say at that time it was through alcohol that violence breaks out, also through drugs violence breaks out, stealing, stuff like that, yes.* (P8)
>
> *So, in the week it will be quieter because people come from work. But during the week there will be more robberies ... over weekends people are more under the influence of wrong stuff, they are more under the influence of drugs than in the week. And under the influence of alcohol, things like that [violence] happen.* (P13)

The way that the participants experienced the effects of alcohol consumption and drug use is also described in the literature. There is a direct correlation between high alcohol use and violence because alcohol and other substances affect both a person’s mind and body. Alcohol impairs personal decision-making skills; thus, a person is more prone to be either a victim or a perpetrator of community violence (Otwombe et al., 2015:6; Ward, 2007:16). The Western Cape Government (2013:13) agrees with the above information and adds that alcohol consumption can be used as an unhealthy coping mechanism for both the perpetrator and

victim of community violence and in this way, a cycle of substance abuse and violence is cultivated.

Sub-theme 2.2: Gangsterism and gang activities

Some participants mentioned gangsterism and the social dynamics surrounding gangs as a reason for community violence.

> *Like in gangs, the gangster is a bit jealous, because where he goes there might be enemies.* (P7)
>
> *Because he was head of the gangsters, the others had to do what he said. So, everybody just followed him because he threatened them [his subordinates].* (P13)
>
> *Because look here, when you shoot someone, not one time but six times, then you are not thinking; it's almost like a game that you play on the TV. You shoot somebody … dead … and then you just walk or drive away … I shoot you and then I walk to the other side and then I shoot there and then I walk to the other side and then I stab there.* (P1)

In some Western Cape communities, such as Cloeteseville, it is not uncommon for the adolescent to have family members or friends that belong to a gang or have gang affiliations (Shields et al., 2008:598). In a gang, violence becomes the only language the gang members know, and they use it to solve most of their problems. Adolescents who observe this behaviour on a regular basis might internalise the behaviour as a norm (Kennedy & Ceballo, 2014:70). Adolescent boys are more susceptible to the influence of gang activities, since they mostly turn to the community to learn life skills as opposed to learning it in the home like most girls (Mc Donald et al., 2011:41). Donenberg et al. (2020:150) explain other reason for boys being more susceptible to gang activities, namely that boys seek out friendships that accept risk-taking behaviour as a means to deal with the trauma they experience from exposure to community violence. Girls do not seem to seek out this same type of experience, and thus they are more protected from negative group affiliations.

Some participants mentioned the power and status that belonging to a gang affords its members and viewed this as a reason for young people becoming members of gangs.

> *The gangsters, the girls; look the gangsters here, the girls like the gangsters, young girls who have old gangsters, schoolgirls, but their birds (boyfriends) are gangsters. Maybe your mom can't buy you a pair of All Stars (sneakers), but he can. And that's where it comes from.* (P6)
>
> *The gangs use children, they are young and they like money, they are going to draw you in. They say, 'Come here, I'm going to give you a gun and then you shoot that person dead. I am going to give you R20 000, R50 000 then you must shoot those people.' Just like that. 'Here is the gun [which is loaded] you shoot those people and then you bring the gun back to me.' So it goes on. He*

> *[the gang leader] doesn't worry about you [the child]. He uses you to do his work.* (P12)

Gangster behaviour can partially be explained by one element of Skinner's social learning theory, called reinforcement. According to the theory, there are two types of reinforcement, namely positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement (Hinduja & Ingram, 2009:408). The former is when behaviour is reinforced by pleasant consequences, like financial gain and status. The latter is when behaviour is reinforced due to a lack of negative consequence. A person can do what he or she pleases since there will be no unpleasant experience attached to the behaviour (Hinduja & Ingram, 2009:408; McLeod, 2007:1-2). A practical example of negative reinforcement is that in South Africa not many criminals who are arrested go to trial, and for those who do, the conviction rate is low (Gould et al., 2017:8). Thus, the idea of getting caught for criminal activities would not intimidate some gang members. The participants were of the opinion that gangs in Cloetesville thrive because of positive reinforcement.

Sub-theme 2.3: Violence becomes a norm

Some participants expressed the view that in some communities, violence becomes the norm for dealing with problems and disputes.

> *Yes, look, that is the stuff that we see and later on we also want to do that stuff. But we know that is not the right thing to do, then [after exposure to community violence] we think that is the right thing to do to shoot people and stuff like that.* (P1)

> *I think mostly they want to fit in with everyone, or they see they are becoming like someone in the family who is like that. Or they also want to use a weapon or probably something like that*. (P7)

The participants mentioned a 'mirroring' mentality in their community, where adolescents want to repeat the violence that they see or also want to act in that particular manner. Pelser (2008:2) and Standler (2012:338) emphasise that being around violence on a daily basis result in communities developing a culture of violence where it becomes acceptable to act violently. Cooley et al. (2019:891) explain that violence leads to more violence. There is great concern that when violent behaviour becomes normalised, the social norms with respect to the actions are affected, resulting in communities ignoring the adverse effects of community violence as well as the criminality of the actions (Fineran et al., 2003:14). When violence is normalised, it is easier to miss the pitfalls of the violent actions and only focus on the rewards that violence might bring. It is hard to look past the reward of violence when even politicians use it for personal gain (Ward, 2007:27). Watching violent media content can also encourage a culture of violence and can contribute to adolescents' violent behaviour (Anderson et al., 2017:143).

The participants further mentioned that, as adolescents want to fit in with the peer group, they will copy violent behaviours if that is the norm within their peer group.

> *Yes, there are lots of things they wanted me to do with them, if they want me to do something violent, then they want me to go with them, but then I tell myself, I am not that kind of person, I am not going to take part with you.* (P4)

> *It's sad to see what teenagers get up to. Two years ago, my cousin also became a gangster, but before that he was a youth leader at our church, he just suddenly left the youth group and then he became a gangster. Then they shot him dead up there in town, just around the corner from his house.* (P9)

During adolescence, the family system becomes less important, and the peer group gains more value in the adolescents' lives (Berk, 2013:577, 579). It is in a peer group where adolescents can find a sense of belonging (Louw & Louw, 2014b:367). It thus makes sense that adolescents are susceptible to peer pressure (Pfeifer et al., 2011:1029). Peer pressure is, however, not always negative as positive peer pressure exists, where adolescents are influenced to do things that add positive value to their life. Parents should, therefore, guide adolescents to know the difference between positive and negative peer pressure (Allen & Antonishak, 2008:157). Assimilation, which means that an adolescent can take in a situation, deconstruct it, and keep the aspects that are useful and let go of what is not, is an essential skill for adolescents to have. This skill can help adolescents to navigate their life constructively when they make positive input from the environment their own (Blom, 2006:23; Schoeman, 2019:45). Assimilation can be observed in the statement of Participant 4 where she decided not to give in to negative peer pressure. Participant 9 expressed concern about another theme that was also found in literature, namely that boys are more susceptible to join a gang. Due to a patriarchal mentality in many communities where boys are "expected" to be rough and tough and pressures to be involved in criminal activity, many boys conform to this mentality in order to protect themselves; they do so as a coping mechanism (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2011:716; Voisin et al., 2011:2486).

Two participants mentioned how peer pressure resulted in them becoming involved in negative behaviour associated with violence in their communities.

> *How did I become involved with the smuggling? The people who were smuggling, I was friends with them. [They asked] to help, then I helped them. … For me it was alright, but it wasn't really alright, because some things come over your path, lots of temptations come over your path.* (P5)

> *As teenager I broke the windows of these old houses. We were this group then we walked up and threw stones through the windows of the houses.* (P12)

The behaviour that the participants explained is not uncommon in the context of the peer group. Ward (2007:22, 28) states that, because adolescents frequently socialise with their peer group, many times unsupervised, they motivate each other to participate in community

violence. Not having constructive leisure activities can cause adolescents to perpetrate criminal activities in the community. One participant mentioned that this situation develops because of a general lack of respect for rules and norms in communities.

> *There are too many people who just allow things to happen and when they allow these things, then people take advantage of something and then it's like this; nobody worries about those people anymore, we just go on with our stuff.* (P1)

As explained by the participant, people participating in community violence tend to lack respect for the lives of others. Wilkinson and Carr (2008:1045) state that a lack of respect for life is cultivated in communities. A lack of respect can be cultivated by factors such as a general rebelling against social norms and common law, when high alcohol consumption is present, and where weapons are easy to come by. Another aspect related to the disregard for human life is that fostering an unhealthy loyalty towards a party, clouds a person's judgement. Cooley-Strickland et al. (2009:142) and Staub (2018:109) agree that in order for communities to change into positive environments that value all life, people's attitudes should change, and they should be kinder to each other.

Sub-theme 2.4: Lack of parental involvement and supervision

The participants showed great concern over children who grow up without adequate parental supervision. They drew a correlation between a lack of supervision and growing community violence rates. The participants explained why they came to that conclusion.

> *There is no order to relationships, or there is, but not in the child's life. He just wanders everywhere, but the parent doesn't worry, that's why there is violence in the community. It actually begins at home. So automatically, if kids and their parents don't have a good relationship then there is miscommunication.* (P2)

> *I always asked 'but where are the kids' parents, why do they allow all these things to happen? They [children] are not at school anymore. They are still young; they stand with knives and want to be gangsters as well and they drink and break off the necks of bottles [to use as a weapon]. ... Why don't they [parents] think about the consequences, what will happen to their own children if they are not a good example to their children? ... [With stabbing incidents at school], they called in the parents as well, but they don't even show up.* (P7)

> *Because parents don't play the role of parents.* (P13)

As the participants indicated, parental involvement or lack thereof has a significant impact on an adolescent's life. Parents can either protect their children from community violence, or they can put them at a more significant risk to be exposed to it (Liang et al., 2019:7). A lack of parental involvement in adolescents' lives can also cause them to show more distress after experiencing community violence (Louw & Louw, 2014c:217). An adolescent's family is a key factor to how they experience violence. Lane et al. (2017:445) explain that the stress that

parents experience from living in a community with high levels of violence impairs their parenting ability and makes it harder for them to fulfil in all their children's needs, which can be an explanation for the lack of supervision some children experience. Furthermore, when families are violent in the home, adolescents are more likely to experience violence in the community (Finkelhor et al., 2009a:323-325; Turner et al., 2016:213). It has also been found that children who have been exposed to multiple forms of community violence will recall their mothers' negative attributes to a larger extent than those adolescents who have not been exposed to high levels of community violence (Lynch, 2003:279). Community violence can thus further impair the mother-child relationship, which can influence the extent of supervision an adolescent may experience. Boys with poor parental attachment, more so than girls, will experience external problems if they have been exposed to community violence (Donenberg et al., 2020:150).

When parents monitor their children's behaviour, it can increase an adolescent's resilience (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008: 304; Copeland-Linder et al., 2010:3; Yule et al., 2019:420). Resilience is a skill where a person can handle and overcome the difficulties they are faced with daily (Louw & Louw, 2014a:430; Thomlison, 2010:4). Resilience can be taught and needs to be reinforced regularly (Thomlinson, 2010:4). Parents who play an active, decisive role in their children's lives can make a significant difference in adolescents' behaviour. Parents who spend quality time with their children and allow them to express their emotions will help them to lessen adverse symptoms that adolescents might experience from contact with their environment (Oaklander, 2007:310). Blom (2006:61) expands on the parental role by stating that parents should implement boundaries for their children so that they can feel safe and secure. Children and adolescents need to be protected by their parents in a physical and emotional manner. When parents set boundaries for their children, not only do they help build their child's resilience, but they can also protect their children from some of the adverse effects related to community violence, including aggressive behaviour (Ahlin et al.,2017:75; Hardaway et al., 2016:1317; Liang et al., Ozer et al., 2017:361; Shields, 2008:599).

Sub-theme 2.5: Material gains and status

Some participants were of the opinion that community violence was caused by the value people place on money and status.

> *It just has to do with (rubs his fingers to indicate money) … Yes, that's what it is that makes everything go wrong. Because look, if I come to someone and I say to him 'There is R50 000, just shoot that one dead' then he won't think twice, he will take the money and go and shoot that guy… It's people in the community who know the gangsters, they won't pimp [disclose], because they also get something on the sideline, so you just keep quiet.* (P1)

> *... so now you become famous; the people must fear you. You must achieve something in life to be able to do violence to other people. [But] there are good things you can do to be heard.* (P11)

If an adolescent sees that social approval and financial gain can come from community violence, they will unconsciously imprint that behaviour and are likely to repeat it later when they are in the same situation (Scholar et al., 2006:3). This idea is strengthened when adolescents see people from all levels of life abuse their power for financial gain (Ward, 2007:27). Other than financial gain, violence can be utilised to gain respect or win a sexual partner. Adolescents can act violently to achieve something that they do not think they can achieve in another manner (Pelser, 2008:8). Ward (2007:16) suggests that adolescents focus on the positive aspects of community violence because they are unaware of the negative elements associated with violence. More education is thus needed in South African communities to address the adverse aspects of community violence.

Some participants mentioned that the value placed on money and status led to jealousy among community members, which in some instances resulted in violence towards others often perpetrated in the community.

> *People don't appreciate one another, or they are jealous of one another, like that. Or the person makes more money that the other person, that is why it happens ... They always want to be better than the other person, that has happened a lot in our community.* (P11)

> *Like, maybe you are jealous, or we ... you go forward, and I stay behind then I get jealous, Then I want what you built up for yourself, then I break it down, then I just use violence.* (P4)

> *Very jealous [of each other], very envious, like that. They also want to be part of where you are, but then they don't fit in there. They force themselves into a thing or they just want to be part, but then the whole thing goes out of control.* (P7)

Jealousy was a theme that the participants regularly brought up in this study. The researcher could not, however, find any literature with regards to the link between community violence and jealousy. The only information the researcher could find was on how jealousy correlated with intimate partner violence (*cf.* Foran & O'Leary, 2008; Adams & Williams, 2014; Harris, 2003) which was not the focus of this study.

Sub-theme 2.6: Lack of community action

Some participants mentioned that community members do not take a stand against community violence. This can be because of threats and fear of retaliation, or because they protect family members. This situation leads to people becoming trapped in a cycle of violence.

> *You know what is going on, to keep your mouth shut, so when you come out and the people ask questions and you say, yes it was him, then they kill you too, and if you say nothing then you can still walk there and walk there and walk there. But if you are a pimper [someone who discloses or reports] then you will die.* (P1)

> *And now you [as an adolescent] maybe go to the principal and say, 'But sir, I am not interested in that stuff' (cannabis, drugs). Now, you want to go and tell the principal, then someone who is watching you will maybe go and say: 'No, she said it happened.' Then it is nearly as if they really know … then they wait for you after school and they say, 'Why did you go and tell the principal, you were involved in the situation yourself' and then it is as if the kid can't escape from the situation.* (P2)

> *When I was a teenager, they didn't want to take a stand [against violence] and mostly in my teenager years lots of things happened. And when I grew older, lots of things happened and now people want to take a stand, sometimes the people don't take a stand anymore, because it is their own people who are causing the violence. Lots of people don't want to go against their family, because they think their family is always right. Sometimes a person is not right, but you will stand by that person, because that person is your family.* (P11)

Snitches get stitches, where a snitch refers to "an informer" or to "inform on someone", is a phrase that comes to mind when reading the quote from the above participants (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2006; Urban Dictionary, 2009). The literature provides some explanations for why people do not always react to violence they witness. Van der Zande (in Ngakane, 2012:44) explains that fear can be a reason not to interfere in violent actions; community members may be afraid of the consequences of getting involved in the situation. Another reason can be that they are in shock because of observing what is happening and, lastly, it can be because community members do not know how to help the victim effectively. Anthony (2018) adds another reason, namely that community members can have a displaced sense of loyalty towards family members who are perpetrators of crime and would rather protect them instead of the victim of the crime.

Sub-theme 2.7: Discontent in communities

Some participants mentioned a situation that is commonly observed in the current South African context as a reason for community violence, namely discontent in communities, which often leads to the involvement of the police service.

> *No, like the people who are dissatisfied with housing, then they protest. They burn stuff like tyres and buses and stuff like that, that they burn. It is not always necessary. A peaceful protest can also work. It can also be more helpful when there is a peaceful protest than a violent protest, because then there will be consequences. Usually people are not heard, they feel that they are not being heard and then violent stuff happens ... the people (laughs a little) the people also throw stones at the police.* (P10)

> *I don't know how it started, I don't know how it came to be like this, the violence against the community people and the police … the community stood up against the police and started throwing bricks at the police and cursed them and then the people became too agitated and then the police took out their guns … we had to run around to miss the bullets.* (P13)

> *Goodness, those years [teenager years], they didn't want me to leave the yard. My granny wouldn't let me go out of the yard to see what was happening because that day was a bit too awful, when people were taking stones and throwing them at the police.* (P8)

Due to the high level of violent crime in South Africa, a police presence is regularly needed in different situations (Altbeker in Ward et al., 2012:5). Some of these situations can include but are not limited to protests and bar fights. Both the police and the community can act violently to get their point across. Seeing the police in that light can add to adolescents' trauma and make them feel unsafe rather than protected (Voisin et al., 2011:2484). This theme comes across in the participants' quotes as well.

3.4.3.3 Theme 3: Participants' reactions to incidents of community violence

There are many ways a person can react to community violence. The participants mentioned a few reactions that stood out in their minds. One reaction was to keep quiet and not to interfere in the situation taking place; another was being curious and excited when violence breaks out in the community. Other participants, however, wanted to avoid the scene of community violence. Lastly, some participants found it easiest to accept community violence as a normal part of life.

Sub-theme 3.1: 'Keep quiet. Do not interfere'

Some participants explained that they found the best way to respond to situations of community violence, was by keeping quiet about it. This reaction was based on fear of retaliation. They explained that they did not want to report any incidents of violence as they feared for their safety as a witness.

> *I feel afraid. When you … how can I say … when you are a witness … then they come for you, because you saw them.* (P1)

> *We see the stuff, but we don't really want to get involved in the situation they are, and you don't want to get involved in their situation … If they wanted to stab one another then I couldn't do anything because I was not on the learners' council or the leadership course. There are some kids [on the council now] but they are also scared because if you … if you are going to intervene then it is … these people wait for you outside to hurt you, just because you defended that person.* (P2)

> *The [guy who was slapped] probably did something wrong beforehand. It was not my business, he must stand by himself; if I get involved then it is more like I am the enemy in the story, like the enemy. I helped you so now the other people don't like me, I am the enemy, then after a while I must look over my*

> *shoulder where is that guy, when is he coming. ... I am scared to give information to the police, because then a few months later then the people [about whom I gave information] come looking for me, then I have placed my life in danger. I tell them I am not going to give you information, I know the people, but I am not going to say anything. They can bribe me or whatever, I am not going to give them any information, it is too dangerous [for me].* (P12)

The fear that the participants expressed is also reflected in literature. A severe consequence of reporting a crime can be that a person may fall victim to vigilantes, who are people from the community who take matters into their own hands. They follow their own set of rules, and when they think a person did something wrong (whether it is true or not), they will take violent action. This can place the lives of anyone that goes against the 'wrong people' at risk (Harris, 2001:4, 40). The extent of the fear that community members may experience can be observed in the fact that the quote by Participant 12 was a statement that he made after he already explained the situation three times during the data collection interview.

Sub-theme 3.2: Curiosity and excitement

The participants admitted that curiosity got the better of them and that they willingly put themselves in situations where they witnessed community violence or wanted to see the aftermath of it. One participant stated that he did make sure he is safe from harm before he watched a violent event unfold.

> *There were so many [instances of community violence], you know, it was in various streets. Yes, then I went to look .... like when someone was shot dead, then everyone was standing around and I went to stand among them.* (P7)

> *In my teenager years when there was violence then people were keen to go and see what was going on there. ... All the people were then outside to see what is going on, everyone was there. So, it was like ... they were shouting or telling one another; it was like this. Then everyone ran closer … for me it was nearly like that, I wanted to see more. It was interesting … to a teenager ... but as one gets older, it's nearly... it's not so interesting.* (P8)

> *Okay, honest opinion, for me it was, I was actually curious to see it.* (P13)

The participants highlighted that watching violent actions could be exciting. The literature explains this phenomenon by first explaining that adolescents are more likely to be drawn to harmful situations and more vulnerable to participate in risk-taking behaviour (Ward & Ashley, 2013:44). Gentile (2014:134) further clarifies that watching violence causes a person to develop a yearning for violence, meaning that the more violence that an adolescent watches, the more violence he or she wants to watch. Watching violence can be the root of becoming desensitised to it and may also cause adolescents to become more violent in their own behaviour. Playing violent video games can contribute to adolescents being more desensitised to violence (Brockmyer, 2014:74).

Sub-theme 3.3: Avoiding scenes of community violence

Although community violence can be exciting to some, several participants seemed more eager to avoid it. Participant 1, for example, found it exciting, but also wanted to avoid community violence.

> *I just thought, why are they (my friends) telling me this. It has nothing to do with me what you are doing… It actually didn't feel good … I am not old enough for stuff like that, I was only about 12, 13 years old.* (D1)
>
> *When I see police at someone's house, standing around, then I don't really move around there … No, I don't go there; like we are taught at school when there is stuff like violence you must just stay at home … you must not go and look, but if I really don't have another way to go then I must just quickly pick up speed past [the scene of violence] … when they [older members of the family] heard that there was a violent situation, or something like that happened, then we as family must just stay at home.* (P2)
>
> *We switched off the lights of the house and we closed the windows, and the TV we also switched off, everything. We locked the door.* (P3)
>
> *But I didn't take much notice of what happened, because I stayed away ... If I am inside, I don't care too much about what is going on outside, or anything.* (P7)
>
> *I always avoided it. I can't say that I prevented it. A person can't always prevent things when people think they are mighty (laughs slightly). I avoided it. I left other people to do what they think is best to handle violence, or a situation with violence.* (P10)
>
> *I was like scared. If there was stuff like that, then I just ran away; to get away, not to go and look, but to run away. Lots of people in the community like throwing bricks and the bricks hit many children. I was always scared, and I ran away. I never like went to see what was happening.* (D11)

Avoiding a violence scene was seen as a way to remain safe. The participants mentioned that they have learnt to spot the warning signs that danger might be headed their way and have learned to navigate their life around it. Horowitz et al. (1995:1359) indicate that as a coping mechanism, adolescents sometimes cut themselves off from their community by denying and avoiding what is happening around them. Adolescents can also avoid specific areas in the neighbourhood that are known to be violent to protect themselves from further exposure to community violence (Horowitz et al., 2005:360). The literature shows that even walking to school in such circumstances may put adolescents at risk of being exposed to community violence (Lane et al., 2017:455).

Sub-theme 3.4: Accept community violence as a normal part of life

Some of the participants explained that they learned to live with community violence. They accepted it as a normal part of life and even learnt that they must retaliate if they are victims of violence.

I was like normal, I lived past it, it did not attract me, I was called home or just told, 'Come in here. The people are fighting or something wild is going on.' Then I had to play in the yard, and my friend came to play there ... I just had to be brave face, and why ... he must see, the child, she is not scared. And I put him in danger, like he put me in danger. (P7)

My general feeling was that one person can't prevent everything. So, I began to accept it [community violence] for what it was, because you can stop one person, but it takes a lot of people to stop something. Yes [earlier days] I felt it was a responsibility, because peace is not always what you think it is, it takes a lot. (P10)

But I can't really like literally say to someone that this happened to that person because [here] if you tell, then no-one will help you in that situation. (P2)

To me it was just like this. Afterwards when it was over, then we spoke about what had happened, that's all, then it was over. Then later over the weekend or a few days later after we finished talking about it, we didn't talk about it again. (P13)

I saw it, just like it happened. It never goes away; it is there for ever. It is people and more people and more people and more people, it just goes on and on and on and on, I don't know when it is ever going to stop. (P1)

Violence is just for everyone, you know. It stands in front of anyone's door. Doesn't matter who you are, or if you are converted, or whatever you are. Violence is for everyone, you know. It can come to anyone. (P6)

The viewpoint of the participants in the study was that violent behaviour should be accepted since it forms part of their daily life - more than that, the literature explains that persistent violence can form part of adolescents' identity. In many communities, community violence has become something that adolescents cannot escape; it is with them throughout their lives (Boxer et al., 2008:891). Horowitz and Marshall (2005:365) elaborate by stating that for some adolescents, community violence has become so familiar that they do not recognise it when they are questioned about it in general terms. For instance, when an adolescent is asked if they have experienced community violence, they might answer in the negative. However, if that same adolescent is asked if they have ever seen anyone get shot in the community, they might respond by saying "yes". Thus, they do not immediately recognise it as community violence. Woollett and Thomson (2016:1068) indicate that by being exposed to high levels of community violence adolescents can deduce that violence is acceptable, appropriate and even inevitable. Calvete and Orue (2011:46) elaborate on the above statement by stating that adolescents can be so used to community violence that they later expect it to happen; they thus assume the worst of people.

The participants did not only experience community violence as normal, as indicated above, but also saw violence as a way to deal with disputes.

I have been attacked, but I fought back. It was a group of two or three, then I hit them back ... It happened once, I was 15 years old, me and my three cousins

> *were sitting outside; the one had a knife. Then somebody jumped over the wall and my cousin stabbed him in the back. He just about died. We didn't know the guy. I told my cousin, 'Stab him with the knife, we don't know him.' Then my oldest cousin stabbed him with the knife. Then we went to the police station and they questioned us*. (P12)
>
> *I just thought, why would they do that to her? There must be a reason, something she did, nobody would attack someone like that without a reason, there must be something that the person did.* (P8)

Many communities in South Africa have been conditioned to think that violence is the only way to solve a problem. Adolescents who are exposed to community violence can experience moral disengagement, implying that they do not have the necessary skills to solve problems appropriately. When adolescents see problems are being solved violently, they will repeat that same violent methods to solve their own problems later. Violent behaviour thus impairs adolescents' creative problem-solving skills (Bradshaw et al., 2009:200; Wilkinson & Carr, 2008:1046). Adolescents can form the idea that it is expected of them to act violently, since that is the violent script that they receive from the community. They do not want to be excluded from the community norms. The participants' views are congruent with the statement by Dinan et al. (2004:737) that a pervasive culture of violence can develop, in which violence becomes seen as an acceptable and valid means to deal with problems and achieve goals.

3.4.3.4 Theme 4: Distrust in others

The development of distrust in others was a salient theme in the data. It appears that community violence resulted in distrust in other individuals, distrust in the community as a whole, and distrust in the police service.

Sub-theme 4.1: Distrust in people

Some of the participants indicated that during their adolescent years, the violence in the community resulted in them distrusting other people, even their peers.

> *They are not really my true friends, they are the back stabbers … because when I tell him something, then I tell him keep your mouth shut, this is just between us, then he shows me, he opens his mouth and tells somebody else.* (P1)
>
> *I don't trust anybody. You can't trust anybody … No, not in our community, you can't trust anybody. Because now you talk to the auntie or something that is personal, and then one day the auntie and my mother are angry with each other and then the auntie just says what I told her. So, you can trust nobody. [During adolescence] they [peers] were good friends, but I always knew my limits, I knew what I can tell them. If it was important, I did not tell them. Friends were like that; we get angry with one another and then this one tells that one and that one tells the other one*. (P9)
>
> *I trusted nobody ... I trusted one person and that was at school ... There were things that took your mind off everything; maybe she did [an activity] with you*

> *one day, you don't even worry about what is happening outside of you, because the focus is just here. So, I really enjoyed that. I miss those times, it was when I was a teenager, because there was this person I could talk to at the school, because that was the only thing that helped me, in my school years. And now there is nobody that I can talk to and so on.* (P11)

> *You can't trust anyone anymore. You can't trust your own friends. They are the same as the gangsters; they pretend to be all innocent, they pretend to be good, [but] if they are with somebody else, they turn against you, and make you weak in front of everybody.* (P12)

The participants highlighted the lack of trust that they experienced, even towards their friends. Community violence amplifies this disposition in adolescents and puts them at higher risk to distrust people (Guerra & Dierkhising, 2011:2; Siegel et al., 2019:5). Schiavone (2009:103) indicates that adolescents use distrust, avoidance and detachment as a coping mechanism to deal with the confusion, fear and distress that community violence provokes. When adolescents are not able to trust other people, the amount of support they can receive from others are limited (Horowitz et al., 1995:135). Of note, is that the opposite is also true. Adolescents who have parents who care about their well-being are more likely to find strong support and will be able to learn positive ways to handle distress (Howard et al., 2010:74; Ozer et al., 2017:362).

Sub-theme 4.2: Distrust in the community

Participants discussed how community members started to distrust one another because of their exposure to community violence and fears associated with it.

> *There is a lot of conflict, because everybody turns on one another, nobody trusts anybody anymore.* (P12)

> *See, how can I say now, people in the community make us feel unsafe through their behaviour towards each other. Here in [our area], if something happens, nobody knows about anything, that is why they say, what happens at night comes out in the day. Nobody saw what happened and then the next day obviously someone saw what happened. Then there is a big fuss and it's like the people are making groups, somebody said this, and somebody said that and then later it is group and group and then there is stabbing with the knife.* (P13)

> *They [the community members] talk to one another, yes, but they won't talk to other people … that they don't know. There are some people who come from the outside then the people don't know they are also gangsters, so that is why people don't really talk about things.* (P3)

The research findings show that a lack of a sense of safety because of community violence resulted in distrust within the community. Many adolescents do not believe that the community is able to protect them; they have lost trust in the community (Schiavone, 2009:103). They feel unsafe as a result of high levels of violence (Aisenberg et al., 2008:1573). Besbris et al.

(2015:4997) suggest that a culture of mistrust can form part of a community's identity and that the effects of that mentality will be visible in the behaviour of the neighbours. Harris (2001:4) believes that the high levels of distrust can serve as an excuse to act violently in some communities, as was also described by Participant 13.

Sub-theme 4.3: Distrust in the police service

Distrust in the police service because of their handling of community violence was a prominent theme in the research findings. Participants told how they developed distrust in the police; sometimes, because they experienced from a young age that the police could not protect them. Other participants mentioned that their distrust in the police stemmed from the police being unresponsive to incidents of violence in the community.

> *Always when the police, the police saw, I was never outside, it always felt like I was always in a fear when I saw the police. Even today still, my granny says I have been saying this since I was small, that the police can't always, how can I say, protect. ... these days ... the people who must get punished for what they do, don't get punished any more, because there are police that cover for the people who do wrong things … These days even the small kids notice this, they see everything. I don't think I will go to the police if something happens to me, and something once happened, and the police were not there to help me.* (P13)
>
> *If the police didn't come out, then more stuff happens, because if the police are not there then the people won't ever stop. Sometimes the police just don't come out. Then people get killed or stabbed, or something like that, because the police didn't come out.* (P11)
>
> *It is almost like they [the police] don't even worry any more … It's probably because they get complaints all the time and then they don't want to anymore, then they don't want to go out anymore to help the people, because they probably get calls all the time.* (P2)
>
> *You can't trust the police. They are a bunch who work with the gangsters … At that time [during teenage years] I felt the police can protect us, but now that I am older, now I can see [they don't do it].* (P9)
>
> *Like [a member of the family] now, he was ... murdered and nobody did anything about it, nobody went on with the case or anything, and he was a photo frame funeral, we couldn't see him. [The participant explained that it is a general practise among Coloured families to have an open casket at a funeral and to have a viewing of the deceased. If the body of the deceased has been severely damaged or disfigured, the family does not have an open casket and only shows a photo of their loved one.]* (P7)

The research findings show that the participants had different views as to why people started to distrust the police service. As of 2019, the South African Police Service are viewed as the most corrupt public entity in South Africa. Police officers abuse their power, and they accept bribery from criminals. The network of corrupt police officers is large enough that they protect one another from facing any consequence for their actions (South African police…, 2019). Thus, the conviction rate for police officers who are involved in crime is meagre (Knoetze &

Grant, 2019). It also appears that the police are driven by statistics and not by effective results. Knoetze and Grant (2019) revealed that the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) handles cases hastily so that their records on transgressions by police officers seem better than they truly are. Cunliffe-Jones (2013) alleges that the same strategies of the IPID are applied by the SAPS and the government, so that the country's crime records appear better than they indeed are. Examples of miscommunication and corruption in which the SAPS are involved, are seen by community members and this contributes to the distrust that they experience towards the police.

3.4.3.5 Theme 5: Effects of community violence on the participants

Their exposure to community violence during their adolescent years has had multiple effects on the participants. Fear was a theme that emerged numerous times: fear for their own safety, fear for the safety of family members, and in general, always being afraid. Emotional distresses, as well as sleeplessness, were also caused by their exposure to community violence. Other effects that occurred include limiting the participants' freedom of movement in the community, causing the participants to become socially isolated and affecting their school attendance. The last effect that the participants mentioned was having a negative attitude towards and behaviour within the community.

Sub-theme 5.1: Fear for own safety

Participants explained that their experience of violence in the communities made then fearful and caused them to fear for their own safety in the neighbourhood.

> *Many times, we were in danger. There was fear in our lives, because when you get up in the mornings then you think, must you go to school or not. It was also difficult for us as teenagers. We could not go to school, because then your life is in danger and you can't stay out of school because the exams have already started.* (P11)
>
> *I was scared, because I thought when I get to school it was going to happen to us. I was actually scared to go home and so on.* (P4)
>
> *I felt that as I got older, I was afraid that it would happen at some time to me or someone that I care for or someone that I know ... Maybe I could now have been that person, there are many of them, and I could be hurt or someone that I know.* (P10)
>
> *The shooting [was the worst for me] ... It feels to me as though I don't know where to run.* (P1)

The participant's descriptions of fear can relate to the statement by Shields et al. (2008:599) that high exposure to community violence can make an adolescent feel unsafe and unprotected. Research shows that there is a significant likelihood that fear will be present in witnesses of community violence because of the unpredictable nature of the violence (Sui et

al., 2018:15-16). However, it is proposed that fear will be present in witnesses of community violence more so than in victims of community violence since victims tend to be more angry than fearful (Reid-Quiñones et al., 2011:63). Donenberg et al. (2020:150) explain that the emotions associated with community violence may contribute to violent behaviours as adolescents may use violence to mask their feelings of helplessness and fear.

Some participants even feared for their safety in their homes.

> *My family menbers were there together with us, and the gang members came into our house because my father's cousin was a merchant and he [a gang member] heard she was there [in our house] and then they came into our house, and they wanted to shoot in our house. So, it is very bad.* (P11)
>
> *I felt very unsafe, yes. There are people who just jump into your yard to [make trouble].* (P12)

The researcher could not find any literature on adolescents' fear related to community violence that spilled over into their home. Scarpa et al. (2006:17) conducted a study on how the location of community violence affects the emotional symptoms of their respondents. The study was, however, focused on the school, the community and the outside of the respondents' homes. The fact that violence entered their homes, as described by the participants in this study, emphasises their feelings of unsafety even within their own homes.

Sub-theme 5.2: Fear for safety of family members and friends

Some participants explained how they constantly feared for the safety of their family members and of their close friends.

> *Is everyone [safe] at home, who is being shot? What is my grandmother doing? My grandmother was very old, for example she was always sitting at home at the gate, so I was always thinking, what will she do if they take her hostage there at home, and so on.* (P4)
>
> *It's every evening that he [the participant's father who is a pastor] must go out to his church members. Monday evenings and Tuesday evenings he must go out all over to persuade people to come to church. Wednesdays he must walk late at night in the road where the gangsters live, because the church is there. So, all week he is out late. Then I was always worried about him.* (P9)
>
> *Maybe I could have been that person now, who is there, and I could be hurt or someone that I know. I had two best friends; then I was always worried about their safety and the safety of their families. Their family was like my family. So, I was always worried about the safety of other people …* (P10)

As described by the above participants, adolescents can experience constant fear for their safety as well as the safety of their family members and friends. This fear is attributed to the unpredictable nature of community violence. Feeling afraid causes adolescents to experience high levels of hopelessness, depression, anxiety, stress, and suicide ideation (Sui et al.,

2018:15-16), which highlight the detrimental effects of community violence on adolescents' emotional well-being.

Sub-theme 5.3: Constant fearfulness

Participants told of different emotional reactions due to their exposure to community violence. Some participants described a general feeling of intense fear.

> *... scared, I was always very, very scared at that time. Then I didn't want to go to school the next day because of that. .... God, very terrified. Very scared. I can't explain it to you.* (P4)

> *As a teenager I was scared of the outside world. The people talked about all kinds of things, and we who are teenagers are at an age when we can understand. And saw lots of things and people spoke about it more and more to us. How they shot each other dead, we were not there but we heard about it and stuff like that. It happens a lot in our community. It happened a lot in my teeanger years that people told me about stuff like that. … To watch it each time [on TV], fear inside, because it can maybe happen to anyone in your family, or someone on the street or a person that you don't even know.* (P11)

From the above quotes, it is evident that community violence can lead to feelings of fear that are constantly present. Adolescents who live in an area known for community violence can experience many different fears. These may include, but are not limited to, being scared of the unknown, being scared of the community, fear for hazardous situations and having a fear of being injured (Cooley-Quille et al., 2001:203). The participants experienced these fears. As described by Participant 11, intense fear can also be evoked by indirect exposure to community violence, such as hearing about violence in one's community or seeing it on television. Oaklander (2007:243) explains that perceived fears are still real emotions and should be handled as such. Lane et al. (2017:455) state that adolescents who are fearful conduct themselves differently than they would have done if they were not in that state. Being scared can make a person more violent.

Sub-theme 5.4: Emotional distress

Being exposed to community violence can place the participants in high levels of distress.

> *There isn't even a description of how I feel [he makes his hands into fists; his facial expression reflects pain] … It is too difficult, for me it is equally bad. I don't like it that people get hurt, it is unnecessary, over things that they didn't do, because most people get hurt over things that they didn't do.* (P3)

> *To me it doesn't matter if it was a stranger or someone I know. You always get the same feeling … I was angry and sad [silence] I don't know.* (P9)

As evident in the above quotes, Waford (2009:1) confirms that exposure to community violence has profoundly damaging effects on adolescents. The DSM-5 (2013:271-272) indicates that direct exposure, witnessing or learning about traumatic events such as actual

or threatened serious injury or death, physical assault, mugging and a life-threatening situation, can lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and have an impact on their well-being. Suliman et al. (2009:125) list emotional symptoms that adolescents may experience, for instance PTSD, anxiety and depression. Experiencing multiple traumas will affect the intensity of the symptoms the adolescent may experience. Adolescents who are exposed to community violence can furthermore become emotionally dysregulated, which can cause them to be aggressive where they otherwise would not have been (Cooley et al., 2019:891). Briere and Scott (2015:517) also point out that the age of a person when the trauma took place will influence the symptoms experienced. The latter authors also state that the type of trauma that is experienced will influence what symptoms will be experienced and that, most likely, a person will experience multiple symptoms at a time.

Some adolescents may not have the words or the opportunity to express the emotions that they are feeling. Not verbalising their feelings does not, however, make their feelings less valid (Blom, 2006: 123). One participant explained how disregard for his distress by the staff at a community medical facility worsened his emotional distress.

> *I got there (to the clinic), but then they said it was nothing serious. Then I said, I feel sort of paralysed, and then they (the clinic staff) said no, it is not serious … I felt …. degraded.* (P1)

The emotional distress which the above participant expressed points to the negative effects on a person's self-concept when his or her emotional reaction to incidents of community violence is not validated. Exposure to community violence can undermine adolescents' view of themselves, and can weaken their support system (Macmillan, 2001:19), for instance not feeling welcome in a place that is supposed to offer support. Gestalt theory explains that a person's self-concept is central to his or her development (Blom, 2006:102). Both Copeland-Linder et al. (2010:184) and Lynch (2003: 278) voiced the opinion that being exposed to high levels of community violence can lower an adolescent's self-worth.

Sub-theme 5.5: Sleeplessness

The participants indicated that exposure to community violence could impact different aspects of their well-being by affecting their ability to sleep.

> *There were many nights that I struggled to sleep. I was up one night, all night … It was after the shooting that happened in the road.* (P3)

> *Can't sleep, sleep, can't sleep, sleep, but I tried to get some rest. But then afterwards I fell asleep [after an incident when someone was stabbed with a knife] ... then you get dreams just about that ... [hearing gunshots in the night]. I pulled the blankets over my head and listened to hear when it would stop ... Wow, that is tough, sometimes I slept and sometimes I didn't sleep, then I went to lie with my momma and then I fell asleep, yes then I fall asleep.* (P8)

> *It was very hard to fall asleep, because you keep thinking about the same things. It is your own family member who is in the house with you that does stuff like that. And now, because he is your family, they [the gang members] come back to you … So, lots of times you lie awake and think about it. How could he do that, how can he put our lives in danger like that?* (D11)

As the participants expressed, exposure to community violence can affect every aspect of an adolescent's life, including quality of sleep. Many studies show that after adolescents have experienced a trauma, they can have recurrent dreams about the traumatic event which they experienced, or they can have nightmares about being a victim of a violent crime. Community violence can also cause an adolescent to experience other problems related to the ability to sleep well, such as insomnia and a disrupted sleep pattern (DSM-5, 2013:271-272; Horowitz et al., 2005:360; Kliewer & Lepore, 2015:10; Wright et al., 2016: 374).

Sub-theme 5.6: Limited freedom of movement in the community

The participants explained that growing up in a community that was characterised by community violence resulted in the belief that they always had to be aware of their surroundings. That awareness limited their freedom to move about in the neighbourhood in a carefree way. The participants' information on this aspect is elaborated on in the quotations below.

> *It was, it was a bit scary to play, because you never know when it can happen in the daytime where we are playing … It has happened a lot [hearing gunshots while playing]. Then, we must run inside.* (P3)

> *To play outside because, what, you never know what can happen. I always just stayed in the house. ... when we went to visit friends, we played in the friend's yard, never in the street ... Then when we were finished playing, then our friend's mother would walk home with us. I mainly stayed inside the house. Going to school, going home, then I was not in the streets anymore.* (P4)

> *I was with pals; I had a time when I had to be inside [going into the house] in the week and on weekends. But weekends my pals and I played block [a game] in the road. Then we went off again and I said: "Nanna, we are going to have a bring and braai for the weekend, at that friend's house" and all the pals were going off together and then we went to have a bring and braai and then she would come and fetch me and say, "The road is getting rowdy again". Then I had to go inside again.* (P7)

The participants in the study indicated they did not have the freedom to move around in the community as they pleased. They were always aware of the possibility of being harmed when walking in the community or playing outside in the streets and were often escorted by their mothers on the way to and from friends' homes. In this respect, research shows that it is more likely for mothers to be protective of their daughters and to keep them indoors; boys will have more freedom to play outside but would be warned to be safe and to keep away from danger (Horowitz et al., 2005:360). Pinnick (2016:92) explains that as a coping mechanism to enable

them to move about freely in certain dangerous areas, adolescents will either boast about being in a gang or pretend to be in one to avoid victimisation.

Sub-theme 5.7: Social isolation and school absenteeism

The participants mentioned that community violence influenced their social habits to the extent that it prohibited them from leaving the house and connecting with their friends.

> *I was alone, I was in my own world at that time, I was just interested in playing. I never went into the street when it got noisy, but we always heard things, things about what was happening outside … It wasn't nice, I am a different kind of person; if the atmosphere isn't nice, then I just stay away or I say I am not going there.* (P7)
>
> *I don't go out with friends ... I stay out of danger*. (P13)
>
> *I was scared most of the time; then I just stayed inside for a whole week. I just go to school and home again and then I stay in the house all day.* (P9)
>
> *We were very scared. Nobody wanted to go out, out of the classes, everyone wanted to go home, some wanted to go home, some didn't want to go home.* (P4)

Not only does community violence limit adolescents' feeling of safety in the community, but it also limits the social interactions that they have. This effect was evident in the above quotes. Community violence can cause adolescents to become socially isolated (Pelser, 2008:6). Adolescents can suffer social rejection from their peers if they have been exposed to community violence. These adolescents are also more likely to be bullied at school and suffer higher exposure to aggressive behaviour. These consequences have the effect that they are more prone to experiencing problematic social functioning (Calvete & Orue, 2011:47; Schwartz & Proctor, 2000:678). As mentioned by the participants, fear was a prominent reason for their social isolation, namely fear of being exposed to community violence.

Two participants mentioned that they were even too scared to go to school and thus were often absent from school. Participant 11 furthermore described how her ability to concentrate in class was affected by her exposure to community violence.

> *There was a time when I didn't want to go to school any more … when I came in the high school and see on media how kids are stabbed and hit with a baseball bat and all that stuff.* (P1)
>
> *How it influenced me; I could not go to school, sometimes there was shooting and then we had to stay at home. Sometimes when that happened then they came to the school or inside your house. That happened a lot when I was a teenager. That influences you. Especially when the exam time started, then I couldn't think. I couldn't think, because there were too many things going through my mind. And that's why once I just stopped going to school. It happened often, that's why I left school when I was still young.* (P11)

The two participants' views highlight two effects that exposure to community violence can have on their learning at school. The inability to focus on their schoolwork, as described by Participant 11, is seen in literature that indicates that a reason why adolescents who are exposed to high levels of community violence do not want to go to school is mainly because they struggle to cope academically. Adolescents exposed to trauma can suffer from PTSD and hyperarousal, which makes it difficult for them to focus in class. Trauma can also make it difficult for adolescents to concentrate and engage in school activities. Furthermore, these children can struggle to form positive relationships with their teachers and peer group, which adds to their negative attitude towards the school (McGill et al., 2014:5; Thomas et al., 2012:59).

The participants of this research study revealed that their primary reason for not going to school was because of fear. Research by Lane et al. (2017:455) supports the above statement in that their study shows that walking to school can be life threatening to adolescents living in communities with high levels of community violence, as it can place adolescents in danger of being exposed to community violence. The threat of community violence is so real that they need to weigh the odds as to where their lives are going to be less endangered, at home or at school, which then influences their academic future. Support by their teachers, both educational and emotional, can help adolescents archieve higher levels of well-being and in the process become more resilient (Yule et al., 2019:420). By providing additional support to their learners, educators can minimise the amount of stress the learners will experience after exposure to community violence (Löfving–Gupta et al., 2015:545). Support from positive peers can also motivate adolescents to complete high school (Howard et al., 2010:75). When adolescents are in school, they are more protected from community violence. Ward (2007:22) explains that adolscents who are not in school are more likely to act irresponsibly. Ward (2007:22) asserts that dropping out of school can also make adolescents more vulnerable to violence since they partake in high-risk behaviour due to boredom. Schoeman (2019:204) states that fear can cause adolescents to freeze both in body and mind and that they are only able to function in a minimalistic way by completing daily activities, but in that state they are not receptive to learning and thriving.

Sub-theme 5.8: Negative attitude and behaviour

The participants indicated that exposure to community violence affected their own behaviour and attitudes in a negative manner.

> *Negative, I began to behave like things in the community happened, not exactly, but my attitude and some of my viewpoints also changed. I began to feel that things that happened were normal, they just had to happen. So, it didn't have a positive effect on my life.* (P10)

> *I also chased people … If they maybe bothered me, I chased them … I didn't mind [fighting].* (P5)

> *To me it was like this, a person is not always what you want to be, just fighting because it is supposed to be a fight ... I never used a weapon to fight with someone. I use my bare hands to fight with someone ... I won't like it if someone stabs me with a knife or something like that, it will put me off if I see you have a knife or a gun. But if I see you are clean [you don't have weapons] then I will come for you.* (P13)

It can be challenging for adolescents to choose the best way to protect themselves. Horowitz et al. (2005:360) state that in their study, children explained that they would not be the first person to start a fight, but that they would physically defend themselves if they needed to. Not fighting can be worse, because then they will continuously be victimised. The participants in this study shared the same sentiment, as evident in the quotes above. They would not stand back but would hit back if they were provoked. Cooley et al. (2019:891) explain this phenomenon by stating that violence brings forth more violence. Oaklander (2007:205, 207-208) explains that adolescents do what they deem necessary to survive in their environment. Adolescents' environment can thus be a provoking agent in their lives. When they do not know how to deal with the environment properly, adolescents can become angry and fearful, which can lead them to behave aggressively. As stated by Participant 10, violence may become acceptable to adolescents who are constantly exposed to community violence. One participant explained how he and his peer group retaliated against violence against them.

> *We saw the man who bothered our cousin one time, so I said we'd wait for him in the bushes. Then I said, go fetch the knife. Then [my cousin] fetched the knife. Then I told my cousin, stab him in the back. So, my cousin stabbed him in the back, right there in the bushes. Then after he was stabbed, we all three had to run away at once*. (P12)

The participant's behaviour correlates with what is found in the literature. One of the adverse effects that witnessing community violence has, especially on male adolescents, is that adolescents are more prone to delinquent behaviour after they have seen violence. Research shows that 32% of boys who were involved in crime witnessed community violence. The boys who did not witness community violence made up only six percent (6%) of that study (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:297). Oaklander (2007:265) states that adolescents do not want to feel left out and that those who go against acceptable norms tend to do so in a group, as was the case with the above participant. The need to be part of a group indicates a search for self-identity. The research findings in this sub-theme are supported by studies indicating that violence becomes normalised by adolescents who live in environments with high levels of violence, whereby the criminal elements of the behaviour and the negative effects on people's mental health are then loverlooked (Fineran, Bennett & Sacco, 2003:14; Pelser, 2008:2).

3.4.3.6 Theme 6: Effects of community violence in young adulthood

The adverse effects of community violence do not simply vanish when an adolescent becomes older. The participants indicated that community violence still affected their lives, and they mentioned that they have become used to it.

Sub-theme 6.1: Community violence still has an effect

The participants mentioned different ways in which their exposure to community violence still had an effect, whether positive or negative, on them as young adults.

> *Yes, because it doesn't just happen in our community, it also happens in the outside community. It's not just our people that get hurt, but small kids who get hurt through violence on the roads and in the area. For me it is, it isn't nice to live here in the community because of the violence that happens. Because it affects not only the people in the area, but also their future.* (P3)

> *For me it is a big change, a big absence, my pals, my friends are dead. It is a big change in me. Most of them have been shot dead. They were all shot dead in a short time. For me it is, I already see what is going to happen, I will land up in jail for a reason. I can't get involved … Yes, I must live differently. I can't live the same life. But I had to grow up, I had to let go of those things.* (P5)

> *If I talk about it, then I feel a bit sad, but I deal with it. I cope. I have come so far, so I can't stop now ... I was scared, that's why I don't want to have children, because I am scared that happens to my children one day or if I have a son that he does that to someone else. Life is not unfair, just the things that happen.* (P10)

> *You can get used to it, but it depends on where you live; is it peaceful or is it cruel. The violence will influence you, of course.* (P12)

> *I always just, just said, I always just said that I never want to live in Smartietown. I always preferred to have a peaceful life, where you don't hear the shots of gunfire or that you don't see how bricks are thrown at people. I always said I want a peaceful life without violence. I just want to see it in the newspapers. I don't want to see it in front of me, actually not even in the newspapers. I don't want, I don't want, how can I say, I still want to live for a long time. ... It actually influenced my life in a positive way, because it makes me strive more for the things that I want to improve, where I think things must improve, where change should take place. ... So, so I, so it had a good inluence on my life. That is, it didn't have a bad influence, because it motivates me to help make improvements.* (P13)

> *My reaction was that as I grow up, I didn't want to go through those things, that I want to strive for something else, [to achieve] greater heights.* (P4)

The research findings show that the participants' exposure to community violence during adolescence influenced them as young adults. Some participants mentioned that their exposure to community violence during adolescence inspired them to try to improve circumstances in their social environment. It appears that the inspiration to live a life in communities without violence is based on their reflection as young adults on their exposure to

community violence during their adolescent years. Their explanations showed the widespread effects of community violence on a young person's life. The participants highlighted the physical consequences of community violence. Community violence can lead to premature death and may cause physical injuries that may lead to illness, hospitalisation, disabilities, reproductive health consequences and other health conditions. People may adopt unhealthy coping strategies as a way to deal with community violence, such as smoking, substance abuse and unsafe sex. They are at a higher risk to develop heart disease, strokes, cancer, and HIV/AIDS, which can in turn shorten a person's life expectancy (Mahlangu & Gevers, 2014:74; Ramchand et al., 2008:676; Rosenberg et al., 2006:758). Lifelong disabilities such as amputation of limbs, brain damage or paraplegia can also pose threats related to community violence (Rosenberg et al., 2006:758).

Participant 10 highlighted the risk of young people engaging in problematic behaviours because of their exposure to community violence. Due to high exposure to community violence, adolescents may adopt risky behaviours like sexual promiscuity and substance abuse. Adolescents may suffer from adverse psychological symptoms, such as anxiety, depression and PTSD, and may drop out of school because of cognitive impairment; all of which have long term implications on a person's life (Dierkhising 2011:3; Barbarin et al., 2001:8; Kennedy & Ceballo, 2014:70; Lane et al., 2017:445; Western Cape Government, 2013:6).

One of the main concepts of Gestalt theory is awareness in the here and now, which helps people to be in touch with their experiences and make choices on how they express emotions and behaviour (Blom, 2006:51; Schoeman 2019:110). Being aware of how community violence has affected them as adolescents, could have helped the participants as young adults to mobilise their actions productively.

Sub-theme 6.2: 'One gets used to it'

Getting used to community violence had different meanings for the participants. Some found it exciting and wanted to learn more about what was happening; others were ready to defend themselves at all costs. One participant mentioned that she does not care about anyone other than her family's safety while other participants had a passive way of looking at community violence.

> *Wow, … now, if something happens, I always want to go and have a look. When I was a teenager then I never wanted to go and see what had happened, but now, there is a difference; when I hear the people shouting, I will run out, but when I was a teenager, I wouldn't have done that I ... I would always have stayed in the house. There is a difference between the two [times in my life] ... Because ... now I want to go and see what happened. … It doesn't even bother me anymore, because I am so used to it, how the people argue and I now know,*

> *after the arguing they are going to do something to each other ... On the one hand it will be very nice [if community violence disappears], and on the other hand it won't be very nice because a person is so used to it, so if it just disappears it is nearly as if life is not going to be so nice anymore.* (P11)
>
> *No, I am not worried, I don't worry about the people, if you come to rob me (makes clapping sounds) I sort you out, I sort you out.* (P1)
>
> *I got used to [it], it is as if I don't react to violence anymore. I am not so aware of things that happen now. I am not so scared [anymore], no … I see it as, it's almost like I don't care any more about what is going on in the community. As long as I protect my people, my family and so on, I don't worry about what happens to other people, because by now parents should be aware of what is going on in the country so automatically, they should protect their children, they mustn't be so ignorant, it is not going to happen to my child. They must actually be aware of what is going on in the community.* (P2)
>
> *But by now a person is used to it [community violence]. If it happens, it happens, and if it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen, like that.* (P8)
>
> *I think, yes, I think the people get used to it, because when they hear gunshots, they don't even get a fright any more … I am used to it by now.* (P9)

Participant 13 provided the following explanation of how people become used to community violence:

> *So, if you live in a place since you are small then you notice things, even as a child, now how can I put it, a person can get used to it, because as you get older you see worse things, you see the things happening often. I was also like that, you see there is action outside, later you get excited when you see something is going to happen; it is almost like you want to see what is going to happen. You want to find out more and so on. You are going to get used to it, because it starts to feel as if it is nice to look at stuff like that, you enjoy seeing what is going to happen. So, you get used to it. And often people don't even feel bad anymore when things like that happen, because they just feel, oh well that's just how it is. So, you get used to seeing what is going on around you. Often you hear, 'oh goodness, that was an old thing.'* (P13)

The above participants explained that they are used to community violence and that it did not affect them as young adults anymore. Some authors ascribe this reaction to moral disengagement (Bradshaw et al., 2009:200; Wilkinson & Carr, 2008:1046). Schaefer and Bouwmeester (2020:8) refer to moral disengagement as "intrapsychic cognitive reasoning processes" in which people shift perceptions of behaviour that is morally wrong to behaviour that is not morally wrong or that the actor is not responsible for the behaviour. According to Gestalt theory, the views of the participants above may a result of them not having the necessary skills to handle the over-exposure to community violence. It may be that the participants have acquired unhealthy coping mechanisms to survive the day-to-day struggles of being exposed to community violence, known in Gestalt theory as contact boundary disturbances (Blom, 2006:31; Schoeman, 2019:43). People may, for example, suppress their awareness of sensory input (desensitisation) or awareness of their emotions (egotism) (Blom,

2006:37-38; Schoeman, 2019:90-110) to cope with high levels of community violence. Aisenberg and Herenkohl (2009:303) confirm that children who are exposed to community violence on a day-to-day basis, are forced to develop coping strategies to deal with the constant threats to their safety and well-being.

Graham et al. (2010:95) state that the reaction of parents and the community toward community violence contributes to the degree in which adolescents become used to it. Being used to community violence can affect adolescents in numerous ways. The normalisation of community violence can make an adolescent feel angry and powerless, which will affect their social functioning (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:17-18). The latter authors emphasise that for adolescents to win the war of community violence, they must develop resilience. Gestalt therapy uses a technique where a specific situation is reframed so that a person can see not only the negative in the situation but also the positive (Parlett & Lee, 2005:52). With reference to the participants in this study, some have reframed community violence into something entertaining. The researcher believes that professional interventions can focus on education so that adolescents can learn from the negative outcomes of community violence.

3.4.3.7 Theme 7: Effects of community violence on the community

The concept 'community violence' implies that it affects the community as a whole. The participants identified five ways in which community violence affected their neighbourhood. The participants discussed a sense of not feeling safe in their communities. The sense of community that was previously known in the neighbourhood was gone and community members had a lack of empathy for one another. These aspects and damage to property and infrastructure led to a sense of hopelessness in the community.

Sub-theme 7.1: Unsafe neighbourhoods

The participants explained that the neighbourhoods became unsafe as a result of community violence, especially for children.

> *Small children are with the adults; if the parent is outside then the small children are also outside. Then I think to myself, can't the police do something about the little children, because one always hears the police shooting, but not real bullets but the, you know uhm [rubber bullets].* (P2)

> *Then my auntie says I must be on the lookout because one never knows what can happen here, so just be careful and then they came to fetch us at school or whatever. Or I walked home with a small group of people, because they were always a bit careful ... [recently] a woman asked me, are there any houses in our area where someone could come to live, or that one can buy. Then I said, I don't advise you to come and live here, because I also want to move away, because it's a bit wild, because there are lots of murders coming out, now.* (P7)

> *People can't come to work anymore, or come back from work late at night, then they are hurt or they are robbed, so then we have nothing else we can do about stuff like that. That causes people to be hurt in the daytime or at night.* (P3)
>
> *Many people hardly ever want to come out of their houses because of it [community violence] ... Some people make trouble here and then the whole area is turned around*. (P12)

The participants indicated that they and the other community members felt unsafe in their community. Perry (2001:1) states that some children and adolescents have nowhere to be safe since community violence occurs in the streets, flow over into homes, and are portrayed on social media. Children are not even safeguarded against violence at school. On the contrary, children, especially those in Grade 1 and Grade 8, are at higher risk to experience violence at school (Finkelhor, 2009a:235; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7). Children and adolescents continuously have to deal with uncertainty about safety; they are trying to figure out if there is anyone they can trust; is there safety in numbers or is it better to be alone; and what the best way is to treat a gang member, should they be friendly to them or avoid them? Foster (2012:25) explains that community violence instils suspicion, anger, terror and fear in community members.

The participants mentioned that community violence often happened very close to their homes.

> *It's in the street behind our [house], because shooting takes place there most of the time … There are mainly a lot of merchants … that is, people who smuggle … They smuggle drugs and dagga [cannabis].* (P3)
>
> *Just here in the street, it happens in every street.* (P7)
>
> *When we go there then the people shoot then we must all lie down flat on the floor and nobody must stand up, so it was there at my auntie's house ...* (P4)
>
> *If there are gangsters living in a street or a street away from that street, then it looks like it affects that street as well.* (P9)

A lack of safety was thus often experienced close to the participants' homes. It can happen in the same street where they live. Scarpa et al. (2006:17) found that when community violence happens close to an adolescent's home, he or she is more likely to experience symptoms of PTSD.

Some participants expressed a wish to be able to escape the violence and move to a safer community.

> *I wanted to go to school so that a person could just get out of the community … I will go anywhere, as long as I can get away from here. [A place] that won't also be like this [with high levels of community violence] where I go to … then we could walk peacefully at night, like our little group, then we could sit outside in the yard up to one o'clock; nothing happens, we don't have to worry if*

> *gangsters are going to rob us or something like that. Now, one has to be home by eleven, ten o'clock … For me it will be perfect, if it can be as peaceful as in Paradyskloof (suburb in Stellenbosch), dead quiet.* (P9)

> *If I could choose where I want to be, then I would prefer to be out of South Africa … just to be there to get your mind cleared a bit from all the things that are happening in the country.* (P1)

> *Like, we can come and go as we please. People can walk with their phones; they will not be robbed, and they won't get raped. So, it will be a very good community.* (P4)

> *Like a fantasy … (talks about the film The Shack). People would care about each other more. That is, if I come to you to borrow sugar than you won't tell everyone that I came to ask for sugar. It is nearly like we must share with one another; we must care about one another ... If you fall, I must help you or you must help me if I don't have something or I must help you if you don't have something, like that.* (P13)

The researcher could not find any literature on the theme the participants mentioned, namely a strong wish to escape from community violence. Horowitz et al. (1995:1360), however, mention that having a dream is an effective way for adolescents to draw hope from. Hope helps adolescents to combat the adverse effects of community violence and better their quality of life (Savahl et al., 2013:590). When an adolescent has hope, he or she can make affirmative plans for the future, which serves as a protective factor as it helps them to experience the present more positively and lowers their likelihood of developing psychosocial problems (Sakakibara & Endo, 2016:184; So et al., 2018:738). The possibility of moving away from their current environment can thus serve as hope to deal with the adverse effects of community violence.

Sub-theme 7.2: Lack of a shared sense of community

Some participants explained how people's interactions and empathy within the community changed due to community violence.

> *Only certain people are allowed to be in certain places and other people at other places ... here near us there is a gangster leader and there is a gangster so they say, how can I say, we are coming to look at what you are doing on that side and then we come and tell on this side. That is why they don't want us to go to that side.* (P4)

> *I was like in, this is everyone's place, everybody is only human, why can't I walk there, why can't you walk there, why is it that I am not even allowed to walk in my own street ... Why are they threatening you?* (P7)

> *People's attitude towards one another started to change, like people who always greeted you no longer greeted you because of other people's wrongdoing ... that is why the community relationships are not like it should be ... even if you are very sick, people don't come to you and be like "well we hope you will get better soon." These days one just hears "well, it is her time" or "she will probably die" or whatever.* (P13)

The above quotes show that community violence limited the free movement of people in their neighbourhoods. Interpersonal contact was thus hampered, which resulted in lower levels of care and reaching out to others. The Western Cape Government (2013:2) acknowledges that community violence harms the social dynamic of communities.

Participant 10 furthermore mentioned that community violence resulted in the destruction of families and in conflict between families in the community.

> *There are many people who are left with deaths, family members who passed away, people with deformities. Also, people whose children died, families who don't get along with each other anymore because of the violence*. (P10)

The research findings show that community violence is something that the participants experience on a very personal level as well as on a community level. The Western Cape Government (2013:2) recognises that community violence has an overpowering effect on families, as well as on the entire community. One participant showed a sense of shame for her community and their lack of empathy and involvement with for one another.

> *I once saw how someone was stabbed with a knife. I was 16, just while we were walking home someone was stabbed; he just lay there, and no-one was worried. Then the man was lying in a pool of blood already, and then the people saw that the man was busy dying, but when they saw him fall nobody cared enough to pick him up. They just took it like, okay he is drunk, so he probably fell, so he must help himself up. Nobody thought of going to help him, but when they saw he was lying in a pool of blood then they realised that he was dying. That doesn't make us a good community. You don't care about the people where you live. You should care everywhere you go. Like people live these days it seems that everything is about violence. Our whole life is just violence ... I just thought why doesn't one feel bad or hurt when someone else gets hurt. It is almost like, that's how it is supposed to be. It is almost like we are used to it. It just happens and so on. If someone gets hurt, it should feel nearly like, that is your brother, that is your sister who got hurt.* (P13)

In the quotation above the participant is deeply disappointed in her fellow community members. She feels that they are experiencing a lack of empathy towards their fellow community members. The literature gives a possible explanation for their lack of concern. Due to high levels of community violence, community members might become desensitised; this could impair their emotional reactions (Akande, 2000:72). Desensitisation can also lead to community members suppressing feelings of anxiety and sadness (Fowler et al., 2009:228). Other than desensitisation, community members can make use of emotional numbing or cognitive denial as a coping mechanism for all the violence they have experienced in their lives (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2001:717). These reactions relate to Gestalt theory on contact boundary disturbances discussed in Sub-theme 6.2.

Sub-theme 7.3: Damage to property and infrastructure

The participants discussed how damage to property because of community violence harmed them personally, and also harmed the entire community.

> *It felt very strange, because you still need to go to the clinic, and they damage the building. That is the place where you can go get stuff ... they permanently did this; they threw out the clinic's windows.* (P11)

> *Our, our windows were permanently broken, because the stones here are used to throw at one another and then our windowpanes are shattered as the conflict here goes on.* (P 13)

As evident in the above quotes, vandalism can add to the community's feeling of insecurity and a lack of safety since it implies that there is no social order in the community. A public place such as a clinic can be the target for vandalism (Ceccato & Wilhelmsson, 2011:191-192), as one participant (P11) mentioned. Vandalism can influence the increasing health care costs as well as the decrease in property value (Centre for Disease…, 2013). This type of behaviour can have a negative influence on the country's economic growth (Hsiao et al., 2018:6). Although there are many reasons for children and adolescents to participate in vandalism, according to Gestalt theory a person remains responsible for the choices that they make and they cannot blame the environment for their bad behaviour (Blom, 2006:157).

Sub-theme 7.4: A sense of helplessness

Some participants mentioned that exposure to community violence makes people feel helpless.

> *No, not really [cannot do anything about community violence] … Yes, it is always like that because, look here, when they come to you, they rob you and if you want to do something then there is a group around you and then you must just give them what you've got.* (P1)

> *There is too much happening in Cloetesville … People can't really stand up for themselves. It is so bad at the moment in Cloetesville … the community is already confused and there is nothing anyone can do about it … there are small kids … they run around everywhere, and I think to myself, wow how can the police be so irresponsible … but everybody stands around … can't they [the police] say, people go into your homes to protect yourselves [and the] little kids.* (P2)

> *Nobody [can do anything about the community violence] because it doesn't take one person, or two people, or ten people, but it takes commitment, and trust, and helpfuness to prevent something like that.* (P10)

The participants' views highlight a sense of helplessness experienced by individuals and the need for community members to work together to address community violence. Schiavone (2009:103) acknowledges the helplessness that many adolescents can experience after multiple exposures to community violence. Gestalt theory has a positive view of people and

believes that people have a capacity for and strive towards self-regulation, thus meeting their needs (Corey, 2013:194; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:216; Schoeman, 2019:11). However, a person's ability to self-regulate will be influenced by the resources within the person and in the person's environment (Corey, 2013:197). Feeling helpless and unable to find support in the environment, as described by the participants, may therefore have a negative influence on community members' ability to stand up against community violence.

3.4.3.8 Theme 8: Recommendations by the participants

The participants had several ideas on how to deal with community violence to make their community a better place. Their first recommendation was that community members must stand up against community violence; the second was that positive values must be taught to children; and the last recommendation the participants made, was that the police should do their duty as it is set out for them.

Sub-theme 8.1: Communities must stand up against community violence

Participants indicated that community members should stand up against community violence and support one another practically and emotionally in this regard.

> *The community must stand together and say they are tired of violence. One will always find people who are not involved in gangs but who have seen the violence.* (P12)
>
> *Point number one, the community will be happy, secondly, they will love one another again, and stand together, work together, do everything in the community together, they will [support] one another, front and back.* (P8)
>
> *To stand up for what is right and fix the things that are not right in your own way. If you see people robbing older people, then you must stand up and say it is wrong, that what you are doing, that is something that I myself have often done. If other [persons] want to hit older people, then I just raise my voice and then they run away.* (P1)
>
> *But they feel nobody cares. That is why I say, I always say to my friends, no matter how small it is, even if you feel your problem is too small to share, just talk about it, there is always someone who will listen, and then you feel much better. If you feel you can't talk to someone, get a notebook and write down all your feelings, even if it makes you cry, the page may be sopping wet, it will make you feel as if someone listened to you, even if it was only a page and lines that listened to you.* (P13)

In line with the suggestions by the participants, Hellum et al. (2011:27) believe that the community can stand up against violence by instilling the following values: compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy. The participants of this study have identified some of these values in their quotes above, for example that community members should have compassion for their neighbours (P1) and having empathy for others in the community (P13). Another way that community members can stand up against the fight of community

violence is by helping adolescents to become more resilient. Social support can help adolescent to cope better with violence in their environment and can build their resilience to deal with the effects of community violence (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:17-18; Richter et al., 2018:185). Savahl (2013:190) points out that having a good role model and mentor, as well as a positive social support system and learning life skills can help in this regard.

Sub-theme 8.2: Instil positive norms and values in children

The participants indicated that growing up in a home with parents who guide their children in terms of positive norms and values had a protective function for children. Schools could also play a role in this respect.

> *I come from a good home and a person should actually always feel good if you came from such a good home, because discipline is very important. Every child should actually come from such a good home.* (P11)
>
> *When I see on the news and so on, things like when the president like Nelson Mandela who isn't there anymore, then my auntie told me stories about what it used to be like; they were not allowed to throw papers in the streets, the streets were pretty, the children were at home at six o'clock.* (P2)
>
> *One learns a lot in the high school, the, the, how can I say, the opportunities that cause a person to want to study more. I was 16 when I went on a leadership camp. At the camp I learned about myself, and how to be, and about integrity.* (P13)

From the above quotes, it is evident that it was vital for the participants that positive norms and values be instilled in children to overcome community violence. Values are what guide a person's behaviour, either positively or negatively. Adolescents learn values from their parents, peers, teachers, and the community. Through assimilation, adolescents choose which values they want to adopt in their lives, and which should be disregarded (Louw & Louw, 2014b:379). When adults have a kind approach towards adolescents, the chances are more likely that they will accept the positive values that they are taught as their own. If adults hold adolescent to a high standard of living by expecting them to act morally, they are also more likely to act in that manner (Krettenauer et al., 2011:366). Bandura's Social Learning Theory also comes into play in this regard. For adolescents to act according to positive values, they must be taught how to act positively. They must be able to observe positive values being displayed, either from a person they know or through symbolic modelling, which can include the media. Living with proper values is learned from repeated behaviour (Scholar et al., 2006:3). From the perspective of Gestalt play therapy, boundaries such as moral boundaries based on positive norms, contribute to children's sense of emotional and physical security (Blom, 2006:64). The participants in this study expressed how having good values helped them to combat the effects of community violence in some way.

Sub-theme 8.3: The police must do their duty

Some participants expressed a desire to be protected by the police and recommended that the police should do their duty in this respect.

> *[It will help] if the police stand up and are not friends or 'pally-pally' with young people who are already involved in violence, [and the police] are not scared of such people. They must help people.* (P2)
>
> *If the police want to bribe me for information, then I will take their name, rank and registration number and I go and make a case against them.* (P12)
>
> *To be honest, I am going to go for [become] a policewoman, just to put everyone in jail (laughs). Then all the streets will be peaceful, and nobody will bother anybody else. Then everything is right.* (P9)

The government employs police officers, and they must ensure that the Bill of Rights is maintained. Police officers must ensure that people are treated with dignity, equality, and freedom (The Constitutional Court of South Africa, 1996). An indication that the South African Police Service (SAPS) is not currently living up to the Bill of Rights is the fact that in 2013 it was found that South Africa police officers are twice as likely to kill someone as police in America. The SAPS are, however, also six times more likely to be killed in the line of duty than in America (South African police…, 2015). In the same article, South Africa is referred to as a violent country. On the other hand, the high rates of crime and violence in South Africa expose police officers to duty-related stressors, including themselves being exposed to aggression from communities (Nkosi, 2019:2). This situation is concerning, since it indicates that the SAPS may not have control over the violence that occurs in the country. Amidst this situation, it may occur that community members have unrealistic expectations of the police. Under these circumstances, the researcher forms the impression that the police and the community should work together more closely.

3.4.3.9 Theme 9: Managing the effects of community violence

The last theme stems from the researcher's discussion with the participants during debriefing at the end of each interview. In discussing how the participants experienced the interview, some of them also mentioned pointed to the way in which they managed community violence. This aspect will be discussed first, followed by a discussion of the participants' experiences of the data collection interview.

Sub-theme 9.1: Participants' handling of the effects of community violence

Exposure to community violence can have several harmful effects on people. Some participants mentioned that they were fortunate enough to have someone that they can confide in.

I always talk to my uncle and auntie. (P3)

I always supported her, I went to her every day, asked her how she was. So, the two of us talked about it, about our feelings, how we felt about it, we talked it out with one another, like that. (P4)

Me and my sisters and brothers always talk about it, then we ask one another's opinions. (P9)

Another participant did not feel that she had anyone to talk to. Participant 7 explained the following:

No, I couldn't trust them, because they spread the news from one to the other and then later it is a big thing. That is why I just left them alone. (P7)

This participant's view could be ascribed to the lack of trust as a consequence of their exposure to community violence that was described by the participants, as discussed in Sub-theme 4.1. Oaklander (2007:244) explains that due to negative things adolescents can experience, they may develop a strong emotion of fear. Talking about one's fears to a reliable person is crucial, because an adolescent can become stuck in fear if they do not express their emotions. The author advises that adolescents need to speak up about the experiences that they had. Adolescents must have someone to talk to and need to talk about their fears. Fear must be acknowledged, accepted, and respected. This will help adolescents to manage a frightening world that they live in (Oaklander, 2007:238). When counselling adolescents who have been exposed to traumatic experiences, the therapeutic space will provide a safe environment in which they will be able to learn how to create better ways to cope with their experiences, thoughts and emotions, and to utilise their reactions in a positive manner (Van der Kolk, 2005:408).

Sub-theme 9.2: Participants' experience of the data collection interview

During debriefing, all the participants expressed that they felt positive. Referring to discussing the intense topic of community violence, some of the participants shared that they had never talked about specific encounters they had with community violence until the interview, and they thus felt a sense of relief after sharing their experiences.

How can I say, one should open up sometimes. It is good to open up. (P6)

I feel quite good, ready for the day. It is almost like, man, something is off my shoulders, but I didn't really notice what it was. Should a person talk about these things and so on, it seemed to me? But now I feel quite good about it. (P8)

I have never spoken to anyone who knows me ... and when they [the person who assisted the researcher to recruit participants] said I should come here, I didn't know, I didn't have knowledge. Then I knew, I had to talk about it, so I

was not prepared [for what it would be like], but [I feel] relieved, something in me. (P10)

It is always good to talk about things that happened when you were a teenager, and things that are happening now. … it is good to talk about things, because then you get it off your heart, and so on. (P11)

Okay (laughs slightly), I don't know, but relieved, but there is a happy feeling inside me now. I don't know why, but there is a feeling of relief, but in the meantime, it feels as if something good has happened to me, that's how it feels now ... Yes, it's been a long time since I spoke to someone like this. (P13)

Although the interviews were conducted for the purpose of data collection and not counselling, the value of talking about their experiences of community violence became a salient theme that the researcher felt should be highlighted as it supports the previous sub-theme.

Persons who provide counselling or therapy, can take cognisance of the following aspects that can be linked to the participants' experiences. Firstly, adolescents who are exposed to community violence may not always have an opportunity to talk about it. It can be even more difficult for adolescent males to open up about the distress that they have experienced, since it can be perceived as weakness when males show symptoms of depression, PTSD or other psychological disorder (Fincham et al., 2009:197). Fowler et al. (2009:252) explain that receiving intervention after a trauma was experienced as being helpful for adolescents to combat symptoms of PTDS. Intervention can also help prevent community violence from affecting other parts of an adolescent's development.

Secondly, Oaklander (2007:216) explains that when a child withholds emotions, especially anger, it manifests in inappropriate behaviours. Thus, when adolescents get an opportunity to explore their emotions with regard to community violence, they will be able to let go of their emotions, including anger. During intervention an adolescent will also be able to learn coping strategies to better handle adverse experiences in their lives (Oaklander, 2007:217).

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the research methodology and the ethical considerations that were taken into account during the study, as well as the research findings relating to young adults' perception of community violence as experienced during their adolescent years. Nine themes, each with a number of sub-themes, were identified. The themes include findings on the participants' exposure to community violence, perceived causes of community violence, their reaction to incidents of community violence, and the development of distrust in others. Furthermore, the themes focused on the effects of community violence on the participants during adolescence as well as in young adulthood and the effect of community violence on the community. The last two themes related to recommendations by the participants to

address community violence and managing the effects thereof. The researcher will discuss the key findings of the study as well as the conclusions and recommendations in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 of this report, information from literature indicates that community violence is widespread in South Africa, with low-income communities having high rates of community violence. Being exposed to community violence can have harmful effects on the residents of the community, especially adolescents. Adolescents are also the demographic group that has the highest exposure to community violence. This study aimed to explore young adults' perceptions of community violence as they experienced it during their adolescent years. This chapter focuses on the key findings and conclusions of this study. The researcher also proposes recommendations that could be implemented in practice and research. In conclusion, the researcher discusses the accomplishment of the goal and objectives of the study and answering the research question.

4.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

As a background to the discussion of the key findings of the study, the researcher restates the goal and objectives that guided the implementation of the study.

The goal of the study was to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during adolescence.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To theoretically conceptualise community violence and contextualise it within the South African context
- To explore and describe how participants were exposed to community violence during their adolescent years
- To explore and describe participants' perceptions of community violence as a phenomenon during their adolescent years
- To explore and describe participants' perceptions of the effects of community violence on them during their adolescent years
- To make recommendations for social workers who provide services to children, adolescents and families exposed to community violence.

The researcher conducted a literature review and collected data from a sample of 14 young adult participants on their perceptions on community violence during their adolescent years.

4.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this study was to explore and describe young adults' perceptions on community violence as experienced during their adolescent years. In this section, the key findings and conclusions of the study are presented with reference to information from the literature review, as relevant.

- **Participants' exposure to community violence**

The participants experienced high volumes of direct and indirect exposure to community violence on a regular basis and at any time of the day or night.

- Some of the participants experienced being victimised, which is a direct type of community violence. These experiences included being robbed, attacked with a knife, chased, and thrown with stones.
- Participants were also indirectly exposed to community violence by witnessing violence in their neighbourhoods. The incidents included observing gun shootings and people being stabbed with a knife, robbed, hit, and assaulted. They also observed gangs chasing and stabbing people as well as vandalising a clinic and other buildings.
- Hearing about violence in the community was a common experience for the participants as community members tended to talk about what happened in their neighbourhood. The participants also frequently heard gunshots in their neighbourhood, which made them fearful.
- Participants also observed community violence on television news channels and in images posted on social media platforms such as on Facebook and MXit.
- Most of the participants have experienced several incidents of violence in their communities and also incidents that involved friends and family members.

The high incidence of violence exposure by the participants can be ascribed to their community that is known for high levels of community violence. Such contexts put adolescent at risk for exposure to violence and, as evident in the research findings, for being exposed to all three types of violence: being victims themselves as well as observing and hearing about violence committed against strangers but also against family members and friends. In such situations, adolescents are at risk for poly-victimisation, as was the case with the participants and is a common phenomenon in South Africa. Posting messages and images of community violence on social media brings community violence closer to the person, as it can involve people that the person knows.

- **Participants' views on different cause of community violence**

The participants had strong opinions on what caused violence in their community.

- Substance abuse was highlighted as the main cause of violence among members of the community, especially over weekends when people were not at work, since it makes them more likely to act violently or to become a target of violent behaviour. Dealing in drugs and the involvement of money also played a role in this regard.
- Gangsterism and the social dynamics involved in gangs were mentioned as contributing to the violence in their communities. Money, power and status lured young people into gang membership and activities. It appears that even people who did not belong to gangs, would engage in violent acts because of jealousy of others or as means to receive money or respect in the community.
- Regular exposure to high levels of community violence was given as a reason why violence became a norm in their community. Adolescents would also copy violent behaviours when it is the norm within their peer group or succumb to peer pressure to become involved in violence.
- A lack of parental supervision was of great concern as a lack of monitoring contributed to children becoming involved in community violence. Similarly, community members do not stand up against violence, either out of fear of retaliation or because of protecting a family member, with the result that the problem of community violence is not addressed.
- Community violence was also ascribed to residents being discontent with aspects such as housing and services, which often resulted in violent protests or peaceful protests that turn violent when clashing with the police.

Risk factors in communities, such as those mentioned by the participants, increase the likelihood of community violence and adolescents' exposure to poly-victimisation. A lack of parental supervision, substance use, a lack of community solidarity and informal social control by community members, the availability of firearms, poor housing conditions and limited resources are described in the literature as factors that characterise communities with a high prevalence of community violence and putting adolescents at risk for exposure to violent incidents. As parents are also negatively affected by community violence, it may diminish their ability for supervision and monitoring of their children or for guiding their children in terms of prosocial behaviour and values.

- **The participants' reactions to community violence**

The participants' reactions to incidents of community violence seemed to be mostly passive or avoidant.

- The participants tended to keep quiet and not report incidents of community violence to the police as they were afraid of taking a stand against the wrongdoings in the neighbourhood since it could have negative implications for them. Speaking up against community violence can cause that person to become a target of the next violent act.
- Some participants explained that they did not want to hear or see anything that has to do with community violence. They have learned to avoid larger crowds of people and police cars, since that usually means that violence has broken out in the community in some form or another. Children were being taught at school to avoid these scenes and some people locked themselves in their homes if violent incidents are close to their homes.
- Some participants displayed a sense of hopelessness by stating that they cannot stop community violence, so they might as well accept it. Another participant said that community violence would be with them forever. Participants were, however, still curious to see what happens when community violence breaks out. Violence were thus seen as a community activity since many people from the neighbourhood go and watch to see the excitement that unfolds in front of them.
- Some participants were drawn to the violent incidents because they were curious to see what will happen and thus willingly got into situations where they were witnessing community violence.

A pervasive level of community violence can result in fear and feelings of helplessness that prevent community members to take action such as speaking out against it or reporting instances of community violence to the police. For community members it may be easier to avoid situations or areas that may expose them to community violence and, if they feel that they cannot escape from it, they may start to accept the violence as part of their everyday life. Community members may even revert to violence themselves. Adolescents who are curious about incidents of community violence may choose to go to the scene and inadvertently expose themselves to directly witnessing community violence, without thinking about the harmful consequences it may have.

- **The phenomenon of distrust in others**

A strong theme in the data was related to the development of distrust in others because of exposure to community violence.

- Because of the fears and suspicion created by community violence, some participants developed distrust in other people, even in their own friends. They would therefore hesitate to share something with others out of fear that the information may be shared with others.
- The lack of a sense of safety within their communities and their perceptions that the community will not be able to protect them, resulted in distrust in people in the community.

- Furthermore, participants expressed distrust in the police service, often because of the way that the police services respond to incidents of community violence.

A lack of trust in others can rob people from opportunities to obtain support from others. This may happen on an individual level, community level and institutional level. In communities, distrust can become part of the communal identity. Distrust in the South African Police Service can be worsened by negative publicity related to corruption and bribery of police officers.

- **The effects of community violence on the adolescent and young adult**

Community violence in their neighbourhood had negative emotional and social effects on the participants during their adolescence and these effects were still evident in young adulthood.

- Fear was a salient theme in the participants' descriptions of the effects of community violence on them. The participants expressed that they lived in a constant state of fearfulness, which was experienced in their homes, at school and in the wider community. They feared for their own safety as well as for the safety of their family members and friends.
- The participants experienced emotional distress because of the violence they observed, and one participant mentioned how these feelings were worsened by clinic staff who disregarded the emotions he felt.
- Participants also experienced insomnia, often because of nightmares or because of constantly thinking about incidents of community violence that they were exposed to.
- Some participants limited their movement in the community, such as going to friends and playing in the streets, and they were often accompanied by parents and other adults when they walked in the community. This situation resulted in social isolation and loneliness. Some participants were too scared to go to school and, when they attended school, could not concentrate on their schoolwork.
- Their exposure to community violence negatively changed some participants' own behaviour and attitudes. Violence became normalised and some started to behave aggressively towards others and would use violence to retaliate for perceived wrongdoings by others.
- As young adults, some participants still experienced the effects of community violence. For some, the effects were negative in that they did not enjoy staying in the community, that they lost friends through death, and that fear still influenced their decisions, while for others exposure to community violence motivated them to strive for a better life.
- Some participants explained that they became so used to living in a neighbourhood with high levels of community violence that they could not imagine a life without it. They did not care about what happens to other people, except for their families, they did not experience

fear or worry about the violence, and they would be ready to defend themselves should they be assaulted.

Fearfulness is a common reaction to exposure to community violence because of the unpredictable nature of the violence. Fear can be pervasive and be experienced in all areas of their social environment, leading to depression, anxiety, hopelessness and suicide ideation. Fear and other symptoms experience by the participants, such as insomnia, social isolation, school absenteeism and aggressive behaviours highlight the detrimental impact of community violence on adolescents' socio-emotional well-being.

The effects of community violence can become deeply embedded into one's life. What happened during adolescence can still affect one's perception of community violence as a young adult and can also influence the choices young adults make. Young adulthood is about deciding on aspects such as a career and lifestyle, showing that exposure to community violence as an adolescent can impact on their whole future. Being used to community violence causes some people to experience desensitisation, normalise violence and see it as a way to solve conflict.

- **The effects of community violence on the community**

The participants highlighted that community violence does not only affect the individual or the family but affects the community as a whole.

- Community violence was seen as resulting in unsafe neighbourhoods, especially for the children in the community. As community violence incidents may occur close to their homes, the participants explained that people were scared to move around in the neighbourhood, especially at night but also during the daytime. Some participants therefore wished to move to a safer community.
- Some participants mentioned the effect of community violence on their sense of community. People's interactions, such as greeting, visiting and showing empathy decreased, and many families lost members because of community violence.
- Community violence led to vandalism, so that existing community resources such as clinics were damaged, and the windows of homes were broken.
- Community members started to feel helpless, leading to a sense that they cannot do anything themselves to curb community violence.

It is clear that pervasive community violence can have damaging effects on communities as a whole. Community members find it difficult to meet their needs in unsafe and toxic neighbourhoods, as proposed in Gestalt theory, and natural processes such as interpersonal interactions between community members become lost. Vandalism can deplete community

resources and affect personal property of community members. This situation highlights that community violence should be approached from a holistic perspective.

- **Participants' recommendation to address community violence**

The participants reflected on possible ways to reduce community violence.

- One recommendation was that community members should stand together against community violence, restore community cohesion and enhance social support networks. Community members should take action and not be passive bystanders when violence takes place in the community.
- Furthermore, parents should guide their children and instil positive norms and values and serve as positive role models for their children. Schools and teachers can also play an important role in this respect.
- The police must strive towards effective service delivery in the community – one where the community members feel protected – and refrain from unprofessional and illegal activities such as taking bribes from people.

The participants' suggestions correlate with what is seen as characteristics values of strong communities that can stand up against violence: respect, compassion, motivation and empathy. Positive values can guide people's behaviour and, as children learn through observation, parents, teachers and other adults can serve as role models for children. In addition, Gestalt theory points to the value of boundaries for the development of children's sense of emotional and physical safety. A well-functioning police force, that treat citizens with dignity, will act in line with the stipulations of South African legislation and can restore communities' trust in them.

- **The need for constructively dealing with exposure to community violence**

Lastly, during debriefing a theme was highlighted on the need to express experiences of community violence.

- The participants pointed to the value of speaking to someone about one's experiences after exposure to community violence as it brought feelings of relief and had a positive effect on their emotional well-being.
- It appears that most of the participants did not talk about these experiences with someone else and expressed the wish to do so.

Talking to someone about what they have experienced can form a significant part of mitigating the harmful effects of community violence. The literature indicates that adolescents who have been exposed to community violence tend to avoid discussion thereof. Desensitisation, which

is a common reaction to exposure to community violence, can furthermore lead to suppression of thoughts and feelings. Gestalt theory emphasises the healing effect of awareness. Discussion of one's experiences, thoughts and feelings related to community violence supports awareness and counselling services may therefore be of great value for adolescents and others exposed to community violence.

The substantial and long-lasting effects of exposure to community violence is an indication of how a neglectful and toxic environment can negatively impact on people's awareness and their ability to make contact, as proposed in Gestalt theory. It can be concluded that direct and indirect exposure to the different types of community violence hamper people's capacity for self-regulation.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key finding and conclusion, the researcher suggests the following recommendations for different role players involved in the community to ensure that children and adolescents are better protected against the harmful effects of community violence.

4.4.1 Recommendations for raising awareness of community violence

The extreme levels of community violence in South Africa and the pervasive effects on persons exposed to different types of community violence requires that all professionals involved in service delivery, such as social workers, teachers, health care staff, and police should be made aware of the prevalence and impact of the phenomenon.

Firstly, valuable information came to light during the course of this study. It is part of the researcher's responsibility in concluding the research study to share this information.

- The researcher will share the research findings with NPO's who work in the area where the research was conducted and with NPO's in the geographical area to raise their awareness of the phenomenon so that the full impact of community violence can be understood and addressed.
- The researcher will approach schools in her immediate geographical area to develop an awareness programme for children to learn about the phenomenon and not to overlook incidents of exposure to community violence simply because these have become part of their normal way of life. Children should also be made aware of whom to contact when they need help.

4.4.2 Recommendations for community entities

For institutions who are involved in promoting the safety and well-being of communities, such

as social services professions and persons in the education, health care and policing sectors, the following recommendations are made. These role players include social workers, psychologists, teachers, clinic and hospital staff, churches, and police officers, amongst others.

- Meetings should be held with different role players to clarify their roles in addressing community violence. Community members should be actively involved in planning interventions to address community violence.
- Specific attention should be given to cultivating a better relationship between the SAPS and the community members. A relationship of trust must be formed between both parties. Trust must be cultivated so that community members can speak up when they see wrongdoing and the SAPS must be trusted to do their work effectively without any corruption. The SAPS should arrange community meetings where they explain what the processes are when a call is made to them, so that community members have realistic expectations of the police. The community can also have a SAPS appreciation day where the police officers are thanked for their service. When mutual respect is formed between the SAPS and the communities, trust will also start to form between both parties.
- Community organisations, schools and churches can arrange events where community members can form a sense of solidarity. As an example, a "greet your neighbours" campaign can be held where the members of the community are encouraged to greet one another. Having a better attitude towards a person's neighbours can have the result that a better relationship between the community members is formed. It is also a simple way to bring humanity back to the community and to help cultivate a sense of belonging for all the residents.
- As parents play a significant role in teaching, supervising and monitoring their children, role players such as social workers and churches can arrange parenting programmes focusing on aspects such as creating safe homes for their children, parental guidance and support groups, and teaching them skills to enhance their children’s resilience.
- Children in the community should be taught ways to handle situations of community violence, for instance to call the police when a violent crime has been witnessed. They should also be encouraged to talk to a grown-up that they can trust about what they have seen. The school setting may provide an ideal opportunity for presenting this information.
- It is recommended that support groups should be established for both parents and children who were exposed to community violence, where they can talk in a safe environment about their experiences of community violence, including being a victim, witnessing, or hearing

about community violence. Being able to talk about personal experiences has significant therapeutic value.

- Conflict management and creative problem-solving workshops should be held at NGOs, churches, schools and community centres in the community so that community members, including adults and children, can learn how to solve their conflicts in a non-aggressive and non-violent manner. Topics could also focus on enhancing self-esteem and emotional regulation as these skills can help people to make positive choices.
- The above institutions can collaborate to develop a mentorship programme for adolescents where they can team up with an adult of the same gender who lives a life free from crime and substance abuse, and learn from them how to respect themselves, other people, and the property of others. These programmes may be especially valuable for adolescent boys, since boys are at higher risk for exposure to community violence.
- In all interventions, people should be encouraged to respect the confidentiality of each other's stories and experiences, so that a relationship of trust can be formed in the community once again. There is great value in sharing experiences with other people, but this is only effective when trust is present.
- Positive recreational activities, such as sport and music classes, should be encouraged by the schools, churches and local municipalities so that children do not become bored. These activities will also have the result that adolescents will have a place to belong which lessens the possibility that they will look for a sense of belonging in places that could have a negative outcome in their life.
- The laws with regard to alcohol consumption should be better enforced, and no under-18 should be allowed into places where high volumes of alcohol are consumed, in order to prevent children and adolescents from witnessing community violence which takes place due to excessive alcohol consumption.

4.4.3. Recommendation for future research

Community violence is a complex phenomenon that has a substantial influence on the well-being of adolescents and other persons. The following recommendations are made for research by practicing professionals and students:

- It is recommended that further research be conducted on how persons from different age groups, for example children in primary school, adults, and elderly persons experience community violence within the South African context.

- Research can also be conducted on interventions to empower individuals, families and communities to deal with community violence.
- It appears that much of the research on the phenomenon of community violence focused on environmental risks related to community violence in South Africa, such as poor socio-economic areas and high poverty rates. It is recommended that more studies be conducted on the personal and emotional causes of community violence such as poor self-esteem, jealousy, and seeking personal status, and how these can influence adolescent's choices in life.
- Research can also be conducted on the experiences of different role players, such as social workers, teachers, and police officers, related to service delivery for children exposed to community violence.

4.5 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during their adolescent years. Five objectives were formulated to achieve the goal of the study. The achievement of the objectives of the study that supported the goal of the study, are indicated below.

Objective 1: To theoretically conceptualise community violence and contextualise it within the South African context

The objective was reached by means of literature review in Chapter 2 that focused on the phenomenon of community violence. The literature review included descriptions of the different types of community violence, the prevalence thereof, risk and protective factors related to adolescents' exposure to community violence, and the effects of community violence on adolescents.

Objective 2: To explore and describe how participants were exposed to community violence during their adolescent years

Objective 2 was accomplished by the presentation of research findings that gave insight on this objective. Themes that were gathered from the data analysis revealed that the participants were exposed to multiple forms of community violence. All the participants were exposed to either direct violence or indirect violence and were frequently exposed to incidents of community violence. The participants elaborated on this aspect and meaningful data was obtained related to this objective.

Objective 3: To explore and describe participants' perceptions of community violence as a phenomenon during their adolescent years

The participants were able to reflect on how they perceived community violence as adolescents. They elaborated on reasons why they thought community violence took place and what their reactions towards community violence were. The participants described several causes of community violence in their community, and some found community violence to be exciting and others wanted to avoid the violence in the neighbourhood. All the participants could, however, agree on one thing: community violence has a negative impact on their lives and the lives of the rest of the community members.

Objective 4: To explore and describe participants' perceptions of the effects of community violence on them during their adolescent years

Through the semi-structured interviews, the participants were able to express how community violence has affected their lives. The effects were visible for the participants in three main themes, namely how it affected them personally as adolescents, how it affected the community as a whole, and how community violence still had an effect on the participants as young adults. A strong theme that emerged was that community violence led to a general feeling of distrust among community members. As adolescents had no-one to talk to about community violence, they must carry the burden of the adverse effects of violence alone. Objective 4 was achieved through this information that the participants provided.

Objective 5: To make recommendations for social workers who provide services to children, adolescents and families exposed to community violence.

The researcher made recommendations based on the data that was gained through the study. The recommendations were made for social workers, but due to the holistic impact of community violence, recommendations were also made for other professionals and role players to help service providers to assist the community in a way that will benefit the entire community. The recommendations were presented in 4.3.2, thereby achieving Objective 5.

All the objectives of the study were reached. Therefore, the goal of the study has been accomplished and the research question of the study - *What are young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced during their adolescent years?* - was answered.

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Community violence has harmful effects on adolescents' lives. The goal of the study was to explore young adults' perceptions of community violence as they experienced it during their adolescent years. The research findings indicated that adolescents are frequently exposed to

multiple forms of community violence. Adolescents experience a vast amount of fear and other effects caused by community violence. Exposure to community violence can lead adolescents to become desensitised and come to see community violence as a normal phenomenon in their communities. It is thus necessary for professionals, parents and children to become involved in services that can mitigate the effects of community violence and lower risks for adolescent's exposure to community violence.

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Appendix A

Onderhoudskedule

Ek stel belang in jou siening van gemeenskapsgeweld wat jy gedurende adolessensie ervaar het. In hierdie studie word gemeenskapsgeweld gesien as insidente van geweld in ‘n gemeenskap of in ‘n woonbuurt in Suid Afrika.
Ek sal vrae vra oor jou siening van jou betrokkenheid of waarneming van situasies van geweld in die gemeenskap, of waarneming van gemeenskapsgeweld op televisie of in die sosiale media. Ons sal nie fokus op geweld wat moontlik in jou huis plaasgevind het nie en ook nie op afknouery (‘bullying’) in die skool nie.

1. Aan watter tipe gemeenskapsgeweld is jy direk en/of indirek blootgestel toe jy ‘n tiener was?
2. Hoe dikwels het jy die verskillende tipes gemeenskapsgeweld wat jy aangedui het direk en/of indirek ervaar?
3. Indien jy direk aan gemeenskapsgeweld blootgestel is, waar het dit gebeur?
4. Wat was jou idees oor gemeenskapsgeweld op daardie stadium?
5. Hoe het jy gereageer wanneer jy aan gemeenskapsgeweld blootgestel is?
6. As ‘n adolessent, het jou vriende of ander persone ooit van jou verwag of jou beïnvloed om aan gemeenskapsgeweld deel te neem?
7. Na jou mening, hoekom vind gemeenskapsgeweld plaas?
8. Hoe affekteer gemeenskapsgeweld mense se lewens na jou mening?
9. Watter invloed het jou blootstelling aan gemeenskapsgeweld op jou daaglikse lewe tydens jou tienerjare gehad?
10. Is daar enige gevolge wat jy steeds ervaar?
11. Hoe sien jy gemeenskapsgeweld noudat jy ouer is?
12. In jou opinie, kan mense gewoond raak aan gemeenskapsgeweld? Verduidelik asseblief jou mening.

Interview schedule

I am interested in your views on community violence that you experienced when you were an adolescent. In this study, community violence is seen as violent incidences in a community or neighbourhood in South Africa.
I will ask your views about being part of or observing violent situations in the community, seeing community violence on TV or in the social media. We will not focus on violence that may have happened in your home or on bullying at school.

1. What type of community violence were you directly and/or indirectly exposed to when you were a teenager?
2. How often did you directly and/or indirectly experience the different types of community violence that you indicated?
3. If you were directly exposed to community violence, where did it take place?
4. What were your thoughts about the community violence at the time?
5. How did you react when exposed to community violence?
6. As an adolescent, were you ever expected or influenced by your friends or others to take part in acts of community violence?
7. In your opinion, why does community violence take place?
8. How, in your opinion, does community violence affect people's lives?
9. What influence did your exposure to community violence have on your everyday life during your adolescent years?

   Are there any consequences that you still experience?
10. How do you view community violence now that you are older?
11. In your view, can people become used to community violence? Please explain.

Appendix B

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Humanities 100.
1919 - 2019
Department of Social Work & Criminology

28 July 2019

Dear Ms M van Heerden

Project Title:	Young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence
Researcher:	Ms M van Heerden
Supervisor:	Dr MP le Roux
Department:	Social Work and Criminology
Reference number:	18048243 (HUM055/0619)
Degree:	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 25 July 2019. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr L Blokland; Dr K Boovens; Dr A-M de Beer; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr W Kelleher; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Dr M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsehe; Ms D Mokalana

Appendix C

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Humanities 100.
1919 • 2019
Department of Social Work & Criminology

Navorser: **Marie-Louise van Heerden**
Graad: **MMW Spelgebaseerde Intervensie**
Kontakbesonderhede: **0790636899**

INGELIGTE TOESTEMMING DEUR DEELNEMER

Naam van deelnemer: _____

1. Titel van die studie

Young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence (Jong volwassenes se persepsies van gemeenskapsgeweld wat hulle in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks tydens adolessensie ervaar het)

2. Doel van die studie

Die doel an die studie is om jong volwassenes se persepsies van gemeenskapsgeweld wat hulle in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks tydens adolessensie ervaar het, te eksploreer en te omskryf. Die fokus van die studie is om 'n beter begrip te verkry van hoe adolessente gemeenskapsgeweld sien.

3. Prosedures

Ek sal versoek word om aan 'n persoonlike onderhoud met die navorser deel te neem. Die navorser stel belang in my siening van gemeenskapsgeweld waaraan ek blootgestel is gedurende my tienerjare. Die onderhoud sal ongeveer een uur duur en 'n stemopname sal van die onderhoud gemaak word. Alle inligting sal streng vertroulik hanteer word en slegs die navorser en haar supervisor by die Universiteit van Pretoria sal kennis dra van die wat ek in die onderhoud sê.

4. Moontlike risiko

Die onderhoud sal fokus op my siening van gemeenskapsgeweld wat ek as 'n tiener ervaar het. Siende dat my blootstelling aan gemeenskapsgeweld 'n paar jaar gelede gebeur het, word verwag dat daar 'n kleiner kans is dat ek onsteld sal voel as gevolg van die onderhoud. Indien ek egter enige emosionele ongemak weens die onderhoud ervaar, sal die navorser my vir gratis berading na 'n sielkundige verwys.

5. Voordele van deelname

Ek sal nie vergoeding of geskenke vir my deelname aan die studie ontvang nie. Die inligting wat ek met die navorser deel kan egter vir maatskaplike werkers help om bewus te word van hoe tieners geweld in die gemeenskap mag ervaar.

6. Regte as deelnemer

Ek is bewus daarvan dat my deelname aan die studie vrywillig is. Ek het die reg om te enige tyd aan die studie te onttrek, sonder dat ek 'n rede hoef te gee. Indien ek besluit om aan die studie te onttrek, sal daar geen negatiewe gevolge vir my wees nie.

7. Vertroulikheid

Die stemopname van die onderhoud sal woordeliks getik word. Die stemopname, sowel as die getikte dokument, sal streng vertroulik hanteer word en sal veilig deur die navorser bewaar word. Slegs die navorser en haar supervisor by die Universiteit sal toegang tot hierdie inligting hê. Indien ek besluit om aan die studie te onttrek, sal my inligting vernietig word.

Die navorser sal 'n verslag oor die studie skryf. My naam of persoonlike besonderhede sal nie in die verslag verskyn nie. Ek het die reg om die navorser te vra om die dokument oor die inligting wat ek tydens die onderhoud verskaf het, te lees indien ek dit sou verkies.

8. Kontakbesonderhede

Indien ek meer inligting oor hierdie studie benodig, kan ek die navorser deur haar e-pos (marielouisevh@gmail.com) of op haar selffoon kontak by die nommer hierbo aangedui.

9. Stoor van data

Ek is bewus daarvan dat die navorsingsinligting vir 'n tydperk van 15 jaar by die Departement Maatskaplike Werk en Kriminologie by die Universiteit van Pretoria ingevolge die beleid van die Universiteit gestoor sal word.

10. Gebruik van data

Die bevindinge van hierdie studie sal gebruik word vir 'n navorsingsverslag en moontlik vir professionele publikasies en aanbiedings by konferensies. Die bevindings mag ook vir verdere navorsing gebruik word. Indien dit vir verdere navorsing gebruik word, sal die inligting steeds as vertroulik hanteer word, soos hierbo omskryf. Ek gee my toestemming dat my inligting ook vir verdere navorsing gebruik kan word.

10. Toestemming vir deelname aan die studie

Ek, die ondergetekende, verstaan die inligting wat in hierdie dokument verskaf is. Ek het die geleentheid gehad om vrae oor die studie te vra en al my vrae is bevredigend beantwoord. Ek verstaan waaroor die studie gaan en hoekom dit gedoen word.

Ek verstaan my regte as deelnemer en gee my toestemming dat ek vrywillig aan die navorsingstudie deelneem.

Ek het 'n afskrif van hierdie dokument ontvang.

Deelnemer: _____ Datum: _____

Navorser: _____ Datum: _____