

**Young adults' perceptions of community violence
experienced in a South African context during adolescence**

by

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of the requirements for the degree**

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“She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future” – Proverbs 31:25

“Promise me you'll always remember that you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think” – A.A. Milne (Christopher Robin in Winnie the Pooh)

ABSTRACT

YOUNG ADULTS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT DURING ADOLESCENCE

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Violence is a form of degradation that challenges human dignity; it can be regarded as one of the most detrimental experiences a child or adolescent can endure. Violent events frequently occur within the communities that children and adolescents are raised in; South African children and adolescents are often regarded as being raised in urban war zones. There is however a lack of research concerning the effects of community violence on children and adolescents, as well as on their perceptions of community violence. Existing knowledge of community violence is mostly based on research done in other countries, which have different socio-economic problems and systems in place. The goal of this study was therefore to explore and describe the perceptions of young adults of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence. To bridge this gap in research, this study formed part of a group research project, with each individual focusing on a different community in South Africa.

In this study, a qualitative research approach was followed, as this elicited the participants' perceptions concerning community violence. The researcher addressed the following research question: *What are young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South-African context during their adolescent years?* To answer this question, the researcher made use of applied research and an instrumental case study as the research design. A non-probability sampling approach was implemented, specifically a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The sample size consisted of ten participants who resided in the community of Sicelo in

Meyerton. Data was collected by means of a semi-structured interview, with the use of an interview schedule. Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data obtained. The Gestalt perspective formed the theoretical framework used to explore the lived experiences of the participants, in order to gain a holistic understanding of their subjective realities and experiences.

The findings show that all the participants had been exposed to some sort of violence, either directly or indirectly. They shared their experiences in terms of assault with a weapon, gender-based violence, xenophobia, protests and theft. Certain times and places were also indicated as hotspots for community violence and various motivations were found to be associated with community violence. Trauma, gangs, not trusting the police and community justice served as consequences of community violence, while education and isolation served as coping mechanisms to counter the effect of such violence. Substance abuse, jealousy and a lack of assistance from other community members when faced with danger, served as perceptions on responses to community violence.

Recommendations for practice include that social workers should be educated on various traditions and cultures within communities in South Africa, to understand the effects of community violence. Traditional healers and persons in traditional positions should be involved to find midway alternatives to address the trauma associated with community violence. Programmes for adolescents and young adults should focus on prevention to combat the cycle of community violence and key individuals in the community should be identified and educated in lay-counselling, to assist children and adolescents when faced with trauma due to community violence.

Key concepts:

Adolescence

Community violence

Perceptions

Young adult

Gestalt approach

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Exposure to any form of violence has proven to be one of the most harmful experiences that any child could endure (Savahl, Isaacs, Adams, Carels & September, 2013:579). Nonetheless, children and adolescents have been exposed to numerous forms of violence on a global scale, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, community violence, school violence and victimisation (Du Plessis, Kaminer, Hardy & Benjamin, 2015:80). In South Africa however, these various forms of violence are also accompanied by political struggles (Savahl et al., 2013:579; Du Plessis et al., 2015:81). As a result, the youth of South Africa is exposed to violence in their everyday life (Kaminer, Hardy, Heath, Mosdell & Bawa, 2013a:321; Savahl et al., 2013:579). Violence is often normalised in settings such as homes, neighbourhoods and schools since violence in different forms and types is observed in all cultures, classes, ages and socio-economic groups (Malherbe & Häefele, 2017:108).

One of the main concerns today is that the continuous exposure to violence could be desensitising children towards violence due to its normalising nature, seeing that children might become aroused by images of violence and want to mimic these violent images (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301). Furthermore, according to the social learning perspective, humans are not born with aggressive responses, but rather acquire these responses through direct exposure or by observing the behaviour of others (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:351). Therefore, depending on adolescents' experiences or what was observed, they each learn about aggression in a different way. Frequent exposure to violence could lead to the blunting of these adolescents' emotional responses (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Savahl et al., 2013:589). Hence, children who are exposed to elevated levels of violence for prolonged periods are prone to develop various problems (Louw & Louw, 2014a:422). Exposure to community violence, one of the forms of violence with the greatest influence on the well-being of children, can result in either long-term or short-term physical and psychological harm to children and adolescents (Savahl et al., 2013: 580).

The goal of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions of young adults of community violence experienced during adolescence. The focus of this research was on the perceptions of young adults, since the hope was that it would create distance in time, which may facilitate a deeper reflection concerning their experiences of community violence during their adolescent years.

This study forms part of a group research project in which a group of masters' students conducted individual research studies on the topic, focusing on young adults' perceptions of community violence. This research report, therefore, focuses on this researcher's individual study.

The following key concepts are relevant to the study:

Adolescents: An adolescent is “[a] person in the age of adolescence” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2018). “Adolescence spans from approximately 12 years to 18 years” (Louw & Louw, 2014b:304). It is a stage of rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial change, in which the adolescent achieves autonomy from the family as well as acquire personal goals and values (Berk, 2013:6; Louw & Louw, 2014b:304). In terms of this study, adolescence ranged between the ages of 13 and 18 years.

Community violence: Violence is “[p]sychological and physical harm perpetrated against another person or group” (Lutya, 2013:239). Community violence is “[e]xposure to acts of violence in a neighbourhood where the person and his or her family live” (Louw & Louw, 2014a:420). Savahl et al. (2013:580) further add that community violence is “deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against a person in the community, also includes gang violence, violence in the home, school and other public spaces.” For the purpose of this study the focus of community violence will be as experienced or observed in the community, or observed in images on television or social media, but will exclude violence in the home and bullying in schools.

Perceptions: Perceptions are “[h]ow people perceive themselves and their world, and how this perception constitutes their reality” (Grobler, Schenck & Mbedzi, 2013:17). Perceptions in this study, will refer to the way in which young adults interpret community violence that they were exposed to during adolescence.

Young adult: Arnett (2016:27) indicates that the demarcation of life stages subsequent to childhood cannot always be associated with age. Young adulthood is in some cultures referred to as emerging adulthood, which is a “new life stage in developed countries, lasting from the late teens through the twenties, in which people are gradually making their way toward taking on adult responsibilities in love and work.” In this study, the focus will be on young adults between the ages of 20 and 25 years.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework which underpins this study is Gestalt theory. Gestalt theory was developed by Frederick Perls and is based on the principle that “individuals must be understood in the context of their ongoing relationship with the environment” (Corey, 2013:194). It is therefore impossible to understand an individual without taking the environment into consideration, which is termed holism (Blom, 2006:19). A person consequently satisfies his/her needs both within the self and within the environment (Blom, 2006:23). These needs are satisfied by making use of organismic self-regulation. Figure-ground forms part of the organismic self-regulation process. According to Blom (2006:24, 25), figure is viewed as the most important aspect or need which captures a person’s attention at a certain moment, while ground is the background of a person’s experience during a specific point in time. Community violence could therefore influence an individual’s holistic functioning, by focusing on meeting the needs of the figure by utilising inappropriate behaviours.

When individuals’ holistic functioning becomes hampered, they have the capacity to be self-regulating beings who are always in the process of becoming and growing (Corey, 2013:194; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:216). Individuals utilise the continuous process of self-regulation to attempt to reach an equilibrium. This equilibrium is reached by meeting the needs within the continuously changing environment as well as within the organism, as the organism grows within its environment (Blom, 2006:24; Oaklander, 2001:47). Non-supportive environments interfere with self-regulation; hence, the individual will not be able to function as a holistic entity (Blom, 2006:24). Community violence may therefore lead to a non-supportive environment, which may interfere with the community members’ ability to self-regulate. Community members may furthermore utilise certain coping strategies

that they have put in place to obtain an equilibrium, but these strategies may not restore to balance, therefore community members will continue to find ways to do so (Kottman, 2011:63). The above-mentioned is one of the reasons why literature indicates that community violence negatively affects people's psychosocial adjustment (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Louw & Louw, 2014a:422; Savahl et al., 2013:589).

During the process of self-regulation, a person will continuously experience physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs which cause discomfort until contact is made to satisfy the needs and homeostasis is achieved (Blom, 2006:24). Contact is a concept that indicates people's interaction with their environment, which refers to people's ability to identify and meet their needs to reach homeostasis (Blom, 2006:23; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:218). If an individual does not create contact with the here-and-now, aspects such as their intellect, emotions, senses and their body could be restricted and the person could become desensitised (Oaklander, 2006:22). Desensitisation can be described as "the process whereby children exclude themselves from sensory and physical experience related to aspects such as pain and discomfort" (Blom, 2006:37). Therefore awareness should be created, which involves the full use of all the senses such as touch, hearing, vision, taste and smell in the present moment (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:217).

If an individual struggles to make contact due to a lack of awareness and the inability to effectively self-regulate, contact boundary disturbances are created (Blom, 2006:31). These contact boundary disturbances include introjection, projection, confluence, retroflexion, deflection, desensitisation and egotism (Blom, 2006:32-39; Corey, 2013:199, 200). Community violence creates an adverse environment which can result in interruptions and resistance to contact in an attempt to cope with these adverse situations (Corey, 2013:199). An introject for example can be formed because of the non-boundary relationship between the individual and the environment. An introject is a negative message that others have uttered about a person, specifically during early childhood. A person may take this message and make it part of who they are (Oaklander, 2001:51; Oaklander, 2006:11). This message is taken from the environment without questioning or criticising (Blom, 2006:32). The need which should be met in the community member himself/herself and the needs of the community could lead to polarities. Blom (2006:40) describes polarities as "opposites that

compliment or oppose each other.” These polarities should be recognised and amalgamated during the organismic self-regulation process to prevent fragmentation (Blom, 2006:40). Community violence may therefore have harmful consequences for people’s awareness and self-regulation.

1.3 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Adolescents have been exposed to numerous forms of violence on a global scale, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, community violence, school violence and victimisation (Du Plessis et al., 2015:80). South African adolescents are furthermore being raised in urban war zones, as they are repeatedly being exposed to community violence in particular (Kaminer, Du Plessis, Hardy & Benjamin, 2013b:113). Numerous studies point to the exceptionally high prevalence of community violence in South Africa (Du Plessis et al., 2015; Kaminer et al., 2013b; Otjombe, Dietrich, Sikkema, Coetzee, Hopkins, Laher & Gray, 2015). Community violence is therefore viewed as one of the most prevalent forms of violence adolescents are exposed to (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:293). Several factors influence community violence, and one of these is the socio-economic circumstances within a community (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:5; Van der Merwe, 2013:77). Consequently, individuals who tend to have fewer means lean towards community violence.

The exposure to community violence as a form of violence is associated with mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression (Louw & Louw, 2014a:421). Children and adolescents who are exposed to community violence have been found to experience psychosocial problems such as PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), aggression, substance abuse, anti-social behaviour, poor academic performance and involvement with high-risk groups and gangs (Kaminer et al., 2013a:320, 327; Savahl et al., 2013:582). In accordance with the Gestalt principle of holism, a person cannot continue to exist without the environment; the environment serves as the source of satisfaction concerning a person’s needs (Blom, 2006:22). Children and adolescents’ needs are therefore not met by the environment and consequently they experience psychological symptoms, as their functioning is impeded by the environment.

Some of the most critical concerns over exposure to community violence is the resulting desensitisation towards violence, blunting of emotions and normalisation of

violence (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Mash & Wolf, 2016:301; Savahl et al., 2013:589). In the Du Plessis et al. (2015:81) study individuals viewed community violence as a means to solve problems and a normal part of their daily life. Consequently, the focus of this study was to explore young adults' perceptions of community violence during their adolescent years.

The Framework for Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013:29, 30) proposes different levels of social work services and emphasises prevention and early intervention services for preventing the progression of social problems. To begin to bridge the gap of inadequate knowledge and needed services, this study will enable the researcher to explore and describe the perceptions of young adults on community violence as experienced during their adolescent years. This newly gained knowledge will underpin the recommendations regarding appropriate interventions on preventative and early intervention levels of service delivery for individuals working with children and adolescents.

Considering the rationale and problem statement discussed above, the research was guided by the following research question: *What are young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during their adolescent years?*

1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this study was to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence.

The following objectives were formulated:

- 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.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the following section a summary will be provided of the research methodology that was implemented while conducting the research. In chapter 3 of this research report, a comprehensive account of the research methodology utilised during this study can be found.

The study conducted was qualitative in nature with an interpretive research paradigm, since the researcher aimed to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence in a South African context during adolescence. With this approach the researcher aimed to gain the views of the participants, with the goal of providing descriptive information and a holistic understanding of the phenomenon in the participants' own words and language, thus providing the researcher with a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:64; Rubin & Babbie, 2011:437). The type of research conducted was applied in nature, since it was used to help social workers fill gaps in their knowledge, in order to address everyday difficulties in practice (Oxburgh, Walsh & Milne, 2011:106). This type of research will assist individuals working with children and adolescents to gain insight into the effects of community violence. Furthermore, an instrumental case study design was used as it provided in-depth insight into the issue of community violence, within the natural environment of Sicelo, a community in Meyerton; it also enabled the researcher to obtain an understanding thereof (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:83).

With regards to the sampling technique used for this study to explore and describe the experiences of young adults concerning community violence, the researcher implemented the non-probability sampling approach. The sample was selected by means of a combination of snowball and purposive sampling, as the population size and members were unknown (Babbie, 2017:179; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392, 393). The sample hence consisted of ten young adults who resided in Sicelo and who had

been exposed to community violence during their adolescent years. The researcher made use of one-to-one semi-structured interviews, as this method was regarded as the most relevant data collection method for this study, since the researcher aimed to obtain rich detailed information on the participants' perceptions of community violence (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:92). The interviews were conducted by means of an interview schedule and were audio-recorded with the permission of participants. The interview schedule, consisting of open-ended questions to elicit the perspectives of the participants regarding the key concepts of the study, was used to guide the interview process (Babbie, 2017:312, 313; Greeff, 2011:351, 352).

The researcher used the audio-recordings to transcribe the interviews. These transcriptions formed the data to be analysed (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:403). Based on the case study design, thematic analysis was regarded as a relevant method of data analysis for this study (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015:223, 224). The researcher thus made use of the six phases that Clarke et al. (2015:223, 224) regarded as the process of thematic analysis which is to identify, examine and record the themes, sub-themes and categories that emerge from the generated qualitative data. The transcripts were therefore read and re-read, while making notes (Strydom & Delport, 2011:409). The data was subsequently categorised, interpreted and compiled as part of the research report (Strydom & Delport, 2011:410, 418). The researcher had to ensure that a transparent procedure was followed which allowed the reader to follow the research process to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. In this procedure the following constructs were implemented: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:122; Schurink et al., 2011:420, 421).

Prior to the implementation of the main study, the researcher verified whether her research methods were effective, trustworthy and free of flaws, by conducting a pilot study (Clarke-Carter, 2010:34). Furthermore, various ethical considerations were considered when the research was conducted, namely avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, violation of confidentiality, debriefing participants, and the publication of the findings (Babbie, 2017:475-487; Strydom, 2011a:115-126).

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following could be regarded as limitations of the study:

- The sample size of this study consisted of ten participants, hence caution should be exercised when attempting to generalise the findings of this study. The objective however was to understand the individual, subjective experiences of young adults concerning community violence during their adolescent years.
- Nine of the ten participants were female; therefore, the perceptions and experiences of these young adults did not include the views of both sexes equally. Caution should thus be taken when interpreting the findings of this study, as males could have a different perspective regarding community violence, since previous research indicates that males tend to be more at risk with regards to community violence when compared to females (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:298).
- Most of the participants resided in a semi-urban area during their adolescent years, therefore this study was predominantly limited to the experiences of participants who lived in semi-urban communities.
- All the participants were of the Black African race, hence the experiences and perceptions shared were limited to those of one race and did not include other races within South Africa. Nonetheless, the Black African population accounts for 81% of the total South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2021:17). The views of participants are therefore meaningful, as the Black population accounts for the largest race group in South Africa.

1.7 CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report on young adults' perceptions of community violence in a South African context during adolescence has been divided into four chapters. The outline of the chapters is as follows:

Chapter 1: General introduction to the research study

This chapter provides a general introduction to the study and includes an overview of the theoretical framework for the interpretation and analysis of the empirical findings. The rationale and problem statement, the goal and objectives of the study, a brief summary of the research methodology, and a description of the limitations of the study are included in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature study

Chapter 2 presents an in-depth literature review on community violence and the effects thereof, with reference to the adolescent life stage. The views of various authors are incorporated and critically reflected on.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and empirical findings

This chapter provides a description of the various research methods that were implemented, along with justifications for these specific methods. The empirical findings are presented in this chapter and substantiated with verbatim narratives from the participants. Furthermore, literature is woven into the discussion to illustrate how the data corresponds with previous research.

Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the key findings of the study and focuses on the accomplishment of the research goal and objectives. The researcher draws conclusions from the findings on the perceptions and experiences of young adults concerning community violence during their adolescent years. The researcher also discusses the implications of the findings for professionals working with children and adolescents, and how the research can be used to improve service delivery.

CHAPTER 2

ADOLESCENTS AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Violence can be regarded as a form of degradation that challenges human dignity and could have a prolonged influence on social norms when it becomes part of systemic abuses (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). It has been shown that violence is one of the most detrimental experiences a child or adolescent can endure (Savahl et al., 2013:579). Adolescents have been exposed to numerous forms of violence on a global scale, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, community violence, school violence and victimisation (Du Plessis et al., 2015:80). This is known as poly-victimisation, given that they are exposed to several forms of violence in numerous spheres of their lives such as home, school and church (Du Plessis et al., 2015:80; Kaminer et al., 2013b:112; Louw & Louw, 2014a:423). Adolescents are therefore more likely to be exposed to violence since they equally divide their time between the community and school (Kaminer et al., 2013b:114).

South Africa seems to be one of the front-runners with regards to violent crimes, when compared to other countries in the world, seeing that the youth of South Africa are exposed to extreme levels of sexual, criminal, domestic, gang, and community violence, due to various socio-economic factors (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Kaminer et al., 2013a:321; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:4; Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008:590). As a result, many South African children die due to violence, therefore they have consequently adjusted to a culture of survival (Maree, 2013:69; Richter, Mathews, Kagura & Nonterah, 2018:181).

Community violence as a form of violence will be focussed on in this chapter since South Africa has a unique background and various socio-economic factors which play a conjoined role in the high levels of community violence experienced by all citizens and especially the youth. Most adolescents have witnessed community violence, while a smaller percentage have been directly involved in such violence. Research shows that community violence has a lasting impact on children and adolescents (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Hsiao, Fry, Ward, Ganz, Casey, Zheng & Fang, 2018:2; Kaminer et

al., 2013a:321; Savahl et al., 2013:580). It, therefore, has become necessary to examine the effects thereof.

In the following sections, the conceptualisation of violence as a whole and community violence as a form of violence, as well as the prevalence and effects of community violence will be discussed, with a closer look at the effects that community violence has on adolescent development. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the effects of community violence on South African adolescents.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Galtung (1990, in Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:5) states that “[w]hen violence is no longer seen as violence, when it masquerades as socially acceptable or even socially encouraged behaviour, it can become dangerously entrenched in everyday life.” The researcher will commence by defining violence in general terms and describing different types of violence. Thereafter, community violence will be focussed on.

2.2.1 Defining violence

Violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation” (World Health Organization, 2010). Violence can be divided into numerous types of violence, which all have different characteristics that are associated with certain challenges and effects within an individual’s life. Amongst these are interpersonal violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence, school violence and community violence.

2.2.1.1 *Interpersonal violence*

In South Africa almost half of the cases due to injury as a cause of death are related to interpersonal violence (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla & Ratele, 2009:1011). “Interpersonal violence involves the intentional use of physical force or power against other persons by an individual or small group of individuals” (Mercy, Hillis, Butchart, Bellis, Ward, Fang & Rosenberg, 2017:71). As mentioned by the World Health Organization (2014, in Sheikh, Chokotho, Mulwafu, Nyirenda, Le, Mbomuwa, Pandit & Lavy, 2020:24), a large number of individuals die due to interpersonal violence,

however, there are a greater number of individuals who are being treated for physical, sexual, reproductive, and mental health concerns in hospitals due to interpersonal violence. The target groups for interpersonal violence include older persons, women and children, and youth (Mercy et al., 2017:74). Interpersonal violence can furthermore be subdivided into sexual violence, intimate partner violence and community violence which will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

2.2.1.2 Domestic and intimate partner violence

Children and adolescents are often witnesses of domestic abuse, which is frequently illustrated in literature as a male overpowering a female (Idemudia & Makhubela, 2011:3443). Idemudia and Makhubela (2011:3444) mention that one in four women are battered by their intimate partners and are assaulted 39 times, for example before attempting to seek help outside of the relationship. In a large number of these cases, women are often killed by their intimate partners, which shows that a home could be the most dangerous place for a woman as well as her children (Slabbert & Green, 2013:234). This type of violence can be portrayed in various forms, such as physical abuse, intimidation, sexual abuse, stalking, forced isolation, emotional abuse, economic exploitation, or a combination of the before mentioned (Idemudia & Makhubela, 2011:3444; Retief & Green, 2015:138; Slabbert & Green, 2013:236).

2.2.1.3 Sexual violence

South Africa has recorded some of the highest levels of sexual violence in the world (Bower, 2013:4). Interpol (South African Broadcasting Corporation, 2012) states that “South Africa is the world’s rape capital. In fact, a woman born in South Africa is more likely to be raped than educated.” Sexual violence is described as defilement and is often followed by feelings of shame, stigmatisation and could have serious social consequences, since the victim of sexual abuse is often portrayed as an individual bringing dishonour to the family (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013:5). Some men obtain their masculine identities by taking part in sexual harassment, which they were taught within their communities, families, or via the media (Mncube & Harber, 2013:10). Dartnall and Jewkes (2013:3) affirm that women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence, while males are more prone to be the perpetrator and, in most cases, known to the victim. These authors furthermore add that a girl or woman’s first sexual experience is more likely to be that of coercion and force, while weapons are often

used in sexual assault cases by two or more perpetrators (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013:8, 9). These girls who have been abused are more likely to encounter marital issues and be dissatisfied with future sexual relationships (Maree, 2013:78). In a study conducted by Townsend, Jewkes, Mathews, Johnston, Flisher, Zembe and Chopra (2011:136), participants indicated that they had more than one sexual partner and engaged in a range of violent sexual behaviour with women, which increased the chance of contracting HIV and AIDS. Boys often underreport sexual abuse, as they fear that they might be labelled as homosexual or unmanly (Otwombe et al., 2015:6; Richter et al., 2018:185). Dartnall and Jewkes (2013:11) therefore state that school-based prevention programmes should be put in place, as sexual violence often occurs on school premises amongst learners.

2.2.1.4 School violence

Violence in schools has been an increasing phenomenon over the last few years and has become particularly alarming in South Africa (Khumalo, 2019:1). Burton and Leoschut (2013:3) explain that it is one of the most salient concerns that children, as well as adolescents, are facing in South Africa nowadays, since the long-term effects outweigh the immediate consequences. Khumalo (2019:1) describes school violence as discourteous, anti-social and unpeaceful. This phenomenon often leads to children and adolescents who become too afraid to attend school or try to avoid school by absenteeism (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:4). Children could also fall victim to, or become a perpetrator of bullying, intimidation, or gang-related activities. Bullying is a type of school violence, which is often overlooked as it is not viewed as a crime, but still results in physical and emotional scars (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:2). Collings (2016:93) found a strong link between substance abuse and school violence in the study, which he conducted. His findings indicated that adolescents were more likely to fall victim (72%) or become a perpetrator (55%) of school-based violence when they used substances and/or had been exposed to school violence. Collings (2016:94) furthermore found that there is an association between the use of alcohol and school violence, especially amongst male adolescents.

The above-mentioned forms of violence are crucial to take note of and are often intertwined with community violence, however, community violence is the focus of this study and will be discussed in more depth. The focus of the discussion will initially be

on South Africa's distinctive political history in order to provide some understanding of community violence within the South African context.

2.2.2 Conceptualising community violence in South Africa

Before defining community violence as a form of violence, it is crucial to consider the role that the history of Apartheid played, during which various South Africans were oppressed and segregated based on race. These oppressed South Africans made use of the persistence of violence in an attempt to break free from Apartheid (Van der Merwe, 2013:66). Alarming levels of political violence arose and created uncertainty, confusion, and great concern for the majority of the oppressed nation, as they feared that this violence would erode their already deprived living conditions (Patel, 2015:64). After Apartheid was banished in 1994, many South Africans believed that South Africa would be free from violence and more peaceful during the post-apartheid era (Shields et al., 2008:589; Van der Merwe, 2013:66). However, this unique socio-political history formed a society, which consists of political violence and various forms of interpersonal violence (Ahanonu, Jooste & Waggie, 2015:15; Savahl et al., 2013:579; Shields et al., 2008:589; Van der Merwe, 2013:66). Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:6) explain that these forms of violence are due to the inequality cultivated as a result of the continuous and vast effects of Apartheid. Most South Africans presently reside in communities comprising of their ethnic groups, which also maintains visual segregation of 'us' versus 'them' (Otwombe et al., 2015:1). The entire education system was, in the same way, built on racial segregation and separation from 1948 to 1994, which taught individuals to dislike other individuals from different ethnic groups (Mncube & Harber, 2013:6).

During Apartheid, The African National Congress (ANC) for example, used 'necklacing' as a form of violence to communicate a message to their opponents (Van der Merwe, 2013:67). Various South Africans still take part in public violence, such as the burning of tyres and libraries as well as necklacing foreigners and criminals within their communities (Van der Merwe, 2013:78). These examples raise questions about the skills and techniques South Africans have inherited as a way of dealing with conflict (Van der Merwe, 2013:68). As a result, South Africans seem to have adopted a culture of violence to achieve goals and resolve conflict, since violence is seen as normative

and valued in certain situations (Ahanonu et al., 2015:16; Van der Merwe, 2013:73, 74).

Apartheid has led to inequalities amongst South Africans, since Apartheid has prevented numerous individuals to strive, leaving them behind. Due to socio-economic inequalities, numerous South Africans face various levels of exposure to violence, and this affects various aspects of the community members' well-being (Savahl et al., 2013:580). Although violence can be found in all communities, lower socio-economic groups report higher levels of violence and in particular peer and sexual violence (Otwombe et al., 2015:1; Richter et al., 2018:183). Disadvantaged communities seem to have low levels of education, which leads to low income, high rates of substance abuse, unemployment, and violent crimes. Therefore, communities with high levels of community violence seem to experience social injustices (Savahl et al., 2013:583).

The social inequality has led to a large division between the rich and poor within South Africa, due to the high level of income inequality (Savahl et al., 2013:583; Van der Merwe, 2013:72). According to Van der Merwe (2013:68), these social injustices can be seen as structural violence, as it refers to "the social structures which harm people by systematically limiting their access to basic needs." This structural violence can be a result of destructive policies and practices at a local, regional, national, and international level, which force individuals to make decisions predetermined for them by a power structure, which benefit certain groups to the disadvantage of other groups (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:5). Various communities exposed to community violence seem to experience a lack of services. While the delivery of basic services and infrastructure has increased at a slow pace during post-apartheid, a large number of South African citizens still need to gain access to services, as many citizens are still unemployed (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253; Van der Merwe, 2013:72). This could lead the community members to feel as though their voices are not being heard. The more the general lines of communication of repressed groups are blocked, the more these individuals will lean towards violence to let their voices be heard, in an attempt to speak more loudly and gain attention (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7; Van der Merwe, 2013:77).

Several factors influence community violence. One of these is the socio-economic circumstances within a community (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:5; Van der Merwe,

2013:77). As mentioned earlier, individuals who tend to have fewer means tend to resort to community violence. These individuals are inclined to resort to violence in an attempt to meet their basic needs. Thus, violence has become a form of communication. Adolescents who are raised in families with a low socio-economic status tend to experience feelings of shame, guilt and inferiority accompanied by a negative self-concept (Maree, 2013:76). There is also a lack of privacy, which could lead to irritation within overcrowded communities (Maree, 2013:76). This could cause more violent scenes due to the elevated levels of irritation and a lack of emotion regulation. This explains why Maree (2013:76) states that the arrest rate is higher in communities that are socially disorganised and poverty-stricken; pointing towards a culture of violence.

2.2.2.1 Defining community violence as a form of violence

In her discussion of community violence, the researcher will define and describe community violence as a concept. Thereafter the unique causes of community violence in SA will be discussed as well as additional structural causes of community violence. This sub-section will be concluded with a description of different types of CV.

South African adolescents are being raised in urban war zones, as they are repeatedly being exposed to community violence (Kaminer et al., 2013b:113). Community violence can be defined as “[v]iolence experienced in society by individuals from the same geographical setting or from other or distant regions” (Visser, Coetzee & Claassen, 2016:279). Savahl et al. (2013:580) further add that community violence can be described as “deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against a person in the community.” Community violence could therefore lead to an adverse childhood experience which includes physical harm as well as negative emotional harm, such as being threatened (Mercer, 2018:176).

Community violence can either be *direct* or *indirect*. Direct exposure occurs when an individual falls victim to a certain event, while indirect exposure refers to an individual who has either heard of or witnessed a particular event (Savahl et al., 2013:580). There is still a large number of adolescents who have been directly exposed to violence. In a study conducted by Shields, Nadasen and Pierce (2009:1199) in Cape Town, more than half of the participants had directly experienced community violence,

while just under half of the adolescents in a Gambian study conducted by O'Donnell, Roberts and Schwab-Stone (2011:63) were directly involved in community violence. In Sierra Leone, for example, almost a third of the child participants had killed a stranger or loved one, as a result of being a child soldier (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:296).

Most adolescents however appear to be witnessing community violence, rather than personally experiencing it (Bach & Louw, 2010:25; Ot wombe et al., 2015:6; Romero, Hall, Cluver & Meinck (2018:37). There is also a large number of adolescents who have viewed someone being killed or have been exposed to a dead body (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:295; Kaminer et al., 2013b:117). In the Kaminer et al. (2013b:117) study almost all of the participants had witnessed some form of community violence. Furthermore, more than 90% of both the boys and the girls in this study was exposed to more than one type of violence (Kaminer et al., 2013b:119). Louw and Louw (2014a:420) believe that the mere witnessing or hearing of community violence could have a negative effect on a person. Some studies have found that the witnessing of violence may be just as dramatic as direct victimisation (Bach & Louw, 2010:26). As a result, community violence is one of the factors that have the largest influence on children and adolescents' behaviour worldwide (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:293; Savahl et al., 2013:580).

2.2.2.2 Factors leading to CV in South Africa

An article on the Apartheid era by Van der Merwe and Williams (1987, in Van der Merwe, 2013:66) focuses on the two ends of a communication spectrum, which are violence and negotiations. These authors mention that people resort to violence when other forms of communication have been prevented, rather than viewing their opponent with sympathetic eyes, to resolve the conflict between them (Van der Merwe, 2013:66). Therefore, a community needs to convey the same message, otherwise various channels of communication may be blocked, which may lead to the community becoming hyper-vigilant and aroused (Smyth, 2017:58). These blocked channels of communication could likewise lead to service delivery protests.

In a study conducted by Banjo and Jili (2013:258) it was found that most violent protests amongst the youth were due to poor service delivery or a lack thereof, and

unemployment due to limited job opportunities. Three-quarters of the major service delivery protests in 2012 were violent (Van der Merwe, 2013:71). Thus, it could be that the adolescents look up to these individuals taking part in the protests and observe their behaviour, hence acting accordingly. The respondents' level of education also seemed to be correlated with service delivery protests, since the respondents who obtained diplomas and degrees were less likely to take part in a protest (Banjo & Jili, 2013:257). The respondents in Banjo and Jili's (2013:261) study mentioned the following reasons for protesting: "Unemployment; RDP houses and toilets; lack of clean water, electricity and damaged roads; corruption, nepotism and imposition of councillors; lack of sporting facilities and a hospital." When the respondents were asked what they have identified as the leading cause for poor service delivery, all the Wesselton and Siyathemba community members mentioned corruption and nepotism (Banjo & Jili, 2013:262). This correlates with the abovementioned frustration due to structural violence and the feeling of helplessness due to the lack of reciprocal communication. In addition, the number of violent protests seems to be rising and this number seems to be higher during the wintertime (Banjo & Jili, 2013:254). Banjo and Jili (2013:254) mention that the key feature of these protests seems to be the youth. It appears that individuals are willing to wait for services to be delivered, but not if it seems as though others are receiving services before them. This perception of inequality could lead to aggressive behaviour.

According to the social learning perspective, humans are not born with aggressive responses, but rather acquire these responses through direct exposure or by observing the behaviour of others (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:351). Therefore, depending on adolescents' experiences or culture, they each learn about aggression in a different way. The culture and ethnic background of adolescents influence their perception about their future and the opportunities that are available to them (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94; Jacobson, 2011:92). Baron and Branscombe (2014:351) explain that adolescents can learn aggression in various ways. Firstly, certain individuals or groups have become appropriate targets of aggression, for example, adolescents might view violence against foreigners as acceptable due to the negative perception of the community members who view foreigners as stealers of resources. Secondly, are various ways in which one can harm another, for example necklacing, which was discussed previously. Thirdly, there are certain situations or contexts during

which aggression is accepted. Some communities for example find that it is justified to beat a person to death if they stole something or hurt someone, to ensure justice. Lastly, as discussed above, the past action of others justifies retaliation, for example, the divide between the Black and White races in South Africa, due to Apartheid.

It is important to note that the social environment in which an adolescent is raised teaches him/her how to behave; this is known as learnt behaviour (Bezuidenhout, 2013:99). Hence, if the adolescent observes aggressive behaviour towards others they will behave in the same way, because that is what they view as normal. Therefore, a child and adolescent need to be raised in a healthy community environment, which is where they feel supported by various good quality relationships that provide them with a sense of belonging (Smyth, 2017:105). Decreasing exposure to and preventing adolescents from experiencing community violence could allow them to reach their full human potential while also reducing “social and health burdens to our society, including severe mental health illness, depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, interpersonal violence and self-harm” (Hsiao et al., 2018:6).

There are various forms of community violence. One of these is physical community violence, which refers to the immediate physical harm caused to a person or which is likely to result in physical harm (Banjo & Jili, 2013:254). Sexual community violence is another form of violence. Boys often underreport sexual abuse as mentioned earlier due to the fear that they might be labelled as homosexual or unmanly (Otwombe et al., 2015:6; Richter et al., 2018:185). A person could also be exposed to emotional community violence. Specific types of community violence will now be discussed.

2.2.2.3 Types of community violence

In a study conducted by Aisenberg, Ayón and Orozco-Figueroa (2008:1563), children and adolescents were more prone to develop symptoms of PTSD when exposed to any form of community violence without a weapon. This statement highlights that community violence without the involvement of a weapon can be just as harmful to adolescents with regards to their physical as well as emotional wellbeing. Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:6) note that there has been an increase amongst the youth in the range of anti-social behaviour due to structural violence experienced within their community. Diverse types of community violence will be considered in this section.

- **Assault**

The children and adolescents in the Aisenberg et al. (2008:1563) study, conveyed assault to be the most vexing when compared to threat and murder. It has become a socially acceptable norm to consider physical violence as a means to solve a problem in many South African families (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:6). This could indicate towards the previously mentioned, culture of honour where individuals believe that it is acceptable to act aggressively in an attempt to protect their honour (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:363). Adolescent males are more prone to engage in violence as adults if they frequently observed their mothers being beaten (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7). A knife seems to be the most common object used during assaults (Statistics South Africa, 2020:35). With reference to muggings, males were more likely to be victims of street robbery compared to females, and individuals in urban areas were more likely to be victims as opposed to individuals who reside in rural areas (Statistics South Africa, 2020:33).

- **Threat**

There are various types of threats. Housebreakings have been reported as the most common crime to occur within a South African household (Statistics South Africa, 2020:11). Richter et al. (2018:185) found that during adolescence, aggressive behaviour tends to be hitting, while young adults are more likely to be threatened with “a gun or knife, hurting a partner, forcing someone to have sex with them, and beating up or robbing a person.” In Zimbabwe, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania children feel unwanted, since they are often threatened with abandonment by adults or caretakers (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2014:57).

- **Homicide**

The number of murders in South Africa rose from 12 000 in 2018/2019 to 16 000 in 2019/2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020:36). The number of individuals who die from homicides throughout the world is higher amongst adults, however amongst individuals younger than twenty years of age, boys account for 70% of the deaths caused by a homicide (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2014:34). Aisenberg et al. (2008:1556) studied the impact of the exposure to severe acts of violence such as homicide compared to less severe acts of violence, for instance being threatened by

another individual with no knife or firearm. The results illustrated that children and adolescents perceived less serious forms of violence as more harmful to them, although they had been exposed to more serious forms of violence.

- **Gang violence**

Children as young as 13 years of age are being recruited to join gangs (Mncube & Harber, 2013:43). A high incidence of gang activity within a teenager's community is a risk factor that could lead to youth violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:57). Adolescents also seem to become involved in gangs as this provides them with a sense of belonging, and they have equally become involved in the spreading and consuming of drugs (Mncube & Harber, 2013:5). Maree (2013:84) however states that there are six factors which lead to gang membership, such as the lack of parental or caregiver supervision, early on unruly behaviour, adverse life events, delinquent peers, antisocial views, and dedication towards offending peers. Drugs, theft, and the use of weapons in gang violence can be found in the community as well as within schools within the community (Mncube & Harber, 2013:5). The increase of gang-related activities in schools prompted the Western Cape's Department of Education to implement new programmes to curb violence within schools, such as the positioning of Metro police within designated schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:23).

- **Xenophobia**

From 2008 to 2015 xenophobic attacks sent shock waves across South Africa as South Africans had never experienced such xenophobic outbreaks before, not even during the Apartheid era (Lelope, 2019:10). Xenophobic attacks have been increasing over the years. It could be that the South African youth view immigrants as a threat, concerning scarce resources such as employment after school (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253). It may be that the youth resort to violence as a form of self-defence and accordingly experience both individual and collective trauma (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). Lelope (2019:32) mentions that xenophobia not only has physical and emotional consequences but also has a negative effect on the community, since it hampers the spirit of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is a Zulu word which states that a person is a person because of other individuals, and therefore this person belongs to a community and should be treated as such (Lelope, 2019:38).

In Banjo and Jili's study (2013:261, 262) the community members felt as though the government were not responding to their demands and making empty promises, thus they turned to violence to make their voices heard. A president might have been set correspondingly expressing that the government only seems to respond when communities resort to violence, thus reinforcing these communities' beliefs of a violent culture, since those who are non-violent are never heard (Van der Merwe, 2013:78). These community members have become tired of waiting for the government to support them and therefore result in more extreme measures to gain the government's attention. This consequently leads to a distorted belief that if community members need something, they should choose violence, even though effective communications by South Africans are a prerequisite to promote equality and reduce poverty (Van der Merwe, 2013:79).

- **Violent media/social media**

Families have adjusted their lives around media, and this has various implications (De Witt, 2017:306). It can furthermore promote negative behaviour such as smoking, substance abuse, aggression, and risky sexual behaviour (Barr-Anderson & Alhassan, 2013:131). The TEARS foundation (2012) mentioned in their presentation in 2012 that mobile phones have a powerful impact within a community as it is easier to access communication than clean drinking water. *Social media* has played a substantial role in the development of various adolescents. Most adolescents spend eleven hours a day using various forms of media such as television, music, video games and computers (Barr-Anderson & Alhassan, 2013:130). The use of media can have a positive as well as a negative influence on adolescents.

The exposure to violent media can have a short-term and long-term impact (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:358). In the short-term, violent media could serve as a trigger for aggressive behaviour due to priming, mimicking and the thrill attached to the violent behaviour (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301). In the long-term, such exposure could prompt the desensitisation of violence and support violent behaviour through observational learning (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301). The results of a study conducted in 2014 indicated that the individuals who had a history of exposure to violence showed less arousal when they watched a violent film, which indicated a reduction of their emotional reactions to scenes of extreme violence (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:362). Some

researchers have found correlations between the exposure to violent media and aggressive behaviour and heightened desensitisation to violence (Barr-Anderson & Alhassan, 2013:130).

There seems to be a link between the aggression shown on television and the aggression expressed by children. Research has shown that a link can be found between watching television violence and violent behaviour, since some adolescents can easily be persuaded (Bezuidenhout, 2013:98). De Witt (2017:306), as well as Baron and Branscombe (2014:358), assert that a child or adolescent may display the aggressive behaviour of the character or individual that they have observed. They can also learn new skills of aggression, which can make them more aggressive and anti-social. An appetite for more violence can be created and condition the child to the violent behaviour displayed by various characters within the media. Baron and Branscombe (2014:362) mention how violence sells, since people view violence as exciting and enjoyable. Thus, adolescents are more likely to watch violent videos, pictures, or movies. This in turn reiterates the circle of violence and aggression amongst them. Lastly, it could instil a fear within a person that they might become a victim of violence (De Witt, 2017:306). Nonetheless, prosocial behaviours, such as friendliness, cooperation, empathy, and tolerance towards different groups can also be observed and implemented within an adolescent's daily life (De Witt, 2017:306).

Another form of violent media is violent video games, which boys often play. It was found that violent video games tend to increase aggressive behaviour, aggressive affect, and aggressive cognitions (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:360). The reason why these individuals tend to play violent video games is that these games are thrilling and entertaining, especially within the harmless milieu of the video game (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:360). However, thrilling these games are, the adolescents playing these games become inactive and this could lead to obesity (Bezuidenhout, 2013:275). Baron and Branscombe (2014:360) also mention that people play video games as it provides the players with a sense of competence and autonomy, which leads to a sense of being in control. This in turn links with adolescents' need for autonomy. It is therefore not the violent content that makes these games appealing, but rather the feeling of autonomy and independence (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:361).

However, in some cases the use of media can be viewed in a positive light. An example of this is the SHOUT campaign, which was launched for a safer South Africa due to the surging crime rates and the murder of Lucky Dube, where more than 100 South African artists took part to create the “You’re the voice” song (Coetzee, 2013:164). This song was available to be downloaded for R20. According to Coetzee (2013:165) this campaign was utilised to spark the fire of positivity amongst South Africans to fight against crime. The media can furthermore be utilised to address specific problems in a particular area, by making use of flyers, newsletters, or the local press (Coetzee, 2013:165). Media can also be used as an educational tool, which encourages reading and language skills (Barr-Anderson & Alhassan, 2013:130).

2.2.3 Previous research on community violence

In the United States of America (USA) community violence causes ongoing health problems, particularly amongst children and adolescents (Aisenberg et al., 2008:1555; Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:296). The exposure to community violence, especially amongst adolescents remains high and contributes towards the morbidity and mortality rates in the USA (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:297). This exposure to community violence is common amongst their youth, because more than half of the adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 years old in a study have been exposed to community violence within their lifetime (Heleniak, King & Monahan, 2017:229). Previous research indicates that males tend to be more at risk with regards to community violence when compared to females (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:298). However, Govender and Killian (in Bach & Louw, 2010:26) found that boys on the one hand made use of a more problem-focused coping style which served as a buffer against stressful events, while girls on the other hand made use of an emotion-focused style which fuelled the emotional part of trauma. In Africa, child soldiers are trained to kill other individuals, as they often fear for their own lives (Mercer, 2018:196). In cases such as these, antisocial behaviour and altruistic behaviour to benefit one’s family become confused (Mercer, 2018:196).

The youth of South Africa are frequently rewarded for violent behaviour within their homes, communities, and schools due to pro-violence models and messages from political leaders (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:8). Burton and Leoschut (2013:53) found a correlation between school violence and the violence children are exposed to within

their homes and communities. In addition, the youth also seem to lack empathy as a result of harmful role modelled behaviour, a lack of encouragement as well as limited personal experience (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:12). The youth who reside in deprived communities are less inclined to have positive relationships and prosocial role models due to the lack of adults who stimulate positive development and serve as a resource to support their parents (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299).

This often leads to youth who cannot resolve conflict without resorting to physical violence (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:13). This is no wonder since most children in the Burton and Leoschut (2013:53) study witnessed violence by the average age of 14 years. Violence has therefore become a normative means to resolve conflict within a South African context (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:13). This normative way of resolving conflict has an adverse effect on the social and emotional well-being of South African youth, who have low self-esteem and who experience insecurity (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:17). In accordance with the structural strain theory, youth in highly disadvantaged communities become isolated due to broad societal imbalances and inequality, which cause relative deprivation and barriers that limit upward social mobility which may cause community violence directly and indirectly (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299). There seems to be a correlation between class and race with regards to violence exposure (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:298). These authors also state that “[i]n addition, economic opportunities, proportion of single-parent families, housing conditions, and number and kinds of youth services and opportunities for youth have profound effects on the nature and context of violence” (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:298). Single-parent families in particular are a cause for concern since one in three children from these families were exposed to violence in the Burton and Leoschut (2013:53) study.

Most of the individuals in the Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:14) study explained that they feel powerless and helpless when exposed to violence and conflict, which repeatedly leads to feelings of rage. The participants added that they often felt helpless and angry because of the way their family members act towards them and their lack of support concerning them (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:17). These communities are regularly portrayed as unsafe and crime-ridden which instils a message of powerlessness,

marginalisation, and a sense of despair amongst the residents of a particular community (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299).

Previous research shows that children who constantly witness community violence within their communities are more prone to internalise behaviours, have psychological problems and are more likely to use substances (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:300; Heleniak et al., 2017:231). Previous studies have found that both witnessing and direct victimisation within the adolescent's community contribute to psychological distress (Bach & Louw, 2010:26; Kaminer et al., 2013a:321). As mentioned, there are internalising, and also externalising effects related to community violence (Savahl et al., 2013:582). "The internalising factors include a depressed mood, anxiety, somatisation, post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, loneliness, suicidality, physiological adaptation, and emotional desensitisation" (Savahl et al., 2013:582). "The externalising factors include violent behaviour, self-identification with a high-risk group, offensive and defensive fighting, gang fighting, school-related problems, conduct disorder, antisocial behaviour, and substance abuse or dependence" (Savahl et al., 2013:582). These youth tend to display anxiety and depression symptoms along with poor academic achievement (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:300; Bach & Louw, 2010:33). There seems to be a correlation between negative mental health consequences in corporation with criminal victimisation with individuals living in poverty (Collings, 2016:94). Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008:297) agree with this statement, since they found that adolescents who have been exposed to community violence are more inclined to showcase emotional and behavioural issues which often lead to enactment of violence in the future.

2.2.4 The prevalence of community violence in South Africa

A study conducted in the USA found that 91% of African American adolescents had witnessed a violent event and 85% had been exposed to interpersonal violence (Bach & Louw, 2010:25). More than half of the adolescents in the USA between the ages of 14 and 17 years old have been subjected to community violence during their lifetime, while more than one-third of these adolescents had witnessed violent assaults within the community they reside in (Heleniak et al., 2017:229). Bach and Louw (2010:25) indicated that 69% of the adolescents in Kenya had witnessed community violence. In Gambia high levels of community violence were also reported. Eighty-seven percent

of the adolescents in Gambia witnessed a person being beaten or mugged, while 48.4% were beaten or mugged themselves (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:294).

In South Africa, community violence is one of the most prevalent forms of violence that children are exposed to (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:293). In the Aisenberg et al. (2008:1561) study, 76.8% of the participants were exposed to violent events, while 66% of these participants reported being victims of violent events. In a study conducted by Muller (in Bach & Louw, 2010:26) in two high schools in the Northwest Province situated in South Africa, 52% of the learners had witnessed a rape within their community, while 56.6% had observed a murder. In South Africa, the homicide rate is five times the global average (Kaminer et al., 2013a:321), while the homicide rate in Cape Town alone is 88 per 100 000 in comparison to the global average of 28.8 per 100 000 (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:292). Burton and Leoschut (2013:56) found that 41.2% of the learners in their study had been exposed to community violence by the age of 14 years. In 2012, 61.6% of learners in Limpopo witnessed community violence, while North-West was a close second with 59.1% (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:55). Recent studies have found that two-thirds of children in middle childhood have been exposed to community violence. However, these statistics seem to rise during adolescence and young adulthood (Richter et al., 2018:181). In a study led by Kaminer et al. (2013b:117) in Cape Town, 98.9% of the participants stated that they had been exposed to community violence. The following results were found:

Almost all (94.9%) had heard gunshots in the neighbourhood, 89.2% reported seeing a stabbing in the neighbourhood, 70.7% had seen someone threatening another with a knife, 68.9% had seen someone get shot in the neighbourhood while 41.3% had witnessed someone threatening another with a gun (Kaminer et al., 2013b:117).

The negative influence of a community on its members is subtle but prevalent over the years (Jacobson, 2011:65). Individuals within a community could be converted when the community transforms due to reciprocal relationships between community members (Jacobson, 2011:72). Although studies have shown that there has been an increase in community violence within the South African context, numerous cases still seem to be under-reported.

There are various risk factors, which could amplify the effect of community violence on an adolescent. In the study conducted by Romero et al. (2018:37) it was found that 86.7% of the South African *socio-economically disadvantaged* youth who were exposed more frequently to poly-violence in their study witnessed community violence, while 43.3% had been the victim of community violence. The Free-State was one of the provinces with the most crime (76%) in 2012, while the Northern Cape was a close second with 62.4% (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:55). Violence is also more prevalent amongst individuals with a lower socio-economic status (Otwombe et al., 2015:1). Romero et al. (2018:32) explain that socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents are more likely to have been exposed to multiple forms of violence due to factors such as chronic poverty, household overcrowding, unemployment, and parental stress.

Thus, *poverty and unemployment* can play a significant role. Maree (2013:70) is of the opinion that people resort to crime because of the way individuals perceive their financial situation within their social environment. A lower socio-economic status and other stressors such as crime or social disorganisation usually accompany community violence (Louw & Louw, 2014a:423). In the Banjo and Jili (2013:258) study, mentioned earlier, conducted in two townships, namely Wisselton and Siyathemba, more than 70% of the residents were unemployed, of which those between 20 and 30 years of age had the highest rate of unemployment within the one township. Adolescents may become violent due to an economic motivation accompanied by the excitement and desire to obtain a reputation amongst their peers (Bezuidenhout, 2013:99). Community violence could furthermore be due to the restricted financial means that these families have, resulting in them not being able to relocate to safer neighbourhoods (Kaminer et al., 2013b:121). Some individuals aged 15 to 24 years, earned R2 100 as a monthly salary in 2012, which could have contributed to their poverty frustration (Maree, 2013:71). It is therefore paramount to create a safe home environment when the family is unable to relocate to a safer community.

Community disorganisation should also be taken into consideration. Over the last few years, there has been a large influx of youth into the urban areas within South Africa. The youth may view *urbanisation* in a positive light as they are given more opportunities; however, this also creates other concerns. Maree (2013:72) mentions that it could lead to a loss of cohesion, social control, and trust within the collective

community. This in turn could lead to the increase of violence within communities. The large influx of individuals into urban areas has also led to various informal settlements surrounding these urban areas that serve as a challenge for crime control and policing (Bezuidenhout, 2013:274; Maree, 2013:72). It is difficult for persons to uphold traditional values and norms in these new cities, which lead to the deterioration of discipline and control within families (Maree, 2013:72). In a study conducted in Mpumalanga amongst individuals residing in townships, 77% of these residents were unhappy with the provision of toilets and RDP housing (Banjo & Jili, 2013:258). These residents furthermore explained that the biggest causes of poor service delivery were nepotism and corruption (Banjo & Jili, 2013:262).

When a family is too closely controlled by the norms and values of the community it could lead to *family disorganisation*. This family disorganisation could also be a reflection of the disorganisation within the community (Bezuidenhout & Smit, 2013:10). An adolescent has a need for stability, love, and nourishment (Bezuidenhout, 2013:98). Hence, there should not be a lack of family structure within an adolescent's home. It is estimated that between 64% and 67% of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are affected by HIV and AIDS, which produces its own challenges with regards to family disorganisation (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:293). Du Plessis et al. (2015:85) found that individuals were more likely to witness domestic violence in disorganised homes, than individuals who live in nuclear families. Disorganised homes have members in the family that do not function as a close-knit unit and thus some individual's needs are not met within this family. Family disorganisation can occur due to any stressor; the impact of this stressor will be determined by the resources available to the family as well as how they define the stressor (Bezuidenhout & Smit, 2013:4, 5). Adolescents who have little family cohesion at home tend to be more likely to be negatively affected by community violence (Bach & Louw, 2010:26). The traditional structure of father-mother-children has changed to many single-mother-headed households, which lead to more violence, especially when mothers seem to have unhealthy control over their children. These single mothers do not have the necessary authority to control their children and lose control, or they over-control their children and prevent them from becoming full-fledged adolescents (Ahanonu et al., 2015:23). Bezuidenhout (2013:98) adds that adolescents in single-parent homes are more likely to drop out of school and have an absence of discipline within the

household. The need for a secure and consistent parent with the support of others is therefore important.

The *role of parents* within an adolescent's life could be detrimental. Children and adolescents learn about social rules by observing their parents' behaviour towards strangers and how they interact amongst themselves (Mercer, 2018:184). Thus, how an adult displays altruism and empathy towards others and a child, has a significant impact on the development thereof within a child (Mercer, 2018:184). A secure relationship between a boy and his father is also of importance. Boys tend to take part in risk-taking behaviour due to an absent secure relationship with their fathers, since they seem to show less resistance to become involved in delinquent behaviour (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018:10752). Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:14) further explain that it is the role of a father, uncle, and brother, to play the role of a defender and nurturer and that these role models are often lacking in South African households. Community violence can be associated with high levels of emotional distress in mothers, however, if the mother positively deals with this distress, her children seem to be affected less by violence within the community (Beukman, 2013:266; Bach & Louw, 2010:26). There also seems to be a correlation between tense family situations in broken homes and an adolescent's involvement in crime (Maree, 2013:76). Almost fifty percent of the participants in the Burton and Leoschut (2013:54) study stated that crime was a common occurrence within their community. There might also be parents who neglect or abandon their children, which leads to unsupervised youth who often misuse substances (Ahanonu et al., 2015:23). However, a positive relationship with a parent can serve as a buffer against the impact of community violence (Romero et al., 2018:43). Nonetheless, the effects that community violence has on an adolescent will largely depend on the barrier, which the family provides when the child is faced with adversities (Beukman, 2013:266).

As seen in the above section, community violence seems to occur quite often within various communities in South Africa as indicated by previous research. The effects of community violence will be discussed further in the subsequent section, in order to provide a better understanding of the consequences resulting from community violence.

2.3 EFFECTS OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

The Adverse Childhood Experience (1997, in Smyth, 2017:54) indicates a strong link between a child's emotional experiences and the physical and mental health of an adult a few years later. Exposure to violence often leads to trauma, which could potentially lead to *mental health problems* (Kaminer et al., 2013a:320). Du Plessis et al. (2015:81) believe that poly-victimised individuals are at a higher risk to obtain a mental health problem, compared to individuals who have been exposed to only one form of violence. However, Louw and Louw (2014a:421) state that mental disorders such as PTSD, depression and anxiety could all result due to community violence. Conversely, other studies only mention that community violence relates to depression (Bach & Louw, 2010:26). Some studies conducted in North America indicate that individuals are more vulnerable to develop mental health disorders when they have been exposed to community violence frequently and reside in a violent home environment (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81).

In this section the researcher will first discuss the effects that trauma has on the body, followed by the effects of community violence on children and adolescents. The researcher will then discuss the risk factors that lead to community violence and thereafter deliberate on the protective factors that minimise the effects of community violence.

2.3.1 The effects of trauma on the body

Almost half of the adult population residing in South Africa were living below the upper-bound poverty line in 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2018:6). Adults take care of children, however if they do not have the means to support themselves, it will be difficult to provide for their families and this, in turn, could lead to various other stressors such as financial strain, substance abuse, violence, and an unsafe living environment (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:38, 39). Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008:301) affirm that parents who are traumatised themselves due to violence within their environment tend to be less able to safeguard their children from harm, since they themselves are overwhelmed by multiple stressors such as economic and social limitations. Children who furthermore reside in homes with maternal psychological health concerns, paternal substance misuse, and the lack of social support are more

susceptible to neuropsychiatric challenges (Barfield, Dobson, Gaskill & Perry, 2014:65).

Barfield et al. (2014:65) explain that “[c]hildren growing up in at-risk or traumatized environments have a unique combination of delays, functional problems, and strengths that are determined by the nature, timing, and intensity both of adverse and attenuating experiences.” Severe challenges while growing up as a child, such as neglect, violence, humiliation, degradation, and deprivation cause children to showcase serious emotional, behavioural, physiological, and cognitive difficulties (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:38, 39). These difficulties have an impact on the individual, family, community, and society (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:39). Genetic and epigenetic factors also have an impact on the effects of these experiences. Alternatively, individual differences in adolescents such as support structures and brain processes may influence an adolescent’s reaction to community violence (Visser et al., 2016:286).

It is, therefore, necessary to review the development of the brain and the restructuring of the brain due to any form of recurring trauma. The development of the brain’s functioning and organisation could be negatively impacted if children are exposed to neglect and trauma during the first four years of their life (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:40). The first four years of life is the most critical concerning brain development, but changes do continue to take place in the brain until early adulthood (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:40). The lower parts of the brain develop first and then the higher parts of the brain. The neuro-sequential model of therapeutics in particular focuses on three areas in the brain (Barfield et al., 2014:66). The first region is the brainstem, which regulates respiration, sucking, swallowing, pharyngeal reflex, feeding, appetite as well as sleep. The second area is the limbic system that affects mood regulation and attunement. The last section in the brain is the cortex or frontal cortex, which manages self-awareness, self-image, plus abstract and conceptual thought. When an individual experiences trauma or resides in an unsafe environment their brain tends to function in the lower parts of the brain, which indicates towards an individual’s fight for survival.

An adolescent’s higher cognitive functioning such as problem-solving, communication and decision-making is impeded when he/she encounters trauma (Hsiao et al.,

2018:4), which could lead to poor school performance and the adolescent's inability to apprehend all the factors at play within a particular situation. Porges and Carter (2017:222) refer to the Polyvagal theory with regards to trauma and the body. They explain that there is a bidirectional link between the brain and the viscera, which explains how a reciprocal process takes place concerning one's thoughts and feelings and how they have an impact on one's body. Porges and Carter (2017:233) further affirm that feelings always take preference since feelings are part of the brain's adaptive survival strategies. The word 'Polyvagal' refers to the two vagal circuits, one which leads to defensive immobilisation and another to a newer circuit related to feeling safe and engaging in social behaviour (Porges & Carter, 2017:223). For example, when a person might view a pat on the shoulder by a friend as aggressive and unsafe due to previous abuse, they react with their brainstem (fight or flight) in an attempt to survive, although the information concerning the environment states otherwise, the input did not reach the higher cognitive regions of the brain such as the cortex. Maladaptive children need positive healthy adults who invest in their lives, as this creates a safe relational environment to calm the brainstem, which will allow the child to access higher parts of the brain such as the limbic (emotions and relations) and cortical (verbal and insight) sections (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:43). A healthy stress response system is therefore developed when a child has healthy supportive relationships with adults (Lynn-Whaley & Sugarman, 2017).

According to Porges (2009:4) and Porges and Carter (2017:223), when an individual perceives an environment as safe, two vital elements are articulated. The first is visceral homeostasis, which is a regulated bodily state that promotes growth and restoration. The second is the process of evolution during which the brainstem nuclei that regulate the myelinated vagus becomes combined with the nuclei that regulate the muscles of the face and head. In short, this bidirectional process allows an individual to take part in spontaneous social interaction while regulating bodily states (Porges, 2009:4). As a result, this process allows a human to survive in a safe environment, as well as in a life-threatening environment. The brain retains two or more primitive neural circuits, such as fight-flight, which is used to regulate self-protective strategies (Porges, 2009:4). Therefore, if the newest circuit is used first and fails to provide safety to an individual, the brain will automatically revert to the older circuits (Porges, 2009:4; Porges & Carter, 2017:230). As a result, any traumatic

experience is stored in the non-verbal memory, where it remains disconnected but entwined with other developmental experiences but is activated when the person perceives an event to be the same as the previous trauma experienced (Smyth, 2017:49).

If an individual wants to switch from defensive to social engagement strategies, they first must assess risk within the environment and then impede more primitive limbic structures that regulate fight, flight or freeze behaviours (Porges, 2009:5). As a result, neuroception takes place since a distinction can be made between a safe and dangerous context while engaging in social behaviours (Porges & Carter, 2017:231). Visser et al. (2016:280) assert that negative life events and childhood adversity can be linked to slight increases in neuroticism scores, which lead to psychopathology and physical health problems a decade later. An individual's defensive circuits must therefore be repressed, since in some cases, the nervous system perceives the environment as unsafe due to a mismatch, which leads to behaviours such as fight, flight or freeze, and not social engagement behaviours (Porges, 2009:5).

If children are constantly being exposed to threats, such as community violence, their brainstem will be overused and consequently cause their stress response to become overreactive, oversensitive and dysfunctional (Heleniak et al., 2017:239; Hsiao et al., 2018:2; Perry & Hambrick, 2008:40). The brain will therefore be in a continuous state of fear. These children will have to learn to self-regulate properly as they perceive their environment and others as hostile even if there is no imminent danger. Hence, children who are exposed to community violence on a daily basis must develop coping skills and strategies to respond to constant intimidation and a loss of personal control (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:303). Heleniak et al. (2017:238) furthermore add that adolescents exposed to community violence report dampened vagal suppression to negative responses from their peers as well as higher levels of negative affect when evaluated by their peers. However, if an individual is in a state of mobilisation, it may be difficult to dampen the state of mobilisation, which leads to asocial behaviours such as aggression and withdrawal (Porges, 2009:6).

There has been a rise in the number of pre-school children who exhibit aggression, impulsivity, and disruptive behaviour (Barfield et al., 2014:65). These pre-schoolers

furthermore display challenging behaviours and struggle with emotion regulation within the classroom setting. Heleniak et al. (2017:238) found that exposure to community violence could potentially lead to disrupted emotion regulation processes amongst adolescents. Barfield et al. (2014:65) assert that this type of behaviour is often a forecaster of delinquency during adolescence, gang membership and imprisonment as adults, hence indicating towards future community violence. Various researchers found a correlation between aggression and high levels of community violence (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:301; Louw & Louw, 2014c:214; Porges, 2009:6). The same was found for adolescents who are repeatedly exposed to violent media, since their perception of reality shifts and as a result, they develop a hostile expectation bias. This is the perception that others will behave aggressively, thus they become more aggressive themselves since they expect others to provoke them (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:361).

Millions of children only express a fraction of their potential due to childhood trauma, which leads to the susceptibility of social, emotional, and physical wellbeing difficulties (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:39).

2.3.2 The effects of community violence on children and adolescents

“A child’s vulnerability to the damaging effects of stressors is greater than that of adults” (Bach & Louw, 2010:25). Shields et al. (2009:1203) believe that children who witness violence against an individual whom they know, experience more trauma. Bach and Louw (2010:26) assert that both being a victim or witnessing violence are traumatic experiences that also have a link with depressive symptoms. One disorder, in particular, is referred to by various authors. Exposure to community violence often lead to symptoms of PTSD (Shields et al., 2009:1194). Children who are diagnosed with *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD) “have experienced events outside the realm of normal human experience that are often perceived by children as life threatening” (Smyth, 2017:54). Hence, they make use of dissociation to survive within their environment, as this state allows the brain to prepare their body for harm, thus attempting to maximise their body’s possibility to survive (Smyth, 2017:52). Although various children make use of this state, they are often not seen by professionals due to the community that tend to regard them as odd (Smyth, 2017:54). They

consequently do not receive the help they require, and are continually being exposed to community violence, without learning to deal with the effects thereof.

One of the biggest concerns today is that the continuous exposure to violence could be *desensitising* children towards violence due to its normalising nature, because children may become aroused by images of violence and want to mimic these violent images (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301). Frequent exposure to violence could lead to the blunting of these adolescents' emotional responses (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Savahl et al., 2013:589). This process is known as hedonic adaptation, which indicates that people have the ability to completely adapt to particular negative situations but can only partially adapt to other experiences (Savahl et al., 2013:598). These individuals are therefore at risk of becoming insensitive and uncaring towards others while turning violent themselves (Richter et al., 2018:185).

Community violence could have an effect on an adolescent's *aggressive behaviour* within a community, since higher levels of aggression were recorded due to the exposure of community violence and children's observations thereof (Hsiao et al., 2018:2; Louw & Louw, 2014c:214). However, Du Plessis et al. (2015:85) found that domestic violence seems to be the greatest contributor towards aggressive behaviour. Nevertheless, parents seem to be more aggressive in communities where community violence is prominent (Louw & Louw, 2014c:214). This level of aggression can be observed by adolescents, and as a result, these adolescents tend to behave accordingly. Some studies have found that violence and aggression were higher amongst adolescent males when compared to female adolescents (Bach & Louw, 2010:26; Richter et al., 2018:185). Other studies discovered that popular boys in particular tend to be more aggressive in addition to appearing competent and tough (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2011:177). Aggressive behaviour was found to be higher amongst younger children but decreased the more mature and socialised the adolescents become (Richter et al., 2018:185). This may be true, however, the type of individuals that an adolescent chooses to socialise with may have an effect on their experiences within a community.

2.3.3 The effect of youth gangs on adolescents

Youth gangs reward individuals for being violent by obtaining a higher status amongst their peers and provide them with spoils (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). Almost a third of the respondents in the Du Plessis et al. (2015:81) study have witnessed a murder or have been threatened with a weapon, while 89% witnessed a stabbing. Gang membership is strongly associated with future crime, especially among adolescents (Maree, 2013:68). Adolescent boys in particular are more likely to become involved in youth gangs (Kaminer et al., 2013a:327; Maree, 2013:84). These gangs serve as a surrogate family, which have a negative impact on the adolescents' morals and norms, as the norms at home become less significant (Booyens, Beukman & Bezuidenhout, 2013:54). Basic societal roles should be taught by a boy's father, however, due to various single-mother-headed households, boys are more inclined to be influenced by their peers (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018:10749). These adolescent boys tend to learn negative behavioural patterns at a faster pace, in an attempt to compensate for the lack of support and attachment obtained at home (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018:10753). Single-headed households tend to be associated with low socio-economic communities, which are associated with a high level of gang activity (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81). However, it is difficult to estimate the activity of gangs within a particular area as memberships and composition are constantly changing, resulting in inaccurate statistics (Shields et al., 2008:590).

Two types of youth gangs come into existence because of social needs or benefits. A cultural gang comes into being within a particular community due to the adolescents' social needs (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015:444). Many adolescents are often excluded from groups and thus tend to seek acceptance and belonging from others (Booyens et al., 2013:54; Smyth, 2017:106). These members come together due to familiarity, which provides them with self-protection, nurturing and belonging (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015:444). Thus, an adolescent can find a sense of identity and belonging, since they feel as though they are welcome and safe and part of something (Smyth, 2017:57). An entrepreneurial gang tends to form due to the benefits associated with the drug and criminal business enterprise (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015:445). This again relates to poverty within communities in an attempt to obtain goods and services that are out of their reach, which could provide a teenager with status. However, other adolescents

become less physically active when the streets and parks become infiltrated by serious criminal activities, drugs, and gangs (Birnbaum & Linver, 2013:53).

2.3.4 Risk factors that lead to community violence

Booyens et al. (2013:34) affirm that various researchers have found that children and youth between the ages of 12 and 21 years fall within the 'high risk' group to be victimised or take part in offending behaviour. Risky behaviours often lead to violence, or violence can lead to risk-taking behaviours (Bezuidenhout, 2013:96). However, adolescents, in particular, tend to participate in riskier behaviour when compared to adults, but they seem to weigh up the consequences of their risky behaviour both socially and cognitively (Booyens et al., 2013:36). Various risk factors will be discussed in this sub-section by referring to environmental, relational and structural risk factors.

2.3.4.1 Environmental barriers

Booyens et al. (2013:35) on the one hand, affirm that children who reside in large families of more than five children receive less attention from their parents and their parents struggle to control them, hence these children are more prone to take part in misbehaviour. Bach and Louw (2010:26) on the other hand, found that children and adolescents displayed more depressive symptoms when living within a smaller family and a household with low family cohesion when exposed to community violence. Maree (2013:76) adds that overcrowding leads to irritation, a lack of privacy, and children tend to drift away from home. This drifting away from home gradually draws these children to misbehaviour (Coetzee, 2013:163). Booyens et al. (2013:32) mention that children run away from home with the goal to escape their circumstances when they are victims of violence and trauma. Most of the homeless children ran away from home thinking that it would be temporarily, since they viewed it as a relief from abuse within their homes or as a means to earn some money (Maree, 2013:76). Bach and Louw (2010:26) furthermore add that the youth who reside in homes where violence is prominent, experience higher levels of distress once exposed to violence (Bach & Louw, 2010:26).

Some adolescents make use of substances as a coping mechanism due to stress and trauma (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:372). There seems to be a correlation between

substance abuse and crime (Maree, 2013:73). In the Ahanonu et al. (2015:22) study the health care workers who were interviewed mentioned that the youth abuse cannabis, alcohol, and methamphetamine. As alcohol use has an age restriction, many adolescents secretly gain access to alcohol (Bezuidenhout, 2013:87). According to Booyens et al. (2013:33) alcohol is the most common substance used amongst adolescents and is a “very powerful mood-altering drug” that can cause severe health risks. Peers can easily influence an adolescent to drink alcohol as it serves as a form of socialisation and acceptance, as they will binge drink or accept a drink from an older peer to gain acknowledgement (Bezuidenhout, 2013:87). Research done by Brown, Esbensen and Geis (1998, in Booyens et al., 2013:33) showed that adolescents who misuse alcohol recall 10% less of what they have studied in comparison to the students who did not drink. In an attempt to deal with various stressors that may be caused by community violence, adolescents misuse alcohol and drugs to cope with their stress, anxiety, or frustration (Bezuidenhout, 2013:90). Adolescents could furthermore misuse alcohol due to a desire to fit in, boredom, the easy availability of alcohol as well as a poor home environment (Booyens et al., 2013:33).

Leggett (2002, in Booyens et al., 2013:35) explain that there are three ways how substances affect crime. Firstly, substances provide an individual with a changed sense of bravado and perceptions, which cause a person to take part in behaviour out of the ordinary for them. Secondly, the profit made from substances is often used to finance the criminal enterprise. Lastly, individuals could resort to crime as a means to obtain the substances they are addicted to. Maree (2013:70) clearly states that it is not the use of substances that lead to a life of crime, but these substances rather increase the chance of becoming involved in such a life.

Some individuals become more aggressive when they consume alcohol (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:372). Sixty-eight percent of the learners in the Burton and Leoschut (2013:57) study personally knew someone who smoked marijuana and 24.9% personally knew someone who sold drugs in the community. Baron and Branscombe (2014:373) explain that a person’s higher cognitive functioning is impacted when consuming alcohol. This makes it difficult for an individual to evaluate others’ intentions as hostile or non-hostile, and therefore they are more likely to become aggressive and maintain an aggressive response.

Heleniak et al. (2017:229) believe that youth aggression is a risk factor associated with community violence. Banjo and Jili (2013:255) write about the frustration-aggression theory, which indicates that persons have unmet prospects, which lead to frustration; this is followed by aggression when something prompts it. They furthermore mention the relative deprivation theory, which is “a perception of inconsistency between value expectations and value capabilities” (Banjo & Jili, 2013:255). One therefore feels deprived of something one feels entitled to.

The youth who reside in socially disorganised and economically deprived communities tend to have a higher arrest rate (Maree, 2013:76). Hertweck, Zielger and Logsdon (2010:202) add that adolescents living in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods are most at risk of being exposed to violence. Nonetheless, having a higher economic status does not protect the adolescent from violence, since some parents become so involved with the upkeep of their status and obtaining enough money by working long hours that they do not supervise their children's behaviour (Maree, 2013:76).

2.3.4.2 Relational barriers

“A lack of parental supervision correlates with criminal activity and misbehaviour” (Maree, 2013:77). Maree (2013:77) mentions that the lack of adult supervision before and after school hours, might be the cause for violence during those hours. A positive school climate however acts as a buffer between adolescents and post-traumatic symptoms as a result of witnessing or being the victim of community violence (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:297). Often within poorer communities, there are no recreational and sporting facilities (Banjo & Jili, 2013:260). The children and adolescents hence do not have an activity that they should participate in before or after school, leaving them with time to take part in risk-taking behaviour (Salzinger, Feldman & Stockhammer 2002:426).

One of the greatest concerns in South Africa is HIV and AIDS, as this has a damaging effect on the youth (Banjo & Jili, 2013:252; Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:298). Forster and Brooks-Gunn (2016:293) researched the link between community violence and having a parent ill with AIDS. They found that there is a correlation between a child with a parent ill with AIDS and an elevated risk for the child in term of psychological distress. They further stated that there was a lower chance of psychological distress,

since low exposure to violence served as a buffer in this case (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:298). Within HIV and AIDS-affected households in South Africa, children often do not complete grade 12 as they must support and take care of their younger siblings (Booyens et al., 2013:34). This in turn, further adds to the psychological distress.

As a result of community violence, children are more likely to develop symptoms of PTSD. This in turn, could lead to internalising problems such as depression and anxiety, as well as externalising problems such as aggressive behaviour, conduct issues, antisocial behaviour, and substance abuse (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:296). These before mentioned problems could have an effect on how children and adolescents socialise with other individuals. These negative symptoms can however be counteracted by a child's resilience (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:297; Green & Pemberton, 2018:84).

2.3.4.3 Structural barriers

Maree (2013:70) deems that crime is universally caused by relative deprivation along with economic strain. Coetzee (2013:166) explains that structural issues like “the lack of adequate housing, education and employment opportunities, which often underpin the formation of a deviant culture” should be utilised to uplift communities when compiling programmes within a community. She further adds that the majority of poor individuals do not engage in misdemeanours, but those who are under the impression that they are being deprived of something, will often resort to crime (Maree, 2013:70). The youth are more likely to take part in violent protests when they feel that the system is corrupt as some individuals are receiving basic resources before them (Banjo & Jili, 2013:263). Past oppression and socio-economic marginalisation in South Africa's previous structure has contributed towards high levels of violence in certain communities such as Cape Town, which leads to violence exposure and poly-victimisation (Kaminer et al., 2013b:121). This frequent exposure to various forms of violence could create a de-sensitisation effect amongst the youth, since they have to navigate their dangerous neighbourhood daily (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81).

Many South Africans have fallen into poverty due to economic recessions, in addition to rapid urbanisation (Maree, 2013:71). This in turn, has led to numerous individuals traveling for hours to work outside of their zone of residence, as they reside in poverty

zones (Maree, 2013:71). This in short, indicates that many underprivileged South Africans cannot find work within their community and to ensure an income, have to find work outside of their communities to obtain an income. Various mothers, therefore, spend hours travelling or stay in town during the week, hence they spend less time with their families (Coetzee, 2013:162; Maree, 2013:77). This leads to a lack of supervision by attachment figures, which along with the absence of physical safety could lead to depressive symptoms amongst female adolescents (Du Plessis et al., 2015:87). Poverty furthermore leads to restricted resources, and this limits a family's ability to move to a safer community (Kaminer et al., 2013b:121). These poorer communities also tend to have higher volumes of exposure to community violence (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81). Rapid urbanisation has therefore worsened poverty, unemployment, availability of food, education and housing, and has caused community disorganisation (Maree, 2013:72).

2.3.5 Protective factors that minimise the effect of community violence

There are protective factors that could prevent or limit the effects of violence. These factors include secure familial structure, quality relationships with peers, a good self-esteem, resilience, hope and a well-developed moral system (Savahl et al., 2013:580). A secure relationship with others can make an adolescent feel less anxious and more focused (Smyth, 2017:57).

Some children remain unaffected by social situations, which others might have thought would have a positive or negative influence on their social or personality development (Mercer, 2018:178). They therefore often thrive during challenging circumstances. Savahl et al. (2013:580) are of the opinion that resilience is needed to maintain a normal level of functioning when adverse circumstances occur; hope plays an important part to ensure resilience within a person. Adolescents should therefore obtain hope as a form of resilience against community violence, but to create hope an understanding must be gained of the phase of adolescence. Positive role models, an increase in social support and the access and implementation of positive life skills educational programmes all contribute positively to a child's well-being (Savahl et al., 2013:589).

Resilience is described as one of the most important factors to minimise the impact of crime and victimisation (Green & Pemberton, 2018:84). Resilience is a resource in coping with adverse circumstances and is explained as the capacity to exercise control over a situation (Green & Pemberton, 2018:85). It is important to note that the high-risk youth do have the capacity and strength to act upon adverse circumstances, which are expected to cause them serious psychological harm (Mercer, 2018:178; Smyth, 2017:84). In some instances, adolescents function better given the various risk factors and vulnerability they are exposed to (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:303). Leoschut and Burton (2009, in Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:9) identified nine key factors that enhance a young individual's resilience when exposed to crime. These factors include "education, gender, non-violent family environments, non-exposure to criminal role-models, substance abstinence, non-victimisation, neighbourhood factors and attitudes intolerant of violence and anti-social behaviour." Bach and Louw (2010:33) are of the opinion that it would be beneficial to study how the pre-existing resources and strengths in communities which contribute to the resilience of individuals could be enhanced.

Smyth (2017:84, 85) mentions that there are various clusters of strengths. The first is insight, which is asking tough questions and giving honest answers. The second is independence, since it is creating a distance physically as well as emotionally between oneself and the troubles in your life. Relationships are the third strength, seeing as good quality connections with other individuals are important. It was found that resilient youth often have at least one involved and caring adult involved in their life (Schwart, Rodriguez, Weisskirch, Zamboanga & Pantin, 2013:220). Bach and Louw (2010:26) affirm this statement, since children tend to develop fewer depressive symptoms when various familial factors come into play, such as higher maternal education and whether children reside with their mother. They explain the correlation between maternal education and "lower levels of exposure to violence, internalising symptoms, and intrusive thinking among children" (Bach & Louw, 2010:26). Bach and Louw (2010:26) further add that children reported fewer depressive symptoms when residing with their mother compared to those living without a mother. Liese and Bezuidenhout (2013:100) state that a strong emotional attachment is a critical component that influences their capacity for resilience. Finding 'the comic in something terrible' is the fourth strength, which is known as humour. The last strength is morality that involves acting based on

knowledgeable integrity. Green and Pemberton (2018:86) state that resilience is a type of agency, which reminds the victim that they should not view themselves as powerless or passive, as a result, there is hope.

McDonald (1999, in Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:9) asserts that young people have a need to be accepted and respected by their peers as well as a demand to improve their self-esteem, which is especially true for individuals who have grown up poor in a wealthy society. Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008:306) furthermore mention that institutional, economic, and social resources all contribute towards community resilience.

There seems to be a significant correlation between *hope* and the well-being of an adolescent (Savahl et al., 2013:586). In the Savahl et al. (2013:589) study, it was found that hope is a stronger predictor of an adolescent's well-being compared to their exposure to community violence. These researchers discovered that adolescents who had greater levels of hope conveyed more positive benefits in addition to scoring high on global life satisfaction as well as personal adjustment (Savahl et al., 2013:582). Oskin (1996, in Savahl et al., 2013:583) asserts that more research should be done to identify the factors which lead to the increase of hope in children, as she found that as community violence increased, hope decreased within a low-income community.

The conceptualising of community violence indicated various factors which could play a role in a person's perception and experience of community violence. The focus will now be placed on adolescence as a life stage and a discussion of the vulnerability of individuals during this life stage.

2.4 ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Various studies show that the exposure to community violence affects adolescents holistically, since it has a negative influence on their physical, cognitive and social development, as well as their overall well-being (Ahanonu et al., 2015:15; Jacober, 2011:62; Richter et al., 2018:181; Savahl et al., 2013:579, 582; Visser et al., 2016:287). When adolescents are concerned about events in the past or the future, they are less likely to identify the needs which they have within the present moment, and as a result, these needs are not met (Fall, Holden & Marquis, 2010:2017). The

focus of this section will therefore be on the adolescent phase of development, by specifically focussing on the physical, cognitive, personality, emotional, social and moral development of adolescents.

2.4.1 Physical development

Adolescents undergo various physical and hormonal changes during the adolescent phase of development. Both males and females enter the puberty phase where they rapidly start growing and start with the development of sexual maturation (Louw & Louw, 2014b:306). Several psychological changes occur due to the transformation their bodies engage in, such as the way they view their bodies which influence their body image. As a result of their sexual maturation and hormonal changes, adolescents may take part in interactive sexual activities as well as autoerotic behaviour such as masturbation (Louw & Louw, 2014b:315). This allows adolescents to explore their sexuality and sexual orientation (Louw & Louw, 2014b:321). Environmental factors, such as physical exercise, stress and nutrition influence the onset of puberty (Louw & Louw, 2014b:307).

During physical development various hormonal changes occur within an adolescent's body, but if an adolescent is repeatedly being exposed to violence, other abnormal deviations transpire. "The neuroendocrine, autonomic, immunological and neuropsychological systems become excessively activated" when exposed to violence (Hsiao et al., 2018:2). These adolescents' bodies remain in a constant state of stress, which leads to an increased heart rate, hypervigilance, and greater secretions of cortisol within the body (Hsiao et al., 2018:2). These changes within the body could lead to various mental health concerns (Hsiao et al., 2018:2; Visser et al., 2016:280). Some adolescents have a lack of coping strategies to deal with the trauma associated with community violence that has led to mental health concerns. They could therefore turn to other alternatives, such as self-harm.

In a study conducted by Hsiao et al. (2018:1), it was found that self-harm can be decreased by 23% if children were not exposed to physical violence. The exposure to community violence could make an adolescent feel uncertain and in return grasp for a feeling of being in command. Smyth (2017:138) adds that the youth who cut themselves do not want to die, they engage in this type of behaviour to release their

torment or to gain a sense of control since they feel helpless, anxious, and out of control. When they cut themselves, they become disconnected and move into a dreamlike state where they feel little physical and emotional pain (Smyth, 2017:138).

Adolescents are exposed to significant amounts of sexual content, which is associated with greater desires of sexual contact as well as a higher number of current sexual behaviours (Corona, Pope, Abrams & Belgrave, 2013:208). Adolescents are twice as likely to become involved in sexual behaviour when they have been exposed to sexual media (Santrock, 2009:361). Teenagers might become addicted to sex. This type of addiction involves the craving for physical contact but without the intimacy associated with being in a healthy relationship (Smyth, 2017:139). Most adolescents are however not emotionally equipped to deal with sexual experiences. Nonetheless, there has been a substantial increase in oral sex amongst adolescents (Santrock, 2009:362). It appears that engaging in oral sex has become a recreational activity outside an intimate and caring relationship (Santrock, 2009:362). Nevertheless, the youth who reside in disorganised and low resourced communities are more likely to initiate sexual activities at a younger age (Corona et al., 2013:211). Bezuidenhout (2013:96) adds that adolescents who reside in an environment of poverty, overcrowding and disorganisation often expose themselves to various deviant behaviours, such as sex at a young age.

Adolescents are expected to conform to various gender roles and in this exploration of the appropriate gender roles, they often indulge in masturbation, homosexuality, and other sexual activities (Bezuidenhout, 2013:93). Increased sexual activity, as indicated, is another risk factor, due to adolescents' sexual maturation and increased awareness of their sexuality (Louw & Louw, 2014b:307; Otwombe et al., 2015:2). These sexual activities pose various other risks such as sexually transmitted diseases. In a survey conducted by Love Life (2002, in Banjo & Jili, 2013:252), one of South Africa's greatest threats concerning the youth, regarding developmental goals and possible negative effects, was found to be HIV and AIDS. Through performing these activities, they become more at risk for teenage pregnancy, as well as HIV and AIDS.

This survey (in Banjo & Jili, 2013:252) also indicated high levels of unwanted pregnancy amongst adolescents. Sexual intercourse during adolescence is usually

unplanned and unprotected, which leads to teenage pregnancy (Bezuidenhout, 2013:96; Smith et al., 2011:669). Teenage pregnancy could also occur because of sexual assault. In 2012, 11.2% of Northern Cape individuals were sexually assaulted at school and 9.7% reported being raped at school in the Free State and Western Cape (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:22). Smyth (2017:134) mentions that falling pregnant during their youth could be a positive factor as it could cause an adolescent to turn away from a life of the streets and force them to complete school, seeing as being pregnant could make an adolescent realise that they have responsibilities beyond themselves and therefore they do not want their children to face the same hurdles which they faced when they were children (Smyth, 2017:135). These mothers could however turn to destructive ways of coping when they become tired, have a lack of family support and freedom as well as stressful relationships coupled with previous trauma (Smyth, 2017:135). However, these destructive ways of coping do not always result in violence but rather have an influence on an adolescent's cognitive development.

2.4.2 Cognitive development

Adolescents tend to reason more than children do, in the middle childhood phase of development (Halpern-Felsher, Lee & Morrell, 2013:65). Jean Piaget (in Martorell Papalia & Feldman, 2014:448) believed that adolescents develop the ability to make use of abstract thought rather than needing concrete stimuli to comprehend information. This is known as the formal operational stage of cognitive development where adolescents develop two important skills, namely hypo-deductive reasoning, and propositional thought. The skill of hypo-deductive reasoning is used to allow an adolescent to identify a problem, form various hypotheses by meticulously looking at various relationships, eliminating unnecessary information, and predicting outcomes based on the information given regarding a particular situation (Arnett, 2016:363; Berk, 2013:253; Martorell et al., 2014:448; Mercer, 2018:106; Santrock, 2009:372). Another characteristic which Piaget referred to, is propositional thought, which is an adolescent's ability to determine the probability of verbal statements without taking actual concrete conditions into account (Berk, 2013:254). These skills therefore, allow an adolescent to manipulate information in a way that permits them to form hypotheses and understand metaphors. Consequently, an adolescent can consider the past,

present, and future to make plans and manage their emotions (Martorell et al., 2014:448).

In some cases, at the beginning of the formal operations stage, adolescents make the *adolescent egocentrism* error, which is the inability to distinguish their own thoughts from that of the thinking of others (Arnett, 2016:366). This is due to the fact they think of themselves on a regular basis and hence believe that others think of them frequently as well. Teenagers furthermore assume that everyone else is concerned with the same thoughts and behaviours, which they are thinking about; this is referred to as the imaginary audience (Martorell et al., 2014:452). These adolescents accordingly believe that the *imaginary audience* constantly watches them and wait for the adolescent to humiliate himself/herself (Arnett, 2016:367). Berk (2013:255) and Santrock (2009:372) explain that the imaginary audience causes adolescents to become extremely self-conscious, hence resulting in adolescents who will go to extreme lengths not to be embarrassed. A critical remark could be humiliating to an adolescent (Berk, 2013:255). In addition, Elkind (in Martorell et al., 2014:452) refers to the personal fable which adolescents experience, since they believe that they are invincible, as they are special, unique, and invulnerable to dangers, accordingly, resulting in some reckless, self-destructive, and risky behaviour (Arnett, 2016:367; Berk, 2013:255; Santrock, 2009:373). They also have a conviction that not one person in the world understands them due to their uniqueness and the exclusivity of their own experiences along with their personal purpose (Arnett, 2016:367; Santrock, 2009:373). Even though impulsivity decreases with age, adolescents are more prone to look for sensation-seeking experiences (Halpern-Felsher et al., 2013:67).

Although adolescents tend to make better decisions than children, their decisions are often influenced by emotions and the social context which they are in (Santrock, 2009:374). Heleniak et al. (2017:239) found that the exposure to community violence could be linked to decreased levels of problem-solving. The prefrontal cortex in the brain controls very strong emotions, but during the adolescent phase of development, this part of the brain has not yet fully developed and thus it cannot adequately control these strong emotions (Santrock, 2009:360). Adolescents are more willing to take risks when there is a possibility of an immediate reward or if they feel strong emotions towards a certain cause (Berk, 2013:256). Adolescents who have been exposed to

violence are more likely to have pessimistic views and assume that they will be harmed in the near future (Halpern-Felsher et al., 2013:71).

Although adolescents can make informed decisions and are able to explain and defend a particularly chosen answer (Arnett, 2016:364), they still need to take part in autonomous decision-making to develop the skill to resist peer pressure (Halpern-Felsher et al., 2013:66). They struggle to adjust to their need for independence and going on their own path separately from their parents (Berk, 2013:256). Parents should assist their adolescents in terms of the pros and cons of certain choices, as they struggle to make everyday decisions (Berk, 2013:255). However, a strain is put on the relationship between adolescents and their adult caregivers, as adolescents have ideals and their caregivers tend to have more realistic views of the world (Berk, 2013:256). Adolescents tend to fall back on learned intuitive judgements when struggling to make a decision and also tend to focus on short-term goals rather than long-term goals (Berk, 2013:257).

An adolescent's exposure to community violence could have negative consequences for their academic development (Romero et al., 2018:31; Visser et al., 2016:279). "The implication of high anxiety levels for the adolescent could manifest as problems in mental efficiency, such as slowing, scrambling, or blocking thought processes, or having words and memory failure. These problems enhance distractibility and are exacerbated by depression" (Visser et al., 2016:286). This furthermore has an influence on South Africa's economy (Hsiao et al., 2018:4). As mentioned by Hsiao et al. (2018:4) violence and unintentional injuries were one of the leading causes for deaths and loss of years due to disability. Therefore, more money is spent on health services, along with welfare services due to individuals' inability to work and the expenditure towards child and youth care and protection (Hsiao et al., 2018:4). According to Currie and Widom (in United Nations Children's Fund, 2014:10), individuals who were exposed to violence were fourteen percent less likely to own assets and become employed when compared to the non-abused control group. It is important to note, that the shift in formal reasoning can only occur with the combination of brain development and growing environmental stimulation (Martorell et al., 2014:450).

2.4.3 Personality development

An adolescent's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning is affected by community violence and recent studies show that it could have an impact on an adolescent's personality development (Visser et al., 2016:278). It was believed that personality was a stable trait, however evidence now shows that life experiences as well as age are factors that can contribute to changes in personality (Visser et al., 2016:280). The development of the personality is therefore a lifelong process, which is also influenced by who adolescents are within their community (Jacobson, 2011:59). Pitsoane and Gasa (2018:10750) describe the phase of adolescence as "a period of emotional variability, moodiness and emotional outbursts." During this phase, adolescents attempt to balance autonomy, closeness, stability and change to understand their own emotions and emphasise with the emotions of others (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018: 10750).

The phase of adolescence is often described as the stormy phase due to adolescents' short-temperedness, divergence with others and high-risk behaviour (Louw & Louw, 2014b:306). Short-temperedness often occurs because of their *identity confusion*. This could be since adolescents feel unsure about themselves and their roles within society, which leads to confusion and anxiety which is often expressed through hostility towards others (Louw & Louw, 2014b:343). Adolescents must find their own identity or be faced with identity confusion (Santrock, 2009:386). Thus, Erik Erikson asserted that an adolescent must find a sense of who they are as well as identify a place where they belong in this world (Jacobson, 2011:55). This is done by exploring values and goals in an attempt to develop their own personal identity (Berk, 2013:16). Erikson (in Berk, 2013:469) explained that young people become involved in an *identity crisis*, which is a brief stressful period during which adolescents experiment with numerous alternatives before deciding on their own objectives and morals. This leads to teenagers who become intolerant to differences and who resort to cliquishness (Martorell et al., 2014:473). According to Erikson, identity could develop if the adolescent adopted values to live by, made a choice of occupation and developed a satisfying sexual identity (Martorell et al., 2014:472). For example, if the identity crisis is not resolved during the identity versus identity confusion stage it could lead to immature behaviour in later life, as this will prevent an adolescent to form mature and egalitarian relationships with others (Branje, 2018:171). Recent theorists however, state that the identity crisis could be compared to a phase of exploration,

where an adolescent gains important information regarding their environment which allows them to make enduring decisions (Berk, 2013:469).

Erikson (in Martorell et al., 2014:472) explained that there are three major issues that an adolescent must overcome with regards to identity. Children must decide on an occupational identity. If there are limited options regarding an occupation; young individuals are more likely to take part in negative behaviour such as criminal activity (Martorell et al., 2014:472). Another issue is sexual identity (Martorell et al., 2014:472). Erikson (in Martorell et al., 2014:473) explained that females only develop their identity through intimacy, while males are only capable of real intimacy after they have developed a stable identity. Gilligan (in Martorell et al., 2014:475) is of the opinion that a female's sense of identity develops together with intimacy. Girls therefore, evaluate themselves according to their ability to care for others and how they handle their responsibilities (Martorell et al., 2014:475). Males on the other hand develop their separate identities and are only then capable of establishing quality relationships (Martorell et al., 2014:475). The moment that individuals work through the identity crisis they decide on their values by developing fidelity, which is a sustained loyalty, sense of belonging or faith (Martorell et al., 2014:473). The last phase is the values that one adopts and chooses to live by during their daily lives (Martorell et al., 2014:472).

The youth who are exposed to community violence often do not trust others. This might seem to be a negative trait; however, it is appropriate when there is a chance of being exploited by others (De Witt, 2017:334; Smyth, 2017:56). Heleniak et al. (2017:229) are of the opinion that youth aggression is a risk factor associated with community violence. Smyth (2017:56) however explains that a quick temper can be of help when an adolescent attempts to instil fear within others, which reduces the chance of them being hurt or challenged. These children's behaviour is often seen as disobedient, stubborn, and manipulative, since this type of behaviour goes against acceptable norms (De Witt, 2017:334; Smyth, 2017:56).

Some youth carry a sense of failure and have a low self-esteem, which leads them to seek out others who have a similar view of the world in an attempt to form a connection with others (Smyth, 2017:106). This form of low self-esteem could also be related to

aggression within adolescents, since significant numbers of adolescents live in dire conditions which could affect them to fall victim to desperate behaviour and thoughts (Bezuidenhout, 2013:276). Baron and Branscombe (2014:381) explain that people often turn to violence and aggression when their egos are threatened. Hence, having a higher self-esteem could minimise the aggression as the adolescent will respond to a threat by confirming their competence in another area, which is known as self-affirmation (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:381). Nonetheless, adolescents tend to look to others for affirmation rather than to themselves.

2.4.4 Emotional development

If there is poor structure and discipline within an adolescent's home, they tend to rely on themselves and form bonds with external persons within the community (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018:10755). Smyth (2017:17) is of the opinion that all adolescents seek to form a healthy bond with an adult despite their initial resistance. These bonds could be negative, and they may therefore struggle with acceptable emotional and social development within the community. The exposure to community violence could increase an adolescent's vulnerability to develop depression, an anxiety disorder and PTSD (Beukman, 2013:266; Visser et al., 2016:281). Beukman (2013:266) asserts that the domains most influenced by violence are attention, aggression, anxiety, and depression. Both male and female adolescents are at a higher risk to display symptoms of PTSD after they have been exposed to multiple forms of violence (Kaminer et al., 2013a:328). Adolescents are prone to have higher levels of internalising problems when exposed to community violence, which could lead to depression and anxiety symptoms (Heleniak et al., 2017:229). Other associated concerns include psychosocial difficulties, adjustment problems, low self-esteem, anxiety, and delays in emotional processing (Visser et al., 2016:280). Heleniak et al. (2017:239) further explain that these adolescents experience a greater sensitivity towards emotions, feel emotions more intensely, along with a greater persistence of emotions. They could therefore feel as though hazards towards one's well-being are largescale in addition to unmanageable (Heleniak et al., 2017:239).

The interactions with peers during the adolescent phase of development is especially significant for adolescents, hence they often respond with heightened emotional reactivity to social situations (Heleniak et al., 2017:231). The emotional regulation and

behaviour of boys could be changed by their fathers' relationships with them (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018:10748). An adolescent is more likely to take part in anti-social behaviour when they have an absent father (Maree, 2013:76). She further adds that South Africa has a high rate of fathers who are in prison, which leaves various families incomplete and without a father as a role-model to learn right from wrong (Maree, 2013:77). Smyth (2017:48) asserts that children may become more hostile and aggressive in an attempt to regulate their emotions, seeing as they have not developed the ability to deal with their emotions at a young age. Emotion regulation requires a great deal of cognitive effort, hence, if an adolescent has invested a large amount of cognitive effort to do other tasks, aggression is more likely to come to the surface due to the demanding cognitive effort required to control this aggression. This results in adolescents who resort to primitive responses to regulate their emotions (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:379).

Adolescents may encounter conflict with their parents, siblings and others close to them as they attempt to search for themselves and gain autonomy (Branje, 2018:172). This conflict could be caused by the adolescent's cliquishness and intolerance of difference as a way to cope with their identity confusion (Martorell et al., 2014:473). It could also be caused by the generation gap which is the disparity between world views amongst parents and their adolescents (Louw & Louw, 2014b:334). An adolescent is more likely to take part in anti-social behaviour when they have an absent father (Maree, 2013:76). South Africa has a high rate of fathers who are in prison, which leaves various families incomplete and without a father as a role-model to learn right from wrong (Maree, 2013:77). Berk (2013:255) asserts that parents should refrain from finding fault with adolescents in front of others since they are sensitive to public criticism. A parent should rather address the matter in private away from the public. Adolescents tend to have an exaggerated sense of individual uniqueness, which a parent should acknowledge but should also allow for a more balanced perspective by referring to the similar feelings they had when they were teenagers (Berk, 2013:255). Parents promote a child's cultural customs and traditions by teaching their children about their ethnic and cultural heritage, which is called cultural socialisation (Martorell et al., 2014:477). Adolescents who have undergone cultural socialisation tend to have a stronger ethnic identity (Martorell et al., 2014:477).

2.4.5 Social development

The adolescent stage of development is known for its risk-taking behaviour, since adolescents have to take some risks to become non-risk-taking adults (Bezuidenhout, 2013:84). Adolescents therefore, engage in behaviour that could have negative consequences (Bezuidenhout, 2013:84). The constant presence of adverse effects on the social-emotional development of an adolescent could lead to risk-taking behaviour (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018:10750). Their risk-taking behaviour can be associated with their attempt to demonstrate their grown-up status and heightened egocentrism or sensation-seeking behaviour (Bezuidenhout, 2013:85). During this phase, adolescents try to gain independence from their families. However, they do not always communicate this and the accompanied emotions well with their family and would rather misuse alcohol and drugs or take part in risky sexual behaviour than admit to them hurting emotionally (Bezuidenhout, 2013:85). In an attempt to deal with substance abuse, an individual should take note that high-risk youth often do not have effective coping mechanisms and consequently resort to alcohol and drugs to cope with various stressors in their life (Smyth, 2017:132).

It is human nature to not exist alone (Jacobson, 2011:60). Therefore, Jacobson (2011:60) argues that a person's survival largely depends on the maintaining of cooperative and protective groups within one's community, since people are interdependent on one another. An adolescent's community provides them with a training ground to identify prosocial and anti-social behaviour (Mercer, 2018:196). However, when the community's standards lean more towards anti-social behaviour, the adolescent will be more inclined to take part in violent acts (Mercer, 2018:196). If an adolescent has various relationships, the more likely they are to be resilient and recover from the effects of trauma (Smyth, 2017:17). Thus, it is within a community that an adolescent discovers who they are on the quest towards adulthood (Jacobson, 2011:61).

Adolescents become fault-finding critics when they develop an ideal world, during which their siblings fall short and their parents' real-world views resort to tension between them and their parents (Berk, 2013:256). A parent should however still help an adolescent realise that a community is diverse and full of imperfections since adolescents tend to have grand expectations and often make critical remarks (Berk, 2013:255). This will assist an adolescent to form lasting relationships when they see

that other individuals have both strengths and weaknesses (Berk, 2013:256). Adolescents nonetheless have an inherent need for intimacy, high self-esteem, and the respect of others towards them (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:17).

High-risk youth often do not feel as though they have a sense of identity and become involved in the streets (Smyth, 2017:106). They therefore develop socially constructed representations of their “crowd” identities which serve as symbolic categories in which they are placed, while being recognised and accepted by others (Jacobson, 2011:64). When identity confusion takes place, a teenager is more likely to lose their identity in a crowd and go along with their peers (Santrock, 2009:386).

Divergence often goes hand in hand with an adolescent’s effort towards autonomy as they want to move away from their parents’ influence and are easily swayed by their peers (Louw & Louw, 2014b:367). Peers become an important factor during adolescence with regards to an adolescent’s behaviour and beliefs (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94). Adolescents minimise the importance of their relationship with their parents to accommodate their peers (Maree, 2013:83). They sometimes make friends with the wrong crowd and are swept up in the hyped emotions of their fellow peers. Girls tend to prefer smaller groups of two or three, while boys prefer large groups to interact with (Mercer, 2018:193). Parents do have an impact on a child’s development, however, peers seem to have the most significant influence on their development, since they compare themselves to their peers and accept their peer’s norms (Smith et al., 2011:193). The brain’s reward system is activated and releases dopamine when an adolescent is surrounded by their peers (Santrock, 2009:374). Peers however often lead adolescents to take part in risky behaviour.

Substance abuse is another form of risk-taking behaviour. Smyth (2017:131) mentions that “addiction is a response to life experience, not simply to a drug.” Adolescents are often curious and thus want to explore the adult ways of doing things, since they are in the transition towards adulthood (Bezuidenhout, 2013:90). Drug and alcohol experimentation amongst adolescents could lead to violence and aggression, as adolescents attempt to maintain their expensive drug habit (Bezuidenhout, 2013:99; Maree, 2013:73; Otjombe et al., 2015:2). In a study conducted by Hsiao et al. (2018:2), it was found that children and adolescents were at greater risk to take part

in violent behaviour when they were exposed to community members who were involved in substance abuse and crime. Female adolescents are more likely to obtain substances since they often date older males (Maree, 2013:84). They consequently become involved in the illicit activities of their older partners (Maree, 2013:84). Furthermore, illicit drug use during adolescence can be minimised when violence against children is reduced (Hsiao et al., 2018:3). During the early stages, they smoke tobacco and marijuana as part of a group activity (Bezuidenhout, 2013:90). Ahanonu et al. (2015:22) found that the use of cannabis, alcohol and methamphetamine were the primary substances used amongst adolescents.

Most adolescents leave a life of offending behind during their transition to young adulthood, but some do continue with this misbehaviour (Beukman, 2013:268). Their behaviour could be influenced by their moral development as adolescents.

2.4.6 Moral development

Recent theorists have divided Erikson's theory on moral development into exploration and commitment (Berk, 2013:470). They explain that there are various identity statuses. The first is identity achievement, where young individuals have already explored alternatives and have decided on a set of morals and objectives (Berk, 2013:470). This gives them a sense of sameness and the idea that they know where they are going, since they know where they stand within the community. They have consequently developed high levels of self-certainty, self-esteem, performance under stress, moral reasoning, and intimacy (Martorell et al., 2014:475). The second is identity moratorium, which refers to adolescents who are still exploring various avenues and have not yet reached a point of commitment (Berk, 2013:470). Adolescents are often unsure of where they stand as they are still questioning morals and objectives. Adolescents who are in this phase are often anxious about their decisions and the obstacles they face (Berk, 2013:471). They often have higher self-esteem and feel more in control of their own lives.

The third is identity foreclosure. These are individuals who have not explored any alternatives but have committed to values and goals (Berk, 2013:470). These individuals go with what their family or community believe. They furthermore tend to have low levels of anxiety, are dependent on relationships and take part in

stereotypical thinking (Martorell et al., 2014:475). The fourth is identity diffusion, which refers to adolescents who have not attempted to either explore or commit to any objectives or morals (Berk, 2013:470). These adolescents tend to fear rejection from those who they depend on for their self-esteem and affection, due to low levels of self-certainty and ego development (Berk, 2013:471; Martorell et al., 2014:475). In the long-term, these individuals tend to rely on the current state of events or pressures to make decisions and as a result, they often go along with the crowd (Berk, 2013:471). Individuals who move toward identity achievement and identity moratorium are more inclined to a sense of personal continuity, social connection and competence across time and different contexts (Berk, 2013:471). Identity foreclosure and identity diffusion are maladaptive compared to the before mentioned types of identity (Berk, 2013:471).

Schepers (2017:70) asserts that morality has formed part of criminology for various years as mortality is used as a key construct to explain criminal behaviour. Mortality gives individuals a sense of belonging, a feeling of solidarity and respect for the mutual embedded authority within society. Therefore, people partake in criminal activity due to their lack of internal moral sense (Schepers, 2017:70, 71). Mercer (2018:181) is of the opinion that children lack prosocial behaviour when they received little empathetic care while being raised. Children form their moral judgement based on social interactions amongst others and emotions such as sympathy, empathy, attachment, and love to form bonds with others (Schepers, 2017:72). Maree (2013:75) asserts that when one takes a closer look at the value system of a community, one will see that there is often not a strong moral foundation, which the community is based on. If there were strong morals within a community that everyone agrees on, crime and misbehaviour would rarely exist (Liese & Bezuidenhout, 2013:140). Therefore, children base attitudes, ethnic awareness, and self-identification on the perceptions of the community (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94). This perception could be negative if they have learned that they occupy a lower status within society; therefore, they have less power and have fewer economic resources (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94). Thus, if an adolescent views another behaving violently, they are more likely to act in the same manner (Bezuidenhout, 2013:99; Maree, 2013:75). The culture within the community dictates the length to which individuals will go to address their needs.

Relationships with peers are important according to Schepers (2017:73), since adolescents build an autonomous morality that is based on equality and reciprocity and is negotiated and gained in these relationships with their peers. However, an adolescent's upbringing of morality by their parent's interaction with them concerning their needs and emotions during early socialisation is paramount (Schepers, 2017:73). The manner a child was allowed to negotiate rules and regulations as well as the manner conflict is resolved also play a role in forming the moral behaviour of an adolescent (Schepers, 2017:73). Children also need to learn how to view a situation from the perspective of another individual, which is known as social perspective taking (Halpern-Felsher et al., 2013:66). However, this type of perspective taking can be dampened when an adolescent does not have positive role models in his/her life (Halpern-Felsher et al., 2013:66). Males tend to rely on abstract moral principles while females tend to reply to the context and the well-being of others (Schepers, 2017:75).

Schepers (2017:74) mentions that shame and guilt are the emotions on which moral development are based, since individuals must take responsibility for their behaviour and wrongdoings. If adolescents lack guilt as an autonomous moral emotion, they are likely to take part in delinquent, violent and deviant behaviour, because the feeling of guilt allows an adolescent to acknowledge his/her wrongful behaviour (Schepers, 2017:74). Maree (2013:76) moreover found that adolescents who are raised in families with a low socio-economic status tend to experience feelings of shame, guilt and inferiority accompanied by a negative self-concept.

The development of an adolescent is a transactional process, since there are interactions and experiences between the environment and the adolescent (Mercer, 2018:37). Bronfenbrenner (1979, in Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:304) added that a child's positive development and adaptability is influenced by the surroundings and environment, which in turn have an effect on the child and his/her family. Thus, the environment influences the adolescent and vice versa; it is therefore not only bidirectional but constantly changing (Mercer, 2018:37). The researcher will thus discuss the influence of community violence within the different ecological systems.

2.5 EXPOSURE TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE WITHIN DIFFERENT ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

A child and adolescent develop within a complex system of relationships, which is influenced by various levels in this child or adolescent's surrounding environment (Berk, 2013:26). Bronfenbrenner (1979, in Visser, 2012:27) explained that these various levels of interaction are important as they aid a person in understanding the behaviour of an individual. These include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. These levels of interaction will be discussed in the subsequent section, by connecting the effect of community violence within each of these levels.

2.5.1 Microsystem and mesosystem

Visser (2012:27) termed the microsystem as “any context of which the person in focus has immediate experience and personal interaction in a direct way”, while the mesosystem refers to the connecting interactions between the various microsystems. The mesosystem is consequently formed when the developing person shifts from one setting to a new setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25).

Children have an increased chance to become involved in misconduct due to the child's inadequate interaction with members of the family (Booyens et al., 2013:35). Secure attachment to caregivers reduces the risks of victimisation amongst teenagers, along with parental monitoring and good discipline (Salzinger et al., 2002:429). Having a secure attachment with at least one significant adult or parent seems to be a sufficient buffer against the effects of community violence (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:305). Some studies which were completed during the Persian Gulf War indicated that the anxiety and emotional stress expressed by parents was a more important predictor to determine a child's response than the war itself (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:305). Unsupervised youth are furthermore prone to depression, lower self-esteem, risk-taking behaviour as well as the abuse of substances (Booyens et al., 2013:35). Parents should therefore be involved in their children's lives (Salzinger et al., 2002:429). Preventative programmes often fail since parents and caregivers are not involved in this process (Salzinger et al., 2002:427). It is believed that a stable and secure home environment is the best prevention against the effects of community violence. Single-parent households seem to be less effective when the household has

an absent father as more quarrels seem to take place (Salzinger et al., 2002:428). Parents are furthermore viewed as the primary agents of socialisation through modelling and influencing a child's beliefs and behaviour (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94).

It is often believed that women should stay at home while the man provides for the family. Many South African boys believe that differences can be resolved by using violence or physical fighting to protect themselves, while young women are socialised in this culture of dominant discourse, which legitimises coercive sexual behaviour against women (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7). For example, some cultures portray that the man makes the final decision as the head of the household along with the choices regarding a couple's sexual relationship. The boy might assume that he has the power within his sexual relationship with his girlfriend and hence disempower or sexually abuse the female against her will. Klopper (2013:155) explains that girls are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour since their fathers often monitor and control them more closely within a patriarchal household. In addition, patriarchal fathers teach their children that the person who earns more at work should be in charge at the home as well (Klopper, 2013:155). Therefore, women are often viewed as less important compared to their male counterparts. A female's self-concept will worsen when they are excluded from important life arenas (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:140). With the shift of the world viewing women as equal to men, various men and women's marriages are affected since conflict and tension may manifest due to traditional views and roles of the wife (Bezuidenhout & Smit, 2013:7). This prolonged and intense conflict could lead to family disorganisation.

Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008:304) are of the opinion that certain aspects within the community such as parental support, adult mentoring and positive community organisations all play a vital part in the resilience of a child. In particular, the support of parents, school as well as peers are of particular importance. A positive relationship with an adult in or outside of the immediate family substantially minimises the possibility of illegal behaviour of an adolescent (Coetzee, 2013:164). Some adolescents do however have authority figures such as teachers and parents who model violent behaviour through physical punishment or discipline that often result in young individuals acquiring violent behaviour (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:56; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:8). Shields et al. (2009:1203) mention that being struck by a teacher

with a ruler, stick or board duster on the hand can be more traumatic to a child than if done so by a stranger or fellow peer. Teachers are however in the ideal position to identify risk factors that could potentially lead to crime (Coetzee, 2013:167).

Adolescents in communities are taught what they should not do, however positive role models or mentors are not readily available for them to observe (Schwart et al., 2013:218). Thus, mentorship programmes should encourage more conventional peers to form friendships, since peer relationships are important to adolescents (Coetzee, 2013:164). Perry, Wallace and Barto (2013:164) are of the opinion that a mentor should provide the following three processes, which include the enhancing of social relationships, improving cognitive skills and promoting positive identity development. By implementing these three processes a mentee-mentor working alliance is formed to provide emotional support and positive regard (Perry et al., 2013:164). Coetzee (2013:164) mentions the Big Brothers Big Sisters organisation, which provides adolescents with counselling in addition to tutoring by various mentors. She adds that after spending a year and a half with a brother or sister mentor, the adolescents were 52% more likely to stay in school, 33% less likely to become involved in violence and 46% less likely to become involved in substance abuse (Coetzee, 2013:164).

Adults are more likely to be depressed if they reside in violent communities (Heleniak et al., 2017:239). These adults who are often the parents and caregivers may be modelling ineffective emotional response strategies to the children and adolescents within the community (Heleniak et al., 2017:239). O'Donnell (2002, in Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:305) found that social support within one's family and the school proved to be more influential with regards to resilience when compared to the impact of their peers. Children who reside in communities with poor resources due to economic constraints are more likely to be exposed to community violence, as they do not have access to alternative attractive activities, such as after-school and sporting activities, which prevent them from getting involved in delinquent activities (Salzinger et al., 2002:426). It was found that the most harmful hours were between 12:00 and 18:00, hence after school programmes are essential to reduce the chance of community violence (Salzinger et al., 2002:427). However, this buffer seems to fade when children are exposed to conditions of particularly high risk (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:306). Adolescents who are rejected by their peers or who do not

have supporting friends are more likely to be victimised by their peers (Salzinger et al. 2002:430).

2.5.2 Exosystem

“A neighbourhood characterised by poverty and unemployment is more likely to produce a child who is at high risk of engaging in misbehaviour” (Booyens et al., 2013:36). It is therefore necessary to investigate the effect that an exosystem may have on the development of a child or adolescent. The exosystem is compiled out of one or more social settings that do not contain the child or adolescent as an active participant but affects the child or adolescent’s immediate environment (Berk, 2013:28; Bronfenbrenner, 1979:237). These social settings could be welfare services, a parent’s workplace, a religious institution, or a hospital (Berk, 2013:28).

The new challenges of globalisation along with the high rates of unemployment in South Africa make the youth of South Africa feel uncertain about their future (Banjo & Jili, 2013:252). One factor could be because of unemployment, since unemployed persons cannot provide the youth with examples of professional and social success, which the youth would look up to (Maree, 2013:72). The youth, however, often struggle to become employed as they do not have prior employment experience, which not only makes it difficult to obtain a job, but they are also not eligible to access unemployment benefits. This in turn, could force a young individual to resort to a life of crime (Maree, 2013:72).

Social ills within the community often filter through to the school setting (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:54). Various adolescents do not finish matric due to “poverty, frustration associated with inexperience of teachers, a lack of relevance of the curriculum and teaching materials, the absence of parents at home, and the need to care for siblings or sick family members” (Booyens et al., 2013:34). With South Africa having such a high rate of HIV and AIDS, children often do not complete grade 12 as they must support and take care of their younger siblings within a HIV and AIDS-affected household (Booyens et al., 2013:34).

If adolescents are therefore exposed to community violence, they tend to have an increased negative affect during a task that emits social stress, which leads to

enhanced physical and emotional sensitivity towards potentially threatening circumstances (Heleniak et al., 2017:238). Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008:306) are of the opinion that collective vigilance leads to shared responsibility, which in turn leads to more positive role models, higher monitoring of the youth, collective strategies to raise children and more stability. Children who reside in inner-city as well as core metropolitan areas are more likely to be exposed to assault and homicide (Salzinger et al., 2002:427). “Communities do not control all of the conditions that affect them, but they have the ability to change many of the conditions that can increase their resilience” (Berkes & Ross, 2012:13).

2.5.3 *Macrosystem*

The macrosystem encompasses the micro-, meso- and exosystems, but with the addition of abstract properties such as belief systems, ideologies, culture, values, traditions, gender roles, laws, and social constructs (Berk, 2013:28; Bronfenbrenner, 1979:258; Visser, 2012:27). The support that a child or adolescent will receive concerning the inner levels of interaction, will be determined by the importance that the macrosystem places on the needs of the child (Berk, 2013:28).

“Culture plays an integral role as cultural interpretations and understanding shape the meaning and use of violence” (Aisenberg & Ell, 2005:861). Although social interaction patterns are shaped and influenced by culture, culture is oftentimes left out when researching community violence (Aisenberg & Ell, 2005:862). Maree (2013:74) mentions that there seems to be a belief that committing a crime is fine, just as long as one does not get caught. She furthermore adds that violent behaviour such as stealing, vandalism and violence has become part of various children’s daily lives (Maree, 2013:75).

Society still has this idea that masculinity is linked with physical strength and power (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). In some cultures, a man’s gender role is to be physically aggressive (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:365). Thus, to be a real man, a male should resort to violence to protect himself or his woman. In a study conducted by Du Plessis et al. (2015:85), males reported higher levels of aggression and conduct problems. Men therefore often choose aggression to reduce or eliminate a threat when their

manhood is challenged (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:365). This in turn could potentially lead to community violence.

Baron and Branscombe (2014:363) discuss cultures of honour, which refers to the idea that “cultures in which there are strong norms indicate... that aggression is an appropriate response to insult one’s honor.” In some townships, for example, wealth is obtained by assets that can be readily stolen, hence the members of the community had to emphasise the idea that theft will not be tolerated (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:363). This condones violence in response towards an individual who steals, highlighting the insult towards one’s honour. Therefore, Apartheid could have played a role in the extent of community violence witnessed and experienced by various South African youth today.

Due to the slow pace of the government’s service delivery, a large percentage of the South African population still need to acquire access to basic services and infrastructure (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253). Individuals within the Mpumalanga province seem to be patient when waiting for service delivery, but not if it seems as though other individuals are gaining access to these services before them (Banjo & Jili, 2013:254). Poor service delivery and unemployment were the main reasons for protesting according to the Banjo and Jili (2013:258) study.

2.5.4 Chronosystem

The environment is ever-changing; therefore the chronosystem consists out of all of the above levels of interaction as a time dimension and how these levels of interaction develop over time (Visser, 2012:27). Changes in life are therefore imposed on a child or adolescent, but these changes could also arise due to the decisions made by the specific child or adolescent, as they create their own experiences and settings within their own lives (Berk, 2013:28).

In various parts of Africa, in particular Sierra Leone, children are being recruited as child soldiers which indicates towards the high levels of violence these children have been exposed to (Forster & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:293). High levels of violence are not only experienced in Africa, but also in South Africa. Vogelmann and Lewis (1993, in Van der Merwe, 2013:73) assert that violence has for a very long time been part of

South African culture. Van der Merwe (2013:74) agrees with this statement, as violence is viewed as normative and valued within certain situations. Xenophobic attacks are one of these examples, since they have become more common throughout South Africa (Van der Merwe, 2013:71). In 2008, xenophobic attacks escalated due to the competition for scarce resources (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253). As mentioned earlier, the South African youth view immigrants as a threat with regards to their basic needs such as employment, which in turn leads to the obtaining of basic resources needed to survive (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253).

Violent protests are another example of a new normative violent event, which forms part of the chronosystem. Van der Merwe (2013:71) is of the opinion that the number of violent protests has risen by over 60 more cases during the span from 2010 to 2021. Violence has however become a way to communicate for those who feel repressed, in an attempt to gain attention from those in power (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7; Van der Merwe, 2013:77). The extent of politically motivated violence however has decreased while violence within communities have been on the rise after 1994 (Savahl et al., 2013:179).

Corporal punishment has been an integral part of schooling for both teachers and students (Morrell, 2001:292). It is defined as “any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light” (Bower, 2013:1). There were however various psychologists that argued that corporal punishment had affected a learner’s self-esteem, had a negative impact on academic performance and did emotional damage (Morrell, 2001:292). With the ending of the Apartheid era and the focus on human rights, the use of violence in schools was outlawed in 1996, in section 10 of the South African Schools Act (1996, in Morrell, 2001:292). Nonetheless, during the Apartheid era violence was still used as a disciplinary tool within schools and during the post-apartheid era (Shields et al., 2009:1203). Even though violence as a disciplinary tool has been outlawed in schools, numerous parents still make use of violence as a tool to discipline their children at home. The idea of the use of corporal punishment at home is viewed by some as a cultural expression or religious beliefs, as the Bible states that a parent has the duty to beat his/her children (Bower, 2013:4). Children are however harmed due to the exercise of discipline at home, which became out of control (Bower, 2013:6). This

could have led to the belief that real men should resort to violence in an attempt to defend themselves and their women (Van der Merwe, 2013:77). This enforces the cycle of violence in households as well as in communities.

In conclusion, a child or adolescent are “both products and producers of their environments” as they and the environment form part of an interdependent network that have an effect while they are in interaction with one another (Berk, 2013:28).

2.6 SUMMARY

In summary, the influence of community violence seems to be significant amongst adolescents. Community violence stems from far reaching factors such as history, culture, unemployment, poverty, and the lack of resources (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Kaminer et al., 2013a:321; Kaminer et al., 2013b:121; Savahl et al., 2013:579). There are also various risk factors, which make adolescents more prone to be victims of, or offenders of community violence (Bezuidenhout, 2013:96; Booyens et al. 2013:34). These risk factors are subdivided into structural, relational and environmental barriers. The effects of community violence seem to cause trauma that has both long-term and short-term consequences, which influence an adolescent’s present as well as future, in all spheres of life. The impact of community violence was therefore linked to the adolescent phase of development to highlight the consequences of community violence in that particular phase of development.

There however seems to be a gap in knowledge concerning the perceptions of adolescents regarding their personal views and experiences, as only quantitative research data on the influence of community violence seems to be readily available. Consequently, the focus in this study will be on adolescents and their personal views and perceptions of community violence. In the following chapter, the research methodology applied in this study as well as the empirical findings of the study, will be presented.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A research study was conducted to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence. In the first part of this chapter, the researcher will highlight the research methodology that was implemented during the study. In the second section of the chapter, the researcher will present the empirical findings of the study.

The following research objectives will be focussed on in this chapter:

- 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.

In the following section, the research methodology that was implemented in this study will be provided. Ethical considerations that were taken into consideration while conducting the research will subsequently be discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, the research methodology implemented in this study will be provided. This will include the research approach, the type of research and the instrumental case study as the research design. The sampling methods and the use of semi-structured interviews will subsequently be described. This will be followed by the use of thematic analysis, data quality and the pilot study.

3.2.1 Research approach

The focus of this study was to obtain information on young adults' perceptions during adolescence concerning community violence in South Africa. Therefore, the interpretative research paradigm was used, since it aims to understand people and

the way they define, interpret, give meaning, and justify their daily actions (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011:8). By exploring the perceptions and experiences of participants, the researcher aimed to uncover how meanings were created and communicated to understand the whole, as human behaviour is shaped by the realisation of the social sphere (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:61).

In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted as the researcher aimed to comprehend a social setting and the individuals within it, by pursuing answers to various questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:53). Qualitative research therefore has broad general questions with the goal to understand the participants' experiences within a certain social phenomenon (Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2016:309). The qualitative research approach was implemented as it has an unstructured and flexible process, which allows for further exploration (Fouché & Delport, 2011:65; Ivankova et al., 2016:310). The main idea of qualitative research, according to McRoy (1995, in Fouché & Delport, 2011:65) is to "understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life." Furthermore, this approach allowed the researcher to focus on learning more about the effects of community violence, which enabled the gaining of a holistic and multifaceted understanding of the social phenomenon (Fouché & Delport, 2011:65). This information was utilised to inform practice, thus leading to applied research.

3.2.2 Type of research

During this study, applied research was used as the type of research, as applied research "most often is the scientific planning of induced change in a troublesome situation" (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94). Applied research is therefore used to help social workers fill gaps in their knowledge, in order to address everyday problems in practice (Oxburgh et al., 2011:106). The researcher could therefore obtain information, which could enable social workers in practice to resolve problems, which could be used in the formulation of policy, administration and increase the level of understanding of a certain phenomenon (Kumar, 2011:10).

The two research purposes were exploratory and descriptive in nature. The exploratory research purpose is used if there is limited information available and when the researcher would like to gain insight into a new situation, phenomenon, individual

or community (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:54). In this study, the researcher was concerned with the phenomenon of community violence in the community and the influence that it has on young adults during their adolescent years.

The descriptive research purpose focusses on sketching a picture of the social setting and focusses on questions such as “why” or “how” (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96; Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:54). The aim was therefore to provide a detailed description of community violence, in hindsight, through the eyes of various young adults. Within this qualitative study, a thorough analysis was done, and thick descriptions were obtained from the participants to understand community violence (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96).

3.2.3 Research design

Fouché and Schurink (2011:320) explain how a case study design is used to allow researchers to immerse themselves into the lives of their participants, which is usually a small number of people, with the aim to intimately familiarise themselves with the social worlds of their participants and identify various patterns within their participants' lives. In this study, case study design was an ideal research design as it allowed the researcher to explore as well as describe community violence within a particular setting. Nieuwenhuis (2016a:81) explain how the case is a bounded entity, however the boundary between the case and the circumstantial terms may be blurred. To ensure that the researcher did not become unfocussed during the research, she followed the suggestions by Nieuwenhuis (2016a:81) who mentions that “(a) time and place; (b) time and activity; and (c) definition and context ... bind a case.”

During this study the instrumental case study design was used, as it provided in-depth insight into an issue, namely community violence, within the natural environment and helped the researcher to obtain an understanding thereof (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:83). The instrumental case study design furthermore aims to explore and describe the social world of a participant with the goal of gaining new knowledge concerning the participant's experiences. Each case played a supportive role towards gaining a better understanding of community violence (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322), which in turn linked with the purposes of applied research, mentioned above.

3.2.4 Research methods

In this section, the study population that comprised of young adults between 20 and 25 years of age, as well as the type of sampling methods utilised during this study will be presented. Thereafter, the data collection method, data analysis, data quality and the pilot study will be discussed.

3.2.4.1 Study population, sample and sampling methods

The study population is described as the population where a researcher will obtain the required information to answer the research question (Kumar, 2011:55). The study population comprised of young adults between 20 and 25 years of age, who reside in Sicelo, a community in Meyerton, South Africa. Sicelo consists of an informal settlement area where the individuals reside in shacks, as well as an urban area where individuals reside in RDP housing and homes where there is more infrastructure such as roads, water and sanitation. The participants who partook in this study must have been exposed to community violence during their adolescent years. Young adults were however interviewed, as they were able to provide an empirical understanding of their perceptions and experiences during their adolescent years.

The “sampling theory is that a small set of observations can give an idea of what can be expected in the total population of the intended study” (Strydom & Delport, 2011:390). Non-probability sampling was utilised during this study since the number of elements was unknown and could not be individually identified (Kumar, 2011:206). Maree and Pietersen (2016:197) assert that non-probability sampling should be avoided, but it may be used in certain cases, such as when financial resources and time are limited. Silverman (2000, in Strydom & Delport, 2011:391) mentions that a particular case may be chosen simply because it allows access. This was the case in this study, since the researcher identified the first participant within a social environment to which she had access and requested this specific participant to identify other potential participants who are members of the study population.

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was utilised during this study. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants, as they had to meet certain criteria:

- The participants had to be males or females between the ages of 20 and 25 years.
- Participants had to 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) on a regular basis.

The researcher first selected an individual who met the criteria above and then made use of snowball sampling to recruit the next participant. The researcher therefore approached a possible participant and was then referred to another case with the same characteristics, by this first case and so forth (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198; Strydom & Delport, 2011:393). Maree and Pietersen (2016:197) add that this type of sampling should be used if the researcher is researching a phenomenon amongst an interconnected group of people. This type of sampling is also utilised when the frame and access to participants is limited (Strydom & Delport, 2011:393). There is however a disadvantage to this sampling method as it is dependent on the referrals of initially selected participants, and these participants may all belong to the same social network, which may have led to biased information (Kumar, 2011:208). The researcher attempted to counter this disadvantage by limiting the number of referrals from each participant, to allow for more participants from other social networks.

3.2.4.2 Data collection

Interviews was the chosen data collection method. During interviewing, the emphasis is placed on obtaining in-depth and detailed data (Strydom & Delport, 2011:391). This allowed the researcher to gain as much information as possible with the aim to understand the phenomenon of community violence and the effects thereof.

In particular, semi-structured interviews were employed; Greeff's (2011:348) motivation for conducting semi-structured interviews is that this type of interview is organised around certain areas of interest, but it allows for flexibility to obtain more depth. The researcher could therefore obtain more data due to the flexibility allowed by the interviews. Greeff (2011:351) adds that this type of interview allows the researcher to understand the participants' beliefs and perceptions of a certain topic. The researcher was able to give her undivided attention to one individual at a time, thus making building rapport simpler in comparison to focus groups (Curtis & Curtis,

2011:32). Nieuwenhuis (2016a:93) explains that the researcher can ask pre-determined open-ended questions and then further probe the participant, along with further clarification. These open-ended questions were formulated on an interview schedule to allow for some structure, while providing the appropriate flexibility needed to obtain more in-depth information.

Nonetheless, there are some disadvantages to this type of data collection. Nieuwenhuis (2016a:93) explains that researchers will have to maintain their focus as focus could possibly be diverted to other aspects that are not associated with the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:93). Maintaining the focus of the interview often serves as a challenge since participants often steer off track as they view certain information as relevant (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:33). An interview schedule was therefore used to assist the researcher to stay on track to obtain the relevant information. (See interview schedule attached as Appendix A).

The researcher used the interview schedule to guide the interview as well as engage the participant (Greeff, 2011:352). The interview schedule was structured in such a way that it complied with Greeff's (2011:352) suggestions, since the questions were ordered in the most logical order, and the most sensitive topics were left for later in the interview. The participants therefore felt more at ease when asked about the more sensitive topics. Consequently, the researcher was not bound by closed-ended questions, thus allowing the participants to tell their stories. The interview schedule also kept the researcher and participant focused on the questions that had to be answered and the interviewer could add more material that was important to take note of (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:32). All interviews lasted for approximately one and a half hours and were conducted without any obstacles. The duration of the interviews allowed time for the researcher to elicit the detailed perceptions and opinions of the participants concerning community violence (Cresswell, 2013:190).

All the interviews were audio-recorded. The researcher received permission from the participants before starting the digital recording, which was tested before the interview, with the aim to transcribe the interview at a later stage (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:94). All the participants were comfortable with the audio-recording and agreed to the utilisation of a device before the interview was conducted.

3.2.4.3 Data analysis

Nieuwenhuis (2016b:114) mentions that analysing qualitative data is an interactive process that requires constant checking, auditing and careful archiving during each step, to allow the researcher to trace provisional results. Due to the audio-recorded interviews that had to be transcribed, the researcher made use of thematic analysis to conduct the data analysis. Clarke et al. (2015:223, 224) mention the following steps during data analysis:

- **Phase 1: Familiarisation**

During this phase, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings of the data collection interviews while taking note of the written field notes. The researcher made use of a transcriber as well as a transcribing application to quicken this process. Thereafter the researcher familiarised herself with the contents of the data set by reading and re-reading the data set as a whole (Clarke et al., 2015:231; Schurink et al., 2011:409; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:115). The researcher furthermore had an inquisitive and questioning approach towards finding key ideas and concepts, along with searching for the underlying non-apparent meanings in the data (Clarke et al., 2015:232).

- **Phase 2: Coding**

Nieuwenhuis (2016b:116) asserts that coding is “a process of reading through your transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units.” In this phase of data analysis, the researcher divided the data into analytical units and identified labels or codes that were relevant and meaningful to the research question to increase her awareness of the data set (Clarke et al., 2015:234, Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:116; Schurink et al., 2011:410). Memoing was important as the researcher wrote down impressions while she sieved through the data when writing a reflective journal (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:115). The researcher furthermore made notes of the recurring ideas and themes, which stood out from the participants’ provided accounts, while also considering similarities and differences in the responses (Clarke et al., 2015:235; Schurink et al., 2011:410). The researcher also made use of different colours and abbreviations to highlight the main categories and themes (Schurink et al., 2011:410). This process was repeated to ensure that all the relevant data was captured and stored on separate Microsoft Word documents.

- **Phase 3: Searching for themes**

After the coding process, the researcher grouped units together to form categories or themes of data that shared commonalities (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:119). The researcher drew a thematic map of the association between the codes and themes to determine the connection between the different themes, aiding to identify the boundaries amongst them (Clarke et al., 2015:236). The researcher made use of these categories to understand her data better. These categories were referred to as themes and sub-themes, which were named appropriately and descriptively to relate the young adults' perceptions of community violence as experienced during adolescence (Clarke et al., 2015:238).

- **Phase 4: Reviewing themes**

The themes were reviewed by re-reading all the data coded under each theme and then in accordance with the whole set of data (Clarke et al., 2015:238). Thus, both the individual themes and the exploration in totality were captured to highlight the core of the entire data set. The researcher ensured that the essence of the data was captured by discarding irrelevant themes, making the necessary adjustments and even reverting to a previous phase of analysis (Clarke et al., 2015:238).

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

During this phase, a description of each theme was given, and the themes were placed into a particular format or sequence with the aim of telling a story. Hence, theme definitions encapsulating the core of the theme created an analytic narrative and a type of roadmap to enhance the understanding of the data (Clarke et al., 2015:240). The researcher therefore defined, finalised the names and interpreted the essence of the themes, along with providing a description of their coverage and boundaries (Clarke et al., 2015:240; Schurink et al., 2011:416). The researcher also provided interpretive commentary and a rich analytic narrative for each theme and ensured the conceptual clarity of the information contained within the themes (Clarke et al., 2015:240).

- **Phase 6: Writing-up**

During this final stage, the researcher drew conclusions from the data obtained by linking it to the literature in chapter two as well as the theoretical framework to gain new insights from the data obtained during the research process (Nieuwenhuis,

2016b:123). During this phase, the researcher started to organise her data in a logical structure. The researcher additionally started to link current literature and categories with one another, to see how the obtained data linked with the current knowledge within the field and how it developed the current knowledgebase (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:120). The researcher furthermore supported extracts from the interviews with the participants with the relevant literature (Clarke et al., 2015:241). This helped the researcher to not only understand her data better but brought in various perspectives from various authors while adding her own study's information to elevate and question the existing literature (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:121). In this phase, the researcher also drew up analytic conclusions across the different themes as she aimed to answer the research question (Clark et al., 2015:230).

3.2.4.4 Data quality

Trustworthiness is how accurately a study corresponds to the perspectives of the participants of the qualitative study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). Four constructs were considered to achieve trustworthiness.

- **Credibility**

The first and most important construct in terms of data quality, is credibility. It refers to “the degree to which a study's findings represent the meanings of the research participants” (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). Schurink et al. (2011:420) state that the credibility of a descriptive study will be determined by the pattern of interactions related to the problem or description of the setting. As there was a risk of research reactivity, the researcher had to be mindful of her own biases and make use of reflective practice (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). Schurink et al. (2011:420) are of the opinion that strategies such as triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing and prolonged engagement can be used to enhance credibility.

- **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the relevance of the findings concerning theory and practice (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). Hence, the idea of transferability is to determine if the information obtained can be transferred from one setting to another (Schurink et al., 2011:420). The researcher aimed to make the findings of this study as transferable and relevant as possible in order to promote the extent to which the findings can be

implemented in other contexts and communities other than the one in which the study was conducted (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195; Schurink et al., 2011:420). Schurink et al. (2011:420) state that this could be a difficult task. The researcher described key concepts underlying the study in detail and included a thick description of the research methods and findings to allow other researchers, through dependability, to understand how the findings of this study may be applicable to other settings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195).

- **Dependability**

Dependability is the construct where “the researcher asks whether the research process is logical, well documented and audited” (Schurink et al., 2011:420). This was done providing a clear and traceable description of the procedures followed throughout the implementation of the study, including the operational detail of data gathering and implementation of the research design (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:124). An individual outside the study would therefore be able to track the study and review the research process by the researcher’s keeping of an audit trail, code book and utilising peer debriefing (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). Throughout this study an auditing trail was put in place to ensure that no data went missing, and the research steps were well documented. Peer debriefing was also conducted on a regular basis with her supervisor who is experienced in qualitative methodology, to promote the auditability of the study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:196).

- **Confirmability**

The last construct is confirmability. Confirmability encompasses whether another can confirm the findings of the study and if the study is objective (Schurink et al., 2011:421). Other individuals should consequently be able to confirm the researcher’s findings if they had to do the data analysis themselves (Schurink et al., 2011:421). Confirmability was increased by the researcher practices of *peer debriefing* and *reflexivity* throughout the research process to enhance the objectivity of the research findings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:197; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:123; Schurink et al., 2011:421). In providing a *thick description*, the research findings included sufficient verbatim quotes to represent the voices of the participants (Cresswell, 2013:252). This will ensure that other researchers are able to corroborate the study’s findings by being able to identify a clear link between the data gathered and the findings by the researcher (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:197).

The researcher had to ensure that a transparent procedure was followed which will allow the reader to follow the research process to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:122). The quality of the study was also improved through a testing of the procedures of data gathering in the form of a pilot study.

3.2.4.5 Pilot study

A pilot study is a type of mock trial. Greeff (2011:350) mentions that a researcher should have a set of questions, establish access within the community, make contact and perform an interview during a pilot study. This will allow the researcher to establish certain trends, while determining whether the researcher will be able to obtain the relevant data, by testing the various questions, considering the cost implications, and establishing relationships within the community (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:394, 395). This was done as the researcher interviewed one participant as part of her pilot study and made use of a preliminary interview schedule to guide the researcher during her first interview. This pilot study was conducted with one person who complied with the inclusion criteria of the study, which allowed the researcher to determine the adequacy and effectiveness of the interview schedule (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:75; Strydom, 2011b:237). The information provided was transcribed and analysed to assess the value and adequacy of the interview schedule in answering the research question. After the pilot study, the researcher concluded that no changes had to be made to the interview schedule, since all the relevant information was obtained. As the data captured was applicable, the decision was made to include this data in the overall data analysis.

3.2.5 Ethical considerations

Maree (2016:44) mentions that it is important to highlight the ethical considerations in research and in particular the issue of protecting the identities of the participants who have taken part in the study. He further mentions that it is necessary for researchers to familiarise themselves with the ethical policy of the institution through which they are conducting their research. Ethical clearance was therefore obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, prior to the data collection process. The proof of ethical clearance is attached as Appendix B. Various ethical considerations such as the avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, deception of participants, violation of confidentiality,

debriefing of participants, the competence of the researcher as well as the publication of findings will be discussed in this section.

3.2.5.1 Avoidance of harm

As part of the study, community violence was contextualised. The literature review clearly indicated that community violence could potentially be a sensitive topic for some of the participants. Thus, avoidance of harm was applicable in this study. The researcher therefore informed participants of the potential danger that they might encounter, as sensitive topics will be discussed. Plans were put in place to counteract these possible issues (McLaughlin, 2014:65). As there was a risk of emotional harm, the researcher made arrangements to refer the participants for counselling to a counselling organisation within their geographical area. There were however no participants who needed or requested to be referred for counselling.

The researcher potentially reduced harm by being sensitive towards the participants' discomfort and minimised vagueness by asking direct questions (Babbie, 2017:66; McLaughlin, 2014:65). There were also some risks involved for the researcher, as she entered a community with a high prevalence of community violence. Thus, safety precautions had to be put in place. The researcher informed others where the interviews took place, she informed others when she was safe at home and she decided to stop the interview if she should feel unsafe or troubled (McLaughlin, 2014:67). The researcher did however not feel intimidated by any of the participants or her surroundings and completed each interview.

3.2.5.2 Voluntary participation

Individuals often share information about themselves that is not even known to friends or family, thus voluntary participation is necessary (Babbie, 2017:63). Participation in this research study was voluntary and the participants signed a declaration of informed consent. Participants should also be mentally and lawfully competent to provide their consent (Strydom, 2011a:117; McLaughlin, 2014:60). All the participants who took part in the research were 20 years or older, which is above the legal adult age in South Africa, and none of them had any mental challenges of which the researcher was aware. They could therefore provide full consent and participated in a voluntary manner.

3.2.5.3 Informed consent

The rationale of informed consent was to provide all the participants with information to ensure full knowledge of all the aspects of the study before agreeing to participate, furthermore no participant was forced to participate in this study (McLaughlin, 2014:59; Strydom, 2011a:116, 117). The researcher discussed various aspects of the study with the participants, such as why the research is being done (goal of the study), what will happen with the research, who will be aware of what they have said and how they could decide if they wanted to continue to participate (the procedures to be followed). These aspects were captured in a letter of informed consent (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2013:32; Strydom, 2011a:117). (See informed consent attached as Appendix C). The participants were furthermore informed of their right to withdraw from the study when or if they wish to do so, without any prejudice from the researcher (McLaughlin, 2014:60). All the participants however decided to continue after the researcher provided them with all the relevant information on the research and on their involvement in the study.

3.2.5.4 Violation of privacy/confidentiality

Anonymity did not apply to this study, as the researcher knew who the participants were; however, confidentiality could be assured. Confidentiality was upheld by allowing the participants to choose the extent to which they wish to share information and by protecting the identity of the participants so that the researcher will be the only person that could link a specific response to a participant (Bless et al., 2013:32). Direct and indirect attribution was upheld during this study. Other individuals who read the mini-dissertation will in the future not be able to identify the young adults' names or roles within the community, thus limiting direct attribution (Babbie, 2017:67). Indirect attribution will furthermore be restrained as the participants' assortment of traits and characteristics will not be identifiable by other individuals (McLaughlin, 2014:62). The researcher made use of pseudonyms to ensure the confidentiality of all the participants and did not highlight any characteristics of the participants in the subsequent chapters (Strydom, 2011a:119, 120, 121). The researcher furthermore restricted contextual information as the participants could possibly be identified if the assortments of characteristics were too unique to a particular case (McLaughlin, 2014:63). Furthermore, the secure storage of data during the research and storage of all research data, including informed consent letters and transcripts of interviews, in

accordance with the stipulations of the University of Pretoria at the completion of the research, was adhered to. The participants also received information on confidentiality by means of the letters of informed consent.

3.2.5.5 Debriefing participants

“Debriefing involves talking participants through their interview experience and minimising the risk of any ill effects” (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:40). Here the researcher had to make sure that the potential for harm was minimised by developing a strategy to deal with the participants’ discomfort before, during and after the data collection process (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:41). The researcher therefore debriefed each of the participants after every interview by providing them with an opportunity to process their emotions, as well as to openly discuss and share the thoughts and feelings they experienced before, during and after the interviews (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:41; Strydom, 2011a:122). The researcher also provided the opportunity to correct any misconceptions that the participants may hold, as well as minimise the risk of negative consequences for the participants (Babbie, 2017:71; Curtis & Curtis, 2011:40; Strydom, 2011a:122).

3.2.5.6 Actions and competence of researcher

The competence of the researcher entails the ethical obligation of the researcher to affirm her honesty and adequate skills to complete the research investigation (Strydom, 2011a:123). The researcher had to acquire the appropriate skills to conduct the research by completing an advanced module in research methodology as part of the MSW Play-based Intervention degree, furthermore the skills and competence that the researcher needed for the implementation of this study was enhanced through a comprehensive literature review on the topic under investigation (Strydom, 2011a:123). The researcher furthermore took part in continuous professional supervision and continuous self-assessment to ensure that she stayed cultural and gender sensitive while engaging with all the participants (Strydom, 2011a:123). The researcher also considered her ethical responsibilities and code of conduct as a registered social worker with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (n.d.). Lastly, the researcher reported negative findings and did not conduct plagiarism or use sources that are invalid and ethically irresponsible (Babbie, 2017:72; Strydom, 2011a:123).

3.2.5.7 Publication of findings

The researcher will ensure the publication of findings by providing the findings in a clear and understandable research report, available within the public domain to inform social work practice (Strydom, 2011a:126). The written mini-dissertation will serve as such a report to present the perceptions of participants concerning community violence during their adolescent years, in a comprehensible and objective manner (Bless et al., 2013:36; Strydom, 2011a:126). The researcher also openly and honestly reported the limitations and failures of the study later, without manipulating the findings (Babbie, 2017:72). The report will also be made available in the library of the University of Pretoria.

The research findings of the study and the researcher's interpretation thereof will be the focus of the succeeding section.

3.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The empirical findings and results of the study will be presented in this section. The empirical findings will be presented in two separate sections. In section A, the researcher will provide an account of the participants' biographical profile. Section B will consist of the research findings, presented in a table format with the use of themes and sub-themes. Each sub-theme will be discussed in an interpretive manner, with verbatim quotations by the participants and the integration of literature.

3.3.1 Section A: Biographical profile of the participants

The biographical information of the participants, who were interviewed during data collection was collected and is presented in the following table.

Table 3.1 Biographical profile of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Place of residence during adolescence (rural/urban/semi-urban)	Race	Highest qualification
1	20	Female	Kagiso, Krugersdorp (Semi-urban)	Black	Grade 11
2	20	Female	Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Grade 11
3	20	Female	Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Grade 10
4	24	Female	Berea, Lesotho (Rural) and Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Matric
5	20	Female	Sasolburg (Urban) and Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Matric
6	21	Female	Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Matric
7	22	Female	Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Matric
8	20	Male	Atteridgeville, Pretoria (Semi-urban) and Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Grade 11
9	20	Female	Meyerton plots, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Grade 11
10	20	Female	Sicelo, Meyerton (Semi-urban)	Black	Matric

As indicated in table 3.1, the average age of the participants was 20.7 years. Nine of the participants were female, while only one of the participants was male. All the participants resided in South Africa during their adolescent years. One participant however resided in a rural area in Lesotho and as well as in Sicelo, Meyerton. Nine of the participants lived in the Gauteng province. Participant 5 mentioned living in the

Free State as well as Gauteng during her adolescent years. Eight of the participants indicated that they lived in semi-urban areas, whereas one mentioned that she resided in a rural area and another participant lived in an urban area. All the above-mentioned participants were of the Black African ethnic group. Five participants had obtained matric as their highest qualification, while four participants attained grade 11 and one participant had completed grade 10. All the interviews were conducted in English; the researcher recruited participants by making use of the snowball sampling technique, keeping the criteria determined for purposive sampling in mind.

3.3.2 Section B: Themes and sub-themes

In this section the researcher will present and discuss the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews with the ten young adult participants concerning their perceptions of community violence in a South African context during adolescence. Six themes were identified as well as various sub-themes, which are summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: Direct and indirect exposure to community violence during adolescence	1.1 Assault with a weapon as a type of community violence 1.2 Gender-based violence as a type of community violence 1.3 Xenophobia perpetrated as a form of community violence 1.4 Protests as a form of violence in the community 1.5 Theft as a form of violence in the community 1.6 Specific times and places in the community with a high prevalence of community violence
Theme 2: Motivations for community violence	2.1 Poverty and unemployment as motivation for community violence 2.2 Lack of education as a motivation for community violence 2.3 Crime as a motivation to commit community violence 2.4 Frustration experienced by community members as a motivation for community violence 2.5 The role of media and social media as an incentive for community violence
Theme 3: Consequences of community violence	3.1 Trauma associated with an unsafe community 3.2 Influence of gangs on the community 3.3 Community members not trusting the police 3.4 Community justice, when the law is taken into own hands
Theme 4: Perceptions of factors that lead to and result from community violence	4.1 Perceptions of the role of substance abuse in community violence 4.2 Perceptions of lack of assistance when faced with danger 4.3 Perceptions of the role of culture in community violence
Theme 5: Coping with community violence	5.1 Education as a way out of current living circumstances 5.2 Isolation from friends and others to reach one's goals

Theme 6: Perceptions of community violence	6.1 Perceptions of community violence as an adolescent 6.2 Perceptions of community violence as a young adult
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The six themes and the sub-themes, presented in the table above will now be discussed. It was important to capture the true experiences of each participant, hence the researcher incorporated thick descriptions from the transcribed interviews to accurately capture these findings. Since the Gestalt theory formed the theoretical foundation of this study, the participants' experiences were also compared to existing literature within this framework.

3.3.2.1 Theme 1: Direct and indirect exposure to community violence during adolescence

The young adults in this study reported high levels of community violence during their adolescent years. The participants experienced these high levels of community violence in a direct and indirect manner. During the interviews, the researcher explored the various forms of community violence that participants were exposed to during their adolescent years.

In this theme, the forms of direct and indirect community violence encountered during adolescence will be discussed as highlighted by the participants. Furthermore, the specific times and places in the community with a high prevalence of community violence, as experienced by participants, will also be presented.

Sub-theme 1.1: Assault with a weapon as a type of community violence

In accordance with the structural strain theory, youth in highly disadvantaged communities become isolated due to broad societal imbalances and inequality, which cause relative deprivation and barriers that limit upward social mobility. This may result in exposure to direct and indirect community violence (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299). The participants in this study had varied experiences with regards to assault with a weapon. Some participants were directly exposed to assault with a weapon, while other participants had heard of individuals close to them who had been subjected to such an event. In the following section, the direct as well as the indirect

exposure regarding assault with a weapon will be highlighted. The participants expressed their experiences of direct exposure in the following manner:

“I was 13, it was here, and it was a fight. Two guys got into a fight in front of my yard and one guy stabbed the other guy with a broken bottle.” – Participant 8

“We were going to a bank to withdraw money that our uncle sent us. On our way there were two guys coming from behind and they started calling us. We didn’t look back because we were afraid as there was just two of us. So, on our way they kept calling us. They came and took our card, took us to the bank and wanted the pin. We gave them the pin because we were afraid. They took all the money from the bank, which was R1 000. They had knives. There were three men. They were older. Maybe 30 something. It is not safe.” – Participant 3

“I was coming from school late because we were studying. Then a couple of guys, about ten approached and asked to take out our phones. I was wearing a knee stretch then the other guy said if he was not at work, he would have raped me. Then my friends hesitated in giving them their phones and they beat some; then I just took out my phone and gave them and then they left...They slapped her around and then pushed her onto the gate and told her she must take out her phone. They don’t have time to waste. The other guy was busy with a knife at my side and my breast ... he would do anything to me... I felt so vulnerable because there were too many of them. I felt so helpless, I was scared, I was traumatised. I felt my biggest fear was about to take place – I felt that I was literally going to be raped.” – Participant 1

“Yes. I was passing that tavern then another guy approached me, and I didn’t want to talk to him. He threatened me with a knife.” – Participant 7

In terms of indirect exposure to assault with a weapon, the following comments were made by participants:

“My aunt told me that she was passing by, so they were fighting and fighting until someone was stabbed in his arm and knees and chest.” – Participant 7

“Someone got murdered by our street. It’s quiet there and nobody walks there. This guy was walking there during the day and got mugged and they stabbed him.” – Participant 9

“They get into a fight. They hit them and kick them brutally. Sometimes they will hit them with violent stuff. Like knives and bottles. Usually, you do not know what happens, at that moment it happens, people come and help.” – Participant 10

“They would break bottles and then stab a person with that ... Sometimes with bottles, hands, belts and whatever they could find they used it to harm a person.” – Participant 1

All the participants reported that a man or men were involved in the assault against them. This is in correlation with the study conducted by Seedat et al. (2009:1015) where they found that men were more likely to be the perpetrator of violence. These authors explain that this could be due to the dominant ideas of masculinity, which portray how a man should fight to resolve differences rather than peacefully approaching a resolution, since men are highly competitive with regards to status, power and respect (Seedat et al., 2009:1015). Boys who have witnessed violence directed against their mothers are prone to become a perpetrator in the future, while girls tend to be at risk for violent victimisation (Seedat et al., 2009:1015). The before mentioned statement seems to correlate with the findings of the current study, since most of the perpetrators were males. Seedat et al. (2009:1015) also explain that the high youth unemployment, substance abuse and carrying of weapons by men when they defend their honour often result in serious injury and death. Participant 7 mentioned that when she did not want to speak to a specific man he threatened her with a knife, hence supporting the previous statement.

Howe and Crilly (2002:15) mention how various studies in the United Kingdom have reported on the physical injuries as well as the psychological distress due to assaults. Almost half of these victims had obtained injuries of a serious nature in the face, neck and throat which could have led to an increased risk of psychological consequences (Howe & Crilly, 2002:20). Participant 3 mentioned how they felt afraid when the three men were calling them, and then how they had to give the bank card to the three men

as they were outnumbered and the men were armed with knives. She also mentioned how she felt unsafe after the event. Participant 1 similarly explained how, while she was held at knife point, she thought that her worst fear was about to take place, that she would be raped by a group of men.

It became apparent during the interviews that nearly all the participants were assaulted with knives or knew of someone who had been threatened with a knife. Statistics South Africa (2020:35) indicate that a knife seems to be the most common object used during assaults. Du Plessis et al.'s (2015:81) study likewise indicated that 89% of participants had witnessed a stabbing. A knife was found to be the weapon used most often by older adolescents in the Swart, Seedat and Nel (2015:600) study, which correlates with the information provided by the participants of this study. In the Swart et al. (2015:600) study however, alcohol was used by the perpetrators of crime with the use of a sharp object. None of the participants of this study however mentioned that the attacker was under the influence of alcohol. Participants 1 and 3 also indicated that they knew someone who were assaulted with a knife to obtain an item such as a bank card or cell phone. A knife therefore seems to be the symbol for taking something of value; this could be an item or even a life. In the section that follows it will be highlighted how women are the targets of violence and assault within the community.

Sub-theme 1.2: Gender-based violence as type of community violence

According to Seedat et al. (2009:1011) "55 000 rapes of women and girls are reported to the police every year, which is estimated to be nine times lower than the actual number." The statistics seem to correlate with the statements made by the participants as gender-based violence emerged as a strong theme when analysing the data. Most of the participants explained how gender-based violence occurred because of the culture that they had been raised in. They commented in the following manner:

"What happened was, I was at my cousin's house and my uncle and aunt always fight, it's always a thing there. So, my uncle came home and was upset about something and started physically abusing my aunt. There were instances where I see women get dragged out of their houses because they were accused of sleeping with someone else. I witnessed violent behaviour against women and children... The environment there was like, if a woman disrespects you, you have to beat her. I have seen so much

of it, that every time a woman does something she gets beaten almost on a daily basis. During my stay there, in a week's time I saw two women getting beaten.” – Participant 8

“Mostly, we used to see the men drunk and they beat the women. Sometimes the men get home from work and they want more food. They cooked the food, but it wasn't enough. But the woman isn't working and he beats her because there is not enough food cooked.” – Participant 3

“People are not taught well. They are still taught like in the days of old. They are taught that men are superior to women and that women should bow down to men ... Because they tell you that men are more powerful than women. You should always listen to a man because he is the head of the family. Men are always right. Maybe because men felt like that they have power over women and could do anything they wanted, anytime.” – Participant 2

“Right now, we are facing a pandemic, which is gender-based violence. Women are being killed for no reason. Some are killed for wanting to protect themselves, for wanting to leave toxic relationships. It's a relationship whereby you and your partner are always fighting, beating women to a pulp where they end up in hospital and women still return to that relationship – that is toxic.” – Participant 5

“They were physically and verbally abusive, sometimes hit them, but the girl will still go back to the same guy.” – Participant 6

“For me, I think they are also confused. Maybe they were taught that that act was out of love. Some believe that when you beat a girl you are showing her that you love her. Some do it for fun. It's different with guys. Some do it because of the community where they are used to seeing it so they find it as a norm ... I witnessed my friend who used to date an older guy and he used to beat her when she was talking to other guys. My friend used to say that if a guy beats you, it means that he loves you. When I was growing up this is what we were used to. I saw my mum's relationship with my stepdad where he abused her. My mum was previously married to my dad and he also abused her. Violence has been around me ... Yes. They do that a lot because they feel that

those girls will respect them. Men feel they must demand respect. If you can't give them, then you will have to, forcefully" – Participant 1

"Culture has different standards of a man and a woman. Culturally a man is more superior than a woman. He is the head of the house. He makes the decisions. A woman has no say in whatever happens in a household. Men feel like they own you and culture has allowed them to feel that way ... They'll tell you to stay. In a marriage you must be patient and how will you pay back the lobola money. Because my mum used to say that when she told her mum that my dad used to beat her, her mum used to say that she must stay and maybe he will change. And what will people say that you failed in a marriage. And what about the lobola." – Participant 1

Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:7) explain how young women are socialised in a culture of dominant discourse, and according to Baron and Branscombe (2014:365) men's role in some cultures is to be physically aggressive. Society also still has this idea that masculinity is linked to physical strength and power (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). Kaldine (2012a:295) adds to the before mentioned by stating that boys are brought up to be aggressive and dominant, while girls are taught to be dependant and submissive, which has led to the rise of their tolerance of exploitation. Participants 1 and 2 explained how men are raised to believe that they are superior when compared to women, while women are believed to be inferior when equated to a man. According to participant 1, there furthermore seems to be a belief that a man owns a woman, hence men seem to have the right to make use of violence against women. This was evident in the contributions provided by participants 1, 6 and 8. They explained that men have the right to injure women to demand respect, or when a woman has not lived up to the expectations of the man. This was highlighted by participant 3, who mentioned that in some cases women are beaten since they have not prepared sufficient food for their husbands.

In South Africa almost half of the cases due to injury as a cause of death are related to interpersonal violence (Seedat et al., 2009:1011). Participants 1, 3, 6 and 8 mentioned how women are beaten by men with whom they are in a relationship. When taking the participants' experiences into consideration it could explain why one in four women are battered by their intimate partners and are assaulted numerous times

before attempting to seek help outside of their relationship (Idemudia & Makhubela, 2011:3444). Participants 1, 5 and 6 stated that they knew of women who went back to the same man after he had abused her numerous times. In many cases, these women are often killed by their intimate partners (Slabbert & Green, 2013:234). Domestic violence, especially wife-beating often leads to murder and is more likely to occur in a young couple's marriage, in some cases where the couple was forced to get married or got married early (Graham, Bruce & Perold, 2010:57).

With the shift of the world viewing women as equal to men, various men and women's marriages are affected since conflict and tension may manifest due to traditional views and the roles of the wife (Bezuidenhout & Smit, 2013:7). It was the view of participant 1 that a man is superior to a woman and especially if he has paid lobola, according to tradition; this in turn obligates a woman to stay with the man until she has paid back the lobola. This could lead to the worsening of a woman's self-concept, as she is not in control of her own life, which was also explained by participants 1 and 2 (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:140). In the Seedat et al. (2009:1013) study, almost 70% of the women participants reported psychological abuse by their intimate partner, which included humiliation, controlling her movements, making threats of violence and eviction from the home. Participant 8 explained how he had seen various women being pulled by their hair and dragged out of their houses because they had a sexual encounter with another man, which is a form of humiliation since this act is performed outside the house for all to see.

From a Gestalt theory perspective these women could have formed introjects about themselves at a young age. An introject is a negative message that others have uttered about a person, specifically during early childhood. This person takes this message and makes it part of who they are (Oaklander, 2001:51; Oaklander, 2006:11). This message is taken from the environment without questioning or criticising (Blom, 2006:32). If a child for example does something wrong, they get spanked on the bottom to show them what they had done was unsuitable. Most of these women mentioned by the participants have been made to believe that they have less worth when compared to a man, as mentioned by participants 1 and 2. A man may also furthermore assault a woman when he perceives that she has not lived up to his expectations, as disclosed by participant 1, 6 and 8. It could be that these women's

introjects were that they had behaved inappropriately, therefore a man had the right to assault them.

Sub-theme 1.3: Xenophobia perpetrated as a form of community violence

Various participants indicated that it is viewed as acceptable to break in and steal goods from shops, where the owners are from another country. These foreigners, referred to by participants as ‘Somalians’, also seem to resort to violence in an attempt to protect what is theirs. This usually occurs during protest actions. As a result, violence is countered with more violence, which creates a cycle of violence. The following are the participants’ accounts of what happens during xenophobic attacks:

“Stealing. During the strikes, they go into the tuckshops and they loot it and take everything. I’ve seen it happen twice and see people get caught as well in the action of robbing. The tuckshop owner is powerless. Like, where I was living, there was a lot of xenophobia; no matter how wrong the looters were, the community always likes the looters. Then the tuckshop owner gets beaten and no one does anything, because he’s a foreigner. It’s gone so bad that I know of two tuckshop owners that own guns just in case crime erupts. That’s the only way to defend themselves because you can’t cry to anyone for help, because when the looters come in, they beat you and take your stuff. It’s not like one guy walking in, but a whole group of people.” – Participant 8

“They break into the Somalian shops and take the food around lunchtimes. They even close the R59 road. They get involved in a heist and stop the trucks and take whatever they can find on the trucks.” – Participant 2

“When someone steals from a shop, other people will support him because they want food. They will just break into the shop and make sure they take everything. You call others and say there are people breaking in into the shop and you help that person.” – Participant 5

“Yes, protests used to happen. Our people vandalise schools. There were xenophobic attacks where Somalians got shot. A drop shot is when they break in, take their food and beat the Somalians up. They’ll hit them, shake them, kick them, even undress them... When it happens, when I was small and they broke into a Somalian shop, I will

also go in and take their food because I thought it was something normal till I realised this is incorrect.” – Participant 1

Children who reside in communities with poor resources due to economic constraints are more likely to be exposed to community violence, as they do not have access to alternative attractive activities, such as after school facilities and sporting activities which prevent them from getting involved in delinquent activities (Salzinger et al., 2002:426). Participant 2, participant 5 and participant 8 substantiated this statement, as they mentioned how a group will join an individual to either steal from or harm a foreigner if the opportunity presents itself. This might occur as they did not have anywhere specific to be at that time, since participant 2 mentioned community members stole from a Somalian shop in the middle of the day.

Banjo and Jili (2013:253) explain that the South African youth view immigrants as a threat, because these individuals take away limited resources such as employment after school. In some townships, wealth is obtained by assets that can be readily stolen (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:363). It therefore seemed sensible to the community members, whom the participants referred to, to take items from the Somalian spaza shops, since these foreigners are seen to be the ones who are embezzling limited resources from the community members. Participant 8 specifically mentioned that the community will always side with the looters, even when they are in the wrong.

Maree (2013:75) explains that violent behaviour such as stealing, vandalism and violence has become part of numerous children's daily lives. Baron and Branscombe (2014:351) further affirm that certain individuals or groups have become appropriate targets of aggression, for example, adolescents might view violence against foreigners as acceptable due to the negative perception that foreigners are seen as stealers of resources. Participant 1 confirmed this as she explained that she also took food while community members looted a shop belonging to Somalians; she did not view this as a wrongful act at the time.

From a Gestalt theory perspective these xenophobic attacks along with stealing, looting and vandalism could have been the community members' attempts to reach homeostasis during the organismic self-regulation process. Homeostasis is a process

during which an organism endeavours to maintain its equilibrium throughout various circumstances to keep itself healthy (Blom, 2006:24; Oaklander, 2006:12). This equilibrium is reached by meeting the needs within the continuously changing environment as well as within the organism, as the organism grows within its environment (Blom, 2006:24; Oaklander, 2001:47). Certain coping strategies that the organism has put in place to obtain its equilibrium may not have restored the balance, therefore an organism will continue to find ways to do so (Kottman, 2011:63). The researcher therefore interprets xenophobic attacks as the community's attempt to self-regulate by taking part in violence to meet their needs. The Somalians contained the resources that the community members needed, such as occupations and food. The community members therefore made use of violence and looting to obtain these resources which could potentially meet the community's needs to restore the equilibrium.

Sub-theme 1.4: Protests as a form of violence in the community

The participants explained that protests occur due to a lack of services such as a scarcity of water, electricity, and housing. The description of such protests was portrayed by the participants in the following ways:

“Strikes, as it is the easiest one to start with. When I was 13, there was a big water problem here and Sasolburg which is down the road. The people of Sasolburg were very upset about it, then they started riots and strikes. They blocked this highway here and threw rocks... I have this massive tree in my front yard. I live next to the highway. There was a lady driving and they threw a rock at her, she tried to swerve out of the way and hit the tree and was badly hurt... For me, it kind of has become a norm. You get used to seeing it. So, when I heard they were striking, I just went on and minded my own business. At the beginning when it first happened, I was scared. But now, that it happens so often, I got used to it, so it does not affect me anymore ... The strike forms a distraction for a lot of other stuff to happen, like the stealing.” – Participant 8

“This one time where I used to live, people were striking for houses and electricity and even closed down R59. They even burnt the clinic in Sicelo ... I am afraid, because this other time we were in the car passing with my mum and they hit the car with a stone, ordering us to go back. Why couldn't they just tell us to go back instead of hitting

the car with stones? Those people are dangerous. There was this other time where it was said that a guy had stolen so the whole community came and stoned the guy until he was dead. It was around Sicelo, at the bridge, then they threw him down the bridge.”

– Participant 6

“People were protesting and if you don’t protest they beat you up. Not sure if they are benefitting from protesting. Some say they benefit and then there are others who bully people. I think, they just protest because they are scared to be bullied or killed ... I thought during the protests maybe they would harm us. Or the people who were passing by the street; it can be very dangerous, because they could harm or kill people ... They can beat you or stab you if you are not protesting with them ... They beat him up and then took his body and put it under the bridge... Some, they protest or hurt and injure other people because people are not hearing them... Sometimes when they are protesting, they burn down houses and churches ... Some people feel they will lose many things. If they burn down their houses, where would they get money to have a house again?” – Participant 3

“They were burning tyres and stealing from shops.” – Participant 5

“They were burning tyres, digging holes, some were fighting. They were striking for services. Electricity, water. In Janteen. I was scared. It was traumatic.” – Participant 9

“Many in my community are struggling. Sometimes as they strike, they also steal. They take soap and beer. Usually whatever the trucks have they just take it and then they burn the trucks.” – Participant 7

Individuals are willing to wait for services to be delivered, but not if it seems as though others are receiving services before them (Banjo & Jili, 2013:254). The respondents in Banjo and Jili’s (2013:261) study mentioned the following reasons for protesting: “Unemployment; RDP houses and toilets; lack of clean water, electricity and damaged roads; corruption, nepotism and imposition of councillors; lack of sporting facilities and a hospital.” Furthermore, in the study conducted by Banjo and Jili (2013:258) it was found that most violent protests amongst the youth were due to poor service delivery or a lack thereof, and unemployment due to limited job opportunities. In the current

study it was mentioned that the protestors used protests to communicate their frustration with the shortages in the community such as water, housing, electricity and health services. Participants 6 and 8 further explained how the protestors closed the R59 highway to be heard by those in power.

Participant 3 mentioned how community members feel as though their voices are not being heard and then they resort to violence. Graham et al. (2010:89) and the Right2Protest Project (2017:25) also found the same to be true in their studies, as they explain how protests have turned violent in South Africa when protestors feel that their voices are not being heard. The more the general lines of communication of repressed groups are blocked, the more these individuals will lean towards violence to let their voices be heard, to speak more loudly and gain attention (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7; Van der Merwe, 2013:77). Violence seems to have become a normative means to resolve conflict within the South African context (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:13). Systemic violence which is “violence that is perpetrated through political, economic or cultural systems” mainly contributes to the legitimisation, normalisation and approval of violence within communities (Graham et al., 2010:85). As mentioned above by participant 8, she was scared at the beginning when she first encountered a protest but now it has become the norm. Innocent and uninvolved persons are injured during protests, as the protestors attempt to be heard and understood. According to participants 3, 6 and 8, if one chooses not to take part in such protests, the protestors will threaten or injure such a person. Various participants mentioned how they themselves were injured or they knew of someone who was injured while the protests were taking place. These were individuals who were not involved in the strikes.

These protestors henceforth cause property to be damaged, such as the burning down of houses, a church and a clinic as mentioned by participants 3 and 6, along with the destruction of cars and roads, as mentioned by participants 6, 8 and 9. Furthermore, it serves as a distraction from illegal activities, such as theft. Participants 7 and 8 drew a link between protests and theft, as they mentioned that during protests people also tend to steal. These participants’ views can be linked to a statement by Habib (2020), who wrote that criminals use protests as a means to conduct criminal activities such as looting and theft. Participant 7 explained that the protestors stole beer and soap. Soap however leans more towards a basic need which in turn points towards poverty

and unemployment as a problem in this community. The Right2Protest Project (2017:25) additionally explains how a protestor is a lazy criminal who wishes to create disruption and cause destruction. All the participants conversely explained how the protestors caused some form of destruction and disruption, be it burning objects, stealing items or harming others.

Sub-theme 1.5: Theft as a form of violence in the community

The participants explained how theft often occurs within the community. Sometimes individuals steal because they do not have something, or because they are attempting to meet a need. Individuals may also steal since they are involved with the wrong crowd. The participants provided the following statements concerning theft.

“He once stole my converse. On a Sunday, I was wearing these shoes and we used to chill, then he will come there and say to us to take off our shoes. He warned us that if we tell anyone he will hit us. Obviously, you’ll get scared and not tell anyone. I was really scared of that guy. First, I thought he would hit me. If I denied him the shoes, he would take me and rape me. Such people you can’t trust.” – Participant 6

“Sometimes they rob people; especially for money so that they can buy food for families.” – Participant 3

“They vandalise by breaking the windows. We had an incident at church where they stole our speakers and our tech equipment... This one is personal. My brother was once arrested. He was involved with wrong friends. He used to steal from students because he was involved with the wrong crowd at that time. He was in prison for a year. He used to steal gadgets, money and cell phones. He was part of a gang because his friend introduced him because they call it easy money. But unfortunately, his friend died last year.” – Participant 5

“Because when they steal, they will say they like something, so when you sleep, they will break into your house. They use medicine to get you sleepy so that they can get into the house and steal and you are fast asleep... At first, they used to steal the flat screen TV. They used to say that inside, it had a powder which they used to smoke, so usually they would go into houses that had flat screen TVs. But, where I stay, our

fathers in the neighbourhood would patrol at night to prevent that. The guy who stole, is someone we knew, he would hello and how are you doing. But his grandmother loved him too much. So, if he was caught stealing and the police locked him up, the grandmother would bail him out. So next week he'll do the same thing, get caught, locked up and bailed out by grandmother.” – Participant 6

In some townships, for example, wealth is obtained by assets that can be readily stolen; individuals steal in order to obtain means (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:363). Participant 5 explained how her brother had become involved in the wrong crowd and would steal from individuals as this was a simple way to obtain money. Madienyane (2013:50) discovered that individuals will steal to support their drug use. Dastile (2013:106) also explain how boys are more likely to become involved in shoplifting and theft to feed their drug habits. This correlates with participant 6's statement of a grandson who would steal television sets to support his drug addiction. Participant 6 and participant 8 additionally referred to male individuals who stole items from others.

Participant 3 however explained that individuals will steal to fulfil basic needs such as acquiring food. This statement relates to the Dastile (2013:106) study, since they found that a person may steal due to financial and food constraints. Madienyane (2013:46) also states that the youth in communities will turn to crime such as theft to meet their socio-economic needs, since factors such as unemployment, poverty and alcohol abuse has led them to do so. Amongst the youth in schools, theft can turn into acts of violence as an individual may injure or harm a person while attempting to steal valuables from them (Graham et al., 2010:79). Participant 6 for example explained how a man tried to steal her shoes by threatening her. He stated that he would physically assault her if she did not cooperate, and she believed that he would rape her as a further punishment due to her unwillingness to cooperate, hence she acted as he had requested.

According to Oaklander (2006:12) within the Gestalt theory approach, a “young child will do anything to get their needs met.” A child however cannot obtain a job or buy food; hence they completely rely on their parents for their survival (Oaklander, 2006:12). The parents in Sicelo might not be able to meet such needs due to poverty, unemployment and a lack of resources. As mentioned by Blom (2006:25), a lack of

resources in the environment will have an impact on the child's ability to self-regulate. These children may therefore turn to inappropriate ways to attain their needs, such as theft, which could be accompanied by violence, as mentioned by participant 6. Blom (2006:26) however adds that children and adolescents' level of moral development will affect the extent to which they inhibit their own needs for the sake of others. These individuals who stole therefore put their own needs before the needs of others within the community.

Sub-theme 1.6: Specific times and places in the community with a high prevalence of community violence

Participants were of the view that community violence was more likely to take place at specific times and in certain places in their community. They mentioned that it is unsafe to walk outside during night-time when there are few people around, as this is when the most crime and violence occur. The participants' accounts were as follows:

"You don't feel safe half of the time. I would never willingly go outside for a walk at 8pm. But when I'm visiting my friends at Tyger Valley then I can go. You don't notice it, but it affects everything you do – the sense of safety." – Participant 8

"During the day and at night I don't feel safe. I felt safe outside around 3 to 5pm because it's rush hour with people coming home from work. Also safe from 7 to 8am, when it's busy with people rushing to school and work." – Participant 6

"Because at night is when it's most dangerous. There are not a lot of people on the streets. Even when you scream there are a few who will come and help you. If you are walking in the afternoons, it's better but not at night." – Participant 1

"Yes, especially at night. As a girl you don't want to walk the street at night." – Participant 10

"Since they unbanned alcohol it's very unsafe weekends. They don't just rape you, they kill you too... They were killed in the bushes. They would find their bodies in their bushes... I become very scared. And I won't walk alone in the bushes. Either I walk with many people, or I won't walk there" – Participant 3

“We should have patrollers ... It’s important if they patrol over the weekend.” – Participant 7

“There was this thing of killing small girls. The people who were killed were innocent. They were killing ladies during the weekends at nights when they were on their way from taverns. When you wake up in the morning you hear that a lady was killed somewhere.” – Participant 4

During apartheid very little effort was put in place to eradicate crime in townships, which has now led to a criminal culture and various criminal groups who resort to informal mechanisms of justice to eradicate crime (Kaldine, 2012b:311). Many poverty-stricken communities are regularly portrayed as unsafe and crime-ridden which instil a message of powerlessness, marginalisation, and a sense of despair amongst the residents of a particular community (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299). This correlates with the statement given by participant 3, as she explained that she does not want to walk alone due to various women who have been overpowered in the bushes, portraying a sense of powerlessness. In accordance with Davis (2012:44) a link can be found between the frequency of criminal victimisation, powerlessness and deprivation. Minority groups, such as women in a deprived community where men are viewed as superior, are therefore seen as culturally legitimate victims by those in power (Davis, 2012:44). In a traditionally patriarchal society such as South Africa, women and children are therefore often exploited (Kaldine, 2012a:295). As mentioned earlier, individuals will therefore resort to violence to make their voices heard, since they are hoping to gain more power (Graham et al., 2010:89), while others may fall victim to violence as a result of those in power.

Participant 7, participant 3 and participant 4 mentioned how a person was more likely to experience community violence during weekends. Pridemore (2004:1039) confirms this since he found that alcohol related homicides in Russia were more likely to take place on a Friday and Saturday, especially when individuals were socialising. Lesch and Adams (2016:171) also found that participants would take part in binge-drinking during the weekends, which would lead to a higher risk of physical injury, death or being arrested. Seedat et al. (2009:1012) also found that alcohol-related violence was more likely to occur in public spaces, during weekends and festive periods. In

accordance with the Mathews, Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin and Lombard (2009:3) study, women who were murdered during a weekend were also more likely to be intoxicated. Participant 4 also mentioned how women were being killed by men who had been drinking in a tavern. Mathews et al. (2009:3) furthermore found that if the woman was unemployed, she was more likely to be killed by her intimate partner (Mathews et al., 2009:3). This would be highly likely in Sicelo, where the participants were interviewed, as they mentioned how the community had a high unemployment rate. Participant 3 described how a woman's chances were not only higher to be sexually assaulted during the weekend, but also to be murdered.

Howe and Crilly (2002:17) found that the accident and emergency department at a hospital in Lancashire had the most victims of assault between 8pm and 4am, while almost half of these victims attended the emergency department on a Saturday or Sunday. They additionally found that the injuries during a weekend were more likely to be of a serious nature, when compared to the rest of the week. In the Gauteng province, South Africa, specifically, violence peaked on a Saturday and Sunday (National Injury Mortality Surveillance System, 2011:6). This correlates with the statements provided by participant 3, 4 and 7, as they mentioned that weekends in particular were unsafe. Participants 8, 6 and 9 explained that night-time was the most dangerous time to walk outside in their community. This correlates with the Howe and Crilly (2002:17) study as the timeframe provided takes place during the night. In South Africa the risk of victimisation increased during night-time and the early hours of the day, including the duration of weekends (Davis, 2012:43). According to the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (2011:5) most of the deaths due to violence occurred during 7pm to 10 pm, followed by 1am to 2am and finally 6am to 7am. Participant 8 and 6 provided times when it would be unsafe in the streets of the community, which was just a few hours before the onset of the proposed time in the Howe and Crilly (2002:17) study.

In this section, the researcher focussed on how the participants had been exposed to community violence, either directly or indirectly, by referring to the assault with a weapon, gender-based violence, xenophobia, protests, theft and lastly the specific times and places the participants were exposed to community violence. The

subsequent section will underpin some reasons why these participants may have been exposed to community violence.

3.3.2.2 Theme 2: Motivations for community violence

Disadvantaged communities have low levels of education, which leads to low income, high rates of substance abuse, unemployment, and violent crimes. Therefore, communities with high levels of community violence seem to experience social injustices (Savahl et al., 2013:583). In this section, the researcher will discuss how poverty and unemployment, lack of education, crime as well as the role of the media and social media have played a role to enhance community violence, within the community of Sicelo.

Sub-theme 2.1: Poverty and unemployment as motivation for community violence

Most of the participants explained that poverty and unemployment are the main reasons for community violence. The participants explained how poverty and unemployment result in individuals resorting to extreme measures in order to meet their basic needs. These extreme measures are often related to crime. The participants expressed themselves in the following ways:

“I think it is poverty and crime, also unemployment, because it is high in Sicelo.” – Participant 10

“Unemployment and poverty. If people don’t work, they won’t have anything to put on the table and feel they must rob people or rape people to relieve that stress of unemployment.” – Participant 2

“I say crime plays a role. It comes from poverty because whenever you don’t have anything to eat, you start stealing in order to provide for the family... Yes, it does. People who are poor and not educated do things without being aware that it will turn out in a bad way.” – Participant 9

“They don’t have enough qualifications hence they are unemployed. I feel sorry for people who have tried to educate themselves and do better and maybe they didn’t

succeed and committed crime, but I don't feel sorry for those who didn't even try to better their lives and commit crime. So even, if it's poverty or unemployment, I say no."

– Participant 6

"I would say unemployment because people were bored. If you are working you are focussed... If there are many people, there is more unemployment and it causes community violence. At other places where we are few, at least we can obtain jobs... They are angry because they are unemployed... If you are hungry, someone will kill someone else to get something to eat."

– Participant 4

"When there is no food or no income, people tend to go off other people, breaking into their houses etcetera. At school, there was a boy whose mum used to drink a lot and he used to bully us to give our money and lunchboxes... I'd say poverty, we are not educated enough about violence and the impact it has. Even our parents do not talk to us when they are being violated, they keep quiet. Also, we have many emotional problems that we are not dealing with which is another factor... Unemployment causes most of the problems like depression. When people are depressed, they tend to be more violent. Everything ticks them off. They are like a ticking time bomb... Yes, frustrated even for little things, for example, if you broke a glass she would get really angry. She would promise to beat you up. Sometimes she would and sometimes she would not. Because they become miserable and down."

– Participant 1

"We all come from different backgrounds and different families. There are some people who can provide for their families and some cannot and they feel like failures and this results in crime so that they can buy for their families... Because, when people are unemployed, they will find ways to get money and feed their families... When people are poor, they find ways to get money and feed their families. This results in break-ins, stealing and all those kinds of things. Because when there is crime, it results in community violence. They just find an opportunity to do what they want to do when there was no crime. For example, when someone steals from a shop, other people will support him because they want food. They will just break into the shop and make sure they take everything. You call others and say there are people breaking in into the shop and you help that person."

– Participant 5

“Yes, to an extent. The frustration of unemployment and poverty. Lots of people don’t know where the next meal is going to come from.” – Participant 8

The social inequality in South Africa has led to a large division between the rich and poor, due to the high level of income inequality (Savahl et al., 2013:583; Van der Merwe, 2013:72). This means that many South African citizens still need to gain access to services, since many citizens are still unemployed and cannot afford to pay for basic services (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253; Van der Merwe, 2013:72). Community members will hence turn to violent protests as a means to access basic services, which seems to be rising during the wintertime (Banjo & Jili, 2013:254). People will do anything, even murder someone or steal, to meet their basic needs such as food, as mentioned by participants 1, 4, 5 and 9. Participant 2 further explained that people will steal from and sexually abuse others to meet these basic needs. Participants 9 and 1 explained how people who are uneducated will make bad decisions and not realise the consequences thereof. Therefore, participant 6 believed that education is a way out of unemployment.

Maree (2013:70) is of the view that people resort to crime because of the way individuals perceive their financial situation within their social environment. Participant 8 explained how poverty and unemployment leave people feeling unsure about the future and where their next meal is coming from. In the Banjo and Jili (2013:258) study amongst participants in two townships, namely Wisselton and Siyathemba, more than 70% of the residents were unemployed, of which those between 20 and 30 years of age had the highest rate of unemployment within one of these townships. Participant 4 described that being unemployed causes a person to feel redundant and hence community members become involved in community violence. Adolescents may become violent due to an economic motivation accompanied by the excitement and desire to obtain a reputation amongst their peers (Bezuidenhout, 2013:99).

The new challenges of globalisation along with the high rates of unemployment in South Africa make the youth of South Africa feel uncertain about their future (Banjo & Jili, 2013:252). The youth too struggle to become employed as they do not have prior employment experience, which not only makes it difficult to obtain a job, but they are also not eligible to access unemployment benefits. This correlates with participant 4’s

description, when she explained that few people in the community can obtain employment, and this makes people feel angry. Participant 5 furthermore explained how people feel like failures when they cannot provide for their families and will go to great lengths to prevent this feeling. Maree (2013:72) also found that because unemployed persons cannot provide the youth with examples of professional and social success, which the youth would look up to, this in turn could force a young individual to resort to a life of crime.

Furthermore, adolescents who were raised in families with a low socio-economic status tend to experience feelings of shame, guilt and inferiority accompanied by a negative self-concept (Maree, 2013:76). Participant 1 concurred as she explained that poverty and unemployment also have psychological consequences. Kaminer et al. (2013a:321) added that community violence leads to mental health problems. From a Gestalt theory perspective, it seems possible that these adolescents make use of deflection as a contact boundary disturbance. Deflection occurs when a person avoids direct contact with the environment and other people (Blom, 2006:36). The environment and other people serve as a cause of pain, since they make the adolescent aware of their low socio-economic status, hence causing feelings of shame and inferiority. The adolescent will therefore rather avoid direct contact with the environment to avoid such pain. Schepers (2017:74) mentions that shame and guilt are the emotions on which moral development are based, since a person must take responsibility for their behaviour and wrongdoings. If an adolescent lacks guilt as an autonomous moral emotion, he/she is likely to take part in delinquent, violent and deviant behaviour, because the feeling of guilt allows an adolescent to acknowledge his/her wrongful behaviour (Schepers, 2017:74). It may however be that these adolescents react inappropriately, since they feel vulnerable and do not comprehend or know how to control their emotions, since they do not have the emotional maturity, cognitive development or inner support to openly communicate their deep-rooted emotions (Blom, 2006:37; Oaklander, 2001:49).

Sub-theme 2.2: Lack of education as a motivation for community violence

The participants explained that the people who tend to become involved in community violence are those who have not completed their education and do not comprehend the value of education. These individuals furthermore believe that the government

should hand things to them without hard work. These were the perceptions of participants based on their experiences:

“They should focus more on the serious things like their books. It is better even to stay at home. If you don’t know what to do in the streets, just stay at home, look at your books, maybe watch a movie. Do useful things other than going to the streets and doing all those things.” – Participant 10

“Sometimes, you get happy because it’s a day off. But, sometimes you are aware that you are losing out on schoolwork. Those people are not educated... I feel they if did go to school and knew the importance of education, they wouldn’t do such things. How can you tell your daughter not to go to school because we are on strike? If they knew the importance of education, they would find a way for their daughter to go to school, not say, don’t go to school because I’m striking.” – Participant 6

“To be blunt, it’s lack of education. For me, I feel like education is the centre of everything. For example, for South Africa to thrive, we need more educated people making good decisions. Because, we don’t have a lot of educated people making good decisions, then a lot of other stuff go wrong and that causes frustration in our communities, hence causing violence. I read a book about the olden days where people left home to work hard and were frustrated if their bosses did not pay them properly and then they will go home and unleash their anger on their families. Still, people have this anger against the government, still not having things, not being employed and not being educated. For example, the Pakistani and Indian people working in our communities, makes our people very angry because they feel those people are taking their jobs. But those people are entrepreneurs who are doing their job but it’s our lack of education, lack of accountability and responsibility... lots of frustration at themselves and the government, lack of resources. For example, my mum blames herself for the situation she is in. She had two choices, to be an actress or a teacher. She ended up being a teacher. She said if she had been an actress she would have lived in an estate-like area, and I would not have needed a scholarship because she would have afforded it... Because in those riots, you’ll never find someone over 30 rioting. It’s always the young guys doing nothing or didn’t finish matric.” – Participant 8

“Yes. But not always, they need to go to school to be educated. There are some people who are talented and maybe they can use their talents to further themselves. I don’t think it’s all about education... It’s about knowing who you are, and what you want in life and how are you going to achieve that.” – Participant 2

Participants 10, 6 and 8 referred to the importance of education. Graham et al. (2010:86) are of the opinion that denying a child access to education, could be placed in the same category as an act of violence, since it denies a young individual a basic human right. According to the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996:6) it is mandatory for a child to attend school until the age of 15 years or grade nine, bearing in mind whichever comes first. This does however leave adolescents with three years of non-compulsory attendance, which could be the three years during which these adolescents become involved with the wrong crowd and take part in delinquent activities, since participant 8 mentioned that it was always young people who were involved in riots. Participant 10 clearly stated that people should rather be busy with books than become involved in delinquent behaviour within the community. Those who are uneducated are often the persons who become involved in protests and who prevented those who value education from attending school, as explained by participant 6. She further stated that if they knew the importance of education, they would not have started a protest. Many young people however become vulnerable to crime, as many individuals do not have access to education (Graham et al., 2010:111). It was found in the Graham et al. (2010:47) study that adolescents are less likely to become involved in violence if they complete their school education.

Furthermore, children are less likely to be exposed to violence, internalising symptoms and intrusive thinking when their mothers have obtained a higher level of education (Bach & Louw, 2010:26). It could also be that mothers teach their children valuable life lessons such as indicated by participant 2. She mentioned that she does not believe that community violence is due to being uneducated, but rather about a person’s values and how hard one is willing to work to achieve one’s goals. Mercer (2018:181) is of the opinion that children lack prosocial behaviour when they received little empathetic care while being raised. A mother could potentially be the source that provides a higher level of empathetic care. Schepers (2017:72) explains that a person’s moral development is based on social interactions with others. If an

adolescent therefore only interacts with individuals from school and home, who are educated, as proposed by participants 2, 6 and 8, they may develop the same moral foundation. Maree (2013:75) however states that there is often not a strong moral foundation in communities. This may be since community members perceive themselves to occupy a lower status within society; therefore, they have less power and have fewer economic resources (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94). Participant 8 explained how his mother regrets the choice she had made regarding two careers. He believes that if she had decided to be an actress, she would have been able to provide a better future for herself and her son, in comparison to choosing the life of a teacher.

According to participant 8, however, some individuals believe that everything should be handed to them and they therefore have a lack of accountability and responsibility. They blame others if they cannot obtain certain means, but do not grasp the idea that they must work for what they want. From a Gestalt perspective, a person is viewed as “response-able” (Philippson, 2012:31). The term “response-able” means that individuals are responsible for themselves and the environment which they live in; in addition, the person and the environment are inseparable as well as interdependent (Philippson, 2012:31). Oaklander (2001:47) explains that children who have been raised in a dysfunctional family, experienced loss or have gone through trauma, tend to take responsibility and blame themselves for whatever has occurred. During the self-regulation process, these children tend to follow inappropriate ways of attempting to meet their needs, thus creating more chaos in their lives. An adolescent therefore must work hard and make use of the resources available to him/her in the environment to obtain a good education. It is however also their responsibility to better the educational tools provided to them for future use by other individuals within the community.

Sub-theme 2.3: Crime as a motivation to commit community violence

It is believed that a stable and secure home environment is the best prevention against the effects of community violence (Salzinger et al., 2002:428). As mentioned before, the person and the environment are independent and therefore creating a safe living environment for a child seems to be a challenging task within the community of Sicelo. It was apparent during the interviews that people will steal or go as far as to injure or

kill a person, in order to survive within this community. These were the statements by the participants, in this regard:

“Many in my community are struggling. Sometimes as they strike, they also steal... Yes, many are not working. I think they think it’s ok because it’s a way of survival... If plan A fails, then you have to come up with plan B. If you can’t find a job, then you have to look for something that you can sell.” – Participant 7

“Theft; maybe people steal because of poverty. But how does poverty cause someone to burn down a clinic and school? There are many ways of making money. You can sell tomatoes in the street. You can sell anything. So, I don’t think why would people do something out of poverty... People have worked hard to get their belongings and then you go and steal their stuff. At our church we give out food. You can always come to church and say you don’t have food. Sometimes I give out my old clothes, I don’t sell them. You can always come to me and say I don’t have this or that and I will give it to you. You don’t go around stealing peoples’ things. Go to someone and tell them the situation and get help.” – Participant 6

“Mostly, it’s the youth. Some, they do it for their families, maybe they are poor, and they do that to get them something to eat. Sometimes they rob people. Especially for money so that they can buy food for families.” – Participant 3

“I was afraid because my dad was a patroller at night and might get hurt by this guy.”
– Participant 6

Participants 3, 6 and 7 stated that community members will steal in order to obtain money for food, as they have limited resources due to poverty. As stated by Louw and Louw (2014a:423), a lower socio-economic status and other stressors such as crime or social disorganisation usually accompany community violence. Graham (2010:94) similarly explained that poverty, unemployment and the scarcity of employment opportunities have been fuelling the youth of Swaziland’s discontent, which has resulted in violence and crime. Maree (2013:74) adds that there has furthermore developed a belief that committing a crime is acceptable, just as long as the person committing the crime does not get caught. Maree (2013:75) further indicated that

behaviour such as stealing, vandalism and violence has become part of various South African children's daily lives.

In 2008, xenophobic attacks escalated due to the competition for scarce resources (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253). The South African youth view immigrants as a threat with regards to their basic needs, such as employment opportunities, which in turn leads to the immoral procurement of basic resources needed to survive (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253). From a Gestalt perspective the researcher could conclude that these adolescents were developing inappropriate behaviours to satisfy their needs during the organismic self-regulation process. This is a continuous process of an individual attempting to reach an equilibrium with regards to his/her needs in an ever-changing environment (Oaklander, 2001:47). Participant 6 commented that she does not understand how individuals could burn down a resource, such as a school or a clinic during their protests against poverty, as those were resources that could have assisted people to escape from poverty. Wikström (2006), however, manages to capture an explanation to participant 6's comment, by stating that "[i]t is only when he sees crime as an action alternative and he deliberates whether to commit a crime or not (makes a moral judgment) that the fear of consequences may affect his choice" (Wikström, 2006 in Schepers, 2017:76).

Participant 6 mentioned how her father was one of the community members who would patrol during these unsafe hours, to keep community members safe. These patrols seem to have been efforts made by community members to minimise the occurrence of crime and the effects thereof. This was a worthwhile initiative because of the restricted financial means that families have in the community of Sicelo, which result in them not being able to relocate to safer neighbourhoods (Kaminer et al., 2013b:121). These families appear to have realised the importance of holism. In accordance with the Gestalt perspective, holism means that a person cannot continue to exist without the environment; the environment serves as the source of satisfaction concerning a person's needs (Blom, 2006:22). The community members have hence taken the responsibility to meet their needs by changing the environment.

Sub-theme 2.4: Frustration experienced by community members as a motivation for community violence

The participants explained how community members often become frustrated because of their living conditions due to a lack of services, such as water and electricity. These participants further described how these community members are also more likely to take their frustrations out on others, which could potentially lead to violence. These are some of the participants' accounts:

“Let’s say you don’t have electricity and your children are going to school and you have to iron for them; you become frustrated because you really need electricity. You become frustrated too if there’s no water to bath.” – Participant 9

“We don’t have a lot of educated people making good decisions, then a lot of other stuff go wrong and that causes frustration in our communities, hence causing violence. I read a book about the olden days where people left home to work hard and were frustrated if their bosses did not pay them properly and then they will go home and unleash their anger on their families. Still, people have this anger against the government, still not having things, not being employed and not being educated. For example, the Pakistani and Indian people working in our communities, makes our people very angry because they feel those people are taking their jobs. But those people are entrepreneurs who are doing their job but it’s our lack of education, lack of accountability and responsibility... lots of frustration at themselves and the government, lack of resources... Yes. Indirectly, everyone. Directly, frustrated people, youth and people who want to make something out of their lives but in a way not doing anything about it.” – Participant 8

“If you are hungry, someone will kill someone else to get something to eat... When you are frustrated it is possible to do such things. You take your frustrations out on others.” – Participant 4

“Maybe personal issues. Some people didn’t grow up nicely, they didn’t grow up in a safe environment. So, they learnt that from home. They see someone doing something then they also get involved in it, in taking out their frustration, maybe being violent and all that... First of all, I don’t understand why they had to burn the clinic because many

people need that clinic and they still go and burn it down. My mum used to work at Sicelo Primary and few weeks ago, thieves came and stole laptops and other stuff at school. Why do they have to do that, because children need to learn and if you steal that stuff, how are they going to learn? So, I still don't understand why they had to burn down the clinic and they complain there is a long line and there is not enough service now. If they didn't burn the clinic they would have got the service they wanted.” – Participant 6

The respondents in Banjo and Jili's (2013:261) study mentioned the lack of clean water, RDP houses, electricity, toilets, sporting facilities and hospitals as the reasons for protesting. This correlates with participant 9's explanation of individuals that become frustrated due to a lack of services such as electricity and water, which enables a person to function. In the Banjo and Jili (2013:262) study, when the respondents were asked what they have identified as the leading cause for poor service delivery, all the Wesselton and Siyathemba community members mentioned corruption and nepotism. Just as in the before mentioned study, participant 8 explained how community members were harvesting anger towards the government due to unemployment and the high rate of people who are uneducated. This correlates with frustration caused by structural violence and the feeling of helplessness due to the lack of reciprocal communication. In accordance with the structural strain theory, youth in highly disadvantaged communities become isolated due to broad societal imbalances and inequality, which cause relative deprivation and barriers that limit upward social mobility that may cause community violence (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299).

Participant 8 further explained that other individuals such as the Pakistani and Indian people work extremely hard as entrepreneurs to make a life for themselves. Community members should therefore also be making plans, such as becoming an entrepreneur to sustain their families' livelihoods, which could in turn break the consequences of the cycle of societal imbalances and inequality. Participant 8 additionally mentioned that it was mostly the youth who were involved in violent protests as they did not have something to do and did not complete their matric. It was likely that these individuals referred to, were unemployed. However, in the Maree (2013:71) study some individuals aged 15 to 24 years, earned R2 100 as a monthly

salary in 2012, which could have contributed to their poverty frustration. The before mentioned therefore contradicts participant 8's account, since the youth had occupations; they however did not earn enough to meet their basic needs.

There is also a lack of privacy, which could lead to irritation within overcrowded communities (Maree, 2013:76). This could cause more violent scenes due to the elevated levels of irritation and a lack of emotion regulation. People who are frustrated are likely to take out their frustration on others which could potentially lead to violence as explained by participants 4 and 6. This could explain why Maree (2103:76) states that the arrest rate is higher in communities that are socially disorganised and poverty-stricken. Most of the individuals in the Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:14) study explained that they felt powerless and helpless when exposed to violence and conflict, which repeatedly led to feelings of rage. The individuals added that they often felt helpless and angry because of the way their family members act towards them as well as their lack of support towards them (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:17). Socially disorganised and poverty-stricken communities are regularly portrayed as unsafe and crime-ridden, which instils a message of powerlessness, marginalisation, and a sense of despair amongst the residents of a particular community (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299).

Sub-theme 2.5: The role of media and social media as an incentive for community violence

The TEARS foundation (2012) mentioned in their presentation in 2012 that mobile phones have a powerful impact within a community, as it is easier to access communication than clean drinking water. Social media has played a substantial role in the development of numerous adolescents. During 2013 most adolescents spend eleven hours per day using various forms of media, such as television, music, video games and computers (Barr-Anderson & Alhassan, 2013:130). Recent studies have shown that children spend up to nine hours per day on their phones (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018). The use of media seemed to have a positive as well as a negative influence on the participants. The following are the participants' experiences:

"Some, I saw them stabbing some thieves, their hands, their necks. Usually Facebook. It happens usually at our place. I think it was 2015 when it happened to a teenage boy

I don't know what happened at night. I think they were fighting... In the morning they went to that guy's place then they started chasing that guy and beating him." – Participant 7

"Yes. The first time I saw violence by police. At school they taught us this is abuse and against human rights. On TV, Soapies; they portray guys beating up girls. On social media you see guys beating up a girl." – Participant 1

"Last I saw video of a person getting hit by the community, but the video was deleted afterwards. I don't really know what he did wrong. It was a video that showed the community hitting the guy but not the full story from the beginning. Lately, I saw police hitting people. Everyone is on social media these days. So, people might think if he can do it so can I. It's a mentality thing... I think social media changes as times goes on. Back when I was in high school, all I used to think about, was social media. I was not into celebrities, but watch funny videos. I feel nowadays children grow faster than we used to grow. They now into things that when we were in our younger days not into. Now you would find a 16-year-old girl pregnant or smoking, but back then there were no such things... Because they influence each other. Maybe they see someone on TV holding a knife and think that this person is young to hold a knife but then, we can also do it." – Participant 6

"Yes, I am still afraid, especially now when it's winter it gets very dark. Like a month back it was posted on Facebook by a girl who said to girls to be safe especially now that it's winter and getting dark early. She said how she and her friends got raped by different guys from the security, police, lawyers etcetera. It's a place where they used to dump girls and police used to come and buy girls and rape them. Lawyers used to come and buy girls and rape them, etcetera. Her incident happened when she went to the shop to buy airtime. On her way home she met her friend and they chatted. When they decided to leave, a guy came with a gun and told them to shut up. Then they saw a car and went running to the car. The driver said get in and he will help them and take them home only to find out that the driver was working with the guy who was holding the gun. They took them to a dump and ordered them to bath and gave them miniskirts to dress into. The girls thought they were going to save them. Then they discovered

that there were planning to auction them abroad. Luckily, they managed to escape.” –

Participant 6

One of the biggest concerns today is that the continuous exposure to violence could desensitise children towards violence due to the normalisation of violence (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301). The Gestalt theory underlines desensitisation as the numbing of physical and sensory experiences that are linked to pain and discomfort experienced by a child (Blom, 2006:37). The child as an entity therefore functions separately from the environment and contact with others, hence this child has no sensory and physical contact with themselves (Blom, 2006:37). These children consequently do not possess the ability to make contact by being fully present in a situation with all aspects of the self, such as cognition, senses, body and emotions (Oaklander, 2006:22). If a child is exposed to violent media, they will for example suppress certain emotions, resulting in fragmentation of the self. Participant 6 explained that children are exposed to more violence and content that should be monitored by parents. These children often take part in crime since other individuals online are broadcasting it. In addition, confirming the perception of participant 6, Mash and Wolfe (2016:301) state that children become aroused by images of violence and want to mimic these violent images. Participants 1 and 6 explained that they have viewed police brutality online. This could lead to younger community members believing that if the police perform certain acts, they might also be inclined to do so, as they are mimicking such behaviours.

Some researchers have found correlations between the exposure to violent media and aggressive behaviour and heightened desensitisation to violence (Barr-Anderson & Alhassan, 2013:130). In the long-term, such exposure could prompt the desensitisation of violence and support violent behaviour through observational learning (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301). The results of a study conducted in 2014 indicated that the individuals who had a history of exposure to violence showed less arousal when they watched a violent film, which indicated a reduction of their emotional reactions to scenes of extreme violence (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:362). Participant 6 also explained how she thought that social media would influence people's views, such as, if a person on social media would hold a weapon, the person watching would also be more likely to make use of a weapon.

Participant 6 described how she developed a fear that she would be kidnaped and raped at night due to a story that was shared by a girl on social media of her and a group of girls who were abducted by a syndicate to sexually exploit them to high profile individuals such as policemen and lawyers. This statement correlates with the view expressed by De Witt (2017:306) that indirectly experiencing violence could instil a fear within a person that they might become a victim of violence. Baron and Branscombe (2014:362) mention how violence sells, since people view violence as exciting and enjoyable. Thus, adolescents are more likely to watch violent videos, pictures, or movies. Participants 7, 1 and 6 all mentioned how media content has highlighted violence as a way to influence individuals to acquire what they desire.

De Witt (2017:306), as well as Baron and Branscombe (2014:358), assert that a child or adolescent may display the aggressive behaviour of the character or individual that they have observed. They can also learn new skills of an aggressive nature, which can make them more aggressive and anti-social. An appetite for more violence can be created and condition the child to the violent behaviour displayed by various characters within the media. The view of participant 1 was that the media often portrayed how men abuse women. Hence children and adolescents may learn that they can become aggressive towards women, since this is highlighted in the media. Frequent exposure to violence could lead to the blunting of these adolescents' emotional responses (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Savahl et al., 2013:589). These individuals are therefore at risk of becoming insensitive and uncaring towards others while turning violent themselves (Richter et al., 2018:185). Boys could potentially begin to see a girl as his property since he can abuse her as he likes, and not feel any remorse afterwards.

3.3.2.3 Theme 3: Consequences of community violence

One of the most prevalent consequences of community violence was trauma, according to the participants of this study. There was also a concern regarding the involvement of the youth in gangs. The participants mentioned that they do not trust the police to regulate criminal activities within the community, hence they turn to community justice as a way to control such unlawful acts. The before-mentioned factors could result in the desensitisation of children and adolescents concerning community violence (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Savahl et al., 2013:589).

Sub-theme 3.1: Trauma associated with an unsafe community

The development of the brain's functioning and organisation could be negatively affected if children are exposed to neglect and trauma during the first four years of their life (Perry & Hambrick, 2008:40). Unfortunately, due to the high unemployment and poverty rates faced by many South Africans, many individuals are exposed to trauma and neglect at a young age. However, if an adolescent has various meaningful relationships, the more likely they are to be resilient and recover from the effects of trauma (Smyth, 2017:17). These were the statements provided by some of the participants concerning trauma:

“Another thing that causes violence is the exposure to violence and as young children in the Black community we don’t go to psychologists to speak about our problems. We just live with it and that thing grows inside of you and you become a bitter and violent person. We don’t get psychological assistance and we need it because we are very depressed inside. We just put on a front that we are fine because that’s how we were taught, that whatever happened must pass... Making other people feel bad about themselves, hurting other people physically or emotionally. I myself, when I get a job, I want to go to a psychologist because many emotional stuff happened around me and now I don’t know what’s right and what’s wrong. I don’t know what’s normal and what’s not... I think it affects everyone because once you see something it actually stays in you and traumatises you. Some don’t show that it affects them, but it actually does. Yes. I cry sometimes. I give up easily these days, yet I was not a person who used to give up easily. I’m not optimistic anymore, I am very negative. I don’t get excited anymore, because I feel like if I get excited things will go bad. I leave the space for disappointment... It does influence your motivation to live. Sometimes, you think, why put in the work, maybe tomorrow I am going to die... I used to be very bubbly, optimistic and had dreams larger than life, but now I’m very negative and scared. Now there are a lot of emotional things happening inside of me and now I feel sad.” – Participant 1

“Young people become scared of their lives... In this community, we don’t know if we are raising a future president or a future somebody because of the trauma growing up in the community. As children we are not all the same. Some people become sensitive very easily and become traumatised.” – Participant 5

“I was beaten and I was raped. Yes, at home and by someone I know. They were staying in the same yard as us. I treat everyone as my family and that’s how I treated them. He pretended to be my brother. He’ll pretend to be good and fetch me from school, when I was 5 or 6 years old. Much older than me... In his home because no one was around, and my mum was at work and my sister was at school. He will scare me with a stick and say that if I tell anyone he will beat me... I didn’t know what to do at that time.” – Participant 2

“They swear at the girls or accuse them, saying maybe that is not my baby. Then the girl will dump the baby somewhere else. They will dump them on the grounds so that someone passing by will see the baby. Or they will hear the baby crying. Sometimes they know when a dog is playing with the baby. Some wrap the babies in plastic and leave them and they die... I was traumatised but there is nothing you can do... No, the baby was just lying there. A guy was passed, and he saw a dog holding an umbilical cord and eating it. When he went there, he saw it was a baby, but it was already dead. Then the body was sent to the mortuary... There’s only one memory of that baby lying there – that is the most traumatic thing I have seen... I got to speak to someone to talk about those experiences because speaking to someone sometimes, it helps. My mother’s sister is a nurse so you can talk to her if something bad happens. Like, two months ago I was involved in a car accident – so I talk to her about lots of things to overcome the trauma” – Participant 6

“Many times. It even happens at my place. Whereby there was this other guy who was with us the whole day, then later, his friend came and took him to the tavern to ask for change. When they reached there, they fought until they stabbed him – then the guy went to my house and died there at the door... Yes, I didn’t sleep at home. At my sister’s place. I was 15... I was so depressed because after a week I saw the same thing happen again, because we stay near the tavern... It was 2018, when we woke up and we found someone next to our yard laying there. He had been stabbed... Sometimes over the weekend if they killed someone, I couldn’t concentrate at school. It would come more often in my mind... Constant alert, cannot relax. Feel like something bad is going to happen around any corner.” – Participant 7

Exposure to violence often leads to trauma, which could potentially lead to mental health problems (Kaminer et al., 2013a:320). Du Plessis et al. (2015:81) believe that poly-victimised individuals are at a higher risk to obtain a mental health problem, compared to individuals who have been exposed to only one form of violence. These mental disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety could all be a consequence of community violence (Bach & Louw, 2010:26; Louw & Louw, 2014a:421). Lambert, Nylund-Gibson, Copeland-Linder and Jalongo (2010:300) on the other hand found that adolescents were more likely to take part in delinquent behaviour and community violence due to depression and impulsivity. Participant 1, however stated that people in the community do not speak about their problems to professionals or even to a lay person. She further explained how she believes that they need to consult a psychologist, since they often become depressed or violent, which leads to more community violence. Participant 6 agreed with the before mentioned, as she explained that speaking to her mother's sister, who is a nurse by profession, helped her to work through the trauma of a vehicle accident she had been in, as well as other traumatic experiences she had previously experienced. One of these traumatic experiences included finding a dead new-born baby, who was discovered in the field when a dog was eating the baby's umbilical cord.

Some studies conducted in North America indicate that individuals are more vulnerable to develop mental health disorders when they have been exposed to community violence frequently and reside in a violent home environment (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81). Participant 2, for example, reported that she was sexually abused and beaten by someone she knew, who, at the time, resided in the same yard as her family. This person was like a brother to her and her family members, however he misused this position to sexually abuse her within her home environment. Participant 7 also explained how her home environment was disturbed as she provided some insight into living next to a tavern. On one account she found a man who was known to them, stabbed to death right by their front door. She also explained how they found another dead body in front of their yard, when they woke up one morning; this person had also died due to stab wounds. It is therefore not surprising that almost a third of the respondents in Du Plessis et al.'s (2015:81) study have witnessed a murder or have been threatened by a weapon, while 89% witnessed a stabbing. Shields et al. (2009:1203) believe that children who witness violence against an individual whom

they know, experience more trauma, as in the case of participant 7. Bach and Louw (2010:26) assert that both, being a victim or witnessing violence are traumatic experiences that can be linked to depressive symptoms.

Participant 1 and 7 both explained how they struggled to concentrate on their schoolwork after they had experienced a traumatic event. According to Hsiao et al. (2018:4) an adolescent's higher cognitive functioning, such as problem-solving, communication and decision-making is impeded when he/she encounters trauma, which could lead to poor school performance and an inability to apprehend all the factors at play within a particular situation. Porges and Carter (2017:222) refer to the Polyvagal theory with regards to trauma and the body. As a result, any traumatic experience is stored in the non-verbal memory, where it remains disconnected but entwined with other developmental experiences. This traumatic experience is activated when the person perceives an event to be the same as the previous trauma experienced (Smyth, 2017:49). Participant 1 explained that trauma stays within you and affects you even though you might not believe this to be true. Participant 1's explanation relates to what Gestalt theory describes as desensitisation. Desensitisation can be described as "the process whereby children exclude themselves from sensory and physical experience related to aspects such as pain and discomfort" (Blom, 2006:37). A child or adolescent may therefore not be able to concentrate at school, since they do not have physical or sensory contact with themselves due to previous experiences such as trauma (Blom, 2006:38). If an adolescent does not create contact with the here-and-now, aspects such as their intellect, emotions, senses and their body could be impeded (Oaklander, 2006:22).

Participant 1 also described how a person begins to develop a warped sense of reality concerning what is right and wrong. She furthermore stated how it changes your outlook on life in a negative light. Participant 5 added how a person becomes very unsure about the future due to community violence that causes trauma. This could be since the exposure to community violence often leads to symptoms of PTSD (Shields et al., 2009:1194). Children who are diagnosed with PTSD "have experienced events outside the realm of normal human experience that are often perceived by children as life threatening" (Smyth, 2017:54). Hence, they make use of dissociation to survive within their environment, as this state allows the brain to prepare the body for harm,

thus attempting to maximise the body's possibility to survive (Smyth, 2017:52). Although various children make use of dissociation, professionals do not see these children, due to the community that tends to regard them as odd, but does not regard them as a problem within the community, to the extreme that they have to seek professional help (Smyth, 2017:54). They consequently do not receive the help they require, and are continually being exposed to community violence, without learning to deal with the effects thereof.

Sub-theme 3.2: Influence of gangs on the community

Burton and Leoschut (2013:57) believe that a high incidence of gang activity within an adolescent's community is a risk factor that could lead to youth violence. Maree (2013:84) however states that there are six factors which lead to gang membership, such as the lack of parental or caregiver supervision, early on unruly behaviour, adverse life events, delinquent peers, antisocial views, and dedication towards offending peers. The participants of this study however indicated careless or uninvolved parents and a need for acceptance and fame as the main reasons for gang membership. This led these individuals to take part in fights at school and stealing from others, which resulted in them hurting those they care for, as well as not completing their education. The participants provided the following statements:

"There are a lot of gangs. I'd rather stay out of the way. In gangs, this is how it works – you pick a fight. Sometimes you die for something you didn't do but your friend did it. It's the same. Some gangs also do crime. They rob people, beat people, rape people. For them it's fun. And in school, some girls enjoy dating gang members. I heard stories of some girls got raped by gangs. Maybe she was dating that boyfriend and that boyfriend says she must sleep with that entire gang. Very big gang, maybe 16, 17 even 20 something people. Yes. They will rape you forcefully. It's either they rape you willingly or forcefully. There are also girl gangs now, maybe if we were a girl gang group they would try and take girls to form part of our girl group." – Participant 1

"Gangs are those who like to be seen and like to be famous. They do all those things so that people can praise you. In our society, if you do something bad, people praise you and it means you are a man." – Participant 2

“I would tell her that she must be careful who she talks to and who she joins on the road, and not to join the protests and the gangs, because the gangs, if they don’t kill you, they’ll kill someone who knows you.” – Participant 3

“This one is personal. My brother was once arrested. He was involved with wrong friends. He used to steal from students because he was involved with the wrong crowd at that time. He used to steal gadgets, money and cell phones. He was part of a gang because his friend introduced him because they call it easy money. But unfortunately, his friend died last year... Oh! I am very afraid of the gangs. Especially, since my brother was involved in a gang... No, I was not part of it. I am really glad that he served his time in prison. I really didn’t encourage him to steal etcetera. For example, gangs, before they commit a crime, they have a meeting to discuss the way forward on how they are going to break in, how they are going to steal things, etcetera.” – Participant 5

“Gangs usually attack schools, they call themselves, wrong turns, or left turns. Where I used to attend school one learner died because of these gangs. These parents, instead of encouraging their children to stop they will tell their kids, they hit you yesterday you must go back and hit him today. When they go back to hit him, they use those big knives or pangas.” – Participant 6

“During gang fights, many people die, or get injured. It affects the community in a very bad way.” – Participant 9

“Well, it affects them like really bad because some become involved in gangs and then they don’t take their education seriously. They start even giving up on school and they think it’s better to be in a gang and do bad things. They then think that school won’t take them anywhere then they go to gangs and do bad things.” – Participant 10

Children as young as 13 years of age are being recruited to join gangs (Mncube & Harber, 2013:43). Participant 6 stated that parents are to blame for children becoming involved in gangs, as they encourage violence because they teach their children that if someone hurts you, violence is the answer. Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008:301) affirm that parents who are traumatised themselves due to violence within their

environment tend to be less able to safeguard their children from harm, since they themselves are overwhelmed by multiple stressors such as economic and social scarcity. Single-headed households tend to be associated with low socio-economic communities, which are linked with a high level of gang activity (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81). In poverty-stricken communities, aggressive gang leaders are the individuals who young people look up to (Meyer & Chetty, 2017:123). In addition, the youth lack empathy as a result of harmful role modelled behaviour (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:12). Burton and Leoschut (2013:53) found a correlation between the violence children are exposed to within their homes as well as communities and school violence.

The increase of gang-related activities in schools has prompted the Western Cape's Department of Education to implement programmes to curb violence within schools, such as the positioning of Metro police within designated schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:23). Participant 1 explained how the violence and fights in schools were gang related. Participant 6 stated how a boy was murdered at school by gang members. These fights were due to the attainment of territory as well as the quarrels concerning the girls who were dating the gang members. Participant 1 further described how a girl is sometimes raped by the entire gang and this girl will have two choices; either she is forcefully raped by the entire gang, or she willingly allows the rape. Vetten and Haffejee (2005:31) stated that women are 70% less likely to report a rape that occurred where more than one perpetrator was involved. They found that men use gang rape as a form of punishment if a woman was unfaithful, or to assist her to know her place when she thinks that she is 'unobtainable'. In addition, gang rape is used as an initiation to form part of a gang (Vetten & Haffejee, 2005:31, 32). Gangs moreover change their modus operandi from criminal activities, such as stealing, to rape exclusively as they become more established (Vetten & Haffejee, 2005:32).

It is difficult to estimate the activity of gangs within a particular area as memberships and composition are constantly changing, which result in inaccurate statistics (Shields et al., 2008:590). Maree (2013:68) explains that gang membership is strongly associated with future crime, especially among adolescents. Participant 1 confirmed this statement by describing how gang members tend to steal. Participant 5's brother was also involved in a gang and was sentenced to prison due to illegal activities, such

as stealing. On the one hand, Kaminer et al. (2013a:327) and Maree (2013:84) found that adolescent boys are more likely to become involved in youth gangs. This was also confirmed by the two before mentioned statements. On the other hand, participant 1 clarified how girls have also begun to acquire membership in youth gangs. She further added that girls are being recruited at school to join these girl gangs.

Various adolescents are often excluded from groups and thus tend to seek acceptance and belonging from others (Booyens et al., 2013:54; Smyth, 2017:106). Adolescents hence become involved in gangs as this provides them with a sense of belonging (Mncube & Harber, 2013:5). These members come together due to familiarity, which provides them with self-protection, nurturing and belonging (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015:444). Thus, an adolescent can find a sense of identity and belonging, since they feel as though they are welcome and safe and part of something (Smyth, 2017:57). The Gestalt theory however emphasises confluence as a contact boundary disturbance. Oaklander (2006:8) highlights the importance of a person to be a separate entity apart from others. In a gang however, these adolescents could take on the identity of the gang as their 'self'. The adolescent's identity and that of the environment, in this case, the gang become undistinguishable (Blom, 2006:34). Stealing for example becomes part of who they are, since their morals and beliefs as individuals are put aside. Participant 2 explained how the members of a gang want to be famous and therefore become involved in illegal activities. Youth gangs reward individuals for being violent by obtaining a higher status amongst their peers and provide them with spoils (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). These gangs furthermore serve as a surrogate family, which has a negative impact on the adolescents' morals and norms, as the norms at home become less significant (Booyens et al., 2013:54). Participant 3 described that if the members of the gang or the gang activity itself does not kill you, it will kill a loved one. Hence one's fame could be at the cost of a loved one's life. Participant 5 confirmed this as she mentioned how one of her brother's friends was killed in a gang related activity. According to participant 9 individuals die in gang related activities and this affects the community in a negative way.

School children for example become involved in gangs and do not pursue a higher level of education, as mentioned by participant 10. Furthermore, two types of youth gangs come into existence because of social needs or benefits. A cultural gang comes

into being within a particular community due to the adolescents' social needs (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015:444). An entrepreneurial gang tends to form, due to the benefits associated with the drug and criminal business enterprise (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015:445). This again relates to poverty within communities in an attempt to obtain goods and services that are out of their reach, which could provide a teenager with status.

Sub-theme 3.3: Community members not trusting the police

The youth who are exposed to community violence often do not trust others. This might seem to be a negative trait; however, it is appropriate when there is a chance of being exploited by others (De Witt, 2017:334; Smyth, 2017:56). It therefore seems reasonable that the participants felt that they could not trust the police. However, the South African Police Service (SAPS) should safeguard the community, therefore individuals should feel that they can trust them. These were the verbatim quotations provided by the participants:

"I feel anxious when a girlfriend and boyfriend is fighting. When I get scared is when the fights are no longer just slaps but there are guns, knives and ambulances. A tenant of mine who used to stay in the backroom – she and her boyfriend used to fight, and she used to beat up her boyfriend. Police would come and just take statements and go back. Police don't even arrest people. They just counsel you and say what you are doing is wrong and just leave the people there. I don't know, maybe they feel that they'll always go back to their abusers, but I still feel like action should be taken. They should go to jail, because if they don't go to jail then they don't see that what they are doing is wrong... The police don't help anymore." – Participant 1

"They were just fighting for alcohol and started stabbing each other. When they called the police, they took hours to come so the other one died. I just called the police, but they took long to come." – Participant 3

"The one with the palisades, I just waited a little bit longer until the police arrived, and thereafter, I just went back home. When they arrive, I think they did arrest the people who beat up the guy who was stealing. The police – they can't be trusted in a way. Say, if someone is breaking into a house and robbing, you can call the police, but they

will arrive after the incident. That's why sometimes people take matters into their own hands, because they can't trust the police." – Participant 5

"When the police came and if they shot at them, I was scared." – Participant 9

"It's mostly a section of the community especially at the shacks – those people are dangerous. They close the R59 and even when the police come and spray teargas, they will still return the next morning and strike... It was part of the shacks. He stole something from one guy and that guy got furious and hit him then the whole community got involved. Even the helicopter was circling around trying to stop them, but couldn't. The police tried and also failed because of the angry community... I don't really know what he did wrong. It was a video that showed the community hitting the guy, but not the full story from the beginning. Lately I saw police hitting people." – Participant 6

"The factual reality of policing in South Africa is that the state agency is under-staffed, under-resourced and, by obvious deduction, over-worked"; these police members are also not adequately trained, as suggested by Singh (2005:44). The police do not do anything concerning violence according to participant 1. More than half of the respondents who reside in Gauteng, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal in the Victims of Crime Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2017) reported that police laziness was one of the main reasons for their dissatisfaction with police members. Furthermore, the visibility of SAPS officials has declined during the period, 2011 to 2016. It is important to note that various South Africans pay private security companies to ensure their safety, however this is a luxury that numerous South Africans cannot afford due to a lack of income.

Participant 3 stated how they waited for hours after calling the police. She described how one person was stabbing another with a knife, and due to the police not arriving in time, the person did not survive. Participant 5 also mentioned that the police cannot be trusted since they will arrive long after the criminal activity has taken place. Another main reason why South Africans were dissatisfied with the police, was that apart from not responding in time, they often do not come out to the specific area (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Almost 30% of the respondents of the Victims of Crime Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2017) said that they waited almost an hour for the police to respond to

an emergency situation, while the other 30% stated that they waited for more than two hours, whereas some respondents even indicated that the police never arrived. Singh (2005:46) discovered that the police often do not have the resources to assist in an emergency. For example, some of the respondents in the before-mentioned study stated that even when they as the residents caught a criminal and called the police, the police have limited vehicles to come and arrest the criminal. Participant 6, however mentioned that the police deployed a helicopter to assist during a community justice attack on an individual, however not even a helicopter was a deterrent to stop the community during their outrage.

Kaldine (2012b:307) mentioned that the attitudes of officials concerning the use of lethal force by police have raised concerns amongst various South Africans. According to Bruce (2002:4) police brutality occurs when “members of a police service use force unlawfully.” Participant 6 mentioned that she saw police hitting individuals on social media, while participant 9 mentioned members of the police, shooting protestors. The SAPS have been in the news on various occasions due to police brutality. One of the biggest events in the media was the Marikana Massacre on 13 and 16 August 2012, where various protestors were shot with live ammunition by the tactical response unit of the SAPS at the Lonmin mine (Marikana Commission of Inquiry, 2015:10). These protestors were not viewed as a threat and “[m]ore or less 270 mine workers were [i]njured and [a]rrested” during this time (Marikana Commission of Inquiry, 2015:10, 247). Another example was of a sixteen-year-old boy who was diagnosed with Down-syndrome, who was killed by police in Eldorado Park, Johannesburg. This unarmed boy was killed with a shotgun by one of the three police officers at the scene, without any provocation towards the police officers, according to the witnesses (Egwu, 2021).

Sub-theme 3.4: Community justice, when the community takes the law into their own hands

It is within a community that an adolescent discovers who he/she is on the quest towards adulthood (Jacobson, 2011:61). Adolescents discover who they are by observing other people’s behaviour in the community. Baron and Branscombe (2014:351) explain that adolescents can learn aggression in various ways, such as the way the community members react to people who steal within the community and also when to inform the police regarding such acts. This has therefore led to various

individuals who have witnessed such violent acts. The participants provided the following accounts:

“There was this guy who stole from another guy and when he got to the community, they beat him up. They tried to kill him, but the police arrived.” – Participant 5

“I was at home. I think I had just finished writing my trial exams. Then I heard my aunt screaming from outside calling my name, ‘K wake up, they want to kill someone’. I just woke up and went there. I saw this guy where the people took this palisade fence and beat this guy with that. They said that he gets into the house and robs people, vandalises property and breaks in. They were just there and encouraging it. I really didn’t do that much because at that time I was still considered a child, still in school. Then there was this other lady who told us that if we break in, this is what is going to happen to us.” – Participant 5

“It was part of the shacks. He stole something from one guy and that guy got furious and hit him; then the whole community got involved. Even the helicopter was circling around trying to stop them, but couldn’t. The police tried and also failed because of the angry community... There are those people who see someone getting hit and they will encourage others to hit that person.” – Participant 6

“Usually Facebook. It happens usually at our place. I think it was 2015 when it happened to a teenage boy. I don’t know what happened at night. I think they were fighting. In the morning they went to that guy’s place then they started chasing that guy and beating him... Yes, he was dead. He was dead because they were throwing bricks on his head.” – Participant 7

“I haven’t seen people physically breaking in, but I have seen them getting caught. The community usually takes action. The last person I saw, they chained him up and beat him with sticks.” – Participant 8

“That’s what they do in Sicelo, they kill you if they find out you are stealing or raping etcetera, because they feel that the police are not doing their job. I’ve heard of a boy

who stabbed someone's father, and the community found him at his house next day and hit him with stones and bricks until he died." – Participant 9

It may be that the youth resort to violence as a form of self-defence and accordingly experience both individual and collective trauma (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). In poorer communities, numerous South Africans rely on vigilantism to deal with criminals (Singh, 2005:48). Participant 5 explained how she witnessed a person being beaten to death by community members because this man stole from other community members. Participant 6 also had the same experience, since the community became involved when one man stole from another man. Participant 8 also provided the same account. Singh (2005:45) made a list of repetitive similarity concerning community justice in the community. The list included that both the victim and perpetrators were of the African race group, from an economically deprived population; the settlements were rural to semi-urban. These identifying particulars were similar to that of the participants of this study. Clark (2018) however found that the people who took part in community justice in the Cape Flats, were all from mixed racial heritage. It therefore seems that a poorer community with rural to semi-urban housing seems to be the source for community justice. In the Singh (2005:45) study, the victim allegedly committed a crime, while the perpetrators were members of the community against whom the crime was committed; the purpose was to bring justice due to the suspected wrongdoing.

Singh (2005:46) described that many poorer Black communities consisting of rural and semi-urban settlements, usually do not have proper roads, streetlights or maintained pathways. Hence the police are afraid to patrol such areas as the police themselves fear an ambush or attack after dark. Participants 6 and 9 mentioned how the police are involved but cannot help the person when the community take policing into their own hands. This could be due to the limited availability of resources accessible to police members, such as vehicles (Singh, 2005:46). Participant 5 however mentioned that the police were able to stop community members from killing an individual who stole from others. In Blikkiesdorp, residents were going as far as to ask for the gang to come back into their community, since vigilante groups were out of control in the neighbourhood (Clark, 2018). With regards to the Gestalt theory, figure-ground forms part of the organismic self-regulation process. According to Blom (2006:24, 25), figure

is viewed as the most important aspect or need which captures a person's attention at a certain moment, while ground is the background of a person's experience during a specific point in time. As part of the community's self-regulation process, the community of Blikkiesdorp turned towards gangs to bring about homeostasis, due to the vigilante groups who went too far in perpetrating community justice. The community therefore viewed the uncontrollable vigilante groups as the figure, and other problems related to community violence as the ground. Asking gangs to come back into the community however could be viewed as an inappropriate process of self-regulation, which could cause further problems within the community (Oaklander, 2006:12). In the community of Sicelo, community members seem to have previously turned to the police, but recently community members have taken justice into their own hands, due to the limited resources of the police as well and the community members' inability to be controlled. Their figure therefore seems to be the inability of the police to protect the community of Sicelo.

Participants 5, 6, 7 and 8 have all witnessed community justice occurring within the community. According to the social learning perspective, humans are not born with aggressive responses, but rather acquire these responses through direct exposure or by observing the behaviour of others (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:351). Therefore, depending on adolescents' experiences or culture, they each learn about aggression in a different way. The culture and ethnic background of adolescents influence their perception about their future and the opportunities that are available to them (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94; Jacober, 2011:92). Baron and Branscombe (2014:351) explain that adolescents can learn aggression in various ways. Firstly, certain individuals or groups have become appropriate targets of aggression, for example, adolescents might view violence against a person committing a crime, such as stealing, as acceptable as they are labelled as the stealers of resources, as mentioned by participants 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Secondly, there are various ways in which one can harm another, for example hitting a person to death with bricks and stones as mentioned by participants 7 and 9. Thirdly, there are certain situations or contexts during which aggression is acceptable. All the above-mentioned participants stated that it is justified according to community members to beat a person to death if they stole something or hurt someone, to ensure justice.

Sub-theme 3.5: Desensitisation as a consequence of community violence

It has become a cause for concern that due to children and adolescents' exposure to various forms of violence, children have become desensitised to violence and the effects thereof. The participants of this study provided the following statements concerning desensitisation within the community of Sicelo:

"Community violence is not a good thing but still people have no say because Government is not doing anything about it. You get used to it." – Participant 2

"Yes, now it's a norm. Like walking past and seeing someone holding a gun at someone; you just walk as if nothing happened. Because, if you interfere then they'll hold the gun against you." – Participant 6

"I think as it happens more and more, they become used to it, like desensitised." – Participant 7

"For me, it kind of has become a norm. You get used to seeing it. So, when I heard they were striking, I just went on and minded my own business... I believe if you see something more than enough, it becomes normal. Because people are exposed to community violence, they become used to it. And if they are placed somewhere where there's no community violence, they become uncomfortable. That's why the Black kids who live in Pearl Valley will not understand the guy who comes from the township. He is used to this happening every day and if he doesn't see it, it's weird. If he's used to it not happening and when it does happen, he'll feel fear." – Participant 8

"Yes, because if they do it more frequently, they get used to it. It's something normal to them." – Participant 9

"I did not really think about it. Not because I didn't care. It was just because the way it happened. In your mind it was an everyday thing, even though you didn't see it, you would hear people talk about it. This happened there and this happened there. You would just ask yourself so many questions that you just not have the answers to." – Participant 10

In a study conducted by Aisenberg et al. (2008:1563), children and adolescents were more prone to develop symptoms of PTSD when exposed to any form of community violence without a weapon. This statement highlights that community violence without the involvement of a weapon can be just as harmful to adolescents with regards to their physical as well as emotional wellbeing. Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:6) note that there has been an increase amongst the youth in the range of anti-social behaviour due to structural violence experienced within their community. This may be, for as mentioned by all the above-mentioned participants, people have become used to community violence taking place all around them. Hence these individuals feel that violence has become a part of their daily lives. From a Gestalt perspective, it could be that these participants have made use of desensitisation as a contact boundary disturbance. As Blom (2006:38) explains, children who have been abused or who have experienced trauma, attempt to protect themselves from others who could potentially hurt them, by desensitising themselves. Another way children attempt to protect themselves is through resistance. Resistance is a child's way to make contact with the world and survive (Oaklander, 2006:23). It is furthermore a child's way to indicate that they have gone as far as they could emotionally at that moment in time (Oaklander, 2001:49). The before mentioned anti-social behaviour could therefore be a symptom of resistance or desensitisation.

One of the biggest concerns today is that the continuous exposure to violence could be desensitising children towards violence due to its normalising nature, as children may become aroused by images of violence and want to mimic these violent images (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301). Frequent exposure to violence could lead to the blunting of these adolescents' emotional responses (Du Plessis et al., 2015:81; Savahl et al., 2013:589). This process is known as hedonic adaptation, which indicates that people have the ability to completely adapt to particular negative situations but can only partially adapt to other experiences (Savahl et al., 2013:598). These individuals are therefore at risk of becoming insensitive and uncaring towards others while turning violent themselves (Richter et al., 2018:185). Participant 6 and participant 8 however explained that they did not become involved in violence, although they became accustomed to such violence taking place within their community on a daily basis.

Previous research shows that children who constantly witness community violence within their communities are more prone to internalise behaviours, have psychological problems and are more likely to use substances (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:300; Heleniak et al., 2017:231). Previous studies have found that both witnessing and direct victimisation within the adolescent's community contribute to psychological distress (Bach & Louw, 2010:26; Kaminer et al., 2013a:321). As mentioned, there are internalising, and also externalising effects related to community violence (Savahl et al., 2013:582). There seems to be a correlation between negative mental health consequences and criminal victimisation of individuals living in poverty (Collings, 2016:94). Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008:297) agree with this statement, since they found that adolescents who have been exposed to community violence are more inclined to showcase emotional and behavioural issues, which often lead to enactment of violence in the future. Participant 8 described this well as he mentioned that a person who is frequently exposed to community violence would feel restless and uncomfortable if they should be removed from a community where community violence is prevalent. Hence a person might become involved in behaviour which goes against the norm to create the same level of excitement experienced within a violence engulfed community.

Trauma, the influence of gangs, community members not trusting the police and therefore taking justice into their own hands, were all mentioned by the participants as a consequence of community violence. The perceptions that the participants had of factors which could lead to community violence should therefore be discussed.

3.3.2.4 Theme 4: Perceptions of factors that lead to and result from community violence

It is human nature to not exist alone (Jacobson, 2011:60). Jacobson (2011:60) therefore argues that a person's survival depends on the maintaining of cooperative and protective groups within one's community, since people are interdependent on one another. Within the community, its members form perceptions about substance abuse, culture and the lack of assistance with regards to community violence. These perceptions form the sub-themes that will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

Sub-theme 4.1: Perceptions of the role of substance abuse in community violence

Substance abuse seems to have an influence on the perceptions of community members with regards to community violence. Individuals find it acceptable to make use of substances to cope with the effects of community violence. Substances however also lead to more community violence as people become aggressive and start to take part in criminal activities. The participants provided the following descriptions which indicate that substance abuse leads to community violence:

“People go to church on Sunday and rest. Usually on a Friday and Saturday is when most violence takes place because most are drunk. They fight about stupid things, for example, like you stepped on my foot; things that they are not supposed to fight over. My house was two houses away from a tavern” – Participant 1

“People obviously go to drink and come back fighting. Or maybe a mother and father go out to drink and return home and beat up their children.” – Participant 2

“Mostly, we used to see the men drunk and they beat the women. Sometimes the men get home from work, and they want more food. They cooked the food, but it wasn’t enough. But the woman isn’t working, and he beats her because there is not enough food cooked... A woman beat up her child who was 3 or 4 years old. She just kicked the child and the child started bleeding. No. She was drunk.” – Participant 3

“Breaking into shops and vandalising. Those that take weed and alcohol do this.” – Participant 5

“At first, they used to steal the flat screen TV. They used to say that inside, it had a powder which they used to smoke, so usually they would go into houses that had flat screen TVs... No people who just have babies or hit someone in the community are not drunk always. People drink just to have fun. I never heard a person say that they got drunk and got raped etcetera. Example, when you hear of a serial killer raping someone, he didn’t go and get drunk to do that. So, I wouldn’t say that alcohol abuse has that much impact” – Participant 6

“Young kids start at an early age, drinking beer – it’s called alcohol abuse because they drop out of school. But it starts at home. When people drink, they can’t think straight.” – Participant 7

“Alcohol abuse make people do things they were not supposed to do, then they regret it. As youth, it influences us very badly because you start stealing because you have cravings, you drop out of school and start smoking. They do dagga and nyope, and all of these drugs... Like those who smoke become addicts, they drop out of school, they start living in the streets. Families can become traumatised because their loved ones are on the streets and are addicts...Young people don’t feel safe anymore.” – Participant 9

Heavy social drinking is an accepted norm in South Africa and various people take part in such behaviour (Mathews et al., 2009:7). Lesch and Adams (2016:171) state that an assumed male friendship rule in the Western Cape is to consume large volumes of alcohol with friends in a group setting. Pridemore (2004:1039) is of the view that there are certain social and cultural characteristics which might transform high levels of alcohol consumption to high levels of violence. These include binge drinking and a high social tolerance for heavy drinking that are associated with violence (Pridemore, 2004:1039). Furthermore, the informal pub scene causes individuals to consume alcohol where there is less formal social control, such as security or the police, hence a simple fight might lead to a lethal assault (Pridemore, 2004:1039). As mentioned by participants 1 and 6 people often consume alcohol in taverns, where there is also less formal social control, hence as mentioned by participant 1, people fight over inconsequential things, such as stepping on someone’s toe. Participant 1’s perception that people in the community become violent due to substance abuse, is therefore reasonable. Participant 2 and 3 furthermore explained that parents often misuse alcohol and then physically abuse their children. Participant 3 described how she observed a mother who was intoxicated, kicking her young child until the child was bleeding. Men furthermore often commit homicides when alcohol is involved in the context of entertainment (Brankovic, 2019:3). Lesch and Adams (2016:171) add that a man’s drinking practices are linked to his masculinity. Therefore, the more he drinks, the more masculine he perceives himself to be.

It is believed that a stable and secure home environment is the best prevention against the effects of community violence (Salzinger et al., 2002:428). Participants indicated that the possibility of children and adolescents being exposed to gender-based violence is quite common within the Sicelo community. According to participant 3, it is seen as acceptable for a man to physically assault a woman while he is under the influence of alcohol because he is unhappy with certain tasks that were not completed to his expectations. In an article by Lesch and Adams (2016:172), they indicated that women were less likely to report a case of abuse by men, if those men were under the influence of alcohol. Furthermore, the women of South Africa view alcohol as a means of justification for being violent (Mathews et al., 2009:1). Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:7) mention that adolescent males who frequently observed their mothers being beaten were prone to engage in violence during their adult years. These boys therefore believe that differences can be resolved by resorting to violence or physical fighting, hence enhancing the cycle of community violence. Men furthermore often use rape as a form of punishment against acts of infidelity, rejection of sexual advances, efforts to end the relationship or due to perceived disrespectful behaviour displayed by a woman (Seedat et al., 2009:1015). Most of the girls under 18 years old in the Seedat et al. (2009:1013) study, were sexually abused by men known to them.

According to participant 5 and 9, children and adolescents could be more inclined to become involved in criminal activities, such as stealing to sustain their need for substances, when they start using alcohol and marijuana at a young age. Maree (2013:73) found that there seems to be a correlation between substance abuse and crime. Some South Africans furthermore believe that they may commit a crime as long as they do not get caught (Maree, 2013:75). Hence these children may become more involved in criminal activities on a regular basis. Participant 7 and 9 also explained that the children and adolescents who misuse substances are more likely to drop out of school. These individuals may therefore become involved in community violence since they do not attend school, seeing as school keeps learners occupied and focussed on their future.

The following quotes provided by the participants indicate that substances are used to cope with the effects of community violence:

“What also causes community violence now, is that people are now running to alcohol and drugs to numb the pain. I myself was exposed to alcohol and drugs at around grade 8. In grade 10, I started to smoke weed. I still use it but not frequently, but occasionally when I feel depressed or sad.” – Participant 1

“Most of my friends in primary school back then, started smoking and said I should also start smoking, and I tried but I struggled. Then they tried introducing me to weed and said it will take me places and I’ll forever be high. You get influenced but at the end of the day I said, ‘I see no reason why I should smoke weed’. But, they didn’t try to influence me to steal, etcetera.” – Participant 6

“Young kids start at an early age drinking beer – it’s called alcohol abuse because they drop out of school. But it starts at home. When people drink, they can’t think straight.” – Participant 7

“When I used to go to school, I saw this girl always sitting there by the corner. So, I asked ‘why are you sitting at the corner every day?’ She said her mum is not here and she does not know where she is. So, I’ll wait with her to 5 or 6pm and then take her to my house. The mother didn’t even come to my house to look for her. The following morning, she demands her child back. So, I said if I didn’t take the child, the child would have stayed outside until today morning. The mother said, that’s my child and you can’t tell me what to do with my child... 4 or 5 years. We found out the mother was in a tavern all night long.” – Participant 6

In response to community violence, participant 1 explained that people in the community use substances as a way to cope with their problems. Baron and Branscombe (2014:372) found the same to be true in their research as they stated that some adolescents make use of substances as a coping mechanism due to stress and trauma. Participant 1 verified this statement when she explained that she started to smoke marijuana when she was in grade 10 in order to numb the pain experienced due to the trauma associated with community violence. Participant 6 was also introduced to marijuana by her fellow peers during primary school. Participant 7 furthermore explained that people in the community start to abuse alcohol at a young age. Lesch and Adams (2016:170) state that South Africans in low-income

communities use alcohol as a means to create a sense of social connection with others. Pridemore (2004:1039) mentioned that young Russian male adolescents use alcohol as a form of stress control. African and Coloured expectant women who reside in low-income communities also use alcohol to cope with their negative emotions and stressors (Lesch & Adams, 2016:170). It is therefore not only adolescents who resort to substances as a coping mechanism, but also older generations.

Bach and Louw (2010:26) are of the view that the youth who reside in homes where violence is prominent, experience higher levels of distress once exposed to violence, which could result in these adolescents resorting to substances to cope with the trauma associated with violence, as mentioned earlier. The participants in the Lesch and Adams (2016:170) study stated how, when they were younger, they wanted a different life compared to that of their parents, however they themselves resorted to substance abuse or lived with a partner who abused substances when they became older. Children and adolescents therefore learn social rules by observing how their parents interact amongst themselves and by viewing their parents' behaviour towards strangers (Mercer, 2018:184). Hence, when a parent abuses a child, the child may perceive this behaviour as appropriate and enforce this behaviour from one generation to another. Participant 6 expressed her disbelief regarding a mother who left her five-year-old daughter waiting at school on various occasions while she was drinking at a tavern. When this mother neglected her young daughter, an unfamiliar adolescent girl (participant 6) took it upon herself to take care of this young girl. Mothers could also turn to destructive ways of coping, such as substance abuse when they become tired, have a lack of family support and freedom as well as stressful relationships coupled with previous trauma (Smyth, 2017:135). These women's children could also acquire inappropriate coping strategies to cope with difficulties as displayed by their mothers and fathers.

Sub-theme 4.2: Perceptions of lack of assistance when faced with danger

Maree (2013:75) states that violent behaviour such as stealing, vandalism and violence has become part of many children's daily lives. However, when faced with such danger, the community members of Sicelo might not be of assistance. The participants elucidated that it has become a norm to not become involved when community members encounter community violence. Some are scared and some are

brave enough to act against this type of violence. It however seems that this may be due to a lack of social cohesion. This aspect was described by the participants in the following manner:

“No, it is not a natural thing. People are really scared to go and help. They end up like calling the cops or calling some people who are brave enough to go and help.” – Participant 10

“The tuckshop owner is powerless. Like, where I was living, there was a lot of xenophobia, no matter how wrong the looters were, the community always likes the looters. Then the tuckshop owner gets beaten and no one does anything, because he’s a foreigner... Us making it a norm. People actually see it happen and mind their own business.” – Participant 8

“It’s more likely males. Because females are also scared. You also get hurt.” – Participant 1

“Yes, now it’s a norm. Like walking past and seeing someone holding a gun at someone; you just walk as if nothing happened. Because, if you interfere then they’ll hold the gun against you... Maybe if we were united as a community, it would be easier. So, if someone came to your house and tried to steal, I’ll call the police immediately. Right now, we not united, we don’t love each other, and everyone has their own agenda. Now they say, if they steal, they steal, I don’t care... There are those people who see someone getting hit and they will encourage others to hit that person.” – Participant 6

Children and adolescents learn social rules by observing their parents’ behaviour towards strangers and how they interact amongst themselves (Mercer, 2018:184). These children will therefore act in the same manner as modelled by their parents. Participant 6 explained that people do not help someone when they are held at gunpoint, because they themselves might become injured in the process. Individuals may therefore walk past as though nothing out of the ordinary is occurring at that point in time. Participant 10 and 6 also referred to the fact that people were afraid to become involved. There are however those who are brave enough, according to participant 10

to provide aid when needed, for example when someone is held at gunpoint. These individuals are prone to be males, as stated by participant 1, since they are more likely to assist when someone is in need. Additionally, participant 8 clarified that people will definitely not become involved if the person is a foreigner, due to xenophobia. Brankovic (2019:4) explains that economic marginalisation has compelled a diverse group of South Africans to form a shared bond against foreigners in communities, hence encouraging xenophobic attacks. Van der Hoven and Maree (2005:61) explain that immigrants are more likely to become victims to violence, since they are viewed as different and have cultural diversities. These foreigners are furthermore easy targets since they may be illegal immigrants, hence they will not report the offender to the police as their own illegal status will be highlighted (Van der Hoven & Maree, 2005:57).

From a Gestalt theory perspective, it is impossible to understand an individual without taking the environment into consideration as well, which is termed holism (Blom, 2006:19). Furthermore, a person satisfies his/her needs both within the individual and from the environment (Blom, 2006:23). These needs that persons attempts to meet as best they can, to keep themselves healthy, is part of organismic self-regulation (Oaklander, 2006:12). It may be that other community members do not become involved when others are faced with danger, since they are attempting to keep themselves healthy, given that they might become injured when attempting to assist others in need. If an individual therefore views such a violent account, their most prominent need may be to look for, or find a safe place. A person will consequently make use of deflection to avoid contact with others and the environment (Blom, 2006:36). This person will therefore try to prevent the impact the environment may have on him/her (Blom, 2006:36). Therefore, by avoiding the individual in danger, the person will protect himself/herself. Deflection could however lead to superficial relationships amongst community members, since a person will experience reduced contact with the environment and other individuals within the community (Blom, 2006:36).

Participant 6 explained how the community is not united. Every person therefore acts in their own best interest. Community members will furthermore encourage others to harm another person, while that specific individual requires assistance. Brankovic

(2019:4) explains the reason for this is a lack of social cohesion and social ties in a community, based on the high turnover of neighbours due to migration, increased poverty and the moving from rural to urban areas. Ascribing to these decreased social ties, people are less likely to become involved when others are in need. This apathetic attitude of not becoming involved, could advance to gender-based violence which could lead to the youth forming newly established bonds that may advance to substance misuse and violence (Brankovic, 2019:4).

Sub-theme 4.3: Perceptions of the role of culture in community violence

“Culture plays an integral role as cultural interpretations and understanding shape the meaning and use of violence” (Aisenberg & Ell, 2005:861). Cultural practices in some cases lead to community violence, while some cultural practices have changed due to community violence. These include parents who maintain certain violent practices and the ideals of men versus women within a community and household. In this section the focus will be on the effect that patriarchy, the socialisation of boys with regards to aggression, gender roles and cultural practices play in perceiving community violence as normal. The participants provided the following examples:

“Culture... because they tell you that men are more powerful than women. You should always listen to a man because he is the head of the family. Men are always right.” – Participant 2

“Most men don’t treat women in a better way than men... Many things like inside the house, the man doesn’t work, and he expects her to work and buy food etcetera. He just beats her up.” – Participant 3

“I think it’s the small things that happens in our houses. This is boys’ work, this is girls’ work. Like my mum used to say a boy does not wash dishes and does not clean, but a girl has to clean and do this or that. And that would make the boys think that they are superior to me. It’s the imbalances of superiority that causes men to be violent towards women because they don’t see them as superior and as equals... I also think these standards where people say that boys can do this, and boys can do that is an old standard. I used to tell my mum that our division of work between boys and girls at

home should be fair because these little things explode into huge things.” – Participant 1

“There were instances where I see women get dragged out of their houses because they were accused of sleeping with someone else. I witnessed violent behaviour against women and children... The environment there was like, if a woman disrespects you, you have to beat her. I have seen so much of it, that every time a woman does something she gets beaten almost on a daily basis. During my stay there, in a week’s time I saw two women getting beaten.” – Participant 8

“Maybe they see their mother hitting someone and will think maybe this is right. If someone wrongs me, I shouldn’t talk to them properly I should just hit them. That is no way to solve a problem. You should speak to the person properly, humble yourself and get to a solution. Violence doesn’t always solve things.” – Participant 6

“I don’t remember. I just hear people say that mum had two miscarriages before she had me and she married at a very young age. There’s also that cultural thing. What happened to my mum, is that she was walking to fetch water and, in the morning, she was already with someone... Yes, Ukuthwalwa. Yes, then came to her mum to ask for bride price. She was 15 years old. She says she was robbed of her teenage life, so she lives her teenage life through me. As we grow up, things affect us emotionally. We are always scared and anxious. We don’t trust any person even if it’s our uncle or close relative. Relatives also rape young children.” – Participant 1

An adolescent’s community provides him/her with a training ground to identify prosocial and anti-social behaviour, however, when the community’s standards lean more towards anti-social behaviour, the adolescent will be more inclined to take part in violent acts (Mercer, 2018:196).

Although men and women are regarded as equal in South Africa, traditional culture still provides men with authority (Graham et al., 2010:104). In addition, patriarchal fathers teach their children that the person who earns more at work should be in charge in the home (Klopper, 2013:155). Therefore, women are often viewed as less important compared to their male counterparts. This perception leads to a culture of

relative deprivation, where authoritarian and patriarchal households often turn to violence to resolve frustration and conflicts (Graham et al., 2010:94). Patriarchal societies therefore marginalise women, since men's needs are viewed to be more important, as masculine traits are valued to a greater extent when compared to women (Graham et al., 2010:115). As mentioned by participant 8, women are often physically abused by men when they have behaved inappropriately, according to the men, as men hold a higher position in households. Many South African boys hence believe that differences can be resolved by using violence or physical fighting to protect themselves, while young women are socialised in this culture of dominant discourse, which legitimises coercive sexual behaviour against women (Graham et al., 2010:104; Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7). Dartnall and Jewkes (2013:3) affirm that women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence, while males are more prone to be the perpetrator and, in most cases, known to the victim. Participant 2 also explained that a woman should always do as a man says, since a man is always right.

As mentioned by participant 1 and 3, men often have less work within the household, as it is expected of women to do more. However, as the times have changed, girls have attempted to stand up against these traditional roles, as indicated by participant 1. In some cultures, a man's gender role is to be physically aggressive (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:365). Thus, society still has this idea that masculinity is linked to physical strength and power (Van der Merwe, 2013:76). In a study conducted by Du Plessis et al. (2015:85), males reported higher levels of aggression and conduct problems. Men therefore often choose aggression to reduce or eliminate a threat when their manhood is challenged (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:365). This in turn could potentially lead to community violence. With the shift of the world viewing women as equal to men, various marriages are affected, since conflict and tension may manifest due to the traditional views and roles of the wife (Bezuidenhout & Smit, 2013:7). Basic societal roles should be taught by a boy's father, however, due to various single-mother-headed households, boys are more inclined to be influenced by their peers (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018:10749). The youth who reside in deprived communities are less inclined to have positive relationships and prosocial role models due to the lack of adults who stimulate positive development and serve as a resource to support their parents (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299).

It is important to note that the social environment in which adolescents are raised teaches them how to behave; this is known as learnt behaviour (Bezuidenhout, 2013:99). According to the social learning perspective, humans are not born with aggressive responses, but rather acquire these responses through direct exposure or by observing the behaviour of others (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:351). Therefore, if adolescents observe aggressive behaviour towards others within the community they will behave in the same way, as this is what they view as normal. According to participant 6, children were taught to be violent since they see their parents becoming violent when they disagree with a person in the community. Baron and Branscombe (2014:363) discuss cultures of honour, where they refer to the idea that “cultures in which there are strong norms indicate... that aggression is an appropriate response to insult one’s honor.” In a male sub-culture, it is important to defend one’s honour through violence, as this violence is viewed as a means to maintain credibility amongst their peers (Graham et al., 2010:103). Thus, to be a real man, a male should resort to violence to protect himself or his woman. In a study conducted by Du Plessis et al. (2015:85), males reported higher levels of aggression and conduct problems. Men therefore often choose aggression to reduce or eliminate a threat when their manhood is challenged (Baron & Branscombe, 2014:365). However, these men accept this challenge in an extreme form as they eliminate this threat by making it a public spectacle for all to see, as mentioned by participant 8 where a man pulled a woman out of the house by her hair to demonstrate his discontent concerning her behaviour. Therefore, depending on adolescents’ experiences or culture, they each learn about aggression in a different way. The culture and ethnic background of adolescents influence their perceptions about their future and the opportunities that are available to them (Bezuidenhout, 2013:94; Jacobson, 2011:92).

Parents promote a child’s cultural customs and traditions by teaching their children about their ethnic and cultural heritage, which is referred to as cultural socialisation (Martorell et al., 2014:477). Adolescents who have undergone cultural socialisation tend to have a stronger ethnic identity (Martorell et al., 2014:477). Participant 1 explained that a girl as young as 15 years old can be abducted by a man; this man then contacts the girl’s parents to negotiate a price to marry her. Traditions such as Ukuthwala, seem to have taken a turn for the worst due to community violence. “Ukuthwala is a form of abduction that involves kidnapping a girl or a young woman

by a man and his friends or peers with the intention of compelling the girl or young woman's family to endorse marriage negotiations" (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2022). According to participant 1, her mother went to fetch water, when a man abducted her and demanded a bride price from her mother. Historically, Ukuthwala did not involve consensual sex before marriage, yet today girls are raped, contract sexually transmitted infections and become pregnant before their marriage, due to men who misinterpret this tradition (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2022).

From a Gestalt theory perspective, a child has the important task to separate from the mother as he/she enters the world confluent with the mother, and throughout his/her life, starting at infancy this struggle for separation commences (Oaklander, 2006:7, 8). Children therefore need to separate the self and the environment, but sometimes children wrestle to grow up or to cope with life's challenges which could lead to inappropriate behaviours that evade healthy contact (Oaklander, 2001:49). In some cases, cultural practices could potentially cause confluence. Confluence can be defined as the "merging with others to the point of the denial of self and the need for individuation and separation" (Kottman, 2011:64). The researcher therefore understands that an adolescent is viewed as part of a certain culture and when he/she does not meet the expectations of the rest of the community concerning the culture, the community will directly or indirectly reject him/her. An adolescent's own identity will therefore become lost with a diminished sense of self (Blom, 2006:34). Blom (2006:35) does however explain that confluence can be acceptable in some cases, when there is good and healthy contact between individuals.

Various factors lead to community violence and the participants mentioned how they have put coping mechanisms in place to counter the effects of community violence. This will be discussed in the next section by referring to education and isolation.

3.3.2.5 Theme 5: Coping with community violence

According to the participants of this study, they have turned to education and isolation as strategies to cope with community violence. These coping mechanisms however influence their daily functioning within the community. This influence on their functioning will be discussed in the sub-themes below.

Sub-theme 5.1 Education as a way out of current living circumstances

The participants placed great emphasis on the importance of education. They believed that education is a way out of a community filled with violence, to ensure a safer future for themselves and their families. Community members furthermore felt unsettled when individuals kept them from gaining access to education, as this was viewed as an attempt to take away their future. The participants provided the following accounts:

“They should focus more on the serious things, like their books. It is better even to stay at home. If you don’t know what to do in the streets, just stay at home, look at your books, maybe watch a movie. Do useful things other than going to the streets and doing all those things... No, it [community violence] doesn’t like excite me but it has disrupted school in a very bad way. I remember when it happened when I was still in school. A child was really stabbed by another kid and we were told like to stay at home. A lot of kids didn’t go. It really affected the lessons too. The time we stayed at home, we missed those lessons while we were at home.” – Participant 10

“I’ve always thought of trying to run away from it as much as possible. Try and escape and go to a good school like St Albans, go to a good university. I always wanted to live like an estate lifestyle and have everything, like live in Midrand. To be blunt, it’s lack of education. For me, I feel like education is the centre of everything. For example, for South Africa to thrive, we need more educated people making good decisions. Because, we don’t have a lot of educated people making good decisions, then a lot of other stuff go wrong and that causes frustration in our communities, hence causing violence. I read a book about the olden days where people left home to work hard and were frustrated if their bosses did not pay them properly and then they will go home and unleash their anger on their families. Still, people have this anger against the government, still not having things, not being employed and not being educated. For example, the Pakistani and Indian people working in our communities, makes our people very angry because they feel those people are taking their jobs. But those people are entrepreneurs who are doing their job, but it’s our lack of education, lack of accountability and responsibility; lots of frustration at themselves and the government, lack of resources.” – Participant 8

“I feel if they did go to school and knew the importance of education, they wouldn’t do such things. How can you tell your daughter not to go to school because we are on strike? If they knew the importance of education, they would find a way for their daughter to go to school, not say, don’t go to school because I’m striking... Right now, I feel I should rather focus on my life and maybe move out and stay somewhere else. I don’t want my kids to grow up here... It does not anymore because right now, I don’t let anything interfere with studies.” – Participant 6

“Every day we must fight, every day is a battle. We must just take one day at a time and see what that day offers. I’m fighting now to get out of this place and go to a place where I feel safe. I feel education is my way out.” – Participant 1

“The bus can’t go, so we can’t go to school. So, I used to walk to school when there were no buses. I felt I need to go to school so that one day I won’t become part of them... I want to study to become a psychologist because I feel our youth is broken and they need someone to talk to. I want to be a sort of social worker to help unfortunate kids because they are innocent and suffer because their parents cannot take care of them.” – Participant 2

“Before I didn’t know the place, but now that I know the place, it will make me reach my goals and focus on my studies. My goal is to be a businesswoman. I want to sell products like sanitary pads for young girls.” – Participant 3

“Yes. I couldn’t go to school because they were burning tyres. It made me feel like I was going to be left behind with my schoolwork. It was about two days. Yes, I was not happy because I missed out on schoolwork. I had to go around looking for notes and approached the teachers and they wanted to know why I was absent... I’ll tell her that community violence is not a good thing. All you have to do is focus on your books, go to school, study hard, make sure you better your life and your future and then maybe you can move to a community that is not violent.” – Participant 5

“Sometimes we couldn’t go to school because the protesters did not allow buses to enter the area, sometimes they took our books. When they want us to go to school,

then they will return books. I was not happy because I was behind with schoolwork.”

– Participant 7

“I used to love dancing but then if you’re a good dancer you have to belong to a group. I changed my direction to academic only and that changed my drive. Now, for me, knowledge is key. I read a lot of books. This happened at St. Albans. This has taught me how to view the better you and has changed me and how I view things and think about things and where I see myself in the future. An example of how education has changed me was at St. Albans. It has a library and I read a lot of books. In a community like this, it is very hard to go to a library and get a book. Here a lot of books are not returned, and you have to have a card. Lot of kids that want to learn are not exposed to learning and they end up doing other stuff that tears them apart.” – Participant 8

“Because I feel being knowledgeable is very good in life. You can make your own choices. You can choose what you want and not rely on people.” – Participant 9

“Education is generally seen as the foundation of society which brings economic wealth, social prosperity and political stability” (Idris, Hassan, Ya'acob, Gill, Aziah & Awal, 2012:443). Adolescents who are academically orientated are more inclined to leave rural communities permanently due to a course facilitated by the expectations of their parents and significant others (Agger, Meece & Byun, 2018:2564). Rural women on the one hand tend to have a greater desire to leave their home community, and they essentially do leave their home environment, while men on the other hand tend to have a higher rural identity and perceive positive economic opportunities within the community, and therefore reside in the same home environment as their parents (Agger et al., 2018:2556). Participant 8 explained how he had always hoped to run away from the community by going to a good school. Participant 1 also supported this statement as she explained that education is her way out of this community of violence. These perceptions hold truth, seeing that educated people are provided with more job opportunities, which offers satisfaction (Idris et al., 2012:444). Hence by obtaining a good education from a school or college they would be more inclined to acquire a job, which would assist them in obtaining the funds to leave the community. Participant 5 explained that she would like to move out of the community and reside in a community

without violence. Participant 6 shared the same sentiments as she did not want to raise her children in Sicelo.

The parents of rural adolescents have the same expectations than non-rural parents pertaining to their children's level of education beyond high school, as 37% expect their children to complete a bachelor's degree (Agger et al., 2018:2555). Adolescents place a high value on school if they have strong family obligations in a culture where both school and family are valued (Agger et al., 2018:2556). Agger et al. (2018:2554) state that adolescents from rural areas have high educational aspirations. The same was found to be true during this study, as participant 6 continuously emphasised the importance of education. Participant 10 stated that one should rather stay at home and do useful things compared to taking part in activities in the streets, seeing as the streets and parks become infiltrated by serious criminal activities, drugs, and gangs (Birnbaum & Linver, 2013:53). Participant 6 also explained that she wanted to focus on her studies when she was at school, and therefore nothing should interfere with her studies. Some losses were also experienced due to this belief, since participant 8 described how he used to be a good dancer; however, he gave that up when he realised that being in the streets would keep him from his education, which he viewed as a way out of the community.

The use of weapons in gang violence can be found in the community as well as in schools within the community (Mncube & Harber, 2013:5). An explanation provided by participant 10 offered the account of a boy who was stabbed at school, hence the learners were not allowed to go to school; they therefore fell behind with their academic work. Exposure to violence at home and within the community could furthermore lead to reduced academic performance and unfocussed classroom behaviour amongst children and adolescents (McGaha-Garnett, 2013:1). McGaha-Garnett (2013:3) also explains that children and adolescents who are exposed to violence display less prosocial emotions and increased personal problems. These children and adolescents would for example be more likely to take part in fights and threaten others at school (McGaha-Garnett, 2013:3). This may have had an effect on their sense of self as they could not obtain education, which is the one aspect that they believe may get them out of the community of Sicelo.

Participant 5 conveyed that she was afraid that she would fall behind with schoolwork when people protested. She even went as far as to go to other people's houses to obtain notes, in an attempt not to fall behind with her academic work. This was participant 5's way to self-regulate since their need for education become hampered by the surrounding protests. According to Kottman (2011:63) organismic self-regulation is a process where an individual's needs are met, and he/she integrates their experience. Participant 7 also stated that due to strikes they could not go to school; the protestors even took their books. Participant 6 furthermore explained that if people knew the importance of education, they would not take part in strikes which prevent children from attending school. Participant 2 also mentioned that she wanted to obtain a good education, as she did not want to turn out like the people who are taking part in strikes. It appeared as if participants looked down on individuals who participated in protests. These protests could indicate towards the polarities within the Gestalt theory perspective, which refer to the natural contrasts within a person's life (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:219); the importance of education is highlighted on the one side, with protesting for basic services, on the other side. Hence these individuals chose education as a long-term solution to their problem concerning the lack of basic services.

Participant 8 also explained that educated people do not rely on and blame the government for everything, as they are educated and know where their resources come from. This participant indicated that resources such as books from the Sicelo library proved challenging to acquire, when compared to St Albans where resources, such as books were easily accessible. This limited access to resources results from geographic isolation and poverty (Agger et al., 2018:2555). Participant 9 furthermore explained that education provides a person with independence, which allows for the making of own choices, hence providing them with a sense of freedom. This sense of freedom could therefore allow the participants to reach their goals. Two participants however mentioned that they would still give back to their community. Participant 2 mentioned that she wanted to become involved in a helping profession to plough back into her community, while participant 3 mentioned that she would like to become a businesswoman and provide sanitary products to girls in need. However, scarifies are not only made concerning education, but also concerning social isolation, which will be discussed in the next section.

Sub-theme 5.2 Isolation from friends and others in the community to reach one's goals

The participants explained how they have isolated themselves from the community members as well as the events taking place within the community as a coping mechanism concerning community violence. They were furthermore of the view that they could not trust individuals within the community, not even family members. The participants provided the following descriptions of their views regarding isolation to curb the effects of community violence:

“Anxious and scared all the time, don’t trust your parents, don’t trust anyone... As we grow up, things affect us emotionally. We are always scared and anxious. We don’t trust any person even if it’s our uncle or close relative. Relatives also rape young children... We no longer make friends. We used to greet each other a lot, but now we no longer greet, we just walk pass. People have their own things in their minds. I don’t trust anyone. Even your friends I don’t trust. You can go with your friend, and you can plan to send you to another guy.” – Participant 1

“People are locked in their houses. Maybe you’ll see that person only when they go to the shop... Because they don’t trust anyone. They think maybe they will rob or kill them. People don’t talk to each other anymore. They don’t go out to the streets... I don’t trust anyone, not even some family members.” – Participant 2

“But on weekends I just stay inside the house. Because I don’t have friends at home.” – Participant 3

“I don’t feel safe with this community violence. So, when I go to the shops, I go with my siblings, so if something happens to me, they can run back home and tell them what’s happening. I usually don’t socialise with my friends. I am usually indoors.” – Participant 5

“Here, it was one person raping and killing girls. At some point, we were all scared of going out because of this serial killer... Most of the time. If there was no raping and killing and I would walk around the street. But then and now all I do is go to church and come back home. I avoid being in the streets because in the streets is where

things happen, where you get killed, where you get influenced etcetera. I feel I rather stay at home than being out there... I am very closed up and I don't want to associate with people anymore because you don't know what type of people you are associating with – good or bad.” – Participant 6

“I believe the more you get involved as a person inside, the more you'll end up doing the action. So, for me, the only way out is to mind your own business, do your thing and get out. Don't get involved. I don't have a lot of friends. Lots of people will say do this sport, and I say my sport was at school. Because I know if I get involved in something here, it will escalate. It will be the squad just chilling, then next thing one of your squad members is in a fight and you have to back him up and that might escalate into something else. I just try to stay away from everything... That's why I stay away from having friends. When I was an adolescent, whenever there was a strike, my friends will encourage me to join. They also wanted me to take the videos of occurrences. For me, the person taking the video is as bad as the person doing it... It makes me feel isolated. Lots of people don't know me for who I am. For me to show my emotions to someone means that I'm getting close to them. It means opening myself to the community and thereby opening myself up to whatever happens in the community. Because I'm isolated, I have to react in a very non-emotional way to everything that happens.” – Participant 8

Tung, Hawkley, Cagney and Peek (2019:1670) state that due to safety concerns individuals who reside in high-crime communities are often confined to their homes. These researchers indicate that this has led to social isolation within various communities in the United Kingdom, which has driven government officials to declare a health pandemic due to the high levels of loneliness experienced by citizens. Social isolation is defined as the “disengagement from social ties, institutional connections, or community participation” (Pantell, Rehkopf, Jutte, Syme, Balmes & Adler, 2013:2056). Tung et al. (2019:1670) add that social isolation includes residing alone, having limited social connections, or taking part in few social events. Social isolation is also clearly evident in communities in South Africa, as participants 1 and 2 explained how they have started to isolate themselves from other community members since they do not know who to trust. Participant 1 added that a person cannot trust one's relatives as they also have the capacity to sexually abuse others. As mentioned, this

correlates with the study conducted by Tung et al. (2019:1671), as their participants described community violence as a social barricade to trust and cohesion within the neighbourhood. This social barricade could hinder social support. Visser (2012:129) highlighted the main functions of social support as companionship (spending time with others during recreational and leisure activities), emotional support (feelings of trust and empathy which make a person feel loved and respected), material support (helping others to solve practical issues by providing them with goods or services), encouragement (support that allows a person to improve their self-esteem by feeling valued and accepted by others) and informational support (the support provided by offering guidance and advice to solve problems).

Participant 6 explained that she does not socialise with people as a connection with them may lead to negative associations. Participant 8 also mentioned that he has few friends, seeing as he may possibly become involved in violence as he might feel loyal towards his friends, and therefore participate in violence to defend his friends' honour. During the identity versus role confusion stage of Erikson, children develop an identity of who they are by taking part in group activities with other peers (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:41). By not taking part in these group activities the researcher is of the opinion that participant 6 and 8's identity development could be impeded. Participant 8 further explained that he did not interact with many individuals as he wanted to rather stay focussed on getting out of the community. This is not in line with the spirit of Ubuntu, which South Africans live by. Ubuntu is a Zulu word which indicates that a person is a person because of other individuals, and therefore this person belongs to a community and should be treated as such (Lelope, 2019:38). However, when community members do not make contact with other community members due to community violence, the spirit of Ubuntu could be hampered. Higher social isolation was furthermore associated with community violence in the Tung et al. (2019:1676) study. This chronic high social isolation could predict mortality proportionate to traditional clinical risk factors as found by Tung, Johnson, O'Neal, Steenes, Caraballo and Peek (2018:1919). These clinical risk factors included elevated blood pressure and high cholesterol levels along with smoking and obesity (Pantell et al., 2013:2056). Social isolation could therefore in the future lead to higher mortality rates amongst the community members of Sicelo.

In the Tung et al. (2019:1670) study the participants additionally described community violence as a physical barricade which prevents them from leaving home. Participant 2 mentioned how they would rather stay inside the house than be outside in the community. They therefore did not see their neighbours since their neighbours also preferred to stay inside. Participant 3 too explained how she remains inside her home during weekends. Participant 5 similarly mentioned that she does not socialise with her friends, since she usually remains indoors due to high crime rates within the community. Bronfenbrenner (1993) explained how a person develops and exists within a complex system which he called the Bio-ecological model (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:46). The microsystem is the closest system to the adolescent, and the mesosystem is the interactions an adolescent has with his/her direct environment, such as family and other support systems, such as the school (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:46). If an adolescent therefore does not allow interaction within the mesosystem, their level of support decreases dramatically, which may lead them to feel isolated and without support. From a Gestalt perspective these rigid boundaries could lead to adolescents disconnecting themselves from community members and resources within the community (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:219). Kottman (2011:63) mentioned that people avoid making contact with others since they are afraid that their needs might not be met, hence they protect themselves from others in the community and the environment. Participant 8's explanation therefore seems logical, as he stated that few people knew who he truly was, as he did not want to become involved in the occurrences of the community. If he had allowed himself to show his true emotions towards other community members, he might have become involved in the community and therefore never move out of the community of Sicelo.

Social withdrawal is viewed as a survival strategy due to the omnipresent fear in high-crime areas (Tung et al., 2019:1675). This continued fear could lead to chronic worry and stress along with hypervigilance amongst participants as found in the Tung et al. (2018:1918) study. Communities with higher levels of social isolation are often associated with child maltreatment, according to Henderson and Thompson (2016:623) as these communities often do not have facilities such as parks, recreational centres and churches where families can obtain support. Henderson and Thompson (2016:646) further explained that social isolation was one of the symptoms of depression and suicide. Participant 6 explained that she used to walk around by

herself in the community, but then a serial killer took to the streets and fear was instilled within her, hence she did not move around in the community if she did not have to. Participant 6's loneliness was exacerbated when she learned about this serial killer in the community. She therefore made use of rational behaviour responses, as she started to become more cautious when moving around within the community (Tung et al., 2019:1675). She consequently began to move from one place to another, only if she had a specific purpose for doing so. Participant 5 explained that she did not walk by herself in the community. If she wanted to travel to the shops, she had to take her siblings with her, since they served as a failsafe when they were faced with danger, as they had to run back home to obtain assistance. It seems as if these individuals could not trust community members when faced with danger, as this might have resulted in the violence becoming worse.

The above-mentioned two coping mechanisms have been used to limit the effect of community violence, however the perceptions concerning community violence has changed throughout the participants' lives. The researcher will hence refer to the adolescents' as well as the young adults' perceptions of community violence in the final theme.

3.3.2.6 Theme 6: Perceptions of community violence

Maree (2013:70) is of the opinion that people resort to crime because of the way they perceive their financial situation within their social environment. Furthermore, a lower socio-economic status and other stressors such as crime or social disorganisation usually accompany community violence (Louw & Louw, 2014a:423). Within the community of Sicelo, limited financial resources, social isolation and crime were highlighted; the way in which participants perceived community violence may be different than within other communities. Perceptions as adolescents will first be discussed and thereafter, their perceptions as young adults.

Sub-theme 6.1 Perceptions of community violence as an adolescent

Some of the participants explained that community violence occurred as a result of the government not doing their job. The participants were therefore exposed to various forms of community violence, which made protests seem fair and desensitised adolescents concerning community violence. The participants provided the following

statements to underline their perceptions of community violence during their adolescent years:

“Yes, I was bullied a lot at school, growing up. I used to be suicidal when I was young because I used to think that I was not enough of a person... Yes. I think there was no safe place to go and hide because everywhere there was violence, either physically or emotionally.” – Participant 1

“Before I thought that community violence should happen but now, I know that it shouldn’t happen.” – Participant 2

“When I was younger, I felt safe. When I arrived here it was safer but now it’s not safe... When I was younger, I used to just want to stay inside the house and not go to school.” – Participant 3

“We experienced trauma at an early age because of the things that we have seen. Sometimes over the weekend if they killed someone, I couldn’t concentrate at school. It would come more often in my mind... I think of people being dead. Many people have died in our community because of community violence.” – Participant 7

“For me, it kind of has become a norm. You get used to seeing it. So, when I heard they were striking, I just went on and minded my own business. At the beginning when it first happened, I was scared... Young people are naïve. They believe whatever they see. So, whenever people make excuses for what they are doing and say we are rioting because the government is not giving us this or that, young people believe it and end up being part of this cycle. They end up becoming part of the problem. Do whatever you get told.” – Participant 8

“I thought striking was the right thing because the government didn’t provide services.” – Participant 9

“When I was small and they broke into a Somalian shop, I will also go in and take their food because I thought it was something normal, till I realised this is incorrect... When I was younger, I used to think that it’s something that should happen; it’s a normal

thing. I used to think it was funny, that it was exciting. Then if people were fighting, I saw it as something exciting ...” – Participant 1

According to Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:13) violence has become a normative means to resolve conflict within a South African context. More than half of the adolescents in the USA between the ages of 14 and 17 years old were subjected to community violence during their lifetime, while more than one-third of these adolescents had witnessed violent assaults within the community they reside in (Heleniak et al., 2017:229). Most children in the Burton and Leoschut (2013:53) study also witnessed violence by the average age of 14 years. It therefore comes as no surprise that participant 7 experienced trauma at a young age due to community violence. She explained that she would often think of death when community violence took place, due to all the fatalities she had encountered. Her perception of community violence was therefore that it resulted in death.

Participant 1 believed that everyone in the community was either physically or emotionally violent towards others. She furthermore mentioned how she was bullied at school; she also felt as though she could not tell anyone and that there was no safe place to hide in the community. This may be as the youth of South Africa are frequently rewarded for violent behaviour within their homes, communities, and schools due to pro-violence models and messages from political leaders (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:8). These children and adolescents who reside in deprived communities are less inclined to have positive relationships and prosocial role models due to the lack of adults who stimulate positive development and serve as a resource to support their parents (Aisenberg & Herrenkohl, 2008:299). The youth therefore lack empathy because of harmful role modelled behaviour (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:12), hence participant 1's perception of not feeling as though anyone would care about her since she did not feel worthy enough, seems rational.

When the researcher asked participant 8 what he thought had caused community violence when he was younger, he explained that young people were credulous and were easily influenced by others to believe certain things to be true, such as the government not providing services. These individuals according to participant 8 would therefore contribute to the cycle of violence. Participant 9 on the other hand, explained

that she held the government accountable when they did not provide services as promised. She believed that community violence seemed acceptable when this promise of service delivery was broken. In the Banjo and Jili (2013:261-262) study, the community members also felt as though the government were not responding to their demands and making empty promises, thus they turned to violence to make their voices heard. This consequently led to a distorted belief that if community members needed resources, they should opt for violence, even though effective communications by South Africans are a prerequisite to promote equality and reduce poverty (Van der Merwe, 2013:79). A precedent may also have been set by government, as they seem to only respond when communities resort to violence, thus reinforcing these communities' beliefs of a violent culture (Van der Merwe, 2013:78).

Socio-economic circumstances within a community are factors that influence community violence (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:5; Van der Merwe, 2013:77). As mentioned earlier, individuals who tend to have fewer means consequently resort to community violence and in particular, protests. Banjo and Jili (2013:254) mention that the key feature of these protests seems to be the youth. Participant 1, at a younger age felt that looting was acceptable during protests, to meet basic needs, such as acquiring food. Habib (2020) however wrote that criminals use protests to conduct criminal activities such as looting and theft. Participant 1, in spite of looting being seen as a criminal activity did not seem to view it as a delinquent activity, as other community members may have modelled such behaviour. It could be that adolescents look up to these individuals who take part in the protests and observe their behaviour; then act accordingly. Participant 3 however mentioned that when she was younger, she did not mind the protests as they provided her with an opportunity to skip school. Participant 8 explained how a violent protest had shocked him the first time, however after it had happened various times, he became desensitised. In the long-term, such exposure could prompt the desensitisation of violence and support violent behaviour through observational learning (Mash & Wolfe, 2016:301).

From a Gestalt perspective, the structure of the personality comprises out of five layers. The outermost layer is known as the false layer, where children perform the roles created by others as well as themselves, while attempting to be who they are not, as they are often influenced by the environment (Blom, 2006:42). An example of

this may be taking part in looting behaviour as it is expected of one to do so. The false layer is followed by the phobic layer, which is known as the layer of roles that is often accompanied by anxiety, as these adolescents attempt to play the role expected of them (Blom, 2006:43). An adolescent may therefore feel anxious when attempting to loot a Somalian's shop, because the community anticipates it. The impasse layer is the third layer, which is where an adolescent may feel that they cannot support themselves, since their external habitual support is not available to them and they have not yet mobilised new support (Yontef & Jacobs, 1989:12). As mentioned earlier, an adolescent may not have prosocial relationships which could play a part in the impasse layer. The implosive layer follows the impasse layer, as an adolescent becomes aware of the aspects that limit them but does not have the energy to move from the impasse bounding them (Blom, 2006:45). Lastly, the innermost layer is known as the explosive layer, as an adolescent develops awareness of the emotions that they have suppressed and becomes mindful of the emotions that they convey (Blom, 2006:45). Within the last two layers an adolescent may realise that certain ideals were holding them back, and finally express the true emotions felt while also realising the repressed emotions. In the next section, the researcher will discuss the perceptions of young adults on community violence, as provided in this study.

Sub-theme 6.2 Perceptions of community violence as an adult

The participants in this study perceived interaction with others as one of the reasons for community violence. Various participants therefore stated that education and legal protests were the way forward to reduce the occurrence of community violence. During the interviews, the researcher also explored what advice they would have given to their younger selves, if they should have had the opportunity to do so. The participants provided the following statements:

"... now, as I was growing up, I see it as something that is really bad and that affects my soul in a way... Maybe because I got exposed to it a lot, and now I am very conscious about the things I find very funny, because I don't want that to happen to me. It's about people beating each other up. I also think violence is not only physically but also verbally. Some people are not aware that verbal violence is a thing. When a person swears at you, threatens you, embarrasses you in front of people, bullies you – that's also violence, even though it doesn't hurt you physically, but it does hurt you

emotionally... nobody should beat you up. No one should hurt your feelings. No one should discriminate against you, against your race or your culture. Some people discriminate you because you are Sotho or Xhosa. They don't realise that is an abuse of your rights. They don't respect your culture. We think it's a free world that everyone can have an opinion, but it's actually not. If you have nothing good to say, then you rather keep quiet." – Participant 1

"Community violence is not a good thing but still people have no say because government is not doing anything about it. You get used to it... I know that it shouldn't happen. But I still feel like I cannot do anything about it, it will happen eventually." – Participant 2

"When I was younger, I used to just want to stay inside the house and not go to school. But now that I am older, when there are protests, I just want the children to go to school... I would tell her [my younger self] that she must be careful who she talks to and who she joins on the road, and not to join the protests and the gangs, because the gangs, if they don't kill you, they'll kill someone who knows you." – Participant 3

"It would help them [my younger self] to be focussed on something and not become frustrated and get involved in gangs or other types of community violence." – Participant 4

"Influence not in a negative way but in a positive way, because I told myself that I must not get involved in community violence... I'll tell her [my younger self] that community violence is not a good thing. All you have to do is focus on your books, go to school, study hard, make sure you better your life and your future, and then maybe you can move to a community that is not violent." – Participant 5

"Outside my community, they also have their faults, but they know the importance of people going to school, not burning down schools etcetera. They don't do such things when they strike, they do legal strikes, not illegal strikes." – Participant 6

"I think as it happens more and more, they become used to it, like desensitised... They should be exposed to entertainment in their areas, such as sports, their careers, their talents and they must be supported... I would tell her [my younger self] not to

participate in those things because she might end up dead. I would also tell her to be aware of the community violence. I'd tell her to be a good person in the community."
– Participant 7

"But now, that it [community violence] happens so often, I got used to it, so it does not affect me anymore... Now, for me, knowledge is key. I read a lot of books... This has taught me how to view the better you and has changed me and how I view things, and think about things and where I see myself in the future... It's kind of weird because I'm a person who wants to give back but does not want to get involved in the community. Like Elon Musk who is proudly South African but does not actually do anything for South Africa. I am proud that I come from this place and that it has taught me something, exposed me to certain things which makes me not like the other guys who sit around and are naïve... So, I am proud that I hail from here and that I have been exposed to certain things, but at the same time, I want to have nothing to do with this place. I really want to get out of here." – Participant 8

"Yes, it's not a good thing because people are going about it the wrong way. The right way is to sign up for a legal strike. Do not vandalise. Do not dig holes in the roads." – Participant 9

"Well, I would tell them [referring to adolescents] that we should like not to involve themselves with violence, or anything that involves violence. They should focus more on the serious things like their books. It is better even to stay at home. If you don't know what to do in the streets, just stay at home, look at your books, maybe watch a movie. Do useful things other than going to the streets and doing all those things." – Participant 10

Participant 8 stated that he was proud of deriving from Sicelo, however at the same time he just wanted to find a way out of Sicelo. Similarly, he did not want to be involved in the community but wanted to give back to the community. This indecisiveness concerning Sicelo could be viewed as polarities with regards to the Gestalt theory. Blom (2006:40) describes polarities as "opposites that compliment or oppose each other." These polarities should be recognised and amalgamated during the organismic self-regulation process to prevent fragmentation (Blom, 2006:40). The before

mentioned may prove to be difficult to the adolescents of Sicelo, as these contradicting feelings could be because of feelings of powerlessness and helplessness when exposed to violence and conflict, which could lead to repeated feelings of rage, as mentioned by most of the individuals in the Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:14) study. The participants of that study added that they often felt helpless and angry because of the way their family members act towards them and their lack of support concerning them (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:17). Adolescents who are raised in families with a low socio-economic status tend to experience feelings of shame, guilt and inferiority accompanied by a negative self-concept (Maree, 2013:76).

Participant 1, mentioned that she had become more aware of what she found to be funny, since she has realised that the same might happen to her one day. Most South Africans presently reside in communities comprising of their various ethnic groups, which maintains visual segregation of 'us' versus 'them' (Otwombe et al., 2015:2). Lamb and Snodgrass (2013:6) furthermore explain that various forms of violence are due to the inequality cultivated as a result of the continuous and vast effects of apartheid. Therefore, communities with high levels of community violence seem to experience social injustices (Savahl et al., 2013:583). As participant 1 mentioned, a person should become aware of discrimination concerning one's race or culture. She furthermore added that verbal abuse is also a true form of abuse, which people often do not recognise.

Social inequality has led to a large division between the rich and poor in South Africa, due to the high level of income inequality (Savahl et al., 2013:583; Van der Merwe, 2013:72). According to Van der Merwe (2013:68), these social injustices can be seen as structural violence, as it refers to "the social structures which harm people by systematically limiting their access to basic needs." This structural violence can be a result of destructive policies and practices at a local, regional, national, and international level, that force individuals to make decisions predetermined for them by a power structure, which benefit certain groups to the disadvantage of other groups (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:5). However, within the community of Sicelo, community members seem to limit their own resources by destroying these resources during illegal strikes. Participant 9 therefore urged community members to refrain from damaging resources during strikes, and in addition to rather take part in legal protests

within the community. Participant 6 mentioned that people outside of the community took part in legal protests and did not burn down important resources such as schools. It therefore seems possible to also do so within the community of Sicelo. This could however prove to be difficult, since various communities that were exposed to community violence seem to have experienced a lack of services. While the delivery of basic services and infrastructure has increased at a slow pace during post-apartheid, a large number of South African citizens still need to gain access to services, as many citizens are still unemployed (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253; Van der Merwe, 2013:72). This could lead the community members to feel as though their voices are not being heard. The more the general lines of communication of repressed groups are blocked, the more these individuals have leaned towards violence to let their voices be heard, in an attempt to speak more loudly and gain attention (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2013:7; Van der Merwe, 2013:77).

Poor service delivery and unemployment were the main reasons for protesting, according to the Banjo and Jili (2013:258) study. Due to the slow pace of the government's service delivery, a large percentage of the South African population still need to acquire access to basic services and infrastructure (Banjo & Jili, 2013:253). Individuals within the Mpumalanga province seemed to be patient when waiting for service delivery, but not if it seems as though other individuals were gaining access to these services before them (Banjo & Jili, 2013:254). In the study conducted by Banjo and Jili (2013:261, 262) the community members felt as though the government were not responding to their demands and making empty promises, thus they turned to violence to make their voices heard. Participant 2 also explained that the government should do more to curb community violence, seeing as people were doing as they like, at that point in time.

In the study referred to, the respondents' level of education also seemed to be correlated with service delivery protests, since the respondents who obtained diplomas and degrees were less likely to take part in a protest (Banjo & Jili, 2013:257). When participant 10 was asked to give advice to her younger self, she stated that children in the community should focus on education and stay at home in addition to avoiding activities in the streets. Both participant 3 and 10 also highlighted the importance of education when they became older. This may be since participants 5

and 6 perceived education as an avenue to living in a safer community without community violence. Participant 7 also advised her younger self to not become involved in community violence. Participant 4 explained that one should take note of who a person involves in their life and stay focussed on their goals, such as education. Participant 3 added that her younger self should be aware of who she socialises with, as these individuals could cause a person to take part in gang related activities, which could result in a person losing their loved ones or their own life. Participant 7 however stated that children should be supported concerning their sports and talents, as this would keep them from becoming involved in community violence. Often, there are however no recreational and sporting facilities within poorer communities (Banjo & Jili, 2013:260). The children and adolescents hence do not have activities that they should participate in before or after school, leaving them with time to take part in risk-taking behaviour (Salzinger et al., 2002:426). Children who consequently reside in communities with poor resources due to economic constraints were more likely to be exposed to community violence, as they did not have access to alternative attractive activities, such as after school and sporting activities which prevented them from getting involved in delinquent activities (Salzinger et al., 2002:426). It was found that the most harmful hours were between 12:00 and 18:00, hence after-school programmes are essential to reduce the chances of community violence (Salzinger et al., 2002:427).

3.4 SUMMARY

The research methodology used in this study was discussed in this chapter. With the use of the research methodology, data was obtained from ten participants who agreed to provide the researcher with their perceptions concerning community violence in a South African context. Each participant's biographical profile was listed in table 3.1 to allow for a better understanding of the themes and sub-themes which followed. Six main themes were highlighted and discussed by linking the data obtained from the participants with existing literature; the discussion was underpinned by the Gestalt theory, the theoretical foundation of this study.

In the final chapter, the researcher will discuss the extent to which the goal and objectives of the study have been reached. The key findings of the study, as well as conclusions and recommendations based on the research, will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study on young adults' perceptions of community violence during their adolescent years is concluded in this final chapter of the research report. In this chapter, the extent to which the goals and objectives of this study were achieved, is reported on. The key findings of this study as well as the conclusions drawn from the findings are also presented. Recommendations for practitioners and further research are made concerning the influence of community violence.

4.2 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The extent to which the researcher achieved the intended goal of this study is discussed below, by examining the accomplishment of the goal and objectives of the research. In this discussion, the researcher will assess whether the research has met the intended purpose.

4.2.1 Goal of the study

The goal of this study was to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence. To obtain the perceptions of the young adult participants who were exposed to community violence, the research study entailed the use of appropriate research methodology. The researcher employed a qualitative research approach with interpretivism as paradigm; a case study design was followed. The ten participants were selected by means of snowball and purposive sampling. The researcher gathered data by implementing semi-structured interviews with young adults who voluntarily participated, after which she analysed the obtained data through a process of thematic analysis. During this process reoccurring themes and sub-themes were identified; key findings as well as conclusions were derived, as set out in this chapter. These findings were compared to existing literature and interpreted from a Gestalt theory perspective, which underpinned this study.

In order to determine whether the goal of this study has been met, the researcher will assess the study objectives which were formulated prior to the commencement of the study. These objectives enabled the researcher to focus on the goal of the study throughout the course of research.

4.2.2 Objectives of the study

In this section, the research objectives of the study on young adults' perceptions of community violence in a South African context are evaluated. This is based on a combination of a comprehensive literature review (chapter 2) and the empirical findings generated from the semi-structured interviews held with the participants (chapter 3).

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

The researcher conducted an in-depth literature review, as found in Chapter 2, to attain this objective. This objective was achieved by consulting various literature sources to define the different types of violence and in particular, to conceptualise community violence as a type of violence within the South African context (section 2.2.1). The role of South Africa's unique history of apartheid was also discussed.

Subsequently, in section 2.2.2, the researcher commenced by defining community violence as a form of violence. Thereafter, the researcher focussed on the factors that cause community violence (section 2.2.2.2) as well as the various types of community violence (section 2.2.2.3) to provide a better understanding of community violence. Previous research conducted globally and in South Africa were discussed, along with the prevalence of community violence (see section 2.2.3 and section 2.2.4), to contextualise community violence in a South African context. The researcher then discussed the effects of community violence, in section 2.3. In section 2.4, the focus then shifted to the exposure to community violence and the effects of community violence on adolescents. The researcher further explored the exposure to community violence in different ecological systems as found in section 2.5. The first objective to theoretically conceptualise community violence and contextualise it within the South African context was therefore successfully achieved.

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

The researcher made use of a literature review and conducted semi-structured interviews with ten young adults who had been exposed to community violence during their adolescent years, to explore and describe how the participants had been exposed to community violence. The literature study enabled the researcher to formulate questions used in the interview schedule, in order to explore how the participants were exposed to community violence during their adolescent years. After the completion of the interviews, the researcher analysed the data and identified six themes which related to community violence during the participants' adolescent years, which are captured in chapter 3.

Theme 1 (as described in chapter 3) highlights how these participants had been exposed to community violence, either directly or indirectly. This theme consists of the following sub-themes: assault with a weapon as a type of community violence; gender-based violence as a type of community violence; xenophobia perpetrated as a form of community violence; protests as a form of violence in a community; theft as a form of violence in the community; and specific times and places in the community with a high prevalence of community violence.

To substantiate these findings, the verbatim quotations of the participants were utilised to convey their perceptions. Existing literature was integrated with these verbatim quotes to compare the perceptions of the participants with the findings of previously conducted research. The second objective of this study on young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence was therefore successfully met.

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

The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews to explore and describe participants' perceptions of community violence as a phenomenon. During the data-analysis, the researcher identified three themes which related to the participants' perceptions concerning community violence. Firstly, theme 2 of chapter 3, focussed on the motivations for community violence. Thereafter, theme 4, 'The perceptions on

responses to community violence', further highlighted experiences about this phenomenon. Lastly, sub-theme 6.1 focussed on the participants' perceptions concerning community violence during their adolescent years. The third objective of the study on young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence was thus achieved.

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

Prior to the interviews with participants, the researcher was able to utilise the existing literature on the effects of violence and community violence in particular (chapter 2, section 2.2), to decide on questions for the interview schedule, to serve as a guideline to explore the effects of community violence. After the completion of the interviews, the researcher analysed the data and identified three themes, as found in chapter 3, which related to this fourth objective. Theme 3 focussed on the consequences of community violence by referring to the trauma associated with numerous factors. In theme 5 emphasis is placed on the two main ways of coping with community violence, while theme 6 dealt with the perceptions of adolescents as well as young adults concerning community violence. The fourth objective was hence met by using a solid theoretical base (chapter 2) and the empirical findings (chapter 3) to explore the participants' perceptions as they described the effects community violence had on their lives.

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

The researcher made use of several sections in the research report to make recommendations for social workers working with children, adolescents and families. Recommendations were made based on the limitations highlighted in chapter 1 (section 1.6), the literature study (chapter 2), and the empirical findings (chapter 3) of this study. The limitations (chapter 1) aided the researcher to make recommendations for further research. The researcher furthermore combined the existing literature (section 2.2.2; 2.3; 2.4 and 2.5) as well as the data obtained in chapter 3 (theme 5 and 6) to inaugurate various recommendations for social workers working with children, adolescents and families in communities with high levels of community violence. The

fifth objective on young adults' perceptions of community violence, experienced in a South African context during adolescence was thus successfully achieved.

In line with the research goal and objectives of the study, the research question was: *What are young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during their adolescent years?* The answer to the research question was presented as empirical findings in chapter 3 of the research report and is summarised as key findings in the following section.

4.3 KEY FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis, the following key findings emerged from the research:

The participants identified various direct and indirect types of community violence to which they were exposed in their community. Almost all of the participants mentioned some form of assault and gender-based violence towards themselves or someone they knew. Gender-based violence often occurred against women known to the participants. Xenophobia, protests and theft were also mentioned by the participants as forms of community violence. The participants were also able to describe times and places where a high prevalence of violence was likely to occur, namely during night-time on weekends, and in dimly lit areas.

Various socio-economic problems were related to motivations for community violence such as poverty, unemployment, crime and the youth being uneducated. Poverty and unemployment were mentioned by most of the participants as the primary motivation for community violence, which was furthermore described as intertwined phenomena. The participants also drew a link between frustration and socio-economic problems. The roles of media and social media were highlighted, by referring to the influence of media concerning community violence on adolescents. Traditional views and the acquired status of women served as another motivation for community violence, which was mentioned by most participants during the interviews.

Based on the data gathered, it became evident that all the participants experienced some form of trauma due to residing in an unsafe community. These participants mentioned various symptoms of trauma (such as avoidance of certain areas,

nightmares, anxiety, changes in mood and affect) while describing community violence as experienced during their adolescent years. Consequently, the participants described that community members have turned to gangs and community justice to counter their mistrust in law enforcement, such as the police. The participants explained how the police had not arrived when called to assist, arrived long after the event occurred and had done nothing to cause people to rethink their wrongful actions. Trauma, the influence of gangs, not trusting the police and community justice were therefore experienced as a consequence of community violence.

The participants explained their own as well as other community members' responses to community violence. Various community members have turned to the misuse of substances to cope with the effects of community violence. There accordingly seems to be high levels of jealousy and mistrust amongst community members which prevent them from assisting others in need. The spirit of Ubuntu is also further hindered in an unsafe community, as the community members of Sicelo tend to not assist others when they are faced with danger.

All the participants mentioned that they have turned to education and isolation to cope with community violence. The participants explained that education is viewed as the main way out of their current living circumstances, since it will allow a person more opportunities and access to a better future. These opportunities go hand in hand with goals set by individuals concerning their education. As discussed by the participants, to reach these goals an individual will have to isolate himself/herself from friends and others in the community.

The participants furthermore provided their perceptions concerning community violence, both as an adolescent and as a young adult. Various participants explained how they viewed community violence as a good thing when they were younger but changed their beliefs as they became older, since they realised the influence of community violence on their emotional well-being.

The key findings discussed above assisted the researcher to draw conclusions concerning the influence of community violence on young adults during their adolescent phase of development, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions were drawn, based on the researcher's comprehensive literature review and information obtained from the empirical findings. Some research findings from the empirical study were supported by the literature review, thus corroborating the validity of the data gathered. However, the research findings also highlighted the gaps in available literature, demonstrating the value of this research in the South African context. The conclusions discussed below will be based on the literature review as well as the empirical findings.

4.4.1. Literature review

The following conclusions could be drawn from the literature review, presented in chapter 2:

- South Africa has a unique history of apartheid, which may enhance the levels of community violence in certain communities. This may be due to a belief that violence is the answer when faced with adversity, due to previous incidences in history, such as necklacing. People also often resort to physical violence to resolve conflict as displayed by family members and other individuals in communities.
- There are certain situations during which it seems acceptable to be aggressive, such as beating someone to death when they have stolen something from another person. Children and adolescents are exposed to such behaviour in the community, schools and as portrayed by role models. These are all systems that a child is exposed to on a daily basis, hence a child could become desensitised to community violence.
- There are various types of community violence such as assault, threat, homicide, gang violence, xenophobia, violent media/social media. All these types of community violence can either be experienced directly or indirectly and both can have a lasting influence on an individual's well-being. Children and adolescents exposed to community violence often show signs of psychological distress as they internalise behaviours, misuse substances and display behavioural issues.
- Family disorganisation also plays a role in community violence. Children who reside in single parent households are more inclined to be exposed to violence, as single mothers in particular do not always have the necessary authority to control their children. Furthermore, South Africa has been facing a pandemic of HIV and

AIDS, which causes family disorganisation due to the loss of resources, family cohesion and members of the family.

- Poverty and unemployment are contributing factors in terms of community violence, since highly disadvantaged communities become isolated due to broad societal imbalances and inequality. Violence has furthermore become a means to obtain certain goods and services, which cannot be obtained due to limited resources and financial gains.
- In poorer communities, there are no recreational and sporting facilities. The children and adolescents hence do not have activities that they could participate in before or after school, leaving them with time to take part in risk-taking behaviour.
- Residing in an unsafe community instils a message of powerlessness, marginalisation, and a sense of despair, which leads to feelings of frustration. Community disorganisation due to the large influx of individuals into urban areas add to this unsafe feeling, as communities have experienced a loss of cohesion, social control, and trust within the collective community, which could lead to higher levels of community violence.
- Parents can serve as a buffer against community violence through positive role modelling, secure attachment, and displays of empathy and altruism towards the child. The phenomenon of parents neglecting or abandoning their children, leads to unsupervised youth, who often misuse substances.
- Mental health problems such as PTSD, depression and anxiety could result due to community violence.
- Any form of trauma influences the body. By residing in an unsafe community, parents often cannot protect their children against factors such as violence which could cause trauma. The development of the brain's functioning and organisation could be negatively impacted if children are exposed to neglect and trauma. According to the neuro-sequential model of therapeutics, fight for survival is affected when a person experiences trauma or resides in an unsafe environment. An adolescent's higher cognitive functioning is also impeded when he/she encounters trauma, such as problem-solving, communication and decision-making. These changes in the brain could affect the way in which individuals perceive their environment and how they engage with others socially.
- Youth gangs are more prominent in disorganised communities with high levels of community violence. These gangs serve as a surrogate family, which has a

negative influence on morals and norms, as the norms at home become less significant. These adolescents are often excluded from groups and thus tend to seek acceptance and belonging from others by joining a gang.

- Resilience is described as one of the most important factors to minimise the effect of crime and victimisation. Resilience is viewed as a protective factor as it is a resource to cope with adverse circumstances and is explained as the capacity to exercise control over a situation. Hence a child's level of resilience will determine the effect of community violence on him/her as an individual.

4.4.2. Empirical findings

The following conclusions could be derived from the empirical study:

- All the participants had been exposed to some form of community violence, either directly or indirectly. Examples of this exposure were the use of a weapon, gender-based violence, xenophobia, protests and theft.
- Night-time was identified as the time of day during which most individuals had been exposed to some sort of community violence. Community violence was also more likely to occur during a weekend.
- Poverty and unemployment served as the leading motivation for community violence. Both poverty and unemployment lead to frustration within a community, as community members cannot obtain necessary means, which in some cases resorted to violent crimes.
- The study revealed that traditional roles and beliefs were linked to higher levels of community violence. Women are viewed as less important and often beaten by men when they had not met these men's expectations, resulting in gender-based violence. Various participants had viewed gender-based violence in various systems such as their home (micro), school and community (meso).
- The study highlighted that community violence and trauma are interconnected. Trauma often causes a person to perceive community violence as acceptable, whereas community violence leads to trauma. Various of the participants mentioned that they had not dealt with the trauma which they had experienced due to traditional beliefs but learned to cope with the effects of community violence by focussing on their education and isolating themselves from others.
- Gangs seem to be a prominent feature in the community of Sicelo, since various

children and adolescents turn to gang membership. Most of the participants mentioned that gang membership was one of the consequences of community violence.

- Participants indicated that the members of the community do not trust the police. Community members therefore attempt to take the law into their own hands by taking part in community justice. Most of the participants had witnessed some form of violence towards an offender, as identified and perpetrated by community members. Most of these offenders had been seriously injured or had been beaten to death.
- All the participants mentioned some form of substance abuse as a response to community violence. Alcohol was the most evidently misused substance, as it is readily accessed by children as well as adults. Taverns also served as a location to access alcohol and a place where various individuals had been exposed to some form of community violence. Males were also more likely to be under the influence of alcohol when assaulting a female.
- It became evident that community members received no support from other community members when faced with danger. This may be due to the high levels of jealousy amongst community members, the previous trauma experienced or the high levels of isolation to protect the self. When there is a scarcity of resources people tend to become jealous and frustrated when others are receiving goods and services before they do. The trauma could cause an individual to withdraw in an attempt to reach homeostasis.
- Two ways of coping with community violence were identified in the research. One method is to focus all of one's energy on education. The parents of the participants and the participants themselves placed great emphasis on achieving a good education, since education is viewed as a means to move away from an unsafe neighbourhood. The second method, illustrated by adolescents was to isolate themselves from family, friends and community members in order to stay away from aspects which could lead to community violence or have a negative impact on their future, such as becoming involved in gangs.
- During the participants' adolescence various of the participants perceived community violence as part of their daily lives and would often participate in acts of community violence. As they became older, these participants started to realise

the effects that these acts would have on their well-being.

Based on the key findings and conclusions of the study, discussed above, various recommendations could be made regarding community violence in a South African context. These recommendations are presented in the following section.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the subsequent section, recommendations will be provided for practitioners as well as for future research, underpinned by the findings and conclusions of this study.

4.5.1. Recommendations for practitioners

- Social workers should be educated on various traditions and cultures within communities in South Africa, as this will assist them to develop an understanding of the ways in which services users view their community and community violence.
- Due to the lack of professional social workers, key individuals who are trusted and valued in the community should be identified and educated in lay-counselling, to assist children and adolescents when faced with trauma due to community violence. Various participants mentioned that they spoke to and were assisted by certain trusted individuals within the community after a traumatic experience. It may be beneficial for these trusted individuals to gain some knowledge and skills on how to not only look after themselves but assist others in the community as well. These individuals should also be aware of professional services for possible referral.
- Programmes for adolescents and young adults, focusing on prevention are crucial to combat the cycle of community violence. Social workers should focus on awareness campaigns and workshops to advance problem-solving and improve communication.
- Social workers should be equipped during their undergraduate training for the BSW degree on the effects of trauma and how trauma affects the body and brain. Qualified social workers should also attend short courses on trauma, due to phenomena such as community violence, to understand its effects and the specific interventions needed.
- It may be beneficial for social workers to work with traditional healers and persons

in traditional positions to find midway alternatives to address trauma.

4.5.2. Recommendations for future research

The researcher can make the following recommendations for future research, following the completion of the study:

- More research should be done concerning the trauma associated with community violence in a non-western setting, as many of the participants mentioned that according to their culture and parental perceptions, counselling and therapy is not needed.
- Research on the need for afterschool programmes in a safe school environment seems paramount, as children and adolescents isolate themselves from friends and family to achieve their goals. This is a cause for concern, since it may impact social and emotional development as peer interaction serves as a key aspect during development.
- More South African research should be done concerning the influence, causes and effects of community violence, since there is limited South African literature available, in particular, qualitative research, with a larger sample.

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The researcher successfully explored and described young adults' perceptions of community violence in a South African context during their adolescent years, hence achieving the research goal and the corresponding research objectives.

After the successful completion of the research goal, it is concluded that young adults perceived community violence differently when they were younger, compared to when they are older. Recommendations were made on how to support children, adolescents and families exposed to community violence, by helping social workers to understand community violence as a phenomenon in a South African context. The perceptions of the participants seem to change depending on the motivations for and responses to community violence. These young adults were forced to cope with the consequences of community violence, as they are still exposed to this type of violence in their daily lives.

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APPENDIX A: 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: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



28 July 2019

Dear Miss RA Johnston

Project Title: Young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence
Researcher: Miss RA Johnston
Supervisor: Dr H Hall
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference number: 14131715 (HUM047/0619)
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 Bomotheo

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

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT



Researcher: Racheal Johnston (student number 14131715)
Degree: MSW Play-based Intervention
Contact details: 072 914 5775

INFORMED CONSENT BY PARTICIPANT

Name of participant: _____

1. Title of the study

Young adults' perceptions of community violence experienced in a South African context during adolescence.

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe young adults' perceptions of community violence that they experienced in a South African context during their adolescent years. The focus of the research is to obtain a better understanding of how adolescents view community violence in South Africa.

3. Procedures

I will be requested to take part in a personal interview with the researcher. The researcher is interested in my views on community violence that I was exposed to when I was an adolescent. The interview is expected to last about one hour and an audio-recording of the interview will be made. All information will be handled confidentially and only the researcher and her supervisor at the University of Pretoria will have knowledge of what I share in the interview.

4. Possible risks

The interview will focus on my views about my experience of community violence as an adolescent. As my exposure to community violence happened a few years ago, it is expected that there will be less of a chance that I will feel distressed as a result of the interview. However, if I experience any emotional distress because of the interview, the researcher will refer me to a registered social worker or a registered counsellor in my area who can provide me with counselling free of charge.

5. Benefits of participation

I will not receive any payment or gifts for taking part in the study. However, the information that I give can help social workers to become aware of how teenagers may experience violence in the community.

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6. Rights as a participant

I am aware that my participation is voluntary. I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time, without having to explain why. There will be no negative consequences for me if I decide to withdraw from the study, even though I initially agreed to participate.

7. Confidentiality

The recording of the interview will be typed out word for word. Both the recording and the typed document will be handled with strict confidentiality and will be safely stored by the researcher. Only the researcher and her supervisor at the university will have access to this information. If I should withdraw from the study, my information will be destroyed. After completion of the research all the documents will be safely stored according to the guidelines of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria.

The researcher will write a report on the study. My name or personal details will not appear in the report. I will be able to request the researcher to read the typed document on the information that I provided during the interview, if I wish to do so.

8. Contact details

If I need more information about this research, I can contact the researcher at her e-mail (u14131715@tuks.co.za) or on her cell number as provided above.

9. Data storage

I am aware that the research information will be stored for 15 years in the Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Pretoria, as stipulated in their policy.

10. Data usage

The findings of this research will be used for a research report and possibly for professional publications and conference papers. The findings may also be used for further research. If used for further research, the information will still be regarded as confidential, as described above. I provide permission that the research findings may also be used for future research.

10. Permission for participation in the research study

I, the undersigned, understand the information provided above. I had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and all my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I understand what the research is about and why it is being done.

I understand my rights as a participant and give my permission to voluntarily participate in the research study.

I have received a copy of this letter.

Participant: _____

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

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