

Community related risk factors

3.1 Introduction

Subsequent to the family, the community and neighbourhood are influential in the child's development throughout life. A youth's world-view and life in general is very much shaped by the community wherein the child lives, the characteristics and type of neighbourhood dictates the child's behaviour in a definite way. These characteristics may include: a neighbourhood which is violent and riddled with crime or a socially disorganized community with a poor infrastructure, as opposed to a community which values its citizens and cares for the security and well-being of others, a community where crime and violence are rejected as accepted forms of behaviour. The impact of the neighbourhood and community on the child will be examined in this chapter.

A considerable influence on the youth within the community is the school that the child attends (the family was discussed and evaluated as the primary socialisation agent) the school is the secondary socialisation agent for the child. It is at this institution that the child learns to get along with others, accept authority and to adhere to certain rules and regulations. The impact of the school is a fundamental issue to discuss as it is through the attendance of school that a child meets and befriends peers. Friends and peers have been and will always be a major part of every child and adolescent's life; friends are able to influence the adolescent in a negative or positive light with what is commonly known as peer pressure. Other aspects included in the community include the effect of friends and peers on an adolescent's life, emphasis will be placed on the youth gang and the drug and alcohol subculture.

The introduction to the literature chapters suggested that the family and community are interrelated with and interdependent of one another. It is important to remember that it is the family that provides the child with a framework for the future: this means that the family teaches the child resiliency skills and the ability to adequately and successfully socialise with others, the others being older persons, people of authority and friends. If the family fails in this task then the child will, when embarking on his/her school career, experience difficulties with accepting authority, respecting older persons and in getting along with peers. Resiliency

skills imply that if the family has failed in teaching the child how to stand up for oneself, help with a good self-esteem and become independent then the child will, quite easily fall prey to the influence of peers. Parents play a key role in emphasizing the importance of an education; this role is aided very much by the media and the school (Siegel, Welsh & Senna 2003:269). Depending on the type of friends that the child interacts with, will largely determine if the influence is positive or negative in nature. Negative influence can lead to truancy at school, poor achievement academically, involvement in gang activities and drug use.

Unquestionably, the community and neighbourhood wherein the child is raised plays a role in the child's future behaviour. Angenent and de Man (1996:180) claim that the correlation between offending and the residential area of a criminal depends on two factors, one factor is the contact that youth have with friends and peers in the neighbourhood and factor two deals with the opportunities for delinquency and crime that are found in the neighbourhood of the youth. The community should be considered a social network, it is in the community where children learn how to socialise, the child learns through observation how to treat others and on a larger scale, the youngster acquires norms and values that are acceptable to the community. Thus if the community is criminogenic in nature the children residing in such an environment will learn that illegal behaviour is not only accepted but perhaps desirable as well. In this regard Regional Court Magistrate, Graeme Tremors (in Peete, 9 June:2005) has likened Eersterus to a "skietbaan" in the sense that the Magistrate actually condemned the regular use of firearms by the residents as a means of solving their problems. One can agree that this kind of environment is not conducive to raising balanced and secure children. The following statement provides insight into the type of coloured neighbourhood that is known as Westbury "*Westbury has always been synonymous with gang violence. In the 1980' and 1990s, this was divided territory. If you lived on one gang's turf, you couldn't so much go and shop on the other side. No one could remain neutral. The gangs ruled the area*" (www.mnet.co.za). Mkhondo (2005:12) claims that when children are exposed to a community that is characteristically violent the resultant affect is: low school performance, substance abuse, behavioural problems and emotional disturbance. Results from a study conducted with prisoners explains further "*Some of the prisoners related how their community and home environment modeled the use of force and violence. They became desensitised to violence as a result of being witness to stabbings, shootings, and murder in their communities. Such environments provided them limited opportunities for learning appropriate problem solving skills, social skills and conflict resolution*" Mkhondo (2005:19). An article in The Star (12 September:2002) that discusses the growth of violent crime amongst the youth in South Africa,

ascribes this increase to a lack of recreational activities in the community, high levels of unemployment as well as a legacy of violence that has been experienced by many children in this country.

McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter (1998:169) have established a list of risk factors within the social environment that includes the community, the school and the phenomenon of gang membership. These factors are labelled as risk factors as the presence of these factors may lead to criminal behaviour:

- The degree of poverty, racism, and frequency of violence and gang activity in the neighbourhood.
- The economic prosperity of the community and the nation as a whole.
- The rates of unemployment and underemployment and the likelihood of economic hopelessness.
- The level of family income.
- The degree to which the economic and educational expectations of the community are being met and the nature of a community's response to economic and educational marginalisation.

Siegel, Welsh and Senna (2003:282) concentrate specifically on the community as a correlate of crime within the school. Researchers in Siegel et al established that any criminal activity in the school is as a result of the community wherein the school is located, they believe thus that delinquency in schools occurs in conjunction with delinquency in the community. Moreover, they have ascertained that there are two key factors that play a role in crime at school and its association to the community, these are

- **Poverty and Disorganisation:** Schools experiencing crime and drug abuse are often found in neighbourhoods that are socially disorganized; there are a significant amount of students who are behind the grade level in reading, many students hail from families that rely on welfare and there is a high rate of poverty and unemployment. Schools located in stable communities do not harbor these problems; students are typically high achievers, there are drug-free environments and parents are more involved with their children. Research found furthermore that the different

stimuli in the community do not aid in the stability and climate of the school. Poverty in the surrounding areas of the school influences the social characteristics of the students. Students from poor areas lack the willingness and readiness for learning, additionally poor areas are unable to ensure that the school is equipped with the necessary tools conducive to a comprehensive education.

- **Neighbourhood crime:** Evidence from research confirms the link between delinquency in schools and the social system in the surrounding neighbourhood. Schools located in high-crime areas show a higher incidence of delinquency than schools located in safer neighbourhoods. Students fear criminal elements in their neighbourhood and as a result may carry weapons as a means of protection as they travel from their homes to school.

3.2 The influence of the school

The school is the first site of socialisation away from the family unit. *“The school provides a much more complex socialization setting than the family unit does, since more varied forces interact and pull against each other there for a youth’s loyalty and attention. Although schools are established and administered by adults, and their organizational goals are set by adults, they are also the focal point of interaction for the peer culture, which in many instances has goals different from, or at least not in total accord with, the goals set by school administrators and pursued by the faculty”* (Kratcoski & Kratcoski 1996:160).

The school has a set of rules and regulations which the child is obliged to adhere to, however, the peers encountered and befriended at school have a totally different set of goals and rules for themselves. It is at the school where a child learns (for the first time) to make independent decisions; parents are not present to assist the child in his/her choices at school.

3.2.1 The role of the school as an educational institution and educator for adolescents

The school has been labelled, time and again as the secondary socialisation agent for a child. This indicates then that the school plays a fundamental role in the development of a child’s personality and coping abilities in life. The following excerpt maintains that the youth *“...spend many hours in school where they develop intellectually,*

emotionally, as well as socially” Angenent and de Man (1996:117). Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1996:148) argue that a school is a far more intricate and multifaceted socialisation agent than the family; this is evident when one considers the role of the school in a young individual’s life. The importance placed on the school is largely due to the fact that as a child/adolescent an individual spends a great deal of time at this institution, the school constitutes a big part of an individual’s environment. McWhirter et al (1998:73) claim that there is a general consensus among educators that it is the responsibility of the educator (as well as the parent) to transfer the values of society to the learner. For Maree (2003:64) the school is one of the most essential socializing agents in society. According to this author, youth who have little or no access to school, run the risk of becoming involved in antisocial behaviour.

Angenent and de Man (1996:120) maintain that it is the duty of the school to furnish the adolescent with the required cognitive, social, and emotional knowledge and aptitude – the school must also ensure that a suitable atmosphere is in place in order for the aforesaid learning to occur. These authors have supplied four points that describe/discuss the characteristics of a good school, these characteristics are derived from the argument that a school is the provider of life skills and an appropriate environment for learning:

- A good school is one where there is a good climate, a warm ambience which excludes nobody. This means, among others, that every learner gets a chance to have positive learning experience, relationships, and identifications.
- The school atmosphere is moderately controlling: that is, not too regulated and not too permissive. On the one hand there is room for responsibility and autonomy on the part of the learners, on the other hand they have to meet reasonable expectations.
- School policy is consistent; consequently, the learners know where they stand. The procedures are clear and are regarded as fair by the learners. This applies in particular to the policy on punishment.
- Learning is central; the content of the lessons is relevant and presented in a satisfactory way. Learners are well aware that learning comes first at school and through it gain self-esteem.

3.2.2 An adolescent's attachment and commitment to school

The commitment and /or attachment shown by an adolescent to his/her school bears significance when examining the relationship between the school and youth offending, a youth with no obligation towards his/her school career can easily fall prey to criminal behaviour, which might prove more exciting than attending lessons five days a week. Mkhondo (2005:12) lists low attachment to school as a risk factor for delinquency. Bezuidenhout and Tshiwula (2004:94) claim that youth from a lower socio-economic background do not feel that the school will improve their circumstances, they therefore have poor commitment to the school and as a result of their frustration turn to committing crime. The fact that a learner is in congruence with and is committed to the norms of the school and school activities might serve as a deterrent to truancy, dropping out of school and even deviant behaviour (Kratcoski & Kratcoski 1990:150). In fact, studies (in Bartollas 2000:280) suggest that delinquents are more rejecting of the learner role than non-delinquents. Gottfredson (2001:31) confirms the aforesaid, she asserts that an adolescent with strong educational desires is far more likely to be committed to the school as opposed to an adolescent who has no educational desires whatsoever.

Where does the problem lie when an adolescent shows little commitment to his/her school career? There are authors and professionals that feel it is entirely the school's fault, whereas others believe that the learner is the sole guilty party. Angenent and de Man (1996:120) have found two sides to this dilemma; on the one hand learners feel that the way in which they are approached by authority figures, the teaching methods and the content of their lessons discourage instead of egg them on to perform better. Studies in Angenent and de Man have claimed that the school fails to inspire learners. The other side of this dilemma deals with the opinion of the schools, learners have poor motivation, they lack absolute interest in their school as oftentimes their interests lie outside of the school. Youngsters show little initiative, they are indolent and weak and show zero resolve.

A study by Kelly and Pink (in Kratcoski & Kratcoski 1990:150) considered the degree of commitment to school by 284 male high school seniors and linked it to delinquency (this was ascertained in terms of court appearances). The results showed (with minor exceptions) that the youths with low levels of commitment to their school had in fact higher rates of rebellion and delinquency than youths with high commitment levels. Additionally, the boys with low school commitment were also more likely to be involved in drinking, fighting and school misconduct. These researchers expand further and claim

that low-status learners are separated from high-status learners by for example, teachers; it is this separation that may possibly force the low-status learners to rebel against the norm and accepted values in the classroom and school. Kelly and Pink surmised that *“Given that they are locked out of the general success flow of the school, it is not surprising to find that our uncommitted males have such a low regard for the school and the demands of its authority figures. This lack of respect or concern would seem to carry over to their out-of-school activities”* (Kratcoski & Kratcoski 1990:150). An adolescent with poor attachment and commitment to school runs the increased risk of taking part in delinquency (Gottfredson 2001:56). Evidence from a study conducted with re-offenders (in Hagell & Newburn 1994:84) shows that 40% of the 74 interviewed respondents claimed to have disliked school, two out of three had been involved with fighting at school and as many were often in trouble with the teachers. With regards to the actual commitment of these re-offenders to their education and attitude towards school, 66 of the 74 interviewed maintained that they were often missing from school - truancy played a huge part of their short school career.

3.2.3 Academic achievement at school

Performing poorly at school seems to have an influence on a youth's commitment to and enjoyment of school. Once again these are factors that play a role in the deviance of an adolescent as attending school and performing well indicates conformity. Siegel et al (2003:270) state *“The general path towards occupational prestige is education, and when youth are deprived of this avenue of success through poor school performance there is a greater likelihood of delinquent behaviour”*. Gottfredson (2001:16) maintains that delinquency is related to educational performance. To follow is a table provided by Roper (2005:26) with figures on the scholastic achievement of twenty offenders (these offenders participated in a youth program). This illustrates the association between poor education and delinquent behaviour.

Table 3.1 Highest grade achieved

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Grade 6 | 1 |
| Grade 7 | 3 |
| Grade 8 | 0 |
| Grade 9 | 4 |
| Grade 10 | 3 |
| Grade 11 | 4 |
| Grade 12 | 0 |
| Post matric diploma, certificate | 0 |
| Not known | 4 |

Angenent and de Man (1996:124) assert that adolescents who fare badly at school usually do not enjoy school and have minimal involvement, at times these adolescents detest the school, this is not only as a result of poor academic performance but due to being discriminated against by teachers and fellow learners. Authors explain that youth who are poor scholars end up in a vicious circle that threatens their adaptation to school, they clarify by stating *“Thus in black and white terms, we see a segregation between “achievers” and “failures”, “successful individuals” and “duds”, “winners” and “losers” “adjusted and maladjusted ones”, “conformists and non-conformists” or whatever they are called. The “failures” lose interest in school and over time do no longer respect moral authority, and increasingly behave as fringe figures. And thus they become more and more marginalized and alienated from school”* in (Angenent & de Man 1996:124). Siegel et al (2003:272) assert that failure at school results in negative responses from important people in the youth’s life for example, parents and teachers; these responses serve to reinforce the youth’s feelings of incompetence and this may pave the way for criminal behaviour. Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1996:163) are of the opinion that academic failure is indeed linked to delinquency. Pink (1994:232) agrees with the authors already mentioned, Pink claims that adolescents who have little success at school are not committed to the values and objectives of the school and are more likely to engage in delinquent activities. Maree (2003:62) expands *“Failure at school is caused by poor academic performance, poor attendance or, more likely, expulsion or dropping out of school”*. Maguin and Loeber found through their research that the poorer the academic performance the higher the likelihood of delinquency, these scholars declare further *“...the odds of delinquency involvement are about twice as high among learners with low academic performance as they are among those with high academic performance”* in (Howell 2003:114).

Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1996:164) suggest that adolescents sometimes hail from an environment that predisposes them to poor academic achievement: this environment includes substandard housing, lack of attention by parents, overcrowding, inexperience with books and adult conversation, all of which place a disadvantage on the child and academic achievement. In this regard, Siegel et al (2003:272) includes a tumultuous family life as a situation that very likely leads to poor academic achievement, delinquent behaviour has previously been associated with a turbulent family life.

In conclusion, Howell (2003:114) claims that risk factors for adolescent violence are: early and persistent antisocial behaviour at school, poor academic performance and a lack of commitment to school.

3.2.4 The youth's alienation from school and avoidance behaviour

Authors in Angenent and de Man (1996:125) explain that an adolescent becomes alienated from school due to poor academic performance, low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Slowly but surely the youth withdraws from day to day functioning at the school and eventually escapes the school environment altogether; this type of behaviour can be described as avoidance behaviour. The incidence of alienation is confirmed by research in McWhirter et al (1998:98), results from the study showed that pupils who were not involved in extra-curricular activities or who were not members of school clubs felt alienated from their school and fellow learners. This process of alienation commences when the learner affiliates himself/herself with fellow learners who are alienated from the school as well. The following statement goes so far as to describe how easy it is for gang members (particularly those attending school) to recruit individuals at school as gang members "*Members who attend school-and there are surprisingly many who do-are always on the lookout for kids who are picked on or shunned by other classmates. They befriend these kids, making them feel safe and accepted*" (Sachs 1997:42). This excerpt from Sachs demonstrates how certain adolescents are prone to negative associations with delinquent peers and thus the process of alienating oneself from the school begins. Siegel et al (2003:272) state that adolescents who perform poorly at school experience feelings of frustration and rejection, this leads the adolescent to befriend other adolescents with the same feelings and together they engage in anti-social behaviour. These authors note that this association with other rejected/alienated peers and involvement in delinquent behaviour is due to the youth's belief that success is unattainable via conventional means. According to the authors in Angenent and de Man (1996:125) the school consists of two

subcultures: one embraces the official, administrative and teaching aspect of the school; it also includes the norms and values that students are expected to adhere to, attaining good marks and taking part in extra-curricular activities. The second subculture takes place during and after school hours; this subculture forms as a reaction to the school and includes rebellion of school norms and non-conformity. The main aspect of this culture is that the youth involve themselves in activities that are enjoyable while at the same time allowing the youth to escape the frustrations experienced at school. Imitating friends is an important motivation for involvement in this relaxed subculture (otherwise labelled: the hedonistic youth culture), adolescents often copy their friends' behaviour; at times this can include deviant behaviour as well. It is interesting to note that the youth involved in this hedonistic subculture will also look for other or similar subcultures outside of the school environment, oftentimes these are subcultures that appeal to youth alienated from their family as well. These subcultures also reject the norms and values of the traditional dominant subculture; it is not rare that an adolescent will encounter deviant friends within this subculture. It is within these relaxed, hedonistic youth subcultures that youths are able to vent their frustrations due to school problems or family issues. Findings from empirical studies support the link between delinquent behaviour and problems experienced at school (Huizinga, Weiher, Espiritu & Esbensen 2003:60).

Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1996:169) explain that dropping out of school is the last step in the process of alienation. According to Bartollas (2003:532) a dropout is a school pupil who by his/her own choice no longer attends school. The following circumstances have been supplied by the National Advisory Council on Supplementary Centers and Services (U.S.A.) as being related to the incidence of dropping out of school (Kratcoski & Kratcoski 1996:156):

- Pregnancy.
- A desire to get a job and to have more money.
- A feeling of failure and hopelessness resulting from failing grades.
- Lack of individual or group counseling or other supportive services.
- Not being able to relate the curriculum to future employment.
- Influence of out-of-school friends.
- Lack of adequate clothing.
- Personal clashes with teachers and authority figures.

McWhirter et al (1998:97) assert that teachers are aware of who the potential drop-outs will be, usually adolescents who leave school early fall within the ambit of the following circumstances: pupils who lack enthusiasm towards their school work, who experience problems with the school authorities or the police or both, poor attendance at school, pregnant or married learners, learners who are poor and must therefore seek employment, family problems, alcohol or drug abuse and pupils who fall behind in their grades (adolescents who have failed a year).

Siegel et al (2003:275) have suggested four points which they feel form the basis of learner alienation:

- **School size:** Larger schools are often impersonal, and relatively few students can find avenues for meaningful participation. Teachers and other school personnel do not have the opportunity to deal with early indications of academic or behavior problems and thus act to prevent delinquency.
- **Irrelevant curriculum:** Some pupils may be unable to see the relevance or significance of what they are taught in school. The gap between their education and the real world leads them to feel that the school experience is little more than a waste of time.
- **Lack of payoff:** many learners, particularly those from low-income families, believe that school has no payoff in terms of their future. Because the legitimate channel of education appears to be meaningless, illegitimate alternatives become increasingly attractive for learners who not plan to attend college or use their high school education directly in their careers.
- **Middle and upper-class bias:** Methods of instruction as well as curriculum materials reflect middle-class mores, language, and customs and have little meaning for the disadvantaged child.

Maree (2003:64) highlights the importance of completing one's school career as she highlights the association between a low education level and a high crime level (in particular violent crime). Minimal education results in a lower income and unemployment, factors that are characteristic of a developing country such as South Africa.

3.2.5 Violence in the school

In their report for the need of a school safety project, Professors Nesor and Prinsloo from the Department of Criminology, Unisa) introduce the article with the following statement *“A few decades ago the most pressing classroom problems were tardiness, talkative learners and gum chewing. Today schools are increasingly confronted with far more serious problems such as drug abuse, gangs, weapons and other offences that pose a threat to the quality of life of learners and their communities”* (www.unisa.ac.za). Zeilhofer (4 May:2005) illustrates this in her article: A youth was gunned down by a seventeen year old learner at the Eersterus Secondary school. Of particular interest to the researcher (in this article) is that a parent openly declared that there is the incidence of adolescents not attending school who visit the school during school hours and who initiate fights with the pupils at school. This particular school in question (Eersterus Secondary School, Pretoria) has had several meetings with parents to discuss the problem of security, the reader must note that the alleged offender was in fact out on bail following a previous murder charge and that this suspect had entered the school bearing a firearm. A parent revealed that this grade 11 youth in question had informed the school that he had been threatened a while back and that he now carried the firearm with him for safety – the same firearm that killed Marcel Davis. What generates violence within schools? Maree (2003:62) explains that carrying a firearm contributes and initiates violence in schools *“Learners take weapons to school because they think they need them to protect themselves, because they believe their friends will think they are “cool” or because they intend to commit crime”*. When looking at the statistics with regards to firearm-related deaths in this country the reader will understand that it has almost become a norm for citizens of this country to own a gun. An article by Ajam (26 March:2005) reveals the following: From 1994-2000 (this is the last year for which statistics have been provided) 174 954 people had been shot dead, due to criminal attacks, police actions, accidents or suicide. In fact the article opens with the following harrowing statement *“Welcome to the killing fields of South Africa. The devastating toll of gun deaths in SA over the past 10 years is five times the number of Americans in Vietnam....”*. Given these figures, one must realise that the youth are not exempted from gun-related crimes. The same article in the Pretoria News clarifies *“The current statistics compiled by Gun Free SA and the Institute for Security Studies, for 1994 to 2000 revealed that 375 children under the age of 12 and 324 minors between 12 and 17 were killed by guns in 2000 – an average of two youngsters a day”*. These figures are shocking but what disturbs the researcher more is the fact that these statistics are compiled from crimes that are reported to the police, what about the crimes that are never reported? Known as the *“dark figure”* in statistics.

The reader will read shortly how crimes committed by gangs within school time are hardly reported for various reasons. These are numbers that are therefore lost and thus a proper figure for gun-related crimes amongst the youth in this country does not exist. In a paper, *Adolescence and Youth: Challenges in Post-conflict South Africa* (www.hsrc.ac.za) Lucas cites data revealing that the leading cause of non-natural death among 15-19 year olds is shooting and stabbing.

A literature review of recent studies, papers, government data pertinent to violence and crime in urban schools was conducted by the Independent Projects Trust at the request of the national Secretariat for Safety and Security (www.ipt.co.za). This review explains violence in schools and its impact *“Gang turf wars spill onto school grounds because the school itself is a territorial prize for selling drugs, collecting revenue from theft, and recruiting gang members or intimidating children into becoming surrogate criminals”*. Research was undertaken by Dr R.A. Griggs from the Independent Projects Trust (www.ipt.co.za) with regards to violence in schools. Ten schools in Kwazulu Natal were included in this study. The research reveals that the gravity and incidence of violence at schools is fast destroying the essential environmental conditions needed to ensure that proper education is carried out. Violence in the school seriously impedes any efforts to upgrade schools as well. In this regard Dr Griggs claims *“Secure environments for learning should be the first priority of any educational policy. At education conferences, summits, and in media coverage the shortages of classrooms, equipment, teachers, and money is often prioritised over the tragedy of our children living in severe stress owing to violence in the schools. However, better supplies do not offer a solution in environments that are prone to arson, theft, vandalism, gang warfare and other forms of violence”*. Dr Griggs highlighted the following five factors that were found to be conducive to violence in the schools:

- **Gang-related violence:** Gang violence was prevalent in 9 out of 10 schools studied. Turf wars included the school as part of its territorial prize. Teachers fear pupils who carry weapons, smoke dagga in the toilets and who move in and out of school grounds freely. The youth attending school (who are oftentimes the target of gang activities) are afraid to talk as they fear for their own safety and that of their families (sometimes their lives are threatened). Dr Griggs clarifies *“Gangs hunt down and sometimes kill learners who are suspected of revealing their activities”*. It is precisely the intimidation of the gangs that weakens any attempts at creating an environment favorable to learning.

- **Inadequate security measures:** Security measures were found to be abysmal in 9 out of 10 schools. Basic requirements for safeguarding the schools were not in place for example: adequate fencing, police protection, weapon checks and security guards. The majority of schools had no fencing whatsoever. At Zahke school any attempts to try and seal holes in the fences failed as gangs re-opened the holes the next day. Police protection is basically non-existent, their response time to a violent incidence can take days or weeks (this holds true even if the nature of the violence was murder). Gangs operate with impunity in the majority of school environments, this entails taking part in murders that are never investigated. For example, at Isibonelo Secondary school, a 16 year old male was shot on school premises and after a week there had still not been any attempt at an investigation. Weapon checks are scarce, when they do take place pupils are informed and thus have the opportunity to hide their weapons. The following account illustrates the phenomenon of weapons at school: At Mzuvele school, five armed youngsters entered the school during the day and robbed pupils of their jewelry at knife and gunpoint. The suspects were not stopped at the entrance to the school, neither were they checked for weapons or questioned as to their presence at the school, an investigation or prosecution did not follow.
- **Lack of counselling for pupils:** None of the disadvantaged schools in the study offered any form of counseling for students in spite of the high incidence and gravity of violence. Dr Griggs found that there was a high figure for the incidence of rape and sexual molestation at the schools. These schools were devoid of any form of assistance to their pupils who were victims of these acts of violence.
- **Absence of education in tolerance:** It was found that the population of the schools consisted of diverse races, cultures and religions. There was zero evidence that pupils attending these schools were receiving any form of education in terms of respecting one another for his/her individual beliefs and inclinations. This resulted in students stereotyping each other, name calling and conflict. This is a pertinent issue for South Africa as a country that is heterogeneous in nature.
- **Parental apathy and indifference:** Dr Griggs ascertained that parents were mostly absent at meetings held with teachers, police and education officials. Meetings were held in order to discuss conflict management at schools, the majority of the

secondary schools have a total of 1000 pupils with only fifty parents attending a meeting at any given time. It is the opinion of Dr Griggs that the lack of parental involvement *“leads to lower self-esteem among educators, reduced financial support, and the inability to garner enough community co-operation to make security programmes work”*. Another problem is that parents are not co-operating with the police. Oftentimes police do not investigate gang killings as parents are unwilling to liaise and divulge information. Dr Griggs found that in some cases parents are in fact themselves involved in gang activities and push their children to violence for example: in Newlands a mother provided her son with a knife and told him to stab another learner.

The following excerpt from an address made by the Director General of Education Mr Mseleku (24 May 2002, education.pwv.gov.za) at the launch of the Self Defence Training Programme for Learners in Kwamashu sums up the state of affairs in our schools and communities *“Our schools, throughout the country, have become notorious for the unacceptable levels of criminal and violent behaviour that plagues them. Many of us have even come to accept this crime in our schools as inevitable – as if there is nothing we can do about it. What very few of us ever stop to think about is the very real trauma experienced by our children because of the levels of violence they are exposed to. And every parent’s heart should bleed at the thought of a traumatised child – and that is what all of us are, in relation to the children in our schools. We are their parents”*. The reality of violence in the schools is one that cannot be ignored, the youth in this country are exposed daily to conflict in the school, a situation which is not conducive to proper learning.

3.2.6 Substance abuse in the school

The use of drugs within the school environment is an important issue that needs urgent attention, the incidence of this phenomena cannot be ignored. The impact of drug and alcohol abuse on the adolescent is not only life-changing but destructive as well. One cannot ignore peer pressure nor adolescent associations with negative peers as a contributory factor towards an adolescent’s drug or alcohol abuse. As far as possible, the influence of peers on an adolescent’s decision to abuse substances will also be discussed in this section.

Periodic surveys are conducted by the national Center for Addiction and Substance abuse at Columbia University in New York, U.S.A. This investigation is conducted with students, parents, teachers, and principals concerning their attitudes with regards to cigarettes, drugs and alcohol and the presence of these aforementioned substances in

the school. The number of students who report that drugs are used, sold and kept at their schools is rising: from 72% in 1996 to 78% in 1998. The majority of students in high school claim that the drug problem is in fact getting worse (Siegel et al 2003:281).

It is disturbing to read about the incidence and availability of substances (particularly drugs) in the schools and to teenagers in South Africa. Gauteng Substance Abuse chairman, Debbie Fielding states "Schools are seen as an untapped market by drug dealers who prey on the curiosity of and peer pressure experienced by their intended victims" Hosken (2005). Fielding continues by claiming that in the last two years there has been an increase in the amount of drugs used by children in Pretoria. Unfortunately, it is easy for a learner to obtain drugs within South African schools, a matric pupil claims that "*...buying drugs at school was as easy as buying a packet of crisps from the tuckshop*" (Hosken, 2005). The influence of peer pressure cannot be ignored, the same matric pupil explains how a youngster falls prey to the use of drugs and alcohol "*When people see you drinking and taking drugs they think that you are cool and you instantly become popular*" and "*The reason children take drugs is because they do not want to be discriminated against and made to feel like an outsider*" (Hosken, 2005). Gottfredson (2001:34) asserts that affiliations with harmful peers is a strong correlate of problem behaviour by adolescents.

Neser as well as Ovens and Victor-Zietsman from the Department of Criminology, Unisa and Ladikos and Olivier from the Institute for Criminological Sciences conducted a study to ascertain chief concerns with regards to the use of drugs and alcohol in school (Views of Learners on Drugs and Related Matters: Preliminary Findings, June 2001). This research was conducted in August 2000; learners in grades 7, 10 and 11 (from 35 Secondary schools in Pretoria) completed 2003 questionnaires. The results are as follows:

- 21 percent of all respondents recognised "*drugs*" as the most important problem facing young people.
- The dilemma with drugs was perceived to be as the most serious by 29,6 percent of all coloured respondents followed by 26,3 percent Indian, 19,5 percent black scholars and 18,6 percent white students.
- Concerning alcohol, the majority of learners (62 percent) stated that they had used alcohol on a few to several occasions in the last month; almost 40 percent of them were drunk occasionally in the course of a month.

- One-quarter of the learners expressed that the illegal drug problem in their school was getting worse, 13 percent believed it was getting better, 14 percent felt that the problem remained the same and 47 percent had no knowledge as to the extent of the problem.
- More than one-quarter of the group had observed the sale of illegal drugs on school property while 42 percent had personally seen the sale of illegal drugs in their neighbourhood. This translates as: 74,9 percent of coloureds, 41,8 percent of Indians, 25 percent of blacks and 13,2 percent of whites.
- Almost 74,9 percent of coloured students claimed that they knew of peers at their schools who were selling illegal drugs compared to 43,2 percent of Indians, 19,7 percent of blacks and 16,2 percent of whites who also had knowledge of this nature.
- The researchers inquired whether students knew of friends or peers at school who were using drugs such as LSD, ecstasy, cocaine and heroin, the following are the results: 79,3 percent of coloureds answered in the affirmative, adding that these friends were teenagers, related views were given by 56,8 percent of Indians, 40,4 percent of whites and 37,4 percent of blacks.
- A troubling matter is that only 8 percent of learners claimed that their schools were drug-free as opposed to 51,5 percent who admitted that their school was not drug-free, the remainder of the students were not sure.
- The majority of coloureds 79,8 percent admitted smoking dagga followed by 45,1 percent of Indians, 28,3 percent of whites and 25,6 percent of blacks. The following table shows the ages that the learners first smoked dagga:

Table 3.2 Onset of dagga use by learners

| Learners: | 11 years old | 12 years old | 13 years old |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Coloureds | 39,4 % | 28,2% | 14,8% |
| Indians | 24,2% | 15,8% | 11,6% |
| Blacks | 9,4% | 6,6% | 4,7% |
| Whites | 6,6% | 5,6% | 8,5% |

- One-quarter of those using drugs blamed themselves for doing so, more than half of the learners not using drugs felt it was their decision to do so, 45 percent of learners felt that their parents influence was vital in their abstaining from drug use.
- 70,2 percent of coloured learners claimed that they had inhaled substances such as glue, petrol and thinners followed by 25,9 percent of Indians, 22 percent of whites and 16,8 percent of blacks. Smoking cocaine or mandrax was tried by 38,8 percent of coloureds, 31,6 percent of Indians, 21,2 percent of blacks and 15,6 percent of whites. Snorting cocaine was attempted by 56,7 percent of coloureds, 21,7 percent of Indians, 14,7 percent of blacks and 7,7, percent of whites.
- Two-thirds of the learners were of the opinion that people started taking drugs as a means to keep up with their friends.

Indeed, these figures are disturbing. The youth of today are far more exposed to the selling and abusing of drugs and alcohol than one had previously imagined. An article titled Teacher Zone-Drugs in schools examines the plight of drugs in Westbury Secondary School (located in a coloured area). The problem with drugs is explained by an experienced teacher Mr Robinson *“Knowledge of drugs is widespread and obvious; the use of drugs is also alarming; there have been certain cases where a kid is selling drugs and even bringing it to school”* (www.sabceducation.co.za). The teacher continues by stating that Mondays at school are *“chaotic”* as he and another teacher stand at the school entrance turning pupils away who are still high (after the weekend) and therefore in no shape to attend school. The article explains that there are loiterers to be found around the school fence, they are later identified as drug dealers. Verification of the growing drug problem in South Africa can be seen in the decision of secondary schools to randomly test their pupils for drugs use (www.heinemann.co.za). Schools are not the only sector of society to show concern over the drug predicament in South Africa, the South African Police Service is extremely concerned as well. Superintendent Rademeyer from Pretoria Central Police station (Du Toit 2005:3) claims that almost every school in the Pretoria area has a problem with drugs. He contends further that there are certain schools who deny that a drug problem exists at all, particularly the Principals of prosperous schools who are resistant to drug raids being carried out at their respective schools. They feel that this would affect the prestige and status of the school, these schools are therefore difficult in terms of co-operating with

the police. The Superintendent continues by stating that the only difference between a “rich” and a “poor” school is the amount of money parents give their children and whether children abuse dagga and mandrax or cocaine (the latter drug is more expensive to purchase). The point that the Superintendent is trying to make is that drugs know no colour; anyone can be caught in the drug-web. In the same article a drug raid was carried out at Berea Park High school, six schoolbags were found to contain dagga. Pupils at this High school told the Du Toit (2005:3) that there were students who were involved in drug dealing on school premises, the Principal claims however there is no drug dealing by learners at the school. The problem it seems is that educators and parents alike are actually unaware that there exists a serious, on-going drug problem within the school and that there exists the opportunity for learners to buy drugs on school premises.

To conclude this section on school and its influence on youth crime the researcher has provided the reader with a list of risk factors that are found within the school environment. This list was compiled by McWhirter et al (1998:169), these authors note that the risk factors mentioned are suggestive of more delinquent behaviour outside of school as well. In school however, adolescents may

- Behave aggressively or violently towards other learners and towards teachers in the classroom or on the playground.
- Use money as a means of winning other learners’ approval and acceptance.
- Disrupt the classroom by failing to attend to the tasks of the class, stay in their seats, respond appropriately to the teacher, or participate in appropriate classroom behaviour.
- Vandalise school property and classroom materials.
- Make sexual gestures towards other students and teachers.
- Perform poorly in academic work, regularly scoring low on tests and consistently failing to complete classroom and homework assignments.
- Spend free time with older students who behave aggressively in and out of the classroom.

- Describe themselves as “*bad*” or “*dumb*”, or in other ways deride their ability to do the required school work and behave appropriately around other students and teachers.

3.3 Negative peer associations

Peer pressure occurs across every country, culture and religion. It can enhance or destroy an individual's life depending on who the friends are. McWhirter et al (1998:75) state in this regard “*Peers not only influence each other negatively by coercion and manipulation but also positively by offering support, advice, and opportunities to discuss conflicting points of view*”. The nature of a youth's interactions with his/her peers may be an indicator for later involvement in delinquency (Mkhondo 2005:12). When focusing on the negative peer association per se, delinquent friends not only have a concomitant influence on delinquent behaviour but also impact on the future involvement in serious delinquency and gang membership (Huizinga et al 2003:69). Howell (2003:116) argues that a high incidence of criminal behavior in groups demonstrates the influence of peers.

The peer group becomes the main focus for the child as he/she moves from childhood into adolescence, this means that the peer group becomes to a large extent more important to the adolescent than the parents; this is clarified in the following statement “*Young people are very responsive to peer group comments as measures of self-worth and self-esteem*” Mc Whirter et al (1998:75). Bezuidenhout and Thsiwula (2004:94) confirm this: it is during adolescence that the child becomes more independent from the parents and for a long time looks to his/her peers for support and self-evaluation, these authors claim “*... the standards of friends become particularly important yardsticks for self-evaluation*” (Bezuidenhout & Thsiwula 2004:94). The period of adolescence is a time of insecurity for most individuals, it is at this stage of their life that adolescents seek out other youth who are in similar circumstances (Angenent & de Man 1996:139).

Pertinent to this discussion is the following, do youths who interact with unsociable peers cause criminal behaviour or are delinquents anti-social youngsters who look for friends who think the same as they do? There are three theories presented in Siegel et al (2003:229) that attempt to explain criminal behaviour. The first theory, a control theory by Hirschi is also supported by research conducted by Short and Strodbeck. These researchers are of the opinion that anti-social youths seek peers who are on the same wave length to take part in criminal activities with them. These researchers state “*If delinquency is committed in groups, it is because “birds of a feather flock together”* and

not because deviant peers cause otherwise law-abiding youths to commit crimes. The structural and learning theory is the second perspective to shed light on this phenomenon. According to this theory; delinquency occurs due to the rewards gained by affiliating with like-minded adolescents, learning deviant values and behaviours from peers and the influence of peer pressure. The third theory suggests that peers and delinquency are in fact, mutually sustaining, this view holds that youngsters who are anti-social will associate themselves with friends who think the same as they do: deviant peers support and strengthen delinquent behaviour. Another theory which holds its weight is the peer cluster theory which provides a means for operationalising peer pressure, particularly as it relates to problem behaviour (McWhirter et al 1998:75). According to this theory antisocial behaviour and problems experienced at school are a key factor in producing deviant peer clusters. Youth who are involved in deviant behaviour tend to find each other and other youngsters with problems, these aforesaid individuals form peer cluster groups. It is within the deviant peer cluster groups that deviant behaviours are not only supported but encouraged as well. This theory further suggests that the governing influences on an adolescent's drug use and other troublesome behaviours are; in fact, the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the adolescent's immediate peers. This theory does not negate the influence of social and environmental factors as contributing to problem behaviours, for this theory then poverty, family, community and the presence of emotional stressors as well as personality traits, values and beliefs play a role in the vulnerability of adolescents to succumb to problem behaviours. Having said this though the main determining factor however, remains the peer cluster. In this regard Siegel et al (2003:229) assert that research shows that criminal activities are committed in small groups and not alone, this is called co-offending.

The young individual has a strong need to "*belong*". In other words the adolescent needs to be with other youngsters, this describes the youths' affinity for always attempting to "*fit in*" with friends and peers (Angenent & de Man 1996:144). An article in Die Beeld (Carstens 2001:6) explains how three youngsters (aged 18 and 20) were prepared to do anything in order to maintain their friendship and impress a young male (aged 18). These three youths went so far as to steal cars and electronic equipment in association with the friend they were trying to impress.

Research cited in Konty and Peek (2003:321) reveals that most delinquents have delinquent friends. Empirical evidence suggests that adolescents who show allegiance towards their delinquent friends, belong to gangs and have unruly companions, are the individuals most likely to commit crime and partake in violence (Siegel et al 2003:229). With regard to gang membership, authors in Howell (2003:89) assert

that a strong risk factor is the affiliation with peers who are involved in delinquency. Gottfredson (2001:57) argues that associations with delinquent peers increase the chances of delinquent behavior and that delinquency actually isolates the delinquent youth deeper into delinquent groups. A study conducted by Andersson and Stavrou (in Maree 2003:66) found that interacting with delinquent peers increases the probability that a youth will take part in anti-social behaviour. Speaking at the Tshwane youth seminar, Pretoria area police chief Assistant Commissioner Mashigo stated that one of the key factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency is peer pressure (Pretoria News, 11 June:2001). A statement made by authors aptly encapsulates negative peer associations and delinquency *“One of the most stable and well-established findings in delinquency research is that the delinquent behaviour of an individual is positively related to the actual or perceived delinquent behaviour of that individual’s friends”* in (Howell 2003:115).

3.4 Gang involvement and related issues

“Youth gangs work. If they didn’t, young people would create something else”. (Pinnock 1997:51). The implied message behind this statement is that the youth want to be involved in a gang; they enjoy being part of a group and experience gang membership as a positive aspect in their lives. Various factors relating to the gang will be dealt with, the typical gang will be defined, reason for gang involvement will be examined, the link between gangs and crime as well as gang-related criminal activities for example: drugs and violence will be included in this category.

3.4.1 Defining a gang

Curry and Decker (2003:3) do not supply a distinct definition for a gang; rather they identify various aspects that together form the concept of a gang. According to Curry and Decker the following elements combined define a typical gang:

- Any definition of a gang must include the term *group*, gangs typically constitute more than two people.
- Majority of gangs are notorious for their use of *symbols*, these can include hand signals; clothes and specific colours worn by the members.

- Communication is another element characteristic of a gang, members have developed a specific form of communication both verbally and non-verbally.
- Turf/territory is a major aspect of a gang, the gang is known to operate and control a specific area in a neighbourhood.
- Lastly, the involvement in crime also defines a gang – this is an element that, in fact, distinguishes gangs from other groups due to the gangs' criminal activities.

Generally speaking, the typical gang, specifically the youth gang; does share the five points listed above: gangs typically consist of two or more individuals who have a unique way of dress and communication with their designated area of control and with daily activities including the commission of crime. Weitekamp (2001:317) has found through his studies that European gangs share many similarities with gangs in U.S.A, these similarities are descriptive in nature and perhaps also correspond with gangs in South Africa:

- Gangs exist in deprived communities.
- Gangs often consist of minority or immigrant members of society either by race, nationality or ethnicity.
- Gangs are predominantly male.
- Gang members are almost always alienated, marginalized youth who are socially excluded from society and whose opportunities are blocked.
- Gang members are usually young and typically adolescents and young adults.
- Gang members are involved in all sorts of criminal activities with quite a range in the level of delinquent and criminal behaviour.
- Gangs are stable over time and can exist for long periods of time.

A South African gang is defined by Pinnock *“Gangs are a contradictory and “imagined” community created to distance young people from the influence of parents or to make up for their absence; a bond of friendship, fear, protection or enmity; a badge of honour and a mark of the beast: a way of making money or ensuring a supply of drugs”* in (Pinnock 1997:54).

3.4.2 The gang experience

This section deals with the motivation (from the gang members' perspective) for gang involvement and examines the connection between gangs and criminal activities.

Becoming a member of a gang must hold some promise for an individual: there must be an attraction for the member to want to join the aforesaid group and to remain a member afterward. Several explanations are provided to understand the phenomena of gang membership.

3.4.2.1 Joining a gang

It is important to note before entering an explanation of gang membership that gang members are either forced to join gangs or willingly become members. Curry and Decker (2003:68) use the term "*pushed*" to indicate a member who is forced onto gang activity and "*pulled*" to indicate a member who is attracted to a gang's existence. According to these authors, individuals who are pushed into gang membership do so due to fear of physical punishment or the view that they are unable to withstand the lure of a gang. In contrast those individuals who are pulled towards the gang and its activities are in fact; attracted to the gang for various reasons: the promise of making money, the affection and acceptance of other gang members or the opportunity for the individual to provide for something in his/her community. Branch (1999:11) enhances on the idea of acceptance by the adolescent, the author claims that an adolescent who has received negative messages about himself and is treated as an outcast by for instance his family, the school and the wider community, will make an effort to join a group who have received the same treatment and who are made to feel isolated. This group will have the same thoughts and attitude towards society and in this the adolescent feels a sense of belonging and acceptance. Paul Godwin maintains that a potential gang member is aware from the onset; that joining a gang involves activities that will undoubtedly transgress the law "*When a youngster joins a gang he or she knows that they will be doing things that are against the law. Therefore they lose respect for the law and for other members of society*" in (Theunissen, 2002:1). An adolescent then, joins a gang irrespective of the group's apparent criminal actions: the pull of the gang proves too strong for the youth. Jackson and Knepper (2003:163) provide the following factors that may lead to youth gang involvement:

- **Low self-esteem:** Gang members experience feelings of low self-worth, when recruited to a gang the youth is made to feel

important, he/she is given the message that as a gang member he/she is an integral part of the group and the continued functioning of the group.

- **Family problems:** Conflict in the home has a deep impact on the youth, the gang serves as a place of refuge for them where they are not affected by the stressful family setting.
- **Poor school experiences:** The school is the medium that largely determines the youths' identity and their chance for a successful future. Poor school performance, lack of acceptance by peers and teachers can lead the youth to join a gang where they find the social acceptability they need.
- **Survival:** Protection and safety from threats to themselves and the family convince the youth to join a gang.

Available evidence (in Curry & Decker 2003:68) maintains that individuals reported that they wanted to join gangs due to the positive elements of the gang: individuals viewed positive aspects, such as being united with friends and joining the group as a result of friends being members, as being an attractive option for them. The fact that the youth join gangs to be with friends is not surprising; the adolescent wants to be with his/her friends who are very important to him/her. The value of a parent's opinion becomes of less importance at this stage in a youths' life (Curry & Decker 2003:68). Pinnock declares the following about youths joining gangs (this is based on his research on gangs in the Western Cape) "...one of the reasons that youth easily identify with street gangs is that the associations fulfil the need for a rite of passage from childhood to adolescence and adulthood" in Dissel (1997:2). Secondary to the influence of friends in joining gangs is the opportunity for gang members to make money quickly for example through the selling of drugs, robbery and burglary (Skolnick 1990; Sanchez-Janowski 1991; Padilla 1992; cited in Curry & Decker 2003:68). A huge attraction of belonging to a gang is that the member need not work long hours to obtain money, rather through the sale of narcotics or other crimes for example robbery and burglary the adolescent gets good money; quickly. This according to Curry and Decker (2003:68) is typical of the adolescents way of thinking: instant gratification of needs for minimal effort, the lure of earning money also means that members are able to afford luxury items for example clothes, CD's and movies and as a means to make an impact on the opposite sex. Gangs are a great attraction for a youth who hails from an economically disadvantaged background, specifically youth from areas where employment is scarce (Sachs 1997:42).

Adolescents join gangs in order to have a family away from family (Sachs 1997:43 Decker & Van Winkle 1996:63). The gang provides the love and acceptance that the youth feel they do not receive at home. In this regard Quamina who has worked with African American gang members explains the concept of the gang perceived as a family to its members *"The brothers see themselves as forming families rather than any form of gang, unit, group or set of violent actors. These young men gather together for what a family sees itself as maintaining a sense of purpose, camaraderie, psychological and emotional support, entertainment and economic well-being. As a family, they look after one another with respect to their abilities, age and length of time in the "family" and position in the family. They have grown to be trusted friends and acquaintances and have some intrinsic point in common that serves to tie them together"* in (Quamina 1999:42). Sachs (1997:43) explains that gang members recruit new members by portraying the gang as a family; this offer is particularly attractive to children from single-parent families.

Although the most common rationale for joining a gang is to satisfy the adolescent's need for a family (as well as defense, security and protection) on deeper inspection, the author finds that the gang is in fact a means of or a facilitator for adjusting the youth's feelings of inadequacy and personal problems, this further elaborated in the next citation *"A youth's desire for community and belonging to something has more value for him than the spurious nature of the security and affection that is provided in reality by his associates. He seldom finds the love and caring of a family or the community he seeks in the violent gang; however, this reality is less important than his desire for some form of belonging that gives the illusion of being in a family or community"* in (Yablonsky 2000:226). This author does not challenge the fact that belonging to a gang (particularly a violent one) provides the member with a sense of power, he does emphasize however, that the gang is a vehicle for the youth to express aggression. Aggression that is possibly related to personal emotions and difficulties for example; as a response to discrimination. The youth is able to express his extreme anger within the gang and through the gang's activities purely because it is an acceptable form of behaviour in the group.

There is reason to believe however, that members are compelled to join gangs. Adolescents enter gangs as a means of seeking protection from other gangs or due to violence that is characteristic of the community (Esbensen & Lynskey 2001:102). A gang member (in the U.S.A.) expresses the need for protection as his motivation for joining a gang *"It was either get your ass kicked every day or join a gang and get your ass kicked occasionally by rival gangs"* (Bartollas 2000:316). The influence of the community wherein adolescents live is aptly explained

in the next excerpt *“If a child lives in a gang-infested neighbourhood, he or she is expected to join a gang. This is where threats and intimidation play an important role. These children are motivated by fear. Many join to avoid harassment from neighbourhood gangs, or to protect themselves against outside rival gangs coming into the area. Rival gangs entering a neighbourhood frequently mistake innocent kids for gang members. Either way, these children are in danger”* in (Sachs 1997:44). Studies (in Thornberry, Krohn, Lozotte, Smith & Tobin 2003:78) confirm the aforesaid information, youth join gangs due to the gang being perceived as a means of providing protection from either a hostile world, rival gangs or crime in the community and schools. A study conducted by Decker and Van Winkle (1996:73) reveals that 86% of gang members questioned indicated that they joined a gang as a means of protection. Researchers such as Padilla, Decker and van Winkle (in Curry and Decker 2003:68) found that oftentimes residing in a neighbourhood or attending schools where gang activity is rife leads to the misconception among community members that young males are connected to gangs. In this regard, Councillor Erleigh (www.rosehare.co.za) the City of Cape Town’s mayoral committee member for the Safety and Security stated *“We know that the curse of gangsterism has deep roots in many communities who have come to accept it as part of their daily lives”*. Indeed, these researchers had many male youth relate how they joined a gang as they were accused of being gang members anyhow. In this regard, Irvin Kinnes states *“Given a situation where people are easily labelled, they sometimes react to such labeling by committing criminal acts”* (www.iss.co.za). Perhaps the most disturbing motivation for gang membership is the fact that members are afraid of the consequences if they abstain from affiliating with gangs. Resisting gang membership in a community where gang activities are rife can have dire consequences for an individual (Curry & Decker 2003:68).

The following comments by gang members in an Illinois (U.S.A) prison (Curry & Decker 2003:71) give an indication of the various reasons for gang membership:

The following three gang members explained that joining a gang was part of the community:

“I wouldn’t say I joined it, I wasn’t forced, I joined it because it was the right thing to do at that appropriate time. I didn’t see that by joining them it would be prosperous in any form or fashion, it was just something to do at that time, back then”.

And

"Mainly growing up, my friends was into it and I was around it so I fell into it".

And

"I didn't really join. It was where I stay, where I grew up at, that's where it was. Like you walk to the store or something or walk to school and they were all from the gang. I think really I just wanted to get in it".

Two gang members indicated that money and protection played a key role in their joining a gang:

"Money. Money and just being around a whole bunch of guys that like to do stuff that you like to do".

And

"Help me make money. Help me protect myself. Really everything".

Dissel (1997:3) alleges that adolescents join gangs as their parents are gang members as well *"Their parents are gang members, so they naturally take on the inherited roles of their fathers"*. Research (in Thornberry et al 2003:78) revealed that gang members joined gangs as their family members were part of the gang and hence persuaded them to join as well.

There is no single or clear indicator or motivation for gang membership. Youngsters are either lured into the attractive web of gangs or unwillingly coerced to become gang members. There are the individuals who find the opportunity for quick and easy money-making, affiliating with friends and perhaps attaining a certain status within the community irresistible. On the contrary, there are the individuals who have no option but to join gangs as a means of protection from other gangs or as a result of violence in the neighbourhood, individuals succumb to joining gangs as a result of being labelled a gang member. In this regard, Paul Godwin who has spent many years working with gangs in U.S.A and a year in South Africa studying the phenomenon of gangsterism asserts *"There are numerous reasons why people are attracted to gangs. Many of them, especially youngsters, join a gang for a sense of acceptance and belonging. Others will join for protection and others because they see the gang as a way of making money. The old saying that there is strength in numbers also plays a part"* in (Theunissen 2002:1). This is confirmed by Dissel (1997:3) who claims that gangs allow members a sense of belonging, the prospect for economic gains as well as a sense of power, acceptance and purpose. Finally, individuals join gangs for the pure enjoyment of it for example, adolescents reported that they

willingly affiliated themselves with gangs for the “*excitement, fun and adventure associated with gang life*” in (Thornberry et al 2003:79).

McWhirter et al (1998:170) provide a list of risk factors that suggest an adolescent’s involvement in a gang:

- Rumors or more reliable information that a youngster has not been home for several nights.
- Evidence of increased substance abuse.
- Abrupt changes in behaviour and personality.
- Newly acquired and unexplained “*wealth*” often showered on or shared with peers.
- Requests to borrow money or reliable evidence of borrowing.
- “*Hanging around*”, but no discussion of problems with others.
- Evidence of mental or physical abuse.
- A dress style or other symbol of identification adopted by only a few.

McWhirter et al (1998:170) conclude that gangs have negative consequences for society and for the gang members as well. According to these authors, the majority of adult offenders begin their life of crime as young offenders. McWhirter et al conclude further that a gang is the adolescent’s only way of satisfying his/her desire for affiliation and affirmation, the gang is a means for the adolescent to achieve economic gain and the image of success that is otherwise not attainable through legal means. Jackson and Knepper (2003:161) suggest the following reasons why youths join gangs:

- **Physiological needs:** The gang provides basic needs for their members for example, shelter and food
- **Safety needs:** Youths join gangs in order to satisfy their need for safety and protection that they do not find either in the family or community environment.
- **Social needs:** Many youths join gangs as they experience the closeness of a family in the gang setting which they do not have in the home environment.
- **Need for esteem:** It is within the gang setting that the youth is able to find self-respect and the opportunity to achieve goals that the youth would otherwise not realise.

- **Need for self-actualisation:** It is believed that the youth can achieve self-actualisation in the gang, this takes place when the youth carries out his gang duties successfully and in return receives praise from gang members.

To close this section, the researcher found the following commentary in a Carte Blanche article to aptly convey the attraction to gang involvement *“The high life of the gangsters brought them prestige and admiration in a community in which 60% of the adults are unemployed and most children grow up in grinding poverty”* (www.mnet.co.za). The gang ensures security, protection and friendship for the youth as well as the opportunity for excitement. It is through the gang that the youth is able to have an improved sense of worth and acceptance.

3.4.2.2 Connecting gangs to criminal activities

Conceivably, the most profound excerpt with regards to gangs-related crime claims *“Since the earliest days of gang research...scholars have noted the disproportionate contribution that gang members make to the level of crime in society. Indeed, the observation that gang members, as compared with other youths, are more extensively involved in delinquency – especially serious and violent delinquency – is perhaps the most robust and consistent observation in criminological research”* in (Thornberry et al 2003:1). Gangs have thus been associated with the commission of crime for many years, according to Esbensen and Huizinga (1996:75) gang membership is tantamount to all kinds of delinquency. A broad explanation for youth crime within a group is supplied *“Youth crime is often a direct consequence of processes that occur in a group, where the quest for sensation and impulsive behaviour is more easily manifested. Young people can also encourage each other and cross certain thresholds. What may begin as an insignificant incident can get out of hand in a group or can suddenly erupt. In a group, one can hide behind others, blaming them for the behaviour”* in (Hakkert, Van Wijk, Ferwerda & Eijken (2001:227). The commission of crime by gang members is partly due to affiliations with other gang members who oftentimes are friends as well. Sarnecki and Pettersson (2001:258) verify this by declaring affiliating with criminal friends increases the possibility that an individual will commit crime.

Research conducted as early as 1927 by Thrasher (in Curry & Decker 2003:34) reveals that gangs are held together by violence, the acts of violence increases the solidarity within a specific gang (particularly when the violence is committed towards other rival gangs). A distinction needs to be made with regards to crimes committed by gang members and gang-related crimes, in the first scenario members commit crimes

for their own benefit with no attachment to the gang whatsoever, in the second scenario crimes committed are motivated by gang identification or as a means to obtain certain goals for the gang.

Paul Godwin explains the grounds for gang-related violence *“It’s about controlling territory. In the 1920s gangs in America fought over the rights to sell alcohol in an area. These days it’s mostly about drugs, prostitution, protection rackets, gambling and any other illegal activities. It’s a multi-million rand trade, so people will kill without question to keep control”* in (Theunissen 2002:4). The following statement goes further by claiming that the main purpose of a gang is to provide drugs for the community. Gangs with mainly young members include car theft, burglaries and robbery in their repertoire of criminal activities merely as a means to maintain their drug habits *“The existence of the gang revolves mainly around the supply and trade of drugs in the community, in surrounding areas, and at the higher level, internationally. Although adults control the gangs, younger members are often used to carry out tasks on behalf of the community. One gang of younger people in this area (Westbury, a coloured community in Johannesburg) is less sophisticated in terms of its management and the scale of its operations, and its members rely on car theft, burglaries and robbery to sustain their drug habits”* in (Dissel 1997:3). A gangster from Westbury interviewed by Ruda Landman from Carte Blanche explains that *“Our main activities was getting involved in selling drugs illegal drugs – that life would give us a kind of luxury – driving lavish cars, we had the best clothes. Drug dealing is an easy way of earning money”* (www.mnet.co.za). Decker (2001:22) presents information from well-known gang researchers such as Hagedorn (1988), Maxson, Klein and Cunningham (1991), Fagan (1989), and Klein (1995) who highlight the informal-individual characteristics of many youth gangs, their inability in organizing activities or arriving to some form of consensus and managing to control profits made by dealing in narcotics. According to these researchers, gangs consist of scattered, egocentric and self-motivated groups of individuals who largely sell drugs for themselves. Padilla’s study (in Curry & Decker 2003:46) found that drug dealing/selling was prominent amongst gangs. A study on gangs in U.S.A. conducted by Esbensen and Lynskey (2001:102) shows that gangs do not sell drugs exclusively - they found very much that these gangs are criminally, very active groups. Gang members reported that they were involved in the following activities: fighting with other gangs, robbing other people, stealing, stealing cars, selling marijuana and damaging or demolishing property. Knox (1994:308) confirms the aforesaid statement by claiming that selling drugs is only one of the criminal activities that gangs are involved in. Law enforcement officials (in U.S.A) do maintain however, that gangs have become the generating force for drug-dealing activities (Spergel 1995:50).

A study in Thornberry et al (2003:42) shows the pervasiveness of delinquency amongst non-gang members compared to that amongst gang members: most of the gang members self-reported that they were involved in general delinquency and violence whereas non-gang members had less involvement. For clarification to follow are the percentages: 98.1% of gang members reported that they were involved in general delinquency as compared to 68.4% of non-members who were involved in delinquency. The disparity between figures for involvement in violence is quite alarming: 90.6% of gang members reported some involvement in violence as opposed to 46.4% of non-members involvement, figures for the drug dealing show the difference between gang members 39.5% and non-members 9.5%. Research undertaken in three states in U.S.A compared the rates of delinquency amongst gang members and at-risk youth, gang members in this study reported that "... they had stolen more cars, that they had participated in more drive-by shootings, that they were far more likely to own guns, that they owned guns of larger caliber, and that they were more involved in selling drugs than the sample of at-risk youths" in (Bartollas 2000:318).

"Gangs have emerged as a serious social problem because they have become nearly synonymous with violent crime" (McCorkle & Miethe 2002:209). This aforementioned statement brings the researcher to a serious issue that requires urgent attention by the authorities, the violence that is associated with gangs in South Africa. Dissel (May, 1997) states that gang-related violence is as a result of the open and free availability of firearms (usually at below a hundred Rand per weapon). Crimes that were previously considered as minor crimes for example: petty theft, have recently become serious in nature such as hijacking, armed robbery and murder. Authors such as Bjerregaard and Lizotte (in Thornberry et al 2003:123) purport that gang members are more likely to own firearms as opposed to non-members and are also more likely to carry illegal firearms on the streets, the afore-mentioned authors maintain that gang members are therefore more likely to use their guns when committing a crime. It was established that gang-related homicides were more likely to involve guns as opposed to homicides with zero gang connection, this translates as: 91% of gang homicides included guns versus 64% of non-gang homicides with no use of firearms (Thornberry et al 2003:123). Research cited (in Howell 2003:87) shows that gang members who owned and carried weapons committed approximately ten times more violent crimes. According to Bartollas (2000:319) it is precisely the norms of the gang that actually contribute to gang violence, the majority of gangs share norms that promote the use of violence to settle any quarrels. The gang condones violence as it coincides with their dictum that violence demonstrates not only toughness but a member's fighting ability as well, in addition

violence establishes a member's status within the gang. An article in The Cape Times (11 April:2001) relates how two gang members (both aged 19) raped and killed two young women. A 15 year old boy testified that the two offenders actually bragged about their crime and that the two adolescents (members of the 28's gang) were unperturbed as to their heinous deeds and considered the entire incident a joke, the youth told the court "*Van der Merwe boasted that the girls screamed in terror seconds before he pulled the trigger...They laughed as they told me this*". The young women died due to fatal bullet wounds, this leads the researcher to the next point of discussion: firearms.

Skolnick (1996:349) asserts that for every gang member, violence is a way of life. Scholars ascribe the increase in gang violence to the greater accessibility of firearms among gang members (McCorkle & Miethe 2002:214). It is pertinent for this discussion to establish the reason for gang members owning and carrying a firearm at all times. There are various explanations for this incidence: firstly, the lifestyle of the gang member must be taken into consideration i.e. gang members move in dangerous circles where peers carry guns as well, gang members need to protect themselves from these peers and other rival gangs. Secondly, guns are made available from other gang members; the availability refers to buying guns or borrowing a gun from a fellow gang member, thirdly, it has been found that individuals who own a gun and join a gang allow fellow members to borrow the gun or buy the gun (Thornberry et al 2003:124). A study undertaken by Horowitz (in Curry & Decker 2003:41) corroborates the gang's *need* for weapons as a means to protect themselves from rival gangs. Two explanations are supplied by Thornberry et al (2003:124) with regards to how gangs facilitate the use and ownership of firearms: firstly, gangs could be a source of illegal guns for members who are willing buyers, secondly, as a type of storehouse; the gang allows for one gun to fit the needs of many members, irrespective of whether these members steal or buy the firearm. Horowitz (in Curry & Decker 2003:41) found that gang members carry weapons with them all the time as a means of protecting themselves from rival gangs.

In conclusion, it is important to note that gang members are involved in diverse crimes concurrently. Esbensen and Huizinga (1996:76) conducted a study with gang members. The results showed that although clashes with other gangs were mentioned often, three-fourths of gang members confirmed that the gang was involved in the following criminal acts: robberies, joyriding, assaulting others, theft and drug sales. Howell (2003:86) asserts that gang members are involved in various types of crimes.

3.4.2.3 Gangs and social institutions

This section deals exclusively with the family and the school and its influence or lack thereof on gang members. The family and the school are key issues when examining the existence of gangs as it is the make-up of these aforesaid social institutions that contribute to the adolescent in resisting or joining a gang.

a. Family and gangs

The importance of the family as the primary socialization agent has been emphasised throughout this study, the family is the key element to ensure a disciplined, well-balanced and strong individual who is able to respect other individuals, interact on a social level with the inner strength to avoid external negative influences. Researchers cited by Hope (2003:169) state that generally poor family relationships are antecedent to gang membership.

Sociologist, William Julius Watson (in Curry & Decker 2003:142) has noted how the contemporary family (in the U.S.A) has in fact declined over the years; Watson particularly refers to poor black residents in large cities. He maintains that the decline in the family structure or setting is due to an increase in the urban underclass – members of which are very poor and socially isolated. Many youth find themselves in families headed by mothers only, single-parent families have previously been discussed as an important factor with regards to the lack of supervision over children due to mothers' long working hours. Wilson continues that the deterioration of the family is also as a result of black males being incarcerated and little opportunity for employment. This degeneration of the family proposed by Wilson is also applicable and relative to South Africa, the following statement elaborates *“The effects of the breakdown of the family were most profoundly felt by children and young people. When the family becomes dysfunctional and discordant, the children leave the family home. They may either permanently abandon their home, or in some cases begin to spend more time on the street, which gradually draws them into criminal associations”* in Dissel (1997). Gang members oftentimes are the result of a poor family structure Quarles (in Maree 2003:68). Spergel (1995:113) confirms that the family structure weakens due to certain social and economic conditions. This weakening of the family structure leads to ineffective relationships both in and out of the family circle. As a result the youth's needs are not met due to inadequate parenting, supervision and support and the child thus turns to delinquency. Authors in Howell (2003:89) confirm the aforesaid by stating that poor family management (this includes poor parental control monitoring and supervision) are powerful indicators of gang membership.

It stands to reason then that the gang would emerge due to the decline of the conventional family: single-parents are unable or unwilling to adequately supervise and monitor their children's behaviour, children feel neglected as a result and a gang is able to (as a consequence) fulfill the needs of the youngster – needs that are left unattended due to poor parental control and guidance. Research conducted in Thornberry et al (2003:58) revealed that hailing from a single-parent family increases the risk for gang membership. Hope (2003:169) cites researchers who maintain that gang members are more likely to hail from single-parent homes. Work by Joan and Diego Vigil Moore (in Curry & Decker 2003:142) strongly suggested that adolescents have a need for order and regulation in their lives and that they will in fact try to find a way to satisfy this need. Gangs are able to aptly fulfill the needs of adolescents i.e. gangs provide some form of structure, the opportunity to make money and perhaps the most important aspect of all is that the gang offers social unity and status; functions that are characteristically fulfilled by a working family (Curry & Decker 2003:142). The gang it seems has become a surrogate family for the youth. In fact, gang members have utilized the exact term “*family*” to describe their gang (Curry & Decker 2003:142). Researchers such as Friedman, Winfree, Klein, Moore and Lanctot (in Thornberry et al 2003:58) have found an association between youth at risk for gang membership and low family involvement, inappropriate parental discipline, low parental control or monitoring, poor affective relationships between parent and child and finally, parental conflict. The aforesaid factors have been mentioned previously (in chapter three) as risk factors for involvement in delinquency.

To conclude the section on gangs, the researcher feels that the following quote by Erleigh aptly sums up the problem of gangs in South Africa whilst at the same time highlighting the negative aspect of gang membership. “*There is nothing glamorous or cool about being a gangster. On the contrary, it is a curse that is eating away at the very fabric of our society. If we don't destroy it, it will destroy us*” (www.rosehare.co.za).

b. School and gangs

The school has also been emphasized as an important agent of socialization. It is at the school after all; that the youth gets to interact with other youngsters from different cultures and backgrounds; this implies therefore that an adolescent will be exposed to norms and morals different to his/her own. The school very much provides the foundation for the youth to later function in an occupational setting, the

school then (apart from the family) encourages the youth to obtain a good education. The school also bears the responsibility of disciplining the learners and in a way exercising control over their charge.

The problem with the school lies when the school itself is incapable of providing adequate education and supervision to its learners. Curry and Decker (2003:144) expand “ *Weakened communities with struggling households produce schools that have a tenuous place in those communities and a limited capacity to prepare pupils for participation in mainstream society*”. Wilson supposed, “*a vicious cycle is perpetuated through the family, through the community, and through the schools*” in (Curry & Decker 2003:144). According to Wilson “... *schools fail communities and communities fail schools*”. Communities fail the schools by not presenting a safe environment where teachers are able to teach and students are able to gain knowledge (Curry & Decker 2003:144).

Poor academic achievement plays a key role in the path of joining a gang; this is affirmed by LeBlanc and Lanctot (in Thornberry et al 2003:59). These authors also indicate the link between low school involvement and lack of commitment by the youth for their education; of which, both factors are associated with gang membership. Quarles (in Maree 2003:68) states that gang members often have a poor attendance record at school; pay little attention during class and are regularly expelled or suspended from school. Authors (in Howell 2003:89) argue that a strong risk factor for gang membership is poor academic achievement at school; this is also associated with poor commitment to school and a reduced desire for an education. Spergel (1995:119) contends that delinquent and anti-social gang behaviour may in fact; result from school failure and the alienation of youths. Decker and Van Winkle (1996:190) conducted interviews with gang members and found that attending school, paying attention to teachers and achieving academically did not take precedence with the majority of gang members. In fact, these respective gang members would have little if no involvement in a typical school day; this includes having poor interest in extracurricular activities.

Another problem which needs to be addressed is the trend of gang activity within the school, are gangs running our schools? As early as 1975 Walter Miller (in Curry & Decker 2003:144) conducted a study of youth gang crime, he supplied a report in 1975 and again in 1982 with regards to the gang activities in public schools in U.S.A. He found that gangs were active within as well as outside of schools in several of the country's largest cities. He concluded “*gangs posed serious obstacles to the education of students and a serious threat to the physical safety of students and teachers*” in (Curry & Decker 2003:144). What is

interesting; is that gangs active within the school posed a problem as far as two decades ago.

3.5 Substance abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse amongst teenagers is a persistent problem; this is a topic that needs urgent attention by the government, health officials, educators and parents. This discussion will commence by defining a substance abuser, looking at the different types of drugs, their uses and effects and later the link between drugs and crime will be established.

3.5.1 Definition of a substance abuser

Yablonsky (2000:242) has based the following definition of a substance abuser on research and observation of young substance abusers; Yablonsky included five elements that together constitute a substance abuser:

- **Overwhelming need:** People become substance abusers when they have an intense conscious desire for their drug of choice. They have a mind-set where acquiring and using drugs becomes the paramount fixation or concern in their lives.
- **Controlled by substance:** Having one's life controlled by a substance is a significant criterion in determining who is a substance abuser.
- **Self-deception and denial:** Almost all substance abusers in the early phase of the addictive process practice self-deception and denial.
- **Periodic abstinence:** Most addicts occasionally become drug free for a period of time when their habit becomes too onerous or they are in a custodial institution.
- **The addict's self-image and primary group relationships:** After a period of time, the addict's substance abuse becomes a central focus of his or her behaviour and in many cases represents his or her identity.

3.5.2. Types of substances

The Pretoria News published two comprehensive supplements titled *“I am cool and clued up”*. (2002) and *“Don’t do drugs”*. (2005) on the different types of drugs used by teenagers in South Africa and their respective effects on the user:

Table 3.3 Different types of drugs and their effects

| Type of drug: | Price: | Dangers: | Characteristics of user: |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Ecstasy (Pills) | R80.00– R120.00 per tablet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood pressure • Accelerated heartbeat (8-10 times faster) • Dehydration • Blood clots • Extreme exhaustion • Death | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Depression • Full-blown psychotic mental illness • Can lead to suicide: As a result of a feeling of euphoria the addict can “escape out” of himself/herself and cannot control him/herself <p>Typical user: Mostly young people at rave clubs. Also used by older people and described as a love drug as observation becomes disturbed.</p> |
| LSD (Hallucinogenic) | R40.00-R70.00 per 5x5mm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic psychological accidents as a result of poisoned body and distorted observation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional fluctuation • Paranoia • Strange behaviour • Flashbacks, hallucinations and visions |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental disorientation • Neurological damage • Depression | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance of thoughts and intellectual activity • Illusions • Distortion of existing images <p>Typical user: Young people use it with Ecstasy.</p> |
| Mandrax (Hypnotic) | R20.00-R45.00 per tablet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental slowness • Lack of watchfulness • Death as a result of overdose • Collapse of breathing • Strong physiological dependency • Lung cancer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowsiness • Lack of concentration • Slow thinking • Dull sensation of headiness • Poor ability to judge • Emotional instability <p>Typical user: Mostly people with a history of dependency, the well-seasoned drug addict.</p> |
| Dagga (Cannabis Sativa/Indica) | R Street value = R1.00/1g | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double effect: Affects the central nervous system and is also hallucinogenic . It attacks the central nervous system and causes depression. Causes toxic psychosis – poisons the body and creates dependency. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloodshot eyes • Droopy eyelids • Unnatural thirst/hunger • Uncontrollable mood swings • Talkative • Disturbed judgement • Disturbed perception • Blotches on hands <p>Typical user: All tiers of society.</p> |
| Cocaine powder | Pure cocaine: R200.00- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood pressure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pale face • Involuntary |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| | R450.00 a gram | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to nose tissue • Convulsions • Paralysis of the heart • Bone between sinus and brain is damaged | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • movements • Nervous twitches • Unnatural excitement • Lack of appetite • Insomnia • Fast pulse • Skin rash • Over-confidence <p>Typical user: High-income group because of high price of drug.</p> |
| Hashish/hashish oil | R5.00/1g | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double effect: It affects the central nervous system, is a hallucinogenic • Causes aggression • Causes toxic psychosis • Causes bronchial irritation • Causes lung cancer • Causes chromosome damage • Can lead to sterility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloodshot eyes • Droopy eyelids • Unnatural thirst/hunger • Uncontrollable moods • Talkative • Disturbed judgement • Disturbed perception <p>Typical user: All tiers of society</p> |
| Cocaine crystals (Crack/ Free base) | R40.00-R70.00 a crystal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood pressure • Damages nose tissue • Convulsions • Paralysis of the heart • Damages bone between sinus and brain • Death as a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pale face • Involuntary movement • Nervous twitches • Unnatural excitement • Lack of appetite • Insomnia • Fast pulse • Skin rash |

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------|--|
| | | result of overdose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overconfidence <p>Typical user: Anyone in society as it is less expensive than cocaine.</p> |
|--|--|--------------------|--|

The researcher purposely included the price of the above-mentioned drugs (Pretoria News, September, 2002) as it provides the reader with an idea as to the amount of money an adolescent must spend in order to sustain his/her drug habit. In this regard an article in Beeld (2004:2) claims that heroin addiction can cost the addict anything from R20 000.00 to R30 000.00 a month. This is important to note as not all adolescents have the capacity to financially afford drugs or even alcohol - how then do youngsters maintain their addiction? Perhaps the lack of money leads youths to criminal behaviour as a means of satisfying their habit. This very issue will be discussed shortly.

3.5.3 Factors contributing to substance abuse

The only way to deter drug abuse by the youth of today is to establish the motivation and reasoning for indulging in drug and alcohol use in the first place. Various factors have been offered as being conducive to drug abuse.

3.5.3.1 Peer pressure

Research shows that adolescent drug abuse is highly correlated with the behaviour of best friends, especially when parental supervision is weak (Siegel et al 2003:310). The same authors believe that peer groups have the most influence on long-term drug use. Shared experiences and feelings as well as the familiarity that has developed between friends; leads the adolescents to become entangled in what is known as the *“drug-use subculture”*. Siegel et al (2003:310) claim that empirical evidence does suggest that there exists a warm relationship amongst drug users. Within the peer group setting the youth has the opportunity to display behaviour that cannot be controlled by external forces. The availability of drugs within these groups means that new members will experiment with illegal substances and might possibly be instigated into the drug scene by fellow group members (Bezuidenhout 2004:121). Mc Whirter et al (1998:118) suggest that drug use is socially reinforced by friends and peers.

3.5.3.2 The school environment

By nature the school is a formal institution with strict rules and regulations. As an educational institution; the school requires that certain academic levels are passed in order to continue with one's education successfully. Sometimes specific pupils do not abide by the rules of the school or are unable to fare well academically. This places pressure on the learner and turning to drug use is a form of coping (Bezuidenhout 2004:121).

3.5.3.3 The family environment

Stress and conflict within the family setting and substance-abusing parents can lead an adolescent to abusing drugs (Bezuidenhout 2002:90). Poor family life is indeed a factor that determines the use of drugs by the child. Research cited by Siegel et al (2003:310) found that a large proportion of drug users have had an unhappy childhood which involved parental neglect and severe discipline. Bartollas (2000:356) declares that risk factors for substance abuse are indeed found within the family environment, these include a family history of abuse, poor family management practices and family conflict. The drug is the adolescent's only way of escaping the problems and tension experienced at home and perhaps substance abuse is a learned behaviour as the adolescent observes the parents abusing drugs. McWhirter et al (1998:119) claims that youngsters who have a unsettling family environment are more likely to indulge in drug use. A representative from the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (news.hst.org.za) declares that weakened family bonds create an environment conducive to substance abuse. An offender who started abusing dagga describes his family environment *"I witnessed many times my dad beating up my mom with fists and he would often chase her away. I remember my mother running away from him naked one day. This violence used to trouble me. I started spending a lot of time with friends and started smoking dagga"* in (Mkhondo 2005:19).

3.5.3.4 Events of life

Sometimes adolescents are forced to endure certain ordeals in his /her life for example: parents divorcing and conflict within the home. If the youth is ill-equipped to deal with these negative issues or does not have the proper support system to cope, the probability of resorting to drug use is high (Bezuidenhout 2004:123).

3.5.3.5 Emotional problems

Not all drug users hail from lower-socioeconomic communities. Emotional problems can afflict any adolescent from any culture and economic background. There are various explanations provided in Siegel et al (2003:311) to account for drug abuse by adolescents, the psychodynamic view explains that drugs help youths control or express unconscious needs. There are some psychoanalysts who believe that youngsters who internalise their problems abuse drugs as a means of relieving their feelings of inadequacy. The third explanation holds that adolescents who blame others for their problems and failures are more likely to take part in anti-social behaviours such as substance abuse.

3.5.3.6 Problem behaviour syndrome

Problem behaviours can start early in life for some adolescents and continue throughout the adolescent's life span. Research cited by Siegel et al (2003:311) claims that adolescents who use drugs are maladjusted, emotionally distressed and experience many social problems *"Having a deviant lifestyle means associating with delinquent peers, living in a family in which parents and siblings abuse drugs, being alienated from the dominant values of society, and engaging in delinquent behaviours at an early age"*. Siegel et al continue by stating that youngsters who are substance abusers have little time for education, have zero religious affiliation and spend the majority of their time with friends. Youths who abuse drugs fare badly at school, are dropouts and continue with their drug use after leaving school.

Yablonsky (2000:246) has suggested the following four factors that contribute to youngsters turning to drugs and alcohol:

- Parents may influence the child to become an abuser because of their substance-abuse role-modelling.
- Non-using but severely disciplinarian parents may cause their children to rebel against their harsh norms, and the rebellion may include substance abuse.
- Substance-abusing parents may genetically or physiologically transmit the problem to their children, since there is clear evidence that the children of addicted mothers are often born addicted to the same drug their mother was abusing.

- In some cases, a parent clearly and directly influences the children's drug use by using drugs with them.

3.5.4 Substance abuse in South Africa

“Drug lords have established a huge market in South Africa and urban youth especially are at risk of getting hard, highly addictive drugs such as heroin, the uniquely South African mandrax, and crack” (www.heinemann.co.za). Leggett, Louw, Parry and Plüddemann (2004:155) conducted a study in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban with regards to drug use. Of the 2 859 arrestees tested for drug use (via urine samples) 46 percent were found to test positive for a controlled substance. Disturbingly, 66 percent of these arrestees were under the age of 20. Roper (2005:25) provides the following information based on a youth programme conducted with twenty youth offenders:

- At the age of eight and nine years, two participants began using inhalants (such as glue) and dagga respectively.
- Three started to use drugs and alcohol by ten years of age.
- 40 percent began to use alcohol during their early adolescence (13-16 years).

It is sad to see the age at which youngsters start delving into the world of drugs. Carelsen and Potgieter (2004:57) provide more insight into the age distribution of drug users in Gauteng, the reader will be alarmed to find that the percentage of users between the ages of 10-19 years old is quite high.

Table 3.4 Ages of drug users in Gauteng

| Years | Jul -Dec 2000 | | Jan - Jun 2001 | | Jul - Dec 2001 | | Jan - Jun 2002 | | Jul - Dec 2002 | | Jan - Jun 2003 | | Jul - Dec 3002 | | Jan - Jun 2004 | |
|-------|---------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| <10 | - | - | - | - | 1 | <1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | <1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | <1 |
| 10-14 | 46 | 2 | 59 | 2 | 93 | 3 | 81 | 3 | 92 | 4 | 63 | 2 | 108 | 4 | 76 | 3 |
| 15-19 | 445 | 17 | 482 | 17 | 533 | 20 | 645 | 22 | 541 | 21 | 525 | 20 | 587 | 22 | 541 | 19 |
| 20-24 | 261 | 10 | 360 | 13 | 342 | 13 | 357 | 12 | 340 | 13 | 368 | 14 | 358 | 13 | 444 | 16 |
| 25-29 | 297 | 11 | 293 | 10 | 254 | 9 | 291 | 10 | 255 | 10 | 261 | 10 | 260 | 10 | 269 | 10 |
| 30-34 | 287 | 11 | 318 | 11 | 309 | 11 | 311 | 10 | 277 | 11 | 300 | 11 | 305 | 11 | 308 | 11 |
| 35-39 | 354 | 13 | 303 | 11 | 307 | 11 | 300 | 10 | 280 | 11 | 284 | 11 | 299 | 11 | 313 | 11 |
| 40-44 | 333 | 12 | 322 | 11 | 269 | 10 | 354 | 12 | 270 | 10 | 307 | 12 | 283 | 10 | 308 | 11 |
| 45-49 | 256 | 10 | 264 | 9 | 218 | 8 | 233 | 8 | 200 | 8 | 211 | 8 | 217 | 8 | 217 | 8 |
| 50-54 | 175 | 7 | 205 | 7 | 166 | 6 | 165 | 6 | 164 | 6 | 139 | 5 | 147 | 5 | 157 | 6 |
| 55-59 | 127 | 5 | 122 | 4 | 106 | 4 | 108 | 4 | 93 | 4 | 86 | 3 | 81 | 3 | 103 | 4 |
| 60-64 | 50 | 2 | 65 | 2 | 50 | 2 | 58 | 2 | 44 | 2 | 45 | 2 | 39 | 1 | 38 | 1 |
| 65-69 | 25 | 1 | 27 | 1 | 21 | 1 | 19 | <1 | 20 | <1 | 18 | <1 | 21 | 1 | 22 | <1 |
| 70+ | 8 | <1 | 18 | <1 | 7 | <1 | 23 | <1 | 10 | <1 | 10 | <1 | 6 | <1 | 14 | <1 |

Dauids (27 February:2005) aptly relays the message that drugs are a problem in South Africa. The article written by Dauids; refers specifically to a new drug that has hit the market – Methamphetamine or more commonly known as “*tik*”. What is disturbing are the statistics provided by Mr Jardine, Head of the Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre. Mr Jardine points out (in this article) that in 2003 five percent of his clients were addicted to *tik*. This figure has risen dramatically: in 2004 the number rose to between 40 and 50 percent. Five percent of the *tik* addicts admitted to rehabilitation centers in the province; ranged from 10-14 years old. He continues that *tik* is popular with adolescents as the drug compensates for an adolescent’s lack of confidence, awkwardness and insecurities. This new drug has now entered the Gauteng province.

Although official statistics do not exist for the prevalence of drug use in South Africa, dagga and mandrax are seen as the most frequently used illegal drugs. The second largest quantity of dagga apprehended anywhere in the world is in South Africa. It is estimated that South Africa makes for 70 – 80 percent of the total world consumption of mandrax (news.hst.org.za). The manager of St. Magdalena’s Health Care asserts that up until 60 percent of school children tested by the centre are substance abusers, with dagga being the most common drug used (Raubenheimer 2004:2). What is interesting with regards to testing school children is the fact that it is the parents who object to their children being tested for drug use. One would think that the parent would encourage such an exercise as a means of ensuring that their child is in fact drug-free. The assumption that a child is not abusing substances is one that neither parent nor educator is able to make in

South Africa today. In a related article by Raubenheimer (2004:5) Mr Bolhuis, a well-known activist against drugs and violence; stated that drugs are a huge problem among the youth today. He found that as many as 80 percent of high school learners have had contact with drugs, alcohol and cigarettes. Approximately 30 percent of these students are frequent users and 20 percent are already addicted to drugs and/or alcohol.

The use of alcohol cannot be ignored either. Brink (6 April:2005) examines the ever-rising problem of alcohol use among teens in South Africa. Brink cites research conducted in 2002 by the Medical Research Council, to follow are the results:

- Nationally, 49.1% of pupils had drunk one or more drinks of alcohol in their lifetime
- Countrywide, almost one in eight learners had drunk their first drink of alcohol before the age of thirteen years

Brink (6 April:2005) alleges that peer pressure plays a role in an adolescent's decision to drink. Clare Savage of Sanca (South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse) maintains that *"Achieving a sense of belonging outside of the immediate family is an important goal for the adolescent. Drinking alcohol can be a means of identification with a group as being [mistakenly] seen as being grown up"* in (Brink, 6 April:2005).

3.5.5 Substance abuse and crime

"Clearly, youths that use alcohol or other drugs are more likely to be involved in other delinquents acts" in (Weaver 2003:250). This statement by Weaver suggests that when an individual abuses substances there is a likelihood of deviant, criminal behaviour as well. The association between substance abuse and crime can be supported by various explanations.

One explanation is that crime or more specifically violence occurs when rival gangs are in conflict due to establishing turf for selling drugs (Siegel et al 2003:316). The systemic model has been used by Brunelle, Brochu and Cosineau (2003:257) to demonstrate how substance abuse leads to criminal behaviour. It is within the milieu of supply and distribution that violence takes place in the drug environment, it is alleged that *"In fact, violence is argued to be used to ensure the*

protection and sharing of territories, sales and stock” in Brunelle et al (2003:257).

Substance abusers commit crimes to sustain their habits. A study conducted in Miami, U.S.A. found that 573 substance abusers committed more than 200 000 crimes per year in order to obtain money for their drug addiction (Siegel et al 2003:316). Maree (2003:56) claims that using drugs and alcohol is an expensive habit and one that may lead to the individual committing crime as a way of feeding his/her addiction. The cost of drugs and alcohol and the frequency needed in order to satisfy the abuser’s need makes for this pass time to be costly in nature. The following excerpt elaborates *“Some drug and alcohol-centred individuals, especially members of gangs, exhibit behaviour such as mugging, stealing, handbag snatching, and other forms of aggression and violence to acquire money in order to satisfy and maintain their habit, while others may resort to prostitution”* in (Bezuidenhout 2004:129). Raubenheimer (2004:2) claims that substance abuse often leads to other crimes such as shop theft, housebreaking and prostitution. Bartollas (2000:356) confirms the above statements and declares that a substance abuser’s life is centred around obtaining drugs every day, these individuals oftentimes commit crimes in order to maintain their addiction. Brunelle et al (2003:257) make use of the economic compulsive model to illustrate the connection between substance abuse and crime. These authors contend that the regular use of drugs or alcohol sometimes predispose abusers to commit money-oriented crime, this model explains how a financial ‘disequilibrium’ occurs when legitimate earnings of an abuser are not enough to sustain his/her addiction (assuming that the abuser is earning an income at all). According to Hunt (in Brunelle et al 2003:257) many factors influence a drug user’s tendency towards money-oriented crime, these are:

- The frequency of drug use.
- The price of consumed drugs.
- Insufficient earnings.
- A criminal record.
- Immersion into an addict life style.

Adolescents who abuse drugs are also more agreeable to taking risks as their inhibitions are lowered by substance abuse (Siegel et al 2003:316). Being under the influence of drugs and alcohol lowers a user’s reserve, when intoxicated with either substance people tend to behave in a reckless and impulsive manner (Maree 2003:56). A statement made by a regular cannabis user describes how he was more

susceptible to fighting when intoxicated *"I'm more likely to get into a fight [when intoxicated] than when I'm straight, that's for sure"* in (Brunelle et al 2003:259). The Cape Times (11 April,2001:5) contains an article of two gangsters that raped and killed two young women. A woman testified in court that that on the night of the killings she had given the two offenders Mandrax to smoke. In a paper presented at the 29th Canadian Congress on Criminal Justice in Canada (www.gov.za), the Minister of Correctional Services, Mr Skosana, cited data from a study conducted by the Human Science Research Council with regards to the relationship between the level of drug/alcohol intake and crime. The following are the results:

- Drug intake tended to precede first involvement with criminal activities.
- The use of dagga tended to precede the use of alcohol, which in turn led to illicit drug taking and the latter concurrently led to involvement in criminal activities.
- Taking drugs immediately before or at the time of committing an offence was general.
- Rape and housebreaking/burglary were all associated with drinking, especially group drinking and drinking in public places.
- Property crimes were associated with the smoking of dagga in groups.

Brunelle et al (2003:261) claim that youths do consume substances in order to commit crime. The authors elucidate further by claiming that drug use plays a utilitarian role: one the one hand, it relaxes the youth and gives him/her courage and it allows the youth to distance himself/herself from the criminal act, while, on the other hand, it allows for more *"fun"* during the commission of a crime. It is further maintained by Brunelle et al (2003:261) that sometimes substance abuse facilitates the commission of a crime; the following excerpts are from two youth offenders who motivate their drug use before a crime. The first offender claims *"With the drugs that I was taking, it would give me the nerve, it gave me more courage"*. The purpose of taking drugs then for this youth was to reduce stress and diminish fear before committing the crime. The second offender states *"I wouldn't think of anything. I wouldn't regret anything. I had money in my pockets. I wouldn't think of anything. I couldn't care less. What's done is done. I wasn't even scared what"*

would happen after...When I was on that stuff I wasn't scared of anything" in (Brunelle et al 2003:61).

Siegel et al (2003:316) hold that there are adolescents who continue with their drug habit and criminal activities into adulthood, these youngsters have the following characteristics:

- They come from poor families.
- Other criminals are members of their families.
- They do poorly at school.
- They started using drugs and committing other delinquent acts at an early age.
- They use multiple type drugs and commit crimes frequently.
- They have few opportunities in late adolescence to participate in legitimate and rewarding adult activities.

Substance abuse is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored, particularly when the abusers are teenagers. It seems that there are a variety of reasons for the onset of abuse amongst youngsters today. Urgent attention should be paid to the fact that drugs are made easily available to the youth in this country. This is a reality that should be dealt with as quickly and effectively as possible.

3.6 Summary

This chapter examined community-related factors that contribute to youth offending. The neighbourhood wherein a youngster is raised was mentioned with particular attention paid to the school that a child attends. The role of the school as not only a secondary socialization agent but also as an educator was highlighted. Academic achievement at and an adolescent's attachment to school were focused on as conducive to criminal behaviour. Violence and substance abuse in the school were included as risk factors for youth offending.

The relationships that youngsters have with their friends and peers are also important indicators of problem behaviour, this was discussed before exploring gang involvement. Reasons for joining a gang explained a youth's attraction to gang membership. The various criminal activities associated with gangs were outlined as well as the family and school as social institutions that contribute to gang membership.

The phenomenon of substance abuse was investigated by listing the different types of drugs and the causes of substance abuse. The researcher provided the reader with figures and newspaper articles to

emphasis the rate of substance abuse amongst adolescents in South Africa. Finally the researcher examined the link between substance abuse and crime.

3.7 Conclusion

The community plays a paramount role in the development of a child. The community should perhaps be viewed as an extension of the family, as it is in the community that the adolescent spends the majority of his/her time – this means that the youth's recreational/leisure and educational/learning time is spent within the community. These aforesaid factors prove conducive to the youth's development into a well-balanced individual and adult. It was found that a neighbourhood ridden with violence emits the incorrect message to the youth. Deviant values and norms are learnt, and as a result deviant behaviour is internalised as an acceptable form of behaviour and method of conflict resolution.

Authors Haney and Zimbardo in (Kratcoski & Kratcoski1990:148) concluded after their study on schools *“The real tragedies of our school system are not the troublemakers, or even the dropouts. They are the endless procession of faceless students who go through the system quietly and unquestionably, unobtrusive and unnoticed. They have somehow learned to inhibit individual expression of any form, whether achievement or rebellion. They have accustomed themselves to passive nonidentity and nonparticipation”*. The school is the secondary socialisation agent after the family, if the school fails in its task to provide proper education within a safe environment the resultant effect may be youth who have little education and therefore little ambition in life. Violence and substance abuse in the school are factors that play a prominent role in the commission of crime by adolescents. Children carry weapons to schools as a means of protection and drugs are often sold on school premises.

Many explanations have been provided for a youth's involvement in a gang. Pull factors such as friends or family in a gang, a gang portrayed as a family, a sense of belonging and acceptance within a gang and the promise of making easy money quickly are aspects that attract the adolescent to participate in gang activities: these features of a gang are perceived to be positive, pull factors for the youth who willingly joins a gang. Push factors include joining a gang for protection from rival gangs; violence in the community or school, being labelled a gang member by the community and after a while surrendering to the label and becoming a gang member or joining a gang purely out of fear of the

consequences for trying to avoid gang involvement: these are factors that compel the adolescent to join a gang.

Criminal activities within the gang milieu is ubiquitous, gang members commit crime as a means of obtaining money (via drug dealing, stealing, robbery) or as a means to protect themselves from rival gangs. Gang members influence one another in the commission of crimes; this occurs as individuals in the gang are friends with each other; peer pressure plays a key role in any typical youth behaviour. The possession of firearms is deemed necessary by gang members as a means to protect themselves from rival gangs and/or a hostile world (given the nature of a gang it makes sense that the environment within which the group operates does not make for a stable, secure setting).

The family and the school are indeed important in preventing the youth from participating in gang activities. The family moulds the child into a stable, secure adult who has the inner strength to avoid negative influences. The school is an institution whereby the youth is encouraged to actively take part in his education. When these two aforesaid institutions fail to supply the adolescent with the necessary skills to cope in the mainstream of life; these youth fall prey to external and suffice it to say powerful pressures.

Generally, substance abuse is a grave enough problem to face, but the fact that so many youth in this country fall prey to substance abuse is an issue which causes immense concern, particularly when one considers the age at which adolescents first experiment with drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, there are many reasons for the onset of substance abuse by the youth of today - causes for this phenomenon are inter-related and interdependent on each other, for example: the family teaches the child life and resiliency skills as well as the importance of a solid education, this indicates that the child will want to achieve well at school and be able to resist negative peer influences. The child is also able to deal with any trauma that may occur in his/her life and may be less likely to suffer from emotional problems or problem behaviour. South Africa has a growing problem with substance abuse by the youth, drugs are easily available and adolescents are influenced to try drugs and alcohol at an early age. Abusing substances allows for the adolescent to let go of his/her inhibitions that may lead to impulsive and risky behaviour. Abusing substances actually facilitates the commission of a crime, it allows the deviant youth to commit a crime with courage, reduced fear and little thought for the consequence of the crime.

The neighbourhood, school, friends, gang membership and substance abuse are factors that prove to be conducive to delinquent behaviour. These aforesaid factors are in fact part of the social fabric of a

community and in a larger context, society. They need to be understood as factors that influence each other and the juvenile considerably, to the extent that criminal behaviour is the inevitable result.

As a final point, the researcher thought it wise to end with the following information which aptly encapsulates three factors discussed in this chapter. Sukhraj (10 April:2005) recounts how a young male was brutally murdered by two youth offenders, the accused were at the time of the murder 17 and 19 years old respectively. The two accused and their friend (a young male who helped to abduct the victim and raped the victim's girlfriend but had nothing to with the murder) showed to the court that they had little to live for; they were high-school dropouts and had a shared drug habit. These three factors have been examined as contributory factors to the commission of crime. The following chapter provides details on the methodology applied in terms of the empirical section of this research project.