DELINQUENT GANGS IN CONTEXT: TOWARDS AN ECOLOGY OF MEANING

by

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Declaration

Student Number: 4493-738-5

I declare that **Delinquent Gangs in Context: Towards an Ecology of Meaning** is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

....

SIGNATURE DATE

(Miss A Venter)

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on that sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(Thomas, Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night, 2005a)

Summary

Gangs exist as metaphors of the societies in which they are embedded and are powerful, hence the need is great for an ecologically powerful model and a collation of a picture about gangs and gang life as described by knowledgeable individuals. With so much literature and knowledgeable individuals at hand to provide insight into the problem, the rationale for this study comes forth in the form of taking all this knowledge and insight and creating a collation of a picture of gangs as it is understood by those who study them and by those who have been confronted with them.

The theoretical framework is a social constructionist cybernetic epistemology. One-on-one interviews were conducted with knowledgeable sources and audio-visual material assisted in understanding the context of gangs better. A hermeneutic analysis was used.
The interview transcripts from the participants were analysed and themed according to a thematic network analysis and linked with available literature. These themes were then used to represent a Time Cable of gangs.

The researcher hopes that this dissertation will contribute to existing research and has opened up a pathway to more research on this topic.

Key Terms:

Gangs; Delinquent gangs; Defining gangs; Groups; Context; Ecology of gangs; Theoretical framework; Methodology; Post Modernism; Social Constructionism; Cybernetics; Qualitative Research; Credibility; Ethics; Hermeneutics; Thematic Network Analysis; Time Cable

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Chapter One: Introduction

What have I learned? The wider the gap between the rich and the poor, and the more poverty it has, the worse a country's gang problem will be. Gangs spring up when social structures are destroyed by sudden and drastic change: the civil war in El Salvador, the end of apartheid in South Africa, the collapse of communism in Russia. Some people join gangs because of peer pressure or to get the friendship, loyalty and respect they cannot find anywhere else. Some join because their attitude is, 'If I can't get it legally, I'm going to take it.' A gang gives many people a family, a purpose and a sense of identity. A lot of men told me they join gangs to get women.

What else? Give people a legitimate way out of poverty, give them equality, a way to succeed and gangs will stop flourishing. Of course however bad their circumstances, gangsters still make a choice. As one female ex-gang member told me, "We may have all these things against us, but we are the ones who pull the triggers." I've learned food in your stomach matters. And education and housing.

(Kemp, 2007, p. 227-228)

A Personal Statement

Roughly four years ago I watched a documentary about gangs. I then watched another one and another one. Since then, I have watched as many documentaries and have read as many books about gangs as I could. It is difficult to explain, even to myself, why I have this fascination with gangs. It also accompanies the interest I have with crime and criminal behaviour, and perhaps the best way to explain this fascination is because I require an understanding of why individuals and groups engage in antisocial behaviour.

My own ignorance also led me to this topic. I could not hide my surprise when I saw what was happening in Pollsmoor Prison in the Western Cape regarding gang activities, how widespread gangs are in New Zealand, how violent gangs are in El Salvador and how dangerous gangs are in Eastern Europe with their accompanying Nazi ideologies. Did I know about gangs before my interest took flight? Yes, I did know about gangs. Did I understand what a gang was? Yes, I did understand what a gang was. What I did not understand was why individuals joined gangs, why gangs engaged in criminal activities, why gang members

felt a sense of cohesion within their group, and that a gang might be a gang in one context and something completely different in another. The research thus satisfies my own hunger to know and understand more about gangs.

A mainstream term that we often hear for an introductory course to a subject is ‘101’, and to some extent this research can be considered as ‘Gangs101’. But it does not only graze the surface of the subject; it delves deeper to the point where one can truly paint a complete picture of a gang. One can find research regarding the subject in abundance, but this research is normally focused on one specific topic regarding gangs. This project aimed to collate a picture of what we know and understand about gangs thus far, and how gangs relate and are influenced by their environment.

My desire to know more about gangs and understand them better also led me to empathise with them and not to dehumanise them. Except for the criminal behaviour as a key ingredient, I came to understand that they share many similarities to that of a social group. As with a social group, members of a gang share a sense of camaraderie and acceptance for one another. Their goals and objectives differ significantly but essentially, a group, regardless of the type of group, follow certain processes and share certain characteristics. Thus, I felt that calling members of a gang ‘gangsters’ dehumanises and labels these individuals as fundamentally bad and dangerous. I decided to refer to them as ‘gang members’ throughout this research project, as that is what I see them as - members of a specific group. The labels we attach can often be very detrimental, and perhaps this is why gang members and gangs in general, have been treated with such animosity. I am by no means attempting to justify the often cruel and violent behaviours that they exert; I am merely stating that throughout this journey of discovery, I have come to view gang members in a different light.

General Introduction

The most indispensable characteristic of a gang, with specific reference to delinquent gangs, is that they engage in criminal activities. Other underlying assumptions about delinquent gangs are that they exist, that they are purposeful, that they survive beyond the lifetime of any given member, that the gang itself direct the activities of the gang members, that gangs recruit and initiate new members, that gangs have structure to varying degrees, and finally, that gangs offer marginalised youths economic opportunities which are not always readily available in mainstream society (Schneider & Tilley, 2004). Goldstein (1991) noted that more gangs have appeared since the early 1990’s, which can be attributed to the more rapid

social disorganisation that is taking place in certain areas of South Africa and around the world. The consequences of gang involvement include a sense of fear that has been injected into the communities that have to face gangs on a daily basis (Klein & Maxon, 2006).

Understanding gangs, gang members, gang life and why gangs exist, begins with defining gangs. However, as Miller (1975, p. 115) explains, “At no point has there been anything close to consensus on what a gang might be – by scholars, by criminal justice workers, by the general public”, and thus it is at the root of the subject where the problem lies. Many definitions about gangs exist, each one emphasising a different aspect, but without an impervious definition, it becomes clear that gangs are defined within the context in which they are viewed. Context can be related to the members of the community and how they view gangs, and it can also be related to current political and economic conditions of the environment in which they find themselves. Context also plays a major role historically, for a gang which existed decades ago may not be seen as a gang today.

Explaining the Title

The title of this study, *Delinquent Gangs in Context: Towards an Ecology of Meaning*, is not only a reflection on the content of this study but it also echoes my own need to understand this complex social phenomenon. It is evident of the journey I have undergone in finding out as much as I could and finding some intrinsic *meaning* about gangs.

The first part of the title, *Delinquent Gangs in Context,* is representative of the idea that gangs are defined as gangs when they are placed in a specific context and they might not be viewed or defined as gangs when they are placed in a different context with a different historical, political, and economic climate. Gangs only exist when someone says they exist and have labelled them as such.

The second part of the title, *Towards an Ecology of Meaning,* firstly represents the fact that the environment contributes to the formation and maintenance of gangs, which is why it is of paramount importance to always evaluate the type of environment in which a gang thrives. The type of environment one finds a gang in is representative of the type of life the gang member lives before and after he or she has joined and it also accurately portrays the type of existence the gang itself will have. Literature cites that social disorganisation is one of the most common motives for a gang to form or for an individual to join a gang.

Secondly, this part of the title reflects the objective of this research which is to form a collation of meaning and knowledge around gangs and gang life. The second part of the title is mostly reflected in Chapter Five, where an ecological model of gangs has been created.

Rationale

There is a wealth of information on gangs and most, if not all literature, discuss the issues with defining gangs. Some tackle the issue and provide suggestions as to how it can be solved and others conclude the issue with providing the reader with their defining criteria for a gang. By just mentioning the term “gang” a magnitude of arguments are brought up; arguments such as: when is a gang defined as criminal, when is a social group a gang, and what the defining characteristics of gangs are?

Kemp (2007, p. 190) summarises the issue of gangs adequately: “Wherever I went looking, the same basic truth stared me straight in the face: the greater the social divide, the worse the country’s gang problem. In Moscow, also a city of grey monolithic housing blocks named after one or other of its grey, monolithic leaders, the poverty-stricken walk the same streets as billionaires.” Kemp (2007) highlights an issue that is not adequately dealt with in literature: delinquent gangs in context. *In which contexts do gangs thrive?* There is a vacuum concerning an ecologically powerful model on gangs on a universal scale. Thus, this research serves as a frame for the investigation of delinquent gangs in context; creating an ecologically powerful model of gangs around the world.

With so many gangs in existence around the world and with so much literature and many knowledgeable individuals at hand to provide insight into the problem, the rationale for this study comes forth in the form of taking all this knowledge and insight, and creating a collation of a picture of gangs as it is understood by those who study them and by those who have been confronted with them.

Research Aims

Gangs exist as metaphors of the societies in which they are embedded and they are powerful, hence the need is great for an ecologically powerful model and a collation of a picture about gangs and gang life as described by knowledgeable individuals.

Gang culture, says Kemp (2007), is like an invisible fog: you cannot escape it, and it is like living under an evil spell. Getting to the root of what is important in gangs and in which societies they thrive will shed some light on the gang problem that is being faced globally.

The aim of this research is to explore literature and audio-visual material and interview knowledgeable sources on how gangs are portrayed and how gangs are described. Additionally, an ecological model of gangs in context will be designed.

Questions that will be guiding this study will include the following:

- How do individuals portray gangs in the relevant literature?;
- How do knowledgeable sources talk about gangs and construe gang life?;
- How can an ecologically viable model of gang life be construed?

I do not wish to narrow the view of gangs but rather to broaden and provide a greater understanding of everything gangs can be and how they can change when their context changes. The grounding of the research within a social constructionist, cybernetic epistemological framework will allow the stories and realities of each research participant to be positioned in context (Lurie, 2007).

Sometimes gangs are viewed as good and sometimes gangs are viewed as bad. The 'goodness' or 'badness' of a gang can almost be viewed on a continuum: it is related to the context in which they find themselves and how individuals in that context perceive the group. In one historical context, a specific gang may find themselves to be on the 'bad' end of the continuum but this might change when they are placed in a different context and may find themselves shifting towards the 'good' end of the continuum.

Design of Inquiry

Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007), focuses on research problems inquiring into a social or human problem and how individuals or groups ascribe meanings to these. Thus the collection of data takes place in a natural setting so as to better understand and learn about lived experiences. Golafshani (2003) mentions that the incorporation of context, complexity, and diversity are essential to capture the essence of what is being researched. Creswell (2007) places great emphasis on the *process* of qualitative research as a flow from philosophical assumptions, to worldviews and through a theoretical lens, and on to the

procedures involved in studying social or human problems. Following this is a framework for these procedures such as grounded theory or case study research.

The aim of the study is to provide “an in-depth description of a small number of cases” (Mouton, 2001, p. 149), thus a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive approach has been chosen. Qualitative research, according to Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey (2010), collects evidence, and can produce findings that were not necessarily determined in advance. The appropriateness of a qualitative approach is justified due to the nature of my study where I am more interested in what the research participants have to say than the questions I ask. The strength of a qualitative approach, say Mack *et al.* (2010), lies in its ability to provide information on the beliefs, opinions and emotions of the research participants which in turn can elicit an understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon.

The application I have chosen for the qualitative method is a case study approach. Case studies, according to Neuman (2000), do not test a hypothesis; its focus is more on experiences and meanings. Both the qualitative and case study approach ties in with Mouton’s (2001, p. 150) notion of an inductive, a-theoretical approach; where no “hypothesis is formulated” and the research will be predominantly guided by the research objectives as well as the questions raised during interviews. A “case”, as Babbie (2004) points out, is a term that is often used very broadly in the sense that it can mean a particular group of people, a certain period of time, or even just one person. This approach is particularly appropriate as I am not looking for answers but rather for meaning. The case I have chosen, namely sources who are deemed knowledgeable about gangs, will add insight and meaning to a phenomenon otherwise studied in a fairly positivistic manner.

Specific information on sampling, data collection and data analysis, is provided in Chapter Three, the theory and methodology portion of this dissertation.

The Format of the Study

This study will consist of both a theoretical section and a practical component. The theoretical section of this dissertation will include a literature review and a discussion of the theoretical framework and methodology employed. The methods which have been selected are consistent with the theoretical framework.

Kaniki (as cited in Lurie, 2007), states that because a research project does not exist in isolation, what has been done already must constantly be added to. The researcher, says Lurie (2007), engages in a discourse with sources such as journal articles, books and knowledgeable individuals in the specific field of study. In conjunction with this, I need to allow my own voice and realities to surface and attempt to position myself among the numerous other realities to which I am exposed.

The literature review provides a context in which to perceive delinquent gangs. Various perspectives within the prevailing frame of knowledge of delinquent gangs and the nature of these groups will be discussed. A broad overview of the various literature sources will provide the reader with insight about this phenomenon. The purpose of the literature review is to not limit the reader and create a reductionist view of gangs but rather to invite the reader into all the possibilities as to what a gang can be. The literature review is offered as an alternative voice (Hyson, 2007) where stories from the data collection and results can be compared with that of the literature review. Hyson (2007) explains that a 'both/and' perspective should be taken, where the literature review highlights the existing multiple realities of a certain phenomenon.

The purpose of interviewing both criminologists and an ex-prisoner, and viewing audio-visual material, is not only to elicit themes (Hyson, 2007) but also to provide all parties with the opportunity to convey their realities and their experiences with and about gangs. Additionally, the research process will allow me to explore and challenge my own views and realities about gangs. My own views, together with those of my research participants, will also assist in the co-construction of the reality of gangs. The dialogue between participants and researcher and the message that comes across in the audio-visual material will provide an alternative reality to that provided in the literature review (Hyson, 2007).

The Presentation of the Study

Chapter Two will comprise the literature review of the study. It acknowledges the difficulty in defining a gang and portrays the vast amount of definitions that have been recorded with regards to gangs as well as the lack of consensus as to what constitutes a gang. The literature review also describes and discusses the characteristics of gangs and how they function as a group. The chapter also looks at communities and how gangs are situated within specific social institutions such as the family and the school and how these are related to gang formation. The last section of the literature review looks at a uniquely South African

perspective on gangs and provides an outlook of gangs as recorded by research conducted on South African gangs and the problem the country is facing with regards to gangs.

Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework from which I departed and the methodology used for the study. An introduction to post modernism forms the basis for the discussions on social constructionism and a cybernetic epistemology. Following this is a discussion on the qualitative research approach which includes the design of inquiry, sampling, establishing credibility in the study, the role of the researcher and hermeneutic analysis of data.

Chapter Four consists of the interpretation of each participant's story and the audio-visual material. The stories and realities are reiterated by way of a thematic network which consists of basic themes, organising themes and global themes. The aim of thematic network analysis is to facilitate the formation and representation of the themes that arose out of the qualitative text (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Chapter Five depicts an ecological model of gangs and serves as a projection of the results discussed in Chapter 4. The ecological model will allow the reader to understand how certain variables influence the prospective or current gang member.

Chapter Six is the final and concluding chapter of this research. The strengths and limitations of the study will be evaluated and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The following chapter will attempt to situate gangs within the framework in which they establish and maintain themselves, and function as a group. The first section serves as a general introduction to the notion of gangs and the second section entitled "Defining gangs" portrays the vast amount of definitions that have been recorded with regards to gangs as well as the lack of consensus as to what constitutes a gang. The third section entitled "The nature of gangs" describes the gang as a group and the fourth section, "Gangs and communities", situates gangs within specific social institutions such as the family and the school, and how these are related to gang formation. The fifth section, "Gangs: a South African perspective", provides an outlook of gangs as recorded by research conducted on South African gangs and the problem the country is facing with regards to gangs.

Overview of Gangs

"What would you say to any young person who was thinking of joining a gang?"
"I would say sometimes it's not what they choose. Sometimes it chooses them, because of the environment where they are living."

(Kemp, 2007, p.209)

Knox (1991) provides the most essential feature of a delinquent gang when he explains that these gangs engage in law-violation behaviour in a constant fashion. These are the gangs you find in both juvenile and adult correctional institutions – the "hard-core law-offending gangs" (Knox, 1991, p. 1). Schneider and Tilley (2004) note that research has unearthed similar aspects of a delinquent gang such as the fact that gangs commit crimes, of which some are often very serious types of crimes. They also mention several other underlying assumptions, a few of which are listed below:

- Gangs exist;
- Gangs are purposeful;
- Gangs survive beyond the lifetime of any given member;
- Gangs direct the activities of their members
- Gangs actively recruit and initiate new members;
- Gangs have structure, albeit to varying degrees of formalisation;

- Gangs are instrumental groups that offer disenfranchised youths economic alternatives to those offered by mainstream society.

Klein and Maxon (2006) expanded on these assumptions. They noted that even though gangs are more similar than different there are clear differences with regards to the structure, gender, ethnicity, geographic location and social class of gangs. That is to say, Latino gangs may emphasise dedication more in terms of the amount of opposition gang members you have murdered whereas a White gang's idea of dedication is measured in the wealth you acquire for the gang. An adult gang may have more structure than a youth gang and a prison gang may have more initiation criteria than a street gang.

Since the early 1990's, there seem to be more gangs (Goldstein, 1991) - more youth gangs, more drug involvement and more violence perpetrated by these gangs. The consequences of gang involvement and the activities in which they engage are severe and sometimes deadly: life efficacy has been reduced by membership in gangs, fear of walking in your own neighbourhood has increased due to gang membership and homicides have increased in gang-infested communities (Klein & Maxon, 2006).

Where and why did it all start? Most, if not all literature, cites that the gang is an American product (see, for example, Curry & Decker, (2003); Franzese, Covey, & Menard, (2006); Goldstein (1991); Klein & Maxon, (2006); Knox (1991); and Schneider & Tilley (2004)). However, Kemp (2007) has discovered that gangs are a worldwide phenomenon with the most dangerous and notorious gangs situated not only in United States but in countries such as El Salvador, Jamaica, New Zealand, Belize, Russia, and South Africa. What Kemp (2007) has also realised is that there is an abundance of reasons for why gangs are formed. Jamaica's gangs, for example, are politically motivated whereas New Zealand's gangs were formed out of revenge. Socioeconomic status plays a big part as well. It is thus the *context* in which these communities are situated that creates or exacerbates the formation and maintenance of gangs.

To understand the history, origins, and nature of delinquent gangs, it is essential to consider the defining criteria of a gang. However, it became abruptly apparent that despite the abundance of definitions on gangs one can find in the literature there is a definite consensus that what constitutes a gang is not as clear-cut and simple (Miller & Cohen, 1996).

Defining Gangs

"At no time has there been anything close to consensus on what a gang might be – by scholars, by criminal justice workers, by the general public." (Miller, 1975, p. 115)

The first distinction that must be made is between a gang and a delinquent gang. Kornhouser (as cited in Miller & Cohen, 1996) took note of the fact that the term "gang" has not always been synonymous with the term "delinquent gang". In fact, the term "gang" has often been romanticised in western culture, with groups such as Robin Hood's group of merry men or the notorious Jesse James gang being fitting examples of fictional or actual gangs (Miller & Cohen, 1996). Miller and Cohen (1996) further suggest that the sociological characterisations of gangs place more emphasis on the notion of *gang formation* as opposed to the destructive and violent behaviours of certain gangs: MacLeod (as cited in Miller & Cohen, 1996, p. 3) highlights the "consequences of maturation on childhood play", Jankowski (as cited in Miller & Cohen, 1996, p. 3) writes about "the solidification of neighbourhood social clubs" and more recently Goldstein (as cited in Miller & Cohen, 1996, p. 3) took note of the "prosocial gang". The more recent negative attitude and connotation related to gangs may *not* be due to the increase in numbers or seriousness in law-violation behaviour but rather to the academic interest and increase in research conducted on gangs (Miller & Cohen, 1996).

More than half a century ago, Thrasher (as cited in Cartwright, 1975, p. 2) defined a gang as "a group that forms spontaneously and without any special attachment to existing parts of society." Examples of these types of groups may be children from the same neighbourhood who play together frequently. These children do not necessarily come from the same family or even go to the same school, and Thrasher (as cited in Cartwright, 1975, p. 2) called this lack of "special attachment" being "interstitial". However, if this group engages in conflict with other individuals it becomes a gang and is thus "integrated" as opposed to "interstitial". This gang then progresses toward sharing common labels and enemies.

While Thrasher (as cited in Cartwright, 1975) offered a distinction between interstitial and integrated groups or gangs, Knox (1991, p. 1) called this phenomena "criminal gangs" and "social gangs". The most essential feature of his definition is that a criminal gang "routinely engages in law violation behaviour", and that it is done in a continuing fashion within small groups. He goes on to explain that correctional officers are familiar with this type of gang as

they are seen in both juvenile and adult correctional institutions whereas “social gangs never come under the attention of the criminal justice system.”

It would appear that Goldstein (1991), as with Miller and Cohen (1996), struggled with a single, straightforward definition of what a gang is. He explains that a definition of a gang constructed fifty years ago will not be the same definition today. It is not a question that previous definitions no longer suffice; the older definitions are in all senses still correct, but because we are constantly dealing with different types of human groups in ever changing political and economic conditions the immediate definition of a gang will always be relative to context. Chronologically, Goldstein (1991) considered the following definitions of gangs by pioneers of that specific time period:

- “...for the boy one of three primary social groups. These three are the family, the neighbourhood, and the play group; but for the normal boy the play group is the gang. All three are restrictive human groupings, formed like pack and flock and hive, in response to deep-seated but unconscious need.” (Puffer, as cited in Goldstein, 1991, p. 3)

This definition dates back to 1912, but if we move forward to 1966, a very different picture is painted:

- “...a group of six or more persons who can identify an instigator among their number or who have a group name and who have experienced, as a group, two or more incidents of conflict with other like groups or legal authorities without openly opposing the moral validity of the social order or norms.” (Arnold, as cited in Goldstein, 1991, p. 3)

- In 1971, Klein (as cited in Goldstein, 1991, p. 4) defined gangs as “any denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighbourhood, (b) recognise themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name), and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies.”

- And finally, in 1990, The New York State Division for Youth (as cited in Goldstein, 1991, p.5) defined a gang as “…an on-going, identifiable group of people (highly organised or loosely structured) which, either individually or collectively, has engaged

> in or is considered likely to engage in unlawful or antisocial activity that may be verified by police records or other reliable sources and who create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community."

The first definition by Puffer (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) included the deep-seated desire to belong to a group but excluded the essential feature of delinquent, antisocial or unlawful behaviour. This definition can then perhaps be construed as an acceptable definition of a social group; not a delinquent or a criminal gang. The second definition by Arnold (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) may be balancing on a very fine line: while it includes conflict with other groups or legal authorities it does not place emphasis on delinquent behaviour. Arnold (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) also mentions that these groups do not openly oppose the "moral validity of the social order or norms" which some would perhaps consider a gross underestimation. For example, as mentioned previously, New Zealand's Mongrel Mob originated out of revenge for the government (Kemp, 2007) – thus it is their "manifesto" to openly defy or oppose the validity of the social order or norms. The next definition by Klein (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) defines a gang as an adolescent group or youngsters. What follows this definition adequately encompasses the behaviour of a delinquent gang but it would be incorrect to assume that delinquent gangs only comprise of adolescents or youngsters.

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) view the terms "gangs" and "subcultures" as existing under the same umbrella. Their first defining criterion for delinquent gangs or subcultures is that they are typically found among adolescent males in large urban centres among lower-class areas. In their account of delinquent gangs they focus on three distinguishing kinds of subcultures. The first one is called the "criminal subculture" (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960, p.1). This is defined as a type of gang that is devoted to any means of securing income. Typically through illegal methods, this gang will use measures such as theft and extortion. The second type of subculture is the "conflict subculture", a gang which is predominantly involved in using violence as a way of manipulation and triumph, be it over rival gangs or innocent bystanders. The third subculture is the "retreatist subculture". The central feature of this gang is the consumption of drugs.

Even though Cloward and Ohlin (1960) made a distinction between three different types of gangs one can almost effortlessly appreciate how the characteristics of all three types of gangs mentioned be combined into one gang. For example, a gang can perhaps use violence (the "conflict subculture") to acquire income (the "criminal subculture") in order to

buy and consume drugs (the “retreatist subculture”). Another scenario can involve intoxicated gang members (the “retreatist subculture”) engaging in violence (the “conflict subculture”) over matters such as turf-disputes. It is not uncommon to hear about criminals first getting intoxicated before engaging in illegal activities. According to Cloward and Ohlin (1960), the three patterns of subcultural delinquency present very different problems for social control and prevention. It also involves different lifestyles for the members of these types of gangs and they impose unique beliefs, values and instructions for behaviour and action on their members. With that said, these patterns of subcultural delinquency are very much alike in the sense that they share certain norms which guide the behaviour of the gang members and is also in stark contradiction to the norms of the larger society (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960).

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) paid particular attention to defining the term “delinquent subculture”. They explain that because the term is used too often in theoretical literature and research it is important to understand what it entails. Firstly, emphasis is placed on the distinction between “delinquent subculture” and “deviant subculture”. A deviant subculture is one that encompasses all behaviour that violates a set of social expectations or rules of conduct (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Such behaviours would involve profanity, property desctruction, disorderly conduct and petty theft. A delinquent subculture however, is one where these types of behaviours “are essential requirements for the performance of the dominant roles supported by the subculture” (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960, p. 7). Reber and Reber (2001) define the term “delinquent” as anyone who violates a legal code or commits a crime, and explain that the term is most often used for a juvenile offender. For the purposes of this study however, the term “delinquent” or “delinquency” includes any age group and not just juvenile offenders.

Similarly to what Goldstein (1991) and Miller and Cohen (1996) explained about the issue of finding one all-encompassing defintion for gangs, so too does Knox (1991) emphasise that the definitional issues of gangs must be confronted. He explains that many decades ago, all gangs looked alike and all gang members acted alike, thus there was no indication that attention should be given to the defining criteria of a gang. However, as society progressed, gangs in too many forms have been described and issues such as what is a gang, when is a group a gang, what constitutes gang membership, and the different levels of gang membership arose (Knox, 1991).

The first definitional issue that Knox (1991, p. 4) confronts is asking the question “Does calling a group a gang make it a gang?” Knox (1991) responded by saying that this question

is dependent on *who* uses the language. The voice of an individual living in a specific community will most definitely differ from the voice of an individual who is in a position of authority. The difference, says Knox (1991), is the distribution of power and he answers his own question by stating that calling a group a gang does not make it a gang. Groups that engage in civil disobedience but possess higher internalised moral imperatives, such as groups that protect the environment, cannot be considered as gangs (Knox, 1991), because the intent is not to use violence to cause harm or benefit economically.

The next issue that Knox (1991) addresses is the amount of crime or deviance in which a group must be involved before it is considered a gang. The answer lies in a succession of goals, for even a legitimate group may transform into a delinquent gang. One can perhaps consider the followers of Reverend Jim Jones as a fitting example. Knox (1991) explains that the hundreds of people that died in the tragedy in Jonestown in 1978 bears much significance to the study of gangs because the collective behaviour of these followers ultimately had a deviant outcome: mass suicide. The followers of Jim Jones were considered to be a cult, and a cult engaged in crime or deviance, says Knox (1991), is a gang.

Unlike today, early scholars did not consider groups such as the Ku Klux Klan or vigilante groups as gangs. The focus was more on youth groups who defied the values and norms of mainstream society, something that Knox (1991, p. 5) calls “youthful deviance”. Today, however, vigilante groups who engage in hate crimes or “skinhead” groups who engage in bias crimes are often considered to be gangs (Knox, 1991).

Knox (1991, p. 6) wraps up the discussion with regards to defining a gang when he says that “a group is a gang when it exists for or benefits substantially from the criminal activity of its members. Some elements of crime must exist as a definitive feature of the organisation for it to be classified as a gang.” He explains that the members of the Jonestown religious community could perhaps *not* be considered a gang because even though the members did engage in a deviant practices, it was considered deviant only from a certain perspective. Using deviance then as a component when defining a gang may be far too encompassing. Crime involvement *must* therefore be a factor when considering whether a group is a gang. Under this deciding factor, Knox (1991) includes gangs such as the Crips, Bloods, Miami Boys, Folks, Peoples, Posse, Vice Lords, Latin Kings, motorcycle gangs such as the Pagans and Hell’s Angels, those engaged in traditional and political crime, rightwing and leftwing extremism groups such as the Aryan Brotherhood, Supreme White Power, Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Symbionese Liberation Army. These are of course all North American products but under this heading one can also include gangs such as MS13 from El Salvador,

the Mongrel Mob from New Zealand, the Seven Sevens from East Timor, the Mungiki from Kenya, the Hoxton Mob from England and the Number from South Africa.

Knox (1991) also addresses the difference between street gangs and prison gangs. He says that large prison gangs, such as the Aryan Brotherhood, were thought to only exist within the four walls of a prison but today we know that gangs such the Aryan Brotherhood do exist outside the context of a prison. Prison gang membership is in many ways equivalent to street gang membership, except in certain correctional institutions where an individual temporarily show an allegiance to a gang simply for the benefits of protection (Knox, 1991). In essence then, few differences exist between street gangs and prison gangs – the major difference is only that the former operates in a community and the latter operates within a prison.

As mentioned previously, most literature cites that gangs are an American product however, the *prison gang* only appeared on the American scene in the 1960's (Lotter & Schurink, 1984), whereas South African prison gangs have started as early as 1908 by a man named Nongoloza. Prison gangs in the United States were characterised as secondary groups binded by politics, race, and religion and were also known for their immense size, charismatic leadership and bureaucratic organisation style (Lotter & Schurink, 1984).

Schneider and Tilley (2004) say that the issues with defining a gang are parallel with the essays relating to history and development of gangs. They explain that across all the essays we see different manners of formation of gangs and different functions and activities among gangs. Gangs also differ from country to country, therefore combining all these traits and functions to define "gangs" may be most unhelpful. According to Schneider and Tilley (2004), the task of researching gangs has been troubled with difficulties since the 1970's and central to these difficulties is the issue of defining gangs. Even though these issues have been acknowledged as limitations in research they have not yet been thoroughly explored as being potentially serious flaws within the process of researching gangs (Schneider & Tilley, 2004). The term "gang", say Schneider and Tilley (2004), is a universal term used by researchers, police, social workers, media and the general population, but it is the meaning of the term "gang" that is not applied consistently and reliably. They say that hearing the word "gang" raises countless images – from group loyalties and tragedies portayed in the *West Side Story*, to violent gang members controlling the streets of Los Angeles and Chicago, to youths enjoying skateboarding.

The problem though is that the manner in which the term “gang” is used reflects disparities with regards to criminal activity, cohesion, purpose and structure (Schneider & Tilley, 2004). Schneider and Tilley (2004) hold that even though defining the term “gang” may be tricky, it is essential to do so. Winfree, Fulle, Vigil, and Mays (as cited in Schneider & Tilley, 2004, p. 18) have described the evolution of gang research as almost following a “schizophrenic path” and they contribute this to the “lack of definitional consensus on the term.” On the opposite side of the coin though, Horowitz (as cited in Schneider & Tilley, 2004) says that due to the unique interest in gangs from a variety of different groups, own definitions may exist and may also be necessary. That is to say that the police and the media may have very different views and opinions as to what constitutes a gang. However, Schneider and Tilley (2004) hold that the danger of overstating the existence of gangs may be avoided if there is use of consistent definitional criteria. In some instances it may also assist in avoiding overestimation of the problems gangs cause and prevent the oversensationalisation of the issue by the media. Once again, Schneider and Tilley (2004) emphasise the fact that one cannot lump defintions of gangs together when one gang is seen as a transient pack of predators and another is seen as an emerging structured crime firm.

Klein and Crawford (1967) wrote a paper that dealt with the qualitative differences between juvenile gangs and other groups (social groups). They explained that by doing this research, they hope to correct an error made by many in which juvenile gangs are emasculated, a characteristic that they believe make juvenile gangs stand out as a social problem. Firstly, Klein and Crawford (1967) explain the phenomenon of social groups. Social groups such as fraterneties and laboratory groups are mostly studied with regards to the interpersonal attraction between members. Their cohesiveness is derived from factors such as commom goals, shared norms and values, as well as stability of membership. An important behaviour by which they are characterised is the fact that they behave in a manner which is acceptable to society (Klein & Crawford, 1967). Cohesiveness in juvenile gangs, say Klein and Crawford (1967), is not only based on factors such as common goals, shared norms and values, and stability of membership but also on negatively sanctioned behaviours and attitudes, mostly to a greater extent. In a gang context, cohesiveness and delinquent behaviour are mutual interactors as well as reinforcers (Klein & Crawford, 1967). Klein and Crawford (1967) also noted that gangs and social groups are sometimes similarly defined, and little emphasis is placed on the deviant behaviour associated with the gang. However, they did report that the delinquent product of gang interaction is the second factor which differentiates juvenile gangs from other social groups.

According to Conly (as cited in Ball & Curry, 1995), some have resorted to abandoning the term “gang” completely due to the great confusion as a result of referring to the term. These people will maintain that the term will never be standardised and their reasoning for this is that the term is not used by the youth to reflect the reality of their involvement in juvenile gangs. Rather it is a term that is relatively meaningless when used by the adult community. Others maintain that everyone already understands the meaning of the term “gang” on an intuitive level and that the term does not need to be abandoned (National Institute for Justice, as cited in Ball and Curry, 1995). Ball and Curry (1995) hold that definitions of gangs, and in particular verbal defintions, are required as a researcher or theorist need to set limits when investigating a specific phenomenon. But even if that were entirely possible, and one was able to point at a specific phenomenon and label or define it a gang, the meaning would have to rest entirely on the characteristics which are visible and even then it might not be clear which of the visible characteristics were considered significant (Harney, as cited in Ball & Curry, 1995). Criminology texts, Ball and Curry (1995) explain, often start their search for a gang definition in a dictionary. Dictionary definitions of the term “gang” normally “designates collectives that are (1) marginal, (2) loosely organised and (3) without a clear, social purpose” (Ball & Curry, 1995, p. 227). And similar to other forms of deviance, gangs are more defined in terms of what they are not as opposed to what they are, indicating that dictionary defintions are expressed in the negative which can in actual fact hinder the process of arriving at a standardised definition intrinsic to the phenomenon of gangs (Ball & Curry, 1995).

Ball and Curry (1995) concluded this issue by saying that one possibility for defining a gang can be to combine the synthetic method of viewing a gang as a social system, with the analytic method, which emphasises the most significant organisational properties of a gang. They say that the rules for determining the most significant properties of a gang may produce something like the following: “The gang is a spontaneous, semisecret, interstitial, integrated but mutable social system whose members share common interests and that functions with relatively little regard for legality but regulates interaction among its members and features a leadership structure with processes of organisational maintenance and membership services and adaptive mechanisms for dealing with other significant social systems in its environment” (Ball & Curry, 1995, p. 240). If, for example, properties and correlatives are emphasised the above definition may be appended with a statement that indicates that a gang is traditionally but not exclusively male, territorial, is mostly found in urban areas and is associated with the lower-class (Ball & Curry, 1995).

Defining a gang is, without a doubt, no small feat. But, as mentioned by Ball and Curry (1995), a definition of a gang is necessary as this will enable a reseacher or theorist to limit the phenomenon they are studying. After all, one cannot study a topic such a adolescents when one is not entirely sure which period in a person's life constitutes as being adolescent. And so too with the phenomenon of gangs and for the purposes of this study, I have conceptualised a number of factors, borrowed from the definitions discussed in this section, which I deem fit for the purposes of this study. A delinquent gang is:

- an identifiable group of three or more people;
- a group that can be highly organised or loosely structured but typically have a leadership structure as well as rules and guidelines that serve as rules of action that specifies appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for the members of the group;
- a group that regulates its members' actions;
- a group that shares common goals, interests, and frustrations;
- a group that frequently engages in law-violation behaviour;
- a group that openly opposes the moral validity of the social order or norms;
- typically found among adolescent males in lower class areas, but is *not* limited to males, adolescents, or lower class areas;
- typically found in either the streets/communities, which is known as a street gang, or in prison, which is known as a prison gang;
- typically territorial;
- typically has some type of history of why they were established;
- typically has traditions which they always adhere to, particularly initiation traditions which they require all new recruits to successfully complete.

It should also be noted that, from here on forward, when I refer to the term "gang", I am referring to gangs that have little regard for the law, i.e., delinquent gangs. If the term "gang" holds a different meaning, it will be specified.

The Nature of Gangs

Group Processes

Goldstein (1991) sought to describe and draw upon the major fields of contemporary psychology in fostering a better understanding of gangs. He examined gangs as part of social psychology's perspective on group dynamics which includes factors such as

formation, conflict, norm development, cohesiveness and leadership. According to Goldstein (1991), these factors are exceedingly relevant to issues of gang formation, gang structure and gang behaviour.

Before exploring the group dynamics of gangs further it is important to consider the term "group" first and investigate its meaning. Levine and Moreland (1995) argued that both positive and negative consequences result from groups, but also that groups more than often facilitate a need satisfaction. They considered a few definitions for the term "group" which they say are sufficient to indicate the gist of what a group is. For example, Cartwright and Zander (as cited in Levine & Moreland, 1995, p. 422) define a group as "a collection of individuals who have relations to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree." Shaw (as cited in Levine & Moreland, 1995, p. 422) defines a group as "two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person." And finally, Turner (as cited in Levine & Moreland, 1995, p. 422) defines a group as "one that is psychologically significant for the members, to which they relate themselves subjectively for social comparison and the acquisition of norms and values, that they privately accept membership in, and which influences their attitudes and behaviour." Levine and Moreland (1995) postulated from these defintions that there is indeed a clear difference between groups and non-groups, but McGrath (as cited in Levine & Moreland, 1995, p. 422) argued that one should rather view groups as "groupness" on a continuum. He suggested that there are different degrees of groupness, which depends on the type of social aggregate, such as a crowd, an organisation, families and gangs. McGrath (as cited in Levine & Moreland, 1995, p. 422) suggested that three criteria can determine the degree to which a social aggregate is a group.

These criteria are size, interdepence and temporal pattern; and using these criteria, he explains that a social aggregate is a group when (a) the number of members is low (size), (b) members may and are allowed to act freely within a wide range of activities (interdependence), and (c) members have a long history together and anticipate a long future. McGrath (as cited in Levine & Moreland, 1995) also mentions dyads, or two person aggregates, and when taking his size criterion into consideration he suggests that dyads are considered to be more of a group than aggregates with three or more members. However, Levine and Moreland (1995) strongly disagree with this statement. They say that dyads should be considered separately and that the term "group" should be earmarked for aggregates containing three or more members only. They justify this by means of the fact that when a dyad loses one member, the dyad is destoyed, whereas when an aggregate

loses one member, it can still function. This idea can also be applied to gangs, for the gang itself survives beyond the lifetime of any given member (Schneider & Tilley, 2004) and losing a gang member, as so often happens in a gang, will not destroy the gang itself.

According to Goldstein (1991), when one uses a framework that organises events and processes it will enhance the understanding of the diverse events and procedures that constitute the birth and development of many types of groups. Tuckman (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) offered such a framework, and Goldstein (1991) explains that Tuckman's stage formation is relevant to all gang types, different stages being of course more significant to different types of gangs, but each gang will pass through the stages of forming, storming, norming, performing and even adjourning sometimes.

Forming

Goldstein (1991, p. 78) introduces the idea of forming by asking, "Why do groups from?" Many have attempted to answer this but the most tenable answer may be one of *need satisfaction.* Schutz's (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) view on interpersonal needs as a major influence on group formation points to the process of group formation as a result of the needs of the members to express or receive inclusion, control and affection. Murray (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) mentions that group formation emphasises the need for affiliation and the social exhange view of group formation. Goldstein (1991) takes the stance that group formation depends on the estimates of the interpersonal value of group participation, with *value* being defined in terms of the potential rewards and costs involved in joining a group.

Cohesiveness in Gangs

A group develops a sense of cohesiveness as it continues throughout its lifespan. Cohesiveness as a central quality of groups has been defined with regards to (a) the attraction that members of the group feel toward one another and toward the group as a whole, (b) the motivation that members feel in terms of participating in group activities and contributing towards the group's goals, and (c) the coordination of group members' efforts (Goldstein, 1991). Cohesiveness is an important characteristic of group development as it has been shown to be a strong determinant of the quality of group interaction as well as the longevity of the group (Goldstein, 1991). Also, as Knox (1991) points out, cohesion in groups is necessary for attaining goals and accomplishing group objectives. When addressing cohesiveness in gangs Goldstein (1991) warns that gangs, as with any other group, differ

significantly from one another in both time and location. He addesses two major concerns with regards to gang cohesiveness: how cohesive gangs are and the relationship between gang cohesiveness and delinquent behaviour. The first issue, namely how cohesive gangs are, was answered by Klein (as cited in Goldstein, 1991). He said that the earlier writers found a sense of esprit-de-corps among gangs, but that gangs nowadays are more loosely structured. This decline in intermember attraction, says Klein (as cited in Goldstein, 1991), may be due to the sheer size of contemporary gangs. It may also be attributed to the fact that the negative push of the members' communities is far greater than the positive pull of the gang (Goldstein, 1991). Quicker (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) addresses the second issue, the relationship between gang cohesiveness and delinquent behaviour, and asserts that gangs do not need to be cohesive to be delinquent. In fact, he says that the more cohesive a gang is, the less conflict in which it is likely to engage.

Even though many researchers concurred with this idea more recent researchers have postulated that gang cohesiveness and gang delinquency are positively related (Lucore, 1975). The direction of this association however is unclear according to Goldstein (1991), or even whether a third variable may be responsible, but there is reason to believe that cohesiveness and delinquency influence one another reciprocally. Lucore (1975, p. 98) suggested three different measures of cohesiveness, each one showing a different relationship with delinquent behaviour. These measures are the amount of time gang members spend together, the group's attractiveness to members and the members' identification with the group.

With regards to time spent together, Lucore (1975) found that the more time a group spends together, the more likely group cohesiveness will contribute to higher rates of delinquency. Similar to this Lucore (1975) reported that delinquent behaviour such as theft or use or sale of narcotics was higher in groups that spent more time together. No significant relationship was found between the attractiveness of the gang and delinquent behaviour of the gang members (Lucore, 1975). That is to say the most delinquent member of a gang may find the gang either more or less attractive than the less delinquent member of the gang. Similar findings were reported by Lucore (1975) with regards to the members' identification with the group and delinquent behaviour. Lucore (1975) found that even though identification with a group relates significantly to cohesion it was not significantly related to delinquent behaviour. Lucore (1975) concluded that each of the three measures, time spent together, attractiveness of the group and identification with the group, are all distinct factors which relates to delinquent behaviour in a different manner. Furthermore, Lucore (1975) says that

some delinquent groups may be more cohesive than some non-delinquent groups while other delinquent groups may be less cohesive than other non-deliqnuent groups.

Storming

Conflict within Gangs

According to Goldstein (1991), groups may experience conflict at any stage during their development. Forsyth (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) suggested that group conflict moves through five phases, namely disagreement, confrontation, escalation, de-escalation and resolution. The first phase, disagreement, involves members discovering that two or more are in conflict with regards to a group-related concern such as a group task or interpersonal matter. The second phase is confrontation, which, according to Forsyth (as cited in Goldstein, 1991), is the most typical phase of group conflict. In this phase, members will openly oppose and debate certain issues and problems. This phase is characterised by heightened tension and the formation of coalitions within the group which results in members of the group often being pressured to elect sides. The third phase, escalation, is normally the result of the heightened tension from the second phase. Forsyth (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) describes this phase as one that is riddled with threats, verbal attacks, sometimes physical violent assaults and coercion instead of persuasion. The group can however hold together and get past the conflict phase and if they do so, they will enter the de-escalation phase (Forsyth, as cited in Goldstein, 1991). This phase is characterised by group members becoming more and more rational as they start to tire from the fighting. They also begin to accept another member's perspective more and decide to rather move towards the group's goals and purposes. When conflict is terminated the group enters the final phase, resolution, which is regarded as the phase where group members (1) compromise until some sort of agreement is reached; (2) where some members withdraw and yield for the sake of peace; (3) where imposition forces some members to give in as they are overpowered either by numbers or by authority; or (4) through conversion, in which persuasion, promises and discussion of one side causes the other side to change its position (Forsyth, as cited in Goldstein, 1991).

Conflict between Gangs

Goldstein (1991, p. 86) introduces the concept of conflict between gangs by referring to the "intergang rumbles of the 1940's and 1950's." He explains that a considerable amount of

research and theorising has been conducted in this area with particular emphasis on conflict related to intergroup competition. Coser (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) reported that cohesiveness is increased with the intergroup competition, with this effect being particularly evident within the group that wins the competition. Intergroup competition also increases the tendency to reject members of the other group and it also serves to establish and maintain boundaries between groups. This tendency stresses intergroup differences and reduces intergroup similarity (Goldstein, 1991). Misperception of other groups' behaviour and intentions is often a result of intergroup competition (Goldstein, 1991). This may lead to the other group being stereotyped and seen as violent and one's own group is often overidealised and seen as the moral, righteous group (Linville & Jones, 1980). Devine (1995) offers an explanation for the perception that group members have of other groups. She says that it is not the competition and conflict *per se* that results in these attitudes but rather the mere categorisation of people into groups which Devine (1995) explains is sufficient to lead to a devaluation of members from another group.

Norming

Group dynamics such as norms, leadership, roles and communication patterns all from part of the norming stage. According to Goldstein (1991), the group begins to establish explicit and implicit norms or guidelines as it learns to deal effectively with potential intermember conflict. The group will also choose leaders and leadership styles with which they are comfortable, create individual roles for all the members and agree on patterns of communication that the group finds comfortable and most effective.

Norms

When taking the level of literacy and education under-attainment into consideration, Knox (1991) was taken by surprise at the written rules and guidelines that some contemporary gangs have. Nevertheless, whether it is written or just verbal, gangs do have guidelines and norms to which they adhere. Norms, according to Goldstein (1991), are either overtly stated or covertly assumed. Norms serve as rules of action that specifies appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for the members of the group. Many group members take the norms of the group for granted or even assume certain norms exist and this may only become evident when the norms have been violated (Goldstein, 1991). Initially, the norms of the group may have been adopted by the members due to positive feelings of group cohesion and because continuation of membership is desired. It can also be due to the members attempting to avoid conflict or rejection but evetually these norms are internalised by the

group members (Goldstein, 1991). Norms can also be seen as the broad guidelines that determine what does and does not occur within a group as well as what the group aspires to achieve and how it will be led (Goldstein, 1991).

Leadership and Role Assignment

Thrasher (1963) notes several types of roles that gang members may assume such as the court jester, the sissy and the show-off. There are also more serious and formal roles such as the president, the vice-president and the war counsellor (Thrasher, 1963). Thrasher (1963) explains that the roles to which members get assigned will depend on the needs of the group, the natural qualities of the member such as emotional thoughness and physical size, and the type of reaction that the new member receives from the rest of the group. Cartwright (1975) says that Thrasher's (1963) examples illustrate the idea that in some gangs the strongest person will become the leader whereas in other gangs the smartest person may become the leader. Cartwright (1975) explains that gangs differ in the manner in which the gang and the members associate physical appearance and personality characteristics with different roles. For example, in some gangs the biggest gang member may be seen as the perfect person to engage in fights while in other gangs he may be seen as the person who will most likely succeed in intimidating members of the community.
According to Goldstein (1991), the "Great Man" theory of leadership prevailed for decades up until the 1940's. Essentially, this theory postulated that effective leaders are people who are born with certain personality traits who are able to lead a group of people in a variety of settings and situations without any difficulty (Goldstein, 1991). The personality traits and characteristics which are referred to include being achievement oriented, adaptable, alert, ascendant, energetic, self-confident and more sociable than some of the other group members (Goldstein, 1991). However, over time it was proven that these personality traits are only modestly related to effective leadership behaviour. Goldstein (1991) says that even though such personality traits do contribute to the success of the group to some extent, the group situation and the specific requirements of the group will dictate more which type of leadership qualities will be most effective.

Knox (1991) is in agreement with Goldstein (1991) with regards to certain personality traits no longer being prerequisites for good leadership in a gang or other group. He says that potential gang leaders need not even be intellectual giants; the only traits that he deems are presumably necessary prerequisites are some levels of charisma and an ability to be cunning.

Communication Patterns

According to Goldstein (1991), feasible communication patterns and networks are the pathways through which the gang will conduct its task- and relationship-oriented business. It is thus important that communication patterns or networks are established early and maintained. The gang's leadership style and the nature of the gang's goals are reflected through the gang's communication network as well (Goldstein, 1991).

Performing

The tasks facing gangs and other groups are numerous and varied, and as these groups develop, deal with conflict and establish roles they seek to perform tasks that motivated the group's formation in the first place (Goldstein, 1991).

Group Tasks

According to Forsyth (as cited in Goldstein, 1991), a group's specific tasks will depend on the group's ultimate goals. Tasks to be performed are also determined by (a) the difficulty of the group's problem, (b) the number of solutions to the problem, (c) the level of interest shown in the tasks, (d) the amount of cooperation required of group members to successfully perform the task, (e) the intellectual demands presented, and (f) the members' familiarity with the task components (Shaw, as cited in Goldstein, 1991, p. 98). Task performance is also significantly affected by the group's relevant communication patterns (Goldstein, 1991). When comparing successful groups with unsuccessful groups the successful groups have a considerably higher rate and accuracy of communication (Goldstein, 1991).

Power

Reber and Reber (2001, p. 553) define power as "the degree of control that a person or a group has over other persons or groups. Power is thus viewed in terms of relationships; maximum power is the ability to exert total control over others while remaining simultaneously immune from attempts by the powerless to do likewise." Task perfromance in group contexts is a function of the relative power bases and tactics which are utilised by leaders and members of the group (Goldstein, 1991). French and Raven (as cited in Goldstein, 1991, p.103) proposed that the power that an individual holds in a gang is derived from one or more of several sources: "reward power" is defined as the control that the powerholder has over the positive and negative reinforcements which are desired by the

target person; “coercive power” is the ability of the powerholder to threaten and punish the target person; “legitimate power” is the belief that the target person holds that the powerholder had a justifiable right to exert influence and power over the target person; “referent power” is derived from the target person’s attraction, identification or respect for the powerholder; and expert power is power that exists when the target person believes the powerholder possessing superior skills and abilities.

Deindividuation and Groupthink

Deindividuation, the process of becoming submerged in a group and losing one’s sense of individuality or seperateness from others, may be explained to be due to a process of contagion (LeBon, as cited in Goldstein, 1991). LeBon (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) observed that riotous behaviour begins in the larger group and will then spread throughout it involuntarily. Another explanation provided by Turner and Killian (as cited in Golstein, 1991) for deindividuation is the emergent-norm theory which says that a variety of group phenomena is combined to foster the emergence of an array of arousal-associated and often anti-social behaviours. Behaviours which characterise deindividuation are behaviours which are high in emotion, which are impulsive, irrational and regressive, all with high intensity (Zimbardo, as cited in Goldstein, 1991).

The term “groupthink” is said to be related to the notion of deindividuation. Forsyth (as cited in Goldstein, 1991, p. 107) defines the influence of groupthink as “a strong concurrence-seeking tendency that interferes with effective decision making” and says that solidarity and cohesiveness is sought by group members to such an extent that they often carefully avoid topics that may lead to disputes. The consequences of such behaviour is that the group’s decisions are impractical and unrealistic. Because groupthink is a phenomenon which usually occurs in groups that are highly cohesive and headed by powerful leaders, groups such as gangs is a tangible example of potential groupthink settings, says Goldstein (1991).

Adjourning

Unlike short-term, task-oriented groups that perform their tasks after they have reached all their goals and adjourn, longer term groups such as gangs follow a parallel but extended sequence (Goldstein, 1991). Some gangs which are more loosely structured will adjourn within days but the multigenerational, vertical gang may not adjourn for decades. A gang may adjourn via a police gangbusting activity, only to reform in prison (Goldstein, 1991), and

some gangs dissolve voluntarily, only to reform in another grouping or merge into a "supergang".

This section on group processes offered a broader picture of the dynamics occurring within gangs. It also portrayed the notion that gangs and other social groups are not that different and that they ultimately follow a similar path with regards to group processes. The most obvious difference would be the fact that gangs frequently engage in law-violation behaviour, but essentially a gang functions as any other other group.

Gangs and Communities

Introduction

According to Curry and Decker (2003), the key to understanding gangs is to place them in the relevant social contexts which help to shape their lives. Curry and Decker (2003) placed gang members in several key institutional contexts that have important implications for what they do and how they do it, as well what their lives are like and how they function outside the context of the gang that to which they belong. They noted that it is only the hard-core gang members that lead a considerable portion of their lives within the confinements of the gang. Other gangs spend the majority of their time in other social contexts such as families, schools and the neighbourhoods in which they reside. If we are able to understand what life is like in the settings which were just mentioned, it would enable us to develop a comprehensive picture of life within the gang (Curry & Decker, 2003).

Families

Appropriately, Curry and Decker (2003) considers the family as the first social institution to discuss as this is the first institution with which an individual interacts. Recent trends in the status of families, with specific focus on poor residents in large cities, is cause to be concerned about the ability of the family to do its job and supervising the youth (Curry & Decker, 2003). The sociologist William Julius Wilson (as cited in Curry & Decker, 2003) has linked the swift decline of the family to the growth of the urban underclass. This group experiences a profound level of concentrated poverty and social insolation, according Curry and Decker (2003), and the growing number of children in these areas who are living in female-headed households are considered to be the poorest households of them all. Wilson (as cited in Curry & Decker, 2003) contributes the decline of marriage and family formation to the increased rates of incarceration of black males together with the decline in long-term

employment prospects. These conditions have reduced the desirability of marriage for many young women, say Curry and Decker (2003), and the consequence of this is lack of supervision for young children who then grow up with little direction and rather find their need for socialisation on the street among other young children growing up in similar conditions.

While Winfree and Mays (1996) found that family problems are no more associated with gang membership than with antisocial behaviour in general, Curry and Decker (2003) hold that this backdrop was the setting for the emergence of gangs in many cities across the world. Similarly, Knox (1991) says that when the family does not provide for all the needs of its children, then what we can look forward to is a greater probablity of gang problems. In many instances, gangs fill the void that families experience when they lack the resources, whether it is financial or emotional, to deal with threats to the welfare of their children (Curry & Decker, 2003). Gangs are also beginning to fulfill many other functions formerly held by the family: Joan and Diego Vigil Moore (as cited in Curry & Decker, 2003) pointed out that children and adolescents have a need for order and regulations in their lives and as they naturally seek these conditions, gangs have come to fulfill these needs for many youths. As the status of families declined, gangs begin to emerge, and in many instances gangs provide some degree of structure and actitivies for the youths (Curry & Decker, 2003). The two most important functions that working families normally provide but dysfunctional ones do not, are social cohesion and status, say Curry and Decker (2003), something which youths are now receiving from a gang.

This prompted Curry and Decker (2003, p. 142) to ask: “Has the gang become a family?” and indeed, they say that many gang members use the term family to describe their gang and also talk about their gang as if it were a family. But despite the increase in family dysfunction, Curry and Decker (2003) say that most gang members will continue to be more committed to their real families than to the gang that they joined. Curry and Decker (2003) also reported on research conducted by Decker and Van Winkle (as cited in Curry & Decker, 2003) which stated that out of a sample 99 active gang members, only one would choose his gang over his real family, if forced to make such a choice. It was also reported that very few gang members actually want their children to grow up and become gang members (Decker, van Winkle & Vigil, as cited in Curry & Decker, 2003).

Schools

According to Curry and Decker (2003), schools are the most powerful socialising agent in the lives of children and adolescents after the family. Children attend school almost everyday and because of this they influence each other in a variety of both positive and negative ways. School also provides the opportunity for nongang members to learn more about gangs and becoming involved in gangs (Curry & Decker, 2003). Strong families have been associated with strong communities and so too have strong communities been associated with strong schools. However, this principle is also thus applied in reverse, where weakened families and weakened communities hold limited capacity to prepare students for participation in mainstream society (Curry & Decker, 2003). Wilson (as cited in Curry & Decker, 2003) calls this a vicious cycle, which is perpetuated through the family, the community and the schools. He goes on to say that this vicious cycle is portrayed by schools failing communities and communities failing schools; schools fail communities by the lack of education provided for the students and the fact that students are not graduating and communities fail schools by not providing a safe environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn.

McConnel (1996) paints a similar picture of schools and its relation to gangs and says that the message the public is now receiving from the press is that schools, once a safe environment were children were able to play and learn, is now a battleground in some communities. Violent crime and gangs are associated with schools, says McConnel (1996), and Moriarty and Fleming (as cited in McConnel, 1996) suggested that street crimes committed in schools are a result of youth gangs.

Ball and Curry (2003) say that the gang offers its own set of values and opportunities for achievement and status, and varying levels of commitment is required from its members which is dependent on the gang's type of organisation and structural location in the network of enemies and alliances. As the complexity of the gang's ideas increase, so does the requirement for full participation and commitment, and the greater the youth's commitment to the gang, according to Ball and Curry (2003), the lower his or her commitment to school participation. Most gang members who are in school are more likely to engage in non-school-oriented behaviour such as skipping classes and violating school rules, and usually these activities are carried out with their gang peers (Curry & Decker, 2003).

Gang involvement stands in stark contrast with the cultural message of schools and is portrayed as a resistance that encourages gang members to openly defy the norms and values of the school (Curry & Decker, 2003).

Neighbourhoods

Franzese *et al.* (2006) proposes that in order for gangs to form the neighbourhood or community in which they form must be socially disorganised. Social disorganisation refers to an underlying condition that is manifested in symptoms such as welfare dependency, marital dissolution and high residential mobility (Franzese *et al.,* 2006).

It should be noted that the terms “neighbourhood” and “community” refer to two separate concepts, according Franzese *et al.* (2006). The neighbourhood, say Franzese *et al.* (2006) is a physical place with identifiable boundaries in which an individual has a place of dwelling and the size of a neighbourhood may be a single block on a single street of even a much larger area in which the individual can move freely. The community is more of a network of interpersonal ties which provides support and sociability to the members who belong to that community (Franzese *et al.,* 2006). Franzese *et al.* (2006) also say that communities are social networks that may be centred at school, the family network or the workplace. Communities thus refer to patterns of interaction.

Franzese *et al.* (2006) further proposes that the probability of gang formation in a particular neighbourhood is directly proportional to the social disorganisation of that neighbourhood. This suggests that there is a direct relationship between social disorganisation and gang formation, however, as Franzese *et al.* (2006) points out, this proposition does not specify whether social disorganisation is a necessary condition for gang formation. In support of their proposition, Franzese *et al.* (2006) do mention that middle class gangs are a scarce phenomenon and that gangs are relatively rare in residential neighbourhoods characterised by low rates of welfare dependency.

Hagedorn (1991) has suggested that in order to curb the increasing gang problem in neighbourhoods, public policies should go beyond the usual “more cops” and “more jobs” solutions. However, researchers have concluded that gangs are part of the urban “underclass”, with poverty, unemployment and high-density neighbourhoods contributing to the increasing gang problem (Hagedorn, 1991). The majority of gangs coming from these types of neighbourhoods have spent time in prison with drug offenses and murders being the main reasons for them being incarcerated.

It is thus the deteriorating neighbourhoods with declining resources and fractured internal cohesion that is fostering the growth of gangs in neighbourhoods (Hagedorn, 1991).

Gangs: a South African Perspective

Historical Overview

The Rise of Street Gangs

The concern for crimininal street gangs in Cape Town dates back to the early decades of the 20th century but generally the problem has only started to be acknowledged when the coloured community had to relocate to the Cape Flats during Apartheid (Standing, 2006). Standing (2006) mentions a superficial survey which was conducted in the 1980's that revealed that approximately 5%, or 80 000 of the city's entire population were gang members. The survey further indicated that 280 groups revealed themselves as gangs.

Social problems which were related to gangs started to appear by the late 1970's and 1980's with alarming frequency in the press, with news and stories of so-called "gang wars" by gangs such as the Fancy Boys, the Scorpions, the Mongrels and the Virgin Breakers (Standing, 2006). These stories terrified white readers. Another gang emerged on the Cape Flats scene and called themselves the Sexy Boys. They were notorious for roaming around the "European" parts of town and their numbers were reported to be more than forty in membership at that stage (Standing, 2006). Following reports of the Sexy Boys was a story that described a clash between the Dagger Kids and the Fluffy Gang. It was reported that the clash became so violent that the gangs resorted to petrol bombs, shootings, murder and rape (Standing, 2006). Citizens started sending letters to the press and urging the police to provide more protection to the suburbs and in reponse the police expressed their distaste in the theft of guns from white areas. This perpetuated gang conflict even more as coloured people were not allowed gun licences at the time but the gang shootings just provided further support for this racial policy (Standing, 2006).

Standing (2006) attempts to explain the explosion of street gangs during the 1970's and 1980's. He referred to Don Pinnock's book, *The Brotherhoods: Street Gangs and State Control in Cape Town.* Pinnock (1984) explains that youth crime was controlled and kept in check by parents, neighbours and extended family during the time prior to apartheid in inner-city areas of Cape Town such as District Six. He referred to this as a strong degree of informal social control. However, the forced removals meant that the residents were dispersed over the Cape Flats and many family networks were broken up (Pinnock, 1984). This gave way to life on the Cape Flats becoming impersonal and distrustful. Families became dysfunctional which left large numbers of youth unsupervised and forming street

gangs as an act of defiance and as a coping mechanism (Pinnock, 1984). The only thing that youths had left, says Pinnock (1984), were each other and forming street gangs was their only defence against the claustrophobic atmosphere in which they had to live. Standing (2006) thus conludes that Pinnock's theory explains that street gangs are a reaction to social disorganisation – the total uprootment of the coloured community.

The Rise of Prison Gangs

The South African prison population started seeing a steady increase from the mid twentieth century with young coloured men being the forerunners of people being sent to prison; and from the 1950's an alarming number of young coloured men were exposed to prison (Standing, 2006). The infamous prison gang, the Number, became an established feature in these cramped institutions (Standing, 2006). The intricate society of the Number has been formed by generations of prison inmates and even though they are particularly noteworthy in the prisons of the Western Cape, they are belived to be present in most prisons in South Africa (Standing, 2006).

The 26's, 27's, and 28's are all said to originate from groups of outlaws that were rampant in Johannesburg in the late 19th and early 20th century (Steinberg, 2004). According to Steinberg (2004), the largest and most notable of these gangs was The Ninevites, which comprised of young black men who refused to be employed by white employers in Johannesburg, a mining town at the time. The Ninevites' leader was a young charismatic Zulu named Mzuzephi Mathebula. He adopted the name "Nongoloza" Mathebula at the height of his reign (Steinberg, 2004, p. 4). Steinberg (2004) reports that Nongoloza moulded his gang of outlaws into a "paramilitary hierarchy" and borrowed its rank structure from the Transvaal Republic's military. Nongoloza instilled his army with a political purpose. He told his white captors in 1912 that "I laid them under what has since become known as the Nineveh Law. I read in the Bible about the great state Nineveh which rebelled against the Government's laws" (Steinberg, 2004, p. 4).

The Ninevites showed little discrimination against races and robbed and plundered white residents as much as they did black labourers, and with a membership of close to one thousand they were at their height in the early 1900's which lasted nearly two decades (Steinberg, 2004).

Interestingly, Nongoloza forsook his gang and abandoned his position as leader of the Ninevites to instead work for the prison authorities (Steinberg, 2004) after the gang was

crushed in the mid-1910's. However, by that time, most of the Ninevites' leaders had already spent some time in prison and had started to recruit from the inside, and by the early 1930's by-products of the Ninevites were present in most prisons throughout the country (Steinberg, 2004) and they have been ever since. The prison inmates that started out as the Ninevites then split into three organisations, namely the 26's, the 27's, and the 28's (Standing, 2006). Each group then created their own history which was loosely based on the history and activities of the Ninevites. Nowadays knowledge of this history largely determines one's status in the Number but because learning the history is so time-consuming, Standing (2006) argues that a high ranking can only be achieved by those prisoners who have been inside for several years. This argument runs parallel with their rituals, for new recruits are required to conduct violent attacks on warders and other inmates which results in members serving longer sentences even if they initially only received a short sentence (Steinberg, 2004). Each derivative of the Ninevites has their own unique key phrases, symbols and images that are used to guide conduct and interactions between each of the Number gangs, between the Number and other prison gangs and between the Number and non-gang menbers (Steinberg, 2004).

Sex, Violence, and Drugs

Gear and Ngubeni (2002) set out to find out more about sex in prisons, a topic that they have found to be an uncomfortable one that rarely receives attention. This may be due to the fact that society does hold a certain attitude towards prisoners: that they deserve harsh treatment and because of this, their welfare is unlikely to be of the public's concern (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002).

Sex among prison gangs is widespread and even though specific sexual activities are organised and supported, not all gang members are supportive of this behaviour (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002). Gear and Ngubeni (2002, p. 33) reported the story of an ex-prisoner who is in the 26's who disapproved of the behaviour he witnessed between a fellow gang member and a "wife": "In the toilet I saw the guy with another guy doing these things. I was mad. 'You said you are a 26 and the 26's don't do these things.' I went to the other guys…'Look at what is happening in the toilet!' They just looked at me…'It's not our problem!' 'But it's our friend and our gang member, and you know we must not do these things!' The 26's are crooks! I am a 26 and I know…but now people like that make others look stupid!"

The topic of sex within gangs can be used as a method of recruiting new members: prospective members are led to believe that in no manner do gang members engage in sex

(Gear & Ngubeni, 2002) and they then persuade people to join their gang with this promise in mind. Airforce 3 members are recruited in this manner; their prime motivation for joining is the promise that they will not have to engage in sex but then ultimately after joining they are made into wives for other gang members (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002).

New recruits are often allocated a masculine or feminine rank according to a classification process which is done by specific gang "officials" (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002, p. 35). In the Airforce 3 gang this position is held by the "Blacksmith" who will literally have sex with new recruits to determine whether they will be allocated a masculine or feminine rank (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002, p. 36). In the Big 5 gang the "official" who determines new recruits' ranks is called the "Medical Doctor" who listens to the pulse fo the recruit which will then determine whether the recruit is assigned to a "wyfie" or a "soldier" status (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002, p. 36). The pulse that the "Medical Doctor" will detect involves holding the new recruit's hand at his pulse and determining whether his blood beats 25 x 4 or 25 x 5, the former meaning the recruit will be a "wyfie" and the latter meaning the recruit will become a "soldier"; but the pulse rate is in actual fact determined by how the new member presented himself and came across to the "doctor" in a previous conversation (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002).

Gang members who occupy masculine roles are not automatically granted access to sex, say Gear and Ngubeni (2002). Rather it is a privilege bestowed upon higher ranking members. The wyfies also have specific rules and regulations which they must adhere to and the punishment is severe if they break their code of conduct: normally they have to have sex with all the soldiers, between fifty and a hundred of them, which is also an honour for the soldiers as they are lowest masculine rank and do not have the honour of having their own wyfies yet (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002). This punishment is called "Funky Mama" (Gear & Ngubeni, 2002, p. 37).

Upon asking their interviewees whether wives ever attempt to penetrate husbands, Gear and Ngubeni (2002, p. 39) found that this is an "inconceivable scenario" and will never happen. However, if a *man* is ever found to have been raped, he will be devalued and demoted to *woman* status.

Violence has become something of a deciding factor within gangs: how violent you are and how dangerous you are determines how much power you will hold within a gang. If a gang member is able to instill fear into his fellow gang members he will be seen as masculine and powerful. How successful a new recruit carries out an initiation task will also determine the type of rank he is allocated. Steinberg (2004) reported on how a longstanding member of the

28's was recruited and what he had to do during his initiation. In order for him to successfully join the 28's he has to stab a white warder. He was told that as soon as the knife arrives, he must do it. The prisoner did not think that they would be able to get him a knife but they did, exactly when they said they would. As soon as he saw the knife he walked past a white warder and stabbed him in the back, just beneath the shoulder. This prisoner was also warned that if he cried out once while the warders beat him for his actions his stabbing would mean nothing and he will never become a 28 (Steinberg, 2004). This story portrays violence as a manner in which one proved oneself worthy of a gang, that one can be as powerful as they want one to be.

Except for the obvious trade in drugs, gang members also often abuse drugs. Leggett (2003) reports on the recent arrival of methamphetamine, or crystal meth, on the Cape Flats scene in areas such as Mannenberg and Elsie's River. Gang members call this drug "tuk-tuk", or tik, because supposedly it makes a clicking sound when smoked, but they also refer to it as "globes" because the drug is smoked in the sphere of a light globe (Leggett, 2003). Another term gang members use for crystal meth is "straws", because they can buy it in straws and the drug looks like small salt crystals. According to Leggett (2003), methamphetamine is seen as the ideal tonic to prepare gangs for a hit as it fuels aggression, sharpens the senses and removes inhibitions.

The Threat of Gangs

According to Standing (2005), gangs pose a grim threat to communities, especially on the Cape Flats. One of the biggest concerns is the high levels of crime with which areas are infested due to gangs. It is estimated that 70% of all crime on the Cape Flats is caused by gangs, which includes high levels of violent crime (Standing, 2005). Gangs are also being held accountable for the drug consumption and prostitution in areas of the Cape Flats (Standing, 2005). Ward (2007, p. 15) provides a chilling account of how gangs target schools to sell drugs or cigarettes, steal possessions from children and rape the girls: "Of as hulle vir jou 'n drink gee dan is daar goeters in daai wyn. Dan rape hulle miskien vir jou. Dan is dit hard om vir jou ma te sê want dit is jou vriend wat jou verkrag het." Young girls are also kidnapped by gangs for use in the sex trade (Standing, 2005).

With regards to the community, Standing (2005) explains that the presence of gangs causes a continuous and relentless level of fear and tension, which has transformed several areas into places where almost no non-gang members would venture into in daylight, let alone at night. What is just as frightening is the fact that gangs intimidate members of the community,

forcing them to stash gang weapons and contraband and if residents attempt to stand up against the gang members by involving the police they place themselves in grave danger (Standing, 2005).

As much as the communities are being intimidated and victimised so too are local businesses being targeted. Gangs victimise them either through theft or by taxing the businesses through false promises of protection and safety (Standing, 2005).

Standing (2005) also confronts the threat that gangs pose on a cultural level. The "world-view" of gangs promotes violence and crime and these two factors are an undermining influence on social norms and values which are promoted by institutions such as the church and the school (Standing, 2005). While the youth may be the easiest and most vulnerable target to influence with this way of life, observers are just as concerned that gang members will manipulate and inlfuence business ethics as well (Standing, 2005).
Due to gangs gaining in brutality, sophistication and ambition, Standing (2005) says that the potential future threats will include the expansion of drug markets, increasing levels of crime and violence, and gangs following trends as observed elsewhere, particularly Russia. The biggest concern however, according to Standing (2005, p. 3), is that gang members will "successfully infiltrate local government and subsequently undermine democracy."

Vigilantism: Guardians or Gangsters?

*"*If you conduct yourself like a leopard, remember the victim can change into a tiger." (von Schnitzler, Ditlhage, Kgalema, Maepa, Mofokeng, & Pigou, 2001, p. 5)

Mapogo a Mathamaga

In their paper entitled "Guardian or Gangster? Mapogo a Mathamaga: A case study", Von Schnitzler *et al.* (2001) provide insight into the anti-crime group Mapogo a Mathamaga, which is now commonly referred to as a vigilante group.

It is said that after the 1994 general elections the nature of violence has changed from political to criminal violence and current vigilantism is now seen as a response to the high rates of crime as well as the weak criminal justice system (Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001). According to Von Schnitzler *et al.* (2001), vigilantism has been part of South Africa's informal policy strategy for decades and the vigilante groups were characterised by their aim to act against progressive youth movements.

Mapogo a Mathamaga was founded in 1996 and initially only operated in the Northern Province (now known as Limpopo) but since then it has spread and now has branches in Mpumalanga, the Free State and Gauteng (Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001). The term "Mapogo" is borrowed from the Sotho proverb which means "If you (the criminal) conduct yourself like a leopard, remember the victim can change into a tiger", and they have become infamous for the brutal manner in which they punish their alleged suspects (Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001, p. 5).

The businessmen who found Mapogo a Mathamaga all came from Sekhukhuneland in Limpopo and felt that they were being targeted by criminals in their area but that the police was not willing to help them or offer them any form of protection (Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001). However, the final straw was when eight businessmen were killed within a two-month period, and so Mapogo a Mathamaga was born.

Initially the members of the group worked within the law as it was indicated in Mapogo's memorandum which they sent to the MEC of Safety and Security but they started to change their tactics after the police released a number of suspects which Mapogo arrested (Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001). It is not uncommon however for vigilante groups to shift from compliance to circumvention (Nina, as cited in Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001).

Mapogo's methods now include presuming suspects are guilty, with no separation between the investigation, the prosecution and the conviction (Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001). Members usually rely on suspicions rather than evidence and the suspects will rarely get the chance to defend themselves against the accusations. Von Schnitzler *et al.* (2001, p. 7) also reported on the type of punishments that Mapogo chooses to use on their suspects: they often refer to "African Medicine", which is corporal punishment in various forms. One of the most commonly used forms of corporal punishment is Sjambokking: beating the suspect with a leather whip that is often soaked in peri-peri sauce. Mapogo members have also been accused of throwing their suspects into crocodile-infested waters or dragging them behind cars. The type and degree of punishment is not dependent on the severeness of the crime but rather on the member: if a member is furious and connot control himself they take it out on the suspect in any manner they see fit (von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001).

The president of Mapogo, John Magolego, admits that even though they use violence to apprehend and punish their suspects, the members of this group are unlikely to face legal consequences. The members of Mapogo, including John Magolego, have all been charged with crimes ranging from murder, attempted murder, abduction and assault but most of them

were released on bail that was paid by the funds collected from the membership fees, and the charges always seem to be thrown out (Von Schnitzler *et al.,* 2001).

People Against Gansterism and Drugs (Pagad)

August of 1996 saw the emergence of a group of predominantly Muslim men who took to the streets under the acronym Pagad, which stands for People Against Gansterism and Drugs (Jensen, 2008). They protested against drugs and gangs in Cape Town. Rashaad Staggie, one of Cape Town's most dangerous and powerful gang members and drug dealers, was Pagad's first victim: he was shot and killed in front of rolling cameras by members of Pagad who were all wearing balaclavas and were heavily armed (Jensen, 2008).

Pagad was established in December of 1995 (Dixon & Johns, 2001), and reports of their controversial actions have been in the media ever since. In May 1996, Pagad marched to parliament and demanded that the relevant government departments address the problems of gangsterism and drugs but was dissatisfied with the government's response. Pagad then decided to start a programme of action which involved them marching to known gang members' and drug dealers' homes and issuing them with ultimatums to stop their behaviours (Dixon & Johns, 2001). In August of that same year, after Rashaad Staggie was murdered, a prominent member of Pagad named Ali 'Phantom' Parker called for a "jihad" (holy war) against gangs and drugs but they insisted that they are neither militant, exclusively Muslim nor a vigilante group (Dixon & Johns, 2001, p. 14). A succession of illegal protests and clashes with the police and gangs, all in 1996, resulted in the police calling Pagad "just another gang" and "part of the crime problem" (Cape Argus, as cited in Dixon and Johns, 2001, p. 15). During September of 1998, the Cape Times (as cited in Dixon & Johns, 2001, p. 16) reported that there is a "continuing war between Pagad and the gangs" after several mosques and well-known Muslim businessmen were attacked and killed. In March 1998, Pagad member Dawood Osman was sentenced to 32 years of imprisonment for his part in the murder of four youths at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront and in that same year Pagad clashed with gangs in Micthell's Plain which resulted in several pipe and petrol bombs exploding (Dixon & Johns, 2001). In May 1999, the US State Department classified Pagad as a terrorist group and the police uncovered that Pagad was planning a pre-election bombing campaign (Dixon & Johns, 2001). The following year saw Bulelani Ncguka, former Director of Public Prosecutions, blaming Pagad for a bomb explosion at the Cape Town International Airport and another bombing in an upmarket Constantia Village shopping complex is also blamed on Pagad (Dixon & Johns, 2001). During September of 2000 two Pagad members were found guilty for the murder of 7-year old Chrystal Abrahams

who was caught in the crossfire between a suspected drug dealer and a group of armed protestors. In that same month former minister Steve Tshwete declares war on Pagad through the new anti-terrorism legislation (Dixon & Johns, 2001).

Anti-crime groups such as Mapogo a Mathamaga and Pagad are often labelled as vigilante groups, terrorists and gangs. In some respects they meet the criteria for all three of these groups and in other respects they meet none. It is dependent on the context in which they find themselves, for some may say they are guardians and others may argue they are just as bad as the gangs and are for all intents and purposes a gang. Both groups started out with good intentions, but along the way frustration with the government and anger at gangs and other suspected criminals overpowered these good intentions. Frustration can lead a rational man to commit irrational acts. This is certainly not the context in which to discuss or argue the government's role in the development, progression and growth of rogue anti-crime groups, but one cannot help but wonder what type of outcome effective control and negotiations could have on groups labelled as gangs, vigilante groups and terrorist organisations. Any group, whether it is a gang or a vigilante group, that share frustrations and a common goal will create a manner in which they attain satisfaction and relief from their frustrations and anger, but the objective for authorities should be to negotiate peaceful resolutions and not to add fuel to an already out-of-control fire by "declaring war" on such groups. Language that encourages violence will most certainly be met with violence, and if this is combined with a dysfunctional context such as the Cape Flats where gangs thrive and vigilante groups see it as the devil's playground, one can understand why these groups have only grown from stength to strength.

Conclusion

Researchers and theorists have been gathering information about gangs for decades. Due to the everchanging political and economic climate across the world, I believe that it will always be a difficult act to define gang as it will always be relative to a specific context. The aim of this chapter was not to limit the reader's idea of a gang to a few short paragraphs but rather to provide the reader with the sense that gangs are what we define them to be. As with the results chapters of this research project this chapter aimed to provide the reader with knowledge and insight about gangs. And whether we define gangs as dangerous, threatening or as a group of people only seeking acceptance and a sense of belonging, gangs are a part of numerous societies across the globe, and it will continue to be this way for many centuries to come.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Introduction

The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework from which I departed and the methodology used for the study. An introduction to post modernism forms the basis for the discussions on social constructionism and a cybernetic epistemology. Following this is a discussion on the qualitative research approach which includes the design of inquiry, sampling, establishing credibility in the study, the role of the researcher and analysis of data.

Post Modernism

Through the eyes of a romanticist, life was characterised by moral values, which was the ulitimate sense of purpose (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). But romanticism was upstaged by modernism towards the end of the nineteenth century and according to Gergen (as cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2006), in comparison to the romanticist, the modern person was far more reliable and trustworthy and his actions were guided by a clear and honest voice. The power of science and objective experts guided the modern person.

Post modernism, the more recent perspective, challenges the modernist belief in absolute truth and states that our reality is subjective, not objective. Becvar and Becvar (2006) also explain that perspectives are replacing facts and that equally valid perspectives are possessed by all, not just some. The goal for the post modernist then is to define and delineate the assumptions, ideologies and values resting upon the shoulders of so-called facts.

The post modernist, as explained by Becvar and Becvar (2006), understands that language is the means by which individuals simultaneously come to know and understand their own world as well as construct it. Reality then can be understood as a construction of our own belief systems and we construct this through the language that we use. The languages that we use are unique to the “culturally created linguistic system” (Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p. 93) into which we are born; our community. The metaphors, conventions and symbols that we use to express ourselves are synonymous with the community in which we are embedded. Similarly, the self and its behaviour can also not be seen as isolated but as a part of the whole, constructed in various relationships (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). From a post modern perspective, and as a researcher, I am thus seen as constructing reality with my research participants through our relationship and through our use of language.

Blaikie (2007, p. 49) has identified a number of themes found in post modernism that represent breaks with the modernist's ideas:

The first theme is the *rejection of grand narratives.* Post modernism denies that grand, overarching social theories can fully explain and describe world systems and regard these theories as stories told from the perspective of the story-teller.

Secondly, the *rejection of absolute truth* as a theme contends that there are and can be many truths and that no scientific or everyday truth can be regarded as the absolute truth (Blaikie, 2007).

Thirdly, the *critique of representation* explains that post modernism rejects the idea that language mirrors or maps reality. Instead, language is viewed as "context-dependent, metaphorical and as constituting reality" (Blaikie, 2007, p. 49).

The fourth theme that Blaikie (2007) identifies is the *centrality of discourse.* The focus has shifted from using emperical evidence in the development of explanations for texts to rather locating the meaning of social texts and close-up interpretive analysis by participants and researchers alike.

Fragmented identities as a theme considers the notion that the post modernist does not view the individual as an autonomous, meaning-given subject but as a collection of separate identities that may change in unpredictable ways. The individual is context-dependent; as the context changes, the individual may change as well.

Finally, the *adoption of cultural relativism* pertains to the post modernist endorsing all forms of relativism. Relativism, according to Blaikie (2007), denies judgements to be made by one culture of another culture. This is based on the grounds that no human being can make objective judgements about the values or practices of another human being as there is no culturally neutral position from which to depart.

Slife and Williams (as cited in Creswell, 2007) explain that post modernism should not be viewed as a theory but rather considered as a family of theories and perspectives that have something in common. Creswell (2007, p. 25) summarises the idea of everything being context-dependent well: "The basic concept is that knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations."

Neuman (2000) holds that post modernists object to presenting research in a detached and neutral manner, but rather find value in telling a story with their research findings that may stimulate experiences within the people who read or encountered it. And so, perhaps the biggest impact that post modernism has had on the social sciences to date is its use of language and discourse to portray analytic methodologies (Sey, 2006).

Social Constructionism

The ground of pursuit of psychological knowledge has long been the positivist-empiricist philosophy of science but the social constructionist metatheory has been able to provide an alternative to this (Hibberd, 2005). As Hibberd (2005) explains, social constructionism is post modernism both in spirit and in method. In spirit, because it is subversive in the sense that it questions the positivist-empiricist philosophy of science, and in method because it travels away from analysis and moves towards synthesis. Social constructionists also tend not to rely on their own assumptions and would insist that their work not be read and judged by its truth or falsity (Hibberd, 2005).

According to Becvar and Becvar (2006), the *constructivist* perspective is based on the assumption that we construct our personal knowledge base about reality as well as our own realities through the process of perceiving and describing an experience, whether to ourselves or to others. This entails that we cannot in any objective manner observe or know the truth about people as everybody's realities and the way they perceive it differ. The way in which we construct and perceive knowledge is expressed through a system of language and this consideration for the context of language and what it creates brings forth *social constructionism.* Becvar and Becvar (2006) say that the social constructionist views language as not only a way in which we report our experiences but also as a representation of our experiences. A change in experience means that there was a change in language and the emphasis thus shifts to "the world of intersubjectively shared meaning making (Gale & Long, as cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p. 91). Greater emphasis should be placed on the creation of narratives, the context within which these narratives are placed, and how individuals socially construct their realities and problems.

Becvar and Becvar (2006) contend that language has moved to the centre stage in the postmodern era and so too do Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006), who say that language and the role that it plays is taken very seriously by social constructionism. It is important to note however that social constructionism is not about language *per se* but about how the social world can be interpreted as a kind of language; Terre Blanche *et al*. (2006b)

explain this by saying that language should be viewed as a system of meanings and practices that construct reality. So, in the world of gangsterism, the everyday talk helps to create and maintain the world in which gangs live and so too do their everyday actions and images. Social constructionists want to highlight the idea then, that representations of reality (e.g., stories about gangs and news about gang murders), practices (e.g., gang recruitment and initiations) and physical arrangements (e.g., gang territory) are structured like a language, or a system of signs. Through these specific behaviours and practices, gangs construct particular versions of the world in which they live by providing the framework, their reality so to speak, through which we can begin to understand their behaviour and how we as outsiders relate to their world and contribute towards it. Burr (as cited in Hibberd, 2005) reasons that social constructionism enables an unlimited outlook, so ultimately social groups or gangs can choose to replace their old or current conventions and ideologies with new or different ones as there is nothing fixed or inevitable about the current events or processes in their system.

The current events and processes in a gang's system are only agreed upon through negotiation and argument (Blaikie, 2007) and how they view themselves at a certain time, in a certain place and under certain conditions creates the reality within which they as a group view themselves as well as the reality each individual within the gang holds.

A Cybernetic Epistemology

According to Heylighen and Joslyn (2001), cybernetics is the science that investigates the intangible principles of organisation in complex systems. It is more concerned with the functioning of systems than of what they consist. By using information, models and control actions cybernetics focus on how systems steer towards maintaining their goals and counteracting various instabilities. Cybernetic reasoning can be applied to understand, model and design systems of any kind: physical, technological, biological, ecological, psychological, social or any combination of those by being inherently transdisciplinary. And in particular, second-order cybernetics is interested in the role of the (human) observer in the construction of models of systems and of other observers (Heylighen & Joslyn, 2001)

As explained in Becvar & Becvar (2006), how reality is seen by simple cybernetics or first-order cybernetics, is that we place ourselves outside the therapeutic system and become observers of what is happening inside the system – that is to say, we are not a part of that system. Becvar & Becvar (2006) also explain that as observers of the system, we focus on explaining what is happening within that system, rather than being

concerned about why the system is doing what it is doing. It is obvious that there is a clear boundary between the observer of the system and the system being observed, and first-order cybernetics "define the degree of openness or closedness of these boundaries" (Becvar & Becvar, 2006, p. 65), by looking at how freely information is moving to and from the system. In terms of the openness and closedness of boundaries, there should be a balance between the way information moves in and out of a system, but one has to take the context of the system into consideration – with certain systems, it might appear that there is not a healthy balance in the way information moves in and out of the system and if the system feels that certain information leading out of it might change the system's identity, the system has to restore its balance by not allowing the information to be let out of the system.

Becvar & Becvar (2006) explain the phenomenon of simple cybernetics as not being interested in cause and not asking the question, Why? Simple cybernetics is consistent with the assumption of recursiveness, or reciprocal causality; to see people interacting with one another, also known as mutual interaction, rather than observing individuals in isolation. By examining mutual interaction rather than individual isolation, we can clearly see the relationship between individuals and how they influence one another.

According to Becvar & Becvar (as cited in van Niekerk, 2005), first-order cybernetics, or first-order observations, are viewed as objective. Van Niekerk (2005, p. 56) states that "an open system would allow more information to enter into it than a closed system, and thereby be more open to change or outside influence." As mentioned before, one has to take into consideration that the system might be seen in a different context. Van Niekerk (2005, p. 57) goes on in explaining that ultimately the observer becomes a participant in that which is being observed and because the observer is now a participant, he or she "can no longer be considered as objective."

Van Niekerk (2005, p. 57) says that because the observer can no longer be seen as objective, "second-order cybernetics was born out of the need to include the observer within the system that is being observed."

Second-order cybernetics, or cybernetics of cybernetics, no longer views the observed systems as only interactional relationships – the observer is now part of what is being observed, according to Von Foerster (as cited in van Niekerk, 2005). The observer is now in all aspects a participant of what is being observed – the boundary referred to in first-order cybernetics does not exist anymore as all the information stays in the

system. It should be noted however that while the system is organisationally closed it is not closed to structural coupling with other systems. Structural coupling is the concept of organisms surviving by fitting in with one another in terms of their context. If the fit is insufficient the system will expire (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 78) also explain that there is now a "mutual connectedness of the observer and the observed" because the observer is now within the system and not outside it anymore. The reality of second-order cybernetics is thus seen as created by the observer because the information circulating the system can be seen by the observer as either closed or open (Maturana, as cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

According to Glanville (1999), second-order cybernetics portrays the observer as being circularly involved and connected to the system being observed. Glanville (1999) also explains that the observer is no longer seen as neutral and detached as in first-order cybernetics: the observer should now explain the experiences with the system in the first person perspective and not the third. In second-order cybernetics, there is no Black Box (Becvar & Becvar, 2006) to be observed as with first-order cybernetics – the observer is now part of the Black Box. In other words, as a researcher, I no longer view gangs from outside the black box, I create a reality about gangs as I conceptualise and talk about it.

Becvar and Becvar (2006) say that to talk about health and dysfunction and family therapy in the same sentence is contradictory – a therapist sees normalcy in any family system, regardless whether that family system might include a member whose behaviour can be seen as different from the rest of the system and thus seen as dysfunctional. All behaviour within a specific family system can be viewed as functional and logical from the therapist's or researcher's perspective and nothing in that system is classified as normal or abnormal (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). This analogy is applicable to the concept of a gang as well. As a researcher, I view a gang system as functional and logical because the gang views itself as functional and logical. How a gang organises itself, what is does to function and how it presents itself are all part of that gang's normal functioning.

Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 211) state that a strategic therapist attempts to see symptoms within a family system as "interpersonal strategies" or efforts to give definition to the nature of the relationships within the family system – thus, maintaining a symptom can be associated with feedback within and between the gang system.

Symptoms serve an important purpose because these symptoms evolve within a gang to serve a necessary and logical role of maintenance within the gang.

From a second-order cybernetics perspective, Keeney and von Foerster (2002, p. 122) explain that we must "always view symptoms within the context of recursive feedback". This means that we must remember that all the systems – individuals, families, and gangs – achieve their stability through the process of change. Keeney and von Foerster (2005) justify this by saying that there are indeed several ways in which an individual's emotions and behaviours can change and that these patterns can begin to suggest how the pathology or symptomology contribute to the process of change through the achievement of stability. Symptoms, say Keeney and von Foerster (2005, p. 122), are what they would call a sort of "escalating sameness" – they explain this by saying that the change is the intensity of an emotion or a behaviour. In other words, the symptoms displayed by a system indicate that specific system's efforts to maximise or minimise a specific behaviour or emotion.

Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 72) say that "communication and information processing are at the heart of the matter when we think systemically", and no matter what one refers to in a family therapy setting, it will always be related back to communication and information processing. Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 72) talk about three basic principles which forms the foundation of communication and information processing, namely (1) "one cannot not behave", (2) "one cannot not communicate" and (3) "the meaning of a given behaviour is not the true meaning of the behaviour; it is, however, the personal truth for the person who has given it a particular meaning." According to principle one, one can never not do anything and even deciding that one is not going to do anything, is doing something. Principle two rises out of principle one because one can never not convey a message – even sitting still and doing nothing sends a message to the other person in the room or within the system. Principle three says that what one person might interpret in a certain manner is not how another person might interpret it. Reality, according to Becvar and Becvar (2006), is not objective but rather subjective. There are three ways of communicating, namely verbal communication, non-verbal communication and the context – the verbal mode of communication refers to words being actually spoken, whereas the non-verbal mode and the context of communication is called the analogue.

However Becvar and Becvar (2006) say that the spoken word is the least powerful and only one part of how a message is received or transmitted. Becvar and Becvar (2006,

p. 73) explain this statement by saying that “the non-verbal mode is the command aspect of the message. It involves voice tone, inflection, gestures, facial expression, and so forth, and tells how a message is to be received. It is therefore the relationship-defining mode of communication, in that it defines the intent of the sender of the message.” In other words, it is much easier to understand what an individual is trying to say when words are coupled with a specific behaviour and it is easier to tell how an individual is feeling by examining that individual’s behaviours and expressions. Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 73) mention that the context of how a message is portrayed “further modifies the meaning of the message” – where we are when transmitting or receiving a message and who we are with also contributes to how the message should be interpreted.

The therapeutic process thus tries to draw a distinction between congruent and incongruent communication patterns. When verbal communication, non-verbal communication and context are matched (the analogue), the members of a system will have a very good idea about where they stand with one another (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). However, by failing to include all levels of communication the members of the system might find themselves not understanding each other, which results in a breakdown in communication.

It would appear that change, but not any specific change, plays a big role in a system from a second-order cybernetic approach. According to Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 294) “second-order change involves a change in the rules of the system and thus in the system itself”, whereas a change in a first-order approach would occur within the system, hence the changing and altering of communication and information patterns within the system. Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 297) say that a change in perception is called a “reframe”, and a “reframe takes a situation and lifts it out of its old context and places it in a new context that defines it equally well.” Change occurs in response to a change in the context and meaning of a situation which was created by the system itself.

Regarding the role and function as a researcher from a second-order cybernetic approach, I should now see myself as part of an autopoietic whole which includes myself and the system (Becvar, 1999). This means that the researcher is now included in what is known as the observed system – the observer is part of what is being observed. Moreover, every narrative that an individual has to tell about gangs means that the system’s reality grows and becomes bigger with every word spoken.

Inquiry

Overview of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007), focuses on research problems inquiring into a social or human problem and how individuals or groups ascribe meanings to these. Thus the collection of data takes place in a natural setting so as to better understand and learn about lived experiences. Golafshani (2003) mentions that the incorporation of context, complexity and diversity are essential to capture the essence of what is being researched. Creswell (2007) places great emphasis on the *process* of qualitative research as a flow from philosophical assumptions, to worldviews and through a theoretical lens and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems. Following this is a framework for these procedures such as grounded theory or case study research.

Qualitative research is also sometimes referred to as an interpretive paradigm, which involves the understanding of people's subjective experiences and what is real for them, and interacting and listening to people in order to make sense of their experiences (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006b). Thus instead of focusing on isolating and controlling variables, the power of language is harnessed to help all of us understand the social world in which we live (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006b). Neuman (2000) adds to this by saying that when we remove the importance that language plays and the significance of social behaviours, the social meaning in a message is distorted.

Creswell (2007, p. 37) has identified several common characteristics of qualitative research:

- As mentioned previously, qualitative research takes place in a *natural setting.* A major feature of qualitative research is talking directly and seeing people behave within their unique context;
- *The researcher as a key instrument.* Qualitative researchers tend not to rely on questionnaires or other instruments designed by other researchers. They prefer to collect the data themselves through interviewing, observing and examining;
- *Multiple sources of data.* Rather than relying on a single data source, qualitative researchers normally gather data from multiple sources and forms;
- *Inductive data analysis.* Qualitative researchers usually work from a "bottom-up" approach. This inductive process involves building their patterns and themes and working back and forth between these themes until they are satisfied that they have established a comprehensive set of themes;

- Instead of focusing on the meaning that researchers bring to a study, the qualitative approach focuses more on the meaning the participants can bring to the study.

It is my hope that by making use of a qualitative research approach as well as a social constructionist paradigm and cybernetic epistemology, that I will be able to add value to the narratives and give meaning to the phenomenon of gangs.

Design of Inquiry

The aim of the study is to provide "an in-depth description of a small number of cases" (Mouton, 2001, p. 149), thus a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive approach has been chosen. Qualitative research, according to Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2010), collects evidence and can produce findings that were not necessarily determined in advance. The appropriateness of a qualitative approach is justified due to the nature of my study where I am more interested in what the research participants have to say than the questions I ask. The strength of a qualitative approach, say Mack *et al.* (2010), lies in its ability to provide information on the beliefs, opinions and emotions of the research participants which in turn can elicit an understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon.

The application I have chosen for the qualitative method is a case study approach. Case studies, according to Neuman (2000), do not test a hypothesis, its focus is more on experiences and meanings. Both the qualitative- and case study approach ties in with Mouton's (2001, p. 150) notion of an inductive, a-theoretical approach where no "hypothesis is formulated" and the research will be predominantly guided by the research objectives as well as the questions raised during interviews. A "case", as Babbie (2004) points out, is a term that is often used very broadly in the sense that it can mean a particular group of people, a certain period of time or even just one person. This approach is particularly appropriate in the sense that I am not looking for answers but for meaning. The case I have chosen, namely sources who are deemed knowledgeable about gangs, will add insight and meaning to a phenomenon otherwise studied in a fairly positivistic manner.

Sampling Technique

As I was primarily interested in talking to individuals with extensive knowledge about gangs I deemed purposive sampling the most appropriate. Purposive sampling, according to Strydom and Delport (2002, p. 335), "will provide rich detail to maximise the range of specific

information that can be obtained from and about [the] context." In purposive sampling a particular case is chosen because of what that case can provide for the study. I also had to employ snowball sampling as I did not know any gang members or in this case, ex-prisoners, who would be willing to talk to me about this phenomenon. One of my research participants, who has kept close contact with the ex-prisoner I interviewed, introduced me to him.

In this study, a criminologist specialising in gangs or an ex-prisoner who was exposed to gangs on a daily basis will be able to provide me with detail and information that I may not be able to gain from someone who has not researched, studied or even lived with gangs.

Open-ended In-depth Interview

Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people and gives us the opportunity to get to know people quite intimately. This, says Kelly (2006), enables us to understand how the interviewees are thinking and feeling. It is also important to note that interviewing is one of the most commonly used sources of data collection for social constructionist research as the social constructionist sees the interview as the basis for linguistic patterns to come forth (Kelly, 2006). Social constructionist researchers are also very sceptical of the idea that an interviewer can play a purely facilitative role when conducting an interview, therefore whatever meanings are created during the interview are rather seen as being co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kelly, 2006). These meanings are in turn then viewed as meanings and products of a much larger social system as everything that is co-constructed is context-dependent.

The interview with each participant was a semi-structured one-to-one interview, also sometimes referred to as an in-depth interview (Greeff, 2002). The purpose of this type of interview is not to get answers to questions or to test a hypothesis but to understand the experience of other people and explore certain issues (Greeff, 2002). In turn this will elicit attitudes and opinions crucial for the research objectives. Greeff (2002) also places great emphasis on the importance of the researcher being engaged in the interview as opposed to being objective and detached. Engagement on the researcher's part suggests that the researcher is eager and willing to understand the participant's response to a question (Greeff, 2002) and that this will contribute towards a fluid and rich conversation.

The interview consisted of a series of open-ended questions. The advantages of open-ended questions are that it allows for self-expression and rich detail, that it can permit

adequate answers for complex issues and that it allows for an unlimited number of possible answers (Neuman, 2000). Questions such as what the participants understood when confronted with the phenomenon of delinquent gangs, how they would define delinquent gangs and in what type of environment gangs normally thrive, were prepared for the interviews. All other questions were derived from the answers the participants elicited. Where appropriate, participants were prompted to elaborate or explain why they felt a certain way or viewed something in a specific manner. The majority of the interviewees' responses were recorded via a dictaphone and then transcribed. Two of the participants were not comfortable with being recorded. In both these cases, extensive field notes were taken. Following this, and while the interviews were still fresh in my mind, I made recordings of my notes, taking into consideration and mentioning the participants' body language and tone of voice. Each interview lasted between forty minutes and one hour. Interviews with the criminologists were conducted first, each in their offices at their respective universities. The ex-prisoner, now a successful human rights lawyer, was interviewed last at the magistrate's court in Pretoria. All six interviews are available on record.

The disadvantages of open-ended questions were taken into consideration, such as the fact that answers cannot always be compared and that the conversations may lose direction if the questions are too general (Neuman, 2000). With all of this in mind it was still my hope that open-ended questions would yield more depth and allow me insight into the participants' attitudes and perceptions about this topic.

Establishing Credibility in the Study

A question raised by many researchers is: how does one go about designing, conducting, and reporting high quality qualitative research, and what procedures can we make use of to evaluate linguistic and contextual research (Stiles, 1993)? In essence, the need is to understand what reliability and validity look like in reports of qualitative research.

Reliability and validity in qualitative research is ensured via measures of trustworthiness. Stiles (1993, p. 9) notes that "reliability refers to the trustworthiness of observations or data, [and] validity refers to the trustworthiness of interpretations or conclusions." Golafshani (2003) provides an explanation to understand the meaning of reliability and validity in the context of qualitative research. Firstly, Patton (as cited in Golafshani, 2003) states that even though reliability and validity are two factors which a qualitative researcher should be concerned about when designing a study, Healy and Perry (as cited in Golafshani, 2003) hold that the quality of a qualitative study should rather be judged by its own paradigm's

terms. Golafshani (2003) explains this when he says that the terms credibility, neutrality, dependability and applicability are essential criteria for a qualitative study, whereas the terms reliability and validity are more applicable for quality in a quantitative study.
Guba (as cited in Krefting, 1990, p. 216) also mentions four aspects that are applicable to qualitative *and quantitative* studies to ensure trustworthiness and increase rigour. These aspects are truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

Truth value refers to the confidence the researcher has established that the findings of the study are truthful, based on the research design, informants and context (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Krefting, 1990). Sandelowski (as cited in Krefting, 1990) explains that truth value is subject-oriented and it is obtained from the lived and perceived experiences of humans.

Even though applicability refers to the ability to generalise the findings to other contexts, Krefting (1990) says that to generalise the findings of a study is not always relevant to qualitative research. Due to the fact that the setting is naturalistic and the experiences unique in qualitative research, applicability is more unique to quantitative research.

Consistency considers whether the findings of the study can be replicated when using the same subject in the same context (Krefting, 1990). However, as Duffy (as cited in Krefting, 1990) explains, unexpected variables can have an effect on the research (such as fatigue) but because qualitative research seeks to investigate the uniqueness of each experience, variation rather than repetition is sought.

Neutrality refers to the issue of bias in the research procedures and results (Sandelowski, as cited in Krefting, 1990) and whether the findings or the informants were influenced in any way by the researcher. In order to decrease any possible influence from the qualitative researcher, Krefting (1990) suggests that prolonged contact be kept to a minimum with the research participants. Thus, from a practical perspective, I kept my interviews to a maximum of one hour and if I had to meet with any of the participants for a second interview, I scheduled it at least 3 weeks after the first interview.

Stiles (1993, pp. 602 – 607), focusing specifically on how dependability can be attained, provides the following outline:

- “Disclosure of orientation.” Disclosure of orientation refers to the researcher’s expectations for the study which includes any preconceptions, values, orientations and theoretical commitments. As these disclosures help the readers’ put my

interpretations into perspective it would be important to mention that in this study I departed from a social constructionist, cybernetic framework;

- “Explication of social and cultural context.” Stiles (1993) emphasises that it is good practice to make implicit cultural assumptions explicit. This is done by “stating shared viewpoints” as well as providing information on the circumstances under which data was gathered;

- “Description of internal processes of investigation.” My internal processes while conducting this research all form part of the investigation’s context. The context is influenced by factors such as how the investigation influenced me, whether the data made me change my mind and whether I was surprised by the results of the study. How I respond to these questions sheds light on the context and may enrich the information in their own right. The biggest personal change that I have undergone through this journey has been gaining a greater understanding of different group processes and how everything is inevitably context-dependent;

- “Engagement with the material.” Qualitative research advocates that the researcher be immersed in the material which is in stark contrast to the often detached manner in which research, especially quantitative, is normally conducted. I found this to be particularly useful, especially when interviewing my research participants. The literature about gangs in which I immersed myself formed the basis for all interviews I conducted. It broadened my knowledge and provided me with a heightened sense of engagement when analysing transcripts;

- “Iteration: Cycling between interpretation and observation.” According to Henning (2005), cycling between interpretation and observation means that there is a continual process of interpretation. Stiles (1993) refers to this as recycling, repeated encounters with theories, with interpretations, with the participants and with the text. By large, this was achieved by “checking in” with the participants and providing them with the opportunity to add and correct the interpretations I conduced from the interviews;

- “Grounding of interpretations.” Abstract interpretations require linking with more concrete observations, and the manner in which this was achieved was by including excerpts from the interview transcripts, which justified specific interpretations that were made;

- “Ask ‘what’, not ‘why’”. As I was ultimately more interested in *what* my participants knew about gangs it was appropriate to approach the interviews in exactly such a manner. I was not as interested in theories as I was in stories and that is exactly what I achieved in my interviews.

Credibility in my study was mostly achieved via triangulation. Erlandson *et al.* (as cited in de Vos, 2002) write that triangulation is a method where the researcher will seek out multiple types of sources that can provide insights about the same events or relationships. There are numerous types of triangulation but the most common type, which is also applicable to this study, is *triangulation of measures* (Neuman, 2000). This method entails researchers taking multiple measures of the same phenomena (De Vos, 2002). In my study I have decided to interview six criminologists specialising in gangs, interview an ex-prison member who was exposed to gangs and gang life while in prison and view audio-visual material of gangs around the globe. It was the expectancy that the criminologists would be able to share the knowledge they have accumulated through their own research with me, that the ex-prisoner would share his reality of gang life and insights that are rare to find and that the audio-visual material would be able to better conceptualise and illustrate the context in which gangs are situated. Thus, my confidence in getting a concise picture of gangs from three different angles is greater. It is my opinion that criminologists would have insights that the ex-prisoner would not have, that the ex-prisoner would share stories that the criminologists would not know of and that the audio-visual material would better portray the context of gangs via images and use of language.

Ethical Considerations

Mouton (2001, pp. 239-245) highlights the following aspects, which were adhered to at all times:

- “Relationship to the practice of science”

  With regards to objectivity and integrity, researchers should always adhere to indicating any limitations that will affect the validity of their findings. Degrees of expertise must be stated accurately and results interpreted in such a manner so as not to compromise the study.
  Data or observations must not, under any circumstances, be falsified or changed.

Any source that is referred to or consulted must be appropriately acknowledged. Plagiarism is considered as one of the most serious matters in terms of ethical principles, hence the importance of addressing this early in the research process.

- "Relationship to society"

  While very specific fields of research do not always reveal their findings, the results from this study will be committed to "public accountability" (Mouton, 2001, p. 242). The findings of this study will also be made public so as to allow for evaluation and assessment.

- "Relationship to the subjects of science"

  Research participants have the right to privacy as well as the right to refuse to participate in the study.
  Research participants' anonymity was respected at all times. This condition applies to all aspects of the research process, even where it is not explicitly stated. Participants also were granted the right to confidentiality where any information gathered from the participants should be treated as such. Participants must not be able to be identified by means of the information they have given.

Research participants were given the right to informed consent and each participant provided written consent before the interview was conducted. In order for the participants to understand the purposes of the study and why they are being interviewed the aims and objectives of the study were communicated to the participants in a clear and coherent manner.

Research participants have the right not to be harmed by the study. Where potential risks were anticipated, informed consent was obtained before proceeding.

The Role of the Researcher and the Participants

It is often thought that qualitative research is an easier route to follow. Interacting with people in a naturalistic setting is, after all, merely an extension of what we do every day (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006b). What is regularly forgotten though is that in quantitative research one can rely on tried and tested instruments to collect data. In qualitative research however the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analysing data. Terre Blanche *et al.,*

(2006b) state that in order to conduct better qualitative research, one has to undergo some personal changes; one has to immerse oneself in the process and truly become an interpretive researcher.

A qualitative researcher requires skills that are often more difficult to describe than the skills required for a quantitative approach. These skills, such as listening and interpreting, are also more difficult to develop (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006b). I believe that this takes effort and practice and I also believe that one improves with time. My very first interview was much more challenging than the final interview and throughout the period of data collection I learned to listen and engage more. The ultimate success of my interviews also rested on my personal views and feelings about the subject of gangs which I conveyed to my participants. I have always been fascinated with delinquency, and to an extent, evil. Even though I have no personal narrative of delinquency in my past or in my family's past, I believe that my intense investigation and interest in this phenomenon convinced the research participants that I am truly interested in their stories, opinions, beliefs, emotions and attitudes. Similarly, Neuman (2000) encourages researchers to display a genuine interest in the topic being investigated when interviewing participants.

Accorrding to Breakwell, Hammond, & Fife-Shaw (1997), the research respondents' willingness to participate in this process is influenced by characteristics of the researcher such as age, gender and profession. This was most definitely a blessing. My eagerness to learn and to some extent my naivety as a young researcher propelled all my participants to freely impart as much knowledge and experience gained upon me.
The quality of the data was enhanced by maintaining good relationships with the participants. Relationships such as these should be built on mutual trust and cooperation (Strydom, 2002), and only if this is established will the participants feel that I am not an intruder. Each participant was provided with a letter of information explaining the nature of my study.

Analysis

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is defined as "interpretative procedures, or the science of such. Originally the term was used to refer to interpretation of scripture but it is used today rather more broadly to encompass any interpretive operations." (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 320)

Hermeneutics, according to Blaikie (2007), emerged in the seventeenth century in Germany as a dominant movement in European Protestant theology (Palmer, 1969). Initially it referred to the principles of biblical interpretation but with time the use of the word came to refer to non-biblical interpretation of texts that appear obscure and symbolic (Blaikie, 2007). An old hermeneutic principle that originated from the practice of interpreting ancient and biblical texts states, “The whole should be understood from the part, and the part should be understood from the whole” (Dobrosavljev, 2002, p. 607). What this entails is that it was noticed long ago that texts cannot be analysed or examined apart form the whole text as the meaning changes if viewed independently. Thus, dependence is mutual: individual texts can change whole meaning as whole meaning can change individual texts. I would like to think that in the case of hermeneutics, the whole truly is *not* the sum of its parts.

Schleiermacher provided the foundation for modern hermeneutics (Blaikie, 2007). He viewed hermeneutics as a science for understanding language and moved more towards the concern for how one member of a culture can understand the experiences of a member from another culture. I view myself as part of this concern for how am I, a member of one culture, to understand the experiences of the culture of gangsterism? It is a completely different culture from my own and it is therefore here that the issue lies which Schleiermacher provided an explanation for and conceptualised the idea of a hermeneutic circle. Understanding consists of two meanings, namely grammatical interpretation and psychological interpretation (Blaikie, 2007).

Grammatical interpretation relates to the linguistic aspect of understanding and sets the boundaries within which our thoughts operate and psychological interpretation encompasses the attempt to recreate the act that produced the text or social activity (Blaikie, 2007). For the readers, psychological interpretation will involve them trying to place themselves within my mind as the author in order to understand what I wrote and how I engaged myself with the text. Blaikie (2007, p. 118) calls this the “art of re-experiencing mental processes of the author of a text or the speech of a social actor.” The hermeneutic circle, says Blaikie (2007) assumes a community of shared meaning by the author and the reader, and where the meanings may consist of incomprehensible elements the goal is to reconstruct these shared meanings in a comprehensible manner.

Whereas the grammatical approach, which focuses on linguistic patterns proceeds from general patterns to more particular and specific texts, the psychological approach is viewed as more intuitive and allows the reader to transform into the author so as to better understand the author’s process (Blaikie, 2007). Kelly (2006) says that a text can mean

more than what the author may have intended it to mean and through the hermeneutic circle the reader is allowed to read meaning into my words in novel ways.

Dilthy argued that there were two fundementally different types of science, *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft* (Neuman, 2000, p. 70). The latter is rooted in *Verstehen*, or empathic understanding for the everyday lived experiences of humans in specific contexts and historial social settings (Neuman, 2000, p. 70). The idea of *Verstehen* was embraced because of the notion that people must learn and understand other people's motives or personal reasons that shape and guide their decisions. Hermeneutics and social constructionism is thus closely related due to the importance of understanding written and social texts. Each reader abosrbs the text and brings to it his or her unique subjective interpretation (Neuman, 2000). The true meaning of a text will rarely be plain on the surface, so it is the readers' responsibility to engage in the material, contemplate the many messages, and seek connections among the parts (Neuman, 2000).

Even though Husserl held a deep appreciation for mathematics and natural science he had an objection to the "Galilean" assumption that mathematics alone could provide the ontology nature, which ultimately meant bypassing lived experiences (Crease, 1997, p. 259). It was thus through this reasoning that Heidegger insisted on access to the *real* itself by calling on a mode of "Being-in-the-world" (Crease, 1997, p. 259). Both Husserl and Heidegger called the Galilean development a historical crisis as it was used to provide characteristics of human inquiry. Crease (1997, pp. 262-263) provides a constellation of ideas and characteristics unique to hermeneutics:

- The first idea is called "the priority of meaning over technique." Science has for long been characterised by the application of techniques or calculated methods, the positivist approach backed by the mainstream philosophy of science. The hermeneutical insight provides a different perspective by claiming that human activities and meaning does not simply move from part to whole. Rather, it is characterised by which phenomena is brought into question and is further reviewed and refined through the ongoing process of interpreting text and social behaviours;

- Crease (1997) called the second idea the "primacy of the practical over the theoretical." This pertains to the fact that the way in which phenomena is interpreted cannot be done by merely making use of tools, texts and ideas. It should comprise of cultural and historical engagement with the text and with the world and is an understanding that comes from lived subjective expriences;

- The third idea that Crease (1997) points out is the “priority of situation over abstract formalisation.” Once again the concept that everything is context-dependent is emphasised. The truth about something will always involve a particular cultural and historial context, without which it cannot be viewed as a truth. The idea that the positivistic approach can provide some truth of different cultural and historical concepts given that the scientific (laboratory) environment is right, stands in stark contradiction with the hermeneutical contradiction that generality can *not* give the illusion of disembodied knowledge.

Just as Schleiermacher (as cited in Blaikie, 2007) divided hermeneutics into grammatical and psychological interpretation, so did Dobrosavljev (2002) divide the hermeneutical problem into three elements: understanding, interpretation and application. Dobrosavljev (2002) explains that these three elements are always in an unbreakable unity. Understanding is always seen as interpretation, for the only way in which we can truly interpret something is by understanding the core of the subject. Application, says Dobrosavljev (2002), is an integral part of understanding. A situation is always seen as open, and for this reason we can never have an “objective” knowledge of a sitiuation. Dobrosavljev (2002) says that historical events are transformed into understanding by means of application. For me to truly be able to interpret my findings, I required a thorough understanding of the phenomena of gangs. By applying the knowledge I gained and relating my findings to a cultural and historical context, I have fulfilled the three elements of hermeneutics which Dobrosavljev (2002) describes.

With regards to the application of hermeneutics, it was necessary for me to examine both manifest and latent content. Neuman (2000) explains that the examination of manifest content will take place according to specific guidelines such as thematic content analysis, whereas examining latent content will be guided by my own insight and intuition as a qualitative researcher.

Steps towards Gathering Data

In order to obtain the necessary data to be analysed, the following steps were adhered to as outlined by Rapmund (2005):

- A letter of information was sent out to all research participants. This letter informed the participants of the purposes and nature of the study. After permission was obtained from participants to participate in the study and be audiotaped (in two

cases, permission to be audiotaped was not obtained), the interviews were scheduled. Appendix A includes a copy of the letter of information, consent forms of participation and consent to be audiotaped;

- Interviews were transcribed with the help of a transcriber. The transcriber signed a non-disclosure agreement to ensure the confidentiality of the material. Excerpts of the transcribed interviews have been included in Appendix B;
- A process of familiarisation and immersion of the texts followed;
- Based on what stood out the most, I then followed a procedure of thematising each interview transcript into basic, organising and global themes, as explained by Attride-Striling (2001);
- Thereafter, I combined similar themes from each text and related it back to the reviewed literature.

Principles Guiding the Categorisation of Data

Even though the principles of hermeneutics include certain elements to which one adheres, Dobrosavljev (2002) mentions that there is not a prescribed method that one follows. Instead, the following techniques as outlined by Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly (2006) were adhered to, which include the principles of hermeneutics:

Step One: Familiarisation and Immersion

It is anticipated that data analysis is well under way during the process of data collection. Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006) explain that data analysis in qualitative research is not just a mindless technical exercise but that it involves the development of ideas and themes about the phenomenon being studied. So, during and after the process of data collection, one should already have a fairly good understanding of the meaning and ideas of one's data. Following the initial interviews, I immersed myself within the material again, this time working with field notes and interview transcripts as opposed to the lived reality of the interviews.

Step Two: Inducing Themes

Inducing themes means looking at one's material and working out which principles naturally underline the material (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006a). This is also known as the bottom-up approach. This process is assissted via thematic content analysis and thematic network analysis. Thematic content analysis portrays common themes that arise out of the qualitative

text (Anderson, 2007), and thematic network analysis “aims to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes” (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic networks, according to Attride-Stirling (2001) enable the extraction of (1) basic themes in the text; (2) organising themes, which are the basic themes grouped together accordingly; and (3) super-ordinate themes and global themes, which captures the main principles of the text. “Web-like maps” are then created from these themes which will illustrate the relationships and interconnectedness between the themes and principles. The audio-visual material was analysed in a similar manner to the interviews and themes from the literature will be summarised and grouped together with related and parallel themes.

Step Three: Coding

Following the process of thematising, the data was coded accordingly. This involves marking sections of the data as either being relevant or irrelevant to the themes developed in step two (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006a).

Step Four: Elaboration

Inducing themes and coding them allows one to break away from viewing the material in a linear fashion (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006a). Remarks that were previously viewed as detached are now brought closer together to give one a fresher perspective on the data. At this stage, the researcher is likely to find that there are numerous different ways in which the data can be grouped together and separated. Different issues can arise that were perhaps not noticed before and the way in which the themes are structured may change significantly. Exploring the themes in this manner is called elaboration (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006a). The objective is to unearth the finer, more abstract meanings and possibly to revise one’s coding system.

Step Five: Interpretation and Checking

This stage of data categorisation entails putting together the interpretation in written form (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006a). Themes that arose from the text were justified by means of excerpts from the interview transcripts. Even though it was not expected for me to be perfectly objective, I gave some indication of how my personal involvement in the phenomenon of gangs influenced the way in which I collected and analysed the data (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006a).

Conclusion

Post modernism challenged the modernist belief in absolute truth. Its goal is to delineate the assumptions resting upon so-called facts. It is with this in mind that a gang's reality can only be viewed within context. What we as outsiders know and understand about gangs is our own reality and is constructed within the specific cultural and historical context we find ourselves in at that moment.

It is not my objective to conceptualise the reality of gangs and gang life better than what gangs can do themselves because there is no manner in which my understanding can substitute what they live and experience everyday. My objective is rather to enlighten and create a reality that explains how gangs are perceived.

Through the use of a qualitative approach and social constructionist cybernetic epistemology I hope to create some form of reality for all my readers. How the readers interpret my findings is in their hands as we all construct a different perspective from what we read.

In the following chapter, the results will be outlined from which an ecological model of gangs will be constructed. Themes that arose out of the transcribed texts will be discussed and a picture of how we views gangs and what we know about gangs will be painted.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

The themes portrayed here arose out of three different sources: interviews conducted with five criminologists, an interview conducted with one ex-prisoner and audio-visual material. The criminologists, who had extensive knowledge within the field of gangs, came from either the University of South Africa or the University of Pretoria. Except for the fact that I required these individuals to have a particular interest and knowledge about gangs, there were no other inclusion or exclusion criteria. One criminologist had, for example, a special interest in female gangs, whereas others may have known more about either prison gangs or street gangs. Each criminologist was able to provide me with exceptionally rich data that contributed to this study.

The ex-prisoner, who was exposed to gangs and gang life for nearly twelve years in Pollsmoor Prison in the Western Cape, also had extensive knowledge within the field of gangs. He was able to provide me with a particularly valuable and different view of gangs and assisted tremendously in the collation of a picture of gangs and gang life portrayed in this research project.

The audio-visual material assisted in conceptualising the context within which gangs are situated via images and hearing and seeing how gangs portray themselves through their use of language and their reasoning behind their behaviours. The stories and conversations from the criminologists and ex-prisoner came to life when I viewed the audio-visual material and a better understanding was achieved of gangs and gang life through this method. The material which I decided to use was from a journalist named Ross Kemp, who travelled to more than ten countries in search for the world's toughest and most dangerous gangs. The documentaries are named *Ross Kemp on Gangs*. Thereafter three videos were chosen to analyse, namely Ross Kemp's journeys to Belize (Thomson, 2008b), East Timor (Govender, 2007), and Kenya (Govender, 2007).

The Researcher's Experience during the Data Collection Process

Criminologists

I am an outsider to the world of gangs and in order to comprehend this phenomenon better I needed to speak to those who are closer to them than I am, who understand them better than I do and have studied them extensively for several years. Before one joins a gang and experiences what gang members experience one will never be able to completely understand their world but I believe that I am one step closer to the world of gangs after speaking with those who do know them better. Together we have co-constructed a reality of gangs as we see and understand them.

Each interviewee contributed to the study differently. I was fascinated and sometimes even rather perplexed at the responses I received to some of my questions. The insight and knowledge that these individuals possess are invaluable and I am extremely grateful that they were willing to freely impart with their realities and what they know about gangs.
Initially the interviewing process itself was rather challenging for me. The uneasy feeling that accompanied me to every interview was due to a fear I had of either wasting the interviewees' time or by appearing as if I do not possess the knowledge to successfully complete this project. However, with every interview I conducted the feeling of fear diminished and was replaced by a hunger to want to know more. Each interviewee was accommodating and made me feel at ease. It was a pleasure to conduct these interviews, without which this study would not have been possible.

While all the criminologists signed the confidentiality agreement and did not want their names to appear in the data they did not want pseudonyms. I have thus decided to refer to them as "criminologists" throughout the results.

Ex-prisoner

This was by far the most interesting interview I conducted. The feeling of not knowing whether this interview will be successful combined with the knowledge that I will soon be speaking to someone who was in prison for more than a decade for his involvement in an organised crime syndicate made it close to impossible to comprehend my own feelings prior to the interview.

My interviewee was willing to share his personal narrative of how he ended up in prison as well as everything he knew about gangs and how it influenced him. He never became involved in gang activities and mostly kept to himself but throughout his twelve years of imprisonment he was confronted with the idea of gang involvement on a daily basis. He knew from the onset that he only wanted to finish his sentence and start a new life, and with that goal in mind he managed to stay out of trouble.

Our discussion was more of a conversation than an interview which enabled both of us to feel more at ease and comfortable with one another. He told me stories of when he was still active in his syndicate and how much he enjoyed having “fun” with his friends when they were doing a “job”. Because he refrained from becoming involved in gang activities he spoke with ease about the gangs he encountered inside prison. He never seemed to fear them and they never seemed to bother him for too long or force him into anything. This appeared to be a man who does not appreciate it when his space is invaded and he made sure that others around him knew that.

Life in prison changed this man in many ways and he is now a successful human rights lawyer. I was deeply humbled by our conversation and I realised that my own preconceived ideas about criminals were challenged in many ways. He is an ordinary person who made a grave mistake, but has paid for it and is now repaying society by fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves.

Our effortless conversation contributed to and complemented the construction of how gangs and gang life are viewed and enriched this study tremendously.
Similar to that of the criminologists, this individual did not want a pseudonym to appear in the results and suggested that I refer to him as the “ex-prisoner”.

Audio-visual Material

The audio-visual material was the last piece of the puzzle required to complete the collation of a picture of gangs and gang life. It facilitated a deeper understanding of gangs and the problem that numerous countries are facing around the world.

As mentioned previously, three videos were chosen to analyse from Ross Kemp’s journeys around the world. Even though he has visited gangs such as the Crips and the Bloods in Los Angeles to Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) and 18 Street in the capital of El Salvador, San

Salvador, I have chosen to view and analyse gangs and gang life from Belize, East Timor, and Kenya as it are these countries that share the same problem of gangs but define their gangs differently. Belize's gangs, for example, are highly involved with drug cartels from Colombia and are often confused with these drug cartels. East Timor's gangs call themselves martial arts groups but share all the characteristics of a gang, and Kenya's most dangerous gang, the Mungiki, are often referred to as a secret sect or a terrorist organisation. The themes portrayed from the audio-visual material about these groups show that their features are similar to that of gangs.

I found the process of learning about different gangs from around the world most enriching, and realised that a lot of countries share the problem of gangs. Where there is social disorganisation one will find gangs and unless the problem is rectified gangs will always survive and thrive in such areas.

Thematic Analysis

The themes extracted from the interviews and audio-visual material were organised into three levels of thematic networks, namely basic themes, organising themes, and global themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). A thematic network for each source was created and then integrated to form one thematic network. Each of the themes in the integrated thematic network will be discussed which will aim to facilitate an understanding of the analysis and reflect how each of the themes emerged from the data.

Table 4.1 Thematic Network for the Criminologists

Basic Themes	Organising Themes	Global Themes
Symbolism	Identity Formation	Participation
The ability to identify with gang and gang members		
The ability of the gang to give the individual a real identity		
Camaraderie, brotherhood, and cohesion	Esprit de Corps	
Sense of belonging and		

acceptance		
The gang as a substitute for the family		
Authority figures as role models		
Lack of choices or alternatives	Crisis	Survival
Lack of cohesion in family and family dysfunction		
Unemployment		
Age		
Dysfunctional communities	Social Disorganisation	
Urbanisation		
Hopeless communities		
Protection, safety and security	Rewards versus Sacrifices	
Financial, material and sexual gain		
Status, recognition and sense of purpose		
Consequences		
Difficulty resocialising		
Old feuds and political polarisation	History	Conservation
Traditions and rituals		
Hierarchy and structure	Power	
Culture of violence		
Trade		
Revenge		
Rules and guidelines		
Masculinity		
Labelling	Perceptions	Context
Context		
Definitional issues and considerations		
Romanticising and		

commercialisation of gangs		
Prison gangs versus Street gangs	Gangs versus “Gangs”	
Gangs versus Vigilante groups		
Gangs versus Organised syndicates		
Male gangs versus Female gangs		

Table 4.2 Thematic Network for the Ex-prisoner

Basic Themes	Organising Themes	Global Themes
Consequences	Rewards versus Sacrifices	Survival
Protection		
Lack of cohesion in families and family dysfunction	Crisis	
Sense of belonging	Esprit de Corps	Participation
Acceptance		
Brotherhood		
Symbolism	Identity formation	
Delinquent gangs versus Social groups	Gangs versus “Gangs”	Context
Gangs versus Organised syndicates		
Masculinity	Power	Conservation
Culture of violence		
Rules, guidelines, and laws		
Hierarchy		
Lack of logic and morals		

Table 4.3 Thematic Network for the audio-visual material

Basic Themes	Organising Themes	Global Themes
Trade	Power	Conservation
Lack of fear		
Culture of violence		
Hierarchy and structure		
Revenge		
Rules and guidelines		
Political polarisation	History	
Traditions and rituals		
Lack of choices or alternatives	Crisis	Survival
Unemployment		
Age		
Lack of cohesion in family and family dysfunction		
Dysfunctional communities	Dysfunctional Setting	
Hopeless communities		
Financial and material gain	Rewards versus Sacrifices	
Consequences		
Difficulty resocialising		
Gangs versus Secret sects	Gangs versus “Gangs”	Context

Table 4.4 Integrated Thematic Network

Basic Themes	Organising Themes	Global Themes
Symbolism	Identity Formation	Participation
The ability to identify with gang and gang members		
The ability of the gang to give the individual a real identity		
Camaraderie, brotherhood, and cohesion	Esprit de Corps	

Sense of belonging and acceptance		
The gang as a substitute for the family		
Authority figures as role models		
Lack of choices or alternatives	Crisis	Survival
Lack of cohesion in family and family dysfunction		
Unemployment		
Age		
Dysfunctional communities	Social Disorganisation	
Urbanisation		
Hopeless communities		
Protection, safety and security	Rewards versus Sacrifices	
Financial, material and sexual gain		
Status, recognition, and sense of purpose		
Consequences		
Difficulty resocialising		
Old feuds and political polarisation	History	Conservation
Traditions and rituals		
Hierarchy and structure	Power	
Culture of violence		
Trade		
Revenge		
Rules and guidelines		
Masculinity		
Lack of logic and morals		
Lack of fear		
Labelling	Perceptions	Context
Context		

Definitional issues and considerations		
Romanticising and commercialisation of gangs		
Prison gangs versus Street gangs	Gangs versus “Gangs”	
Gangs versus Vigilante groups		
Gangs versus Organised syndicates		
Male gangs versus Female gangs		
Gangs versus Social groups		
Gangs versus Secret sects		

Basic Themes: Symbolism; Identification with gang and gang members; The ability of the gang to provide the individual with a real identity

Symbolism

Symbolism plays a major role in gangs. It is the method through which gang members identify themselves as part of that specific group. It is also the method through which gangs distinguish themselves from other gangs. The methods through which gangs distinguish themselves include tattoos, use of language, hairstyles, clothes and behaviours. Tattoos are a very common sight in gangs. One criminologist stated: “…as soon as you join a gang, especially in prison, they tattoo you, they mark you. You are one of them now.” Tattoos can also signify a different meaning; some gang members tattoo small teardrops on their faces for every time they have murdered someone. The most notorious gang in El Salvador, Mara Salvatrucha (MS13), tattoo the words “MS13” on every gang member, sometimes even on their faces (Kemp, Gangs, 2007). It is also the manner in which authorities can identify individuals who they suspect may be involved in gang activities. Kenya’s gang, the Mungiki, are known to have dreadlocks and authorities and members of the community identify members of the Mungiki in such a way (Thomson, 2008a).

An interesting manner in which one can distinguish coloured gang members from white gang members in South Africa is the way they verbally communicate with each other. According to

the ex-prisoner to whom I spoke, coloured gang members' language immediately gives them away. The coloured gangs have a language of their own, one that the ordinary person will never be able to understand. It is said to be a mixture of African languages such as Zulu, with some Afrikaans, and this sets them apart from other gangs and the rest of society. They are outcasts as soon as they speak.

Except for the manner in which gang members verbally communicate with one another there are also many terms used that are reserved for gangs, especially with regards to initiations of new members: "'Jumped in' – that's when they have to fight against a number of other gang members. If you become a member of the gang in that way, your reputation is very good. The 'fair fight' is with just one other gang member, 'walked in' is voted in, very rare, but it's also very important that it must be a unanimous decision in the gang. And then the 'trained' or the 'sexed in' is the sleeping to get into the gang. And they are regarded as the 'hos' and the 'tramps' and they don't get much respect. And that's actually very strange, because that's the most common way in which they become members, and the fact is that they actually get little respect then."

As soon as a new gang member is tattooed and embraces the hairstyles, the clothing and the language that sets a gang apart from other gangs or from the broader community, the gang member's identity becomes enmeshed with the identity of the gang.

Identification with gang and gang members

The individual's ability to identify with the gang and the gang members is an important factor which will drive this individual to ultimately join the gang. As an interviewee said: "You know, this is where your security and safety lies, you identify with it and you are prepared for the risks that go with it," which indicates that individuals who find some form of safety and security with a gang are better able to identify with it. Another interviewee validated this: "…they committed crimes, were less serious, and they were on the fringes of society and it was about shared interests, and they formulated their own values, turned society's values around and made them values that they can achieve." Having shared interests and values and sharing the problem of being ostracised from mainstream society further exacerbates an individual's ability to identify with the gang. Being an outcast in society but not in a gang demonstrates how a gang may appear to be a welcoming sight for an individual: if a gang is able to provide an individual with something that is not available in society, such as a purpose, or safety and security, then the gang will appear without a doubt more appealing.

The ability of the gang to provide the individual with a real identity

The gang's ability to provide the individual with a real identity runs parallel with the above discussion of the individual being able to identify with the gang; the individual will feed off the idea that he fits in better with the gang and can better identify with the gang than with society, and in turn the gang provides the individual with an identity and purpose: "I belong to someone, I have a code of conduct, colours." The individual's identity and purpose in the gang may in fact be as important as an individual's identity and purpose within mainstream society in a socially accepted group, and for this reason the individual feels needed and appreciated.

A problem however that may occur with this process is deindividuation. Deindividuation, according to LeBon (as cited in Goldstein, 1991), is the process of becoming submerged in a group and losing one's sense of individuality and separateness from others. A gang member may find that he no longer knows who he or she is when not in the presence of the gang or when interacting with other gang members and through a process of contagion the riotous behaviour that is a characteristic of gangs will spread throughout the gang involuntarily, causing the gang member to behave as the gang behaves (LeBon, as cited in Goldstein, 1991).

Organising Theme: Identity Formation

Reber and Reber (2001, p. 338) define identity as "a person's essential, continuous self, the internal, subjective, concept of oneself as an individual." It is also quite often used in the context of racial or group identity.

Identity formation is defined as "the forming of one's identity" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 338). The group context, or the gang in this case, facilitates the individual's process of growth and allows this individual to form an identity that is related to the group. Forming an identity is an intense relationship between the individual, now the new gang member, and the gang. The successful formation of one's identity within the gang context depends on whether the individual has accepted the gang's symbolic identity, such as tattoos, language, hairstyles, and clothes; whether the individual is able to identify with his fellow gang members and the gang; and whether the gang itself is able to provide an identity for the individual which is satisfactory and which he or she cannot find in mainstream society.

Basic Themes: Camaraderie, brotherhood, and cohesion; Sense of belonging and acceptance; The gang as a substitute for the family; Authority figures as role models

Camaraderie, brotherhood, and cohesion

"Let's start with the ordinary guy. Spontaneous membership. Three guys say we are 'The Owls' or 'The Tigers' and each one gets a catapult and a clay-stick and they get together spontaneously, because it gives them a feeling of belonging. They talk about, I think the French said, if I'm pronouncing it correctly, esprit de corps. They feel part of something. And that's what a gang gives these guys. That's why they become involved in it."

Gang members find more than an identity for themselves when they join a gang. The gang itself serves many purposes, one of which is the feeling of camaraderie and brotherhood for the members of the gang. This statement is a generalisation of course, for not all gangs may be as tight-knit as they are sometimes portrayed. However, some gang members do appear to find some solace in the gang in the form of a brotherhood, which in turn creates cohesion between the members. This cohesion can exist for various reasons as well, as explained by the interviewees: "It may even be only one person who feels he is being unfairly treated in the community and perhaps he will talk to others and as a result of that it develops cohesion between them" and "For me basically it's a group of people who get together who are drawn – drawn factors by a solidarity or a divided understanding or socialising, but there is a cohesion between them and an ordinary gang also has a certain objective and goal that they have, in the case of committing crime or antisocial behaviour. For me that's the crux of an antisocial gang." Cohesiveness, according to Goldstein (1991), is an important characteristic of group development as it has been shown to be a strong determinant of the quality of group interaction as well as the longevity of the group. Knox (1991) also points out that cohesion in gangs is necessary for attaining goals and accomplishing group objectives, and Lucore (1975) found that gang cohesiveness and gang delinquency are positively related, so the more time the gang spends together, the higher the probability of them engaging in illegal activities. Criminal behaviour is one of the main characteristics of delinquent gangs, and according to Lucore (1975), cohesiveness exacerbates this which is indicative of a vicious cycle of individuals coming together and finding a sense of brotherhood and cohesion, and engaging in illegal activities.

Sense of belonging and acceptance

"Gang membership for girls, just as for boys and men, is all about a sense of belonging. It's about people who have shared interests, who have shared frustrations."

A sense of belonging as a theme was echoed in each interview conducted but it can take on any form and can mean something completely different to someone else. Levine and Moreland (1995) say that groups such as gangs more than often facilitate a need satisfaction, such as a need to belong to something or someone. A gang member may experience a sense of belonging when he finds his identity within a gang, or he may experience a sense of belonging by just being accepted into a group, something which he may have never experienced before. As stated in the above quotation, some gang members share interests and frustrations with their fellow peers and through this they find a sense of belonging to something. Gangs may also experience a sense of belonging within the context of a prison: "unfortunately it is a fact that most of the people who end up in prisons are people without money, that aren't financially well-off and with that they find the sense of belonging and community." This illustrates the fact that it is about what these gangs members share with each other – whether it is interests in the same thing or lack of financial stability – that brings them together and creates a sense of belonging. The ex-prisoner reiterated this and also said that it depends on what individuals do with that desire for belonging that sets gang members and non-gang members apart: "Ons is almal verslaaf aan 'n sense of belonging. Maar dis wat jy doen met daai sense of belonging wat jou apart sit van 'n gang." If the desire to belong is so strong that one is willing to commit crimes and conduct other illegal activities just so that one will experience that sense of belonging, then one is different from other individuals.

Similar to a sense of belonging, gang members also get acceptance in a gang. Their desire for acceptance can be attributed to a lack of acceptance in their family or even a lack of acceptance in their community. Human groupings such as gangs, says Puffer (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) is the response to a deep-seated but unconscious need for acceptance. A dysfunctional or disorganised environment is the driving force behind an individual joining a gang and a structured and functional gang will flourish within a dysfunctional environment, as will the gang member finally finding acceptance: "I think if you say a disorganised system, gangs will flourish in it. The big thing about a gang, and that's where it starts, is the guys get what they want to get, namely acceptance and a common goal. Sort of a family inclusion to be accepted. Also working together for a common goal. And also the 'have not's' - that's usually where a gang gets that feeling of belonging."

The gang as a substitute for the family

"What drive them to gang membership are their circumstances. The fact that they come from dysfunctional families, with the girls suffering a lot of sexual abuse in their families and then

they go and bond with people who understand them, who have the same experiences as them and become their families, such as men's and boys' gangs. That gang becomes a substitute for the normal family group."

A family serves a particular purpose for each individual; they fulfil our need for recognition, acceptance, and safety. Individuals who are not able to find that fulfilment in their own families are likely to find an alternative. A gang can provide safety for an individual, provided that the individual repays the favour. According to Knox (1991), when a family does not provide for all the needs of its children, then what we can look forward to is a greater probability of gang problems. In many instances according to Curry and Decker (2003), gangs fill the void that families experience when they lack the resources, whether it is financial or emotional, to deal with threats to the welfare of their children. As per the above discussion, an individual is also able to find acceptance in a gang context and being recognised as a member of a specific structure (the gang) enables the individual to view the gang as his or her family. The gang breaks down the isolated life that someone may have lived and provides some form of structure in their lives: "They actually have a family now. Whereas some of these people might not have had a family when they were younger or any form of a parent to tell you 'I'm proud of you' and as crazy as that might sound, the other members in your gang, that's your family. These people might have been so extremely socially isolated and now they aren't any more if they join a gang. Their families when they were younger might have been disorganised, disintegrated type of families. Basically the gang leaders will help them and help is a strange word to use in a context like this, but it's legitimate."

It should be noted that the idea of the gang substituting the family prompted Curry and Decker (2003, p. 142) to ask "Has the gang become a family?" Even though many gang members do use the term "family" to describe their gang, Curry and Decker (2003) reported that the majority of gang members will continue to be more committed to their real families than to the gang they joined.

Authority figures as role models

Authority figures in gangs such as leaders or decision-makers replace the common role model one usually finds in a family or community context. The gang member is now intent on becoming just as strong and authoritative as the person he or she is looking up to. The authority figures one finds in a gang are not just viewed as role models now; they replace the family of the other gang members and they and the gang are now viewed as a family:

“These people look up to the gang members, see them as authority figures, role models, family members. It’s the same with girls. They are in the sisterhood when they join a female gang or a co-ed gang where females and males join up.” These gang members are able to find a sense of courage and the will to survive in their role models, characteristics they were not able to find within other individuals or communities.

Organising Theme: Esprit de Corps

Esprit de Corps is defined as “group spirit; sense of pride, honour, etc. shared by those in the same group or undertaking” (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2010), as “A common spirit of comradeship, enthusiasm, and devotion to a cause among the members of a group” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2010), as “A strong sense of enthusiasm and dedication to a common goal that unites a group” (Roget's II The New Thesaurus, 2010), and as “consciousness of and pride in belonging to a particular group; the sense of shared purpose and fellowship” (Collins English Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged, 2003).

The discussion regarding this theme revolved around the gang’s sense of belonging, camaraderie within the gang, the perception of the gang as a family, and authority figures within the gang seen as role models for their fellow gang members. These basic themes related back to what many interviewees described as ‘esprit de corps’ and as it is defined above. One definition mentioned implies that members of a group share a sense of pride and honour, and so too do we find that gang members share this pride and honour among themselves: there is a strong sense of camaraderie and brotherhood between these members and it is the brotherhood they are proud of for they are finally being accepted into a system where they have a purpose.

Global Theme: Participation

An individual’s struggle with finding an identity and forming this identity within the context of a gang and the gang members’ feeling of esprit de corps all form part of the process of participation. Participation, according Tillier (2008), describes the process of the individual taking part in interpersonal exchange as well as the individual’s involvement with others.

Participation in the gang context would require one to know and understand where one fits in with the rest of the group, thus identity formation plays a major role. Participation with regards to one’s involement with others entails one to find a sense of belonging and

cohesion with the gang and the gang members, thus fitting in and understanding the esprit de corps of the group is just as important. By participating within the gang context, gang members also gain a sense of acceptance and they learn how to engage with their fellow gang members according to the rules and guidelines of the gang.

Basic Themes: Lack of choices or alternatives; Lack of cohesion in the family and family dysfunction; Unemployment; Age

Lack of choices or alternatives

"They often don't have a choice. I don't know if that's a romantic view that people also have about what happens with gangs, but they often don't have a choice. You don't have, if you live in a certain area, and my brother is a member of this gang, you are reared from when you are very small that you will one day want to be an active member of this gang. Now you are first a look-out, and you help with this and that, and they just become more active, and they don't have a choice. Sometimes they really don't have a choice. So I find it a bit disturbing that sometimes there is often no choice involved."

The decision as to whether or not one wants to join a gang is often not the individual's to make. They are often forced into the gang, sometimes by their own family members who are already active members in the gang. Young children are conditioned to believe that it is natural for them to someday become active members in a gang.

Many gangs have a reductionist view with regards to individuals who are not in their gang. They believe that if that individual is not a member of their gang, he or she must be the enemy. The theme 'lack of choice' is thus reiterated once again because if the individual is seen as an enemy if he or she does not join, little choice is left but to join the gang. One interviewee reinforced this statement: "You know, this is where you get those drive-by shootings, shooting incidents at the schools and problems at the schools, because children are forced into certain areas and closed communities and it is often gang by association. If you're not for me, you're against me. There is no neutral element.

For some individuals, it may not be that they have no other option but to join, but rather a question of lack of alternatives. This means that individuals are perhaps not aware of any other better lifestyle alternatives as a gang-infested community may be the only lifestyle they have been exposed to and are aware of: "I think it is about external pressure factors, if you live in a community where you are confronted daily and you associate so strongly with this

way of life that you see no alternative for yourself." Another interviewee summed up the issue of lack of choice or alternatives well, with particular reference to the family and pressure to join a gang: "I think literally in a case of if you're born in a family with a strong gang background, you still have your choice, but the pressure is so great that it's sort of that's what's done, and there we're talking about the mafia or about the gangs in the Cape Flats. You have the choice but sometimes the pressure is so great and the level of acceptance just as strong – if you literally want to remain part of your family and if your family is part of a gang, well … what choice do you really have?"

Many individuals have responsibilities towards their families which they must satisfy and lack of other alternatives can drive them to joining gangs to fulfil the responsibility of taking care of family members. One individual who Kemp (Thomson, 2008b) interviewed is from a gang called "George Street" in Belize and he has three young daughters to take care of. As much as he would like to leave the gang he is very much aware of the fact that gang activities will enable him to get money easier and quicker and thus he stays for the sake of his daughters because he knows he does not have any other alternatives of securing finances or any other resources legally for his daughters.

Lack of cohesion in the family and family dysfunction

Many interviewees mentioned several high-risk factors that they deemed significantly increases the chances of individuals becoming involved in gangs. One of these high-risk factors which was reported in the interviews as well as in literature is the breakdown of the family: "This whole thing that I wrote about is about high-risk factors. The family breaking up, you know, or the incomplete family — dysfunctional family, you know, the single parent, the mother, the father, all that kind of thing. The alcoholic father, the drugs in the family, the family discord as they say. If that's your example, the chances are very likely that you would like to follow in those footsteps. That happens a lot in the Cape."

Family dysfunction raises a range of issues and problems, all of them creating a portal for an individual coming from such a family to join a gang. A dysfunctional family means lack of supervision, the absence of an authoritative figure that can guide one in the right direction and teach the difference between right and wrong. The consequences of lack of supervision, according to Ball and Curry (2003), is that young children will grow up rather finding their need for socialisation on the street among other young children growing up in similar conditions. It also means unhealthy and dysfunctional role models, which in turn exacerbates the individual's lack of knowledge with regards to right or wrong actions, and Pinnock (1984)

explains that unsupervised youths that come from dysfunctional families form street gangs as an act of defiance and as a coping mechanism. Both these factors, lack of supervision and unhealthy role models, are a breeding ground for anti-social behaviour, a complete disregard for rules and regulations created by mainstream society and a total lack of consideration for one's actions and the consequences of these actions.

Unemployment

Unemployment as a basic theme ties in with the previous two themes, lack of choices or alternatives, and family dysfunction. It can be viewed as both a cause and an effect of lack of choices and family dysfunction: unemployment can cause a breakdown in the family, resulting in poor and dysfunctional relationships which may result in the individual looking for acceptance in a gang setting and in a similar manner unemployment can also be the effect of family dysfunction. With regards to lack of choices or alternatives, unemployment may be the cause of individuals joining gangs. Unemployment, according to one of the criminologists, is a major issue within gangs: "Unemployment is really a big, big issue with gangs, and some of them join because they don't have any legitimate means of income, so they join a gang." Another criminologist highlighted how the mere idea of gang involvement can be more attractive than unemployment: "Why, ask yourself this next question, if you stand on the corner of the street to do tiling, or building, or painting or whatever you do, for R80, R100 per day and no one gives you a job. You stand there for seven days. You are hungry. But then a guy comes to you and says 'listen here, if you go for me' a syndicate or a gang, 'and go and take out abalone for me, illegally, a box full, I'll give you R1 000.'"

Age

This theme refers specifically to the youth and the fact that mere children are becoming involved in gangs as active members.

Throughout the data collection process my interviewees and I discussed at length the social groups that the youth start: groups that are started for the purposes of innocent play, for homework, for sport, etc. The reality though is that some youths either join a gang or start their own gang (Thomson, 2008b). When referring to gangs, most literature refers to adolescents being involved in gang activities. However, the issue today is that the age for joining gangs is dropping significantly, it is no longer just adolescents who join but children from any age: "Kids join from as young as 7, 8, 9, 10 years old and they can be ordered to perform heinous crimes like murder or rape, even kidnapping, robberies, anything like that.

It's fairly shocking to think that someone of seven who is supposed to start reading will behave in such a way. But the reality is some of these kids are recruited by their own family members." Except for joining gangs, kids also engage in other high-risk activities at an earlier age than before: "I think the main problem in our country in South Africa is alcohol. That's really a big problem, binge drinking and concoctions that the children do at a very young age and that also makes you vulnerable to become involved in certain things that you didn't anticipate at first that you would do."

Dysfunctional communities also do not provide the youth with the support that they require, and view these young children as either being gang members or potential gang members (Thomson, 2008b). This self-fulfilling prophecy does not leave much hope for young children and when they do ultimately join a gang or start their own gang the members of the community are hardly surprised and accept this as commonplace in their society.

Organising Theme: Crisis

Crisis is defined by Reber and Reber (2001, p. 166) as "Any sudden interruption in the normal course of events in the life of an individual or a society that necessitates re-evaluation of modes of action and thought. A general sense of a loss of normal foundations of day-to-day activity is the dominant connotation of the term and is broadly applied." They also note that "there is an accompanying sense that a crisis is something that is uncontrollable, that it must be allowed to run its course."

Crisis as an organising theme in the context of this study refers to the individual and the interruptions in life that he or she experiences which is uncontrollable and may result in the eventual joining of a gang. These uncontrollable interruptions include lack of choices or alternatives, lack of cohesion in the family and family dysfunction, unemployment and the vulnerability of young children and them falling prey to gangs and the activities associated with gangs. These are all factors considered to place the individual at a higher risk to become involved in gangs. As Reber and Reber (2001, p. 166) mentioned, an uncontrollable interruption "must be allowed to run its course", however, when an interruption such as family dysfunction does not expire, the individual must find another solution to the problem, the solution often being to become involved with a gang.

Basic Themes: Dysfunctional communities; Urbanisation; Hopeless communities

Dysfunctional communities

"Disorganised community, no cohesion with the community, no ties with the community, a feeling of being an outsider, labelling that's done, lack of supervision, that's a very big thing with gangs, because it makes it easier if there is no parental supervision or supervision by a control system, and makes it easier for gangs to form."

When the interviewees were asked what type of environment would be most suitable for an individual to join a gang or for gangs to form, everyone mentioned that a disorganised or dysfunctional community is the type in which gangs would flourish. A disorganised or dysfunctional community is one where there is a lack of cohesion within the community, where drugs are abundant and easily available, where prostitution is rife, where it lacks proper supervision from parental figures or a control system, where schools are disorganised and unsafe and where acceptance is more readily available from a gang than from a family or community. One interviewee had this to say: "I think if you say a disorganised system, gangs will flourish in it. The big thing about a gang, and that's where it starts, is the guys get what they want to get, namely acceptance and a common goal. Sort of a family inclusion to be accepted. Also working together for a common goal. So, in any disorganised environment or community a gang will flourish and it can be a prison, it can be a community, it can be a school, where there is a case of the haves and have not's. The have not's, that's usually where a gang gets that feeling of belonging." Curry and Decker (2003) say that strong communities are associated with strong families and strong schools but this principle is reversed in communities where gangs are prevalent; weakened communities are associated with weakened families and hold limited capacity to prepare the youth of the community for participation in mainstream society.

Poverty and lack of social welfare within communities contribute to the idea of gangs as a perpetuating cycle: individuals join gangs because they are struggling financially and can get monetary rewards through becoming involved in gangs but gangs also flourish in poverty stricken areas because of the fact that they can recruit new members easier. The issues that accompany poverty are factors such as family dysfunction and lack of social cohesion: "When you come from a poor area, the context which you find yourself in is an overcrowded area with a lack of resources, and family disintegration and a lack of social cohesion and limited activities, extramural activities which you can get involved in and a poor schooling system. That's why they join. They come from these harsh circumstances and to be part of a

group with a common goal, you can get out of that situation and it might not be better, and it's illegal but for them it's better."

Urbanisation

Urbanisation as a basic theme runs parallel with a poverty-stricken and dysfunctional community. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) say that gangs are more typically found in large urban centres among lower-class areas. Overcrowding and poverty leads to greater gang activity, joining gangs in a new manner in which people are dealing with social problems: "I think our man went with greater technology, I think it has all become more plastic. There are of course also the common characteristics that go with it, like increasing urbanisation and all the problems that go with that. Actually cities are becoming bigger and bigger and the greater the concentration of people the more social problems you find and the gangs are a new way of dealing with that stratification process of people that you get."

Hopeless communities

The final basic theme ties in with all of the above basic themes. A disorganised and dysfunctional community, poverty and overcrowding all contribute towards a community filled with hopelessness. A hopeless community is a broken community that will not find legitimate solutions to the problems they are facing, and instead they turn to gangs to solve their problems, which they eventually come to respect and rely: "Now you must remember, a street gang very often has a lot of money. They have a lot of influence. They get respect in the community. They get respect, they have a reputation. Because what do they do? They build a disco or a night club and the people say, 'gee, look at these guys, they are contributing to the community,' so they turn a blind eye. The community is not prepared to talk about these guys."

The influence and control that gangs exert over communities are so strong that members are prepared to defend the gangs against the police and even fight with the gangs against rival gangs or the police (Govender, 2007). If they do not do this, there are serious repercussions, and the members of the community are only too aware of this. Gangs use fear and intimidation to such an extent that members of the community have no choice but to comply with what the gangs expect from them.

Standing (2005) explains that the presence of gangs causes a continuous and relentless level of fear and tension, which has transformed several areas into places where almost no

non-gang members would venture in daylight, let alone at night. What is just as frightening, is the fact that gangs intimidate members of the community, forcing them to stash gang weapons and contraband and if residents attempt to stand up against the gang members by involving the police, they place themselves in grave danger (Standing, 2005).

Organising Theme: Social Disorganisation

Franzese *et al.* (2006) proposed that in order for gangs to form the neighbourhood or community in which they form must be socially disorganised. Social disorganisation, according to Franzese *et al.* (2006) refers to an underlying condition that is manifested in symptoms such as welfare dependency, martial dissolution and high residential mobility. They further proposed that the probability of gang formation in a particular neighbourhood is directly proportional to the social disorganisation of that neighbourhood. Similarly, Hagedorn (1991) says that the deteriorating neighbourhoods with declining resources and fractured internal cohesion is what fosters the growth of gangs in neighbourhoods.

Social disorganisation can also be referred to as a dysfunctional setting, and Reber and Reber (2001, p. 220) define dysfunction as “any disruption in normal functioning.” A dysfunctional setting can thus be defined as a setting or environment that is experiencing a disruption in normal functioning. This dysfunctional setting that gangs thrive in encompasses dysfunctional communities, poverty, urbanisation or overcrowding and hopeless communities.

Basic Themes: Protection, safety, and security; Financial, material, and sexual gain; Status, recognition, and sense of purpose; Consequences; Difficulty resocialising

Protection, safety and security

“Depending on what you are prepared to give up, for that you receive protection and acceptance to some degree. And then naturally if you’re so called institutionalised, what you pay for yourself and your goal for the gang, you get certain instructions like you must stab someone with a knife or do something that guarantees that you go through a process where you will have to share more and in some cases it then takes place in rather bizarre ways. A person will self-sacrifice, you know, either as a deterrent or to actually focus attention on themselves in certain matters. But, you know, if they can get a guarantee of protection, they’ll do anything really. Protection means safety. At least for another day.”

Many individuals join gangs purely for the fact that they require the protection that the gang can offer them (Thomson, 2008b). This is especially evident in correctional institutions: gangs can offer new inmates protection in return for certain favours such as sex or other material goods. In correctional institutions, sex is one of the most commonplace methods for repaying favours: "If there are, especially young guys coming in, let's say a guy of 18, 19, 20, who's coming into an adult situation, then a guy from, let's say the 28's, one of their guys will go to him and say, 'hey, here's a blanket and some cigarettes for you'. Because those are the strongest medium of negotiation, money, monetary value. And then they will say to them, 'here's something for you and I'll look after you' and then, what the guy doesn't know, two three weeks later, then he will say, 'take this tattoo'. They give him a specific tattoo also. And then actually it means I am now part of that gang. And the guys are quite ignorant because the guy says, 'it's for your own protection. If you have the thing, nothing will happen to you.' And then in two three four weeks, then the guy comes and then someone identifies him and says, 'now you are part of the 28's, you are now going to be my wife'. And the only way you can repay those cigarettes, and they know very well the guy can't pay back cigarettes, money, and food, blankets, is to have sex with the guy, for example."

Financial, material, and sexual gain

Many gang members find that the greatest incentive for joining a gang is the financial, material and sexual rewards. Gang members find that they can repair their dire financial situation faster when they are involved in gang activities. They are also more likely to be in possession of material goods such as cars and jewellery when they are part of a gang as it is not unusual for gangs to perform robberies and hijackings. The sexual reward that gang members experience differs significantly from street to prison: part of the initiations of street gangs involve the females who want to join to sleep with some of the existing male gang members but contrary to this, what one finds in prisons are gang members who are in a position of power who can have sex with the men who are deemed weaker and seen as 'females'. In a South African context, the 28's are infamous for having wives, or 'wyfies' as they call them: "They [the 28's] are known for their sexual activities and that they specifically get wives or 'franse' as they are known."

Gangs in Belize, for example, receive cash and military weapons for their role in the smuggling of drugs for the Colombian drug cartels (Thomson, 2008b). The weapons are used in attacking and defending themselves from rival gangs and the police. These gangs are normally in possession of hand grenades, AK 47's and 9 mm pistols, extremely powerful weapons that can cause severe damage to anyone who gets in the way of these gangs.

The financial gain that gang members are intrigued by is due to saturation of alternatives; they arrive at the point where searching for legitimate employment is not an option anymore according to them and thus they resort to becoming involved in gang activities: “If I say the next thing to you, you’re standing there [on the street] for 5 weeks. The guys swear at you, you did one job for somebody, he kicked you out and said you had built badly or you painted badly or wrongly or whatever, and they don’t even pay you the full R100 or whatever, because you made a mess. Or a guy comes to you and says, ‘I’ll give you R35 000 now if you hijack a BMW 3 series for me, now.’ And you do a job for 20 minutes, and you have R35 000 in your pocket?”

Status, recognition, and sense of purpose

“I think it’s a kind of prestige thing to be able to belong to it [a gang].”
Status is defined by Reber and Reber (2001, p. 708) as “a reasonably well-defined standing in the social order of a group or society.” According to Ball and Curry (2003) the gang offers its own set of values and opportunities for achievement and status. For many gang members, the reward for being part of a gang is the status they achieve after some time spent involved in gang activities and performing well according to the gang’s standards. The status they achieve allows them to have some rights and privileges that other lower order members are yet to achieve. Status also allows these individuals to feel safer and secure in their position in the gang; they enjoy more of the luxuries accumulated by the gang and they also feel a sense of pride and purpose for reaching the type of status they achieved.

Another reward that gang members experience is the mere recognition that they receive when part of a gang. They have goals and purposes to fulfil and they are actively contributing to the existence of the gang which they are a part of. One criminologist compared a gang member’s need for recognition with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs: “It is literally a case of you get recognition in the gang, you get the feeling you are part of a structure. You get acceptance there and also the feeling that you belong somewhere. If you look at Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, that feeling of that need to belong somewhere – that’s what draws guys into the gang. The other things are then the by-products or the symptoms of the system.”

Consequences

“I think it is glamourised, but there is a huge price to pay for it.”

Gang members are often not aware of the consequences they will be facing after joining a gang. The price they have to pay for the protection they receive and for the riches in which they may share are equivalent or even worse in comparison with the rewards. Gang members may not have been aware of the fact that they too need to murder and bludgeon if they want to remain part of the group. Other consequences that gang members are not aware of are the difficulties they face if and when they decide that they would like to withdraw from the gang: “’you are either my buddy or my enemy, who are you now?’ If you go out of that gang system you are an enemy. You are no longer a buddy and you can no longer be trusted”; “I think that the deeper one is drawn in the more you realise that it’s as if you’re in a spider’s web – the more you struggle the more you are trapped. And the guys don’t realise it. And that feeling of camaraderie in a gang, it’s literally a case of if you aren’t part of the group you are the enemy”, and as a gang member from the gang “Dog Pound” in Belize explained to Kemp (Thomson, 2008b): “I want to get out, but who would I turn to? I can’t get out, man. This is my life. I was born here, I’m gonna die here.” Another individual from the Mungiki in Kenya told Kemp (Thomson, 2008a) that leaving the Mungiki is punishable by death.

The ultimate sacrifice that is made by joining a gang is that the gang member no longer has control over his or her own life; decisions of what is to happen next or what new task is to be completed lies in the hands of the leaders of the gang and the decision whether one will be able to withdraw from the gang freely lies within the guidelines of the gang. Gang members cannot take the risk of not doing what they are told: “So it is of crucial importance that you complete your task. The risk is too high to actually say no” and they also cannot take the risk of committing treason, for the consequences of such an act may also be severe: “…they victimise one another, they kill one another in the same gang. If they suspect there is any traitor, it’s so cruel, the cruellest, cruellest punishments they can think of.”

Difficulty resocialising

The previous theme touched on the fact that withdrawing from a gang is a nearly impossible task. Next to withdrawing from a gang is the difficulty in adapting to mainstream society if one is successful in removing oneself completely from the gang. Many interviewees mentioned one or two cases which they are aware of that had great success in distancing

themselves completely from the gang in which they were involved. Normally this would involve gang members enrolling in a gang rehabilitation programme and staying away from dangerous people, places and things that hold any relation with gangs.

The unfortunate truth is that the gang, the fellow gang members and the activities all form part of a lifestyle to which gang members have become accustomed: “So the resocialising out of a gang, I think it is incredibly difficult. In many times what happens is that it has become a lifestyle, and guys who really want to get out of gangs often become the victims of crime, they are killed, and I think it’s also about the whole case of the gang absolutely having its own sub-culture and the whole idea of the mystery, secrets, the gang’s secrets and that’s usually what has such a hold on the guys.”

Organising Theme: Rewards versus Sacrifices

Rewards, or the notion that one may obtain something or experience a pleasurable event when one has carried out a task or accomplished a specific goal, versus sacrifices, the idea that one must give something up in order to enjoy or experience something else, is the organising theme that includes the basic themes “protection, safety and security”; “financial, material and sexual gain”; “status, recognition and sense of purpose”; “consequences”; and “difficulty resocialising”. Rewards versus sacrifices can also be grouped together as “value”, which in this context is defined in terms of weighing up the potential rewards and costs involved in joining a gang (Goldstein, 1991).

The first basic theme that was discussed, namely “protection, safety, and security”, can be viewed as a reward that gang members experience when they join the gang. Contrary to this, it can also be viewed as a sacrifice, for what gang members must give, such as sex or loss of control of one’s own life, are most definitely sacrifices. If the protection from rival gangs and other enemies outweigh the sacrifice that must be offered, then protection, safety and security lean more towards reward than sacrifice. The second and third themes, “economic, material and sexual gain”, and “status, recognition, and sense of purpose”, are both rewards that gang members deeply strive for, whereas “consequences” are viewed as sacrifices and specifically sacrifices that gang members may not have been aware of. As mentioned previously, the ultimate sacrifice made by gang members is that they relinquish the control they have over their own lives and they no longer have the power to exercise their own decision-making ability. The difficulty gang members experience in withdrawing from a gang and resocialising into mainstream society is another sacrifice that they have made; they have sacrificed one lifestyle for another and it is nearly impossible to switch from

the one to the other after the decision has been made to join a gang. Potential gang members thus have to decide whether they find value in joining a gang and if the potential rewards outweigh the potential sacrifices, they will find value in joining a gang.
The organising themes of “crisis”, “dysfunctional setting”, and “rewards versus sacrifices” can be conceptualised as a process of survival.

Global Theme: Survival

The global theme that emerged from the three organising themes of “crisis”, “social disorganisation”, and “rewards versus sacrifices” is the process of survival. The Collins English Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged (2003) defines survival as a state of remaining alive and as the act or process of surviving. The three organising themes all describe a different process which ultimately involves the individual’s desire to survive. The organising theme, “crisis”, referred to an interruption that the individual experiences which is uncontrollable and may result in the eventual joining of a gang – the choice in joining a gang is an act of survival in itself; the individual wants to survive the crisis as well as remain alive and the process of survival that he or she chooses is by joining a gang. This is similar with regards to the second organising theme, “dysfunctional setting”. The only manner in which the individual believes he or she can survive the circumstance of his or her setting, is by joining a gang. The third theme, “rewards versus sacrifices”, also describes a desire for survival that is so intense, the gang member is willing to sacrifice a lot in return for protection and safety. The need to survive is particularly strong in prison; an individual would rather become a “wyfie” and have sex with someone than being mudered for refusing to do so.

Basic Themes: Old feuds and political polarisation; Traditions and rituals

Old feuds and Political Polarisation

Gangs are formed for many diverse reasons. Some of them are formed to protect their neighbourhood from rival gangs, some are formed to defend themselves from a longstanding rival gang, some are formed because of old family feuds: “I found, for example, that in the coloured community there is a very long history and that it actually comes down to family feuds in the first place” and some gangs formed due to political reasons and mistrust in their own government: “Years ago these people were forced into the Cape Flats due to apartheid rules and so they lost their trust in the government and in politicians. They have absolutely no trust in them anymore. They join and kind of create a gang to achieve this political aim to tell the government and politicians and anybody in any authoritative position that you cannot

order me around anymore. You've done this enough now, I'm fighting back. Regardless of the way that I'm fighting back. Whether it is crime related or not. And ultimately, it is crime related, and you know, also very many years ago in the beginning, gangs were more of an urban phenomenon."

Gang violence also rises as the political climate rises, according to Kemp (Govender, 2007). East Timor, the youngest democracy in the world, is still perforated with the remains of the conflict between themselves and the Indonesians, who wanted to gain control of East Timor after the Portuguese left in 1975 and it was no longer deemed a colony. 2002 saw East Timor becoming an independent sovereign state but there is still a war being waged between rival factions throughout the country and as this conflict escalates, so too does the conflict between the gangs as they are affiliated with specific factions.

The reality though is that not many of the newer gang members may be able to explain why their gang initially formed or why they even stand for that same reason now. They are only aware that they have an enemy on the other side of their neighbourhood or that they despise the government. Gangs hold on to old feuds and mistrust in the government because it is what defines the gang and makes it different from other gangs. It is their identity and outsiders identify them in the same manner. Their ideology is what brings them together and is also what makes them defy others who do not share in a similar ideology.

Traditions and Rituals

"In men's gangs they must commit a crime, or a murder, or they must perform well in a gang fight, for example, then they can become members."

Many gangs have certain traditions and rituals that they uphold. These traditions are what set gangs apart, for every gang has a different set of traditions to which they adhere. Many gangs have variations of the same act such as murdering or stabbing someone to become a member but all of these traditions that gangs have are part of the gangs' identities and make them uniquely who they are. Traditions and rituals are also a manner in which cohesiveness is created within the group and it is the manner in which new members are accepted into the system and as much as it can build trust, it can also break trust among members if traditions are not adhered to. One interviewee provided another example of an initiation that a gang in the Cape Flats expects their new members to perform: "Jack Rolling, briefly, what it amounts to, they are black gangs, especially the tsotsi gangs, who do all kinds of things, including committing crimes, but their big thing for example for initiation or whatever is to go to a

school, kidnap a girl from the school and take her, and it's often in informal settlements and such things."

Many initiations are in actual fact highly religious ceremonies. In Kenya, for example, new recruits have to chant for hours before being baptised in freezing water by a high-ranking member of the Mungiki (Thomson, 2008a). This ceremony takes place before dawn in the central highlands of Kenya which are believed to be the spiritual homeland of the Mungiki. In East Timor, a high-ranking member of the Seven Sevens gang will make seven cuts into a new recruit's arm, rub mud into the wounds, gut a pig and read the pig's intestines which will predict the recruit's future within the gang. This ritual is said to make the new member invincible and that God is watching over him or her (Govender, 2007).

Organising Theme: History

Each gang has a narrative, a story which each member of the gang assisted in co-constructing. Each story and each member signify a piece of the historical puzzle of that specific gang. Gang members who are aware of their history and know the stories are proud of it and those who are not familiar with the stories are also proud just to be a member of that gang. Many gangs have long-standing traditions and rituals which they uphold with that same pride they display for their history and stories. A fitting example of this would be the rich and intricate history of each of the Ninevites gangs, the 26's, 27's and 28's, with stories such as how they were established and what they stand for. Each derivative of the Ninevites constructed their own history which is loosely based on the original gang (Standing, 2006). Gang members are proud of their gang and their gang name. They uphold the traditions because it provides them with a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging to something distinct and exclusive.

Basic Themes: Hierarchy and structure; Rules and guidelines; Masculinity; Revenge; Trade; Culture of violence; Lack of logic and morals; Lack of fear

Hierarchy and structure

"Hierarchy is always there, you know. You always have a top guy and then you have advisers, the guys who decide. And you have the hit men, you even have them outside, in the street name gangs and that type of thing, so they are there, and they always have a hierarchy of some sort."

Gangs, as with most other organisations or groups, have hierarchy and structure which enables them to function properly and ensure that tasks are executed. A gang hierarchy will comprise of a leader, as with any other organisation, who will make important decisions and have the final say. Ball and Curry (1995) say that gangs always feature some form of a leadership structure with processes of organisational maintenance and membership services and adaptive mechanisms for dealing with other significant social systems in its environment. Gang members who attain the position of leader may have achieved this position by being the longest standing member, by being the oldest or by being the one others fear most – thus a gang member's reputation plays a big part in where he or she positions him or herself on the group's hierarchy. Cartwright (1975) says that in some gangs the strongest person will become the leader whereas in other gangs the smartest person may become the leader. Cartwright (1975) explains that gangs differ in the manner in which the gang and the members associate physical appearance and personality characteristics with different roles. According to Goldstein (1991), the "Great Man" theory of leadership prevailed for decades up until the 1940's. Essentially this theory postulated that effective leaders are people who are born with certain personality traits who are able to lead a group of people in a variety of settings and situations without any difficulty (Goldstein, 1991). The personality traits and characteristics which are referred to include being achievement oriented, adaptable, alert, ascendant, energetic, self-confident and more sociable than some of the other group members (Goldstein, 1991), however, over time it was proven that these personality traits are only modestly related to effective leadership behaviour. Goldstein (1991) says that even though such personality traits do contribute to the success of the group to some extent, the group situation and the specific requirements of the group will dictate more which type of leadership qualities will be most effective.

Each gang's type of hierarchy or structure will also differ but there is always some sort of leader that guides the gang. One interviewee expanded on the subject of gang hierarchies: "You will basically get … let's call it the leader of the gang. The kingpin, top of the feeding chain. Then he will have confidants and below them perhaps more confidants and then there are the ordinary gang members and the gang members are sort of the foot soldiers and much more planning of a crime will be done in – the execution itself is done by the foot soldiers, and the guys who are foot soldiers are sort of replaceable, so if something happens to one of them or he is caught it doesn't really have an impact on the gang. No impact on the top structure. That's just basic; I think in any gang structure, you have a central person who is the leading figure. Usually it's one person. From there another controlling structure which then expands to the other members." The roles that members adopt, according to the ex-prisoner, have also been referred to as the "generals", who are at the top of the hierarchy,

“middle management”, who ensure that all processes run smoothly and once again the members at the bottom of the hierarchy who are responsible for the execution of the processes are referred to as “foot soldiers”. It has also been noted that gang leaders like to give themselves titles that enforce their authority, hence titles such as “general” and “lieutenant” are not uncommon among gangs.

Rules and guidelines

When taking the level of literacy and education under-attainment into consideration, Knox (1991) was taken by surprise at the written rules and guidelines that some contemporary gangs have. Nevertheless, whether it is written or just verbal, gangs do have guidelines and norms to which they adhere. Norms, according to Goldstein (1991), are either overtly stated or covertly assumed. Norms serve as rules of action that specifies appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for the members of the group. Many group members take the norms of the group for granted or even assume certain norms exist and this may only become evident when the norms have been violated (Goldstein, 1991). Initially, the norms of the group may have been adopted by the members due to positive feelings of group cohesion and because continuation of membership is desired. It can also be due to the members attempting to avoid conflict or rejection but evetually these norms are internalised by the group members (Goldstein, 1991). Norms can also be seen as the broad guidelines that determine what does and does not occur within a group as well as what the group aspires to achieve and how it will be led (Goldstein, 1991).

The rules and guidelines that gangs have are very closely related to the above theme of hierarchy and structure. A member of the gang who is in a position of power, say, the leader of the gang, will create rules and guidelines which the other gang members must adhere to at all times. These rules are then enforced by the confidants of the gang leader. Every gang member has a certain position in the gang and this position will also reveal the type of punishment a gang member will suffer if a rule is broken.

Rules and guidelines also enable the gang to function better and it allows the gang to exercise control and power. The more rules the more control the gang has over its members. A gang that is in control is a dangerous, well-oiled and indestructible system. One example of a rule that gangs have is the ‘blood in, blood out’ rule: “They have a rule that says blood in, blood out. So if you really wanted to be involved with a gang and become one of them, you have to give blood, kill someone, stab someone. It’s applied in reverse, if you have any intention of leaving the gang, you have to repay with blood, either your own or someone

else's. That's really the reality of the situation. And you dare not break the gang's rules, because they are there for a reason. If you follow them, you are safe. And I would say that that is why so many gangs have been around for so long, you know, their rules and things keep them afloat and keep the gang functioning and dangerous."

Masculinity

Gang activities are strongly related to the level of masculinity that a gang member exudes. The more violent the task and the more violent the gang member performs this task, the more masculine a gang member may appear. Masculinity is also related to a gang member's position in the hierarchy of the gang: if a gang member is feared for his infamy as a violent, strong, powerful, and masculine person, he will rank higher than a gang member who is not feared and is not as strong and powerful.

Gang members also exert their masculinity through sex which is a common activity within the confinements of a correctional institution. The individual who forces sex upon another individual is the strong and powerful one, "the man", while the person being forced to have sex is the weak one, "the woman": "They work themselves up, it can happen. He can ask if he can go up, but it is a very sensitive thing, because the, how shall I put it, the 'insertee', in other words, the guy who penetrates, is seen as the husband and dominant and tough and he hits and kicks. The guy who receives, he is now a 'wife' and he now has a bit of a reputation. And it's very difficult to shake off that reputation and be this hard core tough guy. It doesn't easily happen. So you have to prove yourself from an early stage that you don't want anything from anybody." It is also important to note that these men do not view themselves as homosexual in any manner. The moment they are able to penetrate another male they are seen as more masculine than before. It is thus not so much about the act itself but the fact that they exert power over another human being and are able to force this person into a position of total submission. The similar idea applies to male gang members raping women and even though with women the act itself is seen as very masculine, when they rape women, they are once again portraying their complete control and power over another person which in itself is an incredibly masculine act to perform.

Revenge

“Sometimes people join out of revenge. Their family members might have been victimised and the only way they can get back at the people who victimized their family members is to join a gang.”

Revenge is an extremely strong motive for joining a gang. As mentioned in the quote above, many individuals join gangs to revenge a family member who fell victim to a gang. The problem though is that this causes a perpetuating cycle of revenge from one gang to another gang and this is exactly the manner in which violence and intergroup conflict between rival gangs constantly escalates. Intergroup conflict, according to Goldstein (1991), increases the tendency to reject members of other groups and it also serves to establish and maintain boundaries between groups which stresses intergroup differences and reduces intergroup similarities.

Revenge is also a manner in which gangs recruit new members. They entice the individual and explain that they can help him or her get revenge for the family member he may have lost and before the new gang recruit realises it, he or she is a part of that gang lifestyle. But because this new member is blinded by the notion that the gang shares his or her pain and wants to help, he or she does not realise what they are actually signing up for.

Revenge may also take on a more irrational form. Just by disrespecting a rival gang member or trespassing on a rival gang’s turf is sufficient reason to seek revenge on the wrongdoer. The fact that metres, sometimes centimetres, separate opposing gangs means that violence and murder are commonplace, especially when these boundaries are overstepped. As one member of “Dog Pound” in Belize told Kemp (Thomson, 2008b), it is very dangerous to violate another gangs’ territory: “If you disrespect my hood, violate my block, I’m coming for your bitch-ass.” Another member of “George Street” rationalises the irrational violence against other gangs by explaining that they (the gang) need to uphold their standards and their reputation for being dangerous and violent, regardless of the reasoning behind the violence. The unfortunate product of all this revenge-seeking though is that it becomes an unending cycle of violence and it is further fuelled by the drugs and weapons which make these gangs even more dangerous and powerful.

Another example is interfering with a rival gang member’s partner: “And then of course revenge attacks. Violence is always the way to sort out a problem. This happened here in

Eersterus, where one of the gang guys interfered with another guy's girl and then they used violence on him."

Trade

Gangs' existence are not solely reserved for fighting other gangs or for protecting themselves in prison, they are more than often involved in a trade where they will receive some form of monetary reward. As mentioned in a previous basic theme, financial, material, and sexual gain, many gang members do actually join for the gain in finances, material possessions or sexual gratification. The manner in which gangs accumulate these rewards are wide and range from prostitution, where the gang members normally assume the role of the pimp; hijackings, where gangs often sell the cars to a larger syndicate or start up a chop shop; house robberies or store robberies, where gangs often keep the rewards for themselves or split the profit; and drugs, one of the biggest trades in which gangs normally are involved, from selling on the streets to being involved in the mass production of the illegal substances. In order to increase their profit, many gangs collaborate with syndicates or become involved in more than one trade: "For example one coordinator will be involved in drugs, drug trafficking. The other one will be involved in prostitution; the other person will be involved in something like rape or murder, or robberies. And they also work with the big syndicates when it comes to large scale things like car hijackings."

Trade also indicates the amount of control that a gang has over a neighbourhood or community. For example, gangs in East Timor are in control of prostitution as well as drugs and members of the community are only too aware of this (Govender, 2007). In Belize, the drug trade, which involves the local gangs and the Colombian drug cartels, is such a wealthy trade that the police and the military have little to no control over any activities (Thomson, 2008b).

Whether it is drug trafficking, human trafficking, hijackings or robberies, the act itself is extremely powerful and portrays how these gangs can exert complete control over human beings. It is the manner in which they become more powerful.

Culture of violence

Gangs have introduced a culture of violence into society, one where it is commonplace to resolve one's issues with violence: "I don't think their [the gang] getting together is founded on violence *per se*, but they know that with violence they can be successful. And that's

where the sub-culture of violence in South Africa comes from. Violence brings success, in other words, if your wife talks too much, you clout her, she's dead quiet. If the children shout, you shout loud, everyone is quiet. If the father has spoken hard once, that's the brake in the culture. If the guys break into your house, home invasion, they use violence. They always have a weapon. A weapon neutralises your action."

Because using violence has become such an easy manner in which one can retaliate and because everyone is so used to violence, even citizens who are not involved in a gang, communities turn a blind eye when it occurs, and authority figures do not treat it any differently compared to any other crime. As South Africans we have become indifferent and desensitised when we hear about violence or witness it first hand and in doing so the power shifts from the law-abiding citizens and authority figures to the gang and other criminals who are aware that they can use violence and maintain their use of violence without being seriously reprimanded. It has been reported that clashes between gangs in South Africa have become so violent that gangs resorted to petrol bombs, shootings, murder and even rape (Standing, 2006). Through this process, they create the culture of violence that people now find acceptable: "I think if one goes and looks, many gangs that get together do not get together for the sole purpose of starting to commit violence. I don't think so, but in South Africa, we speak about the sub-culture of violence, where norms of violence become generally acceptable. So you get young people who get together, that's also with these vigilante groups and mob justice, as it's known, where guys, where these three guys, locked in the truck and were burnt, the cable thieves. That's a group of people from the community get together, use violence to show their frustration."

Violence has become such a way of life for gangs that it has led to a very casual attitude towards it being developed. Losing fellow gang members and even family members to violence is typical and it is almost as if these gang members have accepted it: "It's a lose-lose situation, because I'm losing my homies, but I can probably lose my family as well" (Thomson, 2008b). The abundance of weapons that gangs own further perpetuates this culture of violence. Gangs fight with weapons and exert their control over others with weapons. It is the way in which they oppose anything that they have a problem with and it is the way in which they make sure they are heard.

Lack of logic and morals

The type of activities in which gangs engage, which is more than often illegal activities, can be attributed to a lack of logic and morals on the part of the gang and the gang members. My interview with the ex-prisoner provided me with many stories regarding how a total lack of logic or morals can play a part in how gang members behave. He could never understand why potential recruits would murder or assault other gang members or wardens just to become part of a gang. Even though he himself engaged in illegal activities, he knew that he would never go as far as murdering someone just to gain a sense of belonging or acceptance. This behaviour, according to him, is due to a lack of logic and morals; the recruit does not possess the logic to understand that what he is about to engage is irrational and incorrect and was also never taught the differences between right and wrong or moral and immoral behaviour. Lack of logic and morals can be accredited to lack of supervision due to absent parental figures and family dysfunction.

Lack of logic can also be applied to turf disputes between rival gangs. In a quote mentioned in the theme of revenge, a member of the “Dog Pound” gang made himself very clear that conflict will arise if a member of a rival gang sets foot in their territory (Thomson, 2008b). The irrationality of this gang member which states that he and his gang believes that certain streets and blocks belong only to them displays a total lack of logic. However, this lack of logic is exacerbated by the fact that many gangs behave in this way by setting up supposed perimeters around “their” area and by members of the community who adhere to these perimeters. The fact that these irrationalities and beliefs are never challenged mean that it will never be retired and will continue as such within gang-infested communities.

Lack of fear

What makes gangs as powerful as they appear to be is a complete lack of fear. They display this lack of fear when they are engaging in violent conflict with rival gangs or authority figures and when they speak about the inevitability of dying in conflict.

Gangs in Belize are aware of the fact that the drug trade is so incredibly strong and wealthy that the police and other authorities such as the military will not be able to stop the trade (Thomson, 2008b). Their lives have become such a whirlwind of illegal activities, being reprimanded for these activities and going back on the streets to continue this behaviour, that they do not see the police as any form of a threat anymore. The police are also outnumbered and thus overpowered and the gangs are aware of this.

When individuals are part of a gang they often have a feeling on invincibility. Many gangs who are highly religious believe that their god will protect them: “God created me to live, so I’m gonna live” (Thomson, 2008b), and thus they have no fear of death.

Gang members feel powerful because of their affiliation with a specific gang. One gang member from “George Street” is paralysed from the waist down due to a gunshot wound thus rendering him immobile to fight rival gangs or even defend himself. Yet he speaks with certain tenacity when referring to how he will someday violently murder the people who caused his paralysis.

Organising Theme: Power

According to Reber and Reber (2001), power is viewed in terms of relationships and in this context is defined as the degree of control that a gang has over another gang or other individuals. The gang itself provides and creates a context in which their power can be exercised. By creating structure and having rules they provide the control and discipline they require to ensure the longevity of their gang so that the gang may exceed the lifetime of any given member. Their behaviour portrays masculinity and the acts signify control and power, something they would require if they were to force their victims into submission. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) referred to three types of gang subcultures that portray a gang’s power sufficiently: the criminal subculture, who will secure income by any means necessary; the conflict subculture, who uses violence as a way of manipulation and triumph; and the retreatist subculture, whose central feature is dealing and consuming drugs. They use violence to resolve any issue they may have and their trade, whatever it might be, portrays their control over human beings and the control system. Power terrifies people and power which falls into the wrong hands is dangerous. Many gangs do have this power; it is how they survive, how they maintain their reputation, and it is how they are recognised.

Global Theme: Conservation

The organising themes of “history” and “power” can be grouped together as a process of conservation. Conservation is defined by Reber and Reber (2001) as the idea that an aspect or a property cannot be altered by any method of transformation or modification of the situation. Tillier (2008) explains that conservation describes a process of creating and maintaining stability, consistency and the status quo. Gangs conserve their environment and maintain stability by acknowledging their history and what they stand for, such as the Number gangs predominantly found in the Western Cape (Standing, 2006). Their story started in the early 1900’s and comprised of black men refusing to work for white employers

in Johannesburg. Nongoloza, their leader, created an army and robbed and plundered white and black people until they were caught in the 1910's. Even though there are many variations of this story, members of the Number are all aware of this piece of history and it is what they still stand for today – to never be oppressed by someone and always be in charge of their own destinies (Standing, 2006). They never waver from traditions and carry out rituals in the manner that it should be carried out.

Through exerting power, gangs maintain consistency; they are able to control and maintain their world and to some extent the world around them, a process which the gang members were not able to experience when they were not part of the gang.

Basic Themes: Labelling; Context; Definitional issues and considerations; Romanticising and commercialisation of gangs

Labelling

"So the label we associate with a gang is not always very clear."

The following four basic themes all deal with the perceptions people carry about gangs. These perceptions are what enable us to decide whether a group is a gang or perhaps another type of group, such as a social group or a vigilante group. What I believe is a gang, may not be a gang in the eyes of social workers or the authority figures and how they define a gang may not be how the gang itself would define it. However, as soon as we attribute a certain quality or characteristic to that group or that individual, we have labelled it. Without even researching the topic, people associate certain characteristics with a gang and this is one of the reasons why there is little consensus with regards to defining a gang. For example, in Kemp's (2008) second book regarding gangs from around the world, he visited Kenya and wanted to find out more about the Mungiki, a group that he defines as a gang. However, many others view them as a vigilante group, a secret sect or a terrorist organisation. When I posed this question to my interviewees, whether or not they believe that the Mungiki, a fierce tribe-like organisation that defies Kenya's government whenever they are not happy with their ideological views or decisions but at the same time used the most violent methods such as decapitations when a member of the community defies them, one interviewee said: "Yes. In context, I would say they are a gang. Because you know, it's about the name, the label."

The danger with labelling is that one might label a group incorrectly, which may cause confusion. It may also cause that group to forever exist with the label of being a gang, regardless of whether they are or are not a gang. When one is labelling a gang the meaning rests entirely on the characteristics which are visible and even then it might not be clear which of the visible characteristics should be considered significant (Harney, as cited in Ball & Curry, 1995).

Context

"That's the thing. That's what I'm saying, you define the context, your own description of what a gang is, what a gang does, what they are composed of, what the variables are, it depends on the context – completely depends on the context ."

The context in which a group is placed will determine how they are perceived. I asked one of my interviewees whether he believed that Jamaica's High End gang, who are affiliated with one specific political party and who views those gangs who are affiliated with an opposing political party as the enemy, whether they would be perceived as a gang in a South African context: "If you think politically motivated, we never referred to the ANC when they were illegal in South Africa as a gang. I mean, they had shared interests; there was a major organisation of members. There was a military wing but is that not the same context as you're referring to now in Jamaica?" The African National Congress (ANC) was referred to as an illegal group but had they been labelled a gang, would that have been what the ANC would have been seen as? The context relates to the events and processes that characterise a particular situation. It also relates to the impact it has on other individuals. If a gang is not seen as a problem or a nuisance or a danger in a certain community, then they will not be labelled a gang in that context. If they are perceived to pose a threat in another community, then they will perhaps be awarded the label of "gang": "As I said, that's typical social sciences research. One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. It depends, I mean, what's the nice academic word, they are pedantic things, I mean, they are fixed, it's language and it's values that you attach to language and words. And that's how you give it meaning and its relative in context." This argument relates to what Knox (1991) says about language as well – it depends on who uses the language and the type of language they use to define a gang. The voice of an individual living in a specific community will most certainly differ from the voice of an individual who is in a position of authority.

It is clear that what people perceive as a gang differs from community to community. It depends on the nature of the group within that community or environment. It may be more

problematic to determine whether a group is a gang when they are active in an above average socioeconomic environment but if that same group is placed in a low socioeconomic environment, the context changes and they may be more easily identified as a gang. Another interviewee explained how our perceptions of gangs from around the world differ: “I think once again it’s relative to a very specific context. I don’t think gangs are formed, I don’t think there is a single gang that was formed because of the same reasons and had the same motives for forming. And I think it’s very, I think when a gang forms, it’s a reactionary thing that’s happening, the forming of a gang. There’s a motivating factor, and our reaction to that motivating factor is to form a gang. And I think it depends on what the context is, once again. What happens in the USA is not the same as what happens here, is not the same as what happens in Europe. It’s not the same as what happens in Japan. You know, the interesting thing is, if you look at Japan for example, I mean, the Jakuza is, they are, it’s organised crime. It’s like the Mafia, but I’ve read a huge amount of research about it where they refer to them as a gang. It’s a gang. The Jakuza is a gang. But have you ever heard of anyone referring to the Mafia as a gang? I’ve never heard that, but why would people refer to the Jakuza as a gang?”

Definitional issues and considerations

“I simply think that from my particular perspective and experience, it is problematic what we term a gang.”

The criminologists and literature alike agree that it is difficult and problematic to define a gang or to reach a consensus on a single definition. Miller (1975) noted that at no point has there ever been an agreement as to what a gang might be defined as. The question “what is a gang, and how would you define a gang?” was posed to every interviewee: “I think firstly of the fact that you need to express yourself very clearly when you speak of ‘gangsters’ versus the ordinary group that gets together, the Trompie gang, which included Trompie, Blikkies and Rooies you know”; “A group of people, more than a certain number probably. Shared interests. Shared frustrations. A sub-culture with values that are different from those of the broad society. A hierarchy of leadership must figure, I think. And perhaps, in other words, there is some or other organisation, organisation of the members around clothes, language. Prescriptions in terms of behaviour.” One interviewee also mentioned the fact that gangs, unlike other groups such as organised crime syndicates, fulfil other needs as well such as the need for belonging and a family-like acceptance: “So, one must be very careful about throwing in the word ‘gang’ when a group of people get together to commit a specific crime or crimes. I think with gang definitions, there are specific needs they have. They fulfil those

needs for one another. In the jail for example, you are lonely, you are away from your family, and you are completely separated from everyone, if you are heterosexual, from your heterosexual relations, where are you suddenly going to find that support of a family setup? It's in a gang. So the gang can very easily start fulfilling them for you" and "And what defines it as a gang, because it has a special existence. It has a leadership. You know, it satisfies certain needs versus a group that meets and then disperses. They scatter, they go their own way." Even though many definitions exist, Knox (1991) is adamant about the fact that regardless of what is included and excluded, the one characteristic that should always be present is some element of crime for a group to be classified as a gang.

The problem with a single definition that is all inclusive is that for the purposes of research social scientists need to narrow the scope of a definition that only include constructs that they require for their studies: "But for the purposes of your studies, you will operationally define a gang, and that's exactly where the problem arises, isn't it, it is relative to context. You said, I think those are the nice academic words you used for it. I think that in a certain context it must be operationally defined. But that's also where all the confusion comes in. Every researcher who does his research has a certain scope, and he has a certain goal with his research, so he wants to include certain things, but exclude others. So he sets his operational definition to fit in with the overall goal of his research and the question he wants to answer. We researchers are quite sly. We are very sly with this kind of thing. So yes, I don't know, I won't, I can't give you an answer. I won't even give you a definition of it." And so a new definition accompanies every new study. With that said, Horowitz (as cited in Schneider & Tilley, 2004) says that due to the unique interest in gangs from a variety of different groups, own definitions will exist and may also be necessary.

The problem with defining a gang may also lie in the fact that it has become a term that is used too loosely: "I think it's the same with the concept of a gang – everyone knows the term but nobody really understands what's meant by it."

Romanticising and commercialisation of gangs

"People romanticise this idea of being in a gang and making quick money and everything."
As stated in the above quote, people sometimes associate being in a gang with making quick and easy money and collecting material possessions faster than one would if one had a legitimate job in mainstream society. It appears to be an incredibly attractive alternative. This perception is unlikely to be clouded by the sacrifices that are to be made when one joins a gang. This perception, as with other perceptions people hold about gangs, also

enable people to decide whether a group is a gang, for they are more likely to perceive this as a 'group' that will provide them with acceptance and monetary rewards, if they carry out the tasks that are given to them, as opposed to a violent gang that reduces the individual's life span and places him or her in constant danger. One interviewee also spoke about the fact that people are not always aware of the reality of gangs: "I think people totally underestimate gangs, and I think people have this romantic idea of a brotherhood and a sisterhood, and these people who understand you, and they have got your back, and I think people have these highly romantic ideas about how it is, but if you look at the reality, I mean, jeez."

Organising Theme: Perceptions

Reber and Reber (2001, p. 519) define perception as "an awareness of the truth of something. This sense is largely nontechnical and connotes a kind of implicit, intuitive insight."

All individuals carry some form of perception of what they would define as a gang. Some immediately relate the term to typical delinquent gangs such as the Bloods or the Crips and other associate the term with individuals that come together that form a group, regardless of whether they engage in criminal activities or social activities. Due to the perceptions that we all carry and the labels that we assign to certain groups it is difficult to pin down one single definition for the term "gang" or "delinquent gang". It is a term that will always be relative to context and as one interviewee said: "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter."

Perceptions may also come to change over time. Knox (1991) explains that because of how society has progressed gangs in too many forms have been described and perceptions of issues such as what a gang is, when a group is a gang and what constitutes gang membership have changed and adapted over time.

Basic themes: Prison gangs versus street gangs; Gangs versus vigilante groups; Gangs versus organised crime syndicates; Male gangs versus female gangs; Gangs versus secret sects; Gangs versus social groups

Prison gangs versus Street gangs

Many discussions during the interviewing process revolved around the differences and similarities regarding specific type of gangs and specific type of groups. One discussion

concerning street gangs versus prison gangs delivered as many similarities as there were differences. Both gangs are agreed upon to fall under the umbrella “delinquent gangs” as both groups have little regard for the law and engage in illegal activities. Prison gangs may be more involved in smuggling illegal narcotics in to the institution whereas street gangs may be more involved in selling illegal narcotics on the street. Both types of gangs mark themselves with tattoos that signify their allegiance with a specific gang. Two very slight differences that were noted during the interviews were (1) even though individuals join street gangs for survival, it is a much greater motivator for inmates to join prison gangs. That is also why some individuals only show temporary allegiance to a gang in prison, simply for the benefits of protection and survival (Knox, 1991); and (2) even though withdrawing from any gang system is a difficult to impossible task to accomplish, it is even more difficult for inmates to withdraw from a prison gang due to the fact that they cannot distance themselves from the members of the gang. One interviewee explained the differences: “In the prison environment, it has a lot to do with survival and young guys are absorbed into a gang and they often join the gang as part of their survival strategy. Without I think them knowing what it really involves. And it’s sort of a big brother system where the big brother offers him protection and then he’ll say ‘to do so you have to join the gang’ and I don’t think they always realise what it then means. And in prison gangs specifically there aren’t very easy ways of getting out of it. They say you must literally be tattooed and they talk of removing the number, the tattoo, and removing the tattoo also has certain repercussions and usually violent action is taken against the person.”

Gangs versus Vigilante groups

“Pagad of course stands for People Against Gangsterism And Drugs which functioned there in America, in the Cape, Western Cape especially, and later blew over here to Laudium and so on, and then to Durban and so on. They also have a ‘criminal background’, if I can say that in inverted commas and that, which is very funny, people don’t know about it, Pagad was at one stage on the FBI’s 10 top terrorists list, because they started developing a criminal element, collecting weapons, arming themselves, smuggling drugs, also on Pagad’s side. That’s how the FBI got to know about them.”

Pagad is just one of many vigilante groups has a question mark above their heads with regards to whether they fall under the heading of “gang”. Vigilante groups are after all a group of people that share similar interests and come together for a specific purpose. If there is a criminal element associated with their activities, one might be able to call them a gang. However Knox (1991) says that groups that engage in civil disobedience but possesses

higher internalised moral imperatives cannot be considered gangs and, unlike gangs, individuals do not join vigilante groups for survival or because of a need for acceptance.

Their intentions are known to be good but unfortunately they sometimes use incorrect and illegal methods to apprehend suspects they believe to be involved in criminal activities. So when the question was posed: 'Would you then define Pagad as a gang to a certain extent?' the response was "No. They are an organised group. I wouldn't define them as a gang, no."

The boundary between gangs and vigilante groups are definitely blurred; whether a vigilante group is really a gang or just an organised group depends on the individual and the perception he has created about that group. It is just as dependent on context, for a vigilante group in one environment and time may be seen as a gang in another environment and time. For example, one interviewee mentioned a group that she perceived to be a gang, dating back more than two thousand years: "If you look, if you go back to the Crusaders in the Biblical times. That was a criminal gang. Under the banner of perhaps their faith and whatever, but at the end of the day they raided and they invaded towns and it was actually a gang if you look very carefully."

Gangs versus Organised crime syndicates

"But a violent gang has a definite aim. They use violence for a certain objective. If they function in a gang structure, but it's very difficult, because it could just as well be a syndicate that uses violence. You get syndicates that get hold of weapons, use violence for cash-in-transit robberies. Is that a gang or is it a syndicate? That's about economic structuring again, what are their objectives? Is it money, you know, that type of thing? What satisfaction do they get out of it? Many of the guys say, 'but, I'm in the syndicate. I'm emotionally happy. I've got no crutch or need of it. I'm only here for the money.'"

The main similarities between gangs and syndicates are that they both have a certain structure and hierarchy to their group and they are both involved in criminal activities. The main differences that were mentioned several times are that (1) gangs satisfy an individual's need for belonging and acceptance, whereas individuals who are in a syndicate do not require an emotional "crutch" to lean on, they are purely involved for the monetary reward; and (2) syndicates meet once every few months to discuss a new task and then they disperse, whereas a gang, which is often associated with camaraderie and brotherhood, may socialise together and meet on a regular basis for various reasons other than to discuss tasks and tactics: "And what defines it as a gang, because it has a special existence. It has a

leadership. You know, it satisfies certain needs versus a group that meets and then disperses. They scatter, they go their own way. Or a syndicate that meets once in six months, plans something to make money and then separates again, you know that kind of thing. These all make it difficult to get definitions."

It should be noted though that the ex-prisoner, who was involved in a syndicate in South Africa for many years before being caught, said that he experienced an intense feeling of belonging when he a part of the syndicate. He associates "brotherhood" with a gang and not with a syndicate but a "sense of belonging" is more associated with a syndicate than with a gang. He explains this by saying that when you are a part of a syndicate you are a part of something big. Many syndicates work together and often he had to do work for more than one syndicate and he always felt as if he belonged to something great and "amazing". He never felt as if the syndicate was a "brotherhood" as the membership in such a group is rather large and believes that it is more fitting for a gang that is smaller and more intimate. He told to me that he enjoyed being part of the syndicate and had fun, not always because of the material gain but because of the feeling he experienced every time he committed an illegal act: "Dit was elke keer 'n moerse kick en 'n rush."

Male gangs versus Female gangs

"With women there are gangs too, but I don't think it's so obvious that they are so structured, but it's more a case of a group of women who will get together and a shared identity and objective, than it really being the case, and many times in the case of the female gangs there is a central person who is sometimes known as a mama or whatever, but I don't think it's so serious that they regard themselves as a gang, but if you look at the definitions, then female gangs still fall under that."

Female gangs share many of the traits one finds in male gangs and it is because of those traits that they share that they are characterised and defined under the same heading as one would define a male gang. Females join female gangs for many of the same reasons males join male gangs: they have a need to be accepted; they want to belong somewhere and have a family; and they join for survival. They also define and distinguish themselves from other gangs with clothes and tattoos like male gangs do: "But just like boys' gangs and men's gangs, they also have, they enjoy the thrill of being a member of a gang, the common language, the lingo, the clothes, the excitement, the hedonism, the living-in-the-now, so many similarities with boys' gangs in that respect." Female gangs differ from male gangs with regards to their leadership style: "But also unlike boys' gangs, where female gangs

differ a lot from men's and boys' gangs for example is that the leadership is a very interesting issue for me in female gangs. Leadership in female gangs is much more democratic. Decisions are made on a consensus basis, whereas boys have a much more hierarchic structure. There are no democratic decisions; there is no discussion, that kind of thing. So, I find that tremendously interesting."

Gangs versus Secret Sects

"Any group that is a secret is a danger to society." This was the response that Ross Kemp (Thomson, 2008a) received after asking an academic at the University of Nairobi whether he thinks the Mungiki is a gang. Kemp, on the other hand, believes that the Mungiki is a gang because they function as a group, are allegedly involved in numerous criminal activities and have many traditions to which the members must adhere. They also openly oppose social decisions that are made, such as when President Kibaki was reinstated as president in 2007. It was alleged that the Mungiki were responsible for the violent riots and deaths that occurred during that time.

Many members of the communities in Kenya refer to the Mungiki as a group that helps them when the government no longer does, almost like a vigilante group. Even though the Mungiki penetrates these communities and force these already poor residents to pay them a large fee in return for protection, safety and basic necessities such as water and electricity, the members of the community believe that because the government does not help at all, the Mungiki is an asset and not a danger. Other individuals refer to the Mungiki as a secret sect that is dangerous and should be stopped at all costs. The police have openly declared war on the Mungiki and believe that they are a threat to the people of Kenya.

According the defining criteria of a delinquent gang which I have set out in chapter two, the Mungiki fits the profile of a delinquent gang:

- They are an identifiable group of three or more people;
- They are a group that is highly organised and have a leadership structure as well as rules and guidelines that serve as rules of action that specifies appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for the members of the group;
- The Mungiki regulates its members' actions;
- They share common goals, interests, and frustrations;
- They alledegly engage in law-violation behaviour;
- They openly oppose the moral validity of the social order or norms;

- They are territorial;
- They have a long and rich history of why they were established;
- They have traditions which they always adhere to, particularly initiation traditions which they require all new recruits to successfully complete.

Ultimately, it depends on the context and the individual and what his or her reality is regarding a gang. The Mungiki may not be seen as a gang in Kenya but placed in a different context, such as South Africa, they may have a possibility of being labelled as a gang. They fit my defining criteria for a delinquent gang but this is my reality and how I see it and someone else may have a different opinion and a different set of criteria. What we see and what we perceive plays a big role in how we construct and define different groups. I see a group which I perceive to be a gang but the poverty-stricken resident of a slum on the outskirts of Nairobi see a group that is helping him to survive for another day.

Gangs versus Social Groups

The term “gang” is often used very loosely which creates confusion. Many social groups such as a group of young boys playing together will refer to themselves as a gang. For the normal boy, says Puffer (as cited in Goldstein, 1991) the play group is the gang. The most common example which was mentioned by the ex-prisoner is “Trompie en die Boksom Bende”, a group of young Afrikaans boys who played together and went to school together and entertained myself and numerous young audiences in the afternoons on television. They referred to themselves as a gang and even though they frequently engaged in mischievous activities they did not engage in serious law-violation behaviour and can thus not be defined as a delinquent gang.

Trompie’s gang fits some of the defining criteria for a delinquent gang such as having rules, being identifiable and sharing common goals and interests. However, they do not openly oppose the moral validity of the social order or norms and they do not engage in illegal activities. Thus a social group lacks the criminal intent that is so ubiquitous among delinquent gangs and it is the most common difference between these two types of groups. So too does Knox (1991) say that the most essential feature of a criminal gang is the fact that they frequently engage in law-violation behaviour whereas social groups never come under the attention of the criminal justice system and behave in manners which is acceptable to society (Klein & Crawford, 1967).

Organising Theme: Gangs versus "Gangs"

This theme is titled "Gangs versus 'Gangs'" to portray the adjacent relationship between what is perceived to be a gang and what is perceived not to be a gang. It is also titled as such to explain the many types of gangs that one finds, some of which are mentioned here. Gangs versus "gangs" are closely related to the theme of "perception" because it is the perception that one formulates about a group that will determine whether one believes that it is truly a gang or just a group that bears some similarities to that of a gang.

Global Theme: Context

The two organising themes, "perception" and "gangs versus 'gangs'" can be grouped together under the global theme "context".

Reber and Reber (2001, p. 153) defines context as "those events or processes that characterise a particular situation and have an impact on an individual's behaviour" and "the specific circumstances within which an action or event takes place."

With regards to defining a gang or distinguishing a gang it would depend on the events and processes, or the circumstances, as well as one's perception of those events and processes that would enable one to decide on what constitutes a gang and what does not constitute a gang. The key to understanding gangs is to place them in the relevant social contexts which help to shape their lives, say Curry and Decker (2003). Goldstein (1991) explains that because we are constantly dealing with different types of human groups in ever changing political and economic conditions, the immediate definition of a gang will always be relative to that specific context. And because gangs differ from one context to the other, it would be most unhelpful according to Schneider and Tilley (2004) to combine every trait and every function of every gang to define gangs as a whole.

Conclusion

The importance of the stories shared by the research participants is reflected in the rich and varied data regarding gangs. For several decades the question of whether or not a single definition for delinquent gangs can be constructed has been open to debate, but Becvar and Becvar (2006) make us aware of the socially constructed world of shared meaning making and that greater emphasis should be placed on context, the social constructions of

individuals, groups and problems and on the creation of stories with the knowledge that each story functions as a reality for the person telling the story (Lurie, 2007).

The results reported in this chapter serve as a co-construction between myself, the researcher, and the story-tellers, the research participants and together we have created a reality of how we view gangs and gang life. The literature tied to the results also serves as a co-construction of the reality of gangs reported here, as literature initiates ideas and conversations.

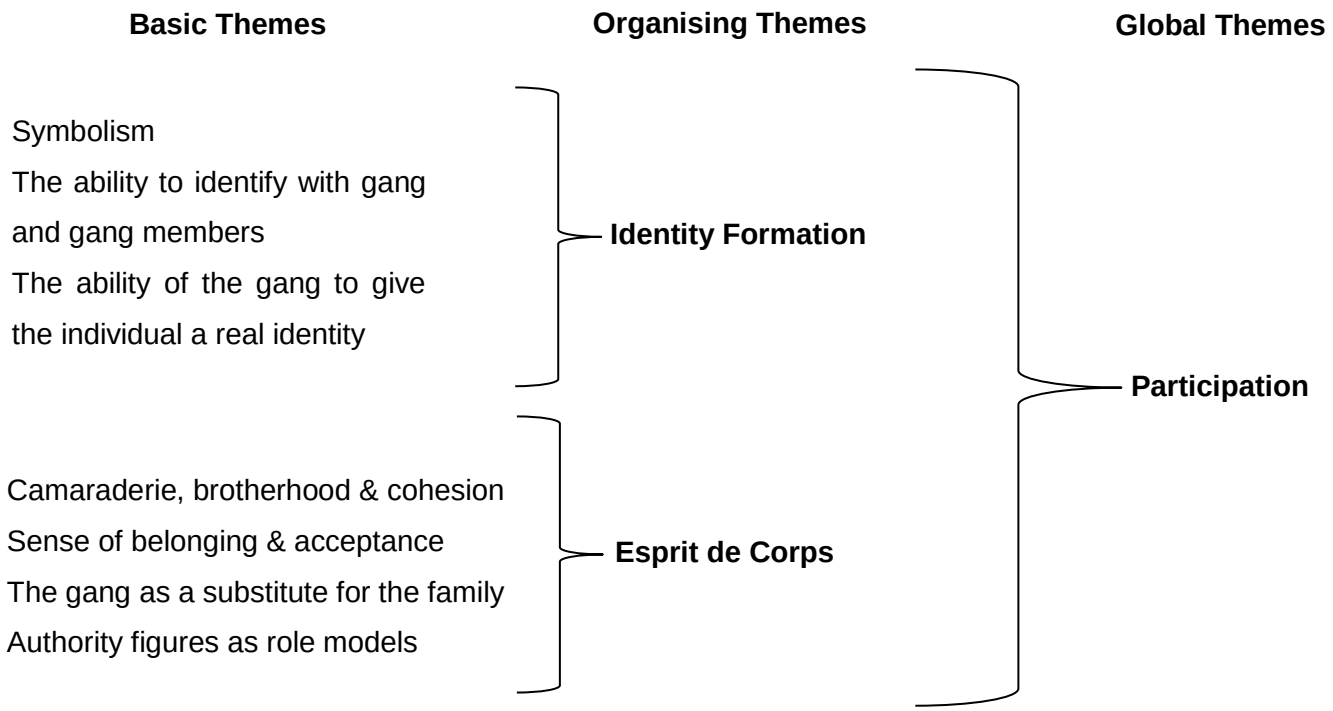
The purpose of the results reported here was not to limit the reader to a reductionist approach of gangs but to rather broaden the reader's perspective on all the possibilities of what gangs can be. It is my hope that it will spark interest and debates regarding this fascinating phenomenon and that we will eventually gain an even better understanding of gangs and gang life.

Chapter Five: Integration

Introduction

The following chapter is an integration and portrayal of the prospective or current gang member and the many variables that influence him or her throughout life. Four figures will be represented in this chapter. The first figure represents the integrated thematic network which was portrayed and discussed in the previous chapter. The second figure represents a summary of the basic, organising and global themes in the form of a 3D model. The third figure is a Time Cable which symbolises the ecology of gangs and the influences that an individual may experience and the fourth model represents an adapted time cable which illustrates a hypothetical gang member and the variables that may influence him at a specific time in his life. The 3D model and the Time Cable represent the projection of a less understood set of data or observations onto a more understood and defined structure.

Summary of Integrated Thematic Network



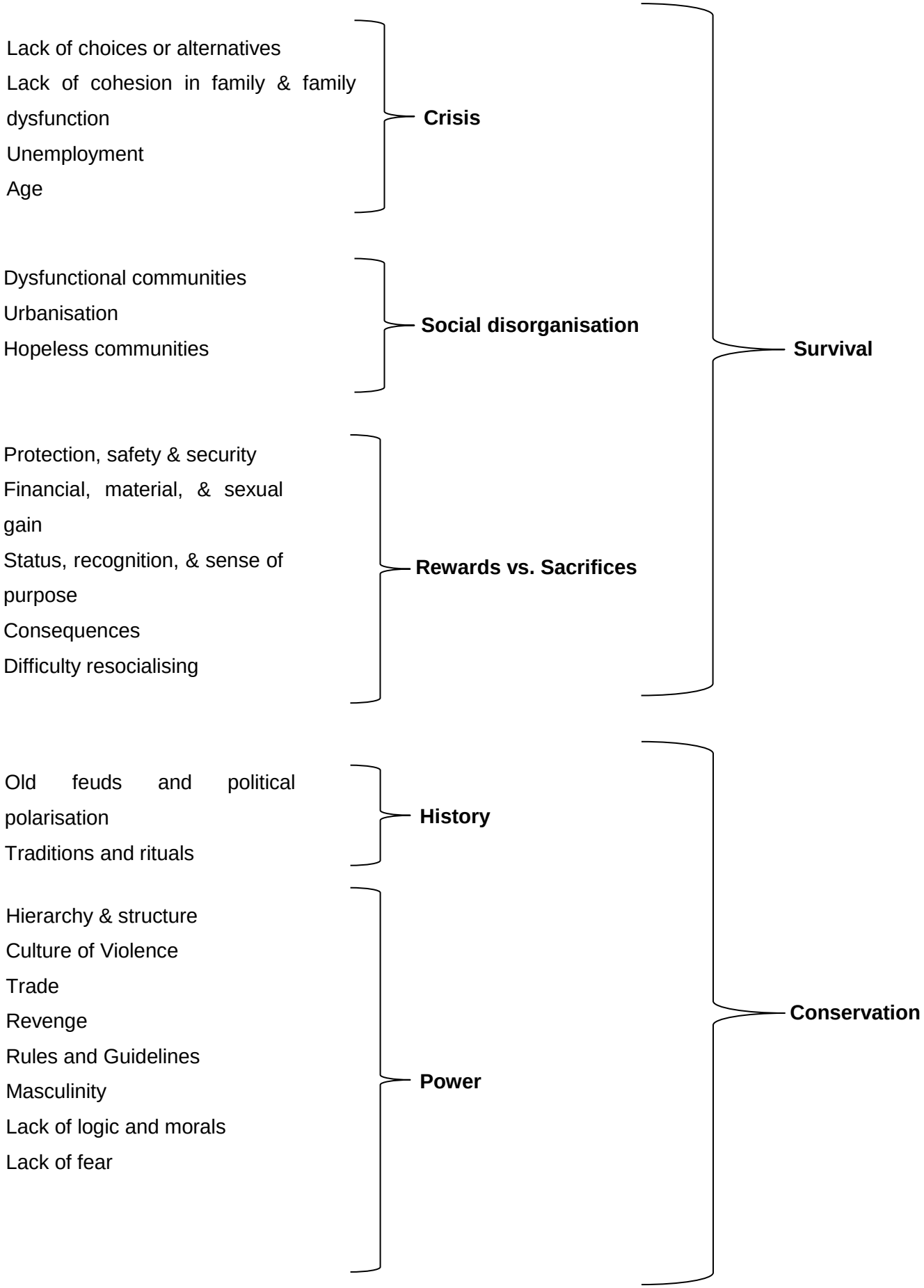


Figure 5.1. Integrated thematic network

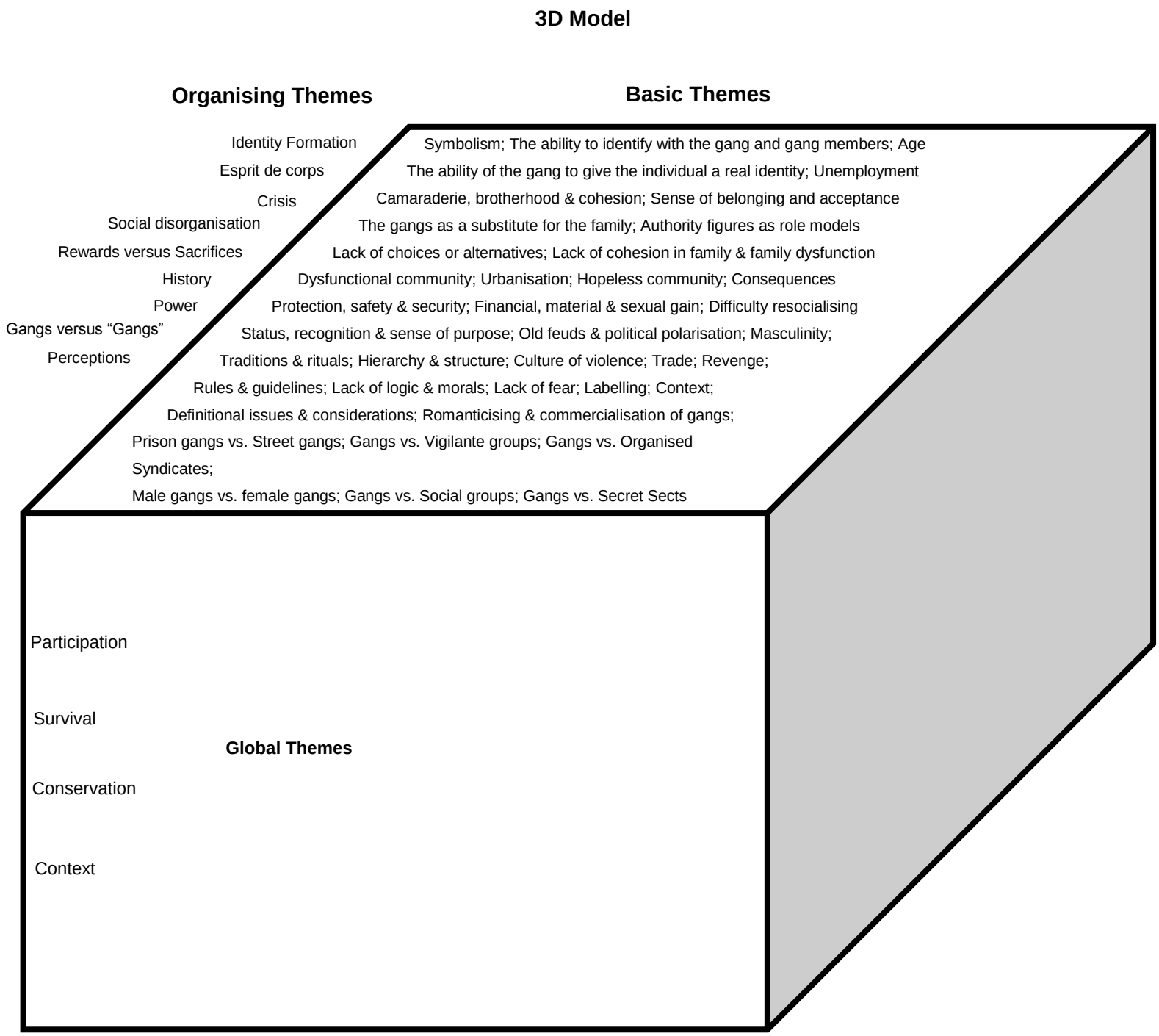


Figure 5.2. 3D Model. Summary of basic, organising, and global themes.

Figure 5.2 also represents the interconnectedness between the levels of themes, and that each theme results into a greater and more overarching theme. The idea that the basic, organising, and global themes are all dependent and related to each other is portrayed here.

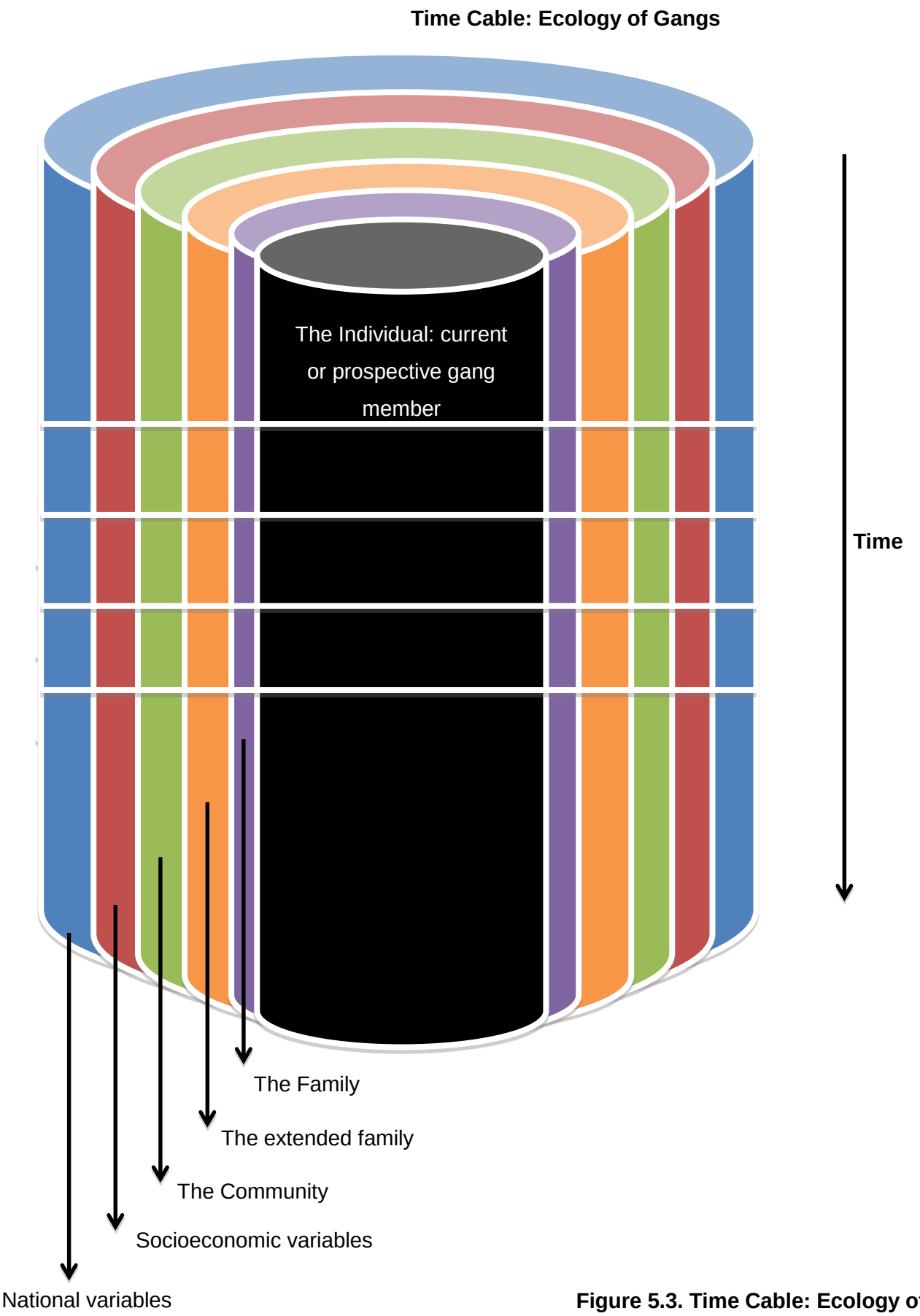


Figure 5.3. Time Cable: Ecology of Gangs.
(Adapted from Hoffman, 1983, p. 42).

Figure 5.2, the 3D model which summarised the themes discussed in Chapter Four, introduces Figure 5.3, which represents the time cable adapted from Hoffman (1983, p. 42). This Time Cable depicts the ecology of gangs: the multiple variables that influence a prospective or current gang member at a specific time. The aim of the time cable is to enhance the reader's understanding of the themes discussed in Chapter Four and how it relates to the individual.

As illustrated in Figure 5.3, the individual is placed in the centre of the time cable and all other variables are constantly revolving around the individual. This implies that at any time there may be variables that negatively influence the individual which ultimately results in the individual joining a gang. Each cylinder depicts a different influence on the individual. The first cylinder around the individual represents the nuclear family; the second cylinder represents the extended family; the third cylinder represents the community; the fourth cylinder represents socioeconomic variables; and the fifth and final cylinder represents the occurrences on a national level, such as political changes, which may influence the individual.

The arrow next to the cylinder is representative of time that is elapsing in the individual's life and the horizontal lines on the cylinders indicate specific times in the individual's life in which something may have occurred which exacerbated his or her chances of becoming a member of a gang. For example, the first horizontal line may indicate a change in the political climate in a country, which causes conflict to erupt and previously tight-knit communities to become uprooted. The second line may indicate severe family dysfunction. The third line can be indicative of socioeconomic variables such as poverty and the fourth horizontal line indicates an increase in crime in the community.

Each cylinder or variable may also have an influence on another cylinder or variable, which in turn influences the individual. For example, a divorce in the family may have been the result of socioeconomic variables such as financial hardship. The individual is now not only living in poverty but also in a single-parent household. The lack of guidance, supervision and financial support can be the cause of the individual joining a gang. The gang is able to provide the new gang member with a sense of guidance, familial acceptance and monetary rewards.

Time Cable Applied to a Hypothetical Situation

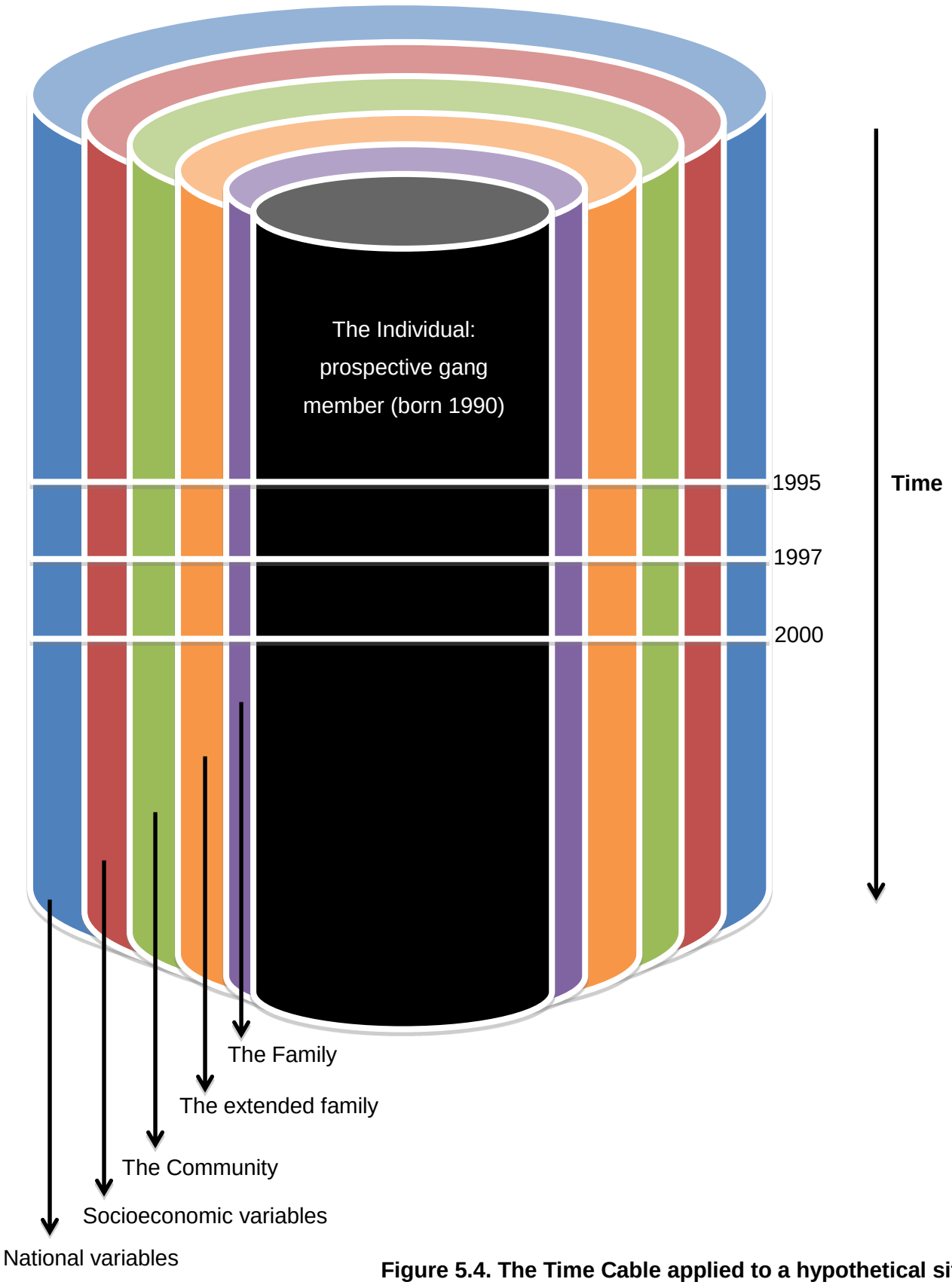


Figure 5.4. The Time Cable applied to a hypothetical situation.
(Adapted from Hoffman, 1983, p. 42).

Figure 5.4 represents the Time Cable adapted from Hoffman (1983, p.42) applied to a hypothetical situation. The aim of this section is to collate the themes discussed in Chapter Four with Hoffman's (1983, p.42) time cable and relate it to a hypothetical situation which will enable the reader to understand how the thematic network relates to the Time Cable.

As with the previous Time Cable depicted in Figure 5.3, the individual is placed in the centre of the Time Cable with the other variables constantly revolving around the individual. Each cylinder either depicts the nuclear family, the extended family, the community, socioeconomic variables or occurrences on a national level, all of which may influence the individual at any given time in his or her life. A particular gang is also surrounded by evolving themes and processes in the wider ecology of the gang itself.

The hypothetical situation tells the story of an individual born in **1990**. In **1995**, the individual was exposed to **family** dysfunction, represented by the organising theme of "crisis", when his parents decided to divorce after many years of severe conflict characterised by both parents being heavy drinkers and the father being physically abusive towards his wife. The dynamics in this family is also representative of the dynamics in the community, which is characterised by violence, crime and drug abuse. This dysfunctional community represents the organising theme of "social disorganisation". The father disappeared out of their lives and the now single mother had to take care of her child. In order to pay the bills and ensure that her child has food in his stomach, the mother was forced to get a job and work long hours. Her drinking problem only got worse and not knowing where his estranged father is, the young boy was taken away from his mother by social workers and was taken in by his **extended family** in **1997.** Never having any friends or some form of a support structure, the young boy was pleasantly surprised at how quickly and easily he was accepted into the crowd which his older cousins hung out with. This new found acceptance is represented by the organising theme of "esprit de corps". In **2000**, the **community** started facing numerous challenges such as the decline in employment opportunities for its members. This was due to a **national** recession that the country was facing. This in turn caused many individuals to choose alternative pathways such as crime to achieve some form of monetary rewards. The young boy, aware of the fact that his extended family is struggling financially, decided to become an active member in his cousins' gang. Even though he always had cash now and was able to take care of his family, he had to sacrifice a lot for this to happen. During his initiation, he had to kill a member of a rival gang as so many others had to do before him. The consequence of him wanting material goods and the initiation is represented by the organising themes "rewards versus sacrifices" and "history". The next five years were characterised by him and his gang growing stronger and more powerful. He dropped out of

school when he joined the gang and with no future prospects he knew that his life started and will end as an active member in the gang. The gang was known for its violent methods of coercing members of the poverty-stricken community to do their bidding. This represents the organising theme of “power”. The gang was able to give this extremely young boy something that he never experienced in his life; they gave him a real identity and sense of purpose, represented by the organising themes of “identity formation” and “esprit de corps”.

Conclusion

The vacuum that the individual experienced in his family, in his extended family and his community provided a backdrop for him which ultimately exacerbated his eventual joining of a gang. One could argue that if his own parents did not divorce or abused alcohol as much, or if his extended family provided more supervision for the younger children in the family, or if the community decided to handle the financial crisis better, this individual may not have ended up in a gang.

The aim of the 3D model and Time Cable (Hoffman, 1983, p.42) was to project the results discussed in Chapter Four onto a more understood and defined structure. Through this, the reader is better able to understand how certain variables are likely to influence the individual. The figures depicted in this chapter are also applicable to the gang and not just the individual. Factors such as the community, socioeconomic variables and national occurrences are of particular importance to the gang itself. The circumstances surrounding the community such as financial hardship and national occurrences such as high unemployment rates and a recession will cause the gang to perhaps be more active or commit more crime and violence.

However, this also begs the question as to whether it is the gang that directs the activities of the members or whether the members direct the activities of the gang. Schneider and Tilley (2004) argue for the former point but perhaps the answer is more dependent on the context in which these gangs find themselves. Gangs with a strong historical undertone will most probably act in a manner that would fit in with what the gang stands for but members who form a gang for reasons such as camaraderie and acceptance and who eventually started engaging in illegal activities are perhaps directing the gang. Many gangs are also in the service of national gang organizations, such as the “Nations” or the “Folk” group of gangs in the United States.

Regardless of the direction of the activities, one element that will never change is the fact that there will always be some form of influence on the prospective or current gang member and on the gang. If the gang members were offered instant employment and housing in a safe community there is an overwhelming chance that they might leave their gang. Of course, many gangs are systems which contain and enslave the individual member for life and the only way out may be to die by suicide or in violent confrontation. If an individual grew up in a functioning and healthy community with adequate supervision and a proper education his chances might also have been significantly less in joining a gang. I am by no means attempting to avoid that human factor of *choice* that comes into play but one cannot make light of the various external factors that play a role in creating gangs and gang members.

In conclusion, it is my hope that this chapter completes the collation of a picture of the gang member, the gang and gang life for the reader. And while the information provided in this study can only be seen as complementary and not as a replacement for existing information, the Time Cable on the ecology of gangs portrayed in this chapter can perhaps be perceived as a stepping stone on which researchers can build new information and include more variables that influence the gang member and the gang itself, until we have reached a point where the gang phenomenon is fully understood.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter attempts to evaluate the research in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. Recommendations for future research will also be provided and the final section of this chapter will be reserved for reflecting on the impact the research had on me.

Evaluating the Research

In this study I set out to explore delinquent gangs and attempted to situate them within the context in which they are defined as such. The goal was to engage with knowledgeable individuals and evaluate audio-visual material, both within the field of gangs. Through this the objectives of the research were met, which were to collate a picture of gangs and gang life as described by knowledgeable sources and create an ecologically powerful model about gangs. The process of co-constructing a powerful narrative with my research participants highlights the complex and rich data which was extracted from each source and the audio-visual material was able to illustrate and colour in the picture painted by each research participant.

The following global themes emerged from the data:

- **Participation:** This theme is related to the individual, or the gang member, and illustrates the process of the individual taking part in interpersonal exchange as well as the individual's involvement with others (Tillier, 2008). An individual's struggle with finding an identity and forming this identity within the context of a gang and the gang members' feeling of esprit de corps, all form part of the process of participation**;**

- **Survival:** Survival as a global theme is also related to the individual, or the gang member, and his process of surviving at all costs. The organising theme "crisis" referred to an interruption that the individual experiences which is uncontrollable and may result in the eventual joining of a gang – the choice in joining a gang is an act of survival in itself: the individual wants to survive the crisis as well as remain alive and the process of survival that he or she chooses is by joining a gang. This is similar with regards to the second organising theme, "social disorganisation". The only manner in which the individual believes he or she can survive the circumstances of his or her setting is by joining a gang. The third organising theme, "rewards versus sacrifices",

also describes a desire for survival that is so intense the gang member is willing to sacrifice a lot in return for protection and safety. The need to survive is particularly strong in prison; an individual would rather become a “wyfie” and have sex with someone than being mudered for refusing;

- **Conservation:** The organising themes of “history” and “power” were grouped together to form the global theme of conservation. Conservation illustrates the process of creating and maintaining stability, consistency and the status quo (Tillier, 2008). Gangs conserve their environment and maintain stability by acknowledging their history and what they stand for. Through exerting power, gangs maintain their own consistency; they are able to control and maintain their world and to some extent the world around them, a process which the gang members were not able to experience when they were not part of the gang;

- **Context:** This theme is perhaps the most important of all the global themes as it embodies the gist of the study. To define a gang, it would depend on the events and processes, or the circumstances, as well as one’s perception of those events and processes that would enable one to decide on what constitutes a gang and what does not constitute a gang. The key to understanding gangs is to place them in the relevant social contexts which help to shape their lives, say Curry and Decker (2003). Goldstein (1991) explains that because we are constantly dealing with different types of human groups in ever changing political and economic conditions, the immediate definition of a gang will always be relative to that specific context. And because gangs differ from one context to the other it would be most unhelpful according to Schneider and Tilley (2004) to combine every trait and every function of every gang to define gangs as a whole;

- The themes discussed above and in the results chapter also formed part of an ecological model depicted in Chapter Five, which portrays the prospective or current gang member and the many variables that influences him or her. The individual’s family, the extended family, the community he or she is embedded in, the socioeconomic variables that influence the individual and occurrences on a national level were all factors discussed and reflected on the model.

Strengths of the Study

This study is embedded in a social constructionist theoretical framework, which is consistent with the stories about gangs that were emphasised and analysed. Social constructionism, according to Speed (as cited in Hsu, 2005), holds that knowledge is a result of social interaction and processes, which provided the backdrop for the research participants to interact with one another as well as with me, the researcher, and through this process we created new realities and knowledge and meanings about gangs. This process enabled me to explore the contexts in which gangs form, thrive and maintain themselves. The lives of gang members were also given expression and highlighted the link between the crises that individuals experience in their everyday lives and the eventual joining of a gang as a solution to their problem. This context also gave me the space to intertwine my own assumptions, feelings and questions into the text (Lurie, 2007) and so the research becomes a co-construction of meaning and multiple realities come together which is contributed by the available literature, the thoughts and ideas of the researcher, the stories of the research participants and the illustrations of the audio-visual material.This study adds another perspective to understanding gangs and it also contributes to the many other perspectives on gangs. Thus, this study can be seen as complementing the existing information on gangs as opposed to being a replacement thereof. Due to the complementary nature of this study, the narratives shared in this study cannot be generalised to all gangs or to other untapped views and opinions on the subject. Owen (1992) explains that if results such as these were generalised, one would presume that there exists only a single truth on the subject and that all other views or possibilities should be eliminated. However, because the objective of the study was never to create a single truth, this study rather attempts to enrich and broaden our understanding on the complexity of gangs as a social phenomenon.

The cybernetic epistemological stance that was taken in this study allowed me to become part of the research participants' social interaction system. Being part of the system and not just being an observer of the system also enabled me to experience and understand the stories of the research participants from as closely as possible as I essentially helped to construct the stories. Even though I have attempted to remain true to my own worldviews it would have been imprudent not to acknowledge them and so the results are a collation of my own worldviews and those of the research participants. It should however also be noted that I never assumed the role of the expert and my own realities were never imposed onto the research participants.

The interpretive research paradigm, which involves the understanding of people's subjective experiences and what is real for them and includes interaction and listening to people in order to make sense of their experiences (Terre Blanche *et al.,* 2006b), enabled me to harness the power of language which helped me understand the social phenomenon of gangs. Instead of focusing on isolating and controlling variables the importance of language and social behaviours became significant and the social meaning in the messages I received from the research participants and the gang members in the audio-visual material did not become distorted.

Many of the questions posed to the criminologists made them reconsider what we know and understand about gangs. I contribute this spark in interest in the criminologists to my own desire to need to know and understand more about gangs. I am by no means attempting paint myself as the expert on gangs but I do believe that the subject has been studied in a very reductionist manner and perhaps my complex and sometimes strange questions will be the catalyst for more interesting and ground breaking research, especially in the field of defining a gang in context. I have thus empowered many of my research participants and made them aware of new and untouched possibilities within the field of gangs.

Trustworthiness in this study, which Healy and Perry (as cited in Golafshani, 2003) hold should be judged by its own paradigm's terms, was achieved by acknowledging that the results in this study are subject-oriented and it was obtained from the lived and perceived experiences of humans. Trustworthiness was also achieved by disclosing my orientation (Stiles, 1993), in that I have explained the expectations for the study to the research participants, which includes any preconceptions, values, orientations and theoretical commitments. As these disclosures help the readers' as much as the participants put my interpretations into perspective it was important to mention that in this study I departed from a social constructionist, cybernetic framework. The social and cultural context was also explained by stating shared viewpoints as well as providing information on the circumstances under which data was gathered (Stiles, 1993). Cycling between interpretation and observation, which is a continual process of interpretation, also proved trustworthiness in the study as I "checked in" with the participants and provided them with the opportunity to add and correct the interpretations I conduced from the interviews (Stiles, 1993). Furthermore, excerpts from the interview transcripts were included in the interpretations so as to justify specific interpretations that were made (Stiles, 1993).

Credibility in my study was also achieved via triangulation. Erlandson *et al.* (as cited in de Vos, 2002) write that triangulation is a method where the researcher will seek out multiple

types of sources that can provide insights about the same events or relationships. In my study, I decided to interview six criminologists specialising in gangs, interview an ex-prison member who was exposed to gangs and gang life while in prison, and view audio-visual material of gangs around the globe. Thus, my confidence in getting a concise picture of gangs from three different angles is greater. My initial opinion was that criminologists would have insights that the ex-prisoner would not have, that the ex-prisoner would share stories that the criminologists would not know of, and that the audio-visual material would better portray the context of gangs via images and use of language.

Limitations of the Study

The interpretations and meanings constructed in this study would most likely be different if another researcher had to interpret the data. This is due to the fact that my perceptions and interpretations are influenced by my own experiences and subjective views on the subject of gangs. The results produced in this study are associated with my worldview, and even though I have attempted to refrain from only selecting data that would confirm the meanings I have identified and have endeavoured to include data that contests these meanings, it is indeed in the nature of my study to rather gather data that supports my interpretations as it validates what I have reported.

It is difficult for a qualitative researcher to be impartial due to the subjective manner in which they view the world (Hyson, 2007). Nonetheless, even though my interpretations are influenced by my own experiences and opinions, the reliability of this study is maintained by remaining authentic to the participants' worldviews. (Hyson, 2007).

Hyson (2007) also mentions that one's personal interviewing style may have an impact on the interviewing process. The use of a dictaphone may cause the participants to feel vulnerable, as was the case with two of my participants. Instead, I had to take extensive notes of the interview, which may have caused me to omit something important or forget an interesting quote, which in turn can lead to data that is not as rich as another participant's interview. Open-ended questions may also cause the participant to feel vulnerable, says Hyson (2007), my own worldview could have contributed to my line of enquiry, which in turn influences the direction of the interview.

Level of trust and rapport between participant and researcher can also influence the study. Hyson (2007) explains that establishing rapport is dependent on the specific combination of individuals and can sometimes be easier than other times. It is thus inevitable that one will

be able to establish a good level of trust and rapport easier with some than with others. I found that I struggled to establish good conversation with those participants who kept on postponing the interviews. I also found that I established rapport more easily with the female interviewees than the male interviewees. Better rapport and a higher level of trust may have impacted the study positively whereas less trust may have impacted the study negatively.

Even though this study fits the aims of qualitative research where small samples are used to obtain rich information, I would personally have appreciated one more ex-prisoner or ex-gang member to interview. I am incredibly grateful for the ex-prisoner who I was able to interview and how he was able to contribute to the study but one more individual who was either in a gang or have been exposed to gang life would have perhaps given me a different perspective to the one obtained from my ex-prisoner interviewee, which would have provided me with even richer data than I already had. The reason why I was only able to interview one such as person was because of the difficulty in convincing such individuals to engage with me and tell me their stories.

Recommendations for Future Research

From the relevant literature it appears that research is mostly focused on the gang as opposed to the individual gang member. And even though this research also focuses on the ecology of gangs and the gang as a system and provides a model that is applicable to the individual, it would be beneficial to understand the individual more intently. A gang is after all made up of individuals who influence other individuals and gang members as well as the gang itself. The individual has always been studied in a very superficial manner and one suggestion would be to conduct numerous case studies on various gang members. This would involve the investigation and storytelling of the individual from early childhood up to the point where he or she has joined the gang. Is important to understand the life story of the individual who joins a gang; this is indeed what occurs when experts delve deep into the psyches of serial killers: they attempt to discover what the turning point was in that individual's life for things to eventually go so horribly wrong. That is not to say that nothing has been investigated regarding the gang member and why he or she joined, research has indeed come a long way and we are now aware of factors such as social disorganisation and the breakdown of the family which can play a role in the gang member's life. The problem however is that not all individuals who come from dysfunctional homes and environments end up joining gangs. If this was the case then a large majority of South Africa and the rest of the world would be involved in gang activities and this is clearly not the case. One could perhaps hypothesise that *choice* plays a large role but even that needs to be narrowed down to something more concrete.

A significant amount of attention has been devoted to definitional issues and considerations of delinquent gangs in this study. The discussions provided in this study are a continuation of the topic as it is discussed in the majority of the literature. It is difficult to say or predict whether literature and scholars alike will ever agree on one all-encompassing definition and it is perhaps unhealthy to only have one definition of delinquent gangs as they are constantly evolving with the political and economic climate of their context. It is to be expected that each study will have its own set of criteria when it is investigating delinquent gangs as it was done in this study as well. One suggestion for future research would be to construct one broad set of definitional criteria for delinquent gangs and when the need arises to change the definition to suit the needs of the study, the researcher can instead place more emphasis on one or more variables of the set criteria as opposed to altering the entire definition from start. With that said, another suggestion for future research is to focus on the various criteria studies use to define delinquent gangs. From there on a model can be created with the possible criteria to be included when defining delinquent gangs.

More investigation into the criteria involved in defining delinquent gangs will automatically force researchers to pay more attention to the role that context plays when investigating delinquent gangs. When gangs are placed into the context they are forming and maintaining themselves, the differences between them and other groups such as syndicates or vigilante groups are not as obvious as one might think. It will place the researcher in a position where he or she would have to consider whether the differences between these groups are as apparent as it is normally portrayed. Pagad, a vigilante group predominantly found in the Western Cape, has been labelled as just another gang by the police (Dixon & Johns, 2001), and Mapogo a Mathamaga's (another vigilante group often found in old Transvaal areas) use of violence and civilian justice display similar characteristics to that of the behaviour normally found among gangs (Von Schnitzler *et al*., 2001). These are but two examples that has to beg the question as to whether the modern gang fits into the reductionist views of early researchers of the gang phenomenon.

One interviewee who held a particular interest in female gangs made me aware of the fact that female gangs are not studied to the same extent as the mainstream male gangs. This can be attributed to the fact that male gangs are more common than female gangs and that female gangs are often labelled as a group sharing similar goals as opposed to a "gang". The word "gang" is often associated with violence and masculinity and thus one can argue that female gangs do not fit this stereotype and are thus mislabelled as something else. That is not to say that female gangs are not violent but the perception that society holds about women and men causes us to view female gangs differently. This interviewee also explained

that there is a total lack of research done on female gangs in South Africa, thus the recommendation for future research is that this topic should be pursued and investigated on a similar level as it has been done with male gangs. This would enable researchers to highlight what female gangs have in common with male gangs and what their differences are. Investigating female gangs in the context in which they form and maintain themselves would also allow us to understand why they formed and what their purposes are: be it for surivival, acceptance, or companionship, to name a few. It would also help us comprehend why they are often mislabelled as something other than a gang.

Conclusion: Reflections of the Researcher

This study provided valuable insight and information regarding the complex world of gangs and gang life. The themes identified were helpful in describing and understanding the nature of the individual gang member and the multifaceted interplay between the individual and the group. A global theme such as “survival” illustrated the powerful desire that an individual has to continue with life regardless of the costs involved. The need for an individual to survive and be accepted is so strong that we he or she will constantly find ways in which this need can be satisfied. “Conservation” demonstrated the group’s aspiration to maintain stability and the status quo. Neither of these themes can hold if there is no input from both the gang member and the gang thus there is a constant exchange of energies between individual and group. Not only did the themes generated from this study provide insight into the complex world of gangs and gang life but it was also helpful in describing the formation and maintenance of gangs. How gangs form, why they form and why they continue with their activities were portrayed in the organising themes of “identity formation”, “esprit de corps”, “crisis” and “social disorganisation” and the global themes of “participation” and “conservation”.

Valuable information regarding the context in which gangs function was provided in this study. Due to context being so powerful it illustrates many issues such as the fact that no gang is the same and that one man’s gang may be another man’s source of protection. It portrays the issue which literature has been struggling with for decades, namely the fact that defining a gang is not a black and white situation but is rather infiltrated with many different shades of grey. I have come to the conclusion that for the purposes of researching gangs, each researcher will construct his or her own definition or perhaps use a different source’s definition provided that it is suitable for the study but defining a gang will always be dependent on the context. The manner in which I have defined gangs for this study may lie in stark contradiction with how someone else will define a gang. That is not to say that my

definition or someone else's definition is more correct, rather our perceptions of gangs and the way in which we interpret situations cause our definitions to differ. The power of perception is thus demonstrated in this study as well and ultimately gangs started and are still in existence due to the metaphors and the labels that we created in the first place.

While the findings reported in this study cannot be generalised, I believe that I have painted an accurate and realistic picture of gangs and gang life to the reader. I have refrained from dehumanising gangs and gang members by calling them "gangsters" but I did not make light of the fact that many gangs are incredibly violent and frequently engage in law-violation behaviour. I have also shifted away from the view that the gang member is inherently bad and rather focused on the notion that one's environment plays an infinite role in one's choice to join or not join a gang.

This study provided me with the opportunity to express the powerful interest that I hold regarding gangs. It gave me the chance to show what I already knew while at the same time enrich my knowledge with what I did not know. I learned so much from literature and my interviewees alike and I was able to share what I knew about gangs with them. In spite of not having any personal narrative of gangs in my family or social life, I believe that I did not enter this field in an ignorant manner. Any topic can be mastered and thoroughly investigated if there is an intense interest such as my own. That very first video that I watched about the Number gang in Pollsmoor Prison was like a magnetic field which propelled me towards wanting to know more.

I do not believe that I have fulfilled my journey towards understanding gangs completely. Rather, I view this study as a pathway which I have uncovered which will eventually lead myself and many other researchers to finding out even more about gangs. The abundance of information about gangs waiting to be mined will always guarantee the gang enthusiast that there is more to find out and more questions that are yet to be answered. As long as there is a dialogue among researchers and gang members alike, the pit of novel information will never dry up.

In my craft or sullen art
Exercised in the still night
When only the moon rages
And the lovers lie abed
With all their griefs in their arms,
I labour by singing light
Not for ambition or bread
Or the strut and trade of charms
On the ivory stages
But for the common wages
Of their most secret heart.

Not for the proud man apart
From the raging moon I write
On these spindrift pages
Nor for the towering dead
With their nightingales and psalms
But for the lovers, their arms
Round the griefs of the ages,
Who pay no praise or wages
Nor heed my craft or art.

(Thomas, In My Craft or Sullen Art, 2005b)

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Appendix A1: Letter of Information

My name is Anneri Venter, a student in the Master's programme in Research Psychology at the University of South Africa. For my dissertation, I have chosen to investigate delinquent gangs in context, and I hope that you will consent to be a research participant in my study. I have always been fascinated with delinquency and gangs, and even though I have no personal narrative of delinquency in my past or in my family's past, I believe that my intense investigation and interest in this phenomenon will convince you that I am truly interested in your story, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions.

The objective of this research is to explore literature and audio-visual material and interview knowledgeable sources via semi-structured interviews on how gangs are portrayed and how gangs are described. Additionally, an ecological model of gangs in context will be designed.

The title of my study is "Delinquent Gangs in Context: Towards an Ecology of Meaning." The model that will be created from this study will be helpful to therapists, criminologists, and gang task forces; in the sense that they will better understand gang delinquency, what the most important features of gangs are, and in which contexts gangs function and operate.
This study will also contribute a new and modern perspective to the literature on gangs. Ultimately, I hope that the research I will be conducting will ignite more interest and more research on South African gangs, which is a growing phenomenon with the potential for severe destruction.

The interview will be transcribed and audio taped, with your permission. The data will then be analysed via Thematic Content- and Network Analysis. The interview will not take longer than one hour.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to participate. Should you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the interview or with any questions posed, you have the right to withdraw or refuse to answer a question. This will have no negative impact on you in any way.

Your anonymity will be respected at all times, and you have the right to confidentiality, where any information you divulge will be treated as such. Only my supervisor, Professor Ricky Snyders, and I will have access to the gathered data and informed consent forms. You do not have do give any personal details, and you will be referred to by a pseudonym to protect your identity.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Kind Regards

Anneri Venter
Contact Details: 072 933 6674 or 44937385@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Further queries may also be directed to my supervisor at Unisa: Professor Ricky Snyders on (012) 429 8222.

Appendix A2: Consent form

I_____ have been clearly informed regarding the nature and objectives the study, including my participation in it. I hereby give consent to participate in an interview which will be conducted by Anneri Venter, a Research Psychology Master's student, under the supervision and guidance of Professor Ricky Snyders at the University of South Africa. I understand that my participation in this study will cause no harm to myself, that my privacy will be protected, and that I have the right to withdraw or refuse to answer any questions at any stage of the study, without any negative impact on me.

Signed_____ Date_____

Appendix A3: Consent form to be audiotaped

I_____ have been clearly informed that the interview I will be participating in will be audio taped. I am aware that Anneri Venter, a Research Psychology Master's student at the University of South Africa, will ensure that my privacy is protected at all times. Only the researcher (Anneri Venter) and her supervisor, Professor Ricky Snyders, will have access to the audio tapes. Should anyone else require access to these tapes, such a transcriber or a co-coder, they will be obligated to sign a letter of confidentiality and will not have access to any of your personal details.

Signed_____ Date_____

Appendix B: Transcribed Interviews

Appendix B1: Criminologist Interview

A: Thank you for your time. So - If I ask you what you know about gangs, what do you think about gangs, why are you interested in gangs – where would you start?

C: A gang is a very wide concept for me. We distinguish between prison gangs, you get community gangs, you get innocent gangs of children that are really just playgroups, but they associate with one another. So, therefore, for me, the first important point is that gang is one of the concepts that are often, you know, sort of used as a cliché, but you must contextualise and conceptualise to determine exactly what is meant by it and in which context.

A: Okay, so let's start with a gang in a community that commits crimes.

C: Okay. So then you have to talk about an antisocial or a delinquent gang that is involved in antisocial behaviour. What specifically do you want to know there? Do you want to know what the definition is according to me? Do you want to know what I understand by it?

A: What you understand by it?

C: For me basically it's a group of people who get together who are drawn – drawn factors by a solidarity or a divided understanding or socialising, but there is a cohesion between them and an ordinary gang also has a certain objective and goal that they, in the case of committing crime or antisocial behaviour. For me that's the crux of an antisocial gang. Of course there are things they get out of it but also what they contribute. Things that they get out of it are often being part of a group, so "acceptance". Things that they put in are usually skills and then also, connected with say they commit economic crimes – the economic gain, or the drugs or whatever they get out of it.

A: And the difference between them and prison gangs?

C: The prison gang isn't necessarily focused on committing crimes. Look, every day you find gangs in prisons, but each of them has a certain objective that they want to achieve – the Big 5s work together for a certain objective, the … um… the 26s and 28s are more on a sexual level or smuggling drugs and so on, while your Air Force's aim is to break out of jail.

There are a few new gangs that have identified themselves, which I heard about the other day in Manguang (Bloemfontein) Prison. I found that very interesting. I don't have enough knowledge about them to be able to talk about them.

A: Are they relevant to the Number Gang or –

C: Not at all. I'll give you the name of the woman, then you can talk to her. She says that in Mangaung there are more of the hardened criminals, usually with behavioural problems – so that's your long-term prison where a very violent gang has started. Once again, in this case, every gang has a certain aim and a certain own identity and rituals associated with it. In the prison environment, it has a lot to do with survival and young guys are absorbed into a gang and they often join the gang as part of their survival strategy. Without I think them knowing what it really involves. And it's sort of a big brother system where the big brother offers him protection and then he'll say "to do so you have to join the gang" and I don't think they always realise what it then means. And in prison gangs specifically there aren't very easy ways of getting out of it. They say you must literally be tattooed and they talk of removing the number, the tattoo, and removing the tattoo also has certain repercussions and usually violent action is taken against the person. So, yes, those are your prison gangs. Women there are gangs too, but I don't think it's so obvious that they are so structured, but it's more a case of a group of women who will get together and a shared identity and objective, than it really being the case, and many times the case of the female gangs there is a central person who is sometimes known as a mama or whatever, but I don't think it's so serious that they regard themselves as a gang, but if you look at the definitions, then female gangs still fall under that.

A: Do you find that a female gang is more a sub-group of the larger structure of a male gang group?

C: I don't think they are really related. I think when women get together, they form a structure, but not necessarily that they will see themselves as a gang, but more that they will see as people grouping together because they have a shared interest or shared objective or shared background. And even then, as I said, there is still that structure and that central person who is more or less in control, so there's still a hierarchy with different levels of perks that they can get out of the gang involvement. But not necessarily that they will classify it as a gang.

A: Yes, okay. Can you perhaps tell me a bit more about the different ways that individuals are introduced into gangs.

C: I worked in corrective services for 10 years, but I can't really say how they're introduced, but I know that with certain groups, such as the 28s, sodomy played a major role where the new person sort of becomes a "wife". I know at a stage to go up in the hierarchy violence is involved, but I don't want to expand too much on that – I have never made a really intensive study of precisely how they work. For me more the whole idea of why they become involved in gangs was more interesting for me.

A: Can you expand on the structure gangs, but not necessarily only prison gangs or gangs in the community, unless there are big differences?

C: You will basically get … let's call it the leader of the gang. The kingpin, top of the feeding chain. Then he will have confidants and below them perhaps more confidants and then there are the ordinary gang members and the gang members are sort of the foot soldiers and much more planning of a crime will be done in – the execution itself is done by the foot soldiers, and the guys who are foot soldiers are sort of replaceable, so if something happens to one of them or he is caught it doesn't really have an impact on the gang. No impact on the top structure. That's just basic, I think in any gang structure, you have a central person who is the leading figure. Usually it's one person. From there another controlling structure which then expands to the other members.

A: Do you find that the foot soldiers commit the more violent crimes or –

C: I think from the nature of their role, they commit more crimes. Let's look, if you look at, if you talk of gangs as a very broad concept – organised crime is a gang system. It's exactly the same. Gang is very very wide concept. You must think very carefully about what you regard as a gang and what you are going to include and exclude, but organised crime and many times the case of organised crime, your management structure will make your decisions, but the guys who are below, who are disposable, commit the crimes or do the drug smuggling or whatever and then they are caught and put in jail. Many times what happens is when the the guys come out of jail the management will still look after them, so in this way they come back into the system. But once again, they're disposable, while the guys who sit higher up who are actually the mastermind behind the activity, who were actually the inspiration for the crime, they are the untouchables. They aren't drawn into it.

A: Do you find there's a difference in the structure of female gangs and male gangs –

C: I'll tell you my interpretation of it is no, I don't think so. It's basically a set structure. And then, only the tasks and roles will differ. So I don't know what or whether you have found something else in terms of female gangs.

A: Female gangs are actually very new to me. I have done more research on gangs in general, so I'm actually not sure myself.

So, the definition of gang, I don't know whether you know about Ross Kemp. I've read a lot of his books and watched some of the videos and everything. I realised it's very difficult to stipulate in some of the countries where he was to define a gang, like for example in East Timor there were things that they called martial arts groups but they fitted the definition of a gang well. Do you find there's a problem to define gangs? Do you think there's fixed structure in terms of the definition – this is what's included, this is what's excluded? I'm talking now of delinquent gangs specifically –

C: I think the very broad definition of gangs is that it is a basic group of people who get together and where there's the whole idea of a hierarchy. If that's not there, then we're really only talking about a circle of friends. There's a direct difference for me between a circle of friends and a gang. In the gang there is such a hierarchy and there is a common goal, or objectives for a common reason, and cohesion that holds them together. So those are the things about a gang that will stand out from an ordinary group for me – the hierarchic system, there's a common outcome.

A: And then crime or illegal actions.

C: It could be illegal actions or it could even, look if, yes most gangs, the gang I think is associated with criminal actions, while you know difference with regard to a positive pressure group that probably has the same characteristics as a gang, but not necessarily, so it's very difficult, so I don't think one must distinguish between, if you go in entirely on a sociological level, and you go and look at the composition of a gang, I think you will struggle to distinguish between a gang and an organised group.

A: Okay. Then I would like to hear from you in which context do gangs flourish, delinquent gangs specifically, and in which contexts do they perhaps not flourish?

C: I think if you say a disorganised system, gangs will flourish in it. The big thing about a gang, and that's where it starts, is the guys get what they want to get, namely acceptance and a common goal. Sort of a family inclusion to be accepted. Also working together for a common goal. So, in any disorganised environment or community a gang will flourish and it can be a prison, it can be a community, it can be a school, where there is a case of the haves and have nots. The have nots, that's usually where a gang gets that feeling of belonging.

A: Can you perhaps expand a little on a disorganised community?

C: Disorganised community, breaking down of families, no family ties, no cohesion with the community, no ties with the community, a feeling of being an outsider, labelling that's done, lack of supervision, that's a very big thing with gangs, because it makes it easier if there is no parental supervision or supervision by a control system, makes it easier for gangs to form. Poverty, not so much – you get many gangs in highly functioning environments, but it's in fact that case where there is no parental control and supervision and there is no cohesion and then sort of they move together, and form their own group that they can be part of.

A: Control and supervision, are you talking specifically about younger gangs that have no parental guidance or are you talking about gangs in general, for example the police aren't doing their job or the government isn't doing its job –

C: I think the thing with younger gangs it's a case of specifically no parental supervision or control, but if you go and look at more adult people who are involved in gangs, then it could be that it is an acquired process that they do not accept the country's laws, in other words they do not accept that controlling supervision as their own, and it's usually through the process of socialisation that they decided, as a result of being disappointed in the country's laws, society is not doing what it should for me so why must I do for society what I do? That whole interaction and then won't accept the rules and laws of the country and then also the feeling of trust. With the police it's sort of a "them" and an "us" scenario, while the guys who integrate well into the community will feel that the police is part of "us". They don't have that bipolar feeling or that extreme feeling of "we are not part of the system". So yes, as far as control is concerned or the control system of the country, I will say that it is adult and youth gangs who share that frustration.

A: We spoke a little while ago about the individual who joins gangs. Can you tell me more about why a gang starts? The gang itself. Why the group of people get together? Different

reasons perhaps. I have read a lot about many gangs being politically motivated, many gangs have only this one goal in mind.

C: I think the main reason why gangs start concerns the outcome. The outcome determines basically who will get together. I may even be only one person who feels he is being unfairly treated in the community and perhaps he will talk to others and as a result of that it develops cohesion between them. It could also be that that one person's goal is to commit crime and he starts a gang exclusively in order to commit crime. And by means of very clever thought processes he attracts people who are weaker than he is, more easily influenced. So yes, a gang could form from political convictions, but it could also be a process where one person literally decides now I want to start a gang for organised crime. Those are my two extremes. Or then in the case of women, who will decide "I am alone and see a stronger person who is a leader figure". The gangs perks are you have someone who watches your back, which is very important, and a feeling of you feel safer with the gang, and as a result of that they then become part of the gang.

A: Differences between South African gangs and overseas gangs, do you think there are –

C: I have no history or knowledge about that. I know the basic knowledge I have was in America when I visited the prison there, is that the gangs are very strong in terms of cultural bonds, so you get your Hispanic gangs, you get your African American gangs, and your white extremist gangs. So there are gangs very driven by groups, by cultural groups and races, while in South Africa that is not always the case.

A: So if I have understood you correctly, you find that in South Africa blacks and whites will be in the same gang?

C: Yes. Some of your gangs, some of your generals that we worked with was a white man who was in the Number gangs. That was literally as a result of a scenario of that he qualified to be a general as a result of actions carried out. Except look perhaps your Big Fives. Your Zulu gang. There are, but in general it's not so rigid I think as overseas.

A: Okay. Then resocialising, could you perhaps expand a bit for me on factors that are required, so that a person can get out of the gang or if it is even possible to get out the gang.

C: I think gangs become a lifestyle, especially if you look at your Cape Flats scenario, because that's basically where your prison gangs started, and they spilt over into the prison,

and what is incredible for us, and for any person who has worked in corrective services is that something will happen in the jail, and there is no method of communication outwards but the gang in that jail will immediately know what happened in the jail and it is still an absolute … for the guys a mystery how that news spreads. So gangs are, especially if it is a centralised or a national gang, 26s, 28s, Air Force and whatever, that there is a feeling of belonging. So if you are in a gang here, in the next jail you will be in the same gang. It's a case of if the person is transferred to another jail, then the guys in the other jail know immediately who is coming and whether he is a member or not. So the resocialising out of a gang, I think it is incredibly difficult. It's many times what happens is that it has become a lifestyle, and guys who really want to get out of gangs often become the victims of crime, they are killed, and I think it's also about the whole case of the gang absolutely has its own sub-culture and the whole idea of the mystery, secrets, the gangs secrets and that's usually what has such a hold on the guys. I think that female gangs, because they aren't so strongly structured and that it's more a feeling of belonging it will be easier to socialise out of it, but your highly structured formal gangs you won't easily get out of. It's the same with organised crime.

A: So there's not much, or you don't know of many success stories of people who have got successfully out of gangs?

C: No. I think there are guys who say in the prison, who say they are distancing themselves from the gang and they will literally cut off the tattoo, or whatever. But this case, they always walked around with eyes in the back of their heads, because it, it's a very dangerous position to be in.

A: Maybe, they resort more to petty crime than to serious crime or –

C: No. I think the guys who want to get out go right out. They distance themselves completely from the whole idea of crime and the objectives of the gang. But that makes them a target, because for me it's a lot like the defence force system. "You are either my buddy or my enemy, who are you now?" If you go out of that gang system you are an enemy. You are no longer a buddy and you can no longer be trusted. So I don't think, the socialisation is more than just crime. The crime is a by-product of the gang. The gang system itself in terms of crime is really just a by-product. The gang is about the social structures and the behaviour that takes place inside it – not so much about the crime and delinquent behaviour. It's kind of a symptom of the whole system.

A: So the crime is not necessarily why they got together?

C: No. I think it's initially why they got together. The guy who started the gang, his goal was, let's say organised crime. The other guys are literally a case of you get recognition in the gang, you get the feeling you're part of a structure. You get acceptance there and also the feeling that you belong somewhere. If you look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, that feeling of that need to belong somewhere – that's what that's what draws guys into the gang. The other things are then the by-products or the symptoms of the system.

A: Is there anything else you could perhaps add, anything you could tell me?

C: What is very important for me, I did some research on recidivism, and the very first point where I had to start was to conceptualise and to explain exactly what I understood under the concept of recidivism. The conclusion I reached, recidivism is this popular term that's used but nobody really understands what the essence of it is. I think it's the same with the concept of a gang – everyone knows the term but nobody really understands what's meant by it. So you must go through that level and find that essence and possibly to form an academic definition of a gang – there isn't one, so you can do something for all of us here in the academic world and set down a definition of a gang.

A: You see that's why I asked the question about what the definition of a gang is. Because in all the literature that I've gone through, literally chapters and pages full of definitions from 40 years ago, there are so many definitions, but they are all different or become out-dated or aren't relevant to the South African context. It's amazing how a definition can change over the years.

C: You will start operational definitions where you say "this is a gang, this is how I define it" and which you can then expand and say "organised crime is also a gang or not". Such as for example, a female prison gang isn't a gang, it's more a social group. So you will explain to us very strongly what the difference is between a group and a gang.

A: Also the different groups that there are. Many many people would say the mafia is a gang, many people would say the mafia isn't a gang. You know something like that, so what I have often found is that most agree that it's relative to context and the feeling that I get from you too is that –

C: And you will, if you want to start, it will perhaps most probably be pioneering work, to begin to say that the whole thing is unravelling, and that the whole conceptualisation process is to take everything to pieces and put it together again. And you will do it and decide for yourself this is a gang or this isn't a gang.

A: I think it's difficult to exclude anything in the end, you know.

C: Yes but there must certainly be some characteristics that will distinguish a social group from a gang and you will also have to ask yourself a question "is a gang always delinquent?". You understand, and whether say a support group, which also has a hierarchy, isn't this a gang too? It's a very interesting debate this is. And to find out, I think that might be where the value of your study will lie, that you, of who, if the guys are a gang, it sounds like a very simple term but it isn't, so on the level of reasoning to work out, what the characteristics of a gang are, what makes a gang a gang. It's very interesting, I would like to read what you've written. I think you can look very strongly at what your objectives are, and don't discard the other information. Save it in case you need it. You understand, so that you can follow on it so don't discard your other information, what is a gang. And characteristics and perhaps comparison of the South African gang and the other gang. The whole understanding process.

A: I find the South African gang extremely interesting. I know they all have, other gangs have history and tradition and culture and everything, but how the Number understood, and everything that goes along with it, it's very interesting. I know that most people say gang is an American product, but to compare them with compare them with South African gangs, it's incredible actually – the differences, the similarities. I must say I find it very very interesting.

C: If you look, if you go back to the Crusaders in the Biblical times. That was a criminal gang. Under the banner of perhaps their faith and whatever, but at the end of the day they raided and they invaded towns and it was actually a gang if you look very carefully.
A: Football hooligans?

C: That's a gang. It's your ultimate idea of the gang of this group that goes together and the whole question of why as you say, "why do people join gangs?" – because you join so as to get something out of it. The question "what's in it for me?" is one of the strongest driving forces in human behaviour. And then it goes to the bigger question in the community – "why do we need gangs in the community?" It's sort of a symptom that something is not right in the community – there's a problem in the community.

A: You spoke about “what’s in it for me?”. Do you think some of them have a choice or does it depend upon the environment they’re in?

C: I think literally in a case of if you’re born in a family with a strong gang background, you still have your choice, but the pressure is so great that it’s sort of that’s what’s done, and there we’re talking about the mafia or about the gangs in the Cape Flats. You have the choice but sometimes the pressure is so great and the level of acceptance just as strong – if you literally want to remain part of your family and if your family is part of a gang, well … what choice do you really have?

A: And revenge, do you think revenge is also sometimes a factor if, for example, your father has been murdered by a rival gang and you then join another gang to take revenge for your father’s death?

C: Yes absolutely, but what would happen then is the gang members will play on that feeling. It’s not a result of “here I am reporting and now I’m a member of the gang” – I think it’s a very active recruitment process that takes place and that way the guys are literally drawn into the gang. It’s the same with organised crime – if you have to see the gang, it’s a case of “gee, you’ve got a nice cellphone, where did you get it?” “No, I’m part of this group”. “No but I also want these things” – and then, I think the prison it’s also such a case of it’s this big brother who can protect me but you don’t know what you are signing up for.

A: It’s as if they romanticise it. The amazing thing comes in and then the benefits aren’t so nice but –

C: The benefits are great but you don’t know what the cost is.

A: The costs sort of outweigh the benefits, to a certain extent.

C: Once you’ve been drawn into that system, getting out is, half almost impossible and remember you become part of it and so you are socialised in the process into the whole thing of the perks that you get out of it and that makes going away from the gang so much more difficult.

A: As I understand it, it's a sort of "blood in, blood out" type of thing. And also what I, I also read somewhere about the Number that if you want to get out, you must put in as much or give back as much as you put in almost, almost like a debt type of thing.

C: And as I said, you always literally have a target on your back. There are always younger guys who must come in, and say you want to move up in the ranks, and they have to assault or cut someone, with their whole rituals that they do, I mean you're a soft target because nobody is going to protect you. You're not part of a gang, so if I target that guy nobody will come down on my back because an old gang member has been targeted. You make yourself a soft target.

A: Yes. And it's probably not always worth the trouble to have to look over your shoulder forever, is it?

C: No, but the feeling is that I don't think that's something you consider when you're in a gang – it doesn't come into it there. I think that the deeper one is drawn in the more you realise that it's as if you're in a spider's web – the more you struggle the more you are trapped. And the guys don't realise it. And that feeling of camaraderie in a gang, it's literally a case of if you aren't part of the group you are the enemy.

A: Once again, it's not worth the trouble. Well, thank you very very much –

C: Pleasure and all the best with your studies –

A: Thank you.

C: I would really be interested when you are finished – please e-mail me a copy. We need more people like you who have a genuine interest in gangs. Be sure to keep up the passion. I like your passion, it's nice.

Appendix B2: Criminologist Interview

A: Thank you for your time. I am very aware of your knowledge of the Number Gangs and the work that you have already done, so if I ask you to tell me about gangs, what do you think of first?

C: I think firstly of the fact that you express yourself very clearly when you speak of "gangsters" versus the ordinary group that gets together, the Trompie gang, which included Trompie, Blikkies and Rooie you know, so when you talk about gangs *per se* –

A: Okay. So, I'm referring to delinquents –

C: Yes, deviant or criminal or withdrawal, you know, guys who go into the drug culture. There are masses of different kinds of gangs that you find in society. What you mentioned earlier, the so-called "Numbers Gangs" that are found in the jails, have specific objectives and functions in the jail that they perform. The 26, 27, 28s; 26 is usually involved in gambling and smuggling dagga and things like that. The 28s are the most, or how can I put it, the most influential and best known, the 28s in the jail who also rape and things like that. They are known for their sexual activities and that they specifically get "wives" or "franse" as they are known, the 28s. Now the 27s work for them.

A: The 27s for the 28s?

C: For the 28s often. The 27s, they are the so-called guardians of gang law, they are known as. The 27s will make sure that things happen as they must happen. If someone interferes with a 28's "wife" or that, then the 27 guys, to uphold that gang law, they will go and execute the guys and then even kill them, stab with a shank or they will rape them, so, that kind of thing, so, they are the guys who see to it that the so-called law and order even between the gangsters is respected. So, the 26s make sure you get dagga and pornography and liquor and the guys gamble for things, the 26s do that. The 28s are the strongest, most influential guys who like to have sexual relations with other guys. They also get "wives" for them. Everyone knows it. If you are a 28's "wife", then no one interferes with you. And if there's a problem, then the 27s are told about it and the 27s will go and sort out the guys who did whatever.

Then also in your jail you have the so-called Big Fives. These are the guys who also have specific things they do. The Big Five gang is very well known for their relations with the

wardens or the staff there at the jail, guards, and they are like the guys who are like the informants. They bring all the latest news to the staff and for that they of course get benefits from the wardens, the jail wardens. So, they aren't very popular, because the guys are scared of them, the Big Fives, because they also know they will know things, if something is being planned or said, then they're scared if there is a Big Five guy nearby, that information will be given to a jail warden.

And then you have the Air Force gang. These are the guys who are known, some of them want to, also in jail, who want to escape. They are very well known for this. The Air Force comes from the wings, they are going to jump over the fence or they plan well. So the Air Force are guys who have already tried to escape once or are planning to escape. They usually join the Air Force gang, yes.

A: How do they go, how do the Air Force usually get into jail or what are the reasons that they go?

C: No, the same. Any type of crime, you, what's important is, when you come in, already even when you're waiting to go to trial, there are, let's call them agents, who go out and try to attract guys to the different gangs.

A: Oh, okay.

C: If there are, especially young guys coming in, let's say a guy of 18, 19, 20, who's coming into an adult situation, then a guy from, let's say the 28s, one of their guys will go to him and say, "hey, here's a blanket and some cigarettes for you". Because those are the strongest medium of negotiation, money, monetary value. And then they will say to them, "here's something for you and I'll look after you" and then, what the guy doesn't know, two three weeks later, then he will say, "take this tattoo".

They give him a specific tattoo also. And then actually it means I am now part of that gang. And the guys are quite ignorant because the guy says, "it's for your own protection. If you have the thing, nothing will happen to you." And then in two three four weeks, then the guy comes and then someone identifies him and says, "now you are part of the 28s, you are now going to be my 'wife' ". And the only way you can repay those cigarettes, and they know very well the guy can't pay back cigarettes, money, food, blanket, is to have sex with the guy, for example.

And that's how they get the guys into that gang, for example the 28s. Air Force, the guys who say he mustn't be here, they come now, you see, this is how it works with a gang, similar needs that are addressed. It's just like making friends. If you want a rave culture, you won't get involved with a lot of farm boys who go hunting every weekend. You'll get involved in the rave culture. That's just how the gang process often works in jail, and also in the community.

I think, just to mention this, there are many, the number gangs, are also in line with many of the number gangs outside, especially in the Cape Flats or Western Cape, especially the number gangs are very well known there. Then there are also name gangs in the community. Especially in the Western Cape, they are really actually everywhere. They do specific things. You, this has a lot of similarities to the American gangs. So much so, that they carry the same insignia, many of the colours like the American flag and also their names, for example The Hard Living Kids, The Thugs, The Americans.

So, you get a lot of these name gangs outside. And then you get the so-called tsotsi gangs in South Africa, who are known as Jack Rollers. The Jack Rollers, you can go and google it. I think you should get something under Jack Rolling. Jack Rolling, briefly, what it amounts to, they are black gangs, especially the tsotsi gangs, who do all kinds of things, including committing crimes, but their big thing for example for initiation or whatever is to go to a school, kidnap a girl from the school and take her, and it's often in informal settlements and such things. And I won't say the community turns a completely blind eye, but they are very much aware of it.

A: And her age is irrelevant?

C: No, it doesn't matter. They rape her throughout the night. She has to make food for them. It's part of the initiation thing and then the following day, then they let them go again. Until the Jack Rollers strike again at another stage, the tsotsi gang guys and then do their thing. So, it's very important for your research, you must distinguish very clearly in your conceptualisation between what a gang does, what a syndicate does, an organised syndicate in economic crimes and then, like guys who do cash-in-transit robberies, you know, are they a gang or a syndicate?

An organised economic syndicate? So, one must be very careful about throwing in the word "gang", when a group of people get together to commit a specific crime or crimes. I think with gang definition, there are specific needs they have. They fulfil those needs for one another.

In the jail for example, you are lonely, you are away from your family, you are completely separated from, if you are heterosexual, from your heterosexual relations, where are you suddenly going to find that support of a family setup? It's in a gang. So the gang can very easily start fulfilling them for you.

What is very interesting, in the relations, those that I have just mentioned, where the guy has accepted now I am a "wife" or a "frans" of one of the gang members, is that he has lots of tasks like a wife. He washes clothes, he sees to it that there's something to eat, you know, extra, keeps the cell clean and he must provide the sex, you know.

A: But what are the chances of a "wife" ever becoming part of –

C: They work themselves up, it can happen. He can ask if he can go up, but it is a very sensitive thing, because the, how shall I put it, the "insertee", in other words, the guy who penetrates, is seen as the husband and dominant and tough and he hits and kicks. The guy who receives, he is now a "wife" and he now has a bit of a reputation. And it's very difficult to shake off that reputation and be this hard core tough guy. It doesn't easily happen. So you have to prove yourself from an early stage that you don't want anything from anybody.
Unfortunately, they rape you, such as when the 27s get instructions that someone has interfered with someone's "wife", say one of the other guys is keen on your "wife", look, often a young guy with certain, how should I put it, soft features is very popular and high risk. Especially if he has a small build and so on, high risk of becoming a "wife". And say one of the other guys likes her, let's say in the 26 gang and he starts interfering with yours, with your "wife", then you can arrange for a hit and the 27s will then go and for example carry out a gang rape as a punishment on you, because you interfered with that other 28's "wife".

A: Yes.

C: You know, this type of thing also occurs generally.

A: Can the "wife" actually say no, I mean, can the person who is going to become a future "wife", can he actually say no?

C: No, it's very difficult because once they've taken that blanket or those cigarettes right at the beginning and they've got that tattoo, it's very difficult to get out of that situation.

A: It's like a contract that you've signed basically.

C: Without you knowing it, so they use a lot of intimidation, because they threaten the guys with violence. They will also say that, you know, “you took these things and then you had no problem,” so it’s also often under false, often under false pretences that these things happen. So the guy doesn’t actually know when he steps in there that this is going to happen to him in the end. So it’s very difficult to get out of that process, yes.

A: In terms of the “wives” who want to become part of one of the groups of the number gangs, there’s a good chance that they will have to commit murder or something or other in that line?

C: It’s often not necessary.

A: Not?

C: That kind of initiation for a “wife” isn’t necessary. But you get a reputation. The more you, you know, one of the top guys will for example have attacked a warder, he will have killed people, he has a specific reputation, and so you can build yourself up in the jail. But what happens often here in South Africa now, is of course we have now built private jails and like, let’s say Bloemfontein, they will take that guy who has worked himself up, in order to break up the gang’s structure and hierarchy, they will take that guy out and put him in a private jail.

So you know, but there is always someone to replace him. There is a general, and you know, under him his lieutenant, and there is always someone who is prepared to go up and so on.

A: So, there are to a certain extent great differences between gangs in jail and gangs outside, but not really. I mean, in terms of structure, there is always, as you say, a general right at the top and then foot soldiers at the bottom?

C: Hierarchy is always there, you know. You always have a top guy and then you have advisers, guys who decide and you have the hit men, you even have them outside, in the street name gangs and that type of thing, so they are there. I think what a guy also has to keep in mind, as I said, the number gangs are especially lined up with the gangs outside. The name gangs that normally function outside in the community, for example, let’s say the Hard Livings or the Americans or something like that, I don’t know if you can remember,

Rashied Staggie, you can google it too, Rashied Staggie, he was a gang leader and his brother is, PAGAD's people did, there was a sort of problem.

PAGAD of course stands for People Against Gangsterism And Drugs which functioned there in America, in the Cape, Western Cape especially, and later blew over here to Laudium and so on, and then to Durban and so on. They also have a criminal, if I can say that in inverted commas and that, which is very funny, people don't know about it, PAGAD was at one stage on the FBI's 10 top terrorists list, because they started developing a criminal element, collecting weapons, arming themselves, smuggling drugs, also on PAGAD's side. That's how the FBI got to know about them.

Not all of them were like that, they were a very small minority. But these guys for example carried out revenge attacks on some of these gang guys and Rashied Staggie and them, the brother was burnt. They poured petrol over him in the community and set him alight. Because they said he was feeding the young people drugs and such things. Now you must remember, a street gang very often has a lot of money. They have a lot of influence. They get respect in the community. They get respect, they have a reputation. Because what do they do? They build a disco or a night club and the people say, "gee, look at these guys. They are contributing to the community," so they turn a blind eye. The community is not prepared to talk about these guys.

A: So, would you define PAGAD as a gang to a certain extent?

C: No. They are an organised group. I wouldn't define them as a gang, no, no.

A: Okay. Now you're talking about the community turning a bit of a blind eye, the Mungiki tribe in Kenya, I, what you've told me, I find many of the same characteristics of what you've told me –

C: Similarities?

A: Yes, and how they're supposed to be doing good for the community, so the community kind of turns a blind eye to them. I don't know how familiar you are with them, but I'm also sitting and wondering a bit, now that I'm thinking about the definition of gang and delinquent, specifically, I'm just sitting and wondering whether one can really define them as a gang. For example, I have now finished Ross Kemp's second book and he was in East Timor and there they called themselves martial arts groups, but with all the characteristics of –

C: A gang.

A: – a violent gang. So, what is your opinion about how to define a violent gang and whether there is a set definition?

C: I think one must say what a gang is firstly, and then a gang, many people differ, many people say when two people get together who have the same need and they satisfy that need, then they talk about a group. Now, away from a group, if there are more than two and the group wants to achieve a specific objective by getting together, achieve by, obtain something by violence or by using drugs or in the rave culture, then you can probably start talking about a gang, if they, say a drugs gang, what is known as the withdrawal guilt's culture.

Or you have the violent type of gang, their opportunities are blocked, so they, innovate like many people say, which murder in [unclear] innovate and by innovating they can become involved, for example in violence. Because that's how they get money, respect, status, so they satisfy that need of theirs. And then you get the rebel type of culture, guys who, and it's more a sub-culture, I think you will have to distinguish very carefully between a sub-culture and a gang, because your sub-culture is for example against the government's norms and values and the system. They want to overthrow it, so you know, it's very difficult.

But a violent gang has a definite aim. They use violence for a certain objective. If they function in a gang structure, but it's very difficult, because it could just as well be a syndicate that uses violence. You get syndicates that get hold of weapons, use violence for cash-in-transit robberies. Is that a gang or is it a syndicate? That's about economic structuring again, what are their objectives? Is it money, you know, that type of thing? What satisfaction do they get out of it? Many of the guys say, "but, I'm in the syndicate. I'm emotionally happy. I've got no crutch or need of it. I'm only here for the money."

A: Yes.

C: And I, you know, so, there is a very fine distinction with this.

A: Do you find with violent gangs, that originally the violence was, the violence has basically become more of a by-product of why they originally got together? That it has now just happened like that to a certain extent?

C: Yes. I think if one goes and looks, many gangs that get together do not get together for the sole purpose of starting to commit violence. I don't think so, but in South Africa, we speak about the sub-culture of violence, where norms of violence become generally acceptable. So you get young people who get together, that's also with these vigilante groups and mob justice, as it's known, where guys, where these three guys, locked in the truck and were burnt, the cable thieves. That's a group of people from the community get together, use violence to show their frustration.

I don't think they're a gang, but it's a group of guys who got together, because they use violence. You do get gangs that, if you're speaking about violent gangs, are like the street name gangs that we referred to earlier, who know they can, if they don't specialise only in drugs, there are gangs that use violence for example, use their success to get a car. They will hijack a guy, you know, so that there are guys who know their medium for achieving success is violence.

I don't think their getting together is founded on violence *per se*, but they know that with violence they can be successful. And that's where the sub-culture of violence in South Africa comes from. Violence brings success, in other words, if your wife talks too much, you clout her, she's dead quiet. If the children shout, you shout loud, everyone is quiet. If the father has spoken hard once, that's the brake in the culture. If the guys break into your house, home invasion, they use violence. They always have a weapon. A weapon neutralises your action.

So I think violence certainly plays a very important role, but I don't think guys get together to use violence against one another or to live their lives violently in that way. It is certainly a means for achieving their objective, if that makes sense to you?

A: No, it does. It makes sense. Then, if one looks at the individual –

C: The individual himself?

A: The individual, yes. His circumstances. What are the circumstances that the, how can I put it, just the circumstances that you find where a person usually joins a gang? Whether it's violent or, yes, let's make it a violent gang.

C: Let's start with the ordinary guy. Spontaneous membership. Three guys say we are "The Owls" or "The Tigers" and each one gets a catapult and a clay-stick and they get together spontaneously, because it gives them a feeling of belonging. They talk about, I think the French is, if I'm pronouncing it correctly, esprit de corps. They feel part of something. And that's what a gang gives these guys. That's why they become involved in it. The gang gives, I belong to someone, I have a code of conduct, colours. And that, you know, and I think, some of those innocent gangs go and catch frogs in the streams and they move around together.

A: It sounds as if, you're almost describing the Voortrekkers.

C: The Voortrekkers or the Trompie gangs, the so-called Trompie gang. Up to where you come to the criminal gang that says, "well, we are now in our position, I am poor or here is a very strong leader who influenced me or I am on drugs and I must get my drugs somehow, so I use violence, commit a crime to get the money or get the income to keep my drug habit going." So with the violent gangs, I think it's given that these guys know that with violence they can be successful. And I think young people, one must also remember, young people are also much more likely to use violence than a parent of 50 or 60 who has already matured as they say.

He will rather use his tongue or intellect. But young guys are aggressive, they are argumentative and they know, you know, I mean, a young guy knows, if he attacks a guy of 50, his chances of winning are much easier. I think that's also why these guys carry weapons because they know with weapons they neutralise a situation. And I also think gangs that fight one another, I think it's a very well known thing in America, the "cribs" say that, you know, with a gang that wants to come in or the Hispanics who want to come in or groups that use violence, because that's the only way you can get someone away from your turf or your area where you sell drugs or where you move and that kind of thing.

And then of course revenge attacks. Violence is always the way to sort out a problem. If one of a, and this happened here in Eersterus, where one of the gang guys interfered with another guy's girl and then they used violence.

I would just like to show you here quickly with a definition. I have written a definition here of a gang myself. Perhaps it will help you.

A: If I think of all the books I have gone through already, I mean, there are chapters and chapters and chapters just dedicated to definitions. Definitions from 50 years ago. How they differ now.

C: Yes. Somewhere you will have to decide, you know, I once did a study on "attitude" versus the judicial system, and I found more than 64 definitions of perceptions and more than 500 of attitude. So which one do you choose? You will have to formulate your own operational definition for your study in the end and say you're just going to stick with that. It makes it very difficult. Let me have a quick look and see if I can find it here for you, that's not it. I wonder if I'll find it now. Let me just page through it quickly, but I almost think it's here. I hope it's in this chapter, otherwise I'll send it to you when I find it.
A: Oh, thank you.

C: These are all just risk factors. Here it is. Here I said, basically about the gang membership, where you asked how the guy becomes involved. "A gang can be seen as a group of young people who form an allegiance for a common purpose." So in other words – a

A: They have a purpose.

C: They have a specific purpose and that's why they get together and that's what attracts them to one another. "Both males and females become members of gangs. Females usually join gangs for friendship, for self-affirmation, economic family pressures," poverty, the "gang cell" that attracts the guys and "lures" them into it. So here is quite a bit that I wrote about everything that contributes to that. So there is, what I actually want to say is that there is no one single factor why I finally ended up in a gang.

People say, gee, I can't believe I am now in so deeply. I once worked with a chap, he was more an informant if one can put it like that and he infiltrated the Greek mafia here in South Africa as a confidant of them. And he said afterwards, "you no longer know what is right and wrong, because you see things happening, but you know you must bring the information out," you know, that kind of stuff. So there is, for the, you know, so the informants have a very difficult job for the police. You know, I just asked him, how it was, because the police said, you know, when he was out and finished with his stuff, I could go ahead and talk to him. He said the most difficult thing for him is, he doesn't know if you want to stay outside, when you really cross that line of being involved.

And that's how it happens. You know it's a sort of fusion of boundaries and eventually you are so involved that you can't get out.

A: Yes, that boundary is so blurred.

C: That boundary is very blurry and fuzzy and that's what will complicate your definition. When are you really involved and not, if, concerning the violence thing, you know, if you look at mob justice, it's completely independent from a group of guys who constantly use violence to achieve certain successes. And stick together, maybe have a name, that has a hierarchy, a head at the top who makes decisions, I think that's where the idea of why a gang develops will start for you. And what defines it as a gang, because it has a special existence. It has a leadership. You know, it satisfies certain needs versus a group that meets and then disperses. They scatter, they go their own way.

Or a syndicate that meets once in six months, plans something to make money and then separates again, you know, that kind of thing. These all make it difficult to get definitions.

A: I think that makes more sense in my head than anything else about all the books that I've read about specific gangs in South America, in Eastern Europe, in America itself and in South Africa.

C: What I've just told you?

A: Yes.

C: Yes, no, I think so. That will, that's your starting point.

A: Definitely.

C: I think I would perhaps give a bit of attention to this in your conceptualisation concept chapter.

A: You know, I have. I started with my Chapter 2, but I'm nowhere near being finished and I'm still busy with the definitions, problems of defining it, what the books say, so.

C: Yes. In this study that we've just completed on "narcissism or the narcissistic personality type and rage type murder", we also spent 40 pages on definitions. No, it's difficult to conceptualise certain things and you have a problem there.

A: Back to the circumstances of a gang member – what I am able to conclude basically is, that your circumstances, the circumstances in which you normally find yourself are a low socioeconomic environment, that kind of thing, if I've understood it correctly. Usually, when you join a gang.

C: Individually, is that what you mean?

A: Yes, myself. My circumstances, where I live, what my circumstances are now. Do you find that it's normally low socioeconomic circumstances, you know, parents that are perhaps not there half the time –

C: Yes.

A: Education is –

C: This whole thing that I wrote about, is about high-risk factors. The family breaking up, you know, or the incomplete family –

A: Dysfunctional.

C: – dysfunctional family, you know, the single parent, the mother, the father, all that kind of thing. The alcoholic father, the drugs in the family, the family discord as they say, the low socioeconomic class. Existing already in that environment, lower class environment of gangs already there. If that's your example, the chances are very likely that you would like to follow in those footsteps. That happens a lot in the Cape. These guys don't go to school, they sit around, they have money, they drink a beer, they smoke dagga from 10:00 in the morning. The kids on the way to school see this. This guy has a reputation in the environment, he has respect, he's got girls, he's got a car and the little guy thinks I would like that too.

So the chances are very likely that he will become involved, but the opposite is also true, that there are many of these guys in these circumstances, who never, on the contrary I had a student who came out of an area where there were gangs, and they teased him and he never became involved. Never, never, never. On the contrary they beat him up badly

because he didn't want to become a gang member. For him in his individual capacity, he didn't want to do it. And for him it was completely against everything. On the contrary, he studied law and today he is a lawyer.

A: Fantastic!

C: So, do you understand what I'm saying?

A: Yes.

C: We can't say these circumstances will do it, but what is the nice word –

A: It's a factor.

C: It makes you vulnerable. You are very vulnerable to gang membership if all these things count against you. Your family is in discord, I mean, dysfunctional, broken family, there is poverty, there are drugs, there are gangs in the environment, there are friends of yours inviting you. We speak about the external pull factors. And that's definitely an external pull factor. If you would like to have a bicycle and these guys say to you, "we'll give you a bicycle," you know, "become a member and you get a name and you must go through our initiation process or you might even get a car or a motorbike," it just makes it much easier if there aren't internal buffers that have developed.

Your ego, your superego, if there aren't guilt feelings that have developed and self-image and think, "no, I don't want to be part of this thing," then it's much easier for these external pull factors to have an influence on you and to stop it. So I think individually, yes, circumstances can play a role, but that's not all. I think it's the argument of nature. I think if you have a strong gene composition, then the chances are good that you can stop yourself from becoming involved. A very interesting thing is, we can't put a finger on it yet, I call it, I defined it as the underlying factor.

The point briefly is, if there are a lot of these factors, I'm speaking of the preceding factors, a broken family, bad neighbourhood or environment, gangs already in the environment, drugs, young age, already clashed with the police. These things are all there, the more of these factors that are present, that's the first thing, there are three things. And the second thing is, the more regularly you are in contact with these things and go around with them, with no one who shows you what is right and what is wrong, three, the greater are your chances of

getting involved in them. But, the fourth thing that we now call the underlying factor is, whether you have a strong gene pool, whether you can make a difficult decision or have the will not to become involved, we can't put our finger on whether you have it or not, in your personality, because one guy will smoke dagga, one guy will go ahead and experiment with Ecstasy or with "tik" while a brother in the same house doesn't, why not?

His underlying factor is stronger. They are influenced by the same things, they are subject to the same pull factors from outside, gangs, money, respect, designer clothes, but why is one brother prepared to go and play rugby or soccer or whatever while the other says, "no, I'm going to become a gangster," and he ends up in jail and the other brother becomes a lawyer or an engineer or whatever? That's the underlying factor. And none of us in the behavioural sciences can put our finger on that thing. What is it? Nothing is known about it.

A: No, I understand exactly what you mean. It's that –

C: Underlying factor.

A: Inherent thing, kind of in you.

C: There are other factors, I would just like to, gee I wish I could, the study's name is "The Street Corner Gang", if I, you should go and google it.

A: "The Street Corner Gang"?

C: "The Street Corner Gang", where they compare the higher and lower class guys, and many of the same factors that frustrate children, frustrated the higher and lower class. But where the difference is, the lower class guy doesn't have the opportunities to do things. Money for a car and designer clothes and such things. The higher class guy has everything in many respects, but he also becomes bored because there is nothing stimulating for him. So he starts and he can afford designer drugs and he can start experimenting with them. The big question very often, why did the Waterkloof 4 go and kick and hit a guy? They are rich, they've got cars.

A: They were bored.

C: They were bored and you have a strong guy in the group so they say, “yes, let’s do something because it’s exciting.” I mean, until you realise what the hell you did when you had a few drinks.

A: Yes.

C: I, know, what did they call them, the socialites and the, I don’t know, the two the poor and the rich, but you’ll find it. It’s very interesting to see what they say. Where the poor guys, if it comes to drugs, it’s not that, I think the main problem in our country in South Africa is alcohol. That’s really a big problem, binge drinking and concoctions that the children do at a very young age and that also makes you vulnerable to become involved in certain things that you didn’t anticipate at first that you would do.

You must remember, these violent gangs you’re referring to, make a lot of money in a very short time. Why, ask yourself this next question, if you stand on the corner of the street to do tiling, or building, or painting or whatever you do, for R80,00, R100,00 per day and no one gives you a job. You stand there for 7 days. You are hungry, but then a guy comes to you and says, “listen here, if you go for me,” a syndicate or a gang, “and go and take out abalone for me, illegally, a box full, I’ll give you R1 000,00.”

A: No, I would –

C: Do you see what I’m saying?

A: No, no, I understand.

C: If I say the next thing to you, you’re standing there for 5 weeks. The guys swear at you, you did one job for somebody, he kicked you out and said you had built badly or you painted badly or wrongly or whatever, and they don’t even pay you the full R100,00 or whatever, because you made a mess. Or a guy comes to you and says, “I’ll give you R35 000,00 now if you hijack a BMW 3 series for me, now.” And you do a job for 20 minutes, and you have R35 000,00 in your pocket?

A: Oh no, absolutely.

C: Do you understand where those concepts come from, and it’s all about those internal buffers. The so-called moral fibre, moral development, and in our country it’s really a big

problem. There is a great moral limitation among people. They don't have empathy with their fellow man. There is an entitlement, "yours is mine," the past, the system, so, "I'm going to take what is mine." I think these are all factors. The culture of violence, the sub-culture of violence that I mentioned earlier. Violence brings success. The guys see it. "I hijack the car, I knock you on the head, your car is mine and I get R35 000,00," and that's the end of it.
You can go and look in Rudolf Zin about home invasions. The groups that infiltrate the home violently. How they think and how they know they're in control of things when they're carrying a gun.

A: You know, but it sounds terrible, almost, the word "romanticise", people romanticise this idea of being in a gang and making quick money and everything, but, the way that you, the two questions you asked me, it sounds fantastic, you, and, but once you're into it, then the blinkers come off or –

C: Yes, yes, yes. Often it's a very tough life. They arrest you, let's say the law catches up with you, they arrest you, and then you are in, you know, about the guy with the reputation but money doesn't do anything, you go to jail and there you are raped or you know, so the, I think it is glamourised, but there is a huge price to pay for it. Ironically in our country, what I wanted to tell you earlier about his book, and they say that they commit more than 100 crimes on average, before they are arrested for the first time.

A: Phew.

C: That's from stealing wallets, grabbing cellphones to flat-out robbery, hijacking, so they commit more than 100 crimes, different crimes, before these guys are caught. So, you have a problem.

A: Petty crimes, then you, you aren't even in jail for too long, so.

C: Yes, you get a fine or a warning and often, these guys take the viewpoint that the police bungle too many cases, and you know, they know they get away with things, so, you know, they have no respect for the legal system. So, I think that plays a big role.

A: Yes. But, thank you very, very much. I think I have about everything I need.

C: No, that's fine. Read this book if you get it, it should be in your library. He speaks a bit about the gang story. "Child and Youth Misbehaving in South Africa." We have a piece about it, it's the high-risk factors and the things you will get.

A: Thank you very much for your time.

C: No problem. Good luck.