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PEACE EDUCATION AS A TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGY IN A COMMUNITY AFFECTED BY GANG VIOLENCE

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Dedication

For my mother, Romea Africa (deceased 2001).

My husband, Phillip.

And the countless children trapped in gang violence on the Cape Flats.

Abstract

Thousands of children in South Africa live in areas dominated by high levels of gang violence. Little is known about the impact of this violence on younger learners in their preschool years and on their teachers. This study sought to provide knowledge on the exposure and experiences of preschool learners towards gang violence in communities on the Cape Flats, Cape Town, over a two-and-a-half-year period (from 2019 to 2021). The study also sought to answer the questions of whether peace education could be used as a transformative strategy for the preschool community situated in gang affected areas, and if so, how peace education could be used in these circumstances.

There is currently a dearth of literature surrounding peace education associations of preschool-aged children and teachers in high-gang violence communities as a strategy to transform a culture of violence to a culture of peace. Such underrepresentation in research constrains the understanding of the impact of gang violence on the preschool population and compromises community-based violence prevention and peace promotion intervention effectiveness. This study explored an ecological systems approach to the consequences associated with early childhood exposure to gang violence in proximal contexts, such as the family, school and environment. It also explored gang violence from the perspective of preschool teachers who live and teach in affected communities and the multiple barriers to promoting peace education in early childhood as an alternative to gangs.

Using qualitative participatory action research (PAR), the study made use of questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups for data collection. The sample population was composed of teachers and principals from preschools on the Cape Flats. The findings revealed that this sample population experienced high levels of victimisation and violence on a regular basis and were desperate to find a solution to their plight. The data provided from the interviews, questionnaires and focus groups and through thematic analysis of the data, provided the researcher information to be able to put together a peace education manual for early childhood development educators.

It is hoped that this manual may be used for practical interventions by preschool teachers in communities such as the Cape Flats, Cape Town, that experience high levels of violence. In this thesis, I argue that the implications for how peace education and peacebuilding aimed at transformation are conceived and practiced, particularly in high-violence, gang-affected contexts, are considerable.

Keywords: early childhood, peace education, peacebuilding, transformation, gang violence, cape flats

Declaration

I hereby declare that the study, entitled, Peace Education as A Transformative Strategy in A Community Affected by Gang Violence, as presented by me, is my original work, which has not been submitted in any form for examination at any other university, or study institution.

Additionally, all the sources that I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Student name: Jo-Anne R. Pearson

Date: March 2025

Signature:

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
AG	Auditor General
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
DDP	Democratic Development Plan
GAA	Group Areas Act
GI-TOC	Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
LO	Life Orientation
LPC	Local Peace Committee
LS	Life Sciences
POCA	Prevention of Organised Crime Act
PP	Public Protector
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Council
SAPS	South African Police Service
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund).

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

South Africa is home to many hotspots for youth gang violence that continue unabated (Maringira and Masiya 2018). Once such area is the Cape Flats, a large low-income geographic region located in Cape Town, South Africa, described as the murder capital of the world (Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo 2021). The Cape Flats have the highest rate of gang violence in South Africa. The South African Police Service (SAPS) report that over 30 percent of murders in the Western Cape were attributed to gang violence in 2017 to 2018 (SAPS 2018). Studies show that 10 percent of those who committed these murders were aged between ten and nineteen years old, meaning that they are part of the "born free" generation, a term used to describe children of the post-Apartheid era (Lancaster 2017).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines peace education as the "process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or global level" (Fountain, 1999: 1). This definition is reflective of a many leading theorists in the field such as Galtung (1995) and Reardon (1988). Curricula addressing issues of violence and peace are primarily developed in privileged and 'elite' contexts that are far removed from the high-violence contexts where they are most needed (van Dijk, de Haan and de Winter 2020; Bajaj 2015). As a result, peace education programmes need to be "reconfigured for effective application in settings of inequality, power imbalances and conflicting interests, in situations of protracted [gang] violence (van Dijk et al. 2020: 3).

The subculture of gangs and gangsterism is deeply entrenched in the Cape Flats in Cape Town and has entrapped many young children in a vicious, senseless and endless cycle of violence, both as victims and perpetrators. In response to this, this study sought to explore the question of education for peace from the perspective of communities affected by high levels of gang violence. Correspondingly, whilst the study considers the transformational potential of peace education, it acknowledges the critical understanding of the community context and the intricate dynamics of gang violence that might constrain the opportunities for change. It also presents the development and evaluation of a peace education programme at pre-school level as a potential strategy to prevent future gang involvement. The peace education programme was part of the action research component of the study, in which the intervention consisted of a peace skills programme for teachers who both live and teach at preschool levels in a gang-ridden community.

The study was conceptualised as a necessity, given the paucity of research in the community violence literature on the preschool population and educators in black/coloured1 areas, who have historically experienced community violence in the form of gang violence at high rates in their communities across South Africa. This is particularly applicable in Cape Town's coloured areas, where gangs are believed to account for most of the crime in the Western Cape (Kinnes 2000). The study was further necessitated by the paucity of research in uncovering the experiences of preschool teachers and children and of the potentiality of peace education as a mechanism to transform the impact of gang violence on the preschool population located in these areas.

Community violence: Sharkey (2018) defines exposure to community violence as having a violent crime take place in close proximity to a child's home, such as within their residential block. The study adopted this definition as well as the timeframe of community violence occurring during the year preceding the study. This definition of exposure to community violence allowed for identifying both the direct influences (for example, victimisation or witnessing violence) and indirect influences (for example, hearing about violence, noticing increased policing or changes in other individuals' behaviours) of community violence on children's mental health (Sharkey 2018).

Therefore, this action research study explored the efficacy of teaching early childhood peace education curriculum in preventing and reducing violence, and mitigating the effects of exposure to violence in communities on the Cape Flats, Cape Town, where approximately 10 000 children are said to be trapped in violence and recruited into gangs (Dube 2021). The critical challenge of peace education for positive peace is the question of whether it can disrupt the cycle of violence and transform the conditions that "incubate children in terror" in gang-ridden communities on the Cape Flats (Perry 1997). According to Rahim (2017), conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (such as, the individual, group, organisation). Conflict consists of actors and their actions in pursuit of incompatible and contradictory goals (Galtung 2009). The nature and impact of gangs in South Africa must be understood with the socio-political context of apartheid and its legacy. Importantly, this contextualises, frames and provides justification for studying peace education as a transformative strategy in gang-affected communities on the Cape Flats, Cape Town.

[1] Coloured (mixed race origin) refers to one of four race groups defined under the apartheid government in South Africa (African/black, coloured, white, and Asian/Indian). I make note of these categorisations in my thesis for the sole purpose of illustrating the continuing social and economic inequality that still exist (Barbarin and Richter, 2013).

1.2. Background to the Study

Chronic community violence is recognised as a problem that affects many children and families across communities in South Africa, particularly on the Cape Flats in Cape Town[2], where gangs have an existence that is decades old (Van Der Spuy 2016). Research reveals that many of South Africa's children experience disproportionately high levels of violence (Meinck *et al.* 2016 cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2018) in their homes and communities. Approximately 40 percent of children in South Africa are poly-victimised in all aspects of their lives - home, school and community - and in their interpersonal relationships (Richter *et al.* 2018).

Gangs are entrenched in South African society and their existence cannot be viewed separately from the political systems within which they exist (MacMaster 2007; Jensen 2008; Pinnock 2015; Van Lennep 2019). Chronic violence builds on historical legacies, socio-political violence, oppression and exclusion moulded by contemporary dynamics. These social-structural problems are more pronounced in developing nations (Katz and Fox 2015). In South Africa, gang violence is deeply connected to its past exclusionary social, economic and political practices, these systemic influences are still evident even after the dawn of democracy as communities of the Cape Flats face a continuous onslaught of violence, predominantly brought about by rival gangs competing for drug territories (Van der Linde 2022; Pinnock 2023).

The intersecting harsh realities of generational poverty, overcrowding, high unemployment, little or no access to resources, fatherlessness, the presence of gangs, corruption and ineffective state responses, come together to form the backdrop for the prevalence of gang violence across poor communities in South Africa (Bowers Du Toit 2014). The sociohistorical origins of gang culture, its linkages to South Africa's unique past and the impact of gang violence are all dominant drivers in the pervasive gang impunity that remains evermore on the Cape Flats (Bowers Du Toit 2014; Van der Linde 2022). Recent estimates state that there are 130 street gangs[3], comprising of approximately 100 000 members in 29 communities across the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2017). Kelly (2018) places this number at a higher estimate of 120 000 street gang members in Cape Town.

For decades, gangs on the Cape Flats have enacted horrific violence upon the lives of the residents (Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo 2021). The ruthlessness and inhumaneness with which gangs on the Cape Flats operate, is felt at every echelon of the community (Dlongolo 2020; Dziewanski 2021). Gangs cause untold disruption and dysfunction that has wide-ranging and devasting implications for

[2] Western Cape Province, South Africa
[3] The most prominent gangs on the Cape Flats include the *Hard Livings, the Americans, Sexy Boys, Yuru Cats, Junky Funky Kids, Corner Boys and Naughty Boys* (Maringira and Masiya 2018).

community life, particularly on young children who witness high levels of gang violence and come to accept it as a normal part of life (Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo 2021).

While gangs are not a uniquely South African phenomenon, the unique and complex socio-political history of the country both shaped and influenced the formation of gangs and gangsterism, particularly on the Cape Flats in Cape Town. The conditions which gave rise to the formation of gangs in South Africa dates back to the beginning of the early twentieth century to the mining compounds on the Witwatersrand where gangs were prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s (Kynoch 1999: 57).

The burgeoning of gangs and gangsterism are largely attributed to South Africa's apartheid legislation, such as The Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950 and The Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950. The Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950 registered and classified all South Africans into four racial categories, namely, African/black, coloured, white and Indian/Asian and systematically segregated people geographically. The Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950, particularly the forced removals of the 1950s and 1960s (Luyt and Foster 2001; Petrus 2015a; Samara 2011; Standing 2006) in Cape Town, is regarded as having had the most significant effect on gangs, gangsterism and the role of the coloured and masculine identity in continuing gang involvement on the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2017).

The forced removal of people of colour from the inner city to the racial dumping grounds on the outskirts of the city centre destroyed family and social bonds, which exacerbated the unemployment, poverty, crime, violence and overcrowding in poor communities across the Cape Flats. Being scattered into different areas across the Cape Flats resulted in the loss of extended family networks (which provided adult supervision), the breakdown of stable family life (for example, increased single-motherhood) and emasculation of thousands of coloured men who now had no access to transportation to their sources of employment in the city centre. The effects were noted as early as 1984 (Pinnock 1984). It was in this context of unstable family, stunted social life, unstructured environment and the loss of a sense of community, that brought about the formation and growth of gangs on the Cape Flats (Mthembu 2015; Pinnock 1984; Samara 2011; Standing 2006). The resultant isolation from the forced removals left many young men with "little choice but to build something coherent out of the one thing they had left – each other" (Pinnock 1984:54).

In the 1970s, the highly addictive drug, Mandrax (Methaqualone) took hold in the Western Cape. Gangs began to sell the drug and thereby further entrenched themselves in the local economy and communities on the Cape Flats (Samara 2011). The low-cost housing units provided by the apartheid regime did not take account of the family structure of coloured people which consisted of extended family networks living together. This created severe overcrowding in living spaces with limited personal space. Space therefore became a "sought-after commodity, and young boys opted to play in the streets forming groups to monitor and protect the self-invented boundaries they set up" (Pinnock 1984). An increased demand

for commodities and the increased need to defend these commodities, gangs evolved from "adolescent play groups or corner kids" into defence gangs who would defend a particular territory (Mthembu 2015; Pinnock 1984:55).

While the gang phenomenon in Cape Town is predominantly a feature of the coloured communities on the Cape Flats (Petrus 2013, 2015a), Kinnes (2017) acknowledges that black gang members and all-black gangs do exist in South Africa. However, whilst gangs pose somewhat the same challenges in the communities, some notable differences between coloured and black gangs have been identified. For example, Maringira and Masiya (2018: 167) noted that:

> "in coloured communities gangsterism is a culture, a committed ideology, with hierarchies of power and strength internal and external, implicit or evident, often impressed on their own skin, and imperative codes of honour".

Less attention is given to gangs in black areas as they are "less structured and less sophisticated" than in coloured areas. (Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya 2014; Kinnes 2000; Pinnock 2016). Furthermore, violent coloured gangs account for most of the crime in the Western Cape (Kinnes 2000) and they "wage full-scale war-like scenes on the streets where the often the victims are children, youth and the elderly" (Du Toit 2014) and "execution-style murders driven by turf wars" (Pinnock 2016).

Maringira and Masiya (2018) note how the concomitant factors that push young black men into gangsterism varies somewhat to coloured young men. While poverty is a strong push factor for gang involvement, the definition of what is means to "be a man" varies culturally among men in coloured and black communities. For instance, you are only considered to be "a man" if you have "killed, committed a serious crime or gone to prison for many young men in the coloured community" (Maringira and Masiya 2018: 167). The authors explain how the emphasis on cultural practices among the Xhosa who define a man as having undergone the cultural initiation ritual ceremony to transition from boyhood to manhood as being cherished by young black men (Maringira and Masiya 2018: 167). Additionally, the nature of gangsterism between the coloured and black gangs differ in terms of strategies and weaponry (Maringira and Masiya 2018). Agnemo 2007 (cited in Maringira and Masiya 2018: 173) stated that "gangs increasingly influence the construction of masculinities in Gugulethu" who "Unlike gangs in 'coloured' townships, youths in Gugulethu prefer sticks, pangas, knives and fists rather than guns - using the latter is perceived as less manly" (Maringira and Masiya 2018: 173).

The issue of coloured identity is described as dynamic and fluid and as being "steeped in ambiguity" (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin, 2012: 87). It is often associated with drunkenness, jollity, criminality, violence and gangsterism and thus marginalised and trivialised (Erasmus 2001; Jensen 2006; Mthembu 2015; Petrus 2013; Samara 2011). As a result of being relegated to an inferior identity, "for many coloured people in South Africa the search for identity, belonging and rootedness remains an unresolved

issue" (Petrus 2013: 76-77). Jensen (2008), Kinnes (2017) and Petrus (2013) argue that gangsterism is one way in which this sense of identity, belonging and rootedness can be achieved. The phenomenon of gang violence on the Cape Flats is more directly examined as a separate chapter (Chapter Two) in the thesis. It critically illuminates the conditions that gave rise to the gangs in South Africa and particularly, the coloured gangs[4] in Cape Town, the effects of which have repercussion to the present day

1.2.1. Context of the Location of the Study

The study was conducted in three areas on the Cape Flats namely, Manenberg (selected as the pilot research site), Hanover Park and Lavender Hill. The researcher chose these areas because they are geographically and socio-demographically similar, they possess parallel cultural and linguistic characteristics and are comparably impacted by high levels of gang violence. The intervention component of the action research study was carried out among a group of preschool teachers in one of the three areas, namely, the community of Lavender Hill, over a two and a half period (from 2019 to 2021).

All three areas are apartheid-styled coloured townships located on the Cape Flats, in Cape Town, created under the nationalist apartheid government as the result of the forced removals in the 1960s. These townships consist of sub-economic housing schemes which catered for the mass resettlement of people of colour from the racially integrated space of the city. These areas are characterised by the lack of adequate social facilities, social spaces and often plagued by substance abuse, social dysfunction, poverty, violence and organised crime (South African History Online n.d.). Afrikaans is the dominant language spoken by coloured people in these townships (City of Cape Town Census 2011). South Africa over the past decades has seen an increase in the number of African migrants settling in townships across Cape Town. According to the 2011 Census, these areas are poor (unemployment rates at approximately 64 percent) and are predominantly coloured communities (over 90 percent).

Manenberg, which is located about 20 kilometres from the Cape Town city centre was created in 1966 and has an estimated population of 52 000 residents (South African History Online n.d.). According to the 2011 Census, the population of Hanover Park (west of Manenberg) was 45 497 (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) 2012). Lavender Hill, the smaller of the previous two areas, was established between 1972 and 1974. It is located approximately 24 kilometres from the Cape Town city centre (City of Cape

[4] The Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950 defined a coloured person as "not a white person or a native" (Erasmus 2001:18 in Kelly 2018).

Town 2013) with an estimated total population of 32 598 (Stats SA 2012). The estimated total population of the Cape Flats was 583 380 (Census 2011).

The latest census conducted in 2022 provides an overview of Cape Town's population as being predominantly Black African (45.7 percent) Coloured (35 percent), White (16.2 percent) and Indian/Asian (1.6 percent) (City of Cape Town 2023; Census 2022). Education levels show that over a third (36.5 percent) of Cape Town's population aged 20 and above holds a matric qualification, with 20 percent holding tertiary level education. Coloureds hold the highest level of functional literacy (6.3 percent) whilst black Africans hold the highest levels of total illiteracy (2.3 percent) (City of Cape Town 2023; Census 2022).

A few key historical factors contributed to the formation and evolution of gangs and gangsterism in Cape Town. In the aftermath of World War II, life in the City Centre was characterised by increased unemployment, overcrowding and crime (Pinnock 1984). Despite these conditions, powerful families through vigilante style community policing exerted control, maintained order and safety in the community (Pinnock 1984). Youth crime in the inner-city of Cape Town was largely kept under control by parents, neighbours and extended family (Pinnock 1984). The origins and growth of gangs on the Cape Flats can be viewed as having gone through three critical periods during South Africa's history: firstly, through the forced removals of the 1960s; secondly, through the economic, social and political instability and insecurity of the 1980s; and then during the transition into democracy in the 1990s (Kelly 2018). Gangs on the Cape Flats used these chaotic times to their advantage and thus they are often described as "being fluid and dynamic in character" (Kinnes 2000; Petrus 2013).

Following the dismantling of the apartheid system in 1994, gangs, especially in the Western Cape, had also undergone a social transition of their own (Kinnes 2000: 8-12). Furthermore, with the subsequent opening of South Africa's international borders, gang numbers became more sophisticated and powerful with international links (Kinnes 2017). After 1994, the lives of many residents in townships[5], did not substantially improve as the result of the state's failure to properly address, basic infrastructure and services, thus continuing the "marginalisation and exclusion of coloured communities, post-apartheid" (Petrus 2013). Glaser (2000) states gangsterism is exacerbated by the "lack of recognition and inherent value from government, vital to the development of youths' identity and purpose" (Van Way and Theron 2005; Kelly 2018). In turn, this creates a snowballing effect of limited political responses to increased youth gangsterism as a means to meet their political means at which point, they become "ungovernable

[5] In South Africa the term "township" refers to underdeveloped and largely impoverished areas, usually built on the periphery of towns and cities that, during apartheid, were reserved for black people. The Cape Flats area included a number of townships (Kelly 2018).

to anyone but themselves, thereby further revoking governmental ability to address the phenomenon" (Glaser 2000; Petrus 2013; Van Lennep 2019).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Deadly and senseless gang violence has become a regular feature of daily life for the residents of the Cape Flats. In the Western Cape Province of South Africa, 35.2 percent (808) of murders were attributed to gang violence in 2017 to 2018; SAPS (2019) recorded the highest rate of gang violence in South Africa and of the 1120 murders linked to gang violence, 938 were attributed to the Western Cape Province reported for the twelve-month period of April 2018 to March 2019 (SAPS 2020).

According to Cooper and Ward (2012), Esbensen *et al.* (2001) and Petrus, 2013 (cited in Kelly 2018), in gang research, the definition of what constitutes a gang, is problematic. Some follow a loose structure where groups of young people "hang out" together and may commit minor acts of delinquency together and possibly engage in illicit activities. Other gangs, for example in South Africa, have a more formal structure with links to organised crime and are run by adults who recruit young people into gangs (Cooper and Ward 2012).

There exists in the gang literature different definitions of street gangs. The Eurogang Project defines a street gang as "any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity" (Weerman *et al.* 2009: 20, cited in Kelly 2018). The National Gang Centre in the United States (2017 cited in Kelly 2018: 6) defines a gang as being characterised by "group criminality, followed by having a gang name, displaying colours or symbols, "hanging out" together, claiming ownership over territory and having a leader or leaders". South Africa widely uses the definition of a criminal gang (instantiated in law) similar to Chapter 1 of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) No. 121 of 1998 as: "Any formal or informal ongoing organisation, association, or group of three or more persons, which has as one of its activities the commission of one or more criminal offences, which has an identifiable name or identifying sign or symbol, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity" (Kelly 2018: 1-2).

Kinnes (2000), whilst pointing out that, in South Africa there is there is no single definition that can adequately describe gangs, identifies key considerations of gangs, based on existing definitions. As listed in Kelly (2018: 2), these concern the following:

- The age of gang members, which range from youngsters or "corner kids" (Pinnock 1984), to adults between the ages of 20 and 40 years.
- The nature and activities of gangs generally determined by the social contexts.

- Gangs may include persons both inside and outside of jails.
- Gang members operate on the street as well as lead criminal syndicates.
- Gangs may engage in criminal activities as a means of survival, or they may be more structured criminal organisations.

The impacts of gang violence have filtered down to all members of the community, but the impacts are particularly devastating for young children (Law 2017). The normalisation of violence, particularly gang violence, means that children experience multiple harms through victimisations and of witnessing violence in their communities as a constant theme of daily living (Finkelhor 2008). One of the most concerning trends observed by researchers is the downward shift in age when it comes to gang involvement (Pyrooz and Sweeten 2015; Ward 2007; Legget 2005 cited in Mguzulwa and Gxubane 2019). In South Africa, child recruitment into gangs has shown a steady increase for some time (Kinnes 2017; Pinnock 2020; GI-TOC 2021). This trend is reflected in the increased number of children appearing in Child Justice Courts in 2018 – 2019, with 33 percent of all criminal activity involving minors across South Africa, took place in the Western Cape (SAPS 2020). A sharp increase in the number of murders committed by children, which are largely attributable to gangs (GI-TOC 2021), as well as child victims of crime was reported between April 2019 and March 2020 (SAPS 2020).

Whilst the average age of gang members in South Africa is between 11 and 16 years (SAPS 2011), children as young as nine years old are recruited by gangs (Salo 2005; Swingler 2014; Department of Social Development 2014). Other authors suggest young boys start to associate with gangs from as early as primary school age (5 to 12 years) and eventually graduate to joining youth gangs when at high school (Pyroos and Sweeten 2015; Howell 2010; Ward 2007; Legget 2005). The average age of gang leaders is around 50 years (SAPS 2011). The recruitment of young children by gangs is a deliberate strategy to reduce the risk of drawing attention from law enforcement (Pinnock 2020). Gangs exploit the legal loophole in South Africa's legal system which regards children under the age of 10 as not having capacity to commit crimes and therefore cannot be charged with a criminal offence and persons under the age of 18 (considered minors) cannot be tried as adults (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (GI-TOC) 2020). Due to their socio-economic marginalisation and vulnerability, children remain easy targets for gang recruiters who own spaces in communities, such as sports clubs that are fertile recruitment grounds (Kinnes 2017). Child recruits are generally enticed with money, food and clothes, and as used as conduits to carry and pass guns to shooters, and to deliver drugs and other illicit goods (GI-TOC 2020).

Over the years, responses to gang violence on the Cape Flats included National and Provincial policy and legislation (for example, Section 4 of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA), which criminalised membership of street gangs). Investigating and prosecuting gang leaders has been a key focus since the early 2000s (Standing 2006). Improving policing of gangs and launching police

campaigns have been launched to increase police presence and promote a greater awareness of gangs in communities (Kinnes 2017). Military operations - the South African Defence Force (SANDF) have been deployed to stabilise gang violence-ridden communities or "hot spots" on the Cape Flats. Several inter-departmental (Western Cape Department of Education, Social Development), anti-gang and crime prevention/reduction programmes with a focus on establishing youth clubs that offer an alternative to gang membership (Cooper and Ward 2012; Ward and Bakhuis, 2010) exist throughout South Africa. Most notable are the Chrysalis Youth Academy (the only programme to have been formally evaluated, and was recognised in 2006 as a best practice example of prevention of youth crime), the Youth Leaders against Crime Programme, and the *Bambanani* Strategy.

Government, community and civil society responses to gang violence have continued to grapple with mechanisms to deal with gang violence on the Cape Flats. Government's glacial response to adequately provide basic services, address the persistent high levels of unemployment and low levels of education in South Africa, particularly among the youth, contributes to gang violence continuing to go unabated in communities on the Cape Flats. Gangs on the Cape Flats have filled this gap and "helped families and communities cope with otherwise almost impossible socioeconomic conditions" (Petrus 2013), resulting in a complex relationship between gangs and communities. Kinnes (2017) provides further insight into a symbiotic, albeit precarious, relationship that exists between gangs and some communities, who have positioned themselves as both tormentors and "good Samaritans" by providing communities with money, food, clothes, buying electricity, and protection from other gangs. It has been estimated that gangs provided an income for an estimated 100 000 people through illicit activities (Kynoch 1999) on the Cape Flats. Thus, gangs have fostered an economic and safety interdependency that perpetuates an acceptance of criminality and a "culture of silence" in the community. This puts children growing up in such challenging environments on a trajectory which portends a host of problematic outcomes.

Whilst South Africa's school curriculum provides a form of peace education through teaching subjects such as human rights, democracy and inclusion, it does not do this in a consistent, systematic and society-wide manner (Vaughn 2018). Compulsory Life Skills (LS) and Life Orientation (LO) subjects for grades four to twelve learners, which focus on the development of self-in-society, most closely reflect the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) attempt to provide systematic peace education within the formal curriculum (Vaughn 2018).

Research by Lamb and Snodgrass (2017: 3 cited in Vaughn 2018) confirmed the importance of the LO subject, despite not seeming to significantly affect the desired behavioural changes. These researchers identified contributing factors such as inadequate training of teachers, work overload, and negative perceptions of LO by teachers and learners as some of the reasons for its poor outcomes. Moreover, the lack of interest by the DBE, given the context of high violence in South African and in schools, one

would expect more resources and a stronger focus on peaceful, creative and constructive conflict resolution skills-building.

1.4. Aims and Objectives

1.4.1. Aim

This action research study aimed to critically examine the potential of peace education as a transformative strategy among the preschool population in the context of gang-affected communities. More directly, it aimed to provide knowledge on the exposure and experiences of preschool learners towards gang violence in communities on the Cape Flats, Cape Town. The study explored the efficacy of teaching early childhood peace education in preventing and reducing violence and mitigating the effects of exposure to gang violence in young children in communities on the Cape Flats, where, as noted above, approximately 10 000 children are "trapped in violent conflicts" and recruited into gangs (Dube 2021). Studies have consistently established that older children experience more community violence compared to younger children possibly because older children are likely to spend more time unsupervised outside of the home and in their neighbourhoods engaging with peers (Antunes and Ahlin, 2017). In South Africa, the emphasis of much existing research on children and community violence has had a political focus and on youth involvement in gangs and violence (Glaser 2000, Sitas 1992 cited in Shields et al. 2008). This would account for the paucity of research focusing on community violence and younger children, such as pre-schoolers (Cook *et al.* 2022).

The thesis examined a central question that has not been looked at in sufficient detail and fundamentally challenged the conventional understandings of the transformational impact of the peace education in early childhood (preschool) in high-gang-violence areas. Conventional conceptions and practices of peace education often fall short of addressing the realities of violent contexts, such as communities with elevated levels of gang violence when evoking the importance of "cultures of peace" (Schultze-Kraft 2022). The study challenged what Schultze-Kraft (2022) refers to as interventions that focus on the conceptions of the universalisation and culture of peace and culture, but fail to address the structural causes and drivers of organised violence. Peace education's transformative potential can only be fully realised and proven sustainable when it is supported by environments that are more stable and where social and economic inequality are much lower.

The implications of how peace education and peacebuilding are conceived and practised – particularly in gang-affected areas, are considerable. Peace education is taken into consideration with peaceful pedagogy, and the content of this pedagogy is made up of cooperative learning, democratic society, moral sensitivity, critical thinking and tolerance of others (Harris 2004). Furthermore, a study by Sağkal (2011) revealed that peace education decreases an individual's aggressive tendencies and psychological

problems whilst improving their constructive conflict solution skills and positive attitudes towards being isolated from violence.

Too often, the role of teachers as peace educators is assumed as well as their commitment to peace and their role underestimated in promoting peace and building social ties (Novelli and Sayed 2016). Bar Tal (2002: 9, cited in Clarke-Habibi 2018) states,

> Teachers who teach peace education must themselves be in line with its objectives and cherish its values, hold comparable attitudes and exhibit similar behavioural tendencies.

Most importantly, the study explored how high levels of gang violence act as an impediment to peace education as a transformative strategy in areas affected by gangs. Through this exploration, the study sought to contribute both to peace education literature in general and acquiring new knowledge and understanding of its role in the preschool population in high gang-affected communities.

1.4.2. Research Objectives

The aim of the study was to explore whether peace education can be used as a transformative strategy for the preschool community situated in gang-affected areas. In order to achieve this aim, the following specific research objectives were developed:

I. To investigate preschool teachers' perceptions and experiences of gang violence and its prevalence in their community.

II. To understand how gang violence exposure and experiences affect young children.

III. To critically analyse the strategies teachers, utilise to protect children and themselves.

IV. To examine existing strategies to navigate to-and-from school during gang violence.

V. To interrogate teachers' conceptualisations of peace education and the challenges for early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas.

VI. To assess how peace education interventions in preschool settings can increase capacities to deal with violence.

1.5. Research Questions

The overarching questions of the study were:

1. How can peace education be used as a transformative strategy for the preschool community situated in gang-affected communities?

It can be argued that in such contexts a very different understanding of the transformative power of peace education unfolds. Therefore, secondary research questions emerge as follows:

- How do preschool teachers perceive/experience gang violence in their community and its prevalence?
- How does gang violence exposure and experiences affect young children?
- What strategies do teachers utilise to protect children and themselves?
- What are teachers' conceptualisations of peace education and the challenges for early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas?
- In what way can peace education interventions in preschool settings be utilised to increase capacities to deal with violence?

1.6. Theoretical Framework

This study made use of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as the overarching theoretical framework of this study. Bronfenbrenner´s ecological systems theory posits that the quality and context of the surroundings in which the child develops and the interaction with that environment, is complex in nature. Ecological systems theory takes into account various contextual influences present in the environment in which a child/youth exist, described as a "nested arrangement of structures" Bronfenbrenner (1976: 5). The theory makes a distinction between four initial concentric systems; the microsystem (the innermost system with the child's immediate surroundings), the mesosystem (interrelations between the major settings in the micro-system), the exosystem (contains formal and informal structures in which the child does not belong, but is influences his/her microsystems (Bronfenbrenner 1989) and the macrosystem (the culture that encompasses all the preceding systems). Later, a time-related fifth system, the chronosystem, was added.

The ecological systems theory is a human development theory that simultaneously describes socialisation processes, the multifaceted layers of influence in the child's environment of becoming a member of the society. Therefore, the ecological perspective facilitated comprehensive insight into the causes of gangs and gangsterism on the Cape Flats in Cape Town (Bronfenbrenner 1974; Bronfenbrenner 1979) and supported the aims and objectives of the study.

Galtung (1969) viewed peace education as responding to various forms of conflict and violence (direct, structural and cultural) and creates new forms of educational praxis in social contexts across the globe. As an active global social movement, peace education can "collectively unify, fuel, and inspire dialog among scholars, researchers, activists, educators, government leaders, and the myriads of public peacemakers committed to creating cultures of peace throughout the world" (Lum 2013:121). At the heart of peace education, is transformation and peace education, is "a mechanism for the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace through a process of "conscientization" Freire (2006). Transformative learning, which was theorized by Mezirow in 1978, occurs when individuals change

their frames of reference through critical reflection on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously implement plans that bring about change and which is fundamental to creating a culture of peace. Transformative learning is critical to the process of peace education and societal transformation, which is a long-term process.

Discussions of peace in this thesis refer to the "process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and value needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level" (Fountain 1999: 1, cited in UNESCO 2017). Peace education is a central component of peacebuilding and in essence includes the transformation of the teacher, parent, learner, community and ultimately, society (UNESCO 2017).

There may be a potential for peace education to prevent and assist the youth to disengage and transform their lives if interventions start as early as the preschool years. However, little is known about this early transformational potential and therefore the current study addressed the following question: Can early childhood peace education be a transformative process in communities affected by gangs? What are the precursors to such transformation?

1.7 Reviewing the Literature

A literature review was undertaken to observe the historical progression of research findings and major considerations that have made major contributions in the human understanding of childhood violence exposure, community violence, with specific reference to the impact of gang violence and peace education. Both qualitative empirical and quantitative studies formed part of the review to gain a holistic understanding of what is known and unknown about community violence and very young children in existing research.

Given the contextual nature of the study, an analysis of the nature of gangs in the South African context is provided, as well as a glimpse into the socio-political-cultural history out of which they come into existence. Global perspectives are examined by drawing parallels with countries containing poor, gang-affected communities such as Latin America (El Salvador and Colombia and Brazil). The review identified that a wide range of literature exists on research associated with community violence and children.

Early studies found growing evidence that exposure to community violence is associated with compromised parenting, and maternal distress appears to be a crucial factor (Aisenberg 2001; Linares *et al.* 2001 cited in Lynch 2003). Linares *et al.* (2001 cited in Lynch 2003) demonstrated that exposure to community violence had an effect on problematic behaviour among preschool aged children, even

when the effects of more proximal family violence were controlled. However, Aisenberg (2001) found that maternal distress partially mediated the link between exposure to community violence and young children's behaviour problems, reducing the direct effect of community violence by about 50 percent.

Sharkey (2010 cited in the United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2021) tested the effect of homicide exposure on children's cognitive performance in a community in Chicago and found that, irrespective of whether a child witnessed violence directly or indirectly the impact was significant on vocabulary and reading assessments by 0.5 and 0.7 points, respectively. Similarly, Sharkey *et al.* (2012 cited in UNICEF 2021) examined the impact of a local homicide on preschool-aged children residing in Chicago and found that it affected children's test performances. In another study, Sharkey *et al.* (2014 cited in UNICEF 2021) found similar results for New York. The geographical proximity of a violent crime (that is, the block where the student lives) had a negative short-term effect on students' language skills (but not on mathematics). These findings suggest an association with short-term impacts but not necessarily with long-term impacts, where evidence is scarce (UNICEF 2021).

Borofsky *et al.* (2013 cited in UNICEF 2021) was one such rare study that addressed the long-term effects of community violence on education achievement. The study tested the variables of community violence on school engagement and grade point average and found a link to school engagement as the way to link the effect of violence on academic achievement over time, and the study concluded that community violence affected both variables – engagement and grade point average. It also found that community violence not only had a direct effect on academic performance, but also a cumulative effect due to psychological reactions (Borofsky *et al.* 2013). Additional studies on the long-term effects of community violence found that violent crime in the neighbourhood predicted a decrease in academic achievement in Chicago (McCoy *et al.* 2013) and other settings (Hardaway *et al.* 2014). Conclusively, all studies that were reviewed concluded that exposure to community violence (self-reported or otherwise) is associated with lower academic achievement, usually measured through standardised testing. In addition, the evidence on the short-term impacts of community violence exposure is clear, whilst the evidence on the long-term impacts has not convincingly been established.

Findings in global literature suggest that the majority of studies focus on community violence-exposed children in middle and secondary urban schools in high income areas such as the United States of America and Europe (Hillis *et al.* 2016; Gaylord-Harden *et al.* 2017; Seal *et al.* 2014 cited in Koposov 2021; UNICEF 2021). The prevailing focus on older children is indicative of the widely accepted notion that children at this stage of development are considered more vulnerable and at risk for gang involvement. This focus negates younger age groups as less vulnerable to the influence of gangs, and it highlights the dearth of literature focusing on the effects of community violence-exposure on preschool and younger children. This has resulted in a less developed research base, the existing research does not

sufficiently account for preschool-aged children and for this reason, there is a need to expand on the literature.

There is also currently a lack of research on the role of teachers in violent communities, despite their potential to have a major influence on children's early adoption of peace education (Novelli and Sayed 2016). Teachers have a significant amount of contact with children and may employ specific strategies influenced by the community's context to buffer young children from gang violence-related risks (Hill and Adesanya 2019). Furthermore, it should be noted that teachers need support to cope with the effects of teaching in high gang-violence areas (Khuzwayo 2021).

The central concern of peace education is peacebuilding. The elements of peace education will be explored in proceeding chapters. Discussions of peace in this study refer to the "process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and value needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level" (Fountain 1999: 1, cited in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 2017). Peace education is a central component of peacebuilding and, in essence, brings about the transformation of the teacher, parent, learner, community and ultimately, society (Setiadi 2020).

Peace education and community violence have, for the most part, focused on older children in first world countries and to a much lesser extent on low-income countries and very young children (UNICEF 2021). Recent literature emanating from Latin America (such as El Salvador and Columbia) has created a shift in the discourse around the use of peace education within elementary and preschools in communities plagued with a high presence of gang violence (Rojas-Flores 2013; Morales 2021). This study draws on these recent developments in the scholarship on community violence and peace education interventions with young children from Colombia and El Salvador, where violence from civil conflict and community violence provides useful and detailed descriptions of peace education interventions in communities affected by high-level gang violence (Rojas-Flores 2013; Morales 2021).

1.8 Research Design

This study used a participatory action research approach (PAR). PAR is considered a variation of action research and is the "systematic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action and making change" by generating practical knowledge (Gillis and Jackson, 2002: 264 cited in MacDonald 2012). Wadsworth (1998 cited in MacDonald 2012:38) expanded the definition of PAR to include the "reflection of historical, political, economic, and geographic contexts in order to make sense of issues and experiences requiring action for changing or improving a situation". All action research allows for

the implementation of investigative theory and the transformation of research through action (Kagan *et al.* 2019). I decided to use PAR to inform my doctoral studies, which focused on a group of preschool teachers and their experiences with gangs in their communities on the Cape Flats, Cape Town. The purpose of this qualitative PAR study was also to consider the broader historical, socio-economic and socio-political contexts that shape the experiences preschool teachers had with gangs in their communities. PAR was used as it is both a methodological process and strategy that is empowering and collaborative, generating knowledge, offering practical and concrete solutions towards positive change in practice and transforming in society. In this study, this approach lent itself well to qualitative methods and allowed for critical adaptive reflection by the researcher throughout the research process. Combining PAR with other qualitative approaches has the potential to address promote community participation (Bailey *et al.* 2006 cited in Mac Donald 2012).

The study used a qualitative research design which included the use of a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The design aided in achieving the research objectives and the overall aim of the study. The research questions were used to interrogate the data which was collected over a 6-month period by questionnaires, interviews and focus group sessions to answer the overarching question of how can peace education be used as a transformative strategy for the preschool community situated in gang-affected communities.

1.9 Data Collection Methodology

The methods used for data collection in this PAR study included a questionnaire, interviews, field notes and focus groups (including participant observation). Combining the latter in the focus groups is useful "in gaining access to the group, focusing on sampling, and site selection, whilst also proving useful for checking tentative conclusions and possible changes to be implemented" (Morgan 1997, cited in MacDonald 2012:42). This also allowed the researcher to capture the social context of the setting in which the teachers operated in, to observe and record both their objective and subjective behaviour.

In collaboration with the participants and the researcher, topics for the focus groups were decided upon. In accordance with the principals of PAR, the participants were actively involved in the research process all involved in the research process (Greenwood and Levin 1998; McNiff and Whitehead 2006 cited in MacDonald 2012); and that even though the topic of discussion was left up to the focus group, "the facilitator typically [provided] some structure" (Gillis and Jackson 2002: 235 cited in MacDonald 2012). Interviews enabled participants to describe their situation and provide their perspective as well as offers the researcher "access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words, rather than the words of the researcher" (Reinhartz 1992, cited in MacDonald 2012:42).

This study was conducted on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, in communities containing high levels of gang violence. Three communities were selected for the study, namely, Manenberg (selected as the pilot research site), Hanover Park and Lavender Hill. These areas were selected due to their similarities in demography, and cultural and socio-economic characteristics.

As an initial step in the action research process, a community assessment was conducted, a community partner was sought that was familiar with the Lavender Hill area where an action research programme could be implemented, and ethical clearance obtained. The community partner was Learning in Reach[6], an NGO that provides trauma-informed care and training services to preschool teachers in Lavender Hill. The organisation facilitated the researcher's access to the Lavender Hill preschool teachers.[7]The preschool teachers completed questionnaires and participated in focus groups and interviews. During this time, they were encouraged to identify areas of concern related to experiences of gang violence, reactions to gang violence, effects of gang violence and the current coping strategies in place. During the next stage of the PAR, that is the planning cycle, preschool teachers in the communities were identified through contacting the Early Childhood Forums in the relevant areas. according to Kelly (2005: 69), the planning cycle, "involves a balance between presenting ideas developed from a formal community assessment and working with community groups on the creation of priorities or strategies".

During the active stage of PAR, the researcher actively worked with the teachers at the preschools in the abovementioned locations to conduct the study and develop an intervention programme, a peace skills training programme for preschool teachers. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and upon review and reflection with the teachers, the training part of the intervention had to modified to developing a peace skills manual for teachers as an outcome of the process. The manual was disseminated and evaluated by preschool teachers at schools that had managed to reopen, as most of them had not been able to withstand the devastation brought on by the pandemic and had to permanently close their doors.

1.10 Population of the Area

In this study, the sample population consisted of preschool teachers in three areas on the Cape Flats that are highly impacted by gangs and gangsterism, namely, Manenberg, Hanover Park and Lavender Hill (the research intervention site). The total sample population consisted of 37 preschool teachers from

[6] The organisation's website is: https://learninginreach.org.za/about/ [accessed 5-6-24].

[7] The organisation's website (pg. 1) states that "only 6 out of 30 Early Childhood Development centres in Lavender Hill are registered, meeting the minimum standard of childcare required by authorities".

nine informal, schools. One of the main reasons for unregistered ECD Centres[8] in South Africa is that government policies require ECD Centres to adhere to strict regulations to quality for assistance through subsidies and grants. However, most ECD Centres located in disadvantaged communities render home-based services and cannot afford registration fees in order to access government funding (Early Childhood Development Sector Skills Plan, 2019:42).

Ethical clearance was obtained prior to any data collection (see Appendix A); ethical considerations are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

1.11 Sampling Methods

Convenience sampling for the selection of teachers who were most accessible to the researcher (Patton 2002). Participation criteria for inclusion in the study sample included at least two years teaching experience at a preschool geographically located in an area affected by ongoing gang violence on the Cape Flats and proficiency in English. Many residents in communities on the Cape Flats speak a mixture of English, Afrikaans and colloquial Afrikaans with which I was familiar.

Furthermore, the three areas selected for the study were selected based on geographic similarity, reported ongoing struggles with high-gang violence, and shared cultural and linguistic characteristics. In this study, nine preschools were eligible for participation with 37 participants who met these criteria. In total 37 participants completed self-administered questionnaires collected across all three areas. In Lavender Hill, 25 teachers completed the questionnaires and participated in four focus group sessions. Two principals completed separate semi-structured interviews. All participants gave informed consent to participate in this study. The sample population consisted of four males and 33 females from ages 20 to 60 years.

1.12 Data Analysis

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007 cited in Ngulube 2015) state that qualitative data analysis is one of the most important steps in the qualitative research process. This is because it assists researchers to create meaning and make sense of their data – the main purpose of data. Depending on the research questions informing the study:

Qualitative empirical materials may be obtained through the utilisation of qualitative designs or approaches, such as the case study (situated knowledge), historical research (knowledge of history), grounded theory (knowledge of process and outcome), ethnography (knowledge of culture), content

analysis (knowledge of content), phenomenology (knowledge of lived experience), action research (knowledge of process, outcome and change), hermeneutics (knowledge and interpretation of the scriptures or text) and discourse analysis (knowledge of discourse). (Mills 2014:35 cited in Ngulube 2015:3-4)

Furthermore, in qualitative data analysis, the researcher puts "aside perceived notions about what the researcher expects to find in the research and lets the data and the interpretation of it, guide analysis" (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 160 in Ngulube 2015: 3). Data was analysed based on evidence that was drawn from the transcribed data, the literature review, and the identified theoretical framework used to guide the research. This was followed by a review of the transcriptions from the interview process, the identification of themes, checking transcripts against the audio recordings for accuracy, constructing thematic categories from this process and applying a comprehensive thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set which often lead to new insights and understanding (Boyatziz 1998; Elliot 2018; Thomas 2006 cited in Naeem *et al.* 2023). Thematic analysis is "possibly the most widely used method of data analysis, but not "branded" as a specific method until recently" (Braun and Clarke 2013: 175 cited in Ngulube 2015: 9). Braun and Clarke (2006) and Williamson *et al.* (2013) consider thematic analysis to be the foundational approach to qualitative data analysis and "a method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to a research question..." (Braun and Clarke 2013:175 cited in Ngulube 2015:9). Riessman (2008 cited in Kelly 2018:90) explains that thematic analysis is exclusively focused on the content of the narrative, on "what" is being said as opposed to "how" it is being said, "to whom" and "for what purposes"

The identified themes were then broken down further into categories that allowed for an in-depth understanding of data patterns. The researcher employed a top-down approach, whereby the data was first reviewed in its entirety before systematically deconstructing it into smaller sections in the form of themes, sub-themes and categories that are expressed through data excerpts and literature control - this allowed for a structured and dense understanding, and the interpretation of the experiences of the sample population.

1.13 Significance of the Study

This study offers a unique insight into the experiences of preschool teachers (as a subgroup of educators) and preschool children in areas of high-level community violence, with specific relation to gangs and gangsterism. To date, most of the research investigating the effect of community violence has focused on urban school-aged children and adolescents. This evidence offers useful insights into the effects of

urban violence on the lives of children and forms the basis of the literature review on the global and local perspectives of gang violence and the preschool community.

Addressing children's exposure to community violence is critical as it is a global problem - one that has life-long burdens on children, their families, and their respective societies (Benjet *et al.* 2019; Finkelhor *et al.* 2013; Hillis *et al.* 2016; Mersky *et al.* 2018). Exposure to violence in childhood can potentially compromise developmental trajectories well into adulthood. Research consistently shows that chronic community violence exposure has deleterious and differential effects on multiple aspects of children's lives and that chronically witnessing community violence can have severe consequences for children and significantly increases one's risk for psychopathology (Luthar *et al.* 2015).

Upon examining the literature on peace education, it is evident that there is substantial research on gangs, youth and peace education but there remains a gap in the literature with respect to relationships between peace education, the preschool community and gangs. Much of the existing scholarly work focused on older children in first world countries. Although a growing body of research that investigates the efficacy of peace education in these contexts is beginning to emerge, there is little research exploring how teachers in the preschool community in gang-affected areas can implement concepts of peace. Among the key issues examined in this study are the perspectives and experiences of preschool teachers toward gang violence, their peacebuilding agency, responses and coping strategies towards violence, and their perceptions about peace education as a tool to promote peace in schools and communities. It is also important to consider the influence of external factors on teachers' motivations, views and experiences as participants in peace learning (Bajaj 2015; Clarke-Habibi 2018).

The action research study importantly identifies and positively contributes to the paucity of research on the role preschool teachers play in promoting peace education for young children in gang-affected communities. The study addresses the need for new insight into the perspectives, experiences of teachers as well as understanding their resilience and commitment to provide education to young children in some of the most violent communities on the Cape Flats. the impact of gangs and peace education. By exploring the role that teachers play in promoting early childhood peace education in violent communities, also importantly, the study contributes to the knowledge of the danger and violence prevention strategies preschool teachers use to enhance their services whilst protecting themselves and the children in their care.

The study hoped to discover the significance of - and add to the understanding of peace education as a transformative strategy to help young children develop positive responses to situations of conflict and violence in gang affected communities. In this way, the study contributes to scholarship on peace education as a transformative strategy. It further identifies several challenges with the implementation of peace education in such areas where violence is an everyday occurrence.

This thesis draws on four sets of literature and reviews of each subset of the literature are necessarily selective. The reviews highlight key theorists and expert scholars' views and current debates on the issue of gang violence in Cape Town. Literature on violence against children, early childhood community violence exposure, peace education and gang violence work and preschool teachers as a subgroup, were reviewed. The Children's Amendment Act (Act No. 41, 2007) Section 91 refers to early childhood development (ECD) as the process through which a young child from birth to school-going age develops optimal "emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, and social and communication development" (RSA, 2008:28).

1.14 Structure of the Thesis

In **Chapter Two**, there is a contextualisation of the environment in which the study took place by providing the socio-political and historical backdrop to the problem of gangs on the Cape Flats. It also places into perspective the historical and present conditions that have contributed to why the gangs have managed to carve out spaces in these communities, pre- and post-apartheid.

Chapter Three looks at the developed and emerging theories around the research questions posed. It includes ecological systems theory as the primary theoretical framework to analyse peace education and gangs. Few researchers have adopted an ecological systems theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner 1974; Bronfenbrenner 1979). This model helped to elucidate how the community context influences children's development, but also how these influences are affected by other contexts such as families, peers, schools, and the like. Conceptualisations of peace and violence, conceptual underpinnings of peace education, peace education as pedagogy, conceptual frameworks of critical peace education and peace education in South Africa, are also discussed. As a central component of peacebuilding, the focus of peace education is to prevent war, conflict and violence in its various forms (direct, structural and cultural), to create new forms of educational praxis in social contexts worldwide (Galtung 1969) and generate an understanding that peace is a cultural situation characterised by conditions of non-violence (Galtung 1990; Galtung1996).

Chapter Four is a literature review. It considers what other scholars have said about the violence against children, community violence (specifically gang violence), parental and teacher coping and safety strategies and peace education. It examines the consequences of gang violence on preschool peace education, on gangs themselves and on peace education.

Chapter Five examines the research methodology used to examine the research questions of the study. Methods used by previous researchers to explore similar questions were considered. The chapter also examines the literature on methods used to study peace education and gang violence. There is a particular focus on mixed methods using qualitative and participant observation methods.

Chapter Six relates to the findings of the study. Key findings emerging from the empirical data collected over a two-and-a-half-year period (from 2019 to 2021) amongst a group of preschool teachers in three gang-affected communities on the Cape Flats, in Cape Town, are presented. The key findings presented in this chapter laid the foundation for the analysis based on the theoretical framework and discusses the findings.

Chapter Seven relates to the intervention phase of the action research. The chapter provides a profile of Lavender Hill, presents the goal of the intervention and an outline the intervention plans pre-COVID-19 lockdown. It then proceeds to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the ECD sector and programme implementation. This chapter also details the development of a peace skills training manual as an outcome of the action component of the study.

Chapter Eight draws on the empirical evidence. It brings together the lessons learnt during this study and reviews the substantial contributions that the thesis can make to the arena of peacebuilding, primarily within the demographic of younger children and their teachers. This chapter also highlights areas for further examination and inquiry, limitations of the study, recommendations, policy and other social development priorities.

1.15 Summary

Chapter One analysed the aims and objectives of this study, whilst presenting the backdrop and background for the research. This chapter also highlighted the location selected for the study and the reasons behind its selection, whilst also describing sampling methods, data collection and study methodology. The importance and significance of this study was also discussed within the context of increasing the quantity and quality around peace education interventions in early childhood, within communities of high gang violence levels, to address the dearth in research which currently exists in this area. Lastly, the chapter provided a brief synopsis of the entire thesis, detailing the contents of each chapter and its relevance.

Chapter Two: Gangs and Gangsterism in South Africa and Cape Town

2.1. Contextual Overview of Cape Flats Gangs

This chapter focuses on how South Africa's unique past and the sociohistorical linkages to the origin of gangs and gangsterism in Cape Town, intersect to form the backdrop of the pervasiveness of gangs on the Cape Flats (Bowers Du Toit 2014). Emphasis is given to the critical determinants behind the formation and evolution of gangs in Cape Town, and the structural causes for the vulnerabilities of communities, especially young children and youth. The chapter also highlights the drivers and dynamics that accord the impunity of gangs as well as current issues and debates on government responses to the gang problem on the Cape Flats which has implications to the present day.

2.2. Pre-Apartheid South Africa: District Six

During and after the second World War, mixed communities lived in inner-city areas of Cape Town (Pinnock 1984). Areas such as District Six, despite being impoverished, had a community life that was characterised by strong cultural and social capital that was vibrant and diverse with strong family bonds and community bonds and networks (Pinnock 1984). Local street gangs, colloquially called "skollies" (South African slang for thugs) had been part of the community, formed out of necessity and were well-integrated with the community. This was in large part due to the fact that they thrived in an informal social control function and worked very well with business in the area (Pinnock 1984). These gangs played a protective function and exercised some degree of informal social control, particularly over involved youth (Kinnes 2000).

In the aftermath of World War II, District Six faced increased unemployment, overcrowding and crime, creating squalid living conditions (Pinnock 1984). Powerful families who had access to force and violence "ordered" communities and kept them "safe" through vigilante style community policing. Such arrangements were beneficial since police offered ineffective protection to communities of colour (a situation which persists to this present day). However, initial cooperation with the police ended when these organisations turned to illegal activities and ran protection rackets which established a pattern of crime and violence (Pinnock 1984).

2.3. Apartheid South Africa' Group Areas Act (1950)

As a part of the nationalist apartheid government's apartheid policies, the Group Areas Act (GAA) of the 1950s was established. The GAA sought to create racially segregated geographical neighbourhoods or group areas. Once declared a group area, the GAA legislation directed houses to be demolished and displace people not of the designated group (Mabin 1992a: 422). When District Six was declared a group area under the GAA (1950), it ushered in the era of what came to be known as the forced removals. Mass evictions in 1968, saw tens of thousands of people of colour forcibly removed from their inner-city homes to the outskirts of the city centre to a vast, sandy wasteland, known, as the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2000). Up to this point, the Cape Flats did not exist as a designated area but became the racial dumping ground for people of colour, condemning them to a life of unimaginable misery (Kinnes 1996). This event, as broadly considered by academics, would be one of the defining moments for the emergence of gangs on the Cape Flats and that would have considerable implications for decades ahead (Kinnes 1996).

2.4. Impact of the Group Areas Acts' Removals

The impact of the GAA had widespread implications from which many families and communities have never recovered (Pinnock 1984). It effectively destroyed the working-class family, brought the collapse of social control over the youth and moreover, moved individual families rather than whole neighbourhoods to the Cape Flats, which was perceived as one of the worst outcomes (Pinnock 1984). The forced removals were antithetical to its intended purpose of being a mechanism of social control but instead created gang displacement and a lack of social organisation (Pinnock 1984). The old gangs of District Six were "moved with families and therefore transported in a different form with old allegiances to new communities on the Cape Flats" (Kinnes 2017:70). The realities of the dreadful conditions of their new environment saw fiercer, more organised and more violent gangs forming and the increased use of knives and handguns (Pinnock 1984). This was unlike the former gangs of District Six who were smaller, less hierarchical and less predatory (Kinnes 2000: 8-12).

Strong community relations that existed prior to the forced removals of District Six, provided people with a "sense of collective identity, purpose, cooperation and pride who were acknowledged as a people and had a place in the world," stated Pinnock (1984). This was a sharp contrast to the new environment in which thousands of people of colour were suddenly thrust into, devoid of communal spaces for children to play but dreadfully claustrophobic dormitory styled housing schemes (Pinnock 2019). The fragmentation and dissolution of the extended family destroyed social bonds and the social glue that held communities together, and in turn created "socially disorganised communities" (Pinnock 2016: 185) which exacerbated the problem of unemployment, appalling poverty and overcrowding in poor communities on the Cape Flats.

2.5 Emergence of Organised Criminal Gangs on the Cape Flats

The economics of poverty and power lie at the heart of the development of organised criminal gangs on the Cape Flats, where many coloured young men found themselves with no access to transport, education, job opportunities and recreational activities (Kinnes 2000: 10).

Salo (2006) states that this vacuum created, "the large-scale emasculation of coloured men" and set up a differential structure for many to achieve success by legitimate means and provide financially for their families, except through informal and illegal activities which often resulted in convictions and prison sentences that rendered then unable to meaningfully contribute to their households (Salo 2006: 151-152). In the end, coloured men were excluded on all fronts: socially, economically and politically, but untypically, the exclusion was also gendered as dominant feminised employment in the Western Cape offered men few secure work opportunities (Salo 2006).

Consequently, these marginalised, impoverished and defenceless young men, were trapped in a vicious cycle of survival with little option but to cohere with the gangs (who became surrogate families) for solace, physical protection from threats in these communities and to build something coherent out of the only thing they had left – each other (Pinnock 2016: 40).

Having considered some of the historical precipitants of Cape Town's gang problem, it would be imprudent in any analysis to not discuss the dominant driving factors for the present-day gang crisis on the Cape Flats. The issues are severalfold, complex and intertwined (Pinnock 2016). Many of these factors could be the causes as well as the consequences of violence but are nonetheless critical to unpack in widening our understanding of the social embeddedness of gangs and reducing the stranglehold on the poorest and most vulnerable communities across the Western Cape (Pinnock 2016).

An important caveat is that apartheid cannot be blamed for all South Africa's social ills (South Africa History Online 2021). Gangs have formed elsewhere in the cities around the world where communities experience similar economic and social conditions (for example, Colombia, El Salvador and Mexico) (Van der Spuy 2016). Where there is an uneven distribution of resources or where there are high numbers of people with low material resources, there is likely to be higher rates of victimisation and different forms of community violence (Pinnock 2019). Those who feel the effects of a country's inequality the most are the urban youth from lower levels of society (Pinnock 2019). Notwithstanding this, there is no doubting that the forced removals had a powerful impact on the relocated and played a key role in the establishment and evolution of gangs on the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2000). Evolution of Gangs in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Following South Africa's social transition and the dismantling of apartheid (after the 1994 democratic elections) gangs, especially in the Western Cape, seemed to be enjoying greater success (Kinnes 2017).

In tandem with South Africa's social transition, gangs had undergone a social transition of their own (Kinnes 2000: 8-12). With the opening of South Africa's international borders after 1994, many gangs "expanded exponentially both in numbers and criminal activity as they morphed into a new variant of criminal enterprises that were sophisticated, more violent and powerful" (Kinnes 2017).

Crucially though, Kinnes (2017:74) draws a distinction between gangs on the periphery of violence and gangs who routinely perpetrate violence such as the larger, organised violent gangs, led by former gang members of South Africa's notorious "Numbers Gangs" that to this day constitute a formidable force in every prison across South Africa (Steinberg 2004: 1).

In the Western Cape Province of South Africa, among 2295 of the 3729 murders in which a motive for the murder could be established, 35.2 percent (808) were attributed to gang violence in 2017 to 2018 (SAPS 2018). Statistics for 2018/19 indicated that Western Cape had the highest rate of gang violence in South Africa (SAPS 2019). Of the 1120 murders linked to gang violence, 938 were attributed to the Western Cape Province which also holds four of the top five precincts where the most murders were reported for the twelve-month period of April 2018 to March 2019 (SAPS 2020).

2.6 Main Drivers of Current Gang Violence on The Cape Flats

One of the longstanding costs and damage of the legacy of apartheid is that gangs persist as a strong driving factor for the subculture of crime and violence on the Cape Flats, and especially among the youth (Pinnock 2019).

2.6.1 South Africa's High Youth Unemployment and Low Education

The sense of powerlessness in communities caused by the forced removals remained even after apartheid ended and can be seen through the high levels of youth unemployment that exist in previously disadvantaged communities (Pinnock 2019). Low levels of education, which fail to adequately equip young people with the skills required in the job market, often leave youth unemployed or underemployed, which places them at lower standing of society. In a 2019 interview, prominent Cape Town-based Criminologist and Research Fellow at the University of Cape Town, Don Pinnock, estimated that 34 million young people in South Africa today (350 000 young people between 15 - 24 in Cape Town) are in the streets, meaning they are not in educational system, in training or currently employed (Pinnock 2019). Among the reasons for this, is that for many, school is boring and increasingly, young people are not matriculating (Pinnock 2019). South Africa has a 50 percent school drop-out rate before matric (Cape Talk Radio Interview 2019).

Another compounding factor is the dominance of single motherhood as the prominent family structure in high-poverty, high-violence communities (Van der Spuy 2016; Pinnock 2019). In much the same

way, this contributes greatly to gangsterism as many fathers are killed in gangs, leaving mothers to shoulder the burden of ensuring the safety of their children (Van Der Spuy 2016: 57). This is a salient point to note for communities afflicted by gang violence on the Cape Flats.

These experiences combined coupled with the limited access to resources and a lack of a sense of direction, engenders further feelings of anger, rejection and despair (Pinnock 2019). With few alternatives to escape these conditions, many vulnerable young men perceive themselves as "social zeroes" or as "invisible" which in turn, has a huge impact on the expression of this frustration (Pinnock 1996). It can provoke a perverse search for power, respect and recognition that becomes directed violently toward both close relatives and strangers – creating a hotbed of toxic masculinity (Pinnock 2016).

The perks that gangs seem to offer of power, prestige and comradeship, and the allure to make quick easy money (although illegitimate) become a means for survival for many in communities that are destitute with poverty and unemployment (Pinnock 2016). When the daily alternative is starvation and hopelessness, gang life is seen as an attractive career choice to many young people, who live from hand to mouth because their families simply do not have money (Pinnock 2019). Gangs also offer a means to "rapidly upgrade their lives to a flashy lifestyle, as gangsters parade money, new clothes, jewellery and cars to capture recruits" (Pinnock 2016). Studies attests that older men may also experience similar feelings of rage, linked to sensations of erasure and impotence, while young women and adolescent girls may seek self-validation through having children (Adams 2017: xiv).

It must be noted here that there is limited research available in South Africa with relation to girl or female gangs. However, the research suggests that many girls participate in gangs for similar reasons as males, perpetuating the cycle of violent victimisation, incarceration and drug abuse which keep them trapped in gang life (Dziewanski 2020). In South Africa, the limited research available suggests that girls and women in gangs can also occupy the role of fully fledged gang members who actively participate in crime and violent acts (Shaw and Skywalker 2017).

The recruitment of young children by gangs is not a new phenomenon (Van der Spuy 2016; Pinnock 2016; Kinnes 2017). South Africa's legal system regards children under the age of 10 as not having criminal capacity and therefore they cannot be charged for a criminal offence (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (GI-TOC) 2020). Persons under the age of 18 are also considered minors under the law in South Africa and therefore cannot be tried as adults (GI-TOC 2020). Unsurprisingly, gangs have exploited young children and these loopholes in the law. Recruiting children helps gangs reduce the risk of drawing attention from law enforcement (Pinnock 2020). "Springbokkies" or "bokkies" (in reference to South Africa's national animal) is the local name given to child recruits who are used by gangs, generally as conduits to carry and pass guns to shooters, and to

deliver drugs and other illicit goods (GI-TOC 2020). It was anticipated that the COVID-19 pandemic would slow this practice, but instead, the pandemic further exacerbated it. Young children are also used to sell drugs in school and encouraged to form junior gangs. Those who prove themselves as having capacity for violence, make it into the main gang (GI-TOC 2020).

2.6.2 Murders Committed by Children are on the Rise

South Africa's crime trends suggests that child recruitment into gangs has been on the rise for some time. (Kinnes 2017; Pinnock 2020; GI-TOC 2021). The number of children appearing in Child Justice Courts has increased in recent years, and in 2018 – 2019, 33 percent of all criminal activity involving minors across South Africa took place in the Western Cape, home to the gang-ridden Cape Flats (SAPS 2020). Murders committed by children also rose sharply between April 2019 and March 2020, along with an increase in the number of child victims of crime (SAPS 2020). Observers have argued that murders committed by children in the Western Cape are largely attributable to gangs (GI-TOC 2021).

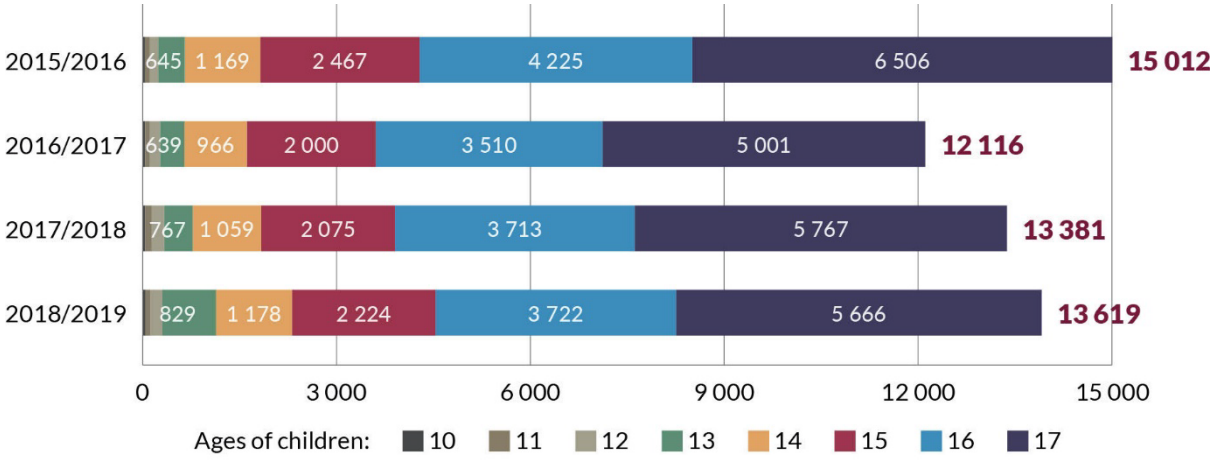

Figure 2.1: Total number of children in conflict with the law, South Africa, 2015 – 2019 financial year (Source: Integrated Case Management System: Child Justice)

The presence of large amounts of firearms and drugs in Cape Town are amongst the biggest drivers of violence in South Africa and are central to the violence gangs enact upon communities on the Cape Flats (Lamb 2020; Pinnock 2019). The influx of high-powered firearms into these communities is bedevilled by appalling high-level police corruption. South Africa's chronically corrupt, inefficient and dysfunctional criminal justice system erodes community trust and legitimacy, as the state is seen as powerless as an effective deterrent to crime (Lamb 2020; Pinnock 2019).

Poor follow-through of investigations, police-prosecutor complicity and low conviction rates are the fundamental drivers of the endemic police corruption in South Africa (Pinnock 2019). Gangs "purchase impunity from the state, using tactics of intimidation and bribery within communities and authorities and consequently, communities appear to have lost faith in the police" (Kinnes 2000:3). The perceived

culture of massive corruption and impunity means that gangs simply do not fear the rule of law and are untouchable (Kinnes 2017; Pinnock 2019 2020; Shaw 2021). This is compounded as more high-profile SAPS malfeasance is uncovered and well documented in various media reports. Certain SAPS members are a part of the problem as they collude with gangs by weaponizing them by either smuggling firearms, selling illegal firearms or providing fraudulent firearm licenses (Lamb 2020; Shaw 2021). According to the SAPS 2020/21 annual report, 566 SAPS-owned firearms were reported as either lost or stolen in that year, a slight decrease from 672 in 2019/20 and 607 in 2018/19 - of the firearms lost or stolen in 2020/21, 376 were recovered (SAPS 2020).

One of the greatest examples of police involvement with illicit gang activity is the high-profile case of disgruntled, SAPS veteran and former Colonel Chris Prinsloo in a gun smuggling operation (Shaw 2021). This exposed the source and the direct link to the circulation of illegal guns to crime bosses in Cape Town which escalated the gang conflict and number of fatalities on the Cape Flats (Lamb 2020; Shaw 2021). Prinsloo claimed his motive was to secure his retirement and to fund his children's university education after he had been passed up for promotions (Lamb 2020; Shaw 2021) Prinsloo, who faced 20 charges of racketeering, corruption and money laundering, pleaded guilty to selling around 2400 firearms and ammunition worth R9 million to an arms dealer, between 2010 and 2016 (Lamb 2020; Shaw 2021). Firearms smuggled from police officers to gangsters had been used in 1666 murders and 1403 shootings. At least 261 children were shot, including child victims as young as one and two years old (Lamb 2020; Shaw 2021).

These illegal weapons were then funnelled to the criminal underworld and sold to the country's gangsters, particularly, on the Cape Flats communities, which were described to be flooded with most of the "Prinsloo guns" (Shaw 2021). This emboldened specific gangs who started to target other gangs which then escalated the conflict to the stage of a local war on the Cape Flats (Lamb 2020). Shaw (2021) writes that the "Prinsloo guns" that flooded the Cape Flats ultimately transformed the nature of organised crime and that ordinary people had to live with the consequences. Drawing actual linkages, data for that period confirms that at least 18 "Prinsloo guns" had ballistic gun matches with the guns that were used to kill children on the Cape Flats, with at least 20 cases that have been directly linked (Cape Talk Radio Interview 2020). Some of these guns have apparently never been traced and it is unclear whether they are still passing between the hands of criminals (Lamb 2020; Shaw 2021). Prinsloo qualified for a remission of sentence and became eligible to be considered for parole as part of a special presidential dispensation during the COVID-19 pandemic for paroled prisoners and non-violent offenders (Shaw 2021). In April 2020, after serving merely four years of his 18-year sentence, Prinsloo was released from prison. Many consider Prinsloo's early release to be a slap on the face to the parents of the children who of had been maimed, injured and killed because of the actions of corrupt SAPS members such as Prinsloo. Prinsloo turned state witness in 2021 (Shaw 2021).

2.6.3 Criminal Philanthropy of Gangs

Gangs and communities have what Kinnes (2017) describes as "a peculiar and deeply complex relationship". South Africa's faltering economy means coloured and black communities remain socio-economically marginalised and vulnerable, such that, gangs are given the opportunity to exploit poor communities by "positioning themselves as powerholders who hold space in communities" (Kinnes 2017). In a neat summation, Kinnes (2017) provides insight into how gangs have become" social movements in that they own welfare institutions, churches and sports clubs and then govern [pseudo-govern] communities through violence". For instance, sports clubs were identified by this study's participants as prominent recruitment grounds and therefore, verify Kinnes' (2017) claim that these are spaces where interaction between gangsters and prospective youth recruits often occur.

Such positioning highlights what Kinnes (2017) coined the "dual face of gangsterism, in which gangs switch roles between being tormentors and philanthropists who are seen as good Samaritans". In some communities, gangs act as the guarantors of safety and defend some communities from other gangs. Gangs provide communities with "an alternative economy, governance and leverage within sections of the community that perpetuate the culture of silence" Kinnes (2017). For instance, it is common knowledge that gangs buy communities. Gangs offer money to buy food, electricity, transport and pay rent for community silence. In this way, gangs maintain their positions as unchallenged within communities (Kinnes 2017).

Substantive evidence of this practice can be found in the recent arrest of underworld kingpin, Nafiz Modack, on 28 April 2020 on charges of extortion, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, the murder of SAPS Anti-Gang Unit Lieutenant-Colonel, Charl Kinnear, in September 2020. Supporters from the community congregated at each court appearance of Modack, as they believed that he was innocent and a good man (Cruywagen 2021). In fact, Modack, in his affidavit, proclaimed himself to be a charitable man who is involved in soup kitchens that feed the poor, including many children across the communities (Cruywagen 2021).

2.6.4 The SAPS Failure to Deal with Gang Violence on the Cape Flats: Government's Military Response

De Vos (2019) argues convincingly of an intervention by police in Rio De Janeiro (Brazil) to restore law and order in the gang-infested informal settlements of the city - in their attempt to subdue gang violence with military force, the military escalated the situation further. When the military starts a defence, gangs increase their armoury, using machine guns and semi-automatics, and therefore endangering even more people. The author further affirms that the scenario in Brazil demonstrates that the situation has deteriorated into a "localised civil war between gangs and organised groups with guns

on both sides resulting The State's failure to stem the flow of firearms in Cape Flats communities has resulted in what Shaw (2021) described as "an orgy of killings so intense that in mid-2019 the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) were called to patrol the City's gang-infested areas on the Cape Flats. This resulted in an effort by government to intervene militarily on the Cape Flats. Involving the military in policing gang violence on the Cape Flats, produced strong responses among experts who warned of the dangers to some and whilst community responses have been divided.

The Anti-Gang Unit was established in 2018 to take a more strategic response to gang violence with its mandate to destroy underground economies (Kinnes 2019). However, the Anti-Gang Unit failed to remedy or manage the gang problem on the Cape Flats. On 12 July 2019, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa decreed a military intervention, called "Operation Prosper" which was deployed to help the provincial government of the Western Cape. The intervention sought to "eradicate the bloodshed and regain lost ground", whilst stabilising 10 of the most dangerous neighbourhoods and hot spots for gang violence, allowing for critical social programmes, such as, schools, work and ambulance services to resume in these areas on the Cape Flats.

Kinnes (2020) explains that while the role of the SANDF was to beef up the capabilities of SAPS (which was arguably misplaced) and provide a support service, this in fact, meant that government had conceded that SAPS had failed in their mandate. He poignantly reminds us that this military deployment to the Cape Flats is not new. In 1989, the apartheid government's Defence Force deployment resulted in civilian deaths. More recent deployments of the SANDF included assisting police with the xenophobic violence in 2008 and 2012, and then in 2015, as part of "Operation Fiela" (Kinnes 2019).

This most recent call for the SANDF to bring peace and stability to the communities on the Cape Flats did not originate from the affected communities but within the political structures Kinnes (2020). Politicians chiefly manufactured this call which was picked up by the media who then interviewed community members, and the call eventually grew louder. South Africa shares deep similarities with some Latin American countries where the military was deployed to combat the problem of gangs (De Vos 2019). Concerns about military presence in communities have been raised from both a constitutional and military perspective (Kinnes 2019). South African Constitutional law expert, Pierre De Vos, illustrates the case of Brazil, where the military oversees public safety and security, and it is evident that police have lost control of areas to well-armed gangs who act as the de facto authority (De Vos 2019). The military have been given broad authority to restore in a dangerous situation, that the army cannot leave. Similarly, De Vos (2019) highlights that this evolution of gangs and interventions is not unique to any specific locality, but that it is an occurrence that repeats itself across different contents, with young people often being caught in the crossfire.

From a military perspective, former Head of the School for Security and Africa Studies at Stellenbosch University, Breakfast (2019) explained that South African soldiers are not trained to deal with the underlying issues or gangsterism (such as, worsening corruption, rising unemployment, poverty) that have allowed gangs to reign over townships for decades. The military operates at two strategic levels, namely, national security (to protect a country's territorial integrity) and at a human security operational level. Fusing the two is problematic, as the military are trained soldiers and are therefore trained differently to police. The effects of introducing the military into communities may be increasingly negative in former military states like South Africa, where civilian-military relations have not been good, and their presence may potentially escalate conflict in communities (Breakfast 2019).

Providing a timeline of the deployment, after the initial announcement in June 2019, the SANDF was set to withdraw on the 16th of September that year. However, the President announced that the SANDF would remain for another six months until the 31st of March 2020 at an additional cost of R64 million (Breakfast 2019). Even as the military is called in for lengthy periods, experts have warned that there are unlikely to be considerable or significant changes due to the lack of engagement by government agencies responsible for safety and security (Pinnock 2019; Pinnock 2020; De Vos 2019; Breakfast 2019). This strategy might have theoretical relevance, but not in practice with some analysts expressing the view that "bringing soldiers onto the Cape Flats is little too late to unscramble the political omelette that is a 50-year history" (Pinnock 2019).

Another risk that surrounds the permanent deployment of the military to the front lines of Cape Town's gang areas is the increased risk that military personnel may become complicit in organised crime (Breakfast 2019). These criminal structures, especially those linked to drug trafficking with international linkages, increase the probability that institutions will become tainted, and troops could possibly be tainted as well. Experts have warned of the dangers of the army on civilian populations and the risks of potentially escalating the violence (De Vos 2019, Breakfast 2019; Stupart 2019). Some researchers predict that the departure of the military after deployment may lead to gangs recovering their weapons and continuing with their illicit activities as they did before (Stupart 2019). As predicted, the military presence on the Cape Flats to deter gangs only brought a temporary reprieve. A few weeks into the deployment of the military, the bloodshed had not paused in some areas. According to provincial authorities, the first week of military patrols saw murder rates drop on the Cape Flats. However, 46 people were killed during the second week, a clear indication that gangs do not fear police nor the army (De Vos 2019). Dudley (2019 cited in Bueno 2022) concluded that, despite hard measures by government to deal with the issue of gangs in El Salvador, gangs keep multiplying. Thus, law enforcement tactics alone cannot solve the issue of gangs; instead, it must be "addressed at a societal level" (Dudley 2019 cited in Bueno 2022: 38).

2.6.5 Gang Adaptability during COVID-19 – Cape Town's "Gangdemic"

When the pandemic hit South Africa, some 2.2 million jobs were lost in the second quarter of 2020 (GI-TOC 2021). In the City of Cape Town metropolitan area, employment dropped by 174 000 between the first and the second quarters of that year. These conditions further exacerbated the tremendous hardship already experienced across the poorest communities of Cape Town. Apart from the country being under lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was "business as usual" for gangs on the Cape Flats. Gangs quickly adapted themselves to the new restrictions to preserve their operations during lockdown (GI-TOC 2021).

2.6.6 Gang Ceasefire

Two weeks into the COVID-19 lockdown gangs apparently agreed to a ceasefire in order to distribute food parcels to the poor and destitute (GI-TOC 2021). This was criminal philanthropy masquerading as altruism. This is a common tactic used by gangs to mislead the media, public and authorities so that they could pursue their illegal activities (Kinnes 2017; GI-TOC 2021). As in the past, truces announced by gangs in Cape Town had no integrity but were merely a public relations exercise, rather than genuine concern for the safety and security of communities. This appeared to be yet another tactic by gangs to serve themselves and strengthen their pseudo-governance over communities in the absence of government social welfare assistance (GI-TOC 2021). Research into the impact of lockdown on gangs shows that gangs became more economically, and socially powerful as countless numbers of businesses saw temporary (some permanent) closure during lockdown, which resulted in the loss of household income and access to credit. As families and communities became increasingly desperate, gangs filled the gap by offering loans either at high interest rates or high penalties, if one was unable to make repayments, they had to perform favours which included stashing firearms or drugs in their homes for gang members (GI-TOC 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic was thus a propitious moment for gangs to more than ever, exploit the vulnerability of communities, especially children, which was heightened during the lockdown. For many children on the Cape Flats, schools not only provide education but also meals through feeding schemes and after-school activities which aim to keep them off the streets and away from gangsterism (GI-TOC 2021). Entire families would also benefit as children would take food home to share – but, such support structures could not operate under South Africa's COVID-19 lockdown. The number of families who faced hunger, and parents and guardians grooming their children to work for gangs in return for money and food became prolific. As previously stated, gangs have a long-standing allure for young people and a sophisticated system of recruiting children (Pinnock 2015). Under lockdown, gangs specifically, and increasingly, targeted children of primary and secondary age with money, food, medication, face masks, clothing, food and protection. This has been the case for other countries as well

- civil society groups in Colombia have similarly warned that the recruitment of children by armed and criminal groups accelerated under lockdown, for similar reasons (GI-TOC 2021).

Similar findings were reported in Kenya. GI-TOC's 2021 article comparing Kenya with South Africa on child recruitment by gangs during lockdown in 2020, found that the closing of schools and idleness of children gave gangs the opportunity to exploit the situation. Gangs in both countries went on recruitment drives. The article reports that across Kenya, there was a rise in child recruitment into gangs with the most notorious gangs going on a recruiting spree from the start of the pandemic. Police in Kenya reported increased incidents of juvenile gang attacks, involving primary and secondary school children, as well as the availability of guns in Kenya during the pandemic (GI-TOC 2021). This was attributed to a mixture of unemployment, insufficient parental supervision, impoverished living conditions and poor education. This comparison highlights how the closure of schools during the pandemic left children without the structure, supervision and inclusion that school offers. Such closure left many disadvantaged children vulnerable. Therefore, the closure of school during lockdown was a major factor that aided the child recruitment efforts by gangs.

In the abovementioned article, it was also reported that gang members distributed food among the community, specifically targeting primary and secondary school aged children. Food was used to attract children to gangs because of the scarcity of food and the need for necessities, including water, a scarce commodity in the slums and which the gangs provided. In South Africa, it emerged that the food parcels were not handed out indiscriminately by gangs but to conceal and smuggle guns and drugs and also to ensure continued loyalty from communities. It should be noted that gangs viewed this as a strategically acceptable thing to do as part of a larger criminal endgame (GI-TOC 2021).

2.6.7 Community, Civil Society and Government Responses to the Army on the Cape Flats

Kinnes (2020) proposed two central questions that emerged after the deployment of the military on the Cape Flats, namely: Did anything change after the army was deployed to the Cape Flats? What are the indicators for measuring the success of the army's deployment? The short answer is that such evaluation is complex and needs to be critically analysed as there can be a danger in relying purely on crime statistics. The release of the SAPS 2019/20 crime statistics indicates that despite the army deployment and COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, gang-related crimes, child and youth gang recruitment, and murders committed by children related to gangs, had increased (SAPS 2020). Observation of crime statistics show that there is no direct correlation between the presence of the army and the reduction in criminal gang activity. Many variables are considered to determine the success or failure of the army's role in controlling the gang crisis on the Cape Flats.

Kinnes (2020) provided the following criteria by which to judge the army's operational success on the Cape Flats: Firstly, the continued safety of communities, that is, whether they are safer as a result of the army's presence; secondly, do gangs continue to exist and conduct their operations in these communities even after the army's deployment? The third criteria look at what the financial and social costs of the army deployment are and if their weight equates to the outcome of this cost? The fourth indicator pertains to neutralising gang leaders by convicting them of their crimes, which did not initially happen at the time of the operation. The fifth indicator is the reduction of firearms and gang shootings in communities.

The issues of lack of integration and collaboration between intelligence structures and SAPS and SANDF, were also noted as some of the biggest challenges of the operation (Kinnes 2019). SAPS had to extend their priority list to areas identified by SANDF's Operation Prosper, signifying a lack of clear agreement between leadership. This was demonstrated midway through the operation by the SANDF's request for additional troops as the initial 421 were said to be insufficient. They did not have the budget to extend the operation and their own intelligence, insisting that they needed to understand the terrain in which they would be operating and probable changes to targets, all present problems for evaluation of the operation (Kinnes 2019).

The sixth indicator is the continued perception of safety by members of the community which, Kinnes (2019) conceded that the army's presence had made a difference in perception. A success attributed to the SANDF, was that people were more confident to venture outside of their homes and go about their daily routines, perceived as a positive outcome in evaluating SAPS and SANDF actions in reducing public fear of gang shootings. The final indicator would be the ability (or lack thereof) of gangs to reproduce themselves, recruit and set up structures after such interventions. The politization of the gang problem and the infighting between authorities indicates a lack of care, understanding, experience and delivery of resources to poor communities affected by gang violence. While the military response demonstrated a high level of collaboration between all three arms of government (national, provincial and local government) in bringing down crime, a potentially significant consequence of the army's deployment is growing public belief that the police are unable to effectively manage the gangs (Kinnes 2019). That perception can lead to low morale in the SAPS and a feeling of false hope.

2.6.8 Government/ Community/ Civil Society Responses to Gang Violence

2.6.8.1 Western Cape Government's Interventions

The Western Cape Government is confined to an oversight role where they monitor, assess the police and make recommendations to police management on systemic problems and failings, such as the problem of gang violence in the province (Western Cape Government 2019; Western Cape Department

of Community Safety 2018). The structure works co-operatively with the SAPS as is required by the Section 206 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa. 1996).

Some of the interventions that have been introduced over the years to improve policing in the province include broad interventions such as:

- Establishing a Commission of Inquiry into Policing in Khayelitsha in 2014 to investigate ongoing vigilante killings upon the request of citizens and non-governmental organisations in the area to set up a commission to investigate complaints from the Khayelitsha community with a view to improve community-police relations (Khayelitsha Commission Report 2014).
- Passing the Western Cape Community Safety Act (2013) which was drafted to improve how the Western Cape Government conducts oversight of the police and to create frameworks for safety partnerships.
- In terms of its constitutional duty, the Western Cape Government report the province's policing needs and priorities to the National Minister of Police. This is done through holding meetings with communities across the Western Cape to find out what each specific community requires in terms of safety and what type of crime most affects those communities. This is sent to the National Minister to consider and to incorporate in the police policy for the province.
- The Expanded Partnership Programme which is a partnership with Community Police Forums aimed at strengthening their civilian oversight role and their sustainability through funding for oversight work conducted on a local level (Department of Community Safety 2015).

Specific interventions focused on addressing gang violence in the province include:

- Watching briefs undertaken either by trained legal experts in the department or university postgraduate law students who attend court cases, observe and report on the proceedings to identify systemic failures, with a particular focus on gang-related crimes (Western Cape Department of Community Safety 2015).
- Partnerships with the religious community to divert youth away from a life of crime such as funding for youth programmes over school holidays, partnering with technical and vocational colleges to offer bursaries to the youth in the most crime-affected areas to prevent youth from joining gangs (Western Cape Department of Community Safety 2020).
- The Chrysalis Academy which is funded by the Western Cape Government, is aimed at diverting at-risk-youth away from a life of crime and gangsterism by providing them with meaningful life skills courses, regular drug testing and anti-drug awareness programmes, as well as preparing them for employment (Department of Community Safety 2017; Chrysalis Academy. 2020).
- Deployment of the army to areas on the Cape Flats in 2020 to stabilise gang hotspot areas so that police are freed up to investigate crimes and bring gang members to justice (Western Cape Department of Community Safety 2020e).

In another example, the City of Cape Town and Western Cape Government took steps to meet the safety concerns of the educators in Manenberg (a gang violence hot spot) of shut schools in the area (Western Cape Department of Education 2013; Department of Community Safety 2013). The educators expressed two main concerns: their safety when travelling to and from schools, and the ongoing violence and shootings just outside the school premises. In response to these concerns, the abovementioned structures both put forward a proposal that focuses on safe access in and out of Manenberg and the protection of the schools. The strategy included deployment of additional Metro law enforcement staff divided between schools during school hours and along the access routes both before and after school (Western Cape Department of Education 2013; Department of Community Safety 2013).

Safe movement corridors were created for educators with high law enforcement presence as well as identifying the security needs of each of the schools. Apart from the enforcement, Neighbourhood Safety Officers and School Resource Officers were deployed at seven schools situated in the proximity of hotspot locations in Manenberg.

2.6.9 Policy and Legislation Related to Youth Gang Prevention in South Africa

The following section contains a brief overview of the policy and legislation as applied to micro-level interventions related to youth gang prevention in South Africa. Legislative documents protecting the rights of children in South Africa include: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1996); the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa 2005); and the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa 2008). While these documents also entitle children to be protected from gangsterism and provide guidance in respect of youth gang prevention, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998) specifically addresses gangsterism in South Africa (de Jongh 2021).

2.6.9.1 The Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996)

South Africa's Bill of Rights is contained within Chapter Two of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and specifies the rights of each South African, which are required to be upheld, respected, protected, fulfilled and promoted (Republic of South Africa 1996). As the foundation on which South Africa's democracy is based (Republic of South Africa 1996), Section 28 of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996) "makes provisions for children specifically and, therefore, guides the provision of services to all children, including those at risk of youth gangsterism" (de Jongh 2021:43).

Key to a child's development is the home and family environment. Inadequate or inappropriate provision of these could have negative impacts (Baumann 1998; Fortune 1998; Pinnock 1998; Standing 2003; Wijnberg and Green 2014; Swingler 2014; Pinnock 2015), despite, Section 28(1)(b) of the Bill

of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996) that makes provision for children with the appropriate family or parental care and protection. For children in situations where parents have abandoned their duty of care, gangs have replaced parental attachment figures for many youths and fulfil the basic needs such as nutrition, shelter and health care (Fortune 1998; Salo 2005; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Swingler 2014; Pinnock 2015).

Section 28(1)(d) is also relevant as youth gangsterism has been linked to family conflict and dysfunction, which include maltreatment, abuse, and neglect (Baumann 1998; Fortune 1998; Pinnock 1998; Standing 2003; Wijnberg and Green 2014; Swingler 2014; Pinnock 2015; Michaeli 2016). Section 28(1)(e) of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996) stipulates that children have the right to be protected from exploitative labour practises. Pinnock (2015) considers gangsterism to be a labour practise, "as youth gangs tend to engage in an illicit economy that has money-earning capacity". Section 28(1)(f) (i-ii) stipulates that children should not be required or allowed to perform work or services that are inappropriate or place their wellbeing at risk, including, education, physical or mental health, spiritual, moral or social development (Republic of South Africa 1996). Intended as a measure to combat organised crime, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998) stipulates that youth gang involvement is illegal and the "violent nature of youth gangsterism can be an infringement on this right where children are concerned" (de Jongh 2021:44).

Crucially, Section 28(1)(i) of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996) also protects children's rights in the event of armed conflict and being forced or coerced into participating in armed conflict. Youth gangs typically violate children's rights to be protected when they use children in violent turf wars involving armed shoot-outs (Standing 2005; Kinnes 2017) and children being victims of stray bullets being fired during gang wars (Pinnock 2015; Kinnes 2017).

2.6.9.2 The Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998)

Developed in response to escalating gangsterism in South Africa, this legislation sought to protect South African's constitutional right to safety and protection (Republic of South Africa 1996) through criminalising gang activities and promoting the allocation of resources towards combatting gangsterism in South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1998).

A core tenet of The Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998) is in the criminalisation of an extensive range of attributes such as certain hand gestures, style of dress, and language. These attributes presume gang affiliation and activity, which are often a reflection of societal and community norms and trends that are adopted by the youth in general, not only gang-involved youth and which could lead to youth being falsely arrested (Pinnock 2015). This contradiction between the legislation and policy has been pointed out as in need of amendment by The Child Justice

Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa 2008) and the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Social Development 2011). Despite these efforts, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998) was not amended (de Jongh 2021).

Criminal justice experts have attracted little critique of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998), criminalising normal youth activities as a suppressive-based intervention which primarily sought to increase public safety through criminalisation, policing and incarceration (Cooper and Ward 2012; Pinnock 2015). The authors further point out that the suppression of gangsterism in South Africa and, specifically, the Western Cape has failed in its attempts to solve, diminish or even prevent recidivism of youth gangsterism. The argument advanced is that the Act had the opposite effect of provoking gangs into greater cohesion and intensified brutality (Standing 2005; Cooper and Ward 2012).

A further critique of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998) is that it recognises gangsterism as primarily a social phenomenon, focusing predominantly on the economic aspects of gangsterism to the neglect of the social aspects of gangsterism (de Jongh 2021). This critical oversight demonstrates the limited recognition of the well-established underlying social causes of gangsterism, such as a need for social identity and belonging (MacMaster 2007; Petrus 2013). Social causes are highlighted as closely associated with the basic rights outlined by Chapter 2 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) and thus allows for the continuation of gangsterism in the Western Cape particularly (Van Way and Theron 2005; Cooper and Ward 2012; Department of Cooperative Governance 2016; Kinnes 2017).

Chapter 8 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa 2005), Section 144(1) gives effect to certain rights of children as contained in the Constitution. stipulates that the purpose of prevention and early intervention services for children include:

> "(a) preserving a child's family structure;
>
> (b) developing appropriate parenting skills and parental and caregivers' capacity to safeguard the well-being and best interests of their children, including the promotion of positive, non-violent forms of discipline;
>
> (c) developing appropriate interpersonal relationships within the family;
>
> (d) providing psychological, rehabilitation and therapeutic programmes for children;
>
> (e) preventing the neglect, exploitation, abuse or inadequate supervision of children and preventing other failures in the family environment to meet the children's needs;
>
> (f) preventing the recurrence of problems in the family environment that may harm children or adversely affect their development;

(g) diverting children away from the child and youth care system and the criminal justice system; and

(h) Avoiding the removal of a child from the family environment (Republic of South Africa 2005)" (de Jongh 2021:47).

De Jong (2021:48) points out that "these stipulations do not specifically mention youth gang prevention, but address issues related to the reasons why children become involved in youth gangs, such as the need for belonging, economic security, an appropriate family structure, and the need for social work intervention where these needs may be neglected or unfulfilled" (Salo 2005; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Swingler 2014; Pinnock 2015). Section (1)(b) of the Children's Act 38 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa 2005) highlights the development of appropriate parenting skills and appropriate parental discipline practices (non-violent) as violent forms of discipline have been known to establish violence as a normal response to resolve conflict in the home, which can be seen as a risk factor for youth gangsterism (Wijnberg and Green 2014; Pinnock 2015; Abbas 2016).

The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa 2008) sole purpose is to uphold the basic values underpinning the constitutional and international rights afforded to children in conflict with the law (Rousseau *et al.* 2018) and considers their needs for care and protection (Republic of South Africa 2007; Badenhorst 2010). Therefore, by acknowledging unmet needs, the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa 2008) is progressive in its advocacy of preventative approaches and the best interests of the child as paramount (Republic of South Africa 1996; Badenhorst 2010). De Jongh (2021) sheds light on the progressive nature of the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa 2008) which was developed through the subsequent Child Justice Amendment Act 28 of 2019 (Republic of South Africa 2019), duly commenced on 19 August 2022 and further raised the minimum age of criminal capacity (no longer 10 years but 12) decisions to prosecute children, and proof of criminal capacity.

2.6.9.3 The National Anti-gangsterism Strategy (2016)

The South African government introduced the new National Anti-gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety 2016) as an inter-departmental gang strategy. The strategy professes to crucially recognise a holistic approach to the root causes of gangsterism in all areas and particularly in the Western Cape as opposed to a police enforcement issue alone. In this regard, the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety 2016) is based on four key implementation pillars. These pillars are (1) human development, (2) social partnerships, (3) spatial design, and (4) criminal justice responses, which appear to focus more on disrupting than neutralising gang activity in all areas of the country.

The Department of Social Development is assigned responsibility as a lead agency in implementing the first pillar of the National Anti-gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety 2016 cited in de Jongh 2021). In this context, the Department of Social Development, guided by the Constitution and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, is responsible for ensuring the welfare and safety of children, including vulnerable children affected by social ills such as gangsterism and as a key implementors in the second pillar of the National Anti-gangsterism Strategy of social partnerships (Department of Community Safety 2016).

The third pillar of the National Anti-gangsterism Strategy is concerned with spatial design. The fourth and final pillar of the National Anti-gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety 2016) aims to improve criminal justice responses to gangsterism. The Department of Social Development is identified as a foremost agency in the implementation of appropriate prosecution practises, as well as in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders of gangsterism (de Jongh 2021).

Pinnock (2016) critiques the policy as being "unimplementable as the strategy, it provides a broad overview of what must be done but does not succinctly state how this should be carried out, lacking an understanding of youth gangsterism in South Africa and, more specifically, in the Western Cape, as the policy lacks basis in daily reality, thus reducing the policy to an ideological construct". A further critique of The National Anti-gangsterism Strategy (Department of Community Safety 2016) by Hoover (1999), (Swingler 2014) and Pinnock (2015) is that it does not specifically focus on youth, but who are the majority members of gangs in South Africa and the Western Cape.

Political efforts towards preventing youth gangsterism in South Africa have been viewed as inadequate and significantly limited in scope because of an enduring focus on suppression and a continued exclusion of social considerations (Van Way and Theron 2005; Cooper and Ward 2012; Kinnes 2017).

2.6.9.4 Western Cape Safety Plan (2019)

The Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government 2019) was developed to boost the capacity of law enforcement to the problem of youth gangsterism specifically, in the Western Cape. The strategies adopted in the plan sought to address this crisis through not only strengthening law enforcement capacity but also addressing the root cause of crime, specifically violent crime, in the province. To this end, the 2019-2024 Provincial Strategic Plan outlines five "Vision-Inspired Priorities" for the Western Cape. These are priority areas, which include: Safe and cohesive communities, empowerment, enabling economy and jobs, public transport, mobility and spatial transformation, and innovation and culture (Western Cape Government 2019).

One of the critiques of the plan is that it lacks detail, "thereby reducing the plan to an ideological construct - it is a vision rather than a concrete roadmap" (Payne 2019). The Western Cape Safety Plan

(Western Cape Government 2019) "compels the development of parenting programmes to be based on international initiatives" but has been criticised for not adequately addressing youth gangsterism as a phenomenon that is context-specific (Cooper and Ward 2012; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014).

Finally, the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government 2019) contains suppressive elements which are counter-productive to the gang prevention initiative. This has been demonstrated by the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998), in which its suppression efforts have tended to "provoke gangs into greater cohesion and intensified brutality" (Standing 2005; Cooper and Ward 2012). Evidence of the suppression efforts of the Western Cape Safety Plan (Western Cape Government 2019) are reflected in the prioritising of financial and human resources towards law enforcement and neglecting the social and underlying causes of crime in the province. Therefore, the Western Cape Safety Plan (2019) cannot be regarded as having failed in its objective of holistic violent crime prevention and specifically, youth gangsterism (Kinnes 2017).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the historical context in which Cape Town's gang crisis has developed. South Africa's policy of racial segregation, known as apartheid, saw the implementation of the GAA (1950) and the forced mass removals of thousands of people of colour to the Cape Flats, the current heart of Cape Town's most notorious gangs. In the nearly thirty decades which followed South Africa's new democracy, gangs have metastasised into powerful enterprises that govern many poor communities on the Cape Flats, for whom life has not significantly improved (Kinnes 2017; Pinnock 2019).

Many of South Africa's youth, especially those from disadvantaged background, who are constrained by social ills that deepen their vulnerability, and they are continually being drawn into the gang ecosystem where they remain entrapped in a complicated and vicious cycle to break free from the cycle of toxic of masculinity (Pinnock 2016; Kinnes 2017). South Africa has a long history of social exclusion. Although there have been improvements in the lives of many South Africans since the transition to democracy, the country is still characterized by high rates of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Rispel *et al.* 2008). These kinds of socioeconomic factors are likely to play a role in the nature of gangs and, thus, the process of gang disengagement. For instance, youngsters growing up in poverty-stricken areas in South Africa may join gangs as a means of survival (Daniels and Adams 2010), which could make disengaging from gang involvement more difficult if legitimate means of earning an income or achieving safety are not available. By contrast, gang disengagement in high-income settings is often accompanied by accessing a legitimate means of making an income (Berger *et al.* 2016).

Gang members typically have multiple motivations for leaving the gang. The process of disengagement may be triggered by what some have called push and pull factors (Roman *et al.* 2017). Push factors are negative occurrences that highlight adverse consequences associated with being in the gang, including, for example, being threatened with criminal justice charges, incarceration, and violence victimisation (Berger *et al.* 2016; Decker *et al.* 2014; Roman *et al.* 2017). Pull factors are usually external to gang dynamics and function as turning points as they offer an alternative to the gang life. Examples include becoming a father or finding employment (Roman *et al.* 2017). Disengagement from gangs remains a challenge attributed to contextual factors typical to low socio-economic communities, which leave communities resoundingly reliant on gangs for support (Dziewanski 2021; Kelly and Ward 2020).

This chapter has also explored the political dimensions of the call for the deployment of the SANDF to the Cape Flats as an incompetent response by government to address the problem of gangs and gangsterism on the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2019; Pinnock 2020; De Vos 2019). The deployment of the SANDF to the Cape Flats drew strong concern from the best legal and criminological minds and affected community residents.

Whilst the initial restrictions of the COVID-19 lockdown did have some impact on the regular illicit income streams of gangs, it was short-lived (GI-TOC 2020) During the lockdown, gangs regrouped and as restrictions were partially lifted, gangs improvised, re-strategized, diversified and expanded their illicit income streams. The remarkable levels of adaptability of gangs during the lockdown was evident in their recruitment drives of youth and young children. Gangs filled the gap of loss of household income, school closures and food shortages brought on by the pandemic and driving shifts that are likely to persist in the post-COVID landscape (GI-TOC 2021).

As had been the case before the pandemic, the main drivers of gangsterism were accentuated during lockdown and gangs continued with business as usual, giving credence to the concerns from gang experts and police authorities about the effectiveness of a military response in bringing a sustainable reduction in gang crime and violence reduction on the Cape Flats (GI-TOC 2021). There may be a potential for peace education to prevent and assist the youth to disengage and transform their lives if interventions start as early as the preschool years. However, little is known about this early transformational potential and therefore the current study addressed the following question: Can early childhood peace education be a transformative process in communities affected by gangs? What are the precursors to such transformation?

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

The primary thrust of the study is "how peace education can be used as a transformative strategy for the preschool community situated in gang-affected areas?" The theoretical framework for this study is based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) to gain insight into the interaction between the different components in the child's ecology that increase vulnerability to the influence of gangs and gangsterism as well as the challenges of preschool teachers working in these environments. Additional theoretical underpinnings that inform the study; namely, conflict transformation, human needs theory, positive peace and transformative peace education are cited.

3.2. Theoretical Position

The presence of gangs and gangsterism is a profoundly complex phenomenon, and the aetiology and solutions to eradicate these phenomena cannot be adequately explained by one theory alone. Therefore, this chapter briefly outlines some key socio-criminological theories on the causes of youth gangs as these provide a broader perspective of the issue. Whilst each theory helps to ground the study, the ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is the overarching theoretical position of this study. Additionally, the ecological theory perspective facilitates comprehensive insight into the causes of gangs and the potential of early childhood peace education to transform communities affected by gang violence on the Cape Flats, Cape Town.

The theoretical position for this study supports the aims and objectives of the study, which state that: the study aims to provide knowledge of the exposure and experience of community violence, specifically, gang violence, on the preschool community of the Cape Flats and to develop and test strategies to reduce harm to children with the community.

The study has six objectives, as follows:

I. To investigate preschool teachers' perceptions and experiences of gang violence and its prevalence in their community;

II. To understand how gang violence exposure and experiences affect young children;

III. To critically analyse the strategies teachers utilise to protect children and themselves;

IV. To examine existing strategies to navigate to-and-from school during gang violence;

V. To interrogate teachers' conceptualisations of peace education and the challenges for early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas;

VI. To assess how peace education interventions in preschool settings can increase capacities to deal with violence.

Within these frameworks, the researcher draws upon the key concepts which are useful for exploring, analysing and contributing to the discussion of youth gangs on the Cape Flats, an area that reflects a particular historical, social and political context.

3.3. Key Sociological and Criminological Theories of Gangs

Some of the key sociological and criminological theoretical perspectives for the causes of youth gang involvement are briefly considered below.

3.3.1 Conflict Theory

The conflict theory of Marx (1859) confirms that groups in power have privilege, access to resources and life chances than those who have not. Since social class determines the choice of education and consequently future success, conflict theory provides an understanding towards how educational challenges may lead to a low regard for school and dropping out and potentially contributing to youths' involvement in gangsterism.

The theory argues that youth gangsterism (and other deviant behaviour), is underpinned by unequal power distributions among various groups (Marx 1859; Meyer 2013). Authority figures such as teachers and learners who are educationally advanced hold dominance over learners that are more educationally challenged, considered to be non-dominant within the schooling environment (Meyer 2013). These educationally challenged learners may experience alienation, apathy and hostility from the dominant group, which many result in low school attachment and consequently cause youth to leave school or seek acceptance in gangs (McCain 2017; Gontsana 2019).

3.3.2 Merton's Strain Theory of Deviance

Merton's theory suggests that society puts cultural pressure on individuals to achieve economic success, even when they lack legitimate means through which to do so (Merton 1938). This causes "anomie" (Durkheim's anomy theory) - an imbalance between these goals and the institutionalised means available to achieve these goals, which in turn may lead individuals to respond by committing crimes to reach these goals. According to the Durkheimian analysis of society, anomie is a situation where the legitimate means of attaining material wealth and comfort are out of balance with the demand for it. This the causes social disorganisation which impacts deviant or dysregulated behaviour.

The legitimacy of the institutions which provides these functions and sell the lie that everyone can achieve these goals, are called into question (Merton 1938). In unequal societies, people do not have equal access and therefore cannot compete through existing institutions. Differential opportunities, the strain of these blocked opportunities and relative deprivation, generally leads to people (especially youth) to seek alternative means to achieve these demands. This undermines one's commitment to social rules which may to a disintegration of culture and society, creating high levels of crime, subculture and gangs (Merton 1938). This theory provides a particularly powerful insights into the anomic pressures experienced by especially male youth on the Cape Flats.

3.3.3 Differential Association Theory (Social Learning Theory)

One of the most prominent forms of the social learning theory is the differential association theory. Sutherland (1883-1950) formulated this theory and the term "differential association" to explain how thieves associate with each other by creating their own values and culture. Beside the influence of symbolic interactionism (the process by which individuals became criminal), Sutherland was also influenced by ecological and cultural transmission theory and culture conflict theory (explanation of varying crime rates in society).

Delinquent behaviour is learned, and that learning is by product of interaction and cannot occur without the aid of others (it is a function of socialisation) (Bandura 1986). Delinquent behaviour is acquired by observing others engage in that type of behaviour, otherwise known as social learning theory. Social learning theory suggests that people model their behaviour and attitudes after others they perceive as role models (Sharkey *et al.* 2010 cited in UNICEF 2021). Therefore, youth will engage in activities or join groups that reinforce similar behaviours (Sharkey *et al.* 2010 cited in UNICEF 2021). Social behaviours are learned through "direct conditioning and modelling another individual's behaviour" (Babik 2019 cited in Banuelos 2021: 9).

Learning happens in intimate groups and reactions to legal codes (laws) vary across society. Children may encounter others who maintain different values and may be influenced by those who show disdain or flout the law (Babik 2019). Youth also learn to define behaviours as good or bad depending on how others view that behaviour. Bandura's theory suggests that individuals can normalise behaviours because they see others participating in delinquent acts. Delinquency occurs from "learned behaviours and thought processes adopted when hanging around others breaking the law" (Walters 2015 cited in Banuelos 2021). A study of social learning theory found that the "social attitudes and behaviours conducive to committing a crime are taught to youth by other gang members" (Walters 2019 cited in Banuelos 2021: 9). Children experience what Sutherland called "culture conflict" when they are exposed to different and opposing attitudes toward what is right and wrong or moral and immoral

(Sutherland 1883-1950). The conflict of social attitude and cultural norms is the basis for the concept of differential association.

The differential association may vary in duration, frequency, priority, and intensity (Sutherland 1883-1950). Whether a person learns to obey the law or to disregard it is influenced by the quality of their social interactions. Those of lasting duration have greater influence than those that are brief; similarly, frequent contacts have greater effect than rare and haphazard contacts. Sutherland did not expand on his description of priority relative to differential association, but Cressey (who continued the work of Sutherland after his death in 1950) (Maloku 2020) and others have interpreted the term to mean the age of children when they first encounter definitions of criminality. This theory suggests that criminal youth behaviour, like other behaviour, is learned behaviour.

3.3.4 Theory of Cultural Transmission

Currently a popular discourse amongst geneticists, the cultural transmission theory suggests that factors such as malnutrition, substance abuse and stress experienced in expectant mothers may lead to children who suffer from physical stunting, tendencies to deviance and mental disorders, such as schizophrenia (Van der Spuy 2016). Genetics and epigenetics provide the instructive blueprint for the prenatal development of an individual (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative 2013; Donnelly and Ward 2015; Pinnock 2015). Whilst genes cannot be altered, epigenetics serves to adapt in-utero in response to environmental influence (Van der Spuy 2016).

The chronic toxic stress to which mothers in poor neighbourhoods are exposed alters the development of the embryo and as a consequence of maternal behaviour, male children may be primed for 'threat detection' and conditioned to respond in aggressive ways (Van der Spuy 2016: 57). For example, Van der Spuy (2016) explains that a pregnant mother who is exposed to extreme environmental stress, such as constant gang violence, may potentially and profoundly alter the epigenetic landscape and biological outcome of her unborn child (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative 2013; Donnelly and Ward 2015; Pinnock 2015). Similarly, Yehuda *et al.* (2018) has demonstrated how epigenetics could explain a link between hereditary trauma and youth gangsterism. The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (2013) and Pinnock (2015) helped to elucidate this issue and explained that negative, dysfunctional, or traumatic intergenerational experiences may condition a child to survive under conditions of environmental stress. The same authors further note that these children have been identified to engage in aggressive behaviour and association with deviant peers and may be at risk of youth gang involvement as they recognise their similarities and purposefully group together to form gangs (Pinnock 2015).

The cultural transmission theory is currently a highly controversial theory, and this position is less well established within the field of scholarship (Van der Spuy 2016). How much significant value this theory

has in understanding behaviour such as gang involvement and gang violence, is debateable. However, the possibility of genetics and epigenetics as risk factors for youth gang involvement is expanded upon in the section on the ecological model.

3.3.5 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1974;1979) socioecological systems theoretical model is well-stablished and offers a holistic view of the wider influencing factors on the child's development and the context (ecology). The environment is viewed as crucial in the child's development. In terms of gang application, the ecological systems theory, suggests that external influences on the individual do not occur in isolation but can appear across multiple domains. When they interact, it increases the risk of gang involvement (Gilman *et al.* 2014).

An ecological model offers a holistic explanation for youth gang involvement by emphasising the impact of the larger environment or systems. For this reason, this theory is used as the dominant framework to examine the factors contributing to youth gang involvement and membership prevalence rates throughout this study. The ecological systems theory divides the child's environment into five different but interrelated levels of ecosystems, with each encompassing different influences on the child's development and risk factors for gang involvement (Estrada *et al.* 2018).

3.3.5.1 Micro-Level Risk Factors

The first and most influential level of the ecology is the microsystem: the child's age, race, gender and temperament (Bronfenbrenner 1974). These uniquely form and influence how the child interacts with the other contexts and the influences that those contexts bring to bear on the child. The child forms the core component and is nested within their microsystem (Bronfenbrenner 1974; Germain and Gitterman 1980) which contains the unique characteristics of the child's immediate environmental setting, such as family and school (parents, siblings and teachers). At this level, the child is involved in continuous, face-to-face interactions with familiar people, such as peers (socialisation during adolescence), family (parental hostility/violence, lack of parental monitoring), community (exposure to violence) and schools (teacher attitudes, climate) contribute to the rates of youth gang involvement (Bronfenbrenner 1974; Germain and Gitterman 1980).

A) Age: Gang involvement is predominantly represented by youth in scholarship, globally (Hoover, 1999; Swingler, 2014; Pinnock, 2015; Michaeli, 2016; Wollberg, 2020). Studies of 1900s gangs in South Africa, revealed the average age for gang members was between 15 and 25 years of age (Hoover 1999; Michaeli, 2016). In contemporary South Africa, statistics reveal that gang entry for youth is becoming increasingly younger (Hoover, 1999; Van Way and Theron, 2005; Michaeli, 2016). Based on personal

accounts, de Jongh (2021) further states that, in South Africa, children as young as nine years have been found to join gangs (Salo 2005; Swingler 2014; Department of Social Development 2014).

B) **Gender**: Gang involvement is also gendered as gangsterism appears to be a mostly male phenomenon (Jensen 2008; Pinnock 2015; Wegner *et al.* 2016). Males are fundamentally on the individual level, biologically and developmentally predisposed towards violence and aggression (Jensen 2008; Petrus 2013; Pinnock 2015; Wegner *et al.* 2016). Bjorkqvist (2017) considers hormones in male violence and aggression and attributes the surplus production of testosterone in males during youth and peaking in adolescence. The hormonal surplus is therefore a risk factor in males as they transition from childhood to adulthood (Parrott *et al.* 1994; Pope and Katz 1994; Van Goozen *et al.* 1995; Pope *et al.* 2000; Sjodin *et al.* 2018)). Therefore, such predisposition towards aggression and violence may serve as a risk factor for male youth gang affiliation, particularly within communities, such as on the Cape Flats, where gangs provide youth as a means to physically express their experiences of hostility (Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015).

C) Genetics: As noted earlier, genetics and epigenetics - the idea that criminality is genetically determined, are a rather progressive and currently highly controversial perspective within youth gang involvement scholarship. The role of genetics as a risk factor for criminal behaviour (gang involvement) are briefly discussed below.

The development of attributes such as "risk-taking, insecure attachments, mistrustfulness, a preference for smaller immediate rewards over larger future ones, aggressive behaviour and affiliation with deviant peers" (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative 2013; Pinnock 2015:177) can originate with in-utero-trauma-exposure. De Jongh (2021:26) suggest that "society, in general, views these attributes as dysfunctional, yet they serve as defence mechanisms for survival in communities ravaged by gangsterism". Authors such as Beaver, Schutt, Boutwell, Ratchford, Roberts and Barnes, (2009) and Pinnock (2015), convincingly explain that "youth, conditioned through pre and postnatal trauma damage, tend to recognise likeness among one another and form youth gangs".

Van der Spuy (2016) notes that the reluctance to engage with biosocial explanations for criminal behaviour is widespread and may be even more accentuated in contexts such as South Africa, where environmental stresses are acute and social inequalities brutal. South Africa's high rate of malnutrition, substance abuse and stress experienced in mothers as "incubators" of the unborn may lead to children who suffer from physical stunting, tendencies to deviance and mental disorders. The toxic stress to which mothers in poor neighbourhoods are exposed can alter the expression of genes and the embryonic development. As a consequence of maternal behaviour, male children may be primed for threat detection and become hyper-alert organisms conditioned to respond in particularly aggressive ways. Some studies show that living in crime hotspots may also have long-term, possibly intergenerational, impacts on brain

development as such environments may be associated with DNA methylation profiles related to aggressive behaviour (Leshem and Weisburd 2019).

Violence is not simply in the genes. Where a genetic predisposition might be present, this does not automatically mean that an individual is destined to become a criminal and/or a gang member but rather indicates vulnerability. Genetics alone do not form a basis for criminality, but a vast array of cultural and socioeconomic experiences from the family as well as environmental and other biological factors. Whilst genetics is a potential source for youth gangsterism, it represents one source of influence on the aetiology of criminal behaviour and needs to be considered amid multiple causal pathways. The applicability of this approach needs to be cautiously embraced in seeking out understandings of the increased risks for youth gang involvement and future research. Additional genetic research may contribute to youth gang involvement prevention efforts.

D) Racial Categorisation: Race has always represented a pivotal issue in any discussion on gangs (De Jongh 2021). Criminological research has historically examined the phenomenon of gangsterism in South Africa predominantly as a demographic of non-white populations (Kinnes 2000; Jensen 2008; Petrus 2013; Roloff 2014; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Pinnock 2015). This is especially the case of youth gangs on the Cape Flats that are largely characteristic of coloured and black townships (Kinnes 2000; Jensen 2008; Petrus 2013; Roloff 2014; Pinnock 2015). Even though coloured and black populations feature more prominently in South African gang literature and race is often utilised as a variable or classification in research, (Venter, 2000; Yudell, 2014) "race is not an accepted scientific category and is not indicative as a risk factor for the predominance of gang affiliation, violence or criminality among South Africa's non-white populations" (De Jongh 2021:26).

However, one cannot talk about gangs within the South African context without including a discussion on race or ethnicity. Such omission fails to understand the different historical experiences of race and ethnicity in South Africa and the impact of these on the different pathways to gangsterism (Petrus 2013; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014). Treating this group as a single entity, ignores their distinct histories in this country. Researchers in South Africa view the racial demographics of gangsterism as a consequence of structural and socioeconomic oppression of South Africa's non-white populations under apartheid and lack of reform under democracy (Petrus 2013; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014). Much later, scholars such as Pinnock (1984) and Schärf (1990) "came to focus on the link between gangs and structural inequalities in their analyses of gangs in Cape Town, with others placing gangs at the forefront of becoming organised (Kinnes 2000) after the political transition, whilst others disagree" (Standing 2006; Jensen 2008 cited in Kinnes 2017).

E) Structural Violence: The existence of gang violence in communities on the Cape Flats exemplify Galtung's formulation of structural violence which is described as "violence caused not by direct

somatic harm, but by systems of [oppressive] unequal power [socio-economic and political] that structure unequal life chances such that a person's potential is unrealised" (Barnett 2008: 79). Clarke-Habibi (2018: 80), in exploring the causes of youth violence in South Africa, ascribes it to Galtung's indirect structural violence, that is, the existence of oppressive and unequal socio-economic and political relationships. The prevalence of structural violence in the form of poverty and inequality explains South Africa's high levels of direct violence.

Clarke-Habibi (2018: 81) further states that poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic issues, therefore, form a backdrop to youth violence in South Africa. South Africa's struggle with institutional violence, has created conditions of horizontal violence, such as gangs, inimical to communities as their grip is difficult to dislodge. Whilst race (and genetics) does not predispose an individual to gangsterism, deprivation and dispossession that targets racial groups does (Petrus 2013; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014). These experiences of deprivation and dispossession are further endured at a meso-level.

3.3.5.2 Meso-Level Risk Factors:

In the second level of the child's ecosystem, the mesosystem, offers insight into how the social context of the individual can exacerbate or buffer experiences for youth who at risk for gang involvement (such as, family and school) and serves to establish the individual's identity (MacMaster 2007; Petrus 2013; Wollberg 2020).

A) Potential Risk Factors: Various potential risk factors increase the likelihood of youth joining gangs and can be divided into five interrelated domains: individual, family, peer group, school and community. Youth are at greater risk for gang involvement when factors in all five domains interact (Thornberry *et al.* 2003). Factors within these five domains are explored.

B) Individual Risk Factors: While external influences in the environment may increase the likelihood of youth to join gangs, individual risk factors or motivations are also involved (Sharkey *et al.* 2016). Unmet needs within the family, school and community structures as well as mental issues of depression and suicidal ideation (Merrin *et al.* 2015) can increase gang involvement.

C) Familial Risk Factors: The family has always been considered to be a vital element in the emotional, psychological and social development processes of the child (United Nations (UN) 2012; Tint and Weiss (2016). In 2012, the UN formally recognised that "the family and the home represent another important dimension in the healthy development of children and youth and as a potential risk factor for youth gangsterism" (de Jongh 2021). The UN called for the international promotion of familial wellbeing (love, care, parental attachment and supervision, socialisation and transitional guidance) in order to reduce the level of socially pathological behaviour in youth, such as involvement in youth gangsterism (de Jongh 2021). Youth observing violence in the home is another potential risk

factor for gang involvement (Merrin *et al.* 2020). Within the familial risk factors domain, the family system is explored and how it increases the risk for youth gang involvement.

D) Parental Attachment: Many attachment theories try to explain the drives towards youth gang involvement. Theories of emotional parental attachment explain the significance of exposure to violence, abuse and dysfunctional family and home environments, characterised by instability and disconnection, as a risk factor for youth gangsterism (Pope *et al.* 2000; Sjodin *et al.* 2018). This risk is most acute in male youth as a consequence of elevated testosterone levels which already predispose them to aggression and violence (de Jongh 2021).

Crucially, weak familial bonds may cause, "insecure or defective, parental attachment stunts the emotional functionality and resilience of the child, which in turn, often results in feelings of shame, anger, loneliness, alienation and a lack of trust" (Burk and Burkhart, 2003; Baker, Beech and Tyson, 2006; Pinnock, 2015; Yoder, Leibowitz and Petersen, 2018). Often, the child then learns to express these feelings through violence and aggression, as a means of reasserting their existence (Pinnock 2015). The negative socialisation becomes a risk factor for youth gangsterism (Miner, Robinson, Knight, Berg, Romine and Netland, 2010; Pinnock, 2015; Yoder, Leibowitz and Petersen, 2018).

E) Socialisation within the Family: Children who do not benefit from positive socialisation within the family, bear comment and analysis. In such instances, children are often inhibited in their ability to observe and conform to the norms of society and are classically at risk of dysfunctional socialisation through gangsterism (Bezuidenhout 2018). Consequently, youth who are not socialised to develop socio-affective needs such as love, empathy, attachment, affection, loyalty and security within the family domain (essentially, non-violence) tend to gravitate towards others like themselves, such as youth gangs (Miner, Robinson, Knight, Berg, Romine and Netland, 2010; Pinnock, 2015; Yoder, Leibowitz and Petersen, 2018). On the other hand, a child who is has developed strong and positive social ties, is less likely to develop a raft of delinquent and criminal behaviour than those who have not been positively socialised (de Jongh 2021).

F) Lack of Appropriate Parental Guidance: The transition from childhood to adulthood requires parental guidance and the lack thereof is detrimental during this developmental stage (Pinnock 2015; Wollberg 2020). It is during this transitional period from youth to adulthood, which poses cognitive, emotional, physical and relational challenges, that positive parental guidance is vital (Novell 2014). Healthy adult guidance throughout this transition phase is fundamental prevent youth gang affiliation which is often the "outcome of an absence of ritualised transition into adulthood" (Pinnock 2015).

G) Parental Supervision: A lack of appropriate parental support and supervision which encourages positive socialisation, is recognised as a prominent risk factor for delinquency and antisocial behaviour,

such as gangsterism (Petersen 2012; Bezuidenhout 2013; Michaeli 2016). However, poor parental supervision and support predisposes the child to engagement in youth gangsterism by having the freedom to engage in deviant or antisocial behaviour without appropriate consequence (de Jongh 2021).

Abysmal conditions characterising South Africa's gang-ridden communities, particularly the Western Cape, youth gangs often adopt the responsibility for supervision abandoned by parents during this developmental transition period (Salo 2005; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Pinnock 2015). Gang practises, initiations, and rituals provide a rite of passage into manhood for male youth seeking to reject the dependency of adolescence but without the legitimate status or resources that would define them as men (Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015). Caregivers in many impoverished families "are forced to have to take on more work commitments in order to make ends meet, which may compromise their ability to provide a safe and supportive home environment" (Estrada *et al.* 2018 cited in Banuelos 2021). Often this means either limited or a lack of parental involvement such as monitoring and supervision of the child (Merrin *et al.* 2020) and weaker family bonds. This is the case for many families on the Cape Flats (Salo 2006; Pinnock 2015).

H) Family Structure: Regardless of family structure, many key factors for engagement in youth gangsterism precede children's involvement in gangs. However, single-parent households or households where youth have to adjust to multiple caregivers are at a significantly higher risk factor for gang involvement (Howell and Miller-Graff 2014 cited in Banuelos 2021). Within the context of South Africa and the Western Cape, a lack of parental supervision is often the consequence of children and youth being raised in single-parent households (Bezuidenhout 2013). Absent parenting compromises the child's availability of love, attention, guidance, stability and supervision, potentially resulting in dysfunctional development and puts the child at risk of engaging in deviant or antisocial behaviour, such as youth gangsterism (Bezuidenhout 2013).

Single-parent households of the Western Cape and Cape Town's Cape Flats are most often comprised of an absent father largely due to imprisonment (Andersson and Stavrou 2001; Bezuidenhout 2013; Wijnberg and Green 2014). Fatherlessness is often the consequence of criminal histories within families and are also considered a contributing factor in the development of criminal behaviour in youth – "if there is a relative in the home who is incarcerated also increases the risk associated with youth joining a gang" (Merrin *et al.* 2020 cited in Banuelos 2021: 12). Male youth exposure to familial criminality and fatherlessness elevates the need to assert their masculinity which serves as a risk factor for gang involvement (Nair 1999; Pinnock 2015). Fatherlessness, often as a consequence of criminality, serves as a risk factor for youth gang affiliation, particularly among boys (Andersson and Stavrou 2001; Bezuidenhout 2013) especially as the burden of providing for and keeping their children safe then falls on mothers (Van Der Spuy 2016).

It is approximated that more than 61.8 percent of children younger than 18 in South Africa, were absent from the Household Statistics Survey of South Africa (Stats SA) 2018). The report revealed that only 31.7 percent of black children stayed with their biological fathers, compared to 51.3 percent of coloured children, 86.1 percent of Indian/Asian children and 80.2 percent of white children. The Western Cape had the highest percentage of homes where children stayed with their fathers (55.8 percent) (Stats SA 2018). This devasting trend of fatherlessness in South Africa means that single mothers are struggling to hold families together (Pinnock 2016; Van der Spuy 2016).

A child's basic developmental needs are predicated on the functionality of the family. Familial environments that fail to adequately provide youth's inherent need for love, security, parental attachment and supervision, or appropriate socialisation may cause a low sense of connection, a feeling of loss and isolation from their local communities (Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Pinnock 2015). The insufficient provision of these needs within the natural family, may motive youth to partially or completely reject their family, instead, seek acceptance among a new, inappropriate, and surrogate family of gangsters and a perception of increased value towards peer relations (Madizela-Madiya and Mncube, 2014; Pinnock, 2015). However, according to Pinnock (1998: 3), "the youth cannot be blamed for the way in which they [try] to cope with the tough, alienated [families] in which they lived: create surrogate families: gangs".

I) Peer Relations: Adolescence is a profoundly critical and difficult period in the child's development and peer factors are a strong risk factor for increased youth gang affiliation (Bezuidenhout 2018; Thomas 2015). The importance of peers and acceptance from peer groups starts to mount during this period and these relationships assume greater importance in the youth's cognitive, emotional and behavioural development (Thomas 2016). Relationships from the overall peer group have been argued to emerge as more influential than parental attachment in the development of delinquent behaviour.

As youth approach adolescence, peers are an essential source of support, and they want to increasingly interact with each other (Thomas 2015; Thomas 2016). This can be more likely when they tend to feel a lesser degree of satisfaction with their families and seek emotional support and companionship from their peers, as the tension this creates within the family unfolds (Thomas 2016; Bezuidenhout 2018). This, Bezuidenhout (2018), sees as normative in minimising the importance of the relationship between child and parent. The family or parental relationship is substituted by proximal peer socialisation and influence as the youth increasingly value the acceptance and company of their peers (Bezuidenhout 2018; Thomas 2015).

Gangs have a structure and set of beliefs which normalise cohesive deviant behaviour (Dong and Krohn 2016). When other systems are disrupted, such as family practices occur, youth seek support and guidance from their peers and "may join gangs for protection, for leisure or respect" Dong and Krohn

2016 cited in Banuelos 2021: 12). The most prominent risk factor appears to be having delinquent or antisocial peer group. Harrigan and Commons (2015) found a strong correlation between involvement with antisocial peer behaviour (in the form of youth gangs) as a primary mechanism to be valued, needed and accepted by family, community or social group.

The gang is a group that provides youth with a social and emotional support network that they may lack (Harrigan and Commons 2015). When the option of a more positive and prosocial alternative network may be restricted or not available, the gang network can serve as a means of compensating for this deficiency by providing continued support for the youth's social and emotional needs (Pyrooz *et al.* 2013). The inherent need of belonging is powerful and for youth, the sense of belonging is particularly strong. Unmet needs become a precursor to- and risk factor for gang involvement (Williams 1998; Vetten 2000; Wijnberg and Green 2014; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Van Lennep 2019). Gangs can offer benefits that are unmet within the family of origin, neighbourhood and the school, through shared beliefs, values, and behavioural traits (Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014).

Dudley (2019) research on gangs in El Salvador has also challenged the common narrative that the primary motivator for youth gang-involvement is criminal enterprise or money. Rather, Dudley (2019: 38, cited in Bueno 2022) suggest the biggest motivator for youth gang affiliation is "social connectivity and a sense of belonging".

J) School-Based Risk Factors: The school ecology (which includes, relationships with teachers, peer rejection, school failure) has tremendous influence on the increased likelihood of youth gang membership (Bezuidenhout 2018). Depending on the child's schooling experience and the impact on socialisation, this can be a strong risk factor for youth gang involvement (Bezuidenhout 2018). Although the family unit is considered as the principal predictor of delinquent and criminal behaviour, school factors have tremendous influence and prevalence as a stronger predictor in the development of youth criminality a children become more exposed to alternative norms and behaviours (Elliot 1998; Payne and Welch 2016; Theimann 2016; Dick *et al.* 2019). It is thus critical to understand the risk factors in the school context which include:

- Low school attendance, which has the greatest influence on antisocial or delinquent behaviour such as youth gangsterism (Dick *et al.* 2019).
- Associated with this, is low school attachment or connectedness with teachers and classmates. Poor school attachment is a stronger predictor of youth gang involvement than poor parental attachment (Resnick 1997; Payne and Welch 2016; Dick *et al.* 2019).
- Low school commitment is also associated with poor academic achievement. Often, if parents demonstrate low value towards education, their children are also less likely to develop a proclivity for education, and at higher risk for delinquent and criminal behaviour and involvement with gangs (Wijnberg and Green 2014; Nordin *et al.* 2017).

K) Gang Recruitment: Youth gang recruitment occurs predominantly through proximal social environments, which often places school learners at risk of direct recruitment (Densley 2012; Gallupe and Gravel 2017). The violence and trauma experienced with exposure to gang violence at school, serves as a strong motivating factor for school drop-out rates among gang-involved youth (Wijnberg and Green 2014; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Petersen 2016). Statistics indicate that when the majority of students perceive their school environment to be unsafe, they are three times more likely to affiliate themselves with gang members (Lenzi *et al.* 2015).

Overcrowding in schools, and notably some schools in the Western Cape, results in youth being denied the opportunity to enter the formal schooling system (Mccain 2017; Gontsana 2019). The impact of this on the youth is that they are forced onto the street, (Pinnock 2015; Williams 1998; Vetten 2000; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014) and swells the number of gang-involved youth. This form of recruitment into youth gangsterism is representative of the factors that are not operating at the child's mesosystem level, such as a lack of educational resources to meet educational needs, (Johnson and Yanca 2010; Hepworth *et al.* 2013).

L) Community Socioeconomic Status: Internationally, youth gangsterism has been viewed as a response to socio-economic deprivation (Merrin *et al.* 2015). This implies that youth gangs are a response to poor socioeconomic standing within the context of relative poverty (MacMaster 2007; Wijnberg and Green 2014; Pinnock 2015). Significant community factors such as living in urban poor, socially disorganised and violent neighbourhoods, where resources are scarce, increases youth participation in gangs (Merrin *et al.* 2015). In impoverished communities, high gang prevalence and crime rates tend to result in increased accessibility to firearms and weapons, and a high availability of drugs which encourages youth to become involved in criminal activity (Pyrooz *et al.* 2010).

Lower socio-economic factors that give rise to youth gangsterism are also linked to basic survival, demonstrating masculinity in alignment with dominant social norms and developing socioeconomic identity (Salo 2005; MacMaster 2007; Pinnock 2015; Wollberg 2020). Mainstream employment primarily provides legitimate and normative means of obtaining economic identity (Gray and Allegritti 2005; Roloff 2014). However, in South Africa, where youth unemployment is the highest in the world (Roloff 2014; Pinnock 2015) and presents a significant crisis, such normative and legitimate means of employment are simply not available to the majority of youth who come from low socio-economic conditions.

With little legitimate resources for economic survival, youth exist on the socioeconomic margins of society and have no recognisable economic identity within the larger socioeconomic sphere (Vetten 2000; Pinnock 2015) and this may propel youth to join gangs in order to meet their basic survival needs. Having to create their own economic opportunities, an alternative economy has emerged among youth

gangs in low economic communities on the Cape Flats whereby their illegal practises are a substitute for legitimate employment, and a means of economic inclusion and survival. Involvement in the criminal economy established by youth gangs allows for basic survival (Salo 2005; MacMaster 2007; Pinnock 2015).

The alternative economy provides youth with significant social capital (access to material goods which symbolise status, power and respect) (Vigil 2002; Petrus 2013) and is recognised by the community and society, thus providing a valid, alternative socioeconomic identity (Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015). The alternative economy also provides an alternative opportunity to be recognised as a man within a context of material or symbolic capital. (Vetten 2000; Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015). The gender and masculinity aspects are important considerations as males experience increased pressure to assert themselves through economic prosperity and their search for identity includes the desire for masculine status (Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015). Ideals of masculine dominance revolve around men's economic roles as the primary breadwinners and protectors of the family (Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015). Similarly, Maringira and Tyanai (2018) argues that for young men, particularly in marginalised communities, gang violence is not only about poverty but about the aspiration of status, identity, belonging and recognition. Gangs, in themselves, are "homes" for young men and boys who feel neglected Maringira and Tyanai (2018). However, gang violence are also spaces in which young men and boys can not only "do crime and violence", but also "do masculinity", validate and display masculine identity and power within in the communities in which they live (Deuchar and Weide, 2018; Deuchar et al., 2016 cited in Kelly 2018; Maringira and Tyanai 2018). Gangs have an undeniable power influence on the construction of masculinities, is undeniable.

In the South African context, youth gangs in low socio-economic communities offer the desired masculine identity of exerting a social image of toughness and economic success through their criminal activities and thus serve as a risk factor for gang involvement, particularly for male youth (Salo, 2005; Pinnock, 2015).

M) Protective Factors for Youth Gang Involvement: Protective factors attempt to function as a shield that protects youth from the exposure of risk factors for gang involvement (Howell and Miller-Graff 2014). Increased exposure to risk factors increases the probability of youth gang engagement and other problematic behaviours. Promoting protective factors may deter youth from gangs. In the preceding section, the text highlighted the risk factors for youth gang involvement that span all five social development domains (individual, peer, school, family and community) from an ecological perspective.

Findings regarding the effectiveness of protective factors to deter youth gang involvement suggests that an ecological approach considers factors across various domains that contribute to the increase in gang entry likelihood (Merrin *et al.* 2020). Starkey *et al.* 2019 examined whether and how school climate

functioned as protective factor in the face of children's exposure to community violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC. Exposure to community violence is thought to create risk in the social and emotional development of children, including those children living in low-income, conflict-affected countries. In the absence of other types of community resources, schools may be one of the few community resources that can help buffer children from the negative effects of community violence exposure (Merrin *et al.* 2020; Starkey *et al.* 2019).

Their findings suggested that schools can provide positive environments that protect the mental health of children and reduce peer victimisation, even in communities that have high levels of violence (Starkey *et al.* 2019). The study further goes on to states, "Students who experienced high community violence and a negative school climate generally demonstrated the worst development." Given a general lack of community resources like mental health services in low-income countries, as well as widespread stigma and uncertainty regarding the role of mental health professionals (Piworarczyk *et al.* 2014), schools may serve as the only consistently available institution that can address the exceptionally high socio-emotional needs of children in high-poverty, conflict-affected regions (Aber *et al.* 2011). This study was the first of its kind, within this unique context, and the findings showed that perceptions of school climate may either protect against or enhance the negative impacts of community violence on social-emotional development. The study also illuminates the critical importance of the dimensions of the school microsystem, namely student perceptions of school safety and support, and school predictability and cooperation. Students who experience high levels of community violence and perceive more negative school climates are at highest risk for poor social-emotional development, due to the compounded risk factors (Piworarczyk *et al.* 2014; Merrin *et al.* 2020; Starkey *et al.* 2019).

The findings contribute evidence to the growing body of research on the important role that the school climate plays in fostering resilience and promoting positive child social-emotional development in the face of community violence exposure, particularly for children in low-income and conflict-affected contexts. The major implication of this study is that the impacts of violence exposure in the community can be reduced by a positive school climate or potentially worsened by a negative school climate (Merrin *et al.* 2020; Starkey *et al.* 2019).

N) Family Protective Factors: Parental support that provides youth with an opportunity to obtain a sense of belonging (Lenzi *et al.* 2015 cited in Banuelos 2021). Strong family bonds among cultural groups that value kinship (Van *et al.* 2008) are potential protective factors in deterring youth gang involvement. Family support, positive peer relationships, drug or alcohol treatment and parental supervision, school engagement (Merrin *et al.* 2020) are all protective factors found to deter youth from joining a gang.

O) The School System: The school is a crucial environment for the child's development and socialisation. In keeping with theories of socialisation, positive school attachment is thus essential to mitigate youth gang involvement and can be instilled through modelling and reinforcement within the family (Sampson and Laub 1993; Wijnberg and Green 2014; Payne and Welch 2016; Dick *et al.* 2019).

The development of strong and positive school attachment can further be supported by experience of safety and security within the educational environment. Experiences of safety and security are often threatened in South African schools, particularly in the Western Cape, due to youth gangsterism extending from the streets onto school grounds (Van Way and Theron 2005; Petersen 2016). School orientation serves as a protective factor that mitigates gang entry risk among youth by 60 percent (Merrin *et al.* 2020). Yiu (2021) suggests that schools located in low socioeconomic communities should strengthen relationships with students and families to create a school-home-community linkage.

A study by Merrin *et al.* (2020) on the longitudinal effect that ecological factors have on gang entry among adolescent offenders found that parental monitoring and high involvement in their child's life reduced the risk of gang entry. Knowledge of the risk and protective factors of youth gang involvement, while useful in that they provide insights into the broader picture of youth gang affiliation and offer empirical guidance for developing more identify specific factors that may be more important than others, it is important to note that these factors are not in and of themselves indicative of causal mechanisms (Peterson and Morgan 2014).

Risk factors identified in the prediction for youth gang involvement have been found to be present and have considerable overlap in other problematic behaviours displayed by youth, such as delinquency and violence (Esbensen *et al.* 2010). Further, youth who become involved with gangs typically possess a high level of risk factors prior to their affiliation (Decker *et al.* 2013). No risk factor nor no one variable can uniquely predict high proclivity for youth gang involvement, which can account for the complexities of the nature of the gangs and gangsterism (Decker *et al.* 2013). Instead, it is the identification of the accumulation of risk factors across the aforementioned domains can best form a method of calculating how likely youth are to be involved in gangs.

3.3.5.3 Exosystem Level Risk Factors

In the exosystem, the individual's development is influenced by events occurring in settings external to the individual, that is in which the individual is not present (Bronfenbrenner 1979). The exosystem involves structures (environments) in which the individual is not directly involved but nonetheless produce significant influences. The exosystems includes parents' workplaces, parents' friends, the mass media and certain aspects of the community. For example, exposure to community violence such as

gang violence, may or may not directly concern youth in the area but could have a negative influence and be a risk factor for gang involvement.

3.3.5.4 Macro-Level Risk Factors Associated with Youth Gangsterism

The macro-level forms the outermost realm of the individual's exosystem and is concerned with the larger social and communal organisations of society (Bronfenbrenner 1974, Germain and Gitterman 1980; Hepworth *et al.* 2013). It is considered as "a cultural blueprint that may determine the social structures and activities that occur within the immediate systems level" (Bronfenbrenner 1977:30). Whilst this level of the ecosystem does not have a direct impact on the functioning and wellbeing of the individual, it will indirectly influence the individual's experiences and behaviour through establishing the functioning and norms of the society in which the individual exists (Bronfenbrenner 1974; Johnson and Yanca 2010; DuBois and Miley 2016).

Structures that contribute to the creation of a climate of violence are for instance legislations, policies, norms, a patriarchal system, and social and economic inequities (Jameson 2014). South Africa's apartheid policies created a dysfunctional society and family structures which have resulted in parents who now lack the necessary resources and skills to provide for the optimal development and adjustment of their children (SACE 2011).

3.3.5.5 Community protection and governance as a risk factor for youth gangsterism

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) affords each citizen the right to safety and protection- a right that extends to include the macrosystem of one's community and larger society (Republic of South Africa 1996 in de Jongh 2021). However, when residence in threatening and gang-ridden neighbourhoods hinders the fulfilment of this right, or when this right is not adequately fulfilled through legitimate governance, youth gangs emerge as an alternative means of protection and internal governance (Van Way and Theron 2005; Kiva 2012; Petersen 2019). In communities that lack safety and security, youth gangsterism is a form of resilience (Pinnock 2015).

A significant amount of the Western Cape youth gangs was formed on the foundation of protection, such as the protection from threats inside and outside their communities, as well as from rival gangs (Van Way and Theron 2005; Wijnberg and Green 2014; Swingler 2014; Pinnock 2015; Petersen 2019; Van Lennep 2019). There appears to be no choice in gang-ridden communities, but to join a gang or die by one (Petersen 2019). The safety offered by youth gangs often extends to protect the wider community from rival gang violence (Van Lennep 2019). According to Van Lennep (2019) a significant number of youth gangs in the Western Cape were founded with the explicit intention of defending their communities. These defence gangs serve, not only to enforce protection, but to enforce structure within disorganised communities (Merrin *et al.* 2015).

These disorganised communities are often characterised by low levels of cohesiveness, high levels of socioeconomic strain, dominating gang presence, high levels of crime and antisocial delinquency, and overcrowding (Raby and Jones 2016; de Jager and Naude 2018). Social disorganisation theorists have established powerful and enduring explanations for the relationship between community disorganisation and youth gangsterism (Merrin *et al.* 2015). These theories depict how the various elements of community disorganisation increase the likelihood of youth victimisation, trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, serving as risk factors for gang affiliation among youth. This risk is exacerbated by prominent subcultures of disorganised communities whereby violence is normative, and criminality is acceptable, thus providing the opportunity for youth gangsterism to flourish (Merrin *et al.* 2015).

As youth gangs flourish, organisation and safety within communities is largely determined by the boundaries established through police presence, which is not always visible (Pinnock 2015; Kinnes 2017). These boundaries, founded on police presence, act as a powerful mechanism in deterring youth gangsterism. However, the police presence in the gang-ridden communities of the Western Cape has been noted as "ineffective in the development of appropriate and balanced organisation and safety" (Pinnock 2015; Kinnes 2017; Ground Up 2018). On 14 December 2018, the Cape Town High Court declared the lack of police presence in gang-ridden areas as unconstitutional (Ground Up 2018). This inadequate presence of police in violent and disorganised neighbourhoods poses a risk for youth gang affiliation, as it allows youth gangs to flourish as a dominant form of internal control and cohesion within disorganised communities (Pinnock 2015; Kinnes 2017). Youth gangs gain considerable community support and respect through undertaking protective functions inadequately performed by the state, such as the lack of police presence.

This weak state governance consequently provides the opportunity for youth gangs to "implement strong criminal governance from a community level" (Standing 2003; MacMaster 2007; Kinnes 2017). Within the South African context, this can be traced back to apartheid whereby gang-ridden areas were declared "ungovernable", causing a deep-rooted animosity towards state governance. The lack of adequate policing in these Western Cape communities has impacted community perspectives on safety and security (Kinnes 2017). Community members appear to prefer the youth gang's "kangaroo style" court form of justice as opposed to formal investigations since the latter risk further gang activity being unveiled and prosecuted. This risk would threaten the collapse of the gangs' criminal economic endeavours that serve to sustain the wider community (Standing 2003; Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015). The mistrust of state governance and preference of internal gang governance is said to be the "glue for social solidarity between the gangs and the community" (Kinnes 2017).

In the Western Cape, power of policing and governance has shifted from the state to the youth gangs, thus further propelling the phenomenon of youth gangsterism. Gang involvement during adolescence

also has long-term consequences on adult functioning, affecting domains of illegal behaviour, educational and professional opportunities, and health (Gilman *et al.* 2014). The increased risk of violence, isolation from family life and a predisposition for other long-term problems such as homelessness. Despite the majority of youth are aware of the repercussions of the gang lifestyle, they choose to remain loyal, while it may cost them time in prison or other adverse effects (Estrada *et al.* 2018).

3.3.5.6 Justifications for Ecological Systems Perspective

As presented above, this study makes use of an ecological systems perspective. The justifications for approaching the study from an ecological systems perspective are as follows:

- It is one of the most accepted explanations regarding the influence of social environments on human development (Johnson and Yanca 2010; Germain *et al.* 2013).
- It supports common scholarly understandings of gangs and gangsterism as a phenomenon in response to unmet needs (Salo 2005; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Swingler 2014).
- It argues that argues that maladaptive behaviour, such as is demonstrated through youth gang practises, is the result of incongruent ecological relationships that cannot sustain the needs of the person and/or the environment (Germain and Gitterman 1980).
- It encourages research based on improving incongruent ecological relations as mentioned in the preceding point (Johnson and Yanca 2010; Germain *et al.* 2013).
- It has applicability across ethnic groups (Salo 2005; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Swingler 2014).
- It can fit into the myriads of natural settings such as home, classroom and community that create and influence the child's environment (Salo 2005; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014; Swingler 2014).

3.3.5.7 Theoretical Limitations

One of the main limitations of ecological systems theory is that it is empirically difficult to test the theory (Guy-Evans 2023; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Whilst investigating ecological systems may establish effect, it cannot be established whether the systems cause the effect. The theory can also lead to the assumption that in the absence of strong and positive ecological systems, individuals lack development (Guy-Evans 2023). This can be misleading, as people are still capable of healthy development despite not having positive influences from their ecological system. For example, children who grow up in poverty concentrated areas do not always necessarily develop negatively.

Another criticism of the ecological systems theory includes its relevance in the twenty-first century amid the technological advances that have developed since the theory was initially developed (Guy-

Evans 2023). Whilst the ecological systems theory may be regarded as antiquated by modern-day standards, it remains a useful framework for the continued urgency to examine the ecological factors that may lead to high gang prevalence amongst youth on the Cape Flats beyond the micro-level of the individual.

3.4 Peace Education

Timothy Reagan states that, "Peace is our future and peace education is the key instrument in reaching the future" (Dinçer 2012: 36). Discussions of peace in this review refer to the

> process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and value needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level (Fountain 1999: 1, cited in UNESCO 2017).

Peace education is a central component of peacebuilding and in essence includes the transformation of the teacher, parent, learner, community and ultimately, society (UNESCO 2017). However, there is a chronic deficit of teachers trained in peace education in South African, which have the potential to transform the lives of children in violence-afflicted communities (Vaughn 2018). Recognising the contribution that peace education can make suffers neglect and therefore represents a wasted opportunity.

The literature review reveals the lacuna of peace education in early childhood education and that the field of peace education needs considerable development in order to be regarded as having a strong evidence base. The literature surrounding peace education, specifically: discussing peace education as a practice; the philosophy of peace education, and the conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives as applied to the field of ECD are explored in this section. Moreover, the study examines the potentiality of peace education to transform the impact of gang violence on preschool-aged children in gang-affected communities.

This section of the chapter is centred within five discussion points within the field of peace education:

(1) conceptualisations of peace and violence as pioneered by Johan Galtung (1964 - 1971);

(2) the conceptual underpinnings of peace education;

(3) peace education as pedagogy;

(4) the conceptual frameworks of critical peace education and

(5) peace education in South Africa.

3.4.1 Galtung's Framework of Violence and Peace

In 1969, Galtung published a paper titled "Violence, Peace and Peace Research" in which he stated that in revealing the relationship between violence and peace, it is necessary to define violence first (1969: 167-168). In his framework of peace and violence, Galtung (1969) comprehensively developed his views on violence and emphasised different forms of violence, namely, direct violence (visible, physical violence) and structural violence (societal, poverty, hunger, discrimination, apartheid (Galtung 1990: 291). Galtung (1969: 168) defines violence as being "present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisation". This definition is wider than violence being merely somatic or direct and includes structural violence.

In 1990, Galtung also introduced the concept of cultural violence as those aspect of culture (invisible myths embedded in society), which he later introduced as violence used to legitimise direct and structural violence. According to Galtung (2004: 18), structural and cultural violence are the sources of invisible conflicts, this violence directly turns into violence and becomes visible. Johan Galtung (1969) refers to structural and cultural forms of violence - systems such as racism, sexism, colonialism and culturally condoned exclusion, that privilege some to the marginalisation of others (Bajaj 2019). Galtung (2009: 2-5) later defined violence as "avoidable insults to basic human needs and more generally to life". The threat of basic human needs for survival, wellbeing, freedom, and identity can therefore also be defined as violence because people are able to form a meaningful relationship with their environment only if their basic needs are met (see Figure: 3.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs). The framework depicts the lower-level needs that must be satisfied before the higher-level needs can be met).

1. **Physiological needs** (food, water, shelter, rest)

2. **Safety needs** (security, stability, freedom from fear)
3. **Social and belonging needs** (friendship, intimacy, acceptance)
4. **Esteem needs** (respect, recognition, status)
5. **Self-actualisation needs** (achieving one's full potential, creativity)

Figure 3.1: Maslow Hierarchy of needs [Source: Harrigan, 2015, originally Maslow (1943)].

Therefore, Galtung moved away from an actor-orientated to a structure-orientated explanation of peace and violence (Ercoşkun 2021). In the latter orientation, violence exists because of structures, such as: apartheid; unjust social conditions; unequal access to education; degrading living conditions; poverty, etc.) and the actors merely carry out the violence. In this context, conflict is a variable process in which structural, cultural, and direct violence affect each other. The three forms of violence - direct, structural and cultural - are neither linear nor exclusive ,but interact in a vicious cycle (Ercoşkun 2021).

Understanding violence and the connection between structural, direct and cultural (symbolic) violence is a prerequisite for achieving peace (Ercoşkun 2021). The latter is fuelled by the anger, fear, and hatred that stem from parties who do not understand each other represents aspects of a social culture that legitimize the use of direct or structural violence. It is a rather invisible force that is formed by the structures that prevent the satisfaction of basic needs. It is usually expressed indirectly and has no directly visible cause. Structural and cultural violence remain invisible conflicts until this type of violence turns into direct violence and becomes visible. In this context, conflict is a variable process in which structural, cultural, and direct violence influence each other. The invisible level refers to a situation of structural and cultural violence, in which it is difficult to identify who is responsible. Structural violence is built into the system and manifests in power relations that are unequal and therefore in unequal life opportunities. Since the three types of violence are interrelated, to prevent any one type of violence, the other two must also be taken into account and tackled. Figure 3.2, the Conflict Triangle, depicts this concept of conflict.

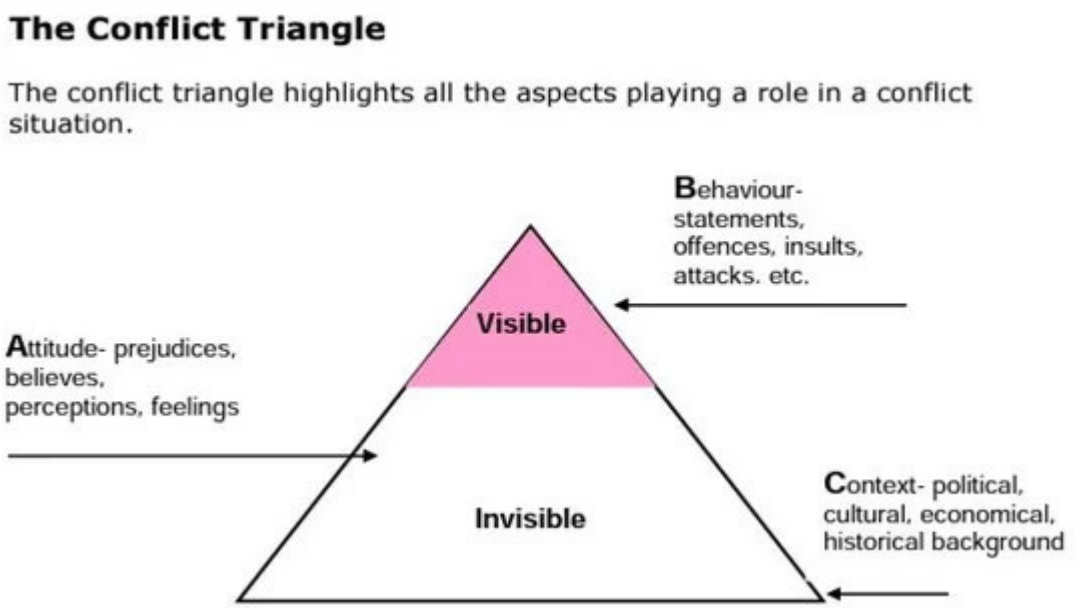

Figure 3.2: The Conflict Triangle propounded by Galtung (1969) illustrates causes and impact of conflict. (Source: Jamil, S., Appiah-Adjei, G. 2023)

3.4.1.1 Galtung's Concept of Peace

Galtung's position on violence forms the basis of his view of the concept of peace. In particular, the link he establishes between the direct, structural, and cultural types of violence and the concept of peace is essential. Thus, understanding violence becomes a prerequisite for achieving social peace. Galtung therefore defines peace as in one way a never-ending process that continually transforms conflicts using empathy and creativity, but not violence. Within this framework, Galtung outlined two corresponding and complementary concepts of peace. Scholars have importantly distinguished between two core concepts in the field of peace studies, namely 'negative peace' and 'positive peace' (derived from the work of Galtung 1969 cited in Bajaj 2019). Negative peace is defined as the "absence of violence and the absence of war" and positive peace is the "integration of human society" (Galtung 1964:2).

Negative peace implies the absence of overt, direct violence (for example, torture, war, militarism, rape and other forms of aggression (Bajaj 2019). Efforts to promote negative peace include disarmament and peacekeeping initiatives. Furthermore, Galtung (1964) suggests that this concept of violence is a problematic, because the use of violence in defining negative peace is based on physical force. Galtung views this as insufficient, as in order to achieve positive peace one must go beyond the state of negative peace. In this context, positive peace is defined as cooperation and integration between human societies (Galtung 1969: 14). Therefore, positive peace, implies a pattern of cooperation and integration among people with the absence of both physical violence and injustice (Galtung 1975: 29-30). Galtung has since the 1980's felt it necessary for a richer concept of peace and expanded his definition of negative and positive peace. In 1981, he stated that the concept of peace should go beyond being used as a pawn

by the powerful to protect the status quo in society and that the concept of peace should rather be enriched (Galtung 1981: 183).

Galtung has always sought to project positive peace as a higher ideal than negative peace because he believed that peace research should not only deal with the narrow vision of ending or reducing violence at a direct, structural or cultural level but seek to understand the conditions for preventing violence (Bajaj 2019). Therefore, positive peace requires the absence of structural and cultural violence and emphasises the promotion of human rights to ensure a comprehensive notion of social justice. For this reason, any effort to promote peace must not only encompass the absence of violence but also account for the structural drivers of violence that are built into social structures that produce unequal power relations and unequal life opportunities. For Galtung, the focus on structural violence revealed the causes and effects of violence and conditions for peace (Bajaj 2019; Ercoşkun 2021). Peace and violence need to be interpreted in its totality at all levels of human organisation - direct, structural and cultural, as these are not mutually exclusive. In other words, positive peace promotion has to address violence at all levels.

Within this framework, there are also three actionable strategies: peacekeeping (reducing direct violence and the cessation of ongoing conflicts), peace-making (promoting structures that support communities in conflict by bringing agreement between differing parties involved) and peacebuilding (a broader concept which entails the previous two elements and encourages long-term changes in societies that support development and sustained peace) (Galtung 1976). This study aligns with the latter strategy.

3.4.1.2 Galtung's Concept of Peacebuilding

UNESCO (2017: 7) defines peacebuilding as "the practice and process of building or rebuilding of new relationships or transforming old ones. Peacebuilding promotes peaceful coexistence by addressing deep-rooted or structural causes of conflict. In short, peacebuilding occurs with the building of peaceful, stable communities and societies at the local and national levels". Negative and positive peace also forms the basis of Galtung's concept of peacebuilding, which he first addressed in 1976 (Galtung 1976). According to Galtung, peace should be built after the problems caused by structural violence are eliminated (Galtung 1976: 297-298). This means that positive peace, should be targeted, not negative peace, which constitutes the fulcrum for lasting and sustainable peacebuilding.

3.4.2 Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory

Lederach (1997) pioneered a framework for peacebuilding within the field of conflict transformation. He uses the term "conflict transformation" to describe his approach to peacebuilding which emphasises the dialectical nature of the conflict (Kone 2023). He averred that conflict is a natural social occurrence and inevitable in human interactions (Lederach (1997). Once conflict occurs, it "changes or transforms

the events, people, and relationships that created the original conflict" (Lederach 1997 cited in Kone 2023: 5). Lederach (1997) views conflict as the result of changes in relationships. Therefore, the role of relationships and relationship building are the central concepts in conflict transformation. Lederach (1997: 26) explains that "relationship is both the basis of the conflict and of its long-term solution...". Similarly, Galtung regards "relational dialogue as being at the center of conflict transformation" (Kone 2023: 4-5). Galtung (1995: 52) views conflicts as "…phenomena that have no clear beginning or end... they wax, wane and transform themselves through patterns of dependent co-arising...". According to Mitchell (2002: 10) this view is echoed in transformation scholarship where the phenomenon is described as involving concepts of Paffenholz's: 'restructuring', 'building', 'validating', 'empowering', 'understanding', 'training', 'promoting', 'participating', 'reconciling' and so on".

Lederach had a profound influence on the shift from international and external peacebuilding efforts, focusing instead on the 'local' in peacebuilding for communities (Gumbo and Shava 2021). Paffenholz (2013, cited in Gumbo and Shava 2021: 136), identifies that the shift from international to local focus on peacebuilding was influenced, in part, by the failed result of desired sustainable peacebuilding by international, external conflict management initiatives during the wars in Angola, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia in the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast, Lederach's active involvement in the "long process of locally owned, bottom-up consultations" in the northern parts of Somalia, yielded "fruitful reconciliation and peacebuilding" (Paffenholz, 2013 cited in Gumbo and Shava 2021: 136). Lederach's experience in Somaliland influenced his view on peacebuilding and led him to conclude that "locally driven, systemic and long-term initiatives are more sustainable than international, external strategies" (Gumbo and Shava 2021: 136). Reconciliation, necessary for relationship building and sustainable peace and guaranteed through building strong local peace infrastructure and capacity building form major parts of Lederach's transformational approach to conflict and peacebuilding (Gumbo and Shava 2021). Lederach's argues, that it is this aspect of the process that "...responds to the longer term and coordination requirements needed to sustain peacebuilding..." (Lederach 1997: 109).

Lederach (1997) points out that with regard to protracted conflicts in contemporary society, it is "simply not possible for the adversaries to disengage and have little or nothing to do with one another once a particular set of contested issues has been 'solved'…" nor can a solution be "...pursued by seeking innovative ways to disengage or minimize the conflicting groups' affiliations..." because "...relationship is both the basis of the conflict and of its long-term solution..." (Lederach 1997: 26). Adversaries are ultimately linked and interdependent and therefore "opportunity must therefore be given for people to look forward and envision their shared future..." (Lederach 1997: 26).

What does transformation transform? What are the indicators of 'transformed' conflicts between adversaries, when the old relationship changes or is "transformed" into a new relationship? These are pertinent questions about transformation which Mitchell (2002) posed. For example, the author asks

whether these indicators are the behaviour towards one another? “What is the nature, extent and balance of inter-actions between the groups? Are these views, attitudes, images, beliefs and other psychological states? Degrees of trust? Also, how widespread do these changes have to be within a society or community before the transformation has occurred? (Mitchell 2002: 17).

Such critical questioning highlights that equal and careful consideration must be given to the qualitative, that is, the kind of relationship and to qualities within that relationship before it can be used as a possible tool in an analysis for understanding the nature of conflict transformation (Mitchell 2002). Additional questions asked by Mitchell (2002) are: “what does conflict transformation actually transform?” What are the precise changes in the nature of that being exchanged and in parties’ evaluations of the relationship are needed to bring about such an alteration?” While the core factors that need to be transformed is not clearly delineated, Mitchell (2002: 9-10) provides a general list of prerequisites for the conflict transformation process to be effective:

1. Multi-level participation from top decision makers through to middle range leaders and grassroot constituents;
2. Efforts that empower the ‘underdogs’ for more equitable solutions and changes between parties;
3. Ensure that parties directly involved in the conflict can have control over the transformation process so that outcomes are satisfactory and garner approval and support from affected parties;
4. Focus on immediate, long-standing traumas, deep-rooted issues and perceived past injustices;
5. Negotiations by appropriate intermediaries who understand the culture and social structures within which adversarial parties are embedded;
6. Create a new understanding of the conflict, how to resolve it to prevent similar or other conflicts from arising or repeating in the future;
7. Create and implement procedures to maintain and continue agreed upon changes necessary to resolve current conflict and prevent future protracted conflict;
8. Education of adversaries of the nature of the socio-political and economic systems within which and from which conflict arose, the dynamics of the conflict and skills training to handle conflict in the future.

Mitchell (2002:18) argues that transformation could involve “many possible evaluations of a pattern of exchange and thus many possible qualities of a relationship that could be altered in any process of relationship ‘transformation’. There are different levels of parties’ evaluation of the relationship that could move from “fearful to confident, hostile to friendly, concealing to open or mistrustful to trusting, from being central to being peripheral, static as opposed to dynamic, or stable as opposed to unstable

or responsive as opposed to indifferent" (Mitchell 2002: 18). By posing these questions, Mitchell highlights a major need to specify which specific qualities of existing adversarial relationships needs change from 'non-peaceful' to peaceful to be considered genuinely transformed and "how such changes might be indicated" (Mitchell 2002: 18).

At the individual transformation level, Mitchell (2002: 12) suggest changes or transformation in individuals are characterised by:

1. How issues and conflict are framed and understood;
2. Acknowledging the legitimacy of the other party, its claims, concerns and hopes;
3. Parties taking responsibility for their role in the origin of the conflict;
4. Consciousness of the other party's perspectives and objectives as well as the reasons for being held;
5. Recognising the short-term mutual reassurance and building longer-term trust between parties;
6. Building competencies in capability to find solutions to current conflict and take action to prevent repetition;
7. Acknowledging past grievances and seek healing of damage caused through reconciliation, restorative justice and redistributive justice; and
8. Accepting the need for durable, inclusive and acceptable solution to a mutual problem which may involve major structural changes.

Transforming persons involves that at the individual level, when changes or transformation occurs within parties directly involved in the conflict, has a major effect on the conflict. This can also happen at the inter-group, inter-community and international level conflicts where transformation involves a variety of changes in individuals involved, such as, leaders and followers (Mitchell 2002). This includes the objectives of the transformation approach of self-determination and self-empowerment and involves restoring an individual's sense of their own value, their strength and their capacity to handle conflict (Mitchell 2002).

Conflict can also be transformed with the necessary change at the structural level to achieve a mutually acceptable and durable solution. Conflict transformation assumes that only major structural change, which are necessary conditions for successful conflict resolution efforts, will prevent conflicts not to re-emerge from the same source in the future Mitchell (2002). This process of structural change, from which all else flows, says Mitchell (2002: 20) is the central objective for those advocating transformation. However, Mitchell (2002) offers a critique of this perspective and explains that replacing an adversarial relationship with a new or "transformed" one does not simply or 'naturally' arise because old adversaries are no longer engaged in conflict. In fact, relationships have to be

“replaced and rebuilt through deliberate and directed efforts, and reconciliation can only take place as a result of these efforts” (Mitchell 2002: 20). Without this fundamental aspect of change, even major structural changes may not yield desired transformation goals of permanent and sustainable changes to conflict and necessary to prevent the re-emergence of old conflicts or new future conflicts. Hence, from a transformational perspective, structural change is axiomatic but relational change is also a fundamental part of transformation (Mitchell 2002: 20).

By giving agency to local actors from the ‘international’ to the ‘local’ Lederach (1997) brought about a paradigm shift in peacebuilding research and practice (Paffenholz 2013). Lederach (1997) views with importance to the peacebuilding process that it “should be sensitive to the local culture, adopt a long-term approach, establish mechanisms for responsibility and accountability on the ground, inclusivity and building on local resources” (Paffenholz 2013: 14). Yet, some case study analyses, evidenced that peacebuilding practices failed in their accountability to local constituencies”.

Lederach’s focus ‘middle –out’ approach is a core element of his transformation theory that divides the conflict society into three tracks of actors: Track I (the top leadership; Track II (the middle level leadership); and Track III (the grassroots) (see Figure: 3.3).

Paffenholz (2013: 5). However, Lederach’s transformation theory does not escape critique from Paffenholz (2013) for having failed to result in desired peacebuilding outcomes. Paffenholz (2013: 5) identifies three main reasons for this failure: (1) particular understandings of the ‘local’ by the ‘international’; (2) narrow international support strategies, ignoring the broader international, regional and local peacebuilding arena, and existing power relations; and (3) the mantra status of Lederach’s middle – out approach. Lederach (1997) avers that Track II actors have the highest potential due to their ability to automatically trickle up to Track I and down to Track III (Paffenholz 2013), However, Paffenholz (2013: 11) regards this main element of the middle– out approach as problematic in practice when ignoring its relevance in different context as evidence from analysing case studies “do not confirm such a clear correlation”. Paffenholz (2013: 16) points out that “little empirical evidence supports the theory of change that lies at the heart of Lederach’s middle – out approach”. In fact, Paffenholz (2013) contends that Track II actors have not shown the highest transformative potential of violent conflicts but rather, Track I actors. This does not imply that Track II actions are not important, relevant or have no impact on peacebuilding. What this does show is that is problematic to prioritise the role of other actors (Track 1) over others as more important (Paffenholz 2013). While undeniable the global influence of the conflict transformation theoretical approach initiated by Lederach (1997), critical analysis contributes to a better understanding of the practical realities of peacebuilding on the ground.

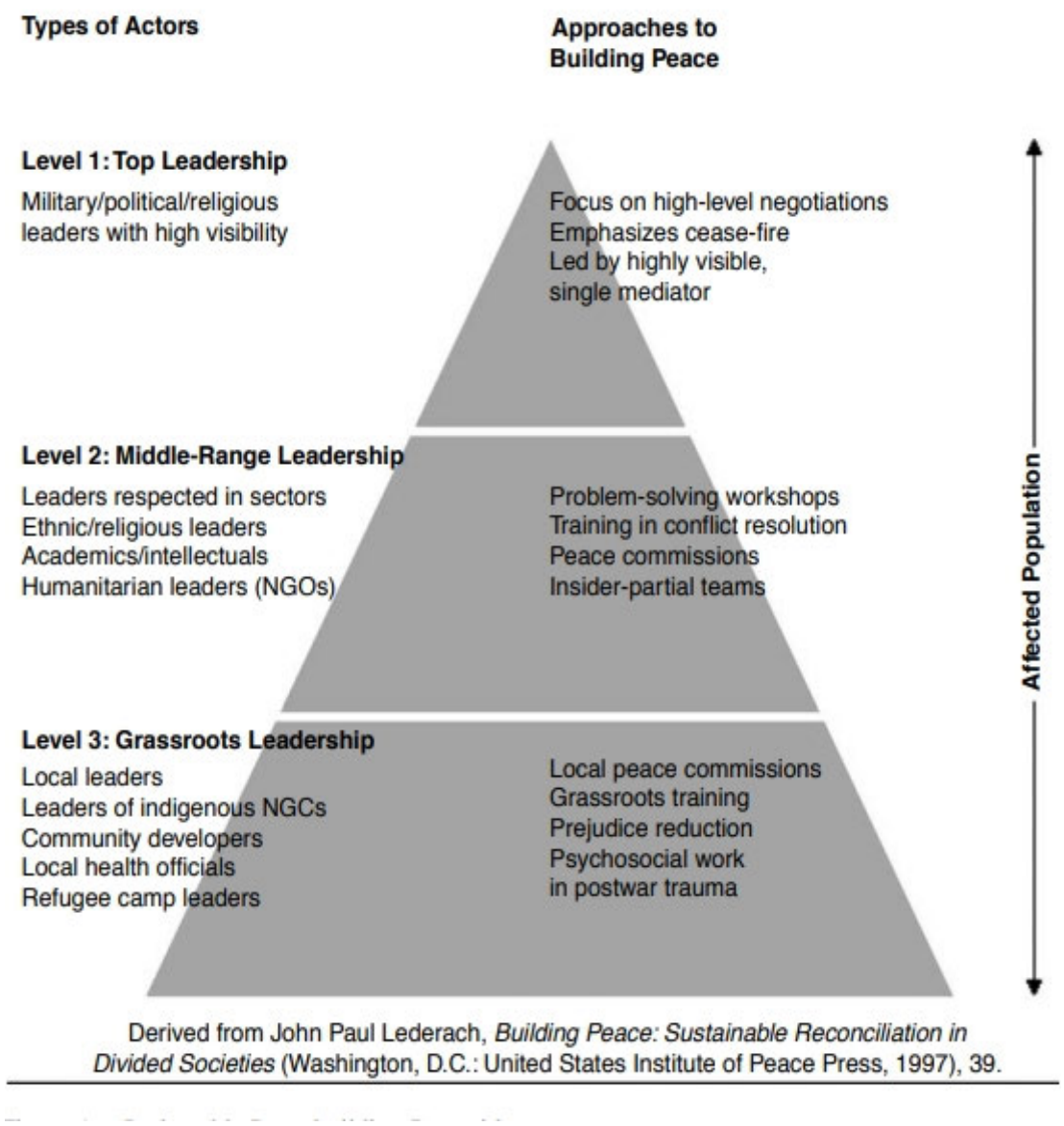

Figure 3.3: Lederach's Peacebuilding Pyramid. (Source: John Paul Lederach 1997)

Peacebuilding promotes peaceful coexistence by addressing deep-rooted or structural causes of conflict. The causes of conflict are not only rooted in individual behaviour but in different economic, cultural and political dimensions that either support or hinder the promotion of social cohesion. Trust, solidarity, and a sense of collectiveness and common purpose are either strengthened or eroded within the communities, (such as the Cape Flats). As such, peacebuilding focuses on structural dimensions, as well as psycho-social, and therefore peace education could be seen as a sub-component of education for peacebuilding (Polat *et al.* 2016).

3.4.3 Origins of Peace Education

Peace education has its origins in responses to evolving social, political, and ecological crises and concerns of violence and injustice. Many early approaches of peace education were responses to

historical experiences of violence and wars, especially, World War I and II. The formalisation of peace education as a field of scholarship and global practice formally emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century (Jenkins 2019). One seminal moment in the field's early creation was at the 1964 convening of peace studies scholars through the International Peace Research Association, at which a call was issued for "peace research, peace action, and peace education," noting the important role that education can play in dismantling structures of violence and promoting peace (Galtung 1973: 317 cited in Bajaj 2019). Subsequently, the field has adapted and evolved from the discourse that has evolved between the three (peace research, peace action and peace education) (Reardon 1999).

3.4.4. Evolving Definitions of Peace Education

Reardon, argued that the lack of a thorough definition for peace education can be explained by the wide range of contexts where it has been simultaneously practiced and developed, thus refusing to take a single form but many shapes and definitions (Reardon 1999). Kester (2019:2) explains that peace education is "a dialogical experience conducted through participatory learning, where learners communally and cooperatively grapple with contemporary issues… related to local and global contexts". This definition emphasizes the contextualised processes of peace education instead of a rigid definition. Peace education is a field of scholarship and practice that utilises teaching and learning not only to dismantle all forms of violence, but also to create structures that build and sustain a just and equitable peace (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016). Additionally, the concept of peace education has been embraced by policymakers, especially within institutions such as UN, UNESCO and UNICEF, who advocate for and implement various peace education initiatives around the world (Gómez 2015; Kester 2013; Lerch and Buckner 2018).

The importance of peace education was proclaimed at the 1994 International Conference on Education and endorsed by the UNESCO General Conference in 1995 (UNESCO-APNIEVE 2000). The phenomenon of physical and psychological violence that occurs in almost all parts of the world is most concerning. Peace education is needed for children to build understanding, solidarity, compassion and tolerance among individuals or groups. Peace education is carried out by developing knowledge, values, attitudes and skills that lead to peace. It is the process and practice of developing nonviolent skills and promoting peaceful attitudes (UNESCO 2017).

Peace is a complex term to define, and even more so when applied to the educational endeavour of peace education. Peace pioneer, Betty Reardon called for a holistic, comprehensive approach to peace education with the caveat that it must be contextually relevant: "While we argue for the universal need for peace education, we do not advocate the universalization and standardization of approach and content" (Reardon and Cabezudo 2002:17). Peace education should be culturally contextualised and emerge from the concerns, motivations, and experiences of a given population. Put simply, people,

communities, and cultures are not standardised and nor should be their learning. Education about peace captures much of the substance of the learning. It invites reflection and analysis on the conditions of sustainable peace and how to achieve them. It also involves understanding and critically examining violence in all its multiple forms and manifestations. Education for peace orients peace education towards preparing and cultivating learners with the knowledge, skills and capacities to pursue peace and to non-violently respond to conflict. It is also concerned with nurturing inner moral and ethical resources that are essential to external peace action.

The many definitions of peace education presented do not assert a clear understanding of what the concept means. The definition used by Kester (2019) encapsulates the essence of peace education as to not be narrowly defined, but to be seen as a philosophy, a process, and a pedagogy. The history of peace education is also connected to activism, where early efforts were pursued primarily by activist educators (Kester 2019; Bajaj 2019). Many early approaches focused on the transmission of knowledge and development of peace-making skills, without considering the personal, inner, or transformative dimensions and the development of supportive attitudes and capacities, called forth by the more inclusive feminist vision (Bajaj 2019).

3.4.5 Feminist Vision of Transformative Peace Education

In the 1970s, feminist peace researchers introduced the perspectives of women and feminist analysts to peace education. Feminist concerns about the relational dimensions of peace, were largely ignored and considered inferior to the traditional issues of war, disarmament, peace and security. Feminist researchers, through structural analysis, countered this false logic by showing the interconnections between feminist issues and experiences of violence and war. Furthermore, the researchers argued that any structural changes would be unsuccessful without change and transformation in human relationships, values, behaviours, and worldviews. Transformative action for peaceful change was a key characteristic of feminist-led peace education. Reardon and Snauwaert (2015) pointed out the same principle held true for the transformation of cultures and institutions.

Brock-Utne (1989) identifies different levels at which violence must be addressed from a feminist perspective, distinguishing between the organised level (referring to state involvement or negligence to act despite knowledge of violent acts) and the unorganised level (highlighting violence that occurs in micro-structures, such as in families and communities) (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016). One such example of the latter is Galtung's concept of cultural violence, which often occurs at the unorganised level through practices that are culturally legitimised and often strongly tied to structural inequalities (Galtung 1990). The feminist perspective was centred around relation rather than conflict, it recognised that conflicts could not be meaningfully resolved without addressing the underlying relationships. This

emphasis is not at the expense of the pursuit of negative peace or the resistance of violence and the dismantling of war, rather, the feminists thought it essential to pursue both.

3.4.6. Culture of Peace Approach to Peace Education

In the early 1980s, peace education pioneer Betty Reardon called for the development of comprehensive peace education, a holistic and integrative approach most applicable for the pursuit of a culture of peace and potentially unifying for a field comprised of many seemingly disconnected approaches. The aim of a culture of peace approach to education is expressed by Reardon, "No other idea has informed peace education with such profound transformational potential as the concept and vision of a culture of peace" (Reardon 1999:30).

A culture of peace, articulated in the 1999 UN Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace, is based upon "a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life" (Article I: UN General Assembly 1999) that flow from several interrelated principles including respect for life, human rights, the peaceful settlement of conflicts, sustainable development and ecological integrity, gender equity, and human dignity. Peace education is often emphasised as a way to promote profound changes in society by fostering a culture of peace among the communities where it is focalised. The culture of peace approach to peace education calls for a paradigm shift in societies (cultures), in institutions (especially educational that give rise to, support, and sustain dominant worldviews) and consciousness of a level yet to be fully pursued by peace education.

3.4.7 Peace Education as Transformative Pedagogy

Transformative pedagogy emphasises a learner-centred approach as opposed to a teacher-centred approach. Through active participation of the learner and experiential learning, learners are encouraged to be "aware, critical and responsive to the vast world of learning beyond school walls, including informal and nonformal education from families, peers, communities, religious institutions, non-religious institutions and the media," (UNESCO 2017: 7). Transformative peace pedagogy is holistic, incorporating cognitive, reflective, affective, and active dimensions into the learning. Transformative learning is important for all involved; it empowers both teachers and learners as well encouraging them to be reflective and critical thinkers who are able to contribute meaningfully as members of local and global communities. Thus, learning and development occur from a reflective experience.

According to leading theorist, Jack Mezirow (1997), transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. This can happen through critical thinking which teachers can encourage through dialogue and questioning, and through more creative, emotional processes such as through artistic activities. In the tradition of American philosopher John

Dewey (Dewey 1916) and Brazilian popular educator Paulo Freire (Freire 2017), peace education pedagogy is typically learner-centred, seeking to draw forth knowledge from the learner's reflection on experience rather than impose knowledge through a process of indoctrination. Pedagogy is thus another important dimension of education for peace. How we teach has a significant impact on learning outcomes and shapes how students will apply what they learn. As such, peace education seeks to model a pedagogy that is consistent with the values and principles of peace (Dove 2019).

3.4.7 Transformative Pedagogy for Peacebuilding

Transformative pedagogy involves engaged, democratic learning which utilises ideas from Pablo Freire (1921-1997), one of the most influential thinkers in the field of peace education. It redefines the role of teachers to become facilitators with the disposition, knowledge, skills and commitment to support students to develop their full potential as peacebuilders. Teachers need to internalise these concepts themselves in order to be able to effectively convey them to their students. Peace educators should develop a regular practice of personal reflection and must employ critical thinking in their own lives to help students develop critical thinking skills. Thus, it is important that peace educators understand that they themselves must begin the process of transformation in their own lives before engaging their students in this practice (Bajaj 2015; Bajaj 2018).

According to Bajaj (2018:2). "Transformative agency lies at the centre of peace education and t is espoused as a desired skill, capacity, outcome for learners". The influence of teachers' agency once fostered is critical in shaping the form that children's agency takes. The major themes identified in the literature as to why peace education is transformative is that it promotes protection, gives children a sense of hope, provides access to a life skill, strengthens social cohesion, supports peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts, and enhances children's well-being (Global Education Cluster 2015; Save the Children 2015; UNICEF 2012; Tebbe 2015).

The transformative effects of peace education can strengthen children's coping mechanisms, promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills, build emotional and intellectual competencies, develop healthy intra and interpersonal relationships, mitigate traumatic effects and reduce the need for responsive services at a later stage (Reyes 2013; Save the Children 2015; Global Education Cluster 2016). Continued access to peace education can also strengthen resilience and coping strategies in adverse environments (Akram *et al.* 2012; Burde *et al.* 2015; Global Education Cluster 2016; Reyes 2013; Save the Children 2015).

Peace education can also help counter the underlying causes of violence and enhance social cohesion by promoting positive, non-violent values of inclusion, tolerance, peace, respect and conflict resolution (Reyes 2013). In addition, research shows that peace education can increase opportunities for choices

for the future and reduce likelihood to participate in gang violence. The role of educational systems in creating a culture of peace and emphasizing non-violent values can offer communities with the opportunities to mitigate the stigma associated with conflict. Furthermore, collective communal action centred on the environment and social networks of children, strengthens social support within a community (Burde *et al.* 2015).

Peace education is also considered to be transformative when it addresses the specific needs of the child and community, when it provides skills and supports that help to strengthen the ability to build resilience in the long-term (Brantmeier 2011; Bajaj 2018; Bajaj 2015). Educational activities that focus on changing social norms and attitudes also provide a transformative effect. The transformative pedagogy for peacebuilding supports the action research study in that it not only instils new knowledge, skills and competencies to promote participation and action; but it also mobilises learners to get actively involved in peacebuilding initiatives beyond the classrooms to find non-violent responses to challenges in their communities.

3.4.8 Critical Peace Education in Context

Critical peace education is a variant of peace education that emerged as a new theoretical approach focussed on power relations, localized meaning-making, agency, and inclusive participation (Bajaj 2015). In particular, it considers the ways in which human agency dynamically interacts with structures and forms of violence; and, in turn, contemplates the potential for educational spaces (both formal and informal) to be sites of individual and collective transformation (Brantmeier 2011; Bajaj 2015). Bajaj (2019) highlights a few key underlying principles that distinguish critical peace education from regular peace education.

Firstly, all peace educators draw from violence as the basis of analysis. However, critical peace educators pay particular attention to how unequal social relations of issues of power must inform peace education and corresponding social action (Bajaj 2019). Secondly, critical peace education pays attention to local realities and local conceptions of peace, which amplify the voices of the marginalised through community-based research, narratives, oral histories and locally generated curricula. Lastly, Bajaj (2019) points out the theories that critical peace education draws upon, namely, the social reproduction theory (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976 cited in Bajaj 2019) and critical pedagogy (Freire 1970) to view schools as both having the potential to be institutions of marginalisation and/or transformation (Hantzopoulos 2016).

Galtung's (1969) conflict triangle is a tool that holistically examines the root causes of violence by looking beyond the surface-level of direct violence when designing any intervention (Bajaj 2019). Bajaj (2019) presents a modified version of the conflict triangle for critical peace education (Figure 3.1) and

adds in Brock-Utne's (1989) levels of violence that are deliberatively historicised to consider long-lasting legacies of colonialism, genocide, forced displacement and other forms of exclusion.

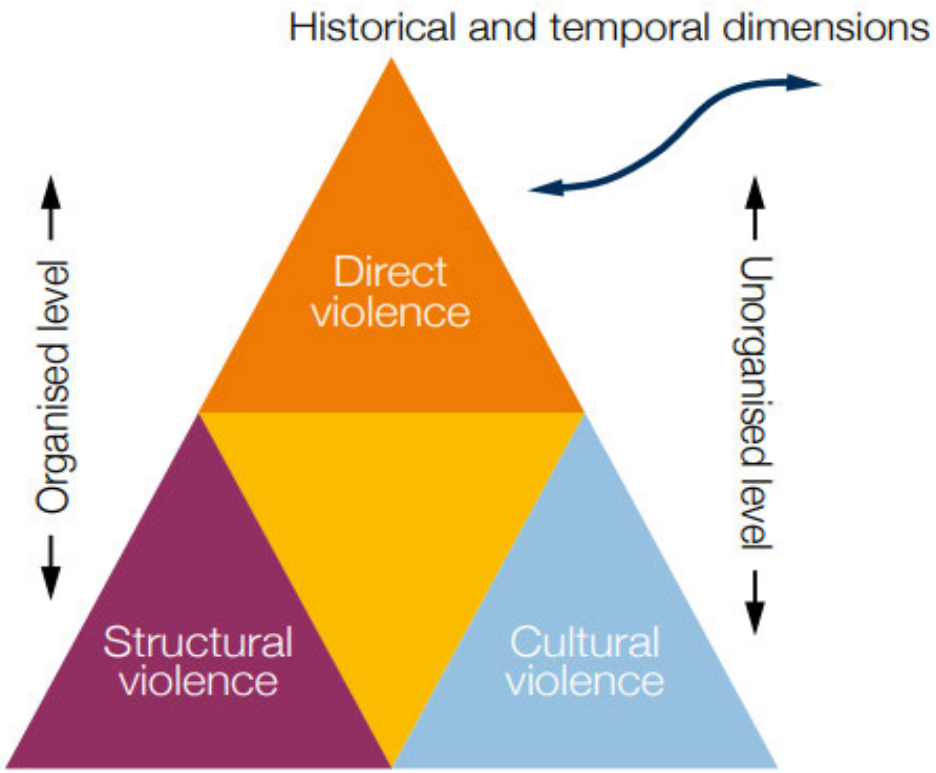

Figure 3.4: Galtung's (1969) triangle of conflict as reconfigured by Bajaj (Sourced: Bajaj 2019)

Galtung's triangle depicts that there are always larger historical and structural forces that cause manifestations of direct violence. Applying this analysis, most societies are indeed in conflict, not just those experiencing outbreaks of direct or armed conflict. For example, South Africa experienced high levels of violence during the apartheid era, yet the country is not considered a post-conflict state nor any of the gang-ridden communities in the country considered conflict zones in the conventional analyses.

3.4.9 Analytical Tools for Critical Peace Education for Exploring Conflict

When examining violence (structural, cultural or direct), several tools emerge from peace education and its critical variant. As Figure 3.4 demonstrated, the analysis of violence requires not only different understandings of its forms, but historical tracing of the roots and levels of violence. Tailored efforts to intervene in conflict and studies of them constitute much of the field of peace education with varying

degrees of knowledge about the context. Figure 3.5 (below) highlights the core competencies for critical peace educators and learners as developed by Bajaj in 2014, but it was then modified for conflict settings to situate the learner and researcher within a holistic framework for analysing violence and possibilities for peace (Bajaj 2015). There are many more competencies that may be elaborated depending on context, and the educator should undertake a situational analysis attending to the power dynamics in a particular setting before engaging in any form of peace education (Bajaj 2019).

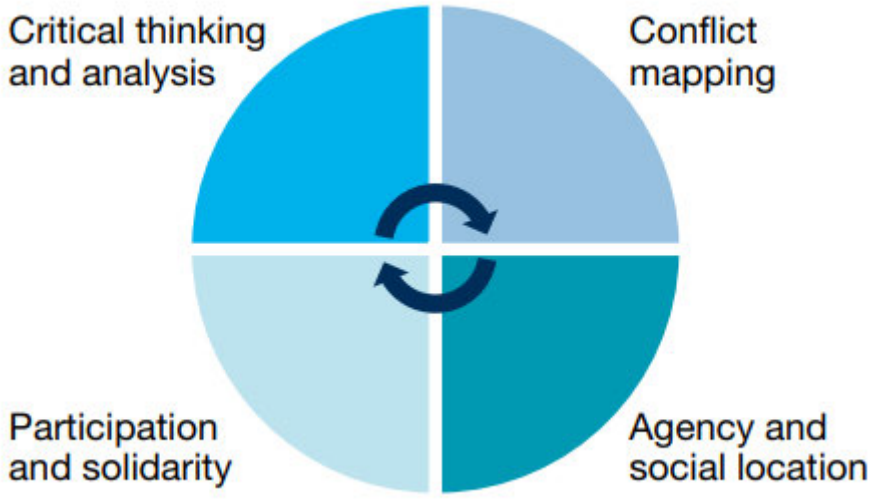

Figure 3.5: Critical peace education competencies for conflict settings (Source: Bajaj 2015)

Figure 3.5 illustrates the following aspects of the critical peace education competencies and their contexts (Bajaj 2015):

- Conflict mapping: What are the historical roots of this conflict? Who benefits from conflict? What power relations and asymmetries in material conditions contribute to this conflict?
- Agency and social location: What forms of individual and collective agency might be possible given the conditions? What factors and strategies are needed for such agency to be sustained and long-lasting?
- Participation and solidarity: What forms of participation are possible and meaningful? How might trauma influence the forms of participation that can be taken, and what forms of individual and collective healing might be required before action is possible? What solidarities are needed for the advancement of peace and human rights in this context?
- Critical thinking and analysis: What narratives are being presented (in the media, and textbooks)? What are other narratives?

The questions posed above (under the peace education competencies) can be useful for guiding further scholarship in critical peace education by utilising such analyses for inquiry and research. Each of the

elements listed may contribute to the preparation of the learner-actor who is equipped with the skills and capacities to teach for comprehensive visions of peace in a variety of settings (Bajaj 2019). Critical peace education efforts make use of Freire's (1970) cycle of praxis wherein action is taken, reflected upon and analysed, then revised for new action in a continuous cycle of learning and simultaneous social and political engagement.

3.4.10 Peace Education in Early Childhood in South Africa

Much of the existing research in peace and multicultural education has focused on elementary school aged students and above (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016). For example, to address the effects of apartheid in South Africa, the National Curriculum Statement was implemented in schools in 2003. The curriculum was focused on students in grades 10-12 and was developed to generate a greater understanding of the importance of human rights within students, as well as to allow them to acquire the skills necessary to navigate a violent history and racial divides (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016). In order to advance peace education in South Africa at the foundational stage there has to be a reconstruction of education, as the logical starting point (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016). Peace education has institutionally and routinely been relegated to a peripheral status. It is pedagogically difficult to exaggerate the vital role of school leadership, teachers and parents in advancing peace education in schools (in particular) located in areas governed by gangs.

The study investigates the potentiality of peace education as a mechanism to transform the impact of gang violence on the preschool population located in these areas. Harris (1943, cited in Sertel and Kurt 2004) and Demir (2011) stated that peace education should be applied to each age group, but especially to students who are in their puberty age in order for peace education to reach its aims. Contrary to this, some researchers (Türnüklü 2006; Kamaraj and Aktan-Kerem 2006) emphasised that peace-making was more important in preschool or primary school education. In their study, they posited that peace education starts at birth and that it is generally done by the family in highly developed countries; and in the countries with middle (South Africa) or low levels of development, peace education usually started in early childhood (zero – eight years in age). Peace education at schools should begin in preschools and continue primary schools. Subsequently, teaching institutions would be expected to provide training for peace education. In many countries with low levels of development (such as, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Somali and Sudan) peace education is included in preschool curricula, however, there are no specific peace education programmes or curricula in the South African Education System (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016).

3.4.11 Peacebuilding and ECD: a Critical Period

Peace education must be contextualised - in doing so, peace education sets its agenda from the prevailing and most pressing conditions of its context (Vaughn 2018). This suggests that peace education is condition dependent, taking its cue from the socio-political agenda of a society. Given South Africa's history of widespread human rights abuses, building a democratic society with a culture of human rights was an obvious priority for the newly elected post-apartheid government. South Africa did not opt for a systematic programme of peace education as part of its reconstruction and development strategies, as systematic and sustained peace education was and is not a national priority in South Africa.

Peace education is not a term that is explicitly used by South Africa's governmental education authorities. However, some of government's educational interventions are directed at peacebuilding and nation building (Vaughn 2018). South Africa's constitution, promulgated by President Nelson Mandela in 1996, enshrined democracy and human rights. Accordingly, the new government created institutions which reflect, promote and protect these ideals. Vaughn (2018) further explains that in terms of Chapter Nine of the Constitution, three state-funded commissions, namely, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), and the Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, were established, alongside the institutions of a Public Protector (PP), Auditor-General (AG), and Electoral Commission (IEC). The aforementioned Chapter Nine institutions were provided with research and investigative power to protect fundamental rights.

To promote these rights and to raise public awareness, these institutions were also expected to play an educative role. Whilst educational programmes and material emanating from such Chapter Nine institutions could be classified as education about human rights, democracy and inclusion (all of which can be considered as forms of peace education) such education is not provided in a continuous, systematic and society-wide manner. Vaughn (2018) also explained that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) funded some ad-hoc projects which developed materials and curricula promoting a culture of human rights, most visible in subjects like Life Skills (LS) and Life Orientation (LO). These subjects most closely reflect the attempt of the provision of systematic peace education within the formal curriculum. LS and LO are compulsory school subjects for learners from grades four to twelve and focus on the development of self-in-society.

Vaughn (2018) argues that ad-hoc campaigns on anti-bullying and the inclusion of peace-related topics within a curriculum are not sufficient. This view is supported by research that shows that violence in schools in South Africa, remains at unacceptable levels and that much of the research on LO indicates that it is not achieving its intended outcomes. Lamb and Snodgrass (2017: 3 cited in Vaughn 2018) reviewed 15 studies on LO in South Africa and concluded that this research consistently confirmed the

importance of the LO subject in the school curriculum but highlighted that LO does not seem to bring about the desired behavioural changes in learners. These researchers identified inadequate training of teachers, work overload, and negative perceptions of LO by teachers and learners as some of the reasons for its poor outcomes.

Peace education is best served by participatory, learner-centred, and experiential learning processes. Given the large classes and demands on teachers in South African schools, in practice, it is unlikely that there is room for such pedagogical strategies. According to Vaughn (2018) these factors have tended to make LO the "Cinderella" subject of the school curriculum. Moreover, he stated that this subject being used as the chief vehicle for peacebuilding in South Africa is unfortunate. Given the context of the high prevalence of violence in South Africa, one would expect that peace education would be well-resourced in terms of trained teachers, curricula and time allocation, with a stronger focus on peacebuilding through non-violent and constructive conflict resolution skills. This would ensure peace education's relevance. Peace education should also be linked to other subjects across the school curriculum and be supported by the general school ethos and climate. The absence of this is a serious indictment and neglect with long-term consequences for future generations.

The few existing non-formal peace education programmes in South Africa all supplement peace-related curricula offered via LS and LO in schools. These programmes tend to be responsive to critical needs in communities and schools and have the learning conditions to use more-suitable participatory and experiential pedagogy. Bar-Tal (2002: 33 cited in Vaughn 2018) notes: "Because peace education aims to form a state of mind, its principal modes of instruction target experience. Experiential learning is the key method for the acquisition of values, attitudes, perceptions, skills and behavioural tendencies, in other words, their internalisation."

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to illustrate that gang violence is a deeply complex phenomenon and therefore, its aetiology and solutions, are not adequately explained by one theory alone. Pertinent socio-criminological theories that explain the causes of gangs, were briefly discussed. The study's main theoretical framework was explained as the ecological systems theory, due to its resonance with the understanding of youth gangs and gangsterism in communities on the Cape Flats. The ecological systems theory appropriately accentuates the importance of the nature of an individual's interactions with multiple levels of interactions and influence in their environments (Bronfenbrenner 1994). By situating the study within ecological systems and drawing on the theoretical underpinnings, the chapter discussion offered an analysis of preschool teachers located in communities affected by gang violence.

This chapter also aimed to present peace education as necessary to promote a sustainable culture of peace (peacebuilding). Dealing only with the more visible and direct forms of violence and not the root causes of violence (such as poverty, gender discrimination, and inequality) is insufficient. In the context of South Africa, both physical and structural violence must be the agenda of peace education and especially critical peace education, for the creation of a just and sustainable peace. The next chapter provides a review of the related literature.

Chapter Four: Literature Review

4.1. Introduction

The review of the selected literature aims to situate the study in the context of previous research and identify the gaps in existing knowledge surrounding community violence, more directly, gang violence, peace education and preschools located in gang-affected settings. As suggested by Volpe (2012: 44), "The literature review includes contemporary debates and identifies what is already known about your topic or problem and what consensus or lack there is around your topic or problem under investigation." This chapter discusses community violence, violence on children and an analysis of strategies intended to decrease harm towards children.

4.2. Community Violence

Community violence is defined as exposure to intentional, interpersonal violent acts experienced directly or indirectly in a public setting (Kliewer 2016a). Therefore, community violence is a type of interpersonal violence but occurs primarily in public spaces between individuals or small groups unknown to each other - "it is usually impulsive or only loosely planned, arising from gang disputes, for example, or street crimes, such as robberies" (Save The Children Ending Violence in Childhood: Global Report 2017: 53). Research has consistently found community violence to be pervasive in low-income urban areas, with similar predictors and consequences on the development of young children, across multiple domains and countries.

4.3. Gangsterism

South African literature on gangs is relatively well established (Van der Spuy 2016). Historical and sociological explorations of both street and prison gangs and recently, political analyses of links between local gangs and global organised crime networks have assembled, by South African standards, a respectable body of "gang studies". Gang development in South Africa, both within and outside of the prison system, has closely paralleled similar phenomena elsewhere in the urbanised world mostly in the United States and Latin America, the places where the most relevant studies have been undertaken (Van der Spuy 2016; UNICEF 2021).

The phenomenon of gangs on the Cape Flats is decades old. Gangs have achieved a multigenerational evident in history and post-apartheid South Africa. Kinnes (2017) estimates that there are 130 street gangs, comprising about 100 000 members in 29 communities across the Cape Flats. (as previously

mentioned, Kelly's (2018) estimates are 120 000 gang members). Whilst gangsterism is not a uniquely South African experience, as evidenced in the global literature, what is unique is the formation and nature of gangs given South Africa's socio-political history (Van der Spuy 2016). Youth gangs in South Africa have rose to prominence as a substitute means of survival (Pinnock 2015; Van Lennep 2019) resulting from economic oppression and dispossession, which largely originated through apartheid regimes but has continue due to limited reform under democracy (Petrus 2013; Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube 2014).

The current study aimed to offer a unique insight into the experiences of urban preschool teachers and children in areas of high-level gang violence. More specifically, the study aimed to understand preschool educators' perceptions and experiences with gang violence, the impact of gang violence, coping strategies and resources to prevent exposure and/or mitigate its effects. Key to the review is a look at this population's exposure to gang violence both locally and further afield. It has long been acknowledged that young populations are adversely affected by violence (Pinnock 2015; Van Lennep 2019). A wide-ranging literature exists on research associated with violence and children with equally robust literature on community violence exposure, specifically gang violence.

Evidence in global literature around the effects of community violence (gang violence), suggests that there has been a stronger focus on elementary and adolescent children from urban, middle and secondary schools in high income countries. Such focus has resulted in a less developed research base in the literature which examines the effect of gang violence on preschool children due to the widely accepted assumption that children at this stage are less vulnerable and at lower risk for gang involvement. This bias is also exceptionally problematic as it stems from literature almost exclusively completed in high income countries such as the United States of American and European countries and focusing almost exclusively on older students (Gray 2016; UNICEF 2021). Researchers, teachers, and administrators may be overlooking the potential of engaging students at a key stage of development, that occurs during the first eight years of a child's life.

4.4. Violence Against Children

Violence against children is emerging as one of the most disturbing realities of our times as global estimates highlight the frequency and the extent of the phenomenon (Hillis *et al.* 2016). This thesis adopts the UNICEF understanding of violence against girls and boys based on Article 19 of the Convention of the Right of the Child, which refers to violence against children: "All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (UN General Assembly Article 19: Convention on the Rights of the Child n.d.). However, exposure to violence extends to the vicarious experience of violence (such as hearing about an act of violence), being the direct victim of a violent act, or witnessing violence involving others.

4.4.1. Magnitude, Types and Consequences of Early Childhood Violence Exposure

In the year 2015, Global literature estimated that approximately three-quarters of the world's child population had experienced moderate or severe physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, affecting nearly 1.5 billion children aged 2 - 17 years old (Hillis *et al.* 2016). Violence exposure influences development across multiple domains and at different stages. It can impact children's neurological, mental, physical, emotional, and social development, often leading to a cascade of problems that interfere with adjustment. Substantial neuroscientific evidence has amassed on the adverse consequences of experiencing violence during childhood on later health outcomes, health risk behaviours and subsequent perpetration of violence. Through repeated experiences or witnessing of violence, the neuro-endocrine, autonomic, immunological and neuropsychological systems become excessively activated (Shonkoff *et al.* 2012 cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2017). This results in children's bodies remaining in a constant state of high stress through increased heart rate, hypervigilance and elevated secretions of cortisol.

4.4.2. Child Violence Exposure in South Africa

The high levels of childhood violence exposure in South Africa, indicates an increasingly urgent situation, as children experience disproportionately high levels of violence (Meinck *et al.* 2016 cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2017). South Africa's estimated child homicide rate of 5.5 homicides per 100 000, is more than twice the global average, with nearly half of child homicides related to child abuse and neglect (Mathews *et al.* 2013 cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2017). However, since actual rates of violence against children in South Africa remain severely under-reported, figures are said to be an underestimate (SAPS 2013; Jamieson *et al.* 2017; Meinck *et al.* 2017 cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2017). A 2017 study compared the national violence against children data for South Africa against the global averages and found that: one in five children in South Africa (19.8 percent) experienced sexual abuse (global average is 18 percent for girls and 8 percent for boys), one in three (34.4 percent) experienced physical abuse (global average is 23 percent), one in six (16.1 percent) experienced emotional abuse (global average of 36 percent), one in eight (12.2 percent) reported being neglected (global average of 16 percent) and one in six (16.9 percent) reported witnessing violence (Artz *et al.* 2016 cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2017).

Similarly, Richter *et al.* (2018) reported that approximately 40 percent of children in South African are poly-victimised in all aspects of their lives: home, school, community and in their interpersonal relationships. This also attests to the interconnectedness of the forms of violence experienced by children. The accelerated frequency at which children experience multiple victimisations and witnessing violence in their communities speaks to the contemporary realities of violence as a constant theme of daily living in South Africa.

4.4.3. General Drivers, Risk and Protective Factors for Violence

The term driver is used for factors that create conditions in which there is an increased likelihood of violence at the structural or institutional level; whilst risk and protective factors reflect the likelihood of violence occurring at the individual, interpersonal and community levels (UNICEF 2017). A study by Aliprantis and Chen (2016) documented that black males in the United States were exposed to much more violence in early childhood when compared to their white counterparts, as measured by children's perceptions and mortality rates in early childhood. ECD refers to the process through which a young child develops optimal physical health, mental alertness, emotional confidence, social competence and readiness to learn (Aliprantis and Chen 2016; Gray 2016). The study also found that a strong association exists with early childhood exposure to violence and school absence, especially for black males, who are almost 12 percentage points less likely to attend school. Factors such as children having to contribute to household income, the educational accomplishment of mothers and family structure, also contributed to associations to childhood exposure to violence (Aliprantis and Chen 2016).

A critical analysis of the risk and protective factors associated with violence against children in South Africa that were conducted at the individual, relationship and community level, support international research with evidence suggesting that very high levels of violence were most prevalent among poorer and disadvantaged communities (Mkhize 2012). According to Mkhize (2012: 37), "children in black and coloured communities are more exposed to violence and that in Cape Town alone, the rate of violence against children exceeded the world rate by 59.2 per 100 000". When violence is ever present in the lives of children, they develop coping mechanisms through normalisation and legitimacy to deal with conflict violently and even to keep safe. A striking example of this normalisation is that children often report feeling safe; despite being confronted with violence in their daily lives - this illuminates the normalisation of crime in South Africa (Burton 2008 cited in Sibisi 2016).

In South Africa, children are at highest risk of experiencing violence when they live in households where parents are absent, financial resources are scarce and they are exposed to drugs, alcohol, crime and conflict (Mathews *et al.* 2016, cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2017). Greater exposure to community members involved in drugs, alcohol and crime, also increases the risk of children being exposed to violence (Artz *et al.* 2016 cited in Hsiao *et al.* 2017). Richter *et al.* (2018) further supported the literature that suggests that high levels of violence are most prevalent among poorer and more disadvantaged communities, in their investigation of 2000 children born in 1990 in the township of Soweto, Johannesburg. As the study evinces, over the past two decades, only one percent of the sample had not been exposed to or experienced violence in their home, school or community.

4.5. Predictors of Community Violence Exposure Youth Gangsterism

Studies of predictors of community violence exposure show that gender and age are the most examined factors (Salo 2005; Jensen 2008; Petrus 2013; 1999; Pope *et al.* 2000; Sjodin *et al.* 2018; Pinnock 2015). The sub-sections below will expand on these findings and explain their relevance to community violence exposure.

4.5.1. Gender as a Risk Factor for Youth Gangsterism

Many authors agree that youth gangsterism is predominantly a male phenomenon (Jensen 2008; Petrus 2013; Pinnock 2015; Merrin, Hong and Espelage, 2015 Wegner *et al.* 2016). However, there is growing recognition of female gang-involvement (De La Rue and Espelage, 2014). Other authors (such as, Pope *et al.* 2000; Sjodin *et al.* 2018) support the view that being male is a risk factor, this can be attributed to the biological surplus of testosterone in males as they go through puberty and then seek a release for their feelings of aggression, frustration and hostility through gang involvement (Salo 2005; Pinnock 2015). However, a study conducted by O'Conner *et al.* (2004) found no correlation between natural male testosterone production and the expression of violence.

Researchers such as Vetten (2000 and Salo (2005) have alluded to the traditional male gender role as that of the family protector and provider, which in turn pressurises men to be economically successful. Consequently, males from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, such men on the Cape Flats, may experience social and economic emasculation (Salo 2005; MacMaster 2007) and turn to the illicit economic activities of the gangs, as well as the violence ascribed to them, to develop a masculine and dominant identity within their communities (Vetten 2000; Salo 2005). The continued lack of relief to the socio-economic status of the majority coloured and black men and who suffered during the apartheid era, reflects abysmally on South Africa's democracy (Kinnes 2017). Race-isolated poverty as a risk factor for youth gangsterism is particularly notable in the Western Cape, which is predominantly represented by the coloured population who were previously dispossessed of land and economic power (Kinnes 2000; Jensen 2008; Petrus 2013; Roloff 2014; Pinnock 2015). This is evidently clear in contemporary South Africa as many men on the Cape Flats continue to be economically deprived and contribute to the high levels of youth gangsterism on the Cape Flats (Pinnock 2015)

In South Africa, the limited gang research available suggests that there are cases of gang-involvement for females (girls and women) as active gang members who participate in crimes (Pinnock 2017; Shaw and Skywalker 2017; Dziewanski 2020). One of the main routes into gangs for females in South Africa is through developing a romantic relationship with a male gang member (Kelly 2018). However, this is often not out of free choice. Many females in high-violence communities experience high vulnerability and powerlessness. Often without anyone to protect them, they are mugged, sexually assaulted and

raped. Rejecting the advances of gang members, also increase their risk of being accused of belonging to rival gangs. Many females would rather make the choice to join a gang and provide sexual favours in return for enhanced protection and security. Females tend to occupy a more supportive and submissive role, whose boyfriends are gang members with "glamorous girlfriends who enhance the status of their boyfriend" (Cooper and Ward 2012: 247; Vetten 2000). Once part of the gang, these women are often under constant surveillance of their male counterparts, have limited freedom of movement (Shaw and Skywalker, 2017) and continue to be victims of emotional, psychological and physical trauma and abuse. For example, a gang leader known as a "general" can have any women he wants in the gang or community. When he no longer wants her, she is "released" to other gang members, and she is not supposed to refuse (Cooper and Ward 2012).

These finding as supported in a conflict analysis of gang violence in El Salvador by Karlin (2015) that once females join gangs, it does not exempt them from violence. Not only are female gang members expected to participate in criminal acts, for instance, females act as links to imprisoned gang members or provide hideouts for gangsters, but they face the most danger during their initiation into gangs, as sexual assault and rape are often, they only way to gain "credibility" among their male counterparts. Studies have revealed how some females have been exposed, influenced, and trained, from a childhood, by older family gang members to participate in gang activities (Khan *et al.* 2013; Howell and Miller-Graff 2014; Pinnock 2016). Females are said to join gangs for more affective reasons (Khan *et al.* 2013). According to Pinnock (2017), females, who join gangs, seek a substitute family in the gang. Some females join gangs for socio-emotional reasons. Shaw and Skywalker (2017) have found that some females join a gang because of the immediate availability of illegal substances. Their study also revealed that some females join gangs because its lifestyle appeals to them, with its public symbols of perceived wealth. The participants in this current study reported that they were attracted to the flashy lifestyle that the gangs could provide, which represented the initial allure to join the gang.

It is important to emphasise that, whilst most studies have found more community violence exposure for males and older children, there are fewer studies in certain populations, such as pre-schoolers, for example, in which these finding have not been replicated. Urban, racial, ethnic minority status and family socio-economic status have also been commonly examined and are often associated with community violence exposure. Outside of gender and age, researchers have noted other factors that may have an impact on the prevalence of violence within communities and amongst individuals. Bronfenbrenner (1986) noted that there are some links between inner-city life, poverty and community violence. He reported that persons living in urban areas were at higher risk of developing psychiatric disorder than their counterparts in other communities, even when contending with other similar challenges (Bronfenbrenner 1986). Similarly, risky adolescent behaviours can also influenced be

influenced by neighbourhood ecology. In a longitudinal study, delinquent behaviour rates for boys declined after the families moved out of the city of London.

In communities affected by violence, children and youth, their families and other individuals with whom they interact are affected by environmental danger and may adopt practices or policies that differ from those in communities without similar safety concerns. This process, known as adaptation, influences an individual's or family system's responses to external stressors in the environment. An important related issue is that of single motherhood, which is a dominant family composition in high-poverty, high-violence communities as many fathers are absent or been killed because of gang involvement (Van der Spuy 2016). This puts considerable strain on mothers who have the burden to protect their families and make sure their children get to school and return home safely during gang conflicts (Van der Spuy 2016:57).

4.6. Consequences of Community Violence

Exposure to high rates of violence has devastating consequences for community life, individuals and families. Community violence exposure may impact early child development across multiple domains and at various stages (neurological, physical, emotional, psychological and social), that may set in motion a chain of maladaptive reactions that interfere with early development and are increasingly resistant to change (Perry 1997; Lynch and Cicchetti 1998a, cited in Lynch 2003). Victimisation by community violence has been shown to lead to high levels of traumatic stress even when demographic variables and prior symptomatology have been controlled for. Clinical research literature contains many studies documenting the neurological and physiological effects of trauma on individual arousal and stress reactions (Perry 2001, cited in Lynch 2003). In reaction to normal stress, the central nervous system activates brain structures that influence the individuals' overall arousal and ability to regulate stress.

Many studies have demonstrated that exposure to community violence has been positively correlated with symptoms of post-traumatic stress in children ranging from early elementary years through adolescence (Lynch and Cicchetti 1998a, cited in Lynch 2003). Many of the early quantitative studies in this research area reveal several deleterious effects of chronic community violence on children (Cooley-Quille *et al.* 2001; Garbarino *et al.* 1992; Osofsky 1995). Seminal studies in the USA have documented that younger populations experience high levels of community violence. For example, in an informal survey, 10 mothers living in Chicago's public housing had all reported that their children had witnessed a shooting by the age of five (Dubrow and Garbarino 1989).

Garbarino *et al.* (1992) found that preschool children under the age of five exposed to community violence tend to behave passively by internalising symptoms such as fear, anxiety and withdrawal;

externalising symptoms such as anger and aggression; and/or displaying major regressive symptoms such as enuresis and decreased verbalisation. Additionally, pre-schoolers often demonstrate memory of traumatic events through their behaviour and play rather than with words (Overstreet 2000). Correlational studies indicate a clear association between violence exposure, and mental and physical health symptoms, including post-traumatic stress symptoms (Cooley-Quille *et al.* 2001; Osofsky 1995); headaches, asthma, allergies and ulcers (Aisenberg and Mennen 2000); and depression (Ceballo *et al.* 2003; O' Donnell *et al.* 2002). In contrast to children who have not been exposed to community violence, children with violence exposure display greater difficulty paying attention, are less likely to explore, experience more sleep disturbances and nightmares, as well as higher levels of anxiety.

Children may display aggression and "act tough" to deal with fears linked to community violence (Farrell and Bruce 1997). In this case, violence exposure strengthens the inclination of children to behave aggressively. Alternatively, school-aged children may respond to violence with internalising behaviours, becoming inhibited or constricted in their activities and thinking (Osofsky 1995). Research suggests that violence exposure may cause children and adolescents to become uncaring toward others and desensitised to future violence (Farrell and Bruce 1997). Problems associated with community violence may lead to academic difficulties (Overstreet 2000). In 2000, a study by Shahinfar revealed that 78 percent of three to four-year old African American children had been exposed to at least one incident of community violence. A nationally representative survey in the United States revealed that children, specifically in the age category two to five years, had witnessed family assaults (15.8 percent), community violence (nine percent) and experienced some form of violence in their lifetimes (21.2 percent) (Finkelhor *et al.* 2013). More than 50 percent of preschool-aged children living in an impoverished, low-income crime area had been exposed to either domestic or community violence within their lifetime (Linares and Moris 2006; Miller *et al.* 2012; David *et al.* 2015 and between 13 - 15 million children were exposed to violence each year (Cole *et al.* 2005, cited in David *et al.* 2015). Poverty tends to generate other traumatic events such as community violence and child abuse (Abraham-Cook 2012).

Shields *et al.* (2009) investigated the relationship between exposure to community violence and psychological distress in a sample of children living in Cape Town. Their findings suggested that a child's ability to feel safe is directly related to reducing the distress that occurs as a result of exposure to violence. Whilst parents and schools can help children cope, this is limited. Early intervention, before maladaptive coping mechanisms have developed are important. From this study and those aforementioned, an inference can be made about an upward trajectory of younger children being exposed to community violence. According to Sharkey *et al.* (2016) living in a dangerous area not only leads to short term trauma but it also shapes children's behaviour, engagement and educational trajectories in ways that build over time.

Guerra *et al.* (2003) note that most research on the impact of community violence on children's development tends to focus on samples of children from disadvantaged communities who experience multiple stressors and risk factors, which fails to disentangle the impact of community violence from other factors. These factors are all conveniently bundled under the umbrella term of "exposure" to violence when researching the relationship between life stressors and/or factors contributing to community violence, which has serious implications for scientific enquiry. South African researchers, Shields *et al.* (2009) are among the few researchers who have attempted to isolate the effects of hearing about violence, witnessing violence or being a victim of violence. Their study found that among children in the eight- to thirteen-year-old age group in lower economic groups in Cape Town, 48 percent had witnessed someone being killed in their neighbourhood (Shields *et al.* 2009).

Another critique is the lack of longitudinal studies on the impact of community violence on children (Guerra *et al.* 2003). This poignant critique is essential to expanding the literature on the impact of community violence on young children over time. Recent scholarship (such as Richet *et al.* 2018) in South Africa has made a major contribution in addressing the research gap by pioneering the first longitudinal study in Africa. Research has consistently shown that living in a violent community affects multiple aspects of children's lives and that chronic exposure and witnessing community violence can have severe consequences for children (Artz *et al.* 2016 in Hsiao *et al.* 2017). Fifty percent (50 percent) of pre-schoolers in the sample in the Soweto study exhibited aggressive behaviours, such as fighting and bullying toward other children.

What emerged from Richter *et al.* (2018) is that their steady progression in violent behaviour having been reported in primary school years (greater than 65 percent of children) and rising in adolescence (89 percent), amongst children exposed to violence from an early age. Long-term effects into adulthood include poor mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, risky sexual behaviour, criminality and neglectful or abusive parenting, leading to a vicious cycle of violence and poor functionality. Despite the cost of violence and its avoidable effects on short- and long-term mental and physical health, social adjustment and intergenerationally, South Africa is yet to develop a strong focus on reducing violence and children's exposure to- and experience of violence (Richter *et al.* 2018).

4.7. Multilevel Mediators and Moderators

4.7.1. Specific Multilevel Mediators and Moderators That Work in Regions of Africa

Brookes-Gunn (2015) reviewed the importance of war-related trauma and community violence in children's health in the African context and drew attention to specific multilevel mediators and moderators. Studies show that school climate, family organisation, and school, family and peer support all moderate the effects of community violence exposure on a child's health. The study also identified

the importance of risk and coping resources in the family and community, that exert direct effects on children's health in Africa. Gender also modified some of the effects of violence exposure on children's health (Betancourt *et al.* 2011; Betancourt *et al.* 2014). In terms of the role of context, Shields *et al.* (2013) find an interactive effect in the association between the neighbourhood victimisation of children on the symptoms of psychological distress across countries, in a comparison of children in South Africa and the USA. In a plot of the interaction, they found that at both low and high levels of victimisation in the neighbourhood, children had higher levels of psychological distress in the United States than those in South Africa (Brookes-Gunn 2015).

4.8. Early Childhood Cumulative Adversity

Exploring how adversity impacts children in the preschool context may highlight the influence of early adversity on self-regulation and student-teacher relationships in preschool as well as potential opportunities for trauma-informed interventions. Loomis (2021) conducted a study on the relationship between children's exposure to cumulative adversity, their self-regulation, and their relationship with their teachers in a sample of predominantly black (29 percent) and Latino (71 percent) children. Data was collected from caregivers of preschool children (n = 126) on their child's lifetime exposure to twelve childhood adversities, including traditional adverse childhood experiences (such as, domestic violence exposure and parental substance use) and environmental adverse childhood effects (such as, community violence exposure and food insecurity). The data was also collected from teachers at the middle and end of the preschool year on the self-regulation of the children and on the student-teacher relationship. The study found that children in the sample experienced an average of three adversities, with a range of zero to ten adverse childhood effects. In a series of path analyses, children's mid-year self-regulation problems mediated the relationship between children's adverse childhood effects and their end-of-year student-teacher conflict (Loomis 2018).

Above and beyond the contribution of cumulative adversity, teachers reported higher self-regulation problems and student-teacher conflict for black pre-schoolers in the study than for other children. The findings in this study highlight the potential negative impact of cumulative adversity on children in the preschool context and supports the need for the development of trauma-informed preschool models to support the well-being of adversity-exposed young children.

4.9. Secondary Traumatic Stress and Secondary Trauma in Teachers

The terms secondary traumatic stress, secondary trauma and vicarious trauma have been used interchangeably in literature (Abraham-Cook 2012; Jensen 2019). A formal definition of secondary traumatic stress and secondary trauma refers to "the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first-hand trauma experiences of another" (Peterson 2018, cited in Robinson 2021). It

refers to “a spread of trauma reactions from the victim to those who have close contact with the traumatised individual” and occurs when an individual indirectly (vicariously) experiences the trauma of another (Motta 2012:256; Cieslak *et al.* 2014, cited in Robinson 2021). In this instance, vicarious trauma is described as the manifestation of symptoms educators may feel when working with students who have experienced trauma (Robinson 2021).

There is a sparsity of research specifically regarding vicarious trauma and educators. As vicarious trauma “can develop through the stress of wanting, but not being able, to help individuals in distress” (Koenig *et al.* 2017: 263) this could suggest that “educators may be more at risk for developing vicarious trauma”. Lander (2018) found that teachers, counsellors, and administrators may recognise the cumulative stressors that they face, but they do not always realise that their symptoms are a common reaction to working with traumatised children and that these symptoms are real and have a name. The symptoms of vicarious trauma in teachers may include feelings of emotional exhaustion, psychological distress, feelings of ineffectiveness, depression, anxiety, and/or reduced empathy (Ziaian-Ghafari and Berg 2019).

Like frontline trauma workers in the medical field, teachers (particularly in high-violence communities) feel the need to be strong for their students and tend not to recognise trauma in themselves and thus ignore the symptoms (Figley 2012). Teacher exhaustion or stress have often been dismissed as signs of weakness and an inability to cope (Walker 2019). According to Ziaian-Ghafari and Berg (2019: 38), the teaching profession is focused on providing care for students, which places educators in the role of human service providers, making teachers vulnerable to vicarious trauma. The body of research concerning vicarious trauma in teachers, while recent and limited, is growing (Robinson 2021).

4.10. Community Violence Impact on Parenting Practices

It is readily apparent from the literature that there is a narrow focus on the effects of community violence on parents. Repetitive exposure to violent events taxes the emotional and psychological resources of parents, and impairs their overall functioning, often leading to hopelessness and powerlessness (Pat-Horenczyk *et al.* 2009; Carreras and Carter 2019). Therefore, in aversive environments where families are exposed to high levels of community violence, parents can play a crucial role in protecting or placing their children at risk for further psychological distress (Pat-Horenczyk *et al.* 2009). Carreras and Carter (2019) examined emotion regulation and parent distress amongst preschool children experiencing high socio-demographic risk. The study found that there is considerable evidence that psychological stress can impair sensitive parenting practices. It further found an association between psychological stress and negative effects on emotion regulation capacities of parents (Carreras and Carter 2019).

4.11. Early Childhood Community Violence Exposure Interventions in Colombia And El Salvador

Community violence is a global phenomenon, and the lessons learnt in other countries can be applied to the South Africa context (Van der Spuy 2016; Kinnes 2017). The literature draws on parallels within Latin American countries such as El Salvador and Colombia, where gang violence is a serious national concern. These cases are particularly relevant to this study. El Salvador and South Africa share similar socio-political histories and therefore their citizens may have been exposed to community violence in multiple contexts where "the interplay of social and economic factors have similarly contributed to a systemic interface with violence" (Rojas-Flores 2013).

The 2013 study of elementary schools in El Salvador on the impact of gang violence on children and their families, sought to address a gap in the literature concerning community violence and the perception of its negative effects on parenting practices (Rojas-Flores 2013). The study found that the children and their families were at high risk and had experienced multiple traumas as a result of a lifetime of exposure to community violence. Not only did community violence negatively impact on parenting practices and parent-child relationships, but it also indicated that parents' reactions to violence also affected their children's responses (Royas-Flores 2013). This dynamic of the parents of pre-schoolers who are confronted with violence has received little investigation.

Identifying the consequences of violence exposure on parenting (in El Salvador) constitutes a critical first step in raising awareness of the frequency and severity of exposure to community violence on parents and their children. This can provide a basis for creating programmes and policies to both protect children from such exposure and support caregivers in developing and practicing healthy and protective childrearing in high criminality contexts (Rojas-Flores 2013).

Colombia has had one of the longest civil and drug wars in the world (UNICEF 2010). It has historically experienced high levels of community and domestic violence with young children from zero- to six-years being at particular risk of psychosocial harm. Young children are particularly at risk in Colombia due to their physical vulnerability in the midst of high levels of domestic and community violence, and specific risk factors associated with internal forced displacement, such as the breakdown of traditional childcare patterns, poor parenting, young motherhood and inadequate access to early childcare services due to poverty, and geographic and social isolation (Aria 2010; UNICEF Colombia 2012).

To protect the young children of Colombia, a multicomponent programme called Classrooms in Peace (*Aulas en Paz*), integrating an empathy-empowerment model to prevent aggression and promote peaceful relationships (Rojas-Flores 2013). The psychosocial well-being of young children and the capacity of caregiver empathy and positive parenting was applied. The programme included a universal

curriculum, parent workshops and home visits to parents of the top ten percent most aggressive children, and extracurricular peer groups of two aggressive and four prosocial children. Activities sought to promote socio-emotional competencies such as empathy, anger management, creative generation of alternatives and assertiveness.

The programme examined the effects of the programme on behavioural outcomes (such as, aggression, pro-sociality and victimisation) as wells as some socio-emotional competencies (such as, assertiveness and empathy) of second to fifth graders in three Colombian schools, located in a high-risk-communities. Research documenting the application of this model in these distinct Colombian communities, showed that this integrated empathy and empowerment approach resulted in a reduction of domestic violence towards young children, improved child thriving, increased engagement of parents (in particular teen parents) in community-based children's advocacy initiatives, and strengthened municipal child protection systems including the creation of "pathways for peace", or zones of pace in otherwise very violent neighbourhoods (Rojas-Flores 2013).

4.12. Danger Management Strategies

4.12.1. Parental strategies: The Role of Mothers

A noteworthy qualitative study by Jarrett and Jefferson (2004) examined poor African American mothers living in a high-poverty community in Chicago (United States) and specifically asked about the strategies they used to deal with community violence and the benefits and the costs to family and community life. The study revealed four key themes: (1) violence in the community, (2) the nature of community violence, (3) responding to community violence and (4) the benefits and costs of danger management strategies of women.

The women identified concerns for their safety within the neighbourhood. They attributed the danger to gang violence, abductions, drug dealers and robberies. The mothers were clear about the location of the violence, with many stating that their immediate building was safe despite the violence on nearby streets. Findings further revealed that the mothers could easily identify the perpetrators of violence as community outsiders. The mothers also noted that the timing of violence was circumscribed, respondents felt that late evening was a particularly dangerous time (Jarrett and Jefferson 2004).

Interestingly, the danger management strategies expressed by participants in the study challenged the notion that families living in economically depressed communities would be destabilised. Women monitored their environments and avoided dangerous situations by employing self-imposed curfews and confining their family members to the family home. This qualitative study contributed to our understanding of how poor African American mothers respond to community violence, addressing issues neglected by previous research (Jarrett and Jefferson 2004).

Qualitative data from empirical studies of African American families in high-risk communities in the United States were reviewed by Jarrett (1997a), who identified and usefully summarised four parenting strategies to promote positive child development. The first being, parents employing protection strategies that included avoiding dangerous areas, conducting errands and taking children to school early in the morning presuming these hours to be safe, whilst gangsters were still asleep, restricting relationships with neighbours and social distancing. Secondly, the parents employed child monitoring strategies such as chaperoning and isolating children to protect against negative adult and peer influences, created playgroups with "desirable" children and accompanied their children up until the eighth grade on walks to school and recreational activities (Jarrett 1997a).

Thirdly, parental resource-seeking where some parents sought resources that taught children concrete skills, whilst others sought resources outside their neighbourhoods and sending their children to play in "nicer" neighbourhoods. Lastly, in-home strategies that supported their children's intellectual development, such as reading to children before bedtime, which help mediate the deficits of impoverished inner-city schools (Jarrett 1997a). These empirical findings directly support central themes that the research aims to engage and expand on.

Another qualitative study by Murry *et al.* (2001) explored the impact of parental monitoring on children's psychological well-being in low-income, inner-city neighbourhoods. Elementary school children (163) were given questionnaires regarding community violence, parental monitoring, depression and hopelessness. The mean age of the children (73 boys and 90 girls) was ten years. The majority of respondents were Hispanic (100) with additional representation from white and African American children.

An analysis revealed that the children whose parents engaged in more supervision were less likely to experience personal victimisation and witness violence (Murry *et al.* 2001). If the adults in children's lives are emotionally inaccessible, panicked and unsupportive, children may lose a future orientation and respond with violence, depression and anti-social behaviour. Greater parental monitoring was associated with fewer symptoms of depression and hopelessness (Murry *et al.* 2001).

The researchers speculated that the children viewed parental monitoring as a sign of concern, which engendered parent-child communication. They concluded that high levels of monitoring moderated the relationship between violence exposure and children's psychological wellbeing. The authors further noted that researchers may misinterpret protective strategies (such as, high supervision) as maladaptive, when in reality, parents, teachers and other community members in dangerous communities understand the grave consequences of failing to monitor their children's behaviour (Murry *et al.* 2001).

4.12.2. Community Violence and Impact on Parenting Practices

Rojas-Flores *et al.* (2013) conducted a study in elementary schools in El Salvador on the experiences of parents after experiencing 12 years of civil war. In the aftermath of the war, communities in the Central South American country were now experiencing high levels of community violence, especially the proliferation of gang violence and organised crime and having to raise their children in dangerous communities.

The study investigated the impact of gangs on children and their families and the perceived negative effects on parenting practices among Salvadoran parents and other primary caregivers as well as the positive coping mechanisms and resiliency of parents in these communities. It explored the possible effects of community violence on parenting practices and the parent-child relationship.

Findings from this study point to the rates, types, and patterns of community violence exposure and their possible influence on parenting practices and parent–child relationships among Salvadoran parents. The author noted several themes regarding the phenomenon of community violence within their surroundings. The themes are summarised below:

- The perception of violence: almost half (47 percent) of the participants agreed that violence was a significant problem in their neighbourhood.
- Indiscriminate and unpredictable gang violence: gangs in the community indiscriminately killed all in, including children and the elderly. They also noted the severity and the frequency of the violence.
- Gang violence worse than the violence of their prior civil war: participants reported on the lack of community and the lack of protection that now exists, nobody is safe.
- Gang violence perpetrated by youth: gang members are evidently getting younger and younger. Some have even seen children with markings and tattoos (signifying gang allegiance). This contrasts the faces of the civil war, which mostly involved adult fighters.
- Negative effects of violence exposure: participants indicated experiencing the negative effects of violence in several areas of their lives including psycho-emotional distress, reduced parental efficacy, uncertainty and hypervigilance, and sense of a foreshortened future.
    - Psycho-emotional distress: this accounted for 58 percent of the coded items under the theme of negative effects of violence exposure (it occurred frequently in the focus group discussion setting of the study).
    - Uncertainty and hypervigilance. The participants discussed experiencing a chronic state of anxiety and fear that led to constant hypervigilance.
    - Sense of foreshortened future. Feelings of uncertainty and a general personal sense of foreshortened future for the focus group participants (a feeling that they may not be able to come home alive after a day's work).

- Daily routines constrained by violence: parents complained about the limitations gang activity placed on their daily lives, as they were often required to pay money to enter the streets that the gangs have claimed as territory.

- Maladaptive parenting practices: this theme was endorsed by approximately a third of the participants. The participants indicated that the violent environments in which they were raising their children have often led them to implement maladaptive parenting practices, including negative modelling and overprotecting their children.

- Spiritual and religious support (including prayer): Prayer to God was described as a helpful spiritual practice, and source of protection and comfort. Overall, participants' comments conveyed that prayer played an important role in their lives.

The study found that the chronic nature of violence affected the overall psychological wellbeing of the parents and their parenting practices; the presence of intergenerational transmission of negative coping mechanisms; they also expressed deep concern about their general lack of trust and the effect of this on family and community relationships, and their fear of imparting their mistrust to their children (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013). Overall, the high rates of violence have caused an overall sense of diminished parental self-efficacy and a feeling of helplessness to adequately protect their offspring from violent events.

The study also found parents to be overprotective of their children which resulted in tense and conflicted relationships with their children. In turn, the strain of their overprotectiveness on the parent-child relationship seemed to create more stress and anxiety for the parents and therefore exacerbated the general sense of stress and helplessness that parents reported (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013).

Interestingly, the study found that despite the challenges of raising children in an adverse context of violence, parents reported positive coping and resilience. Adaptive parenting practices emerged as a significant theme among more than half of the participants Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013). The study highlights some of the positive coping strategies reported: (1) seeking meaning and religious support, (2) making deliberate efforts to provide healthy monitoring and to model positive coping and (3) an overall renewed sense of positive meaning in the form of increased appreciation for family and life (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013).

Rojas-Flores *et al.* (2013) noted that nearly all the participants (94 percent) in this study placed high importance on religion and the church as a vital and essential resource in raising a family. The majority of participants reported the need for professional support, a need for additional psychological support for themselves and their children, an increase in parenting education and requested more church- or school-based parenting support (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013).

When detailing the kinds of professional support needed, requests centred mainly on two types of interventions: Parent education and psychological interventions. Participants also recognised that the

lack of resources were likely to increase their vulnerability for post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental problems when exposed to trauma. Being in a state of heightened safety concerns, stress reactions coupled with inadequate resources for recovery remain a serious concern (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013).

The negative influences of community violence on the overall psychological wellbeing of the parents and the daily burden of coping with chronic stress in a potentially traumatic context were highlighted by the participants. Many participants reported experiencing significant physical, emotional, and psychological difficulties, which they attributed to the chronic nature of their stress and fear. The participants regarding the most concerning as the chronic nature of anticipatory anxiety, or the fear of being a victim (or their children being victims) of violence. Hypervigilance and fear can negatively affect restful activities, including sleep, eating, and recreation (Breslau 2002). For the participants in this study, simple activities, such as coming home after a day of work could potentially become dangerous situations with real and lethal consequences (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013).

This study makes a significant contribution to the field in that it highlights the importance of developing programmes to educate and equip parents and other caregivers raising children in violent communities to adaptively cope with community violence. It also points to the importance of preventative work, whilst providing a basis for guiding further research and development of culturally sensitive parenting interventions in high criminality and gang violence contexts. Furthermore, by identifying the consequences of violence exposure on parenting in El Salvador, the study takes a critical first step in raising awareness of the frequency and severity of exposure to community violence on parents and their children, which has a narrow focus in the literature (Rojas-Flores 2013). This, the author suggests, can provide a basis for creating programmes and policies that that protect children from exposure to community violence and support caregivers in developing and practicing healthy and protective child rearing in high criminality contexts.

4.13. The Role of School and Teachers

Teachers, like parents, are strategists in the lives of children and have the potential to transform the lives of children, change the life trajectory of children and to make a difference in the world. There is a dearth of research on the strategies that teachers use to address the needs of young children in violent communities (Jarrett and Jefferson 2004). Therefore, it is not clear whether teachers display danger management strategies that parallel those displayed by parents. The role of schools and teachers is a recurrent concept in the literature examining the development of cognitive and social skills in disadvantaged children (Garmezy 1993). Impoverished schools can maintain a positive school climate where teachers, principals and parents work together, and children are kept safe from violence in the community. Teachers can serve as role models and confidants who influence children. However, they

need help in coping with the ongoing stresses of their environment, such as understanding the relationship between exposure to chronic community violence and the resulting psychological, physical and behavioural effects on children (Garmezy 1993).

4.14. Mediating Role of Resilience

The concept of resilience is important as a recurring theme throughout incidences of violence against children and represents a protective factor against stressful events in childhood. It is a dynamic process which encompasses positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Rutter 2007). When applied to children exposed to stressful environments, resilience can be described as the ability to adapt and function successfully in a high-risk setting or following exposure to prolonged trauma. Contemporary risk and resilience theory proposes that resilience is not a static trait possessed by an individual, but rather a dynamic and transactional process that develops between a child and his or her larger ecosystem (Ungar *et al.* 2013 in Starkey *et al.* 2019).

Therefore, resilient preschool children can be considered those who are exposed to adversity and able to evidence success in the developmental domains of emotion regulation and prosocial skills (Hughes *et al.* 2001). Walsh (1998) noted that resilience is often erroneously equated with invulnerability or self-sufficiency, yet it is forged through interdependence with others. An individual's resilience is greater when s/he has access to at least one caring adult, such as parent, caregiver or another supportive person (Garmezy 1993; Jarret 1995; Nettles *et al.* 2000; Walsh 1998). Osofsky (1995) noted that previous research studies on chronic community violence lack information about the individual, the family, the school and other social ecological factors on children's behaviour and adjustment. An investigation of the challenges, strategies and support needs of teachers in violent communities may provide important insights about individuals and institutions that contribute to adolescent resiliency (Ungar *et al.* 2013, cited in Starkey *et al.* 2019).

4.14.1. Resilience Fostered by Schools

Resilience models suggest that students can cope more effectively with risks such as community violence if their experiences in school are sensitive to their needs (Luthar *et al.* 2015; Garmezy 1993; Haggerty *et al.* 1994). There are three potential protective factors in schools including, school attachment relationships, structure and control, and a developmental approach to the curriculum that supports coping and self-esteem (Garbarino *et al.* 1992). Luthar *et al.* (2015) discussed school attachment as a social-emotional factor that influences early adolescent achievement in school. For middle school students ages 10 - 14, academic and school attachment become increasingly significantly as they look for role models and support from non-parental adults. These researchers also reported that classroom observations in disadvantaged middle schools revealed lower teacher expectations, greater

emphasis on rote learning and more frequent interruptions for behaviour management, when compared to their more affluent counterparts (Luthar *et al.* 2015).

The school is one of the first environments that influence a child's ability to negotiate the world outside of their home (Bronfenbrenner 1986). Teachers are in a unique position with the potential to act as parent proxies when school age children and adolescents are away from home. Bronfenbrenner (1986) defined family and school as a mesosystem model important for researchers to examine. He noted that while family processes are more powerful (than classroom experiences) in changing child behaviour, schools may have a definite influence, especially in homes lacking intergenerational communication or shared decision-making (Bronfenbrenner 1986). Yet despite numerous studies examining the impact of families on children's school performance, there has been little examination of how teachers influence children's coping with environmental stressors such as community violence.

4.15. Summary

The literature review has presented a critical consideration of the current literature related to childhood violence exposure, including community violence and more specifically, gang violence. It began with a brief mention of the phenomenon of gang violence in South Africa, particularly the Cape Flats in Cape Town. It also briefly described peace education as a potential mechanism for transforming the impact of gang violence on the preschools located in these areas. It was stated that each issue would be given in-depth attention in separate chapters of the thesis. In examining the global literature (United States, Africa, including South Africa, and Latin America) the magnitude, types and main effects associated with violence against children were highlighted. The review then shifted focus onto community violence, as one of the most prevalent and detrimental forms of childhood violence exposure among children in South Africa (Collings *et al.* 2013 cited in Foster and Gunn 2015).

The review has identified that relatively less research has focused on community violence and preschool children as compared to older children, which has resulted in a less developed research base in the literature. Moreover, the literature reveals a dearth of research on the preschool population as a subgroup of educators in black and coloured areas appear in the community violence literature. These groups historically experienced community violence at high rates in their communities across South Africa and this study hopes to contribute to the literature to address these groups (Foster and Brooks-Gunn 2015).

Research consistently shows that chronically witnessing community violence has deleterious effects on multiple aspects on a child's life and that witnessing community violence, potentially puts them on a development trajectory that portends a host of problematic outcomes for children (Suniya 2015). Although chronically witnessing violence constitutes a significant risk for psychopathology, such as psychological, emotional, social difficulties that may last into adulthood, a substantial percentage of

children exhibit resilient functioning following early exposure to violence, including community violence.

Additionally, the chapter also looked at the risk factors and protective processes present among children exposed to community violence, and the factors that mediate the effects thereof and moderate children's response to community violence. There was also an expanded review of the short-term and long-term experiences of violence exposure for trauma, experienced by both children and teachers as secondary or vicarious trauma victim. Much of the literature considering vicarious trauma in educators is scant, but it is steadily growing (Robinson 2021).

Much of the literature on the effects of community violence on teachers is mostly quantitative in nature and the same is true for the few studies that exist on the preschool population. Whilst quantitative studies are useful, more qualitative research that allows for the voices of preschool teachers and how gang violence affects them, and the young children in their care, is needed. Hearing directly from teachers who experience gang violence in relation to teaching preschool children in these communities, is important. The literature reviews considered some of the gaps on community violence and peace education and the danger and protection management strategies of teachers at preschools located in high-gang-violence communities. The current study may contribute to the scholarship on community violence and peace education interventions with young children in communities affected by high-level gang violence (Jarret and Jefferson 2004; Murray *et al.* 2001*;* Rojas-Flores 2013; Morales 2021) as discussed in the literature review chapter.

The next chapter describes the research methodology underpinning this action research study.

Chapter Five: Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This action research study took a participatory and collaborative process approach that focused on "promoting peaceful coexistence and addressing structural causes of conflict" (UNESCO 2017:7). According to Blaxter *et al.* (2002: 59), methodology refers to "the approach or paradigm that underpins the research". This chapter detailed and described the research approach and the research design. It also took a close look at the area of study, including the population, sample of the population, sampling technique and the instrument for data collection. Thereafter, it discussed the validation of the questionnaire, administration of the data collection instrument, the method of data analysis and how each objective was intended to accomplish the overall aim of the study.

In the following sections of this chapter, participatory action research and the development of action research as a methodology over the past few decades, are discussed. Thereafter, the different models and definitions of action research are explored, and an attempt is made to identify the unique features of action research that make it an attractive mode of research for peace education practitioners and this study. This chapter sought to address the first and second sub-questions of the study, which were to explore perceptions, prevalence and experiences of gang violence and examine existing strategies employed by preschools located in gang-affected areas on the Cape Flats (and through this knowledge develop and test a peace education strategy to reduce/prevent youth gang involvement).

5.2. Aims and Objectives

The overall aims of the study were to explore the experiences (and exposure) of preschool teachers on the Cape Flats with gang violence and to explore if peace education could be used as a transformative strategy in preschools located in high-impacted gang communities on the Cape Flats. The aim of the study was developed according to the research questions and was supported by six objectives.

The research objectives were:

I. To investigate preschool teachers' perceptions and experiences of gang violence and its prevalence in their community.

II. To understand how gang violence exposure and experiences affect young children.

III. To critically analyse the strategies teachers, utilise to protect children and themselves.

IV. To examine existing strategies to navigate to-and-from school during gang violence.

V. To interrogate teachers' conceptualisations of peace education and the challenges for early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas.

VI. To assess how peace education interventions in preschool settings can increase capacities to deal with violence.

5.3. Research Questions

The overarching research question was outlined as "Can peace education be a used as a transformative strategy by preschools located in high-gang violence communities on the Cape Flats in Cape Town?" This research question was determined as appropriate towards seeking an in-depth understanding towards the capacity of preschool teachers as potential early childhood peace educators in youth gang prevention. To reiterate, in such contexts, the transformative power of peace education may take on a very different understanding. Therefore, secondary research questions looked at determining how peace education could be used as a transformation strategy as follows:

- How does gang violence exposure and experiences affect young children?
- What strategies do teachers utilise to protect children and themselves?
- What are teachers' conceptualisations of peace education and the challenges for early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas?
- In what way can peace education interventions in preschool settings be utilised to increase capacities to deal with violence?

The research questions served as a strong support structure throughout the empirical data collection process, as they provided an underpinning pillar upon which to base all interview questions and further data analysis.

5.4. Context: Location of the Study

The study was conducted in three areas on the Cape Flats, in Cape Town, namely, Manenberg (selected as the pilot research site), Hanover Park and Lavender Hill. The researcher chose these areas because they were geographically and socio-demographically similar, sharing cultural and linguistic characteristics, and also all impacted by high levels of gang violence. The intervention component of the action research study was carried out among a group of preschool teachers in the gang-affected community of Lavender Hill over a two-and-a-half-year period (from 2019 to 2021).

5.5. Sample Population

In this study, the sample population consisted of preschool teachers in three areas on the Cape Flats that are highly impacted by gangs and gangsterism, namely, Manenberg, Hanover Park and Lavender Hill

(the research intervention site). The sample population of this study was 37 preschool teachers from a total of nine schools.

5.6. Research Approach: Action Research

This study was based on an action research approach. In this section, the researcher will present a discussion on what action research is, why action research was chosen as the research approach for this particular study and how it is defined in various literature. To this end, a brief background to the development of action research is given, its' purposes, different models of action research, as well as some of the unique features of action research that make it an attractive mode of research for this study.

Action research was chosen as the research strategy for the study as it is likely to yield more complete information and data sets from the community directly affected (Koshy 2010). The approach is said to bring to bear the best information on what is actually happening on the ground, encourage community buy-in and support for interventions to be developed, and also enhance the value of the research whilst meeting the needs of the community. Action research is an orientation of inquiry, rather than a particular method, action research is the investigation of action, implementation of investigation through action and the transformation of research into action (Kagan *et al.* 2019). It also lends itself particularly well to qualitative methods and allows for critical adaptive reflection by the researcher throughout the research process. It is a methodology that is empowering and collaborative, generating knowledge and offering practical, concrete solutions towards positive change in practice and transformation in society.

Participatory action research was used as it encourages participants to become co-researchers who contribute to solving their problems through "their action in the different phases and moments of the research carried out to solve them" (Montero 2000: 134). Whyte (2008 cited in Kaye and Harris 2018: 241) describes participatory action research as, "a process in which some of the people in the community being studied actively participate with the researcher throughout the research process from the initial design to the formal presentation of results and discussion of the action implications."

5.6.1 Definitions of Action Research

No universal definition of action research exists in literature; however, some authors offer useful ones which are considered in this section. Wright-Mills (1959 cited in Adelman 1993) states that, "action research gives credence to the development of powers of reflective thought, discussion, decision and action by ordinary people participating in collective research on private troubles". It is generally acknowledged that participatory action research can be understood in different ways. Fundamentally, though, it can be seen as an umbrella term that takes many forms, all of which can use a range of qualitative and quantitative methods and are linked in some way to partnership and processes of reflection and action, but each of which has a different focus on partnership and action, depending on

the nature of the research, the issue being studied, the resources available, and the "contributions of the communities or parties involved" (Chevalier and Buckles 2013: 174).

A useful definition of participatory action research is that it is a "democratic and participative orientation to knowledge creation" that "brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern" (Bradbury 2015: 1). It is a way of doing research which places emphasis on collective self-reflective enquiry, the co-construction of knowledge, and the development of skills for speaking back and organising for change with others (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988: 5; McIntyre 2008: 5; Reason and Bradbury 2008: 1). In short, participatory action research is research into practice, undertaken by and with those involved in that practice, with the aim of investigating a problem and acting on it in a way that enhances that practice (McNiff 2014: 227).

Some authors view action research more as an orientation, rather than a research methodology. For example, Reason and Bradbury (2006) view action research as a particular orientation and purpose of enquiry, rather than a research methodology and describe action research as an approach which is used in designing studies to inform and influence practice (in Koshy *et al.* 2010). These authors also propose that action research consists of "a family of approaches" that have different orientations, yet reflect the characteristics which seek to "involve, empower and improve" aspects of participants' social world.

The following section gives a sense of what distinguishes participatory action research from other kinds of research. Participatory action research involves:

(1) deepening understanding and contributing to change,

(2) thinking about the past, present, and the future,

(3) working from a stance of pragmatism,

(4) including those on the receiving end of the practice as research partners, and

(5) bringing reflexivity to the work (Gittins 2017; Reason and Bradbury 2008; Chevalier and Buckles 2013).

The best participatory action research projects join first-person (researcher self-study), second person (researchers working face-to-face with others on an issue of mutual concern), and third person (research which extends to a wider populous) research/practice accounts (Reason and Torbert 2001: 3 cited in Gittin 2019).

Like conventional research, participatory action research is concerned with the pursuit of knowledge and making contributions to scholarship that are rigorous (Foote-Whyte 1991: 20 cited in Gittin 2019). But unlike the conventional model of pure research, participatory action research moves beyond mainstream methods used in most research with human subjects, that is, interviews and focus groups.

It links with principles of grassroots community organising that builds knowledge collaboratively within a community of practitioners and researchers (Stringer 2007: 151; Haung 2010: 95, cited in Gittin 2019). In effect, participatory action research calls for a process of dialogue between "evidence based and people-based inquiry," offering a systematic approach to inquiry that satisfies both the need for scientific rigour and the need for democratic practices (Chevalier and Buckles 2013: 4 - 5 cited in Gittin 2019).

5.6.2 Key Features of the Action Research Approach

It is worthy to consider what some of the key features of action research are. Bradbury (2008: 3) put forward a list of features of action research, as:

a) A set of practices that respond to people's desire to act creatively in the face of practical and often pressing issues in their lives in organisations and communities.

b) An engagement with people in collaborative relationships, opening new communicative spaces in which dialogue and development can flourish.

c) Drawing on many ways of knowing, both in the evidence that is generated in inquiry and its expression in diverse forms of presentation as we share our learning with wider audiences.

d) Value oriented, seeking to address issues of significance concerning the flourishing of human persons, their communities, and the wider ecology in which we participate.

e) A living, emergent process that cannot be pre-determined but changes and develops as those engaged deepen their understanding of the issues to be addressed and develop their capacity as co-inquirers both individually and collectively.

Koshy (2010: 1) further identified some key characteristics of action research as:

a) A method used for improving practice that involves action, evaluation and critical reflection that is based on the evidence gathered and the changes in practice that are then implemented.

b) Participative and collaborative, as it is undertaken by individuals with a common purpose.

c) Situation-based and context specific.

d) Reflection based on interpretations made by the participants.

e) Knowledge that is created through action.

f) Involving problem solving, if the solution to the problem leads to the improvement of practice; and

g) findings that emerge as action develops are not conclusive or absolute.

Meyer (2000 cited in Koshy *et al.* 2010) describes action research as a process that involves people and social situations that have the ultimate aim of changing an existing situation for the better. He goes on

to add that its' strength lies in its focus on generating solutions to practical problems and its ability to empower practitioners, by getting them to engage with communities and the subsequent development or implementation activities.

Waterman *et al.* (2001: 4, cited in Koshy *et al.* 2010) provide a comprehensive and practically useful definition. They describe action research as a period of inquiry, which describes, interprets and explains social situations while executing a change of intervention aimed at improvement and involvement. It is problem-focused, context specific and future-orientated. Action research is a group activity with an explicit value basis and is founded on a partnership between action researchers and participants, all of whom are involved in the change process (Koshy *et al.* 2010). The participatory process is educative and empowering, involving a dynamic approach in which problem-identification, planning, action and evaluation are interlinked. Knowledge may be advanced through reflection and research, and qualitative and quantitative research methods may be employed to collect data.

Creswell (2013:5) uses the term "research methods" to refer to techniques such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, document analysis and artefact analysis. Research methods also to refer to techniques for gathering data, while research designs or research approaches are ways of designing and conducting research (Rule and John 2011; Creswell 2013). Different types of knowledge may be produced by action research, including practical and propositional. Theory may be generated and refined, and its general application explored through cycles of the action research process.

Winter and Munn-Giddings's (2001: 8 in Koshy *et al.* 2010) defined action research as a "study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding." This captures the essence of the philosophy underlying the action research approach. This section presented the various definitions and viewpoints of action research. In so doing, it attempted to highlight some of the unique features of action research which include key concepts such as deeper understanding, participation, improvement, reform, problem finding, problem solving, a step-by-step process, modification, and theory building- all of which may demonstrate the reasons for the popularity of action research as a mode of study for peace education practitioners and researchers.

5.6.3 The Development of Action Research: A Brief Background

It is useful to provide a brief history of how action research developed over the decades as this shows how its popularity rose as method of research in fields such as education and peace studies. Lewin (1946 cited in Adelman 1993) is often referred to as the originator of action research and as a pioneer in the development of action research as a methodology (Adelman 1993). For Lewin, the discussion of identified problems, followed by group discussions on how to proceed, exemplified action research

(Adelman 1993). Lewin emphasised active participation by those who carry out the research in exploring the problems that they identify and anticipate (Lewin 1946). Once these problems have been investigated, decisions are made by the group, monitoring, keeping note of the consequences and regularly reviewing progress. Adelman (1993) notes that Lewin's emphasis on participation, creates the expectation of more emphasis to be given to the processed than outcomes.

The pioneering action research of Lewin and his associates showed that through discussion, decision, action, evaluation and revision in participatory democratic research, work became meaningful, and alienation was reduced. Following Lewin's seminal work, subsequent action research in the United Kingdom and the United States have acknowledged their debt to Lewin and his associates' pioneering his work. Adelman (1993) notes that the perceived merit of action research as a means to help solve social problems by participative intervention has risen and fallen since the 1950s. Lewin's work was followed by that of Stephen Corey and others in the United States, who applied this methodology for researching into educational issues (Adelman 1993). In Britain, the origins of action research can be traced back to the Schools Council's Humanities Curriculum Project (1967–1972) with its emphasis on an experimental curriculum and the re-conceptualisation of curriculum development (Hopkins 2021). The most well-known proponent of action research in the United Kingdom has been Lawrence Stenhouse, who's seminal (1975) work, "An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development" added to the appeal of action research for studying the theory and practice of teaching and developing curriculum.

5.6.4 Different Models of Action Research

The purpose of highlighting the different models of action research is to enable the reader to analyse the principals involved in these models, which (in theory) would lead to a deeper understanding of the processes involved in action research (Sagor 2005). Action research is participatory in nature, which led Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 595 in Sagor 2005) to describe it as participatory research. The authors suggested that action research involves a spiral of self-reflective cycles of: (a) Planning a change; (b) Acting; (c) Observing the process; (d) Reflecting; and (e) Re-planning.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2000 cited in Sagor 2005), indicated that, in reality, the process may not follow a neat spiral of sequential steps as mentioned above. In fact, these authors maintained that these stages would overlap and that initial plans may quickly become obsolete as learning from experience dictates. Therefore, the action research process should not be seen as inflexible nor be used in a rigid structure because in reality, the process is likely to be malleable, fluid, open and responsive. Figure 5.1 illustrates the spiral model of action research proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 564 cited in Sagor 2005).

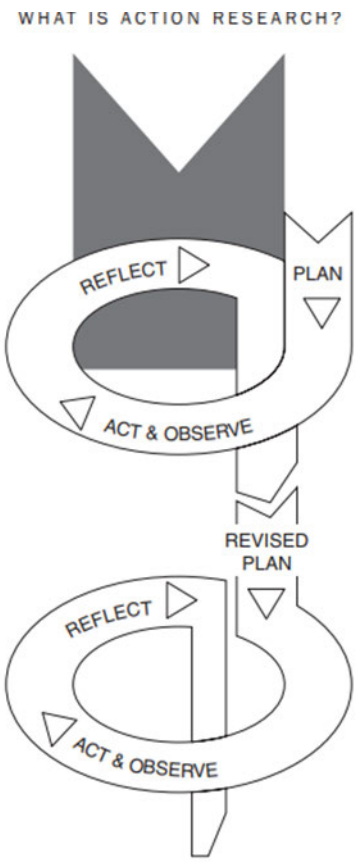

Figure 5.1: Illustrates the spiral model of action research proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (Source: Kemmis and McTaggart 2000: 564).

The model employed by Elliot (1991: 71, cited in Koshy 2010), Figure 5.2, is based on the work of Lewin of the 1940s but shares similar features to that of Kemmis and McTaggart. It includes identifying a general idea, planning the action, reconnaissance or the evaluation of the action. Thereafter one must learn the strengths and weakness, so informing the next step.

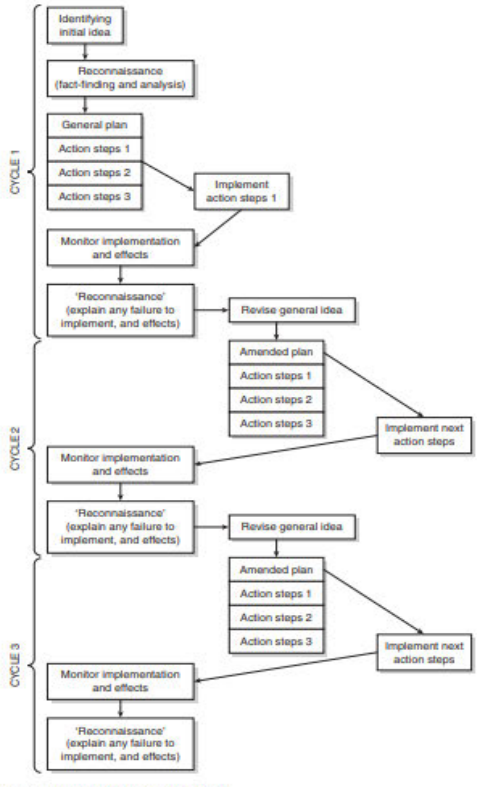

Figure 5.2: Elliot's action research model (Source: Ellis 1991)

The Sagor Model (1992), as shown in Figure 5.3 below, consists of a collaborative 5 step process. These five sequential steps were: (a) problem formulation; (b) data collection; (c) data analysis; (d) reporting results; and (e) action planning. Sagor viewed action research as a means of making the teacher feel less isolated from the students (Sagor 1992 cited in Sagor 2010). He further suggested two guiding principles which should be used by teachers in the action research process: (1) the action research must concern the teaching/learning process, and that (2) the issue must be within the scope of the researcher/teacher. He underscored the value of data collection in the action research process.

Data allow researchers/teachers to determine the scope of the problem/phenomena and to observe such issues through various perceptions. Sagor elaborated, "If data collection is the heart of the research process, then data analysis is its soul" (Sagor 1992: 11, cited in Koshy *et al.* 2010).

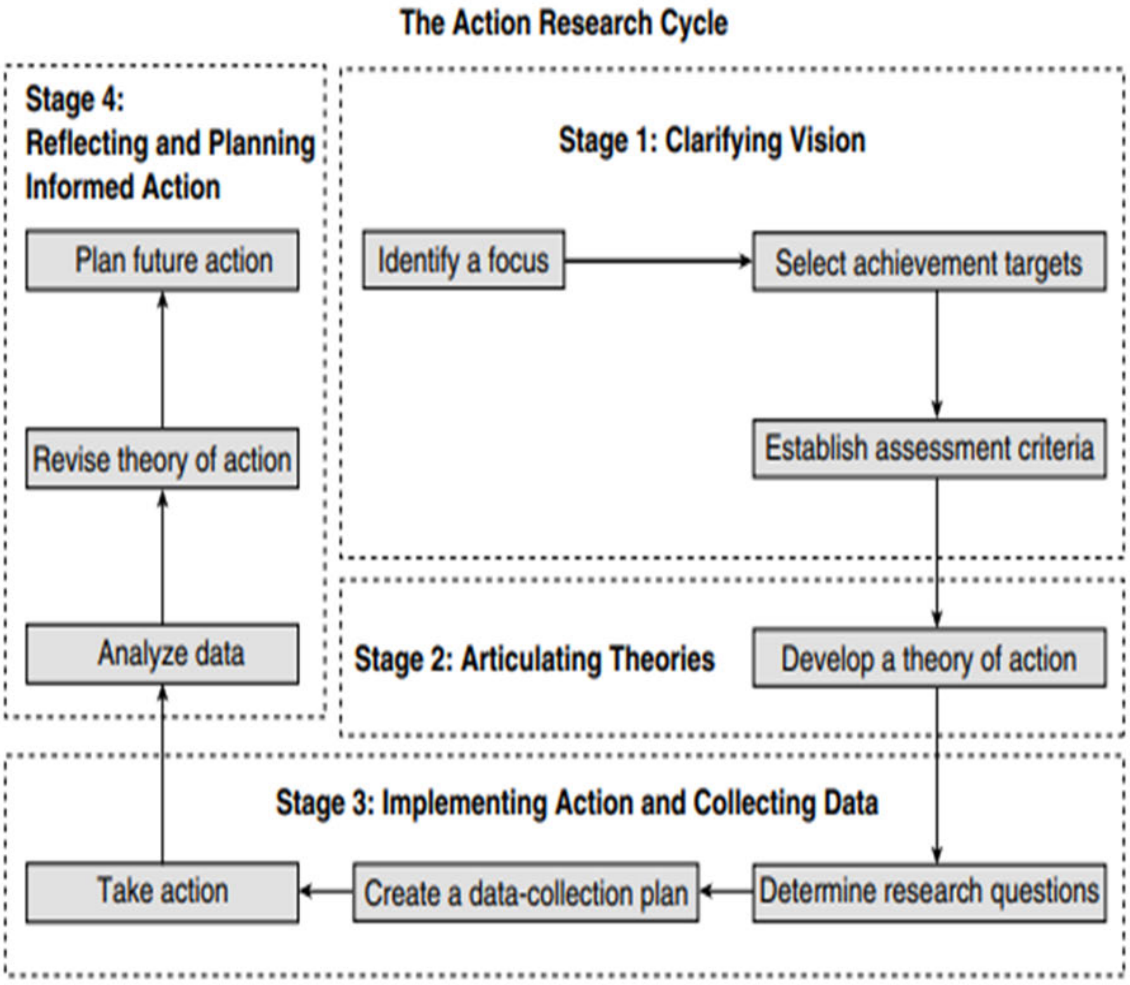

Figure 5.4: The action research cycle (Source: Calhoun 1994: 2)

Calhoun's model (1994), depicted in Figure 5.4, illustrates four stages of action: clarifying vision: articulating theories; implement action and collecting data; reflecting and planning informed action.

In O'Leary's model, as illustrated in Figure 5.5, it is stressed that "cycles converge towards better situation understanding and improved action implementation, and that they are based in evaluative practice that alters between action and critical reflection" (Koshy 2010). O'Leary sees action research as an experiential learning approach – its goal is to continually refine the methods, data, and interpretation considering the understanding developed in each earlier cycle.

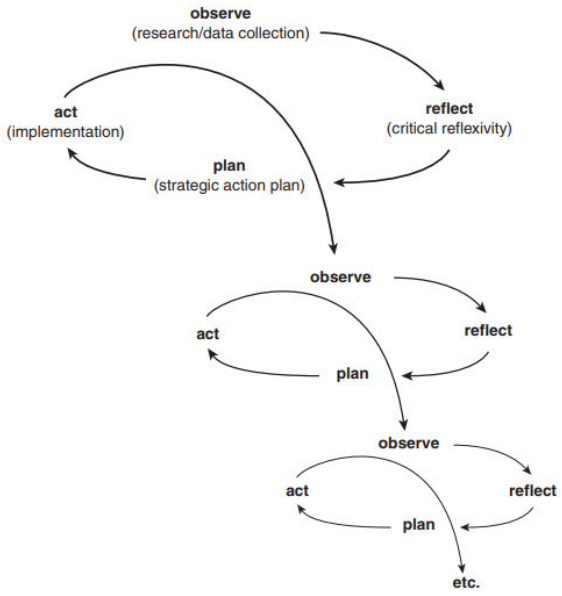

Figure 5.5: O'Leary's model of action research (Source: O'Leary 2004)

Although it is useful to consider different models, one should avoid excessive reliance on a particular model as this may lead to inflexibility by following the stages or cycles of a particular model too rigidly (Koshy 2010). In doing so, it could adversely affect the distinguishing feature of action research which is the emerging nature and flexibility of the research. Therefore, it is encouraged that researchers adopt the models which suit their purpose best or adapt these for their particular use, which is what the researcher did in this study.

5.6.5 Purpose of Conducting Action Research

Parkin (2009 cited in Koshy 2010: 1) describes that the purpose of undertaking action research is to bring about change in specific contexts. The researcher needs to go through the process of developing and using a range of skills to achieve the study aims, such as careful planning, sharpened observation and listening, evaluation, and critical reflection. As Reason and Bradbury (2001: 2) explain, the primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. They maintain that action research is about working towards practical outcomes and that it is also about "creating new forms of understanding, since action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless". They further expand and explain that the participatory nature of action research "makes it only possible with, for and by persons and communities, ideally involving all stakeholders both in the questioning and sense making that informs the research, and in the action which is its focus" (Reason and Bradbury 2001). Similarly, without action peace education is merely an intellectual and speculative exercise. The true substance of peace

education is the subjective reality of the learner and their pursuit of authentic peace and freedom. Thus action, and reflection on that action, is essential to transformation.

5.6.5 Benefits of Action Research

Liptok *et al.* (1998) conducted research on indigenous people using action research within the community. They found that the action research community project increased the community spirit and encouraged community interest. According to Segal (2009 cited in Bissessar 2015), teachers using action research will benefit in the following ways: (a) structure case reports so they can be of value to others; (b) are able to contribute to the knowledge base of teaching; (c) improve their practice by sharing information that is learned; (d) get opportunities to receive critical feedback; (e) fulfil the "need to know" with concrete examples and results; (f) see that even case research reports may be valuable to others in the field; and (g) have the opportunity to work with students, faculty, or a school towards a common goal. Another important benefit of action research noted in the literature was practicality (Bissessar 2015). Action research encompasses both reflection and doing and is based on more practice than theory (Townsend 2010 cited in Bissessar 2015).

5.7 Reflective Praxis

Reflexive praxis involves the researcher reflecting on what he or she has learned and considers the implications of how these learnings impact the broader context they work in (Adelman 1993). Dewey (1910: 6 cited in Adelman 1993) emphasised the importance of reflection in learning and referred to the term reflective practice as "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it."

Hyams (2010) outlined four conditions necessary to engender reflection among pre-service teachers, which are relevant to preschool schoolteachers in this study and therefore merit mention. Firstly, teachers should be placed in situations that force them to get outside their comfort zones so that their reactions will trigger a need to reflect. Secondly, teachers need to be willing to engage in reflection and be honest in their reflections, Thirdly, teachers need to be open to the process and an atmosphere of risk taking should ensue in order for students to be honest with their reflections. Lastly, teachers should be willing to learn from their reflections and experiences.

5.7.1 Reflective Practice in Action Research

Sagor (2000 cited in Bissessar 2015) indicated that action research fostered more reflective practitioners. When teachers engage in reflection whilst teaching, as well as after teaching and finding new ways to deliver instruction, this is both reflective practice and action research at work. Proponents of action research and reflective practice viewed critical teacher introspection as a vital tool in the

continuous improvement of practice (Schon 1983; Kemmis and McTaggert 1990; McNiff 1997; Danielson and McGreal 2000 cited in Bissessar 2015).

Action research birthed a more focused and disciplined method of introspection of teaching and learning. Danielson and McGreal (2000: 24 cited in Bissessar 2015) stated, “Few activities are more powerful for professional learning than reflection on practice.” Moreover, Calderhead (1992: 9 cited in Bissessar 2015) concluded that reflective teaching enables self-directed growth as a professional, facilitates the linking of both theory and practice and overall, it helps to explicate the expertise of teachers and subject it to critical evaluation. It enables teachers to take a more active role in their own professional development (Bissessar 2015). Reflective practice and action research share a synergistic association where one promotes the other and vice versa (Bissessar 2015).

5.8 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design. The term research design is used in variety of ways by researchers and is often referred to as a “blueprint of the research study” (Babbie and Mouton 2008). The research design is a plan of the methods and procedures that are used by researchers to collect and analyse the data needed by the manager. The research design provides a plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research question(s) defined by the researcher (clearly defining the problem into a researchable question is extremely important). The research problem influences the types of questions and the issues to be examined, and the approaches to data collection, analysis, and strategy.

The research design also contains clear objectives derived from research question(s), specifying the information sources from which data will be collected, the type of data, the design technique, the sampling methodology and procedures (Babbie and Mouton 2008). There should be clear justification regarding the research design based on the research question(s), aims and objectives. The researcher chose a questionnaire and interview research design because it best served to answer the question and the purpose of the study. The overarching research question looked at addressing how peace education can be used as a transformative strategy for the preschool community situated in gang affected areas. This research question was determined as appropriate towards seeking an in-depth understanding towards the capacity of preschool teachers as potential early childhood peace educators in youth gang prevention.

5.8.1 Qualitative Research Paradigm

Qualitative research is a broad term covering several methods. Qualitative research draws from interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, seeking to deeply understand a research subject rather than predict outcomes, as in the positivist paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). The term is often used

interchangeably to describe a researcher's relationship with the data (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Mertons 2005). This study uses the term 'social constructivism' (Creswell 2013).

Qualitative research also seeks to provide context to the phenomenon being studied in the social world and assume multiple meanings, co-create understandings between the researcher and participants and uses natural settings for its research procedures (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). The qualitative research process involves questions and procedures, data that is collected in the participants' natural setting, data analysis, which is inductively built from particulars to general themes, the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data and finally, writing a report on the findings. Qualitative research thus uses inductive data analysis to discover the meaning participants hold about a problem or issue by identifying patterns or themes. Open-ended questions gathered the information for grouping into codes, themes, categories, and larger dimensions. Qualitative research methods are typically used when little is known about the topic, this process allows the researcher to explore the meanings and interpretations of constructs in the observed phenomenon.

Therefore, research studies conducted within the qualitative paradigm, seek to explore and understand perspectives and the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem collaboratively and reflectively, through a collective inquiry and experimentation which is grounded in experience and social history (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). This study is grounded in qualitative paradigm. The researcher made use of qualitative research instruments (semi-structured, in-depth and focus group interviews) together with a quantitative research instrument (questionnaire), due to the nature of the study. According to Schwandt (2015), qualitative studies can and often do make use of quantitative data". The researcher used the data from the qualitative instruments to complement the results of the quantitative instrument and to verify that the data that had been collected by means of the questionnaire. The method whereby a combination of research methods is used to crosscheck findings (as is the case in this study) is referred to as triangulation (Blaxter *et al.* 2002: 84)

Interpretivism seeks to build knowledge from understanding an individual's unique viewpoints and the meaning attached to those viewpoints (Creswell and Poth 2017). Constructivism views knowledge as constructed, as people work to make sense of their experience. In whole, qualitative research values people's lived experiences and is inherently subjective and sensitive to the biases of both researchers and participants. That subjectivity, while considered a serious flaw from the positivist perspective, speaks to the core value of qualitative research and the interpretivist/constructivist paradigms. Qualitative research conducted thoughtfully is internally consistent, rigorous, and helps to answer important questions about people and their lives.

5.9 Making the Researcher's Philosophical Stance Known

When selecting and deciding about what methodology to use and to adopt, whilst also reporting on findings, researchers will need to consider their ontological and epistemological stance. Whichever philosophical stance they take, it is important to declare this and understand the implications of doing so about data collection and analysis.

5.9.1 Ontological Issues

The term ontology is used to designate the theory of being (Koshy 2010). Its mandate is the development of strategies which can illuminate the components of people's social reality (Blaikie 1993: 6 cited in Koshy 2010). Within action research, researchers would consider this reality as socially constructed and not external and independent. Meaningful construction occurs through the interpretations of a researcher's experiences and communication. The stories they tell will be based on subjective accounts from the people who live within their environment. The methods of data collection they use will be consistent with their ontological stance. Action researchers must ideally make their theoretical stance clear at the start.

5.9.2 Epistemological Issues

The term epistemology is used to designate the theory of knowledge, and it presents a view and justification for what can be regarded as knowledge – what can be known and the criteria that knowledge must satisfy in order to be called knowledge rather than beliefs (Blaikie 1993: 7, cited in Koshy 2010). For traditional researchers, knowledge is certain and can be discovered through scientific means. For an action researcher, the nature of knowledge and what constitutes knowledge are different. The type of data collected is more subjective where the experience and insights are of a unique and personal nature (Burrell and Morgan 1979). In any reporting of their research and claims to knowledge generation, action researchers need to acknowledge their epistemological stance.

5.10 Method of Data Collection

This section presents an overview of the research methods used for the gathering of empirical data for this study. The quality of data collection is also concerned with using complementary techniques to provide better insights. The use of diverse techniques in qualitative research also entails the need to legitimise what techniques are the most compelling for theoretical reasons on the grounds of internal consistency, and why they help to draw and verify conclusions. After a review of these different techniques, the researcher determined that questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews would be the preferred method of data collection techniques. Data from participants were collected evaluated and examined in an unbiased, neutral style setting (Creswell and Poth 2017).

5.10.1 Population

Participants selected for the study were preschool teachers and principals, all of whom lived and/or worked in a high-gang violence community on the Cape Flats. They were chosen to deepen and enhance the credibility of the analysis by adding information of their rich experiences (Patton 2015). To uncover the truth about an event or idea, the research must interview participants. The participating schools were informal, urban preschools and were not government funded or subsided.

5.10.2 Recruitment

Participants for the study were recruited through local community workers who facilitated access to the ECD Forums for each of the respective areas of Manenberg and Hanover Park. A letter of information was shared with the ECD Forum prior (see Appendix B). Contact was first established through emails sent to principals in surrounding areas on the Cape Flats. The invitation to participate was in the form of an official letter as well as verbal and written announcements via email.

Some principals indicated that gang violence was not a major problem in their area and recommended the areas that were more deserving of an intervention, such as Hanover Park. A representative (Miss Dixon) from the Hanover Park ECD Forum was initially contacted electronically via WhatsApp and indicated a strong interest in participating in the research. The researcher was invited to attend the ECD Forum meetings where she presented her research study. Members of the ECD Forums which included school principals were given research information letter, consent forms (Appendix C), advert to distribute the study (Appendix D) as well as the questionnaire at their respective schools (Appendix E).

Through listening to a radio interview with the organisation Learning in Reach, previously referred to in Chapter One, the researcher contacted the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation, Ms Leanne Reid, and shared information about the study and sought permission to access the group of teachers in their programme to recruit as participants. Permission was granted and the researcher was put in contact with programme coordinator and clinical social worker to facilitate field visits. The teachers who voluntarily participated were sampled for both the focus groups and the intervention phase of the study.

5.10.3 Participation Criteria

The primary participant selection criteria for inclusion of the sample were that teachers were:

- To be an experienced teacher, with at least two years of experience at a preschool geographically located in an area affected by ongoing gang violence on the Cape Flats.
- To be proficient in English.

Furthermore, the researcher selected three areas as they were geographically similar, struggling with high-gang violence, and shared cultural and linguistic characteristics. A total of nine preschools (Hanover Park and Lavender Hill) were eligible for participation with 37 participants who met these criteria.

5.10.4 Research Sample

Selection of this sample was done in consideration of appropriate representation of the population group. Manenberg was used as the pilot site for the study. The study also included preschool teachers from two other areas for a larger range of gang-affected areas on the Cape Flats and to encourage further diversity, namely, Hanover Park (17 participants) and Lavender Hill (24 participants). A combined total of 37 preschool teachers participated in the study. For the intervention phase of the study in Lavender Hill, 24 preschool teachers participated, including 2 principals. Despite the hierarchical distinction, they all had daily contact with pupils and their caregivers and played a significant role in the children's education.

5.10.5 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was used to include the teachers who were accessible to the researcher (Patton 2002). Participants gave informed consent to participate in this study. The sample population consisted of four males and 33 females from ages 20 to 60 years. In total, 37 participants completed the self-administered questionnaires collected across all three areas. In Lavender Hill, 25 teachers completed the questionnaires and participated in four focus group sessions. Two principals completed separate semi-structured interviews.

5.11 Instrument(s) for Data Collection

The empirical data collection methods employed for the study included, semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and questionnaire. After the pilot testing and all necessary modifications, the questionnaires were disseminated directly to the chosen sample for the study. 37 out of the 50 copies of the questionnaire given out were successfully completed and returned. The retrieval of the completed questionnaires took place over two months due to challenges with getting teachers to return the questionnaires within the agreed timeframe.

5.11.1 Rationale for Using a Questionnaire

Questionnaires are one of the most widely used social research instruments (Blaxter *et al.* 2002: 179 cited in Koshy 2010), especially when they are used to clarify the needs and reactions of a defined user group to the design and implementation of specific services or products to which that user group is

exposed. The participants who completed the questionnaire remained anonymous. Self-administered questionnaires (50) were handed out to principals and teachers in two areas on the Cape Flats with similar socio-demographic characteristics impacted by gang violence, namely, Hanover Park and Lavender Hill. The questionnaire response or return rate for the questionnaire was 37 out of 50 in total.

The intended design of the questions focused on the need to gather data specific to communities affected by high-gang violence and was important to probing how the preschool community is impacted by this phenomenon. The rationale for quantitative data was to ascertain the nature and frequency of exposure to and experience of gang violence by children and teachers from preschool communities on the Cape Flats. The questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and had two parts.

The first part of the questionnaire was based on questions which would be used to create a socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The second part used both closed- and open-ended questions to determine the respondents' experiences of gang violence. Open-ended questions were used because they gave the respondents the opportunity to answer in their own words thus providing a deeper understanding of the responses to the closed questions. The questionnaire was designed not as a diagnostic tool but to capture historical information.

To gain a full understanding of the experiences of preschool teachers in gang-affected areas and for plans of peace education skills intervention, the research questions were developed in the best possible fashion to obtain data that would benefit the outcome of the study. The quantitative questions were designed to gather information on gender, race, ethnicity, age, and years of teaching experience. Participants had the option to provide the name of the school where they worked. The qualitative questions used to collect data were the most appropriate to gain insight and understanding into complex topics as well as ways to validate data from these measures. Additionally, gaining teachers' perspectives and insights into their experiences of gang violence lent itself to gathering information on the teaching process in gang-affected environments.

5.11.2 Pilot Test of Questionnaire

A pilot study is considered a trial run of the data collection method, which is conducted with a smaller group of participants. It was decided that the pilot study would be conducted in order to bridge gaps, eliminate potential bias, and ensure reliability of, both, the data collection instrument (questionnaire), and the sample criteria (Delport and Fouche 2011; Delport and Strydom 2011). The pilot study was thus implemented by the purposive selection of four respondents that allowed for the data collection process to be tested. Other methods used such as random sampling used in quantitative methods do not produce as much relevant information as deliberate sampling (Maxwell *et al.* 2004; Patton 2015).

Pilot phase sought to determine if a ECD peace education intervention would be well received by preschools in communities exposed to gang-violence. Pilot interviews and questionnaires were conducted during July-September 2019 in Manenberg with a small group of ECD principals and teachers, representing four schools in the area. Manenberg was not the area where the actual intervention would be carried out. Whilst predominant feedback provided by this group was positive, the questionnaire was too lengthy, and some questions were found to be ambiguous. The researcher had to, therefore, modify the level of English used in the questionnaire and required some of the questions to be omitted or simplified. The questionnaire completion time was thus reduced from approximately 30 minutes to 10 -15 minutes.

The questionnaire required refining and restructuring according to the selected ecological orientation of the study. The restructuring was specifically related to the levels of the ecological perspective, thus allowing the researcher to gain clearer insight of the views of preschool teachers regarding their attitudes towards early childhood peace education for youth gang prevention, at the various level of the ecosystem. The pilot phase refinement of the questionnaire and interview guide enhanced the accuracy and relevance of the questions.

5.11.3 Phases of Data Collection

Data collection took place in three phases with each representing inquiries at different ecological levels. This phased set-up facilitated the process of building trust between the researcher and the community before conducting the highest volume of interviews, which were part of the third phase.

The first phase involved general socio-economic community mapping aimed at understanding the local experiences with gang violence and the resources available in the community. Sources included written demographic and from local authorities (City of Cape Town) and crime statistics. In the second phase, questionnaires were completed by preschool teachers in Hanover Park (13) and in Lavender Hill (24), This phase also included four focus group interviews.

In the third phase, qualitative interviews were used to gather detailed in-depth information from two principals and an anti-gang community activist. The interview is the main road to multiple realities (Stake 1995). Using the participant's own words can help the researcher to develop an insight of others' understanding of the environment that might include feelings, ideas, experiences, judgments, thoughts, and intentions. Stake (1995) suggested that qualitative researchers like multiple views of discovery when analysing data for the case.

5.11.3.1 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative data-gathering technique are an unstructured and direct technique used to create “categories from the data and then to analyse relationships between categories” while attending to how the “lived experience” of research participants can be understood (Charmaz 1990: 1162, cited in Dworkin 2012). According to (Rubin and Rubin 2005: 4) in an in-depth interview, the researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion, simultaneously leading the way with well-prepared and thought-through questions and following the interview through active, reflective listening (Brouneus 2011).

In peace research, in-depth interviews at grassroots levels endeavour to gain deeper understanding of processes, possibilities and challenges of peacebuilding and is often used in combination with other data gathering methods as it is rarely the sole source of data (Johnson 2002: 104 cited in Brouneus 2011). In-depth interviews provide unique and essential knowledge for peace research but is also a challenging methodology entailing reflection and responsibility on the part of the researcher – towards interviewees, the research community and oneself (Brouneus 2011).Three principals and three teachers from the six participating schools were interviewed so that the researcher could gain a clearer understanding of the meaning behind their personal stories and experiences of gang violence beyond the data collection.

5.11.3.2 Focus Groups

Focus group discussions were held after the questionnaires were collected and analysed before the action research intervention began. The term focus group is used to define qualitative research. A focus group is a formalised process of bringing a small group of people together for an inter active, informal and spontaneous discussion on a particular topic or concept (Krueger 2002). A focus group generally involves eight to 12 participants and can capture vast array of information. The focus groups timing can vary from one to three hours and is usually conducted in a congenial surrounding such as a hotel or specialist focus group research facility. Of the 24 principals and teachers from six participating preschools (unregistered) in Lavender Hill who completed the questionnaires, 22 (females) participated in the focus groups, including the three principals who were interviewed.

Focus Group No.	Date of Focus Group	Number of Participants	Gender
1	22 October 2019	6	F
2	23 October 2019	6	F
3	28 October 2019	4	F
4	29 October 2019	6	F

Table 5.1: Focus groups held in Lavender Hill with preschool teachers at their schools.

By encouraging the group members to talk at length about the topic, the moderator can gather vast amount of information on ideas, attitudes, feelings and experiences about a particular issue. Focus groups are usually constructed using similar participants to encourage positive discussion. The advantage of selecting participants from the same demographic groups is that it helps to ensure that group members feel at ease with each other. It is believed that people with similar characteristics are more likely to divulge their opinions in a group. However, in some cases a diverse group can also be selected to encourage a wider viewpoint relating to a concept or product.

The group of participants is guided by a leader of the focus group who is called moderator. The discussion (at the start) is led by the moderator who introduces the topic of discussion and attempts to get everyone to participate in an honest discussion and debate. The moderator maintains a certain degree of control over the discussion by directing it whenever the discussion moves too far from the research objectives set forth. The major goal of any focus group is to provide as much information as possible to the decision maker regarding the issue at hand. With a group of people involved, group dynamics becomes a very crucial issue in focus group discussions. The success of any focus group relies heavily on the overall group dynamics, willingness of members to engage in an interactive dialogue, and moderator's ability to keep the discussion on track. Focus group can help generate creative ideas, thoughts and opinions relating to a topic. They can highlight the underlying reasons for a specific phenomenon, allow participation and provide participant response in a direct manner and provide an interaction opportunity for participants and researcher.

While there are many advantages of focus groups, they also have disadvantages. The major weaknesses of focus groups are inherently similar to other qualitative research techniques. They include the limited generalisability of results to the target population, subjectivity (bias) of representation and interpretation, data reliability and validity and are costlier than in-depth interviews as they bring diverse groups of respondents together (Denzin and Lincoln 2013).

5.11.3.3 Focus Group Interviews

A series of four focus groups conducted with 24 purposively selected preschool principals and teachers from Lavender Hill who had completed the one-time self-reporting questionnaire. After obtaining agreement and consent from school principals, the study advert was sent to schools inviting participants to be part of the focus groups (Appendix D). The interviews took place at the school setting during suitable times for participants (during lunchtimes from 12h00 – 14h00) over a two-month period with a two-hour duration for each. Interview participants received a light meal and snacks at focus group sessions which were held during lunch time. The designated days and times to undertake the interviews were directed by the school principals.

For optimum use of interviewing time, the researcher developed an interview guide to keep the interview session focused on the topic and on specific insight factors (see Appendix F). Each participant took part voluntarily without promise of incentives and without detriment to their livelihoods. Participants were provided with the informed consent form prior to the interviews for personal review and were mutually reviewed on the interview day. Each participant gave their written consent to have the interviews audio recorded.

As recommended by Hall (2020: 43), participants were "encouraged to answer all interview questions as authentically, ethically and unbiased as possible. Confidentiality was assured. Study participants were also given the opportunity to ask clarifying questions as well as "present personal feelings to responses that represented the intent of each respective answer" (Hall 2020:43). I was fully bilingual in English and Afrikaans as were the participants. The interview schedules were developed with an emphasis on directing the discussion towards exploring teachers' perspectives and experiences of gang violence, their existing coping strategies and their needs as a preschool community in preventing youth gang violence.

The interviews were guided by a pre-determined list of open-ended questions (see Appendix E) and flexible interview protocol so as to respond to and build off of participants' in-the-moment responses. If participants who were interviewed in person, left during the duration of the study, any data provided by them up to that point would remain part of the study. Three principals were interviewed in person as well as a community activist who was not part of the school staff nor participated in the focus group sessions.

5.12 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of organising and structuring collected data in order to identify underlying meaning and patterns (de Vos *et al.* 2011). As a part of the data analysis strategy (computer software program was not used as part of the analytic strategy), the researcher embarked upon Tech's eight steps

to qualitative analysis of interview data (Creswell 2014). It is imperative that a review and a study of all interview transcripts occur. In the first stage of analysis, observations developed into preliminary descriptive and interpretive categories based on evidence that was drawn from transcribed data, the literature review, and the identified theoretical framework used to guide the research. Thereafter, the researcher reviewed all the transcriptions (transcribed verbatim in the original language used by the participants) from the interview process to gain a general understanding of the data and of the participants' responses in their entirety. The researcher then thoroughly reviewed each of the data transcriptions from the interview process individually to identify themes associated with perceptions and experiences of preschool teachers in gang-affected communities and their role in youth gang prevention.

The transcripts were checked against the audio recordings for accuracy. Then transcripts were analysed for the purpose of category construction. Constructing thematic categories from this process includes making comparisons between diverse types of emerging data (Creswell 2014). The researcher looked for themes and patterns in the answers given by the participants to find answers to the research questions. The data was then clustered together and abbreviated as preliminary codes. Transcripts were hand-coded to indicate information that was potentially relevant to the research questions. To ensure anonymity, numerical codes in transcript excerpts were used in this study.

A comprehensive process of thematic analysis was applied (Braun and Clarke 2006), with the main analytical focuses being on the teachers' perceptions of gang violence in the community, their experience with gang violence and their educational practices related to violence and peace. Themes addressed in participants' statements were identified and coded into categories. The identified themes were then broken down further into categories that allowed for in-depth understanding to be exhibited through the interpretation of data patterns and interpreted through diverse potential explanations (Marshall and Rossman 1995).

In simplified terms, the researcher employed a top-down approach, whereby the data was first reviewed in its entirety before being systematically deconstructed into smaller sections in the form of themes, sub-themes and categories that are expressed through data excerpts and literature control; this allowed for a structured and dense understanding, and interpretation of the experiences of preschool teachers in gang-violence areas.

In addition to the above, the researcher also found the tips recommended by Patton (2015) useful and incorporated them to strengthen the foundation for the qualitative analyses:

1. Begin the analysis during fieldwork: The researcher took notes of patterns and themes that began to develop during interviews.

2. Took inventory and organised the data: The researcher labelled, dated and ensured all interviews were accounted for.
3. Missing data: The researcher filled in the gaps by contacting interviewees and;
4. Protected the data by backing up all the data to and ensured that it was secured.
5. The researcher expressed her appreciation and thanks to the participants to create positive relationships.
6. The researcher affirmed the purpose of my study and analysis and created a clear understanding of the purpose of her study and the designs that framed her analysis.
7. She dedicated time for analysis and set a realistic schedule.
8. Clarified her analysis strategy: the theoretical tradition directed the organisation of the data. The study used a pragmatic theory and generic inquiry data analysis method, and the researcher reconnected with the theoretical and strategic framework regularly to guide the design and analysis.
9. The researcher was reflected and was reflexive. The monitoring of the thought process and decision-making was monitored to reduce biases, fear and blinders.
10. The researcher kept an analysis journal: documenting on thoughts, analysis, decisions, forks in the road, false starts and dead ends and breakthroughs helped with remembering.
11. Qualitative analysis was observed and documented even with the researcher own processes and analyses.

In the next stage of the data analysis, the underlying emerging themes were determined by examining the groupings of comments that were made by the respondents. Themes were discussed with an assistant until consensus was established and were subsequently checked for consistency, distinctiveness and their validity in relation to the original dataset. Analysis of the interview data was directed at an improved understanding of the practical dilemmas involved in peace education in violent contexts and the opportunities for resistance to gang violence.

The final stage examined themes from all interviews across specific groupings, to delineate predominant themes contained in the data that needed addressing in the overall analysis process. These principal themes then served as answers to the research questions and form the basis for writing up the data (McCracken 1988).

The resultant data was analysed through a qualitative approach using interpretive, inductive approaches. The data analysed categories, themes, and patterns (thematic analysis) in order to promote in-depth interpretations of the participants' narrative. Interpretations of the participants' narratives were analysed in reference to the literature study to support correlations and appropriate deductions of the identified themes, subthemes, and related categories.

5.12.1 The Quality in Data Analysis

Data analysis is neither a discussion on standardisation and formalism, nor on methodological particularism (Gobo 2005). Instead, going beyond current methodological accounts by putting a strong emphasis on the quality of data collection and analysis techniques can lead to better theorising with qualitative data. Specific data analysis procedures for each strand as well as how the two strands are integrated is described. Analysis of each strand discusses the analysis of reliability or consistency and a review of assumptions and trustworthiness.

5.12.2 Empirical Triangulation

Triangulation is a process in which a variety of data sources cross-check the data. This technique is designed to examine and re-examine the data collected throughout a research study. Another strategy is to present discrepant data, when evident. Triangulation helped support the accuracy of the interpretations. Yin (2009) emphasised the importance of using varied sources to corroborate the findings of a study. Denzin and Lincoln (2011: 511, cited in Fusch *et al.* 2018) stated, “qualitative research scholars have an obligation to change the world [to make] a positive difference. We are challenged to confront the facts of injustice… and hence open to change and transformation”. The process of triangulation also includes a combination of other qualitative research methods which serve to confirm the validity of the research. Denzin 1989 (cited in Fusch *et al.* 2018) noted that triangulation involves the use of multiple external data collection methods, concerning the same events, and that it may be enhanced by multiple external analysis methods. Triangulation is one method by which the researcher analyses data and then presents the results to others to understand the experience of a common phenomenon.

Hall (2020:44) states that the qualitative researcher is expected to “draw upon at least two sources of evidence, if not more, to seek convergence and corroboration from using different data sources and methods…such sources include interviews, participants, or non-participant observations, and physical artifacts”. Triangulating data is a useful strategy in qualitative research as it attempts to provide "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Eisner 1991: 110 cited in Hall 2020: 44). Since triangulation uses multiple sources or data, it protects the researcher against possible accusations that a study's findings are based on a “single method, a single source, or an individual investigator's bias (Patton 1990 cited in Hall 2020: 44). Using triangulation allows for multiple ways to examine the identical phenomenon. Researchers must investigate different facts and provide comprehensive explanation in the analysis to guarantee research bias does not hinder or change views of the data and any insight offered (Hall 2020).

According to Hall (2020) member checking was a useful technique for exploring accuracy and allowing participants to analyse the data collected from the interview transcriptions. Hatch (2002 cited in Hall 2020:71) stated that the "process of member checking allows for all participants to provide feedback on the interview transcriptions and researcher interpretations". This technique is designed to examine and re-examine the data collected throughout the research study. In this way, participants can check that the data and results resonate with their experiences. Another strategy is to present discrepant data, when evident. Triangulation helped support the accuracy of the interpretations. Member checking and triangulation thus provides an opportunity to evaluate the method by which validity is established for the research questions used in the study. Yin (2009) found that the use of several sources enhances the credibility of the study. Hall (2020) views the method of member checking and triangulation as providing support of the research questions, which is established through the data collection process. This is where the feelings and perspectives of [preschool teachers] were expressed regarding the variables that impact the safety [of children from gang violence. The literature reviewed also confirmed the factors identified by teachers.

5.13 Credibility

According to Creswell (2003:195), researchers must take the necessary steps "to check for accuracy and credibility of their findings". Several strategies are useful to promote the study's validity. These strategies include triangulation, bracketing, detailed description, the inclusion of discrepant data, member checking, and peer-debriefing. Member checking and triangulation thus provides an opportunity to evaluate the method by which validity is established for the research questions used in the study.

5.14 Validity

Validity traditionally views the degree to which an instrument or test accurately measures what it intended to measure, or to the extent to which the measure is free of systematic error. Validity requires reliability, but the reverse is not true (Creswell 2008). Validity is the strength of the conclusion reached. Validity is not known to be a companion of reliability and establishing validity does not necessarily mean that reliability has been established. Examining the stability or consistency of responses received plays a significant role in invalidity. The researcher is responsible for detailing steps within their own studies to check for the accuracy and credibility of their findings (Creswell 2008).

Instrumental validity is measured by data from interviews, surveys, and focus groups. For example, validation of this data came from using member checking or having the participants read the transcript of the collected data to ensure it is correct. Yin (2009) found that the use of several sources enhances the credibility of the study. In this study, credibility was established through the data collection process

in which preschool teachers shared their feelings and perspectives on how gang violence impacts the safety of children in the community. By preschool teachers discussing options of how to address they identified, this helped to further establish validation.

5.15 Reliability

In practice, reliability relates to the consistency or stability of a measure internally from one use to the next. Reliability measures the consistency of data derived from the instrument of choice used to gather the data. If reliability is to be evaluated, internal consistency with regards to responses should be consistent across constructs (Creswell 2003). Hall (2020:46) points out, albeit in a limited way, "qualitative researchers can use reliability to check for regular patterns of theme development" and that "this process enables the researcher to isolate and identify data that is similar". On completion of the research, any bias can be set aside. In this study, the evaluation and analysis processes were completed objectively to preserve the validity and reliability of the action research study.

All action research should involve action. The action research component of the study was planned in collaboration with the participants in the study (preschool teachers). researchers who use qualitative research approaches such as action research, often will include participants concerning the decision of what action to take. In this study, the initial decision was taken to have a peace education skills training intervention for the preschool teachers with the following goals:

1) To implement a classroom-based peace education programme designed to assist preschool teachers in promoting a culture of peace in the classroom.

2) To increase preschool children's peaceful problem-solving behaviours and play.

3) To determine if and how the programme increases preschool children's awareness and understanding of peace.

However, due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown restrictions, the intervention strategy had to be re-planned. The collective decision was made to develop a peace skills training manual for teachers with content and pedagogy that was relevant to their context and the children.

5.16 Ethical considerations

For this action research study, Ethical Clearance approval from the Durban University of Technology was obtained prior to implementing this study. (Appendix A).

5.16.1 Avoidance of harm

Babbie and Mouton (2008:522) states that it is the "responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the research did not harm by considering if the study would be do any potential emotional, social or physical harm to participants or anyone else in the study". Children were not included as part of the study given their age and the challenges of avoiding any harm to the children. However, since this study focused on ECD teachers and children in high-gang-afflicted communities, the analysis indirectly related to children. To safeguard the rights and protect teachers and children, the researcher ensured the privacy and confidentiality of data received throughout and after the conclusion of the study.

The identities of all the participants and the schools they represented have not been revealed. Given the qualitative nature of the study, and the subject matter, it was understood that the information shared might be traumatic for some participants who experience gang violence daily. Therefore, in order to mitigate any potential harm, the researcher worked with a group of teachers who were receiving professional trauma counselling services from the NGO, Learning in Reach, in Lavender Hill.

5.16.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is "the individual's ability to make decisions based on complete awareness of the risks and benefits that may arise from such participation" (Gomez 2011:210). Informed consent was obtained by ensuring that participants in the research study have the right to make a free and voluntary decision to participate. informed consent. Therefore, the researcher presented verbal consent at the start of each interview as well as administered consent forms (Appendix C) which were signed by all participants prior to their participation in interviews and focus group sessions.

5.16.3 Voluntary Participation

Creswell (2014:137) recommends that the researcher reveal their identity, provide the purpose of the research study, the intention of data collection to support the study and the method by which it was to be done and presented. The researcher's identity was revealed as a PhD research student from the Durban University of Technology (Appendix D), including verbally at the start of interviews and focus group sessions. For transparency, the researcher ensured that participants in the study were not mislead, deceived or misinformed about the research process (Appendix B). Participants were not pressured to participate or offered any financial rewards to participate in the study, except for a providing a light snack during the focus group sessions which were held during lunch period.

5.16.4 Privacy and confidentiality

Paoletti, Tomas and Menendez (2003:22 in Butland 2023) refers to confidentiality as "the nondisclosure of information that might specifically harm informants". For this study, the researcher audio recorded

(with prior permission from participants) interview sessions which were then transcribed verbatim using the Microsoft word application. Codes were created to provide privacy of participants and ECD Centres who participated in the study. Privacy also refers to the space in which the interview was conducted (Paoletti, Tomas and Menendez, 2003:22 in Butland 2023). During initial telephone conversations with principals, it was made clear that the only practical time to meet with teachers would be during lunch hour at their place of work. Principals arranged a private space ahead of time for the researcher to hold interview and focus group sessions without disruptions.

5.17 Study limitations

As all research has limitations, it follows that the current study was not without limitations. The potential limitations that may have affected the study's findings are detailed below. Firstly, any conclusions that might be drawn from these results should take into consideration the dominance of female participants in the sample. Furthermore, the intervention phase of the study was planned for 2020. With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown, it dictated that the intervention could not be done as originally planned. The extended lockdown of schools meant that the intervention had to be further postponed. When it was eventually possible to meet with principal facilitator for the group of teachers, over the extensive length of time that had passed, many of the schools had not survived the economic impact of the pandemic and were forced too permanently close. This is described in the next chapters.

One of the limitations of all phenomenological qualitative research, is the copious amount of data that must be analysed (Creswell 2014; Patton 2002), and the generally small sample sizes that the data is collected from cannot always be generalised (Maxwell *et al.* 2004; Patton 2002). Data via questionnaires was collected in three gang-violence communities on the Cape Flats to overcome this limitation.

Qualitative research is subjective and therefore listening to and hearing teachers express their feelings about how the trauma of working with children and their own gang victimisations affected them, this may have elicited differing interpretations by others. The participants in the intervention phase (implementing the peace skill manual described in Chapter Seven) were few; four teachers were able to provide feedback. A larger group of participants may have produced more feedback on the viability of implementing a peace skills programme, the effectiveness of implementing such a programme and improving the manual. The impact of COVID-19 included the lengthy closure of schools, the economic hardships it created in the community, and consequently a reduced number of participants in the action research phase of the study.

5.18 Summary of chapter

This chapter gave the reader an overview of what is entailed in carrying out action research and the purposes of carrying out action research projects. The presentation of models and definitions of action research expanded on the experience and steps involved and typically adopted by researchers. A salient feature of action research is its cyclical structure, and this was highlighted by the diagrammatic forms. This chapter also highlighted the different methodologies implemented in the study to select the location and participants, the data collection instruments and data analysis techniques. Once ethical clearance was obtained (Appendix A), the researcher established rapport with participants, ensured that they were comfortable with the process and administered the interviews. Questionnaires were used to elicit the perceptions and experiences (direct and vicarious) as well as protection strategies teachers used to keep themselves and children safe from gang violence. Semi-structured interviews were audio recorded with the consent of participants and where all conducted in English. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to probe for more robust data which provided a deeper understanding of their perspectives, experiences by teachers themselves, first-hand knowledge and interpretation of gangs in their community. This added to the depth of the study as well as increased the validity and credibility of the study as were discussed.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the key findings of the empirical data collected in the study from the perspective of preschool teachers who are exposed to high-gang-violence in the suburb of Lavender Hill on the Cape Flats in Cape Town.

Chapter Six: Findings and Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to present the key findings of the collected empirical data of the study, which sought to determine the narratives of a group of educators teaching at preschools in high-gang violence affected communities on the Cape Flats in Cape Town. Focusing on the experiences and effects of gang violence on the preschool population on teachers and children, the study hoped to provide deeper insight and rich information from personal narratives regarding the participants' experiences of gang violence and their ability to promote peace education in such contexts. Data for this study was collected over a two-and-a-half-year period (from 2019 to 2021) among preschool teachers in two gang-affected communities on the on the Cape Flats, in Cape Town, namely, Hanover Park and Lavender Hill.

The chapter is structured to first present a summary of the key findings of the study. This section of the chapter briefly reviews the participants' responses, data collection obtained from questionnaire responses, focus group sessions, semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers and an anti-gang community activist. Secondly, thematic analysis was used to extract main themes and sub-themes, which are then presented according to the identified themes in the discussion of the research questions section. Each research question was examined against the emerging study data from the current study, and where applicable, existing literature was linked to the research outcomes.

The limitations of the study are acknowledged and described. The implications of the study section identified audiences who may find the current research relevant and reports the potential impact of the study on those audiences. This chapter also includes suggestions for future research, which identified potential research study areas which may extend or enhance the current study. The chapter is then concluded with a summary of the contents of the chapter.

As previously stated, the first focus in the study's aim was to provide knowledge about how gang violence affects preschool teachers' experiences of gang violence. The second was to develop and test strategies to reduce harm to children within the community. The overall aim was to be achieved by four objectives:

- to explore how teachers, parents and other caregivers in gang areas perceive gang violence;
- to examine existing strategies of teachers to navigate to-and-from school during gang violence; and

- to use the knowledge gained to increase teachers' capacities to deal with the impact of gang violence through a peace education intervention, and
- to evaluate the intervention programme.

The study's objectives included the co-design, implementation and evaluation of a peace education intervention programme with teachers at preschools in gang-affected communities. This chapter is a presentation of the empirical data collected, and Chapter Seven is a discussion on the intervention programme and its evaluation.

6.2. Discussion of the Research Questions and Key Findings

From the above aim and objectives, the overarching question of the study was:

- How can peace education be used as a transformative strategy for the preschool community situated in gang-affected areas?

As mentioned before, it can be argued that in such contexts a very different understanding of the transformative power of peace education emerges, therefore a series of secondary research questions are established:

- How does gang violence exposure and experiences affect young children?
- What strategies do teachers utilise to protect children and themselves?
- What are teachers' conceptualisations of peace education and the challenges for early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas?
- In what way can peace education interventions in preschool settings be utilised to increase capacities to deal with violence?

The research questions used to guide the study was derived from the problem statement, interviews and information gathered from the literature review. I concluded that the research questions were valid as the means to explore the experiences of preschool teachers and the strategies they used to cope with gang violence. However, these questions also revealed the need to address the teacher's histories of their actual experiences of gang victimisation and secondary trauma. Teachers in the Lavender Hill group were in a trauma counselling system offered by a local non-governmental organisation, Learning in Reach, operating in the area. They related stories the children in their care had shared about what they see and hear about gangs and violence in their homes and community.

Little attention has been given to the subjectivities of teachers (Kirschner 2015). For instance, little substantial recognition has been given to how teachers themselves are affected by and self-assess their experience of peace education; how teachers' own conceptions, priorities, worldviews, behaviours and practices may change, positively or negatively, throughout the course of their education engagement

nor what effect these shifts may have on the classroom experience. The questionnaire was used to elicit information about the teachers' perceptions and experiences of gang violence in their community, personal experiences of gang violence, protection strategies used for children and themselves and what support systems were needed to help children affected by gang violence in the community. Based on the responses from the questionnaire, five further questions were developed for discussion in the focus group sessions. They are listed in Appendix F.

Four major themes were then identified from the data collected in the questionnaires, interviews and focus group sessions. Subsequently, thematic analysis was used to extract main themes and sub-themes and were presented according to the identified themes listed in Table 3.

6.2.1 Demographics

Demographic-related questions were asked in the questionnaire to assess the general background of participants. The demography factors identified for all participants across all study areas were age, gender, and race. The data indicated that:

- Thirty-three (33) participants identified themselves as female and four participants as male.
- Fourteen (14) participants were aged between 21-34 years, eighteen (18) between 35-54 years and 5 were over 55 years of age.
- The average teaching experience for all thirty-seven (37) participants at schools in the gang-affected area of Hanover Park and Lavender Hill was 9.9 years.
- The average teaching experience for the Lavender Hill group was 9.1 years.
- All participants identifying as coloured.

The majority of the participants had lived in the same community as the schools where they taught for more than three years. Since perceived race is still a relevant factor in the life experiences of South Africans, participants' racial category was included in the study.

Participant No.	Race	Gender	Area	Position at school	Years of teaching experience at school in gang-affected area
Participant 1	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	12 years
Participant 2	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	34 years
Participant 3	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	11 years
Participant 4	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	14 years
Participant 5	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	4 years
Participant 6	Coloured	M	Hanover Park	Teacher	26 years
Participant 7	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	5 years
Participant 8	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	8 years
Participant 9	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	10 years
Participant 10	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	10 years
Participant 11	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	5 years
Participant 12	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	4 years
Participant 13	Coloured	F	Hanover Park	Teacher	5 years
Participant 14	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	6 years
Participant 15	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	5 years
Participant 16	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	4 years
Participant 17	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	23 years
Participant 18	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Principal	4 years
Participant 19	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	4 years
Participant 20	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	3 years
Participant 21	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	13 years
Participant 22	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	3 years
Participant 23	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Principal	19 years
Participant 24	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	4 years
Participant 25	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	4 years
Participant 26	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	8 years
Participant 27	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	3 years
Participant 28	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	3 years
Participant 29	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	3 years
Participant 30	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	17 years
Participant 31	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	18 years
Participant 32	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	5 years
Participant 33	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	5 years
Participant 34	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Principal	25 years
Participant 35	Coloured	M	Lavender Hill	Driver	25 years
Participant 36	Coloured	F	Lavender Hill	Teacher	4 years
Participant 37	Coloured	M	Lavender Hill	Teacher	10 years

Table 6.1: Demographic Profile of Research Study

Table 6.1 above provides a representation of the participants' demographics at the informal preschools in Hanover Park and Lavender Hill (shaded area) on the Cape Flats. Both groups completed questionnaires (37 in total). Only Lavender Hill teachers (22 females) participated in focus groups. The intervention was done in Lavender Hill. It can be noted that participants render services to children under the age of 5 who are exposed to gang violence in the area.

Bein (2009:356 cited in Hammer, 2011) highlights the importance of providing a detailed description of the characteristics in a study. A thorough description provides an understanding of the sample being studied, which in this study, was preschool teachers in gang affected areas on the Cape Flats. Including demographic information also prevents researchers assuming an "absolutist" stance. Such a stance

means that the researcher assumes that the phenomenon under investigation is the same, regardless of culture, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status (Hammer 2011). To reduce this assumptive risk, by including demographic information, allows the researcher to move from an absolutism stance to one of universalism in which psychological processes manifest differently, depending on the aforementioned factor.

Furthermore, a thorough description of participants allows researchers to determine to whom research findings generalise and allows for comparison to be made across studies that are being replicated, providing information needed for research syntheses and secondary data analyses (Bein 2009 cited in Hammer 2011). As a result of these analyses, gaps in existing bodies of research can be identified as well as universals and variations that occur within and between populations (Hammer 2011).

6.2.2 Gang violence

The majority of teachers reported that gang violence happened almost every day, with gun shots heard near schools weekly. Almost all the teachers reported having some experience with gang violence over the past three years. Teachers reported that more than ten children in school had witnessed gang violence, three had been victims and fifteen had a caregiver injured or killed in gang violence in the past year, that is, prior to the start of the field work phase of the study in 2019.

6.3 Themes

In Table 6.2 below, the identified themes and sub-themes are presented, followed by a discussion of each theme.

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: Fear and violence	▪ Frequency and unpredictability of gang shootings ▪ Restriction of movement ▪ Disruption of learning
Theme 2: Poverty, unemployment and single motherhood	
Theme 3: Trauma due to gang violence	▪ Teachers' accounts of effects of gang-violence exposure on children in classroom ▪ Children's violent/aggressive play and storytelling themes ▪ What teachers hear about gang violence from children ▪ Teachers' personal histories of gang victimisation ▪ Teacher secondary trauma
Theme 4: Strategies	▪ Lack of formal danger management training ▪ Existing strategies ▪ Classroom strategies ▪ Independent strategies ▪ Collective strategies

Table 6.2: Themes and sub-themes

6.3.1 Theme One: Fear and Violence

Research question one in the questionnaire explored teachers' perceptions and experiences of gang violence in the community. In general, the majority of preschool teachers described their environment as being poor, dangerous, unsafe, gun-and-drug-ridden, extremely unpredictable because of gang conflicts and akin to a warzone.

Respondents painted a dire picture of the area:

- Drug-and-gang-infested and a "warzone" (Respondent Questionnaire (Q) 33),
- gang zone (Respondent Q26).
- it is very violent (Q12)
- the area is exposed to a lot of gang violence and children are often affected by it daily. (Respondent Q36)
- the area is unsafe, and [that] children are exposed to selling of drugs, alcohol and prostitution. (Respondent Q34)

Preschool teachers also described what it was like to teach in the area. One respondent described the area as being:

- a very unsafe place to teach the children, the area where I teach, is full of gangsterism and full of violence. I fear walking to the shop or standing outside for too long. (Respondent Q1)

The majority of participants revealed that they live in a chronic state of fear, anxiety and hypervigilance. This is consistent with findings in gang-ridden communities in El Salvador (Rojas-Flores 2015) where parents reported chronic psychological distress resulting from community violence exposure. Findings in the current study support those of Rojas-Flores (2013) that daily routines are severely restricted due to gang violence.

- Sometimes I see how these gangsters are running past you with their guns in their hands. (Respondent Q8).

Chapter Two in the thesis provides a comprehensive discussion on communities and gangs on the Cape Flats as well as the symbiotic relationship that exists between them (Kinnes 2017). Teachers articulated their appreciation of the embeddedness of gangs in their communities. It was clear from the teachers' descriptions of the embeddedness of gangsterism in their communities, that their environments presented them with many possibilities to encounter gangsters. These views expressed by teachers are supported by Das, *et al.* (2000: 2 cited in van Dijk, de Haan and de Winter 2020) who argue that

“violence produces intricate social dynamics, in particular when perpetrators, victims and witnesses are all embedded in the same social space”.

The views of teachers in the study also confirm the literature on the extent and nature of gangs and gangsterism on the Cape Flats. Youth gangsterism, and the prevention thereof, has been identified as a foremost priority in the Western Cape (Kinnes 2017; Ramaphosa 2019; Wollberg 2020).

6.3.1.1 Site visit

On the first visit to the research site in Lavender Hill, accompanied by my supervisor and the project coordinator of Learning in Reach organisation, she pointed out that the house directly opposite the preschool belonged to a gang leader. She related the story of how two weeks prior to our visit, while doing her flyer drop to the school, a man standing five feet away from her was shot dead. She explained how that day, she ran for her life. On another occasion, as she and the Director were in the parking area of the school, they noticed that the cars in the street were reversing and then shots were fired as men came out and ran with guns down the road. The coordinator also pointed out that the men standing around in the streets and on corners, were in fact lookouts for rival gangs and were paid about R150 per week by gang bosses. Her hypervigilance throughout our interaction was a bit unsettling, but she reassured the researcher that she can read the atmosphere well and would know if there was any imminent danger.

As our conversation continued, she elaborated on how her twenty-three-year-old son had been shot seven times and shot in the head by gangsters. He was not gang-involved but had apparently been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Despite being severely injured, her son has miraculously survived. Yet, it was visibly obvious that she was still affected by this traumatic experience.

She added further added that “people were dying like flies”. Medics fear entering the area due to gang violence and the risk their lives. This comment came as little surprise, as this was common experience of emergency responders and substantiated as a well-established fact through widely publicised media reports. Emergency responders, due to the high levels of gang violence in areas on the Cape Flats, are not able to provide medical services to the community, thereby denying many innocent community members the right to emergency medical assistance. Emergency responders come under attack, are deliberately targeted by criminals, and are hijacked for the medical equipment and supplies which are sold for- and/or used in the manufacturing of drugs.

6.3.1.2 Drug trafficking

Subthemes that emerged around this research question include gang drug trafficking and the availability of guns, unpredictability of gang shootings, restriction of movement and the disruption of learning. The

overwhelming majority of the teachers expressed concern for the level of child exposure to the selling of drugs, alcohol and guns in the community and perceived these as the main driving force behind the deadly gang violence that was a daily occurrence. Participants indicated these potential risk factors for youth gangsterism on a macro-level, which in this study, refers to the larger national and social organisations of society (Bronfenbrenner 1974; Germain and Gitterman 1976; Hepworth *et al.* 2013), such as community exposure to gangsterism, poverty and unemployment and the lack of government service responses.

Literature confirms that significant community factors such as living in urban poor, socially disorganised and violent neighbourhoods, where resources are scarce, increases youth participation in gangs (Merrin *et al.* 2015). In impoverished communities, high gang prevalence and crime rates tend to result in increased accessibility to firearms and weapons, and a high availability of drugs which encourage youth to become involved in criminal activity (Pyrooz *et al.* 2010). The above narrative indicates an agreement by teachers about the drivers of youth gang involvement and support the reviewed literature. Respondents stated that:

> Regarding gang violence in our community, it is all drug related (Respondent Q37).

Comments on how drugs are exploited as a form of escapism include,

> because of drug selling in the community and poverty some people are using drugs to forget about their problems they are facing daily. (Respondent Q21)

> Gangs are their [community] government. Gangs have opened the gates of demise for our people. They are seen as heroes. Because of poverty factors, the people don't see gangs as their demise (Community activist).

These comments are supported by the literature that highlights the problem of high levels of poverty in these communities (Pinnock 2016; Pinnock 2019), and that gangs form within the context of relative poverty (MacMaster 2007; Wijnberg and Green 2014; Pinnock 2015). Furthermore, it supports the notion that poverty generates traumatic events like community violence **(**Abraham-Cook 2012) and that community violence and poverty are important areas of research (Bronfenbrenner 1986).

6.3.1.3 Frequency and Unpredictability of Gang Shootings

The resultant turf wars between rival gangs and confrontations with the police create an atmosphere of unpredictability, violence, mayhem and are a constant threat that limits the freedom of movement for both teachers and children. Many participants described living under these conditions as fearful. Teachers acknowledged that daily, they did not know whether they would make it to work and back home, because of the sudden and unpredictable nature of gang shootings:

> Gang violence starts at any time, it has no day or time (Respondent Q7).
>
> You are scared to walk out the door because you don't know when they [gangs] are going to shoot. (Respondent Q9)

These comments regarding the unpredictability and indiscriminate shootings by gangs in El Salvador are endorsed by participants in the study by Rojas-Flores (2013) who reported elderly people and children being killed. Perlman's (2010 cited in van Dijk, de Haan and de Winter 2020: 2) ethnographic study of the impact of community violence in the favelas of Brazil confirms how gang violence erodes community life as "the upsurge of gang violence, incurred by the drug trade, community cohesion has hampered, decreased social interaction, weaker trust in neighbours and reduced membership of community organisations".

These perceptions and experiences of gang violence in the community identified in the questionnaire, were corroborated in the focus group sessions. The first question presented to the focus groups probed their feelings about gang violence in the community and participants were asked to share their immediate thoughts about gang violence. It became readily apparent that participants shared collective perceptions and experiences. The participants (all female) discussed the fear that existed in the community as a result of gang shootings, death and destruction. This component of the discussion was deemed pervasive and identified as a central theme in all four focus groups.

> "I feel afraid to go to the shop because they shoot. We as people are in the middle, they [gangs] don't care who they shoot",

lamented focus group one participant. Another participant in focus group one stated that,

> "People cannot walk freely in the community because different gangs live in different parts of area and knew who lived in their area."

One teacher explained that gangs owned the streets, "

> Where I stay, there are gangsters. They don't even live there but act like they own the road and shoot" (Focus group 1 participant).

Similarly, a participant from focus group four responded,

"A person does not know how to walk in another place because you don't feel safe, not even in your own house do you feel safe because the gangsters live in your road and one can expect anything".

A participant in focus group four adds,

> "The crossfire when they shoot. They [gangs] do not care if you're walking with your children, they just shoot, but innocent people get shot".

In contexts where gangs control communities, they dictate how much access and freedom local inhabitants have and "people have to adjust their behaviour to coexist with the gangs" (Bueno 2022:43).

Many participants expressed the view that gangsters often had fathers who were gangsters, so it became a vicious cycle and that older children (13- to 15-year-olds) were being used by gangs to shoot:

> "They [gangs] don't care if you see them walking with a gun. Children walk openly with guns" (Focus group 3 participant).

Inter-generational family gang membership plays a key role in the perpetuation of gang violence and is supported in the literature on gangs (Van der Spuy 2016). Teachers often know many of the gang members because they were once young learners in their class. Many have therefore grown up in front of the teachers and had fathers and older siblings who were gang members and are now gang members themselves. These reports by teachers that many of the parents, siblings and other family members are involved in gangs in the area under study, attests to what Van Der Spuy (2016) describes as the multigenerational existence of gangs on the Cape Flats.

Criminal histories within families are also considered a contributing factor in the development of criminal behaviour in youth (Pinnock 2016). When there is a relative in the home who is incarcerated, it increases the risk associated with youth (in the household) also joining a gang (Merrin *et al.* 2020). The data and the literature indicate that gangs use dangerous weaponry in their warfare (Standing 2005: 2) and that many learners feel unsafe at school (Ramsey *et al.* 2005: 3). These challenges deprive the families and individuals of crucial development opportunities and the improvement of their poor circumstances (Pinnock 2016; Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo 2021).

The responses to this question illustrate that preschool teachers and principals were well informed and had strong opinions about gang violence in the community. This also indicates that the perceptions and experiences of preschool teachers located in these communities are valid and need to be critically addressed. One respondent summed it up perfectly, "Every day you are a victim, you just don't know when you are next" (Respondent Q9). These findings concur with the findings in El Salvador where parents experienced a chronic sense of anticipatory anxiety due to the fear of (them or their children) being the next victim (Rojas-Flores 2015).

6.3.1.4 Restriction of Freedom of Movement

Respondents reported that children are unable to play outside due to the inherent danger of gang shootings in the area. The level of gang violence in the area, restricted the children's freedom of movement. This meant that the children's ability to freely play in open spaces was limited due to gang shootings. Teachers felt strongly on this issue as they understood the importance of the need for children to feel safe, at school, in the streets and in their backyards at home. Literature explains how gang

territorial activities may infringe on the freedom of movement of learners and children (Pinnock 1997:42).

The impact of gang violence on the freedom of movement of children both on the streets and in the home, were captured by respondents' following expressions:

> "The children live in areas where the [gang]shooting is out of control (Focus group 4 participant).

Respondent Q16 explains,

> "We live in a community where they [children] can't even play in the own [back]yard because it is too dangerous."

Another participant, Respondent Q25 shares how this restriction of movement takes place even in private residences,

> "children can't even play in their own backyards because it is so dangerous".

One respondent summed it up simply,

> "It is horrible! There are no words to describe it" (Respondent Q21).

Community facilities and resources in the community are also often vandalised or destroyed by gangs. Many participants in focus group two session expressed that:

> There are no safe spaces for children to play in the community. The City of Cape Town erected a fully equipped play park with artificial grass in the community. We [teachers] tried walking with the children to the park because transport was not available but due to gang shootings we had to stop. The park was also destroyed, burned to its foundations (Focus group 2 participant).

> "There are no facilities or resources because you can have nothing here. They [gangs] will break it" (Focus group 2 participant).

As a result,

> "teachers have to plan outings outside of the area sometimes just to allow them to be children for a moment" (Focus group 2 participant).

Teachers explained how they often must arrange for activities for children outside of their community because of gang violence so that the children are able to have "normal" learning and play experiences. This is consistent with the Jarrett's (1997a) study on African American families in high-risk communities in the USA where some caregivers engaged in resource-seeking resources that taught children concrete skills while others sought resources outside their neighbourhoods and sending their children to play in "nicer" neighbourhoods.

6.3.1.5 Gang Violence Disrupts Learning

Pinnock (1994) explains that gangs are extremely territorial and fiercely protect their territory. When rival gangs enter their territory and threaten to steal their customers or victims on whom they prey, it usually results in a full-out gang warfare. The fighting often spills over onto school grounds, causing fear and disruption to the school day (Pinnock 1997: 44). Teachers reported that gang conflicts often mean that children either come to school late or stay at home and lose entire school day or days. Gang violence often disrupts teaching, sometimes spontaneously and other times with some notice that allows the ability to take evasive action.

Teachers described how gang violence disrupted children's learning:

> "There are children who stay far from school and if they [gangs] are shooting, the children cannot come to school" (Respondent Q5).

Another respondent highlights how gang activity often negatively interacts with daily life,

> "When the children come home from the school that is the time, they [gang member] are running with guns in hand - some of the children run back to the school" (Respondent Q35).

The impact of not being able to attend school means children lose more than a day's lesson, they also lose a vital meal as many preschools in disadvantaged communities are beneficiaries of food schemes.

> "Some days children come late, or they stay home due to the [gang] violence and so they miss out on a day's education and a plate of nutritional food" (Respondent Q21).

These experiences from the teachers support evidence from literature that gangsterism deprives learners and teachers of a safe environment conducive for learning. Further, the data illustrates, how this directly violates one of the most basic human needs for safety, according to Maslow's (1943) theory, which suggests that individuals have the following basic hierarchical needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. This data illustrates that gangsterism disrupts learning. Teachers indicated that gang violence had an adverse effect on school attendance as children either came late, did not attend school at all or parents had to fetch children from school during gang fights. On several occasions, schools have been forced to close early due to gang conflicts, resulting in the cancellation of the school programme for the day.

6.3.1.6 School environments and safety

Literature explains the importance of schools in promoting a positive school climate (O'Donnell 2011; Yiu 2021). Evidence in the literature is put forward for moderating the role schools play and how crucial it is for a child's development and socialisation (O'Donnell 2011) and that schools should provide children with positive and supportive bonds in a safe environment, as these bonds are a strong predictor

of gang involvement (Yiu 2021 cited in Banuelos 2021). The reports of the teachers in this study illustrated how the school climate can act as a buffering role, as noted by O'Donnell (2011) among youth witnessing community violence and victimisation. The moderating factors of school and family were found to decrease the effects of gang violence on children in Cape Town, especially psychological stress (Shields *et al.* 2009). Merrin *et al.* (2020) found that strong social bonds as a protective factor reduced youth gang involvement by 60 percent. Schools located in low socio-economic communities should create a strong school-home-community linkage to promote stronger relationship with children and families (Yiu 2021 cited in Banuelos 2021).

However, from the reports of the teachers about the young children they teach, school disruptions due to gangs and highly disorganised or dysfunctional families (which are the norm in the community) do not promote foundations for building strong and social bonds. This study shows how difficult it is for schools located in communities affected by high-level gang violence. As the study found, while the findings of this study are consistent with the literature, promoting protective factors remains extremely challenging in marginalised, gang-affected communities where gang violence is out of control. This was echoed by respondents in the focus group sessions. As previously discussed in the chapter on gangs, there was a call from local Community Police Forums for government to declare a state of emergency as gang violence surged out of control in the Cape Flats. The deployment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to parts of Cape Town from July to September 2019, but then was subsequently extended to March 2020, was to assist police in controlling the gang crisis and restore law and order on the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2017, 2019,2020; GI-TOC 2021; Cano *et al.* 2023). Such efforts, however, did not yield long-term results.

6.3.2 Theme Two: Poverty and Unemployment, Compounded by Single-Motherhood

Poverty and unemployment, compounded by single motherhood, were another set of concerns which was raised by teachers and was identified as the second main theme in the study. The majority of participants indicated that these are strong risk factors for involvement in youth gangsterism. The narratives below provide a depiction of teachers' views that their communities face many social challenges (Calix 2013; Cooper and Ward 2012; Pinnock 2017). Respondent Q11 states,

> "The kids live in poverty and have to live in fear of the gangsters that are shooting."

Respondent Q2 expands on the social challenges that exist in the community,

> "[There is] lots of unemployment, teenage pregnancy, it is the norm - drug abuse, domestic violence and lots of gang violence."

Pinnock (2019) highlighted the issues of high levels of poverty, unemployment and overcrowding in poor communities on the Cape Flats, especially among youth unemployment who represent the highest

in world (Pinnock 2015). Teachers explicitly expressed the view that poverty and unemployment, compounded by single and young motherhood (including girl children) was a major concern. The issue of single parenthood as a dominant family structure on the Cape Flats has been acknowledged in the literature by Van Der Spuy (2016) as this indicates that the burden falls on the mother, which often puts their mental health at risk for anxiety and depression. To cope with the stress, mothers may sell drugs for an income or abusing alcohol and drugs (Van Der Spuy 2016). Rojas-Flores *et al.* (2013), in their study on Salvadoran parents, reported that parents felt an overall sense of diminished parental self-efficacy and feeling helpless to adequately protect their offspring from violent events and a compromised parental efficacy. Furthermore, the lack of resources and these resource deficiencies are likely to place Salvadoran parents and caregivers at a higher vulnerability for post-traumatic stress disorder and other debilitating mental health problems when exposed to trauma (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013).

Single motherhood, within the context of South Africa and the Western Cape, is also linked to a lack of parental supervision, as it is often the consequence of children and youth being raised in single-parent households (Bezuidenhout 2013). It is also linked to dysfunctional development, associated with a lack of co-parenting, and puts the child at risk of engaging in deviant or antisocial behaviour, such as youth gangsterism. Within the single-parent households of the Western Cape and Cape Town's, Cape Flats, it is most often the father who is absent due to imprisonment (Andersson and Stavrou 2001; Bezuidenhout 2013; Wijnberg and Green 2014). Fatherlessness, consequent of criminality, serves as a risk factor for youth gang affiliation, particularly amongst boys. The burden of providing for and keeping their children safe, all falls on mothers (Van Der Spuy 2016).

Respondent Q15 makes an observation:

> "This is where maybe just the mom who is unemployed and struggling to provide for their children's daily needs". (Respondent Q15).

The same respondent continued:

> "This is also where moms are stressed and maybe sometimes have a drink which is where the problem begins. Now mom is drinking, dad using drugs and there are the learners who are exposed to drugs and violence in this way" (Respondent Q15).

The latter part of the above quote confirms the views of authors such as Pinnock (2015), that men on the Cape Flats who are unable to obtain employment through legitimate mainstream employment may eventually join gangs as a means of earning money to provide for their family's basic survival needs.

6.3.2.1 Exposure to Drugs and Guns in the Home

Not only were children being exposed to guns and drugs on the streets, but also in their homes. This happens when family members are gang members themselves, exposing children to criminal activities and an unsafe home environment (Kinnes 2009). Generally, the family unit has been accepted as the most fundamental factor for an individual as it provides him/her with a safety net when it functions optimally (Khan *et al.* 2013). As reported by teachers, many children in the community hail from dysfunctional families, where parents abuse and/or sell alcohol and drugs. As noted in the literature, the absence of positive socialisation within the family inhibits the child or youth's ability to conform to the norms of society, thus introducing the risk of dysfunctional socialisation through youth gangsterism (Bezuidenhout 2018).

Teachers often tell children not to "touch the baby powder", a euphemism for cocaine. Despite teachers' efforts to warn children about the dangers of the touching and using of drugs and guns, children would often say:

> "but teacher, it is my daddy's", implying complete innocence and trust in the parent (Focus group 3 discussion).

When parents use drugs, it affects their ability to care for their children, as it influences their parenting skills (Kinnes 2009). Consequently, substance abuse by parents foreshadows possible substance abuse by the child later their life, as they model the behaviour of their parents (Fisher 2015; Schäfer 2011). Additionally, it exposes children to higher risk for gang involvement (De La Rue and Espelage 2014; Khan *et al.* 2013; Strand 2014; Shaw and Skywalker 2017).

6.3.3 Theme Three: Trauma Due to Gang Violence

Teachers reported that trauma caused by gang violence has negative effects on children. Most of the teachers gave accounts of the behavioural and emotional responses exhibited by children through play and daily interactions. Teachers stated that the children's emotional responses in the classroom to gang violence often included fear, aggression and withdrawal:

> "Some children are aggressive, whilst others become withdrawn. It seems like learners take the daily shooting as the norm" (Respondent Q7).

According to teachers, some of the children are afraid of noise:

> "Any sound sounds to them like a gun sound. Some kids are afraid of the shootings. Some will sit in the corner and be afraid because every day they see someone being shot" (Respondent Q17).

6.3.3.1 Children's Violent/Aggressive Play and Storytelling Themes

A strong theme that emerged was how children in the community engaged in gang-related play and storytelling. Teachers unanimously shared how children would convert any toy into a gun and mimic the sound of gunshots whilst playing. Teachers reported this as constant feature in children's play:

> "Our children take a toy and make like it is a gun. It's part of life to them" (Respondent Q9).

These results support the literature that indicated that pre-schoolers often demonstrate memory of traumatic events through their behaviour and play rather than with words (Overstreet 2000). Similarly, van Dijk, de Haan and de Winter (2020) found that preschool children in El Salvador were reported by teachers observing that children would pick up a biscuit and say it is a gun.

Teachers emphasised that it was common for children to imitate how gangs shot people on the street. This is particularly expressed during pretend playing in class:

> "The learners have a tendency to portray or act out what they see and hear from gangs. Children (mostly boys) used Lego blocks that they play with to build guns and pretend to shoot each other" (Respondent Q12).

Respondent Q11 adds,

> "The children show us how these gangsters run with their guns and where they keep it".

Teachers also reported that when playing, children mimicked the sound of gun shots:

> "Bah-bah! bah-bah! That is how they play. Guns are part of everyday living, even though we tell them not to play with guns". (Respondent Q31).

Another teacher emphasised that the majority of the children's re-enactments during playtime involved guns,

> "90 percent of their play is about guns, no matter what toy it is, it will be a gun." (Respondent Q25).

The same respondent described that even the youngest children would play in the same manner:

> "Even the babies (laughs). I have one to two-year olds that will take a doll and shoot each other with it and that is the gun. That's how they play" (Respondent Q25).

She continued to explain that when she gave them a toy, for example a car to play with, the children would still say:

> "Here come the police, here come the police, catch that person with the gun" (Respondent Q25)

Children talked excessively to the teachers about the gang shootings. They would talk about shootings that happened around them and the older children would often speak about a family member that got shot or somebody close to them. For example, according to one teacher:

> "A three-year old child in my class whose father was shot and killed just came "out of the blue" and said, "My daddy was not a gangster"" (Focus group 3 participant).

Respondent Q19, reflects on how talk about guns and shootings have become the norm,

> "children continue talking about shootings and fear that it could happen to them."

It has become so normalised, that children now know how to differentiate between gunshots and other sounds,

> "Many children talk about the shootings they have experienced and will often tell me the difference between a gunshot and a firecracker" (Respondent Q4).

This is all the result of the environment the children live in and what they see daily. Some children were filled with anxiety (teachers as well) and afraid of outdoor play at school:

> "They [children] are scared of outdoor play because of previous gun shots they heard while playing outside" (Respondent Q39).

One respondent who transports children to and from school, spoke of how children react when gang shootings occur:

> "When I pick up some of the children and we hear gun shots, they start shouting, crying and ask to go hide" (Respondent Q31).

Shields *et al.* (2009b) found individual resources significantly modified the effects of violence exposure, where children with a low unknown locus of control, that is, not knowing why events happened, had lower distress than those with a higher unknown locus of control. Locus of Control (LOC) is a personality concept originally proposed by Rotter (1966 cited in Wang and Lv 2020). People either perceive events that happen in their environment as determined by their own behaviour [internal locus of control] or that their environment controlled by forces outside of their control [external locus of control] (Wang and Lv 2020). Teacher accounts in this study indicate that children are keenly aware of the violence around them that has been caused by gangs.

6.3.3.2 What Teachers Hear about Gang Violence from Children

Children constantly tell teachers about the gang shootings and fights they see and hear about. All teachers shared similar accounts, as children typically discussed how they heard gun shots and how they saw gangsters run with the guns, how gangs shot the windows and how they had to lay on the floor. Children would also demonstrate to the teachers how gangsters held their guns. The constant element

of gang violence in stories told by children to teachers and their peers in class, reflects how the gangs fight and shoot in the areas. Many of the respondents shared similar stories of what they heard from children. Children discussed incidents of how they heard gun shots and how they saw gangsters run with the guns. Children would often show teachers the actions of how gangsters ran and held their guns:

> "They can tell you the incidents from the beginning, with names [children know the names of the gangs] and show the way the gangsters run with guns, how they lay on the floor under the bed when shots are fired" (Focus group 2 participant)".

Teachers reported that children told them who and what they were shooting, and who in the community or families had been shot. Children also recounted how men with guns came inside their homes and attacked the parents involved with gangs, even being shot in front of their siblings. The majority of the teachers reported that many of the children in their class had experienced the loss of a parent, caregiver or family member through gang violence. One teacher expressed her sadness that most of the children in her class had been exposed to guns while she had never seen a real gun herself:

> "It's sad, most of them know how a real gun looks. I have not seen a real gun, but they have. They tell you that they have even touched a gun".

In particular, she recalled a conversation she had with a child in her class who said he had touched his father's gun:

> "My daddy did clean the gun and I touched it".

When the teacher said to the child that guns were dangerous, the child responded:

> "No teacher, but it's my daddy's gun" (Respondent Q31).

6.3.3.3 Parental behaviour

Similarly disturbing, it is not unusual for parents to take their children (with them) to visit crime scenes of the gang violence. In fact, teachers said that is type of behaviour from parents, is the norm:

> "When there are shootings, they [parents] will run to the shootings and take the children with them (Respondent Q28)".

Literature shows that in aversive environments where families are exposed to high levels of community violence, parents can play a crucial role in protecting or placing their children at risk for further psychological distress (Pat-Horenczyk *et al.* 2009). As noted earlier by Rojas-Flores (2013), Savadoran parents raising children in violent communities displayed maladaptive parenting skills. Similarly, the apparent maladaptive parenting practices that put some children on the Cape Flats at further risk are endorsed by all the participants in the current study. Preschool-aged children in gang-controlled communities, see death on the streets all the time.

Children often told teachers of family members who have been shot and about innocent people in the community who have been killed, as if it were a movie that they had watched on television. The consequence of poor parental supervision and support is confirmed by Petersen (2012) who noted that such parental practices, espouses the child's freedom to engage in deviant or antisocial behaviour without appropriate consequence, thus predisposing the child or youth to engagement in youth gangsterism. Not only does this demonstrate poor parenting skills and role modelling, but it also illuminates the normalisation of gang violence in these communities. Literature on the normalisation of crime and violence shows that children often report feeling safe, despite being confronted with violence in their daily lives (Burton 2008 cited in Sibisi 2016).

Literature on family protective factors show that parental support and monitoring serve as common protective factors that can prevent youth from joining gangs as it provides them with a sense of belonging and protection (Lenzi *et al.* 2015 cited in Banuelos 2021). A longitudinal study on the effect of ecological factors on youth gang entry, suggested that high parental involvement lowers this risk of gang entry (Merrin *et al.* 2020 cited in Banuelos 2021). Parents and other family members play a strategic role in protecting children from the influence of gangs and preventing their future involvement in gangs. However, young children are being exposed to many risk factors in the home, as evidenced by the participants responses. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that proximal relationships, such as parent-child and teacher-child relationships, are the most influential in shaping a child's development. Microsystems therefore play an important role in the likelihood of young people becoming gang involved.

Evidently, many parents in these communities lack appropriate parental support, supervision and monitoring practices, which is a a prominent risk factor for delinquency and antisocial behaviour, such as gangsterism (Petersen 2012; Bezuidenhout 2013; Michaeli 2016). In the instance of this study, teachers play a variety of indoor games when there are gang shootings. Teachers would tell the children that they must play inside because of gangs fighting, to which children have grown accustomed – "It is everyday stuff" (Focus group 4 participant). Even the kids will say, "They are shooting! They are shooting" (Focus group 3 participant). Gang violence has become so normalised in the community that children instinctively know what steps to take when they hear the sound of a gun, whilst at school.

6.3.3.4 Teachers' victimology

An interesting insight uncovered in the study is that of the victimology of preschool teachers. Teachers provided interesting insight into their personal victimisations by openly disclosing their direct experience with gang violence or talking about family members who had been killed as a result of gang violence. Some teachers gave accounts of multiple experiences of gang violence which had intensified their fear, anxiety and trauma. The teachers also indicated that they were often informed by the children

about gang-related violence that they see or hear about in their home or on the streets, especially after the weekend. The stories that children tell them about daily include the violence that happens in the home because of the drugs, alcohol and violent retribution of family members affiliated with gangs. Children speak of how gangs run the streets with guns and how bullets can come through the windows of their homes, and how they lie down on the floor when this happens. The actions of gangs are often demonstrated to teachers.

Constantly hearing about the experiences of gang violence from the children, is not just traumatising to teachers, but also retraumatising. The secondary trauma experienced by teachers exacerbates the personal trauma teachers may have endured through gang violence in the community. The literature confirms strengthens the assumption that the teaching profession is focused on providing care for students, which places educators in the role of human service providers, therefore making vulnerable to vicarious trauma (Ziaian-Ghafari and Berg 2019:38).

The second research question in the questionnaire addressed the perspectives of teachers on how they perceived gang violence exposure and experiences to affect young children. The data collected concerning the third research question in the questionnaire was attributable to all the teachers who reported similar perspectives. These narratives reveal the immense personal trauma of teachers as a result of teaching in a high-gang-violence community. During one of the focus group sessions, one of the teachers who shared her experience of gang violence, was visibly traumatised. This researcher observed this phenomenon with many of the teachers when they shared a personal experience of gang violence. The sombre atmosphere when they shared their experiences was palpable. Since all the teachers were participating in a trauma counselling programme run by non-governmental organisation (Learning in Reach*)* in the community specifically to assist the teachers, this assured the researcher that they were receiving the necessary support.

The findings revealed that this sample of participants was highly victimised, not just in their fear of gang violence but also through experiencing gang victimisation. Most of the respondents in the questionnaires and focus group sessions recounted experiences of gang violence within the past three years, prior to the commencement of the study interviews in 2019. The questionnaire responses included the teachers' direct and vicarious experiences with gang violence in the past year. Some teachers said that they had witnessed friends shot by gangs, almost being caught in crossfires and having to run for cover into the nearest house when gangs open fire unexpectedly. Some comments were as follows:

> "My brother was shot and killed about a year ago when he was on his way to work" (Respondent Q30).

Another respondent shared a similarly harrowing story,

> "I was caught between two gangs shooting at each other. Whilst they were shooting, I ran in by any open door" (Respondent Q15).

Their stories of terror continued, as Respondent Q28 shared one of her experiences with gang violence,

> "I was walking down the road and I saw three boys running with guns in their hands and they pointed to the ones they were going to shoot. I was scared I ran into someone's house".

Respondent Q36 recounts her traumatising ordeal,

> "I actually got shot in my leg by gangsters who robbed me while I was trying to protect our school from danger. You're nowhere safe".

Another respondent recounted an incident that took place at her home,

> "It has been hectic where I saw it with my own eyes. They shot a boy in our driveway where I stay, and I feel it's unsafe everywhere. It's traumatic to experience such ongoing violence" (Respondent Q16).

During the session with Focus Group One, one of the participants explained how a staff member had left their school because she was stressed and afraid of the children and constantly took off sick from work. The group reacted to this with laughter because they could not understand how an adult could feel stressed or afraid of young children. This type of reaction is consistent with the literature on the normalisation of violence and the numbing effect it has on people living in communities exposed to chronically high levels of violence (Burton 2008 cited in Sibisi 2016). Furthermore, showing emotion may be seen as a sign of weakness when you have to be tough in order to survive in a harsh environment. This would also seem to explain the lack of empathy expressed toward the colleague. The literature confirms that similar to frontline trauma workers in the medical field, teachers, particularly in high-violence communities, feel the need to be strong for their students and often times, tend not to recognise trauma in themselves and thus ignore the symptoms (Figley 2012). Oftentimes, teacher exhaustion or stress is dismissed as signs of weakness and an inability to cope" (Walker 2019:1).

Some teachers voluntarily shared how gang violence affected them which evoked intense emotions. This was commonly expressed in both the questionnaires and the focus groups. Participants bravely shared their stories which were already known to the group as they have similar experiences of gang violence. Two stories stood out to the researcher:

> My son was killed on the Battlefield [an open field in the area where gangs usually gather for a truce]. He was not a gangster. He was innocent. Next month, on the 14th, it will be two years. I'm still feeling it. I walk over that field. I am scared because I can be killed anytime. Don't make me cry [laughs] (Focus Group 2 participant).

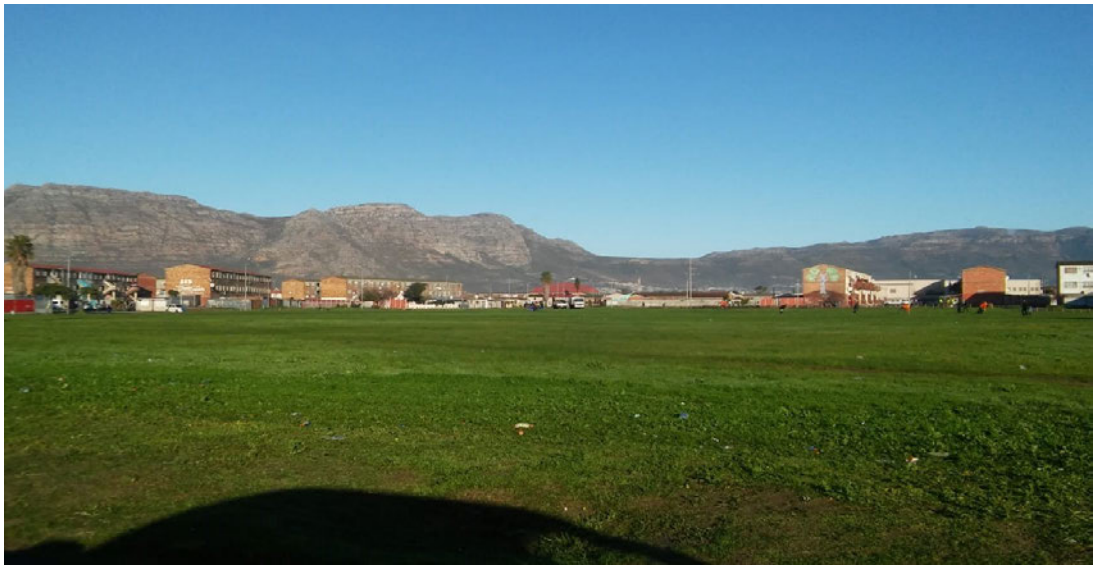

Figure 6.1: Image of the notorious Battlefield in Lavender Hill known for gang clashes.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, the field shown in Figure 6.1 served as a gathering place where hundreds of children from as young as three years old would sit spread out and wait to receive a meal handed out by civil society networks, residents and volunteers.

The researcher could sense the collective pain as the room fell silent, and the participants shared their personal stories. Some of the participants who told their stories were visibly still traumatised. It was also apparent that to the researcher that these women and as teachers, were putting forward a brave face as it was their daily reality. Another teacher shared how her two brothers, both in their twenties, were caught in gang crossfire and killed in the past three years.

> "I am the only one left. I have to be strong for them [her nieces and nephews]. If I break, what do I show them? I have to move on for them. I have to show them that life goes on" (Focus group 3 participant).

Many expressed that they often felt afraid but set their personal feelings aside for the sake of the children:

> "Children are always our first priority as they are mostly affected (Focus group 2 participants).

Another teacher added that:

> "We see it in their [children's] behaviour. We don't forget about ourselves, but children's safety come first, then it's us". (Focus group 2 participant).

Another participant in focus group 2 stated,

> "keep the children calm. That's all that we can do" (Focus group 2 participant).

However, one participant in the second focus group was the exception and did not share the same sentiment but felt strongly that they had to show the gangs that they would not be intimidated. She felt that:

> "As principal, and also a church pastor, as a community member, I had authority to speak" (Focus group 3).

As an example of how the two worlds of gangs and church overlap, she shared how one morning during church service, gangs started shooting. She described how she stopped the service, went outside with a loud-hailer and appealed to the gangs to stop shooting so that the congregants could make their way home safely. The shooting ceased for a few hours before it resumed later. This act can also be seen as a form of moral authority and direct resistance to gangs.

Teachers need to heal their trauma first before they can work with children to provide peace education. Teachers therefore first need to work with their own trauma. This vital intervention is currently being provided by Learning in Reach in Lavender Hill. As the literature indicates, peace education redefines the role of teachers to become facilitators with the disposition, knowledge, skills and commitment to support students to develop their full potential as peacebuilders (UNESCO 2017). Teachers need to internalise these concepts themselves to be able to effectively convey them to their students. Peace educators should develop a regular practice of personal reflection and must employ critical thinking in their own lives to help students develop critical thinking skills. Thus, it is important that peace educators understand that they themselves must begin the process of transformation in their own lives before engaging their students in this practice (UNESCO 2017).

As Bajaj (2018:2) notes, "transformative agency lies at the center of peace education and is a desired skill". Furthermore, the influence of the teacher's agency (once cultivated) is critical in shaping the form that the agency of the child takes (Bajaj 2015). In other words, the agent role of teachers necessitates the need for preschool teachers to first heal their own trauma for peace education, as evidenced in the study.

6.3.4 Theme Four: Strategies

The third research question in the questionnaire attempted to glean the protection strategies teachers used to protect children as well as themselves. This question specifically addressed the strategies teachers used. This was also one of the primary questions within the focus groups. The responses in the questionnaires were similar to the focus groups for this research question.

6.3.4.1 The Lack of Danger Management Training

The data indicated that teachers had no formal training in how to deal with gang violence but surviving required adaptation. Teachers had learned to protect themselves and their learners based on years of experience of living and teaching in gang-ridden areas. Therefore, many of the safety and protection strategies that they employed were largely on-the-job learning from colleagues, self-taught through various social media platforms or just plain common sense from having grown up in the community. Respondent Q19 substantiates,

> "Growing up in the community and having family members that are gangsters, made me more aware of my surroundings and how to handle different situations".

Since teachers declared that they had no formal training in danger management strategies, it raised the question about their self-protection mechanism and what they were currently doing to keep children safe when gang conflicts broke out in the community. Existing protection strategies employed by teachers included classroom strategies, independent coping strategies and cooperative strategies.

6.3.4.2 Classroom Strategies

Teachers reported a variety of techniques and activities they use in the classroom with children when gang shootings happen, to protect, calm and console them. A general rule of thumb is that children are told to lie still on their stomach on the floor or under the table to keep them out of harm's way from bullets that come through windows and doors, until the shooting has stopped. Sometimes, children are told to lie on the mat and count to 100 as it allows them to not think about the gun shots. Respondent Q21 reiterates how they are taught to lie down both in the school and home settings,

> "There they are shooting! Down!" They fall down on the floor. They are taught at home and at school".

Teachers have set up sensorial areas in the class to calm and relax the children using the sensory boxes provided by Learning in Reach. Teachers also sometimes play music to drown out the sounds of gunshots. Teachers admitted that the latter strategy was not always effective as the sound of gun shots often prevailed over the sound of music. Respondent Q33 elaborates,

> "Most of the children, they hear right through the music."

Children in these communities do not have access to counselling so teachers try to show them love and understanding and talk to them about how to stay safe and help them express their feelings in a better way. During quiet time, teachers reflected on the good that happens around them to reassure children. Teachers did their best to create a peaceful environment for the children in class and maintain a normal

daily programme as possible. Expanding on their classroom strategies in Focus group 3, the participants stated,

> "Some are scared, some of them need extra love and care, especially those who have witnessed gang violence".

Other physical security measures included doors and gates being always locked as well as having additional fences around the school walls, so that the gangs couldn't get inside. However, despite these valiant efforts by teachers to teach children about the dangers of guns and that only the police are supposed to have guns, this seemed to have little to no impact. Teachers felt that,

> "The more that children were told, the less it sank in because they believed everything must be a gun'. (Focus group 4).

Teachers were asked which of the classroom strategies being currently employed, worked the best and why. Responses to this question showed no variation amongst the strategies. In other words, all the strategies were restated, and no particular ones were identified as working better than others.

6.3.4.3 Independent Coping Strategies

Religion and spirituality featured strongly as a coping mechanism amongst teachers. They felt that prayer centred them and allowed them to cope with their individual trauma resulting from gang violence. This is consistent with studies on community violence and the impact on parenting practices done in El Salvador, which found that nearly all the participants (94 percent) considered religion to be of high importance (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013). Teachers in Lavender Hill would pray for their safety as they journeyed to and from their place of work. Two teachers said that they felt relatively safe on the school premises because they were heavily fortified (Focus group 3 participant).

While teachers had put in place their own early warning systems to take evasive action, they shared that they still heavily relied on their faith and prayed a lot for their protection because they felt that there was nothing else that they could do. Previous studies have suggested that the church and religion may act as a buffer against the effects of community violence (Cook 2000; Van Dyke *et al.* 2009 cited in Rojas-Flores 2013). A strong spiritual element was common among the of participants in the present study. A member of Focus group 4 reiterates,

> "I just pray every day that I make it safely to work and then back home. What else can we do?"

Akin to this study, Rojas-Flores *et al*. (2013) found that such simple activities as returning home from a day of work posed a real and lethal potential danger to parents in gang-ridden communities in El Salvador. The general sense of foreshortened time among participants in the current study was supported

by Rojas-Flores *et al.* (2013). The latter also found that positive coping strategies included seeking meaning and religious support.

6.3.4.4 Cooperative Strategies

As a group, teachers learned to develop their own informal early warning systems through social media, specifically WhatsApp, whereby they would alert each other when gang fights broke out in the area. The teachers developed their own informal early warning systems. One forum member's husband was a policeman and so she could reliably inform the teachers via the forum chat about possible gang fights in the area. When the alerts were issued, teachers would inform the school bus drivers not to fetch the children from school at a particular time. However, some parents reportedly fetched their children during the gang shootings, which was the norm, since they were used to it (Focus group 1 participant).

The teachers relied on each other for their safety, which included sharing and venting emotions. They would advise each other about which parts of the area to avoid and when it was safe to venture out. The teachers would also take turns regarding who would leave work early on a particular day to avoid gang shootings. The teachers who lived the furthest from the school, were given preference. Even though the news about gang shootings came rapidly, the teachers could easily tell the direction of the gun shots as their ears were well-trained:

> "We are so in tune with our senses already that we can tell where the shootings are coming from (group laughter)". (Focus group 2 participant).

It was apparent that teachers were innovative, resilient and somewhat successful in devising strategies to protect the children and themselves from gang shootings, given their limited resources.

6.3.4.5 Available Support in the Community

The questionnaire and focus group discussions concluded with the question of which support services were currently available to preschool teachers in gang-affected communities and some recommendations for future community support interventions. In terms of available support services, many teachers reported that no support or resources were available to them:

> "We do not have any system in place to assist us as a whole" (Respondent Q 4).

They also stated that teachers,

> "Have no support system or any resources in place. We as teachers also need to express our tears and talk about it" (Respondent Q10).

Respondent Q25 spoke of their difficulty in accessing the limited services that were available to them,

> "I know that social workers are available, but it is so hard to get hold of these professionals" (Respondent Q25).

Other support systems available were mentioned: some mentioned non-government organisations, such as Learning in Reach, that provided trauma counselling and training for the teachers to support children. Given the high rates of exposure to community violence in this sample, it is crucial that teachers receive psychological support. Many teachers expressed that whenever there are workshops available, their principals would send them to attend and they would do so reluctantly, as they feel that nothing would help.

Teachers felt that authorities were not effective and had insufficient will to address gang violence, therefore, violence in the neighbourhood was inevitable. It was said that gangs only make peace for short periods (hours or two to three months at most):

> They make peace. The police are present. We shake hands. Our green land at the back they named the Battlefield. That is where they make peace. The community is there, the police, gang leaders and they make peace. It is fine and it is nice and quiet again. Everyone can walk where they want to walk. Before long, it is the same again. Back to normal (Respondent Q19)

This view arose from a fatalistic belief amongst the teachers that the gangs are not interested in peace. This view was echoed in an interview the researcher conducted with an anti-gang community activist (25 October 2019) as well as in a personal conversation with Dr Irvin Kinnes, an associate professor with the Institute for Criminology at the University of Cape Town in 2019. The community activist boldly stated that, "Communities are not interested in peace. There is nothing we can do for those already into gangs. We need to focus on the next generation to make it a better one."

6.3.4.6 Support and role of the SAPS and SANDF

The focus groups addressed the issue of support from police and the miliary in reducing gang violence in the community. This question was considered pertinent in the timing of the study because in the same year, 2019, when the data collection phase of the study commenced, gang violence on the Cape Flats spiked to an all-time high, resulting in the deployment of the military into communities on the Cape Flats identified as hot zones. Operation Lockdown (not to be confused with the COVID-19 lockdown implemented country-wide shortly afterwards) in which the military was deployed to assist the police initially from 18 July 2019 to 16 September 2019 but was subsequently extended to 31 March 2020 (Cano *et al.* 2023).

According to respondents, Lavender Hill was not flagged as a hot zone. However, the researcher observed military presence in the area during the site visits. Cano *et al.* (2023) confirmed with community police forums (CPFs) the presence of the SANDG in their respective precincts. This discrepancy, perhaps, is indicative of the erosion of trust over the many years where authorities have

failed to stem gang violence in the community. Table 6.3 below presents areas on the Cape Flats where the SANDF was deployed according to the Community Police Forums.

Table 1. Presence of SANDF in each police precinct, according to CPFs

Police precinct	Gang period	COVID period
Athlone	Yes	Yes
Atlantis	No	No
Bishop Lavis	Yes	Yes
Capricorn (Muizenberg)	No	Yes
Delft	Yes	Yes
Elsies River	Yes	Yes
Grassy Park	Yes	Yes
Guguletu	Yes	Yes
Harare	Yes	Yes
Hout Bay	No	Yes
Kensington	Yes	Yes
Khayamandi (Stellenbosch)	No	No
Khayelitsha	No	Yes
Kraaifontein	Yes	Yes
Langa	No	Yes
Lavender Hill	Yes	Yes
Lentegeur	Yes	Yes
Lwandle (Strand)	No	Yes
Macassar	No	Yes
Manenberg	Yes	Yes
Mfuleni	Yes	Yes
Mitchells Plain	Yes	Yes
Nyanga	No	Yes
Ocean View	Yes	Yes
Philippi	Yes	Yes
Philippi East	Yes	Yes
Ravensmead	No	No
Steenberg	Yes	Yes

Table 6.3 Presence of SANDF in each police precinct, according to CPFs. Source: Cano *et al.* (2023).

Reiterating teachers' perception that the police and the military had not done anything to improve their, they did not place their trust in the authorities. Again, this was the overwhelming view brought to light in the both the questionnaires and focus group sessions. Teachers expressed their frustration at the lack of police services in their community as,

> "the police are not doing enough. There are no visible SAPS when gang violence is happening" (Respondent Q22).

The view that the police were not particularly concerned with what was going on in the community was very common and that there was little point reporting gang-related crime, based on past experiences of police inaction. Cases might be opened but the perpetrators were rarely arrested and convicted, which is the overall situation with the country's criminal justice system.

Communities on the margins of society often cannot rely on public authorities to maintain law and order (Bueno 2022). Often, these communities are abandoned to negotiate their daily existence and survival with gangs. For this reason, community members have deep distrust in police and the military and gangs can infiltrate and control marginal communities (Bueno 2022).

Despite the military having been deployed to Lavender Hill during the gang intervention period (Cano *et al.* 2023) and further that the researcher had observed their presence, respondents overwhelmingly still expressed concern that Lavender Hill was not deemed a 'hot zone". Teachers were emphatic that the government did not care about them:

> "They [the government] think nothing of us. They really do nothing for us" Respondent Q14).

Another teacher responded:

> "Mostly children are being shot. I mean, that's our future. Isn't that a war zone?" (Respondent Q6).

A surprising revelation made by the coordinator who acted as the researcher's initial escort around the community, was a new trend by gangs to shoot witnesses in the face in order not to be identified:

> "Now you tell me, how can they not send in the army? Is it not a zone? (Learning in Reach coordinator).

Teachers explained how in the past, the army would only come by helicopter to the "Battlefield" and just leave again after having done nothing. They recall the time when the Minister of Police had visited the community and offered nothing useful. The gangsters, apparently, also attend the meetings to intimidate community members:

> "Gangsters also attended, parading there, asking questions and people are afraid to talk because of their presence" (Focus group 2 participants).

6.3.4.7 Teacher Perspectives on Type of Support Needed

Teachers were also specific about the type of support they required from government. Their collective responses from the questionnaires and discussions in the focus group sessions, verified their needs and they are summarised below:

> "Government support can provide us by sending people out to have functions, workshops, having discussions about the reality in our communities" (Respondent Q26).
>
> Workshops on how to support children and community members affected by gang violence addressing, for example, how to keep children calm during shootings, how to deal with children, how to make them aware of the dangers of guns and drugs (Respondent Q26).

The need for professional support as reported by the participants in the study, is similar to the need identified in the study among Salvadoran parents and caregivers (Rojas-Flores *et al.* 2013).

Teachers felt that the suggestion to include the community in workshops on gang violence issues would bring teachers and the community together and create a better community for the children.

Another suggestion made included:

> "having programmes at our Edu-care centres that involve parents/guardians" (Respondent Q 24).

Respondent Q5 also added that it was important to

> "have books available to practitioners with regards to community violence and skills to handle conflict."

Whilst Respondent Q31 importantly noted that,

> "tailoring education efforts need to meet both community and their needs as teachers should culturally specific".

This suggestion is an outcome of the action plan (intervention) component of the study (objective four), which is further described in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

6.3.4.8 Peace education and cultural context

The need for peace education is supported by the argument in literature, which reiterates the universal need for peace education, but does not advocate for the universalisation and standardisation of the approach and its content (Reardon and Cabezudo 2002: 17). Therefore, peace education should be culturally contextualised and emerge from the concerns, motivations, and experiences of a given population. Put simply, people, communities, and cultures are not standardised and nor should their learning be - scholars need to identify and design learning and educational interventions most relevant to their realities (Reardon 2001). Tolera (2019: 66) concurs that peacebuilding education should be "firmly rooted in immediate realities, not in abstract ideas or theories". Furthermore, trainings are typically premised on approaches that are "externally generated and imposed solutions, that fails to recognise the possibility that culturally and place-specific peacebuilding capacities may well exist and be more appropriate and sustainable" Tolera (2019:66). In this way, peacebuilding education, would be applied as a "bottom-up rather than top-down process is driven by communities themselves, founded on their experiences and capacities" Tolera (2019:66).

6.4 Peace education and viability

The way teachers conceptualise peace education and its viability in the community are pertinent and an essential part of the study. The fourth research question in the questionnaire was dedicated to discovering the teachers' conceptualisations of peace education and what are the challenges for early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas. This question connects directly to the purpose of the current study, which was to explore the viability of peace education in preschools located in gang-

affected communities. Objective four of the study was to develop and evaluate the efficacy of the peace education intervention programme used in this study.

6.4.1 COVID-19 Pandemic and its impact

Based on the identified needs from the questionnaires and focus groups (conducted during 2019) the initial intervention was planned to be implemented in the first part of 2020 in three phases, namely: teacher, child and parent peace skills programmes. Previous research, for example, the Salvadoran study of 2013 by Rojas-Flores, suggested parental involvement in peace programmes. Parenting practices not only affect children's emotional and behavioural difficulties, helped reinforce peace skills in children, particularly in high-gang-violence communities Rojas-Flores (2013).

South Africa entered a state of almost complete lockdown from 26th of March 2020 (Spaull and van der Berg 2020). In August 2020, when lockdown was still ongoing, albeit with fewer restrictions, the researcher held a meeting with a principal who was also the de facto facilitator for the teachers in the area participating in the study, to finalise the intervention phase of the study. The discussion included ways to get the parents involved, how to contact them to participate in the intervention, peace lessons and activities for the programme as well as the duration of the intervention.

The researcher sensed reluctance at this point of the conversation and chose to express her concern. At this point, the principal divulged that the pandemic had shifted the needs of the teachers to become more individualistic and immediate. After probing what this statement meant, the principal explained that it would be difficult to get parents involved. One of the main reasons for this was that parents were too busy and did not have the time. This extended to the teachers as well. The principal explained that the pandemic would make things exceedingly difficult (Principal interview).

It was conveyed by the principal that the teachers felt overwhelmed by the competing priorities brought upon by the pandemic. Teachers felt that they could not take on any additional work such as a training programme at the time. Bearing in mind that this was during the pandemic, which devastated many poor communities, including preschools, who were already struggling in so many aspects pre-COVID. Therefore, in the context of the pandemic, this revelation, was not surprising.

Worldwide, in the initial stages of the pandemic, the impact of the virus on children was unclear and closing schools seemed a reasonable response (Spaull and van der Berg 2020). Subsequently, international evidence that children are not important transmitters of this virus shows "the cost of school closures and the impact of children, in South Africa and internationally, had considerable unintended consequences" (Spaull and van der Berg 2020:2). Children who are already vulnerable, deprived and marginalised, "are being hit the hardest by the pandemic, exacerbating existing inequalities and pushing the most vulnerable children even further behind" Ashing (2020 in Spaull and van der Berg 2020:2).

For example, closing schools during lockdown would mean that many children would not have access to a free meal available at schools, which would often be the only meal they have for the day and thereby exacerbating child hunger (Spaull and van der Berg 2020). Globally, the closure of schools translated into 370 million children who did not receive free school meals and for many children, "those meals were the only sustenance they received each day" (Whiting 2020:1). The same authors reported that in 2018, 77% of children in public schools in South Africa, approximately 9 million children were beneficiaries of a free school meal every day (Statistics South Africa 2019a). Reportedly, forty-six per cent of adults went hungry during the COVID-19 pandemic because they did not have money for food (Ispos 2021 cited in Munir 2021).

The table below provides an indication of the number of children in households with unemployment, who experience hunger or live in communities where crime restricts their movement.

TABLE 1: Children who live in households with no employed adults, who experience hunger or who live in areas where crime prevents them from using parks, 2018.

Region	Child population 2018 ('000)	Children living in households without an employed adult (%)	Children experiencing hunger ('000)	Children experiencing hunger (%)	Children in public schools who benefit from school feeding (%)	Areas where fear of crime prevents children from going to parks (%)
Western Cape	1 971	8	288	15	54	47
Eastern Cape	2 514	46	212	9	90	38
Northern Cape	436	29	73	17	83	57
Free State	1 021	35	131	13	80	35
KwaZulu-Natal	4 184	36	826	20	84	28
North West	1 382	35	284	21	80	21
Gauteng	4 186	15	345	8	55	46
Mpumalanga	1 673	29	222	13	88	39
Limpopo	2 374	41	118	5	91	15
Total	19 741	30	2 500	13	77	35

Source: Hall, K., 2019, 'Income poverty, unemployment and social grants', in M. Shung-King, L. Lake, D. Sanders & M. Hendricks (eds.), *South African Child Gauge 2019*, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, Cape Town; Statistics South Africa, 2018a, *Marginalised groups indicator report 2018*, StatsSA, Pretoria; Statistics South Africa, 2019a, *General household survey 2018*, StatsSA, Pretoria; Statistics Sount Africa, 2019c, *Victims of crime survey 2018/19*, StatsSA, Pretoria.

Table 6.4: Children who live in households with no employed adults, who experience hunger or who live in areas where crime prevents them from using parks, 2018. Source: Spaull *et al.* (2020)

Teachers' priorities shifted to providing feeding schemes for children as existing food insecurity deepened due to massive job losses during the pandemic. Teachers felt that it would not be practical to teach children at the time. Teachers could not be blamed for responding in this way as the community found themselves in survivalist mode due to the substantial impact the pandemic on their livelihoods.

Teaching about peace, under the challenge of gang violence, was now exacerbated by the pandemic and not a priority. Understandably, teachers felt overwhelmed and could not conceive peace education at this time in the life of the community. This was not an excuse, but an actual obstacle to the peace education skills training intervention, which raised the question about the viability of peace education as a transformative strategy in these communities.

The impact of the pandemic on the community deepened the dire existing social and economic challenges. Understandably, the focus of the teachers had shifted to one of survival, as many families, including the teachers, had lost their livelihoods. With growing food insecurity, the teachers' prioritised

feeding schemes in the community. The teachers reported that they could not take on any additional work and that teaching peace skills during food insecurity was not a priority.

As shown in Figure 6.2:, findings of the research indicate that the lockdown measures, including the closure of schools implemented to control the spread of coronavirus, have resulted in food insecurity for millions of families. Parents or caregivers of children have lost their jobs and are unable to provide for their families. Poor nutrition will impact the immunity of children and adults against harmful diseases, including COVID-19. Closure of schools has meant that most children from disadvantaged background will not have recourse to school meal.

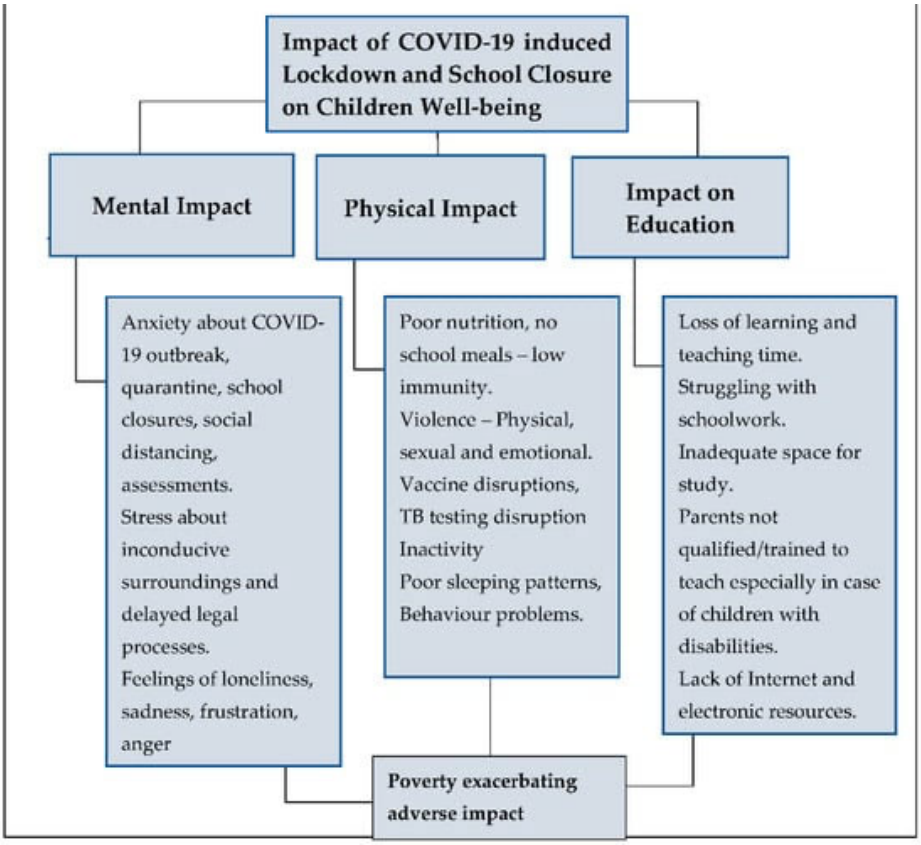

Figure 6.2: Impact of Covid-19. Source: Munir (2021: 12).

Over time, it became increasing difficult to regroup with teachers, as many had left or lost their jobs. Furthermore, it would have taken at least a year for the few remaining schools to recover from the impact of the pandemic, if at all. If the intervention phase of the study had been implemented in a time preceding or after the pandemic, the intervention may have been implemented more successfully.

The study explored the perceptions of teachers and principals. Originally, the study had intended to include parents which may have produced different perspectives. Whilst being the only researcher to analyse the data is a potential limitation of this study, the trustworthiness of this research is nevertheless upheld in light of the fact that the researcher consulted with the 37 teachers who participated in the

focus group sessions and interviews, where she presented the summary of the findings, and the participants agreed as to how their stories had been interpreted. It is also worth highlighting that across the group of teachers who participated in the study, the average length of time that they had worked at preschools in gang-ridden communities was between seven and ten years. Similarly, this length of time increased the reliability and credibility of their narratives.

6.5 Implications of the Study

There are multiple groups of children and teachers in preschools located in gang-infested communities, including but not limited to the Cape Flats, which may benefit from the findings of the current study. When teachers are traumatised by gang violence, as was revealed in the current study, their ability to care and teach children may be affected, especially, their peacebuilding agency in the capacity as peace education teachers. When that happens, it may not only affect the child, but the entire community and society. Of the audiences which may benefit from the current study, there are three main groups for which there are direct implications: teachers, children and government leaders, particularly educational authorities. The lessons learnt from the COVID-19 should actively be considered by the relevant sector and others on how to better prepare and manage any pandemic in the future.

6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the key findings of the first objectives of the study. The study examined the perceptions and experiences of preschool teachers of gang violence in the community. Preschool teachers reported that they themselves and the children that they teach had high-gang violence exposure. The findings point to individual, family and environmental contributing influences. Results revealed that teachers and children were victimised and traumatised by ongoing gang shootings in their communities.

Findings suggest that preschool teachers in gang-ridden communities are adversely affected by the trauma they suffer from personal gang victimisation, coupled with the secondary trauma from the children in their classroom who typically and consistently share stories of their exposure to gang violence and drugs, both in the home and wider community. The themes that have emerged from the finding have offered deep and rich insights into the world of preschool teachers in communities ravaged by gang violence.

Teachers must navigate daily gang shootings and devise their own coping strategies to protect themselves and their learners from gang violence. Their resilience and commitment, amid the enormous challenges of gang violence and resource-deprivation (further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic) is extraordinary. Such coordinated community responses to gang violence are referred to by Maringira

and Gibson (2019) as the adaptation and development of resilient localised structures by local people themselves to deal with inadequate and or absent state response.

Nelson Mandela (2003) said, "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." While this is true, it becomes empty words when gangs are allowed to enact fear and terror in children and deny them the opportunity to learn in peaceful environments. Conceptions of peace, under these conditions where gangs continue to enact violence unabated, seems an almost impossible task. Gang shootings were normalised as part of everyday life in these communities. Teachers have devised strategies within the classroom to help children cope with the physical, emotional and psychological effects of gang violence. Teachers have also devised creative strategies for keeping themselves and children safe as they navigate their way to and from school and while they are at school.

As reported by teachers, the high level of drugs and gang-violence exposure of children in the streets as well as in the home, seemed to negate their efforts to educate children about the dangers of guns and drugs. Teachers reported that children re-enacted in their play, scenarios of gang shootings. This was a prevailing theme, particularly, among boys. Overall, teachers' questionnaire responses and focus group discussions, revealed that teachers and children alike were overwhelmed by the level of gang violence in the community. The need for assistance in dealing with the negative impact that gang violence had on the teachers and children was abundantly clear. Teachers offered specific and concrete suggestions about what type of interventions they needed and emphasised the importance of these interventions being culturally sensitive.

A community activist paints a bleak picture of the reality of gang affected communities.

> "Gangs feed into children's lives. Our communities are built on violence. People have the violence within themselves. Communities are in pain. We need to break the foundations of violence and build something new" (Community activist).

In this narrative, she recollected her childhood growing up on the Cape Flats:

> Despite the negativity, we had a larger community, caring for family, for each other. Our homes were open. We were poor but I climbed trees, played on the sand dunes but now it pains my heart that my grandchildren are deprived. You can't just be a child. Why have things not change in our communities for our children since I was a child. We still have the same challenges. I am now 51 years old and it's the same nearly 30 years after democracy. Why has nothing changed for us?

This chapter presented the key findings of the collected empirical data of the present study. The main findings included high rates of lifetime exposure to community, the experiences and effects of gang violence as told from the perspective of preschool teachers, their danger management strategies as well

as the challenges for peace education in gang-dominated communities such as Lavender Hill on the Cape Flats.

6.7 Recommendations

These recommendations target educational policymakers, administrators, curriculum developers for early childhood education, especially preschools located in high-violence communities in South Africa. The implementation of these recommendations, general (Chapter eight) and practical, is justified based on the findings of this study. As documented in this study, preschool teachers and children in gang-affected communities on the Cape Flats are significantly impacted by gang-violence.

Capacity development must be integrated into ECD curricula and skills training, such as conflict resolution skills workshops and materials for teachers, parents and other caregivers of children at early learning centres. Therefore, it is recommended that peace education be integrated into early childhood curricula and skills training to develop the capacity of teachers, parents and other caregivers' skills for resolving conflict peacefully. Comprehensive peace education skills training programmes should be provided to equip preschool teachers, parents and other caregivers in gang-affected communities with the necessary skills, knowledge and how to implement these methods. Training should include experiential conflict resolution skills training workshops for preschool teachers in gang-affected areas. It is anticipated that such training and support would increase teachers' and children's peace-making and peacebuilding agency. This would promote a more dynamic and effective early learning environment which is more conducive to academic achievement. Continuous assessment should be conducted to monitor and further improve teacher performance in the subject area.

Preschools in high-gang communities are in dire need of peace education resources as most of the participating schools in this study were struggling to survive. The need for context sensitivity (relevancy in gang contexts), cultural sensitivity (sensitivity to local culture- how locals engage with gangs) cannot be over-emphasised.

Training in danger management for preschool teachers for themselves and the children in their care. As reported by teachers in this study, they must devise their own strategies for keeping themselves and their children safe from gang fights.

Specifically, the provision of psycho-social support for teachers who themselves are often traumatised as victims of gang violence in these communities where they live and teach needs to be prioritised. This is critical as most teachers in the study reported chronic psychological distress resulting from community violence exposure and that daily routines are severely restricted due to gang violence. The negative impact of the cumulative adversity on teachers and children is justification for urgent

development and provision of trauma-informed preschool models to support the well-being of violence-exposed teachers and young children.

It is important to note that these recommendations are based on data from a specific demographic and requires a curriculum that addresses community violence, specifically gang violence and its impact on early learning in the poorest communities of South Africa. Further, general recommendations are briefly provided in the final chapter (Chapter Eight) of the thesis. The next chapter describes the specific details of the intervention component developed for the action research study.

Chapter Seven: Intervention - Peace Education as a Transformative Strategy in The Community of Lavender Hill on The Cape Flats

7.1. Introduction

The intervention component of the action research study was carried out amongst a group of preschool teachers in the gang-affected community of Lavender Hill on the Cape Flats, Cape Town, over a two-and-a-half-year period (from 2019 to 2021). This chapter opens with a brief outline of the purpose of the study, thereafter it provides a profile of Lavender Hill and presents the goal of the intervention. The intervention plan is discussed in its pre-COVID-19 lockdown form, thereafter the impact of COVID-19 on the early childhood and development sector and implementation of this study's programme are discussed. Lastly, the development of a peace skills training manual as an outcome was detailed.

The action research portion of this study was undertaken with the objective of exploring the perceptions of preschool teachers, and the existing coping strategies related to chronic gang violence within their neighbourhood. Utilising the capacities of teachers, a peace education programme was developed and implemented as a strategy to transform the dominant ethos of violence and to build positive peace from an early age. Understanding the perceptions of preschool teachers based on their experiences with gang violence, addressed a gap in the research regarding the presence of peaceful conflict resolution education for preschool children in high gang-victimised communities.

Peace education, as part of a peacebuilding intervention for preschool teachers in Lavender Hill, is a strategy to mitigate the impact of violence and promote an alternative path to violence. The goals of the intervention as planned (pre-COVID-19), based on the findings from the interviews with preschool teachers, were previously outlined in Chapter Five as follows:

1) To implement a classroom-based peace education programme designed to assist preschool teachers in promoting a culture of peace in the classroom.
2) To increase preschool children's peaceful problem-solving behaviours and play.
3) To determine if and how the programme increases preschool children's awareness and understanding of peace.

7.2. Lavender Hill

Lavender Hill can be characterised as having a hybrid character (City of Cape Town 2013). It is an asset-vulnerable community in terms of labour (high unemployed populous), human capital (high drug abuse and low-level education), productive assets (housing is often a valuable asset in poor urban households, but the majority of houses in the area are rented from the state or informal structures), household relations (absent fathers and insufficient or non-payment of maintenance) and social capital (trust from social ties has been eroded between those who benefit from criminal activities and those who feel victimised), based on the five elements of asset vulnerability identified in Moser's framework (1998: 4) in the Democracy Development Plan (DDP) (Hot, 2012).

Decades of systematic state neglect and violence enacted by gangs upon the lives of people on the Cape Flats, has become a normalised part of living for residents who live in daily fear. The profusion and impunity with which gangs on the Cape Flats operate deeply affects all members of the community, as the might of the gangs is indiscriminate. Gangs cause untold disruption, chaos and dysfunction that has wide-ranging and devasting implications for community life and particularly, women and children. As noted in previous chapters, children witness high levels of gang violence and come to accept it as a normal part of life (Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo 2021). During the course of the research, teachers sent videos via WhatsApp of gang shootings to the researcher. Numerous incidences of gang violence with young children as killed as innocent bystanders took place across the Cape Flats (including Lavender Hill) throughout the completion of this study.

Identified as one of the sites for the forcible relocation of families of colour to the Cape Flats, Lavender Hill was established between 1972 and 1974 under the GAA (1950) and is located approximately 24 kilometres from the Cape Town city centre (City of Cape Town 2013). Chapter Two provided a contextual overview of the apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act (GAA) under which these racially segregated neighbourhoods were established and where gang violence took hold, substantiated by a number of authors such as Luyt and Foster 2001; Petrus 2015a; Samara 2011; Standing 2006; Pinnock 1984 and Kinnes 2000. According to the 2011 Census, Lavender Hill is a poor and predominantly coloured community (95 percent) with an estimated total population of 32 598 (Stats SA 2012)[9].

[9] In a telephonic conversation on 30 July 2024, with Marita Petersen, City of Cape Town Ward Councillor for Lavender Hill, confirmed that the latest statistics for Census 2022 had not yet been released. Councillor Petersen advised that since Lavender Hill is regarded as a static community and no real development has taken place to change the demographics, the 2011 census statistics would still be relevant.

7.2.1 Education and income

According to the 2011 census data only 19 percent of the people over the age of 20 have a grade 12 level of education and just one percent have some level of higher or tertiary education (Statistics South Africa 2012). Whilst the South African national average unemployment rate is percent, only 15 percent of people between the ages of 15 - 64 are employed in Lavender Hill, with 59 percent of households having a monthly income of R3 200 or less (City of Cape Town 2013). These socio-economic indicators are reflective of a community with low income and education levels, and a high rate of unemployment. In the abovementioned telephonic conversation on 30 July 2024, the ward councillor for Lavender Hill advised the researcher that the youth unemployment rate in Lavender Hill is an estimated 72%.

7.2.2 Women and Children

The institutionalisation of criminal activity in Lavender Hill has contributed to the view that the police are unable to effectively address these issues, especially the problem of gangs (Hot 2012). Unsurprisingly, many residents in Lavender Hill feel unprotected and live in fear of retribution from gangs for standing up against crime in the area (Hot 2012). Women comprise 51.7 percent of the residents of Lavender Hill and are at higher risk of domestic abuse and financial vulnerability (City of Cape Town 2013) due to lack of child maintenance support from fathers (Hot 2012). This leaves children in Lavender Hill, particularly vulnerable (Bowers 2005: 167 cited in Hot 2012). Additional factors such as poverty, malnutrition, overcrowding and foetal alcohol syndrome and high school drop-out rates, contribute to the vulnerability of children in gang recruitment and drug addiction (Hot 2012). The previously mentioned NGO, Learning in Reach that was actively working in Lavender Hill, assisted the researcher to gain access to the group of preschool teachers who participated in the present study. Their website currently states that poverty, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse are prevalent in the community of Lavender Hill.

7.2.3 Housing

Housing in Lavender Hill is predominantly low-cost, derelict blocks of double and three-story apartment buildings – known as Courts (City of Cape Town 2013). These building were poorly constructed by the apartheid government, with staircases falling apart and broken windows. These flats have not been maintained nor upgraded for decades (Hot 2012). Over the last three decades, informal housing has been constructed in Lavender Hill and 16 percent of residents live in shacks (City of Cape Town 2013). New Reconstruction Development Plan (RDP) housing has also been constructed in the area by the City of Cape Town. This housing is subsidised, but due to the high unemployment rate, many people fail to qualify for monthly bond repayments (Hot 2012). Inadequate housing conditions are inextricably linked to increased vulnerability from health issues due to a lack of a sense of safety,

security and a lack of belonging to the community. The ward councillor for Lavender Hill has recently confirmed that the area has 1964 rental stock, and that government is working towards achieving home ownership for residents.

7.2.4 Derelict Parks and Recreational Facilities

Lavender Hill has three community parks: a sport complex that includes four soccer fields, two netball and two basketball courts, as well as a cricket field and a rugby field (Hot 2012). However, the parks and sportsgrounds in the neighbourhood are in a poor state or destroyed. Participating teachers in the study confirmed that a fully equipped play area for children was erected by the City of Cape Town but was vandalised to the extent of being burned to the ground and only a black patch of ash now remained (study participants).

7.2.5 Social Cohesion

Poor communities, like Lavender Hill, often experience high concentrations of low-income or unemployed families, lack of basic services and tend to have high levels of residential instability, making it difficult to develop strong social bonds and support networks that support social cohesion (Hot 2012). With little or no formal institutionalised presence, these communities become very unsafe. Undeniably, South Africa's long socio-historical trajectory of gang violence, is an enormous social challenge in Lavender Hill.

7.2.6 Pre-COVID-19 Intervention Plan

The intervention prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was planned to be implemented in three phases, namely: teacher, child and parent peace skills programmes. This was based on the identified needs from the questionnaires and focus group sessions with teachers for assistance with practical strategies to help children learn new peaceful behaviours in the classroom. As discussed in the previous chapter, some respondents expressed that it was important for them as practitioners to have access to books on community violence and the skills to handle conflict. Respondents further expressed that these resources be culturally specific and tailored to meet both the community and their needs. This particular suggestion is an outcome of the action plan component of the study, which is further described in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Part of the intervention plan was to solicit the involvement of parents in the programme to reinforce peace skills learning that the children would be learning. This was not only based on research suggestions that parenting practices affect children's emotional and behavioural problems (such as the Salvadoran study of 2013 by Rojas-Flores), but particularly in high-gang-violence communities, where

parents are sometimes gang members (study participants). Therefore, a parent peace skills programme was also envisaged with the aim to reduce and promote parent peace skills at home.

A four-day (one to two days on the introduction to peace skills) teacher training workshop in content and delivery of a peace education programme was planned, followed by a weekly review of the lesson plans and for the researcher to co-teach lessons twice weekly over a ten-week period. Parents would be contacted by the principals to inform them of the peace skills programme being implemented in the classroom and to invite parents to participate in a conflict resolution skills training programme. The intervention was planned for 2020, however, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown was implemented in South Africa and the ECD sector was officially instructed by the Department of Social Development, to close. Bear in mind that, in South Africa, ECD programmes are primarily provided by "Not for Profit Organisations, subsistence entrepreneurs or micro–social enterprises, mostly by women of colour, based on community needs with limited cash flow, which places them below the minimum wage" (Ilifa Labantwana, 2020:06 cited in Butland 2023). ECDs play a crucial role in providing care to many of South Africa's poorest children by "allowing caregivers to either work or seek work and are thus as important as any other part of the economy" (Ilifa Labantwana, 2020:06 cited in Butland 2023).

7.2.7 Onset and Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the ECD Sector

The Department of Social Development issued an official statement that the ECD sector must close from the 18th of March 2020 to 15th April 2020 and then further extended the date due to the continuation of COVID-19 pandemic (Department of Social Development 2020). In South Africa, the ECD sector has suffered historic disinvestment, particularly in low-economic communities and its closure threatened to destroy the sector if it did not receive government support (Ilifa 2020; National ECD Alliance 2020; SmartStart 2020; SA Congress for ECD 2020). Under a pandemic of this nature, ECD's in the most vulnerable communities, which were already just getting by before the pandemic, were threatened with permanent closures (King *et al.* 2021, Bipath and Aina 2021).

A report authored by the ECD sector, along with many partners in the sector, was submitted to President Ramaphosa on the 23rd of April 2020 to raise concern about the catastrophic impact of ECD closure in the absence of urgent government assistance, and the need for the sector to be a priority within the government's COVID-19 responses (King *et al.* 2021). The report stated that an estimated 20 000 to 30 000 ECD operators faced closure, with 118 000 to 175 000 people employed in the sector, potentially losing their jobs (Ilifa 2020; National ECD Alliance 2020; SmartStart 2020; SA Congress for ECD 2020). Closure of ECD's meant more than the loss of jobs but also resulted in the disruption of the development of children's core capacities, care and critically needed nutrition programmes in the poorest communities. Their analysis further approximated that one million children across South Africa would be stranded by the end of September 2020 if ECD's were not reopened (King *et al.* 2021).

Following a court challenge by the sector and other interested bodies, on the 7th of July 2020 it was ruled that ECD's must be reopened. However, the closure of ECDs had profoundly impacted centres in the most vulnerable communities. One of the casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown was the ECD centres in the community of Lavender Hill, where the research intervention was planned. ECDs in Lavender Hill are not unlike those that serve the poorest communities across the country and the Cape Flats - they are small, informal and mostly operate out of private homes or rented venues. They are often not well-resourced both in terms of materials and staff (who are mostly women). Typically, the staff component is small (with low levels of formal education) and only earn subsistence stipends (usually below the minimum wage) without formal employment contracts and benefits (King *et al.* 2021). This means that many centres are not registered with the Unemployment Benefit Fund (UIF).

In April 2021, government announced relief measures to assist ECD Centres and parents during COVID-19 (King *et al.* 2021). However, this was limited to ECD centres registered with the South African Revenue Services (SARS), registered for UIF or registered as a Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) company. Government child support grants and other grants were increased, a newly introduced COVID-19 Relief of Distress Grant for persons not receiving any grant or UIF, was provided for approximately six months (Ebrahim, Martin and Excell 2021).

Approximately three million people in South Africa lost their jobs in 2020, thereby increasing the unemployment rate in what is regarded as one of the most unequal countries in the world (Munir 2021). South Africa's high unemployment rate remains a major challenge. While on the one hand, government has failed to create to create sufficient jobs, on the other hand, South Africa is constrained by an unskilled attributed to the "lack of resources, underdeveloped transport, crime and the poor state of the government-run educational system (World Bank 2018, cited in Munir 2018: 8). The largescale job losses due to COVID-19 (Munir 2021; King *et al.* 2021) meant that many parents were unable to pay school fees. Since there is a strong reliance by ECDs in these areas on parents, this in turn meant that centres were not able to pay salaries and cover operating costs, especially the unsubsidised ones.

This financial loss, coupled with the strain of meeting the COVID-19 health and safety standards in order to reopen, such as the cost involved in buying masks, sanitisers and/or gloves and social distancing crippled most ECD centres (King *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, social distancing in a class of multiple children in small spaces, in areas where children cannot play outside because of gang shootings, was incredibly challenging. All these issues compounded the struggle to keep operating and resulted in the permanent closure of many ECDs. This was expected to continue beyond lockdown as caregivers in poor communities remained constrained in their ability to recover from the deep, practical impacts, including Lavender Hill.

7.2.8 Impact on Community-Based Intervention During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Lavender Hill

During August 2020, when COVID-19 lockdown was in place, the researcher had a meeting with one principal to discuss the impact that the lockdown had had on the preschools in the area and the implications for proceeding with the planned intervention for peace skills training workshops with teachers. The meeting was candid, and it was made apparent that the intervention was unlikely to proceed as initially planned due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the ECD sector in the area. What was supposed to have been a temporary closure of preschools under lockdown, eventually resulted in the permanent closure of most of the ECD centres in the area. The pandemic had deepened their economic vulnerability that preceded COVID-19. Many preschools could not withstand the substantial losses suffered and were forced to close their doors permanently. Preschools could also not afford to reopen their doors as they could not afford to buy the necessary equipment in order to meet government's criteria for compliance.

In a follow-up meeting with the ECD principal regarding the planned intervention, when the researcher asked how to get hold of the parents, she was told that contacting parents would be difficult as they were dealing with their most immediate needs during the lockdown. The researcher then explored the possibility of using WhatsApp to communicate with parents and perhaps sending them lessons on how to talk about peace with their children. Unfortunately, the principal did not respond well to this suggestion, clearly stating that many parents did not have the time to home school their children and that the WhatsApp was strictly used for administrative purposes, with parents being unable to respond.

The principal also spoke on behalf of the ECD teachers reporting on their shift in lack of enthusiasm for the implementation of the programme due to them being "hungry" and unable to receive any teachings that the researcher may impart in their current state of poverty and unemployment. They also complained about not having sufficient time to implement the programme, with all of the pressures that had come with the COVID-19 pandemic and stated that they did not need any additional work.

The Lavender Hill ECD sector, as many others in the poorest areas, have had to shift character to one of survivalist livelihood mode, as imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic outbreak thus necessitated that the researcher devises an alternative strategy to develop the intervention in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most viable option was to develop a peace skills training manual, which would still be an outcome, not only for teachers at the four remaining preschools (of the original six schools pre-COVID-19), but one which could be used by other similar preschools. The proposal was communicated to the principals at these schools and agreed upon.

The Basic Introduction Peace Education Manual for ECD Educators (Appendix H) developed as an outcome of this study, presents peace education that is culturally contextualised and emerged from the concerns, motivations, and experiences of preschools teachers in gang-affected communities on the Cape Flats. The manual was designed based on the needs and aspirations expressed by teachers during the interview stage, focus groups discussions and from questionnaires. This also addresses objectives three, four and five of the study **r**egarding developing, implementing and evaluating the intervention (Appendices A, B and C in the manual).

Teachers were given a draft of the manual to test with children in the class over a six-week period. Feedback showed that the manual was well-received by the teachers. The manual consisted of an assessment before the peace education programme (Appendix A in the manual):

1. Why do you think a peace education programme is or is not needed at your school/in your class?

   Most teachers felt that peace education was necessary to "have a solid foundation, make our environment a better place, peaceful", that "children came from various home environments and school is often their safe haven and "being comfortable and feeling safe at school plays a vital role in their well-being".

2. What, if any, negative effects/impacts a peace education programme might have on the children in the class/community?

Teachers responded that:

> "there will be so much happening if they don't implement a peace programme and the effects will be drug abuse, gangsterism and peer pressure" and that it would also be "uplifting and motivating for all the children".

3. What do think would be the greatest benefit of a peace education programme for the children?

   Teachers felt that a peace programme "will sustain them [children], give them peace of mind, relax their bodies, keep fit in activities provided at school and occupy them".

Appendix B in the manual makes provision for an assessment after the peace education programme was implemented:

1. What do you think of when I say the word peace?
2. Do you like peace?
3. How do you know when there is peace?
4. What makes you feel peaceful?

Some of the answers included:

> "no fighting or arguments and comfort"; "comfort and positive space of mind", "calmness and quietness" and that
>
> "peace was something we all need in our everyday life, even in our world we live in today".

They felt peaceful when they could feel safe "in the heart to walk around in their community".

Appendix C in the manual enquired about the actual programme teachers implemented at the school:

1. Did children go into the peace area on their own?
2. Which is their favourite peace activity?
2. Which activity did they like but was not a favourite?
3. Which activity do you think made them (children) feel more happy/peaceful?
4. Which activities did not work?

This section indicated that the peace activities children responded to the most were storytelling, painting, dancing and singing, in other words, the creative and artistic activities. This also align with teacher reports in Chapter Six on classroom strategies of how they use playing games, dancing and turning music on loud in the class as a strategy to drown out the sound of gang shootings.

Teachers' comments and ideas were incorporated in the manual. The manual featured a basic introduction to activities and teaching children about peace and titled "Little Peace Ambassadors". The manual also included the benefits of peace education, guidelines on how ECD educators could teach peace education, a description of what peace education is, teacher self-reflection, and activities for Peace Education in the Classroom (included in Appendix G).

During interviews with teaches, it was apparent to the researcher that teachers' conceptualisations of peace education in their community was not easily articulated. The concept of peace education seemed too abstract. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to provide a basic introduction to the concept of peace education. By doing this, the concept might appear less intangible and elusive. A better understanding of peace education would help teachers begin to recognise the value of peace education and the benefits that may accrue to both themselves, children and the community.

The topic on reflection was included in the manual as it is a necessary condition of peace education that teachers be willing to learn from their reflections and experiences. Before bringing the concept of peace into the classroom, it is vital that teachers self-reflect, in an open and honest way, what peace means to them. Danielson and McGreal (2000: 24 cited in Bissessar 2015) underscores the importance of self-reflection: "Few activities are more powerful for professional learning than reflection on practice."

Reflective teaching also enables teachers to take a more active role in their professional growth and development as peace educators (Bissessar 2015).

Next, teachers would then need to be assisted with practical ways in which to introduce peace skills into the classrooms and incorporated into the daily curriculum. Given the context of poorly resourced communities, the peace related activities and suggestions on how to engage the children to learn about peace, were thoughtfully selected. All the activities are able to make use of resources that are easily accessible and perhaps easily available in the community and home. It is even possible that families could contribute to the inexpensive materials for the peace activities.

The data in the study overwhelmingly showed that teachers were seeing the effects on children of exposure to high-levels of gang violence in the community. Based on the numerous examples provided by teachers in the study of how children mimic gang fights and shootings and turning toys into guns, including practical ideas for peaceful activities in the manual, would assist teachers in introducing ways of helping children imagine what peace looks, sounds and feel like and alternative, peaceful behaviours. Teacher reports previously stated in Chapter 6, justify the topic inclusion in the manual:

> "Our children take a toy and make like it is a gun. It's part of life to them" (Respondent Q9).
>
> "The learners have a tendency to portray or act out what they see and hear from gangs. Children (mostly boys) used Lego blocks that they play with to build guns and pretend to shoot each other" (Respondent Q12).
>
> "The children show us how these gangsters run with their guns and where they keep it". Respondent Q11)
>
> "Bah-bah! bah-bah! That is how they play. Guns are part of everyday living, even though we tell them not to play with guns". (Respondent Q31).
>
> "90 percent of their play is about guns, no matter what toy it is, it will be a gun." (Respondent Q25).
>
> "Even the babies (laughs). I have one to two-year olds that will take a doll and shoot each other with it and that is the gun. That's how they play" (Respondent Q25).

In summary, the researcher developed the manual to serve as a basic introduction to the subject matter of peace education for preschool teachers in marginalised gang-affected communities. Key to the development of the manual was the views collected from the teachers who participated in the study through various data collection methods used. Another key factor prior to the development of the manual was that teachers critically identified the need for such a manual to have high resonance with them. With that in mind, the manual was user-friendly and locally adaptable with resources at their disposal for suggested activities.

As a guide, the manual serves to provide a foundation to increase teachers' personal awareness, inspiration, motivation and skill to introduce peace education activities into the school programme. The manual seeks to assist preschool teachers to instil in children the values, attitudes, behaviours and skills that nurture peaceful communication and relationships. In this way, the manual supports preschool teachers with improving their peacebuilding agency and preventing children from gang involvement and violence in the community.

7.2.9 Transformative model

Based on the study findings, the researcher developed a potential model that suggests some of the various elements that need to be considered when planning a peace education manual in gang-affected communities.

To consider the dynamics of a community with high rates of violence, one that would provide the support needed to allow peace education to be effective, the researcher developed a potential model that would consider the dynamics and needs of a community with high rates of violence. The model, depicted in Figure 8.1, incorporates some of the elements of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory that were used as the theoretical framework of this study. Early childhood development is a key factor in transformational development and the model suggests what factors need to be considered when planning a peace education intervention in areas affected by gang violence. An explanation that supports the proposed model follows.

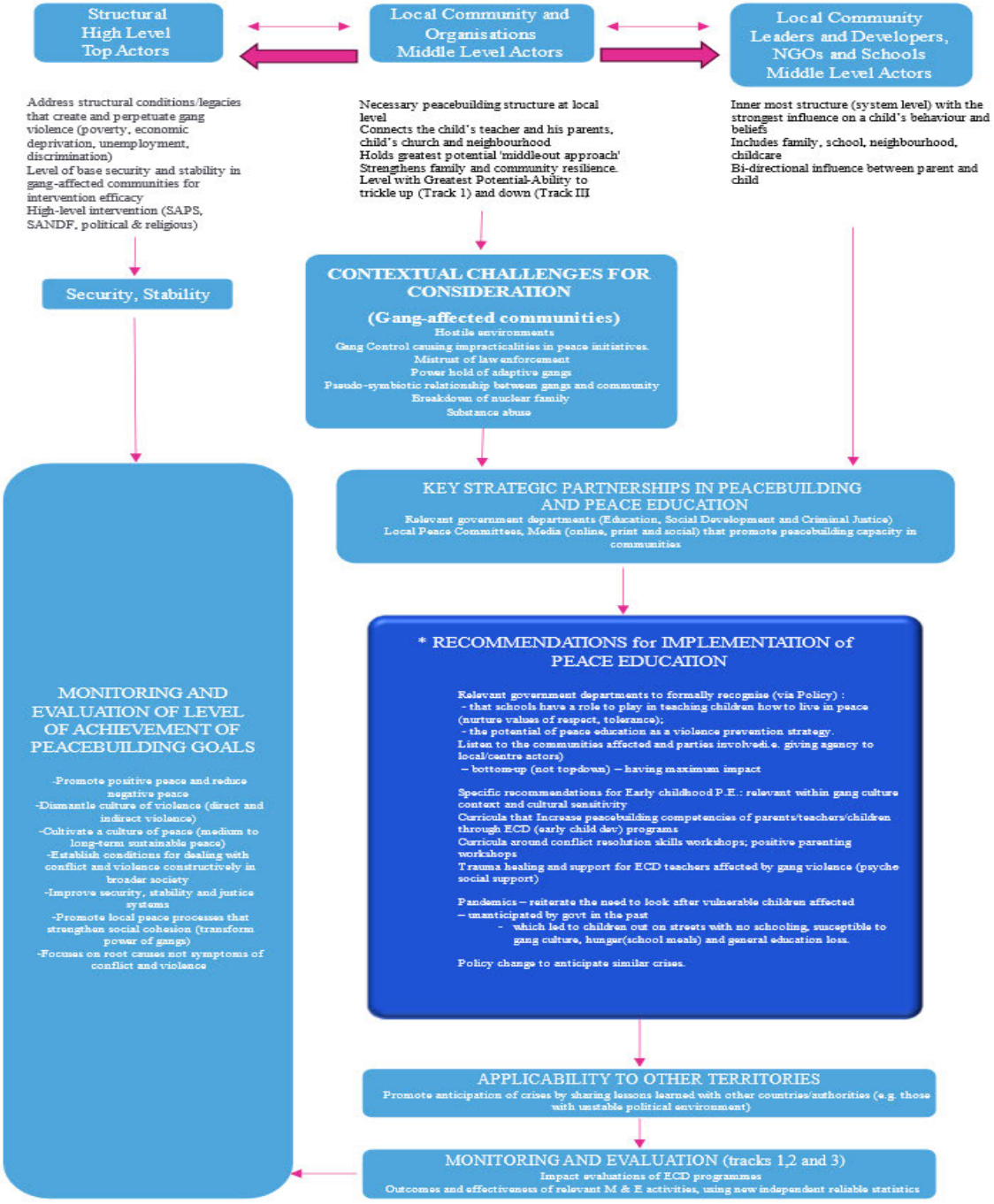

Figure 8.1: **Model to Support Transformative Early Childhood Peace Education in Gang-Affected Areas. (source: self).**

As the thesis argues, peace education alone cannot bring about the desired transformation within gang-affected communities. To be wholly transformative, peace education initiatives need to be part of a holistic approach to dealing with high-gang violence areas and supported from all levels in society. From the highest-level actors (macro level or 'Track 1'), necessary structural adjustments to the conditions that create and perpetuate gang violence (such as economic deprivation, unemployment, poverty) needs to be dealt with decisively.

Government efforts to stem the power and economy of gangs have had limited impact as gangs are able to rearrange, restructure, and adapt to challenges by government to disrupt their criminal enterprises. When gangs are allowed to govern areas, they create chaos, erode security and stability within communities and communities cannot be expected to deal with gangs on their own. Communities are not equipped, nor have the local capacity to negotiate with gangs who are not interested in peace. High-level intervention (as seen with the deployment of the SANDF to high gang violence areas on the Cape Flats) might be necessary to bring a level of base security and stabilise communities for peace education intervention efficacy. However, while necessary, this is not sufficient as such peacekeeping responses do not bring the systemic change to the underlying root causes needed to achieve sustainable peacebuilding and transformation in these communities.

Meso-level actors ('Track 2') or the "middle-out approach" (Lederach 1997), such as community and organisations, hold the most potential as a peacebuilding structure at the local level that sustain long-term peacebuilding processes. As high-impact actors, they can influence what happens at 'Track 1' and 'Track 3' levels by trickling up and down (Lederach 1997). At the grassroots level, (micro-level or 'Track 3', local community leaders and developers provide support to the middle level, but whose activities can still impact the local level irrespective of a trickling down from 'Track 2'.

Contextual challenges communities must necessarily be considered when planning peace interventions. In hostile environments such as where gangs are in power, it creates a difficult context in which effective peacebuilding strategies with family, schools, and social cohesion, are reduced. Power position of gangs in communities makes it difficult to counter-balance the negative influence of gangs. Communities where authorities have consistently failed to protect them from the onslaught of gang violence, understandably view criminal justice (e.g. police) structures with mistrust. Other contextual challenges include economic deprivation, high youth unemployment, single-motherhood as the dominant family structure, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence as well as the symbiotic relationship between gangs and community who act as "good Samaritan" due to government neglect in these communities. These challenges portend poor long-term prognosis for peace initiatives and therefore need the support of key system actors. These key strategic partnerships in peacebuilding initiatives comprise relevant government departments (Department of Basic Education, Social Development and Criminal Justice),

Local Peace Committees (LPCs) as well as the media (online, print and social) that promote peacebuilding capacity in communities (Yorlay, 2024).

Giving agency to local actors is central to peacebuilding processes. This bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach has more impact when beneficiaries own the process. This is supported by authors such as Paffenholz (2013), who writes about the importance of local involvement in peacebuilding efforts. Hancock (2023:427) further describes the failures of top-down peacebuilding approaches: "More importantly, many peacebuilding projects have failed to be embraced fully by those whom they were supposed to help: the individuals and communities attempting to rebuild their lives in post-conflict countries." Local Peace Committees (LPCs) are necessary structures as they can provide a framework for implementing peacebuilding concepts (Yorlay 2024). LPCs also empower local communities by directly involving local members and giving them control over decisions and implementation (Haider 2009: 65, cited in Yorlay 2024). Another benefit of LPCs is they utilise local knowledge and skills that represent a community-based approach (Yorlay 2024).

The proposed model suggests some of the necessary elements for sustainable conflict transformation when implementing peacebuilding initiatives in gang-specific contexts not limited to South Africa. It is applicable to countries elsewhere that have social conflicts. Therefore, it would be prudent to promote the anticipation of crises by sharing lessons learned with countries/authorities elsewhere, e.g., those with an unstable political environment such as the current social conflict unfolding in the United Kingdom and Europe. Some general recommendations put forth in the model for the implementation of peace education are listed and expanded upon in the Chapter Eight of the thesis.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the specifics of the intervention action research component of this study amongst a group of preschool teachers in the gang-ridden community of Lavender Hill on the Cape Flats, Cape Town. A community profile presented the baseline conditions for the context of the study area and for exploring the perceptions, experiences, personal gang victimisations of preschool teachers and their existing coping strategies. This insight, pre-COVID-19, informed the initial intervention plan for the early childhood peace education programme in collaboration with the teachers. The added stressors of the onset and post-pandemic, radically impacted upon the already struggling preschool community in Lavender Hill and necessitated a modification of the original intervention plan. The design of a peace skills training manual to assist preschool teachers in promoting a culture of peace in the classroom as a critical strategy for transforming violence to building positive peace from an early age in high gang-victimised communities was an outcome of the action study. The intervention highlighted the critical need for relevant support for preschool teachers that considers their unique understanding of the challenges of implementing peace education in high-gang violence communities.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This study sought to navigate the effects of gang violence on the preschool population in gang-affected areas, it also sought to examine the potential efficacy of peace education in this environment. Within peace education, the principle focus has been on achieving a culture of non-violence, through shared knowledge, skills and appropriate strategies to transform challenging situations. Accordingly, the strongest focus of peace education has been at a broader level where it has had a general impact but in specific contexts, such as in communities affected daily by gang violence, peace education seems to have had less of a focus. The theoretical framing of the study adopted the ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner (1971) for examining the key research questions and sub-questions of the study. Viewing peace education from this perspective has not received much academic attention in the past.

8.2. A Review and Summary of the Findings

The section reviews the chapters and provides a summary of the key findings of the collected empirical data of the present study that examined the perceptions and experiences of preschool teachers of gang violence in the community from data collected over a two-and-a-half-year period (from 2019 to 2021) among preschool teachers in gang-affected communities on the on the Cape Flats, in Cape Town. The study explored the potential of early childhood peace education as a transformative strategy in these communities.

Chapter One has provided an analysis of the aims and objectives of this study and presented the backdrop and background for the research. Whilst the chapter highlighted the location selected for the study and the reasons behind its selection, it also described the sampling methods, data collection and study methodology. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the importance and significance of this study within the context of increasing the quantity and quality around peace education interventions in early childhood for marginalised communities with high gang violence levels. This would importantly address the dearth in research which currently exists in this area.

Chapter Two illuminated the decades-long and unique historical context in which Cape Town's gang crisis has developed. This is important to acknowledge South Africa's policy of racial segregation, known as apartheid, the implementation of the GAA (1950) and the forced mass removals of thousands of people of colour to the Cape Flats that has created Cape Town's most notorious gangs. In nearly than thirty decades which followed the dawn of South Africa's new democracy, gangs have metastasised into powerful enterprises that govern many poor communities on the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2027). The chapter also explored the political call for the deployment of the SANDF to the Cape Flats. This was widely

viewed as an incompetent response by government to address the problem of gangs and gangsterism on the Cape Flats (Kinnes 2019; Pinnock 2020; De Vos 2019).

Chapter Three discussed the study's main theoretical framework, namely, ecological systems theory and the reasons for selecting this theory. Due to its resonance with the understanding of youth gangs and gangsterism in communities on the Cape Flats it was regarded as appropriate. By situating the study within ecological systems and drawing on the theoretical underpinnings, the chapter discussion offered an analysis of preschool teachers located in communities affected by gang violence.

Furthermore, the chapter aimed to present peace education as necessary to promote a sustainable culture of peace (peacebuilding). A myopic view of dealing only with the more visible and direct forms of violence and not the root causes of violence (such as poverty, gender discrimination, and inequality) is insufficient. In the context of South Africa, it is imperative that both physical and structural violence must be the agenda of peace education and especially critical peace education, for the creation of a just and sustainable peace.

The literature review **(**Chapter 4) has presented a critical consideration of the current literature related to childhood violence exposure, including community violence and more specifically, gang violence and gave a brief mention of the phenomenon of gang violence in South Africa, particularly communities on the Cape Flats in Cape Town.

The review of the literature has identified that relatively less research has focused on community violence and preschool children as compared to older children. Consequently, there exists a less developed research base in the literature, revealing a dearth of research on the preschool population as a subgroup of educators in black and coloured areas appear in the community violence literature. Chapter Four also considered the risk factors and protective processes present among children exposed to community violence, and the factors that mediate the effects thereof and moderate children's response to community violence. Crucially, the literature reviews considered some of the gaps on community violence and peace education and the danger and protection management strategies of teachers at preschools located in high-gang-violence communities in countries like El Salvador and Colombia who share similar histories to South Africa.

In Chapter Five the reader was given an overview of what is entailed in carrying out action research and the purposes of carrying out action research projects. This chapter also highlighted the different methodologies implemented in the study to select the location and participants, the data collection instruments and data analysis techniques.

Chapter Six relates to the findings of the study. It presented the key findings emerging from the empirical data collected over a two-and-a-half-year period (from 2019 to 2021) amongst a group of

preschool teachers in gang-affected communities on the Cape Flats, in Cape Town. These key findings laid the foundation for the analysis based on the theoretical framework and discusses the findings.

Chapter Seven related the intervention phase of the action research. The chapter provided a profile of the study community of Lavender Hill, presented the goal of the intervention and outlined the intervention plans pre-COVID-19 lockdown. It then proceeded with a discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on the ECD sector and programme implementation. This chapter also detailed the development of a peace skills training manual for preschool teachers in gang-affected communities as an outcome of the action component of the study.

Chapter Eight drew on the empirical evidence that brought together the lessons learnt during this study. It also reviewed the substantial contributions that the thesis can make to the arena of peacebuilding, primarily within the demographic of younger children and their teachers in high gang communities. This chapter also highlighted areas for further examination and inquiry, limitations of the study, recommendations, policy and other social development priorities to institutionalise peace education.

8.3 Key findings of the Study

This section highlights some of the study's key findings as follows:

8.3.1 High-gang violence exposure

A prevailing theme in teachers' questionnaire responses and focus group discussions, revealed that teachers and children alike were overwhelmed by the level of gang violence where gang shootings were normalised as part of everyday life in these communities. Preschool teachers reported that they and the children that they teach had high-gang violence exposure with individual, family and environmental factors as contributing influences.

It is difficult for schools located in communities affected by high-level gang violence to provide a conducive learning environment. Promoting protective factors remains extremely challenging in marginalised, gang-affected communities where gang violence is out of control. School disruptions due to gangs and highly disorganised or dysfunctional families (which are the norm in the community) antithetical to promoting foundations for building strong and social bonds.

8.3.2 Victimisation and Trauma

Most of the study participants were highly victimised, not just in their fear of gang violence but also through experiencing gang victimisation, directly and vicariously, within the past three years, prior to the commencement of the study interviews in 2019.

Results revealed that teachers and children were victimised and traumatised by ongoing gang shootings in their communities. Findings also revealed the adverse effects of gang violence upon preschool teachers who were traumatised from personal gang victimisation. This was coupled with the secondary trauma from the children in their classroom who routinely shared stories of their exposure to gang violence and drugs, both in the home and wider community. Consequently, the negative impact of the cumulative adversity on teachers and children, highlighted the need for the development of trauma-informed preschool models to support the well-being of adversity-exposed young children. Conceptions of peace, under these conditions where gangs relentlessly enact violence upon communities, are a barrier to peacebuilding efforts.

8.3.3 Strategies

By force of circumstance, preschool teachers in gang-dominated communities such as Lavender Hill on the Cape Flats had to devise creative danger management strategies for keeping themselves and their learners safe from gang violence while performing their daily routines of walking to and from school. These strategies have been extended to while being at school within the classroom to help children cope with the physical, emotional and psychological effects of gang violence. Teachers reported that children's play themes were dominated by violence through the re-enactment of common scenarios of gang shootings. This was a prevailing theme, particularly, among boys. Specifics of these danger management strategies used by teachers are detailed in Chapter Six of the thesis.

8.8.4 The need for assistance

Due to the high level of drugs and gang-violence exposure of children in the streets as well as in the home, teacher expressed concern that their efforts to educate children about the dangers of guns and drugs, were being negated by the high level of gang violence in the home, on the streets and community. Dealing with the negative impact that gang violence had on the teachers and children was abundantly clear.

Teachers demonstrated deep insight into the problem of gangs and gang violence and could therefore clearly articulate an understanding of their needs. They offered specific and concrete suggestions for the type of interventions they needed and emphasised the importance of these interventions being culturally sensitive. Some of the needs expressed are incorporated in the recommendations section (8.7) below.

8.3.4 COVID-19 Pandemic

Preschool teachers displayed remarkable resiliency during the pandemic. They were instrumental in coordinated community responses to gang violence amid the enormous challenges of gang violence and

existing resource-deprivation. These challenges were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as communities had to deal with inadequate and or absent state response. As earlier noted in the thesis, findings of the research indicate that the lockdown measures, including the prolonged closure of schools implemented to control the spread of coronavirus, rendered many families, food insecure.

Gangs, too, were resilient during the COVID-19 lockdown. Remarkably, gangs adapted and turned the lockdown period into one of opportunity. They adapted, regrouped, improvised, re-strategised, diversified, expanded their illicit income streams, went into recruitment overdrive of youth and young children. Strategically, gangs filled the gap of loss of household income, school closures and food shortages brought on by the pandemic and driving shifts that are likely to persist in the post-COVID landscape (GI-TOC 2021). Essentially, the main drivers of gangsterism before Covid were accentuated during lockdown and gangs continued with business as usual.

8.3. Thesis Argument

The study's overarching research question was outlined as "Can peace education be a used as a potential transformative strategy by preschools located high-gang violence communities on the Cape Flats in Cape Town?" The study argues that ongoing, high levels of gang violence on the Cape Flats are an impediment to the salience of early childhood peace education as a transformative strategy for preschools located in these communities. Since 1994, South Africa promulgated numerous policies that advance the development of early childhood as an important sector (Boulle *et al*, 2020:01). Despite these improvements, the unredeemable reality is that it remains a struggle to provide optimal early childhood services for children in many black and coloured communities affected daily by the high rates of poverty, unemployment, crime and violence (Butland 2023). Contributing factors such as these continue to conspire to impact the delivery of poor early childhood services in low resourced communities in South Africa and further hampered by constraints imposed by the pandemic.

This research has shown that the teachers have had to deal with numerous aspects of community violence, such as personal histories and trauma of gang victimisation, combined with the secondary trauma emanating from the children in their care; ongoing gang violence; and additionally, the long-term suffering caused by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. All of these challenges pose significant threats to the development and implementation of early childhood peace education interventions in environments of high gang violence. The nature of gang violence in communities on the Cape Flats is so deeply entrenched that peace education alone would not be effective as a transformation strategy. Even if peace education is taught from as early as the preschool years, the deep roots of gang violence that perpetuate the cycle of violence (in the external environment of the children) remain the same.

The findings of this study indicate that, currently, it would be difficult for peace education to change the influence of gangs on children without addressing other key systemic factors that create conditions for gangs to flourish and perpetuate their proliferation in communities. Communities cannot solve the problem of gangs on their own, nor is it reasonable to expect them to. Social interventions, including peace education, need to be supported by structural, cultural reforms as well as political will to address the insecurity and instability brought upon communities by gangs. At present, there is no immediate solution to the structural concerns that allow gangs to thrive. Communities affected by high-gang violence cannot count on any government support needed for macro-level structural change. Without any systemic changes to the conditions that create and perpetuate gangs and prevent base security and stability, peace education will remain severely constrained in achieving its transformative effect in becoming a sustainable alternative to gang violence in affected communities.

Critically, interventions need to take into consideration the social conditions and contextual obstacles (and pandemics) that might limit their translation into practice, inhibit agency and narrow possibilities for change (Freire 2014, cited in van Dijk, de Haan and de Winter 2020). When a 'dominant ecology of fear' exists, it "inhibits agency, restricts possibilities to actively resist violence, and virtually dictates community life" Das and Kleinman (2000, cited in van Dijk, de Haan and de Winter 2020: 2). Similarly, Noddings (2008: 90, cited in van Dijk, de Haan and de Winter 2020) poignantly stated that when there is a disconnect of peace from people's social reality, it might result in the dissemination of 'lovely principles that stand little chance of translation into practice". This view is supported by teachers in this study who have resoundingly expressed the deep fear caused by the presence of gang violence in the community.

Although the teachers supported the implementation of a peace education programme (Objective Three), they acknowledged that it would do little to change the environments that the children were in. As revealed by teachers in the study, young children regularly witness gang violence in the community, while they do their best to mitigate the harms to children. Schools are microcosms of the wider community. It is disheartening that teachers' efforts to develop peaceful individuals are overtaken by the high levels of gang violence happening around them.

Peace education does not occur in isolation and does not have the capacity alone to address the problem of gang violence and restore communities. For this reason, a comprehensive and holistic approach is needed in which peace education plays a key role. The researcher acknowledges that the broader reach of peace education and its transformative power would still be severely constrained in contexts where communities such as those on the Cape Flats are experiencing unprecedented levels of gang violence.

8.4. Contribution to the Literature

The answer provided to the research study's overarching question, "Can peace education be a transformative strategy for preschools located in gang-affected areas?" is an important contribution to the literature on peace education. Posing the question is the result of nearly eight years of work in the field of conflict resolution and the researcher's background in criminology and criminal justice. It contributes to the growing literature on peace education by considering several sub-questions as raised in the empirical chapters.

The study expanded the literature of the experiences of preschool teachers when it comes to gang violence and the coping strategies that exist in a community living with chronic gang violence. The use of a peace education manual to increase teachers' capacities is advocated in this study to assist their efforts to deal with violence and teach peaceful means at the ECD level. This satisfies the objectives of the study as iterated in Chapters One, Three, Five and Six. The study made significant contributions to the field of peace education by looking beneath the surface of the observable and provided new insight into the dynamics of gang violence to better understand its influence on the likely efficacy of peace education as a transformative strategy for preschools located in gang-affected areas. The study provides evidence, from the perspectives and experiences of teachers, that gang violence adversely impacted teachers and children at preschools located in gang-affected areas, and that it is an obstacle to meaningful transformative peace education in early childhood. The study thereby explored an aspect of peace education of preschool teachers located in gang-affected areas on the Cape Flats, that until now had not been addressed. The transformative model identifies how peace education efforts can be supported through holistic considerations.

8.5. Reflexive Creativity

The researcher's own journey into researching peace skills education has thrown up interesting challenges through her reflexive creativity in considering it as a transformative strategy. Initially moving from her work as a project coordinator in the mediation and training services project at the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town had inspired her to consider peace education as a transformative strategy with preschool children growing up in areas affected by gangs. The centre had provided conflict resolution skills training for primary and secondary school teachers as key focus areas. The lack of focus on early childhood of the child's developing peace skills planted the seed of interest in the topic. Later in life, challenging behaviours are more resistant to change.

At the start of my research, I met with a eminent South African academic in the field of education. Upon learning about my proposed topic, the individual advised that I would be "wasting my time" as the Department of Education was not interested in peace education and stated that the Department's priority

focus was on academic subjects. In fact, this statement, emphasised the critical need for a study of this nature. In another conversation with a senior official in the Department of Basic Education, I encountered disinterest in the subject matter, confirming what the academic had said.

Two crucially challenging moments occurred during the execution of the study, namely, the government's military deployment to gang areas on the Cape Flats where the study was conducted and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges present moments of moral dilemma as well as personal safety considerations that the researcher grappled with throughout the duration of the study. Ultimately, the study's findings hoped to present a true reflection of the reality of preschool teachers rendering services to children in "war-like" conditions on the Cape Flats.

8.6. Limitations

Firstly, any conclusions that might be drawn from these results should take into consideration the dominance of female participants in the sample. Furthermore, the intervention phase of the study was planned for 2020. With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown, it dictated that the intervention could not be done as originally planned. The extended lockdown of schools meant that the intervention had to be further postponed. When it was eventually possible to meet with principal facilitator for the group of teachers, over the extensive length of time that had passed, many of the schools had not survived the economic impact of the pandemic and were forced too permanently close.

One of the limitations of all phenomenological qualitative research, is the copious amount of data that must be analysed (Creswell 2014; Patton 2002), and the generally small sample sizes that the data is collected from cannot always be generalised (Maxwell et al. 2004; Patton 2002). Data via questionnaires was collected in three gang-violence communities on the Cape Flats to overcome this limitation.

Qualitative research is subjective and therefore listening to and hearing teachers express their feelings about how the trauma of working with children and their own gang victimisations affected them, this may have elicited differing interpretations by others. The participants in the intervention phase (implementing the peace skill manual described in Chapter Seven) were few; four teachers were able to provide feedback. A larger group of participants may have produced more feedback on the viability of implementing a peace skills programme, the effectiveness of implementing such a programme and improving the manual. The impact of COVID-19 included the lengthy closure of schools, the economic hardships it created in the community, and consequently a reduced number of participants in the action research phase of the study. Despite these limitations, this study provides a good starting point for future studies and larger studies in this field.

8.7. Recommendations

The level of exposure to gang violence in communities on the Cape Flats, clearly suggests the need to develop interventions that assist preschool teachers to cope with the effects of violence. In Chapter Six of the thesis, some practical recommendations to address the findings of the study were presented.

Some general recommendations put forth for the implementation of peace education are that it is critical that government effectively address the problem of gang violence on the Cape Flats. Without significant gains in this respect, preschools (and all schools), located in these areas, will not sufficiently benefit from any peace education interventions, irrespective of the motivated and dedicated teachers. However, government has a responsibility to care for and protect its youngest and most vulnerable citizens. It has the responsibility to ensure that children can enjoy the right to an education in a safe environment. The government also has a duty to care for and support teachers, and to be attuned to the needs of teachers working in the most dangerous communities so that they may better render services for children in their early educational development.

Over the years, teachers have articulated their needs to government but in what seems to be a dialogue with the deaf, teachers in high gang-violence areas have not received the necessary support services and are left to find their own coping strategies for gang violence. Gangs are not interested in peace (Dr Irvin Kinnes, pers. comm. 2020). They will not give children the opportunity to learn about peace. Without genuine political will by the government to intervene and assist teachers in meaningful and sustainable ways, gangs will continue to brutalise and traumatise communities on the Cape Flats and deny children peaceful futures.

To implement peace education, it is critical for structural changes that would mitigate the growth and membership of gangs and improve security and stability: economic regeneration, improve job creation and employment opportunities; improve educational opportunities; social services.

ECDs lay the foundation for healthy child development by providing safe, nurturing, inclusive and responsive environment and therefore an opportune time to introduce programmes that increase the peacebuilding competencies of children.

Capacity development can be integrated into ECD curricula and skills training, such as conflict resolution skills workshops and materials for teachers, parents and other caregivers who are entry points for positive peace.

Relevant National Government Departments (Basic Education, Social Development) must be open to the potential for peace education as a violence prevention strategy starting in the earliest years of child's school career. These Departments should recognise that schools have a role to teach children to live in

peace (respect, tolerance) and not just prioritise academics. Government recognition needs to translate into policies that recognise, support and include peacebuilding and peace education efforts such as develop protocols for ECD guidance and tools to deal with gang violence prevention. Formally recognising that education supports transformation processes that lead to peace, especially if nurtured at ECD level, ultimately contributes to peaceful communities and societies.

Lessons need to be learned from the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of school closures on the children's well-being, safety and education. I reiterate the need to look after vulnerable children by government who had been affected in unanticipated ways in the past and which led to children out on streets with no schooling, susceptible to gang culture, hunger, and general education loss. Policy changes are needed to anticipate similar crises.

Impact evaluations of ECD programmes should use new and independent reliable statistics. Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and effectiveness of activities that aim to achieve general peacebuilding goals. These include promoting positive peace and reducing negative peace, dismantling a culture of violence and cultivating a culture of peace for sustainable peace, promoting local peace processes that strengthen community cohesion, addressing root causes not simply the symptoms of conflict, establishing conditions that promote constructive approaches to conflict security and stability in broader society.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his opening address of the Basic Education Lekgotla (government strategy meeting) held in February 2025, highlighted the critical need for strengthening the ECD sector after admittedly, many years of neglect and that such increased focus is critical for South Africa's future. In the 2025 State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Ramaphosa expressed government's commitment to expanding access to quality ECD services for all children by registering and formalising existing centres, providing adequate facilities, ensuring proper teacher support, training and materials. Discussions on strategies to realign the current basic education curriculum to strengthen learning in the foundation phase, must include peace education and conflict resolution skills from early childhood, along with the need to teach subjects that produce learners who are prepared for work in the technology-based global economy. Peace education must cease to be relegated to a status of less-importance in the school curriculum.

8.8. Opportunities for Further Research

The information garnered in this study forms the basis for future research. The need for further research is deemed essential by including other key stakeholders in the study. The study used teachers as the sole reporter of information about children. Using multiple reporters such as parents and other caregivers would have provided more in-depth information and greatly contributed to existing literature on peace

education in early childhood. Further research should explore the long-term impact of early childhood peace education on children's development in marginalised communities to expand the findings of this research. It is the researcher's hope that future research will probe the gaps that remain to better address the potential of peace education to be a transformative strategy amongst preschool-aged children in communities affected by high-gang violence in all its forms.

8.9. Concluding Remarks

The thesis has provided a theoretical contribution to the question of the potential of peace education as a transformative strategy in preschools located in gang-affected areas. A historical overview of factors that contributed to the formation and the growth of gangs and gangsterism on the Cape Flats, provided a context for the study. Drawing on an ecological model to explicate the complex dynamics that interact at the individual, environmental, broader socio-political, economic and cultural level, the study revealed the intricate interactions that contribute to the embeddedness of gangs and gangsterism in communities on the Cape Flats. As a qualitative, participatory action research study, this study explored, particularly, preschool teachers' perspectives on gang violence in the communities where they teach and live.

While this study is by no means the only answer to the question, it is intended to contribute to the discourse on early childhood peace education in gang-affected areas. This thesis has sought to make an original contribution to the literature on peace education based on current identified research. It sought to answer the question of whether peace education in preschools located in gang-affected areas on the Cape Flats could be transformative as a strategy.

Patra and Mete (2015) viewed peace education as a process of instilling values, knowledge, skills, and behaviours to build harmonious communities, as well preventing conflict and violence, particularly among young children through peace education. The question of the value of peace education is then raised, especially in contexts where young children witness their community being devastated by gang violence. What impact, if any, would peace education have amid the deep complexity of ongoing gang violence on the Cape Flats?

Critical structural and social changes are needed in many communities on the Cape Flats who experience a combination of unimaginable social and economic suffering which undermines social cohesion and for positive peace efforts (Galtung 1969). The relationship between structural violence and physical violence is easily visible when we consider the recent statistics for gang-related crimes in the Western Cape. For this reason, any peace education efforts must not only aim for the absence of violence but also address the drivers of structural violence as a necessary condition for peace. This view is supported by as Vaughn (2018) who points out that when aiming for just peace, it is imperative that both physical (gang violence) and structural violence (poverty) be the agenda of peace education

programmes, as dealing only with the more visible and direct forms of violence will not provide sustainable peace, as is the case with gangs on the Cape Flats.

Peace education in gang-affected communities is challenging and it is extremely difficult to implement as a strategy for transformation in contexts where the cycle of unemployment, poverty and intergenerational gang violence is perpetuated. However, this does not suggest that peace education does not have the potential to transform the minds of young children from the influence of gangs. Peace education may be difficult amid widespread and deep cultures of violence, poverty, and historical trauma evident (such as in communities across the Cape Flats) yet, where it is vitally needed.

Early childhood is considered a crucial time for developing the skills and capacities necessary for peace making and peacebuilding. Mahatma Gandhi (1931) emphasised the importance of teaching the concept of peace at early ages by stating that: "If we are to reach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children." The key to the success of peacebuilding interventions is that it needs to be viewed in the context of the child's environment. As Gittin (2019) states, peace and conflict studies field tend to construct knowledge, removing the contexts they wish to study, and exclude those on the receiving end of peace interventions in the design and delivery of their own programmes. This inhibits the ability to think of knowledge as being the product of an "iterative process of learning, that is done in relationship with others" (Lederach 2003: 58, cited in Gittin 2019). This also addresses the concern about the "need for peace research to benefit participants as much as researchers" (Cremin 2016: 12).

The dynamics of gang violence and its impact on the community, is complex. Therefore, peace interventions must consider all the ambiguities that might exist in contexts characterised by violence and mistrust as this might "impose constraints on the opportunities to address issues of violence and peace" (van Dijk, de Haan and van Winter 2020). When violence is part of daily life, it becomes "central to the moral order and orients norms and normality" Das and Kleinman (2000, cited in van Dijk, de Haan and van Winter 2020: 3) which might present important implications for peace education in such contexts.

Peace education can be considered to have transformative effects when children are given the tools to transcend their vulnerability in communities where they cannot be protected from the influences and harms of gangs and gangsterism. Providing these children, who have no choice in where they live, with conflict resolution skills to constructively respond to conflict and resolve problems is one way to help prevent future violence and build stable, peaceful communities.

Part of the challenge is that there are too few peace education programmes which prioritise, develop and support peace educators in gang-violence affected communities on the Cape Flats. Such

programmes that promote positive behaviour in young children are likely to bring positive changes to those who are at risk of future gang involvement. The literature has shown studies that emphasised early childhood as being the critical period in a child's development capabilities across all domains for laying the foundations of peace. This suggests that including education that promotes peace should start in the early years for children to acquire the skills, values, morals and behaviours of peace which has potential for influencing children's capacities for peace later in life.

It is noteworthy that the SANDF were deployed to high-gang presence areas to reduce the levels of gang violence, and the COVID-19 pandemic emerged while the study was underway. The pandemic further exacerbated the hardship already experienced by communities which presented as a huge challenge to the commitment to the action research intervention (Objective Three and Four) by participants as they had to prioritise their basic needs for survival. As previously iterated, the impact of COVID-19 on the initial intervention plan meant that it needed modification and therefore a peace education manual was developed and evaluated as an outcome. Any early childhood peace intervention programme in communities marred by high gang violence should include the participation of teacher, parent and child, which the present study set out to do initially but curtailed of this under constraints of the pandemic.

In this context of chronic gang violence and where the nature of gangs and gangsterism is deeply complex, transformation is a long and glacially slow process. Reducing the levels of gang violence on the Cape Flats is a precursor to such transformation. Until the triangular chokehold that gangs hold on communities is released, it would be difficult to overestimate the significant challenge of peace education as a transformative strategy for preschools located in gang-affected communities on the Cape Flats. Although challenging, the hope is, that, preschool teachers, with the support of parents, other caregivers and relevant government agencies, will stay diligent in their pursuit of teaching peace to young children in communities marred by high gang violence.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (FREC)

01 April 2019

Student Name: J Africa

Student No: 21855190 FREC REF: 5/18FREC

Dear J Africa

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (PEACEBUILDING).

TITLE: Education as a Transformative Strategy in a Community Exposed to Gang Violence.

Please be advised that the FREC Committee has reviewed your proposal, and the following decision was made: **Approved – Ethics Level 2**

Date of FRC Approval: 26 March 2019

Approval has been granted for a period of two years from the above FRC date, after which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the form located at the faculty. This form must be submitted to the FREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the FREC according to the FREC SOP's.

Please note that ANY amendments in the approved proposal require the approval of the FREC as outlined in the FREC SOP's.

Yours sincerely

_____

Prof JP Govender

Chairperson: Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B: ECD Forum Letter of Information

Dear Hanover Park ECD Forum

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Peace education as a transformative strategy: key stakeholders in a community exposed to gang violence, Cape Town

Principal researcher: Jo-Anne Africa

Supervisor: Dr. Sylvia Kaye

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: Through this study, I intend to gain insight and an understanding into the lived experiences of the community of Hanover Park. The community's experiences of violence, particularly gang violence and its impact on young children and other key stakeholders of the preschool community, will be explored. Collaboratively, I will explore and develop an intervention to address these challenges for the benefit of the whole community.

Dear participant, I'm a doctoral candidate from the International Centre of Nonviolence at (ICON) Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban. My research study focuses on peace education as a transformative strategy for alternatives to community violence that impacts young children in Hanover Park.

Outline of the Procedures: An introduction and the purpose of the study will be provided to participants, including information about the processes such as community profiling, recruitment of participants, data gathering, intervention planning, evaluation, and dissemination of research findings.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: This is a very low risk study and there are no discomforts to you expected.

Benefits: Both participant and researcher will benefit from this study.

Reason/s why you May Withdraw from the Study: Participation in the study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse effects.

Remuneration: There is no remuneration for you and no form of inducement will be offered for participation in this study. Snacks will be provided to the participants.

Costs of the Study: Participants are not allowed to cover any costs of my study.

Confidentiality: Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed through the use of acronyms. Access to data will be limited to study personal and information collected will be locked in a safe place and destroyed after five years. You will be told about the concepts of anonymity and confidentiality which will be applied to this study and if participants would like to be named, then they will be named as agreed.

Research-related Injury: Should there be any study related injury, the psychologist skills will assist the researcher in remediating to the situation.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher +, my supervisor +or the Institutional Research Ethics administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to Prof. C. E. Napier - Acting Director, Research and Postgraduate Support. Contact number is 031 373 2326.

Appendix C: Letter of Consent to Principals

Letter of Consent

PRINCIPAL'S PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, Mr/Ms _____, principal/vice-principle of

_____, hereby consent to the research that Jo-Anne Africa intends to conduct _____.

I understand the nature of the research and that the participating teachers will be involved in an interview process that will not be intrusive.

I understand that all information obtained during the research will be treated confidentially and the anonymity of the school and the participating teachers will be ensured.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL: _____ DATE: _____

Appendix D: Research Flyer

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Participate in research</td></tr>
<tr><td>Principal Investigator:

Jo-Anne Africa

(PhD Candidate)

Research Area: Community violence, Preschools and Peace Education

CONTACT INFORMATION:

TO ASK QUESTIONS CONTACT

084 634 5246

Africaj11@yahoo.com</td><td>What is this study about?

This study is about preschools located in communities exposed to gang violence.

Who can participate?

I am looking for teachers and parents/caregivers of children between the ages of 3-5, attending preschools in Manenberg, Hanover Park and Lavender Hill. Teachers should have at least 3 years teaching experience at the school. Participants should be comfortable reading English.

What’s involved?

This study involves completing surveys and/or participating in focus groups. Participants will be interviewed/asked to complete survey that takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. It will be completed in during September 2019 – November 2019. Participants can also choose to participate in focus groups that will happen around the same time as the surveys. Focus groups (2 hours) will be</td></tr>
</table>

	offered during the week and/or weekends. There are no costs to participants. What are the benefits of participating? You will be contributing to help understand how gang violence affects the preschool community.

If you wish to participate in the study, please leave your contact number:

Teacher or Parent	Contact number

Appendix E: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a Peacebuilding Study to create a safer preschool community through peace education. It will be used as part of an information gathering process to conduct a community profile to gain a better understanding of the context of the study i.e. the communities on the Cape Flats that affected by gang violence who have a direct vested interest in the young children attending preschools in these areas.

Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this field test by completing the following survey? You are free to discontinue your participation at any time for any reason.

Yes, I agree to participate ☐ No, I decline to participate ☐

Name of School: (optional)

_____

(Please use your initials of your first name, surname with day, month and the last two digits of the year you were born in. For example, Janet Thomas was born on 21 June 1975 so her unique code would be JT 210675).

Your unique code: _____

What is your gender? ☐ Female ☐ Male

What is your age category? ☐ 21-34 ☐ 35-54 ☐ 55+

What is your ethnicity?

White	Coloured	Black	Other (please specify)	Prefer not to answer

Do you live in the community where you teach? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many years? ☐

Including this year, how many years of teaching experience do you have? ☐

Including this year, how many years have you been teaching at your current school? ☐

1. Challenges faced by preschool teachers who work in communities affected by gang violence

a. How would you describe the area where the children you teach live?

_____
_____
_____

b. How has gang violence affected the children in your class/school?

_____
_____
_____

c. What about gang violence do you hear from children in your class/school?

_____
_____
_____
_____
___

2. Experience of gang violence by preschool teachers in the community they teach

a. How often do you experience gang violence in the community?

Never	
At least once a month	
At least once a week	
Almost every day	

b. How often do you hear gun shots near your school or on school grounds?

About a week ago	
About 1 month ago	
About 3 months ago	
About 6 months ago	
about 9 months ago	
About 1 year ago	
More than 1 year ago	

c. If yes, when was the last time this happened?

About a week ago	
About 1 month ago	
About 3 months ago	
About 6 months ago	
about 9 months ago	
About 1 year ago	
More than 1 year ago	

d. What has been your personal experience with gang violence in the community in the past year?

_____

_____

_____

e. Do you know of children in your class/school who have experienced any of the following?

Witnessed gang violence	
Been a victim of gang violence	
Had a parent/caregiver/family member injured/killed in gang violence	

f. How do you handle children in your classroom who are distressed due to being exposed to gang violence?

_____

_____

_____

g. What strategies do you use to keep children in your class/school safe during gang fights?

_____

_____

_____

h. Which strategies work best and why?

_____

_____

_____

i. Where did you learn these strategies?

_____

_____

_____

3. Support systems to help teachers respond more effectively to the needs of children affected by gang violence

a. Can you describe any support systems or resources that are currently available to help preschool teachers assist children who are exposed to gang violence?

_____

_____

_____

b. What additional support systems or resources would help teachers deal more effectively with community violence?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and effort in assisting with my thesis.

Appendix F: Teacher Interview Questions

Proposed Preschool Teacher Interview Questions

4. What are the challenges faced by preschool teachers who work in schools that are in violent communities?
    - What is the area like where children attending your school live?
    - How does the neighbourhood feel – safe or unsafe?
    - How has community violence (gang violence) affected children in your classroom and school?
    - What have been your personal experience with violence in this community?
    - How have these experiences affected your teaching?
    - What do you see as the challenges of teaching young children in this community?
    - How do school administrators handle violence?
    - Does your school have a protocol with regard to violence?

5. What specific strategies do you use to cope with violence-related issues in your classroom and school?
    - How do you handle children who acts aggressively in your classroom and school?
    - How do you deal with a child who is distressed about an incident of violence, such as a fight or shooting?
    - How do you respond to news of a violent event involving a child or his/her parent?
    - What other strategies do you use to work with children who are exposed to community violence?
    - What strategies do you find works best?
    - Where did you learn these strategies?

6. What support systems would help teachers respond more effectively to the needs of children affected by community violence?
    - What support systems are currently available to help you assist children who are dealing with community violence issues? School resources? Community resources?

- Can you describe any educational, mental health or other resources that are available to help teachers deal more effectively with community violence?
- What additional support systems or resources would help teachers deal more effectively with community violence?
- Are there any professional development opportunities that would assist you with this task? What are they?

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience teaching at this school that is located in a high violence community?

Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Questions

The questions used to guide the focus group discussions were as follows:

1. How do you feel about the gang violence in the community?

2. How does gang violence affect you when you go to work?

3. What strategies do you use to keep children safe?

4. What do you think about the military presence in the community to deal with gang violence?

5. What are your needs as preschool teachers to address gang violence in your community?

Appendix H: Peace Education Manual for ECD Educators

Peace Education Manual for ECD Educators

A basic introduction

Activities and teaching children about peace

"Little Peace Ambassadors"

A. Contents

Introducing the Peace Education Manual for ECD Educators

While our communities should be pleasant and peaceful places to live in, this is not always the case. Often, we experience lack of stability and lack of peace in the area where we live, due to negative patterns and negative behaviour displayed by individuals or groups. When no intervention is made to curb the negativity in communities it can result in further conflicts, deterioration of relationships, negative values, and generally out of control situations.

When community life is disturbed by violence and crime, our young children are impacted as much as the impact on older children or adults. Small children need structure and a disciplined environment to feel safe and secure and they are not able to effectively negotiate between their own wish for autonomy and boundary setting and the dysfunctional nature of their family and or community contexts. While it is difficult to walk in the shoes of our young ones, we can contribute to their learning and internalising of positive values that will help them to make healthy choices in dealing with conflict and non-peaceful situations.

Peace education is a great option for young the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector to integrate in the classroom curriculum as part of the broader life skills outcomes. Promoting peace education at the level of young children holds great benefit to ensure that positive values and problem solving are inculcated at an early stage in a child's life. Teaching peace education at such an early stage provides an opportunity for children to explore how to resolve conflict in creative and constructive ways and how to be ambassadors for peace in the classroom, at home and in their community.

The Peace Education Manual for ECD Educators are prepared to be a user-friendly guide for the ECD educator with easy to do activities and suggestions on how to engage the young child to learn about peace and to do peace related activities inside and outside of the classroom. All the activities will make use of resources that are easily accessible and perhaps also easily available within the community. The peace education activities in the classroom could also include the family at home with their contribution to the inexpensive materials and their inputs and general encouragements.

The aim of this basic introductory is to prepare teachers for peace education and to equip you with the necessary skills to increase young children's experience and knowledge of peace to become little ambassadors of peace.

B. Benefits of Peace Education on Children and Educators

Research has shown that peace education benefits children in the following ways:

- Academic achievement
- Positive attitudes towards school
- Assertiveness
- Cooperation
- Communication skills
- Healthy interpersonal/inter-group relations
- Constructive conflict resolution at home and school

Offering peace education at schools has assisted with the decrease in the following:

- Aggressiveness
- Discipline referrals
- Drop-out rates
- Social withdrawal
- Suspension rates
- Victimised behaviour
- Violence

C. How can the ECD Educator teach peace education?

1. Integrate the peace education activities in the life skills curriculum.
2. Use the resources that you have and think about how these could be used to design a peace education activity.
3. Mobilise volunteers to assist with outside activities, for example, the making of a small peace garden.
4. Use the classroom space to incorporate a permanent reminder of peace, for example a peace mat or a peace corner.
5. Encourage the children to become peace ambassadors through group assigned activities or individual leadership tasks.
6. Choose specific days to celebrate peace through events or colour display or celebrations.

E. What is peace education?

Peace education is about education to understand and appreciate peace.

Peace education is about creating awareness on justice and equality.

Peace education is about promoting a culture of peace.

Peace education is about appreciating that inner peace is important.

Peace education is about transforming negative behaviour to positive behaviour.

Peace education is about creating change from being competitive to being cooperative.

Peace education is about inculcating positive values and rejecting violence.

Peace education is about teaching knowledge and skills to deal with conflict situations.

F. Teacher self-reflection

Before bringing the concept of peace into your classroom and asking students to consider what it means to them, it may be helpful for you to take a few minutes to reflect upon peace on your own.

• Begin by quickly brainstorming a list of the first ten words or phrases that you think of when you hear the word peace.

• Then, consider the definition of peace from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary below.

peace noun \'pēs\

1: a state of tranquillity or quiet: as

a: freedom from civil disturbance

b: a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom

<a breach of the peace>

2: freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions

3: harmony in personal relations

4: a: a state or period of mutual concord between governments

b: a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity

5: used interjectionally to ask for silence or calm or as a greeting or farewell

Source: merriam-ebster.com/dictionary/peace

For each line in the definition, circle words or phrases from the list you made that connect.

Next, try to define peace in your own words using one or two sentences.

Finally, take a few minutes to reflect upon following two points:

Think about a time in your life when you knew peace. What made this peace possible?

Was there a time when you did not experience peace? Why was peace absent?

When do you think you first became aware of the concept of peace? Has your view changed over time? If so, how has it changed and why?

How does the concept of peace connect to your classroom and what you are teaching? How might it relate to your student's life experience thus far?

How could you collaborate with other teachers about this topic?

What is Peace?

Peace Points:

Peace is being calm.

Peace is not fighting.

Peace is walking around without fear.

Peace is sleeping safely.

Peace is not bullying.

Peace is playing with freedom.

Peace is caring for one another.

Peace is having respect for everyone.

Peace is loving people, animals and nature.

Peace is speaking out when you are hurt.

Peace is no violence.

Peace is no more guns.

G. Four levels of Peace

World Peace

World peace is also called peace on earth. It is about happiness and freedom and peacefulness among every person and every nation in the world.

World peace is about appreciating and respecting all cultures, religions, customs, politics, and nationalities of people no matter who they are.

Community Peace

Living in a peaceful community means that every person in that community has freedom to walk, talk, play, work, and so on. In other words, a peaceful community is harmonious and care-free. There is no violence, fights, crime and people do not live in fear.

Environmental Peace

Environmental peace means that we live in harmony with nature and Mother Earth. Our environment is free from pollution and we look after the land, the gardens, the fields and the animals.

Environmental peace also means that the conflict and war in countries should end so that the people in these countries can feel free, safe and secure and not starve from hunger.

Inner Peace

Inner peace is also called peace of mind. Inner peace is about feeling harmonious within. In other words, inner peace is about feeling content, feeling stress free, feeling happy, feeling spiritually fulfilled, feeling calm, and a sense of knowing yourself

H. Practice Peace: Activities for Peace Education in the Classroom

Steps

7. Prepare the lesson for the peace activity.
8. Decide on the specific topic or theme for the lesson or activity.
9. Identify the outcomes for the lesson especially the specific learnings regarding peace.
10. Explain the purpose of the lesson to the children.
11. Organise the children in small groups or in different spaces in the classroom.
12. Ensure that the children participate fully in the activities.

1. Paint pictures of peace

- Each child should have a piece of paper and access to paint.
- Let them imagine that they are artists and that they have been asked to paint PEACE. Allow them to paint freely.
- Ask them what they think PEACE is based on the picture that they painted.
- Encourage a class discussion on peace.

Discussion Example

- What did we learn from this activity? Why do all children need peace?
- Do you think all children are able to live in peace? Why or why not?
- Link the ideas to the International Day of Peace.

2. Draw peace based on a symbol for peace

Ask the children what comes to their minds when they think of peace. Ask them to choose one of the ideas or symbols and to draw a picture.

- Mention different symbols or elements that may remind them of peace and then ask them to choose one symbol which they need to draw and discuss.

Examples of symbols and elements:

- A dove
- A rainbow
- Flowers
- Happy people

- A clean school
- Children laughing
- Children playing
- Butterflies
- Rivers flowing joyously
- The sun shining

3. The classroom as a peace zone

- Discuss with the children about how they would feel to have peace in the class all the time.
- Let them know that this could happen if their class become the PEACE CLASS.
- Encourage the children to identify ground rules for how the class should be kept peaceful.
- Ask them to express the ground rules through drama or song.
- Encourage the class to discuss when tension or conflict situation emerge and to revisit the ground rules for their PEACE CLASS.

4. Creating or finding songs and poems about peace

- Option 1: Identify a nursery rhyme and adjust the words to have peace incorporated.
- Option 2: Identify lyrics from well-known songs sung by professional artists and teach these to the children. Allow them to dance while the music is playing and let them learn the words.
- Option 3: Ask the children to suggest words for a song and make up a song on the spot in a fun way while the theme of peace is emphasised.

5. Create a peace garden at the schools

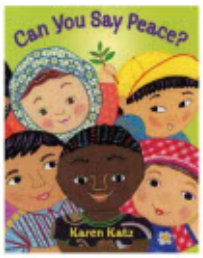
- Involve some of the community members or parents and start a small peace garden at the school.
- The purpose of the garden is to create discussion on how to look after the environment and Mother Nature.
- The peace garden should create very interesting conversations and lessons about exploring and promoting peace in a very different way.

6. Peace clay sculpturing

- Provide each child with a piece of clay and ask them to think about peace in their community or family or the class.
- Ask them to create something about peace. They will keep whatever they create as something special about peace.
- If paint is available, ask them to paint their peace clay object.

7. Story

- Read a story that explains changed behaviour from negative to positive e.g. bullying to friendship; violence to peace; disrespect to respectfulness and so on.
- Involve the children in the story and allow them to ask questions and to comment.
- Stories could range from fables, to creative stories, to newspaper incidents that are culturally relevant and appropriate for ECD children.



8. Be kind to animals and their pet project

- Give the children a task that they need to do at home. They need to report back in class.
- Ask the children to be friendly with any animal and especially with their pets.
- Have a discussion with them on how caring for animals is part of being peaceful and promoting world and community peace.
- Give them an incentive when they give feedback e.g., something small that they can keep.

9. Look for peace around

- Ask the class to become quiet and to become calm.
- Each child needs to sit in their own spot and observe peace and quiet. They should listen and sit in silence.
- Explain to them this is what peace could feel like.
- Try to do this exercise on occasions so that the children can experience the sensations of quiet, peace, temporary silence and serenity.

10. Create a peace carpet in the class

- This is an easy activity to set up, it only requires a carpet.
- Allocate the carpet space as the PEACE SPACE.
- Explain the purpose of the carpet in the class and invite the children to spend time on the carpet.
- The carpet is about appreciating peace and should encourage positive behaviour when the carpet is visited.
- The carpet could be put in a specific area in the class and the area could be extra beautified to make it different from the rest of the class.

World Peace Day is celebrated on 21 September each year. There is also a date in August for International Gardens Day. There is a day for Humans Rights Day. Create a calendar in the class with the children and let them do posters, shows, drama, sing-a-song events on these days. Involve their parents to support and to learn with their children about peace and especially for parents to become effective role models for all children. Perhaps their excitement will overflow and they could sponsor safety-friendly badges with "Little Peace Ambassadors" written on which their children could wear with pride.

I. Final Thoughts

There are so many more creative ideas for peace activities that the ECD Educator can employ. The most critical aspect of the peace education lessons is to offer constant education on what is peace and what is not peace. Children at the ECD level are already engaging in their own experimentation of assertiveness and testing of boundaries as part of their development stage. The communities where they come from do not fall short of exhibiting aggression, strife and violence. Unless a concerted effort is made through education that provide different ways to problem solve, we will have future generations of youth pulled into a spiral of unbalanced adults in dysfunctional communities.

APPENDIX A

ASSESSMENT BEFORE PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. Why do you think a peace education programme **IS or IS NOT** necessary at your school/in your class?

_____

_____

_____

2. What, if any, negative effects/impacts a peace education programme might have on the children in your class and community?

_____

_____

_____

3. What do you think would be the greatest benefit of a peace education programme for the children?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

ASSESSMENT AFTER PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. What do you think of when I say the word peace?

_____

_____

_____

2. Do you like peace?

_____

_____

_____

3. How do you know when there is peace?

_____

_____

_____

4. What makes you feel peaceful/happy?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

EVALUATION OF THE PEACE ACTIVITIES

1. Did children go into the peace area on their own? Yes No
2. Which is their favourite peace activity?
3. Which activity did they like but was not a favourite?
4. Which activity do you think made them feel more happy/peaceful?
5. Which activities did not work?

Activity	"Favourite"	"Liked but not favourite"	"Made them feel peaceful/happy"	"Did not like"

APPENDIX D

ABOUT YOUR PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. Your school: _____
2. Principal/Teacher: _____
3. Grades in which programme used: _____
4. Peace Programme Name: _____

5. Why did you think it was necessary to start a peace education curriculum in your class/school?

_____

_____

6. When did you start your peace education programme?

_____

7. Did you incorporate peace education as part of another subject? If yes, what subject?

_____

8. Did you include parents in the programme?

_____

9. In what phase of the peace education programme are you now? (Term?)

_____

10. What lessons/activities did you teach in your peace education programme?

_____

_____

11. What parts of the curriculum are most effective and why?

_____

_____

12. Did you make your own changes to the suggested activities and what were they?

_____

_____

13. Compared to before the programme, how often was aggressive play among children generally?

_____

_____

14. More children's conflicts are not resolved, fewer conflicts are resolved or about the same?

_____

_____

15. Children resolve more conflicts without/little or more teacher involvement?

_____

_____

16. Share concrete examples of how children benefited from the programme?

_____

_____

17. What additional content do you think should be added to the programme for teachers?

_____

_____

18. What do you think was the greatest benefit of the programme for the class as a whole? If, you do not believe that there was a class-wide benefit, please write "None."

_____

_____

19. What additional resources and support do you need to implement peace education?

_____

_____

20. Would you encourage other ECD practitioners/schools to promote peace education as part of their curriculum?

_____

_____

NOTES: